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RUSKA 2020 intel

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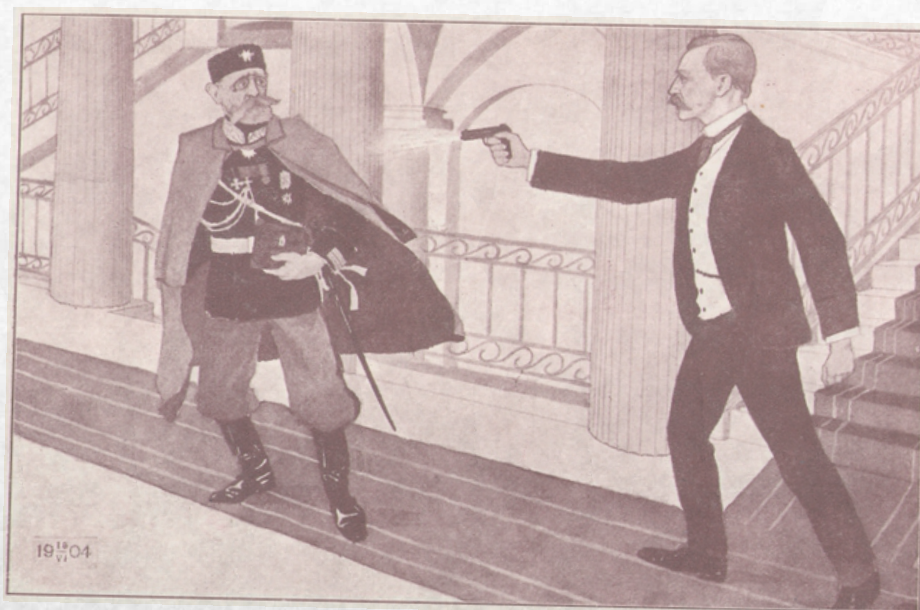
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Title: *Assassination of Nikolay Bobrikov*

Location: 60°10'09.9"N 24°57'12.4"

It was around eleven o'clock on 16th of June 1904, when the governor-general of Finland, Nikolay Bobrikov, was seen walking across the Senate Square with his entourage. Bobrikov was heading towards the house of the Finnish Senate, where he was to chair a session of the senate, a weekly appointment for him, happening every Thursday. He entered the building alone, leaving his retinue outside to go about their daily business. Moments later, five gunshots rang from the Senate's stairwell. After initial confusion, the governor-general was found from the Senate chamber, badly injured by two bullets, but still alive. His assailant, former senate clerk Eugen Schauman, lay dead on the 2nd floor landing, having died instantly from two bullets fired at the heart.




The attempt on Bobrikov's life was a result of the then-ongoing russification of the grand duchy of Finland, a manifestation of rising pan-Slavic ideology in the Russian empire. Finland had been an autonomous part of Russia since 1809, when the region was ceded by the Kingdom of Sweden following a brief war between the two countries. The autonomy of Finland became fairly strong, as the grand duchy had its own senate, army, tax policy and even a national bank with its own currency, the markka. However, during the last quarter of the 19th century, increased criticism was voiced by the Russian government towards the policy of autonomy as a part of a broader attempt of strengthening the Russian Empire by binding it more uniformly together.

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Beginning in 1899, this criticism turned into a program of gradual dismantling of the Finnish autonomy. For example, as time progressed, the Finnish army was amalgamated into the Russian army, Russian was decreed as the primary language of administration in the grand duchy, and the governor-general was given dictatorial powers in all but name to make sure these changes would succeed.

While russification was generally disliked by the local populace, there were noted divisions about how to best react to this situation. Some considered that compliance would be the best policy; that by caving in now, the autonomy could be regained in the future when the general political situation would - hopefully - improve. Many, however, considered that the actions undertaken by Russians were inherently illegal vis-à-vis the Finnish constitution, and had to be resisted one way or the other. A boundary emerged between proponents of passive and active resistance, the former advocating for non-violent civil disobedience, the latter planning assassinations, bombings and sabotage. Many of the activists set their sights on the hated personification of russification policies - governor-general Nikolay Bobrikov.

Despite different groups of violent activists making plans for Bobrikov's assassination, the lone wolf Eugen Schauman was able to strike first. Schauman, a radicalized 29-year-old nobleman, had a good chance of getting close to the governor-general as he used to work at the house of the Senate. Schauman prepared for his deed by doing target practice with his pistol and even consulted for his doctor-friend about where to aim to achieve fatal shots. However, an activist group called "Gummerus' group" got wind of Schauman's plans. With an assassination plan of their own, they set a deadline for Schauman: he had to carry out the assassination during the week before midsummer at the latest. If he could not do this, Gummerus' group would proceed with their own plan.

Thursday the 16th of June was the last day Bobrikov would visit the house of the Senate before his summer holiday. With midsummer fast approaching, this

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was Schauman's last chance to execute his plan. Schauman observed Bobrikov's arrival from the top floor of the house of the Senate. As he saw the governor-general entering the building, Schauman proceeded down the stairwell, meeting Bobrikov, dressed in full uniform heavy with decorations, on the 2nd floor landing. Schauman fired three shots at him from close range: the first shot ricocheted from a button on Bobrikov's uniform without hurting its target. The second bullet also ricocheted, albeit this time from a decoration, grazing Bobrikov's throat. The third shot hit Bobrikov's belt buckle and gravely wounded the governor-general. The last two shots Schauman aimed at his own heart.

Seriously wounded Bobrikov was transported to a hospital for an emergency operation. Despite spending hours upon hours on an operating table, the third bullet with shards from belt buckle had irreparably destroyed his intestines. Governor-general Nikolay Bobrikov died the following night and was later buried in St. Petersburg. Eugen Schauman, however, was buried in an unmarked grave without ceremony, with the Russian army initially guarding the grave to deter possible homage-givers.



*A memorial plaque
was unveiled in
Senate's stairwell in
1933. "He gave
himself for his
country".*

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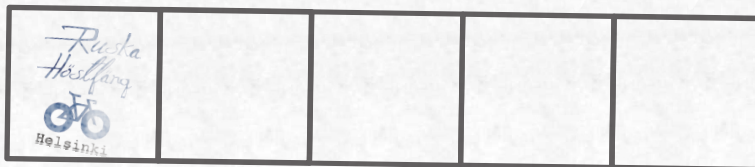
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As the news of the successful assassination spread, many Finns were overjoyed by the death of an unpopular governor-general. Schauman became a national hero; when his remains were reinterred in 1906, the reburial became a public festival. One newspaper, *Päivälehti*, published an allegorical piece hailing Schauman's deed - but did it somewhat too plainly, as the paper was immediately shut down for good by the censorship officials. Undeterred, the editorial team soon began publishing a new newspaper, *Helsingin Sanomat*, which is now the biggest newspaper in Finland.

Of course, not all reactions were positive. For example, the newspaper *Uusi Suometar*, representing the compliance-oriented circles, published an editorial condemning the crime. Later it became known that the editorial was written by the future Finnish president J. K. Paasikivi.

Author: Jan-Erik Engren, bachelor of arts (history)

Images:

Eugen Schauman ampuu Nikolai Bobrikovin, kuvakortti (vesivärimaalaus).

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