

## People in World History Activity 23

## Profile 1

**Archduke Francis Ferdinand (1863–1914)**

Describing the death of a soldier in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the king's son says, "Nothing in his life became him like the leaving it." Archduke Francis Ferdinand, too, is remembered for the way he died, for his death was the spark that ignited World War I.

Francis Ferdinand was born in Graz, Austria, the eldest son of Archduke Charles Louis and the nephew of Emperor Francis Joseph. When he was 12 years old, Francis Ferdinand inherited the title Archduke of Austria-Este. He became heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1899, after the deaths of his father and his cousin, Crown Prince Rudolph. However, since Francis Ferdinand's health was poor, most people assumed that the throne would go to his younger brother Otto. This made Francis Ferdinand very bitter. There were other conflicts as well.

Francis Ferdinand was deeply in love with Countess Sophia Chotek, duchess of Hohenberg. The countess was of a much lower social rank than Francis Ferdinand was. As the heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he was expected to marry someone of equal rank, such as the

queen or princess of a great empire. After much strife, Francis Ferdinand was allowed to marry Sophia—but

only after he relinquished all claim to the throne for his children. The morganatic marriage disallowing Sophia and their children any of the rights guaranteed by Francis Ferdinand's status took place in 1900.

Francis Ferdinand tried to influence foreign affairs, but he had little success because of limitations placed on his power by Francis Joseph, who remained emperor. From 1906 on, however, he did exert greater influence on military issues. In 1913 Francis Ferdinand became the inspector general of the army, but his time in this office was tragically cut short.

In June 1914, he and his wife were assassinated at Sarajevo by the Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip. World War I began a month later, when Austria declared war against Serbia.

**REVIEWING THE PROFILE**

**Directions:** Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Why is Archduke Francis Ferdinand significant in history?
2. What made Archduke Francis Ferdinand bitter?
3. What were the expectations about the kind of person the Archduke would marry?
4. **Critical Thinking** Determining Cause and Effect. What were the consequences of Archduke Francis Ferdinand's marriage?
5. **Critical Thinking** Predicting Consequences. What influence do you think Archduke Francis Ferdinand might have had on history if he had lived? Explain your answer.