Unification of Death (The Black Hand)

The conspiracy to assassinate Archduke Francis Ferdinand was organized by a secret Serbian society called Union or Death, more popularly known as the Black Hand. Founded in 1911, the Black Hand aspired to create a greater Serbia by uniting with their kinsmen, the South Slavs dwelling in Austria-Hungary. Thus, Austrian officials regarded the aspirations of Pan-Serbs as a significant threat to the Hapsburg Empire. The following Articles are taken from the original oath of allegiance.

Article 1. For the purpose of realizing the national ideals - the Unification of Serbians - an organization is hereby created, whose members may be any Serbian.

Article 2. The organization gives priority to the revolutionary struggle rather than relies on cultural striving; therefore its institution is an absolutely secret one for wider circles.

Article 3. The organization bears the name: "Union of Death".

Article 4. In order to carry into effect its task the organization will do the following things:

1. Influence over all the official factors in Serbia
2. It will carry out a revolutionary organization in all the territories where Serbians are living:
3. Beyond the frontiers, it will fight with all means against all enemies of this idea:
4. It will maintain friendly relations with all the States, nations, organizations, and individual persons who sympathize with Serbia and the Serbian race:

Article 24. It shall be the duty of every member to recruit new members, but it shall be understood that every introducing member shall vouch with his own life for all those whom he introduces into the organization.

Article 27. The members of the organization must unconditionally obey all the commands given by their respective Directorates, as also all the Directorates must obey unconditionally the commands which they receive direct from their superior Directorate.

Article 29. The interest of the organization shall stand above all other interests.

Article 30. On entering into the organization, every member must know that by joining the organization he loses his own personality; he must not expect any glory for himself, or any personal benefit, material or moral. Consequently the member who should dare to try to exploit the organization for his personal, or class, or party interests shall be punished by death.

Article 33. In administering capital punishment the sole responsibility of the Supreme Central Directorate shall be to see that such punishment is safely and unfailingly carried into effect without any regard for the ways and means to be employed in the execution.

Done at Belgrade this 9th day of May, 1911 A.D.

1. What is the stated purpose of the Black Hand?
2. Why do you think that this organization must keep secret membership?
3. What is the duty of each member?
4. What is the punishment of members that exploit the organization for personal gain?
5. How shall death sentences (of its enemies) be carried out?