



**The mystery of Lake Starnberg
The death of Louis II of Bavaria**



**Archduke Rudolph and the
secrets of Mayerling**



The mystery of Lake Starnberg The death of Louis II of Bavaria

A life of mystery

Was Louis II mad?

Was he assassinated?

Was he a murderer?

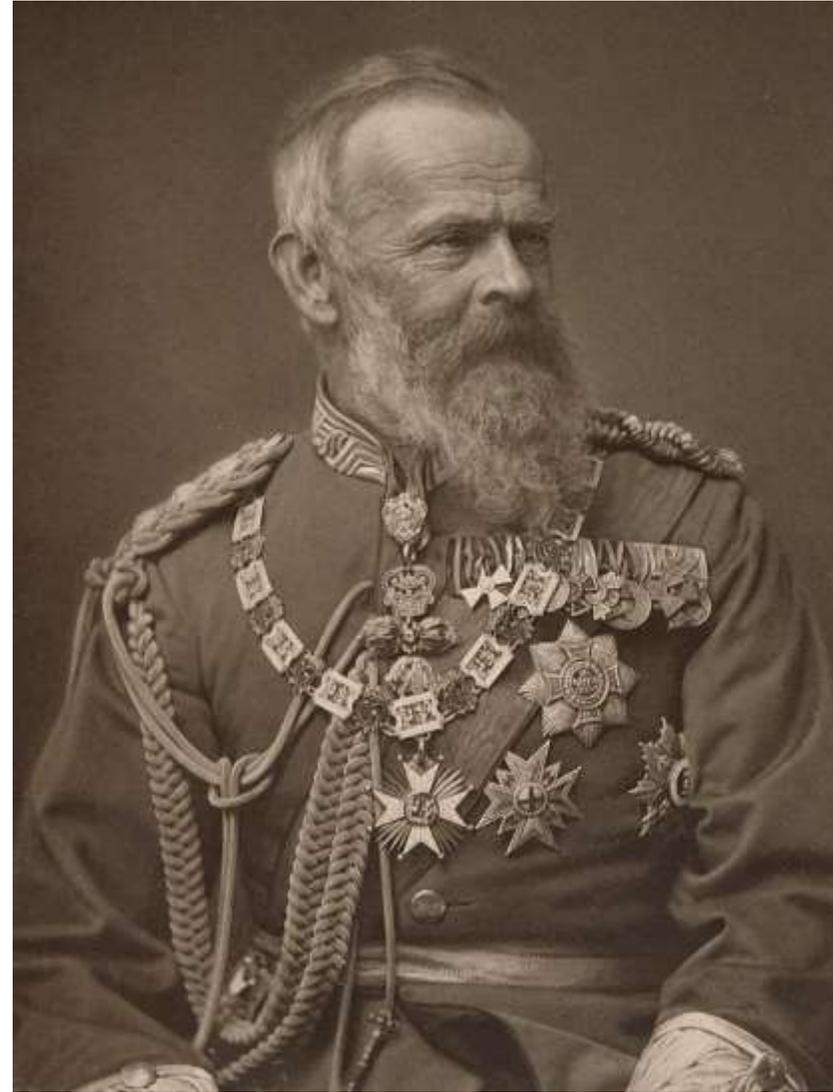
13 June 1886: what really
happen?



13 June 1886

Prince Luitpold: the new regent
of Bavaria

Louis II declared mad and taken
to **Berg Castle** (Lake Starnberg,
80km south of Munich)

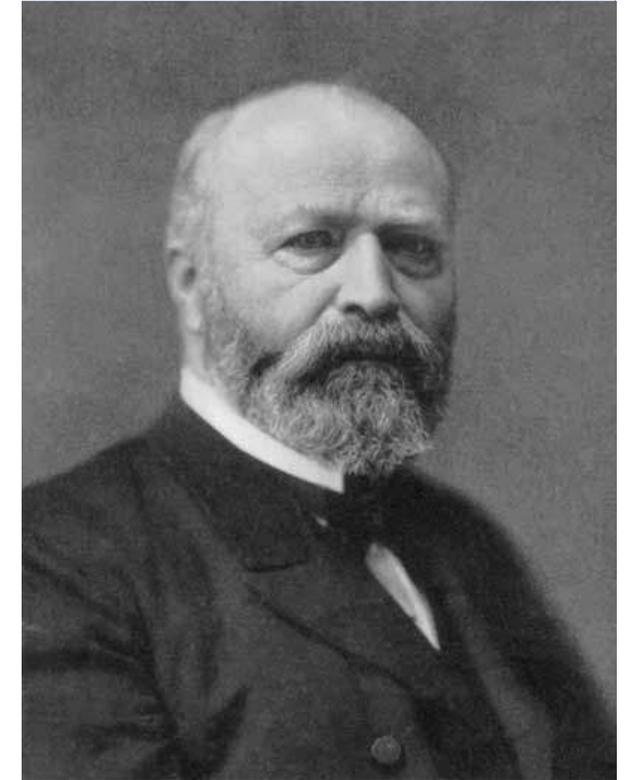




*“Here, everything goes
marvellously well”*

(Professor Von Gudden, psychiatrist)

10.30pm: *“the king and Gudden went
out for a walk in the evening. Not yet
returned. The park is being searched”*
(telegram to Prince Luitpold)

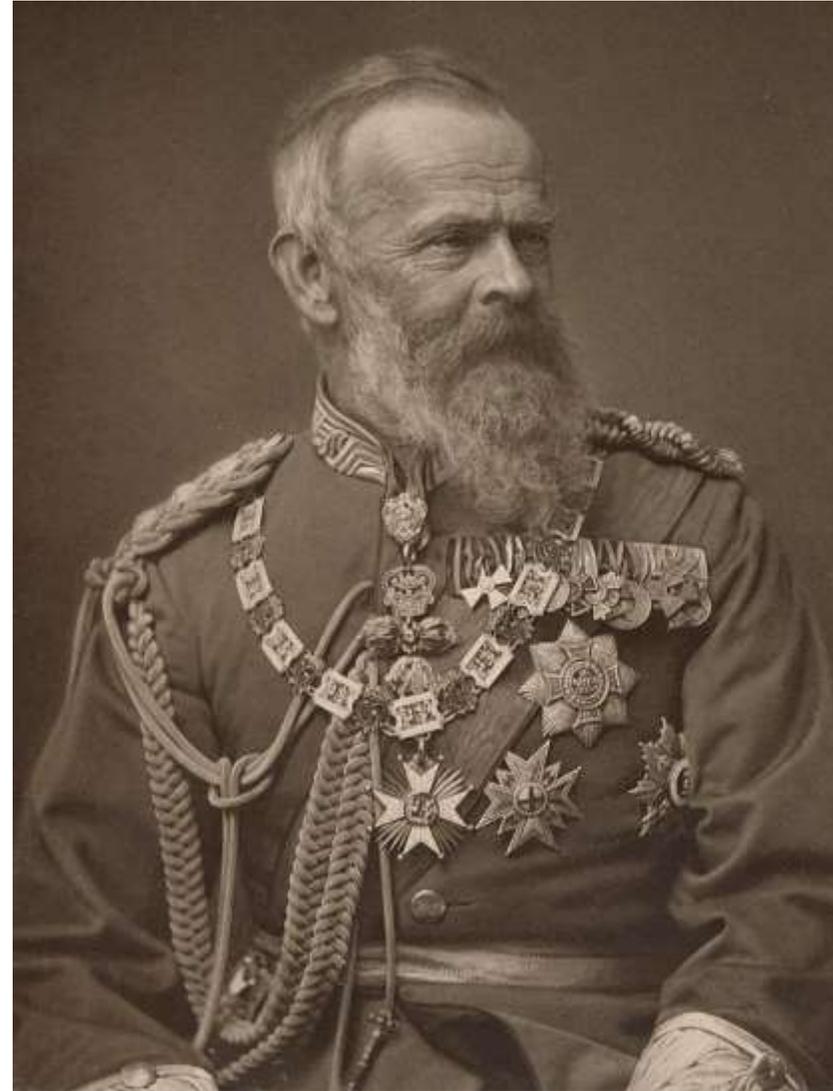


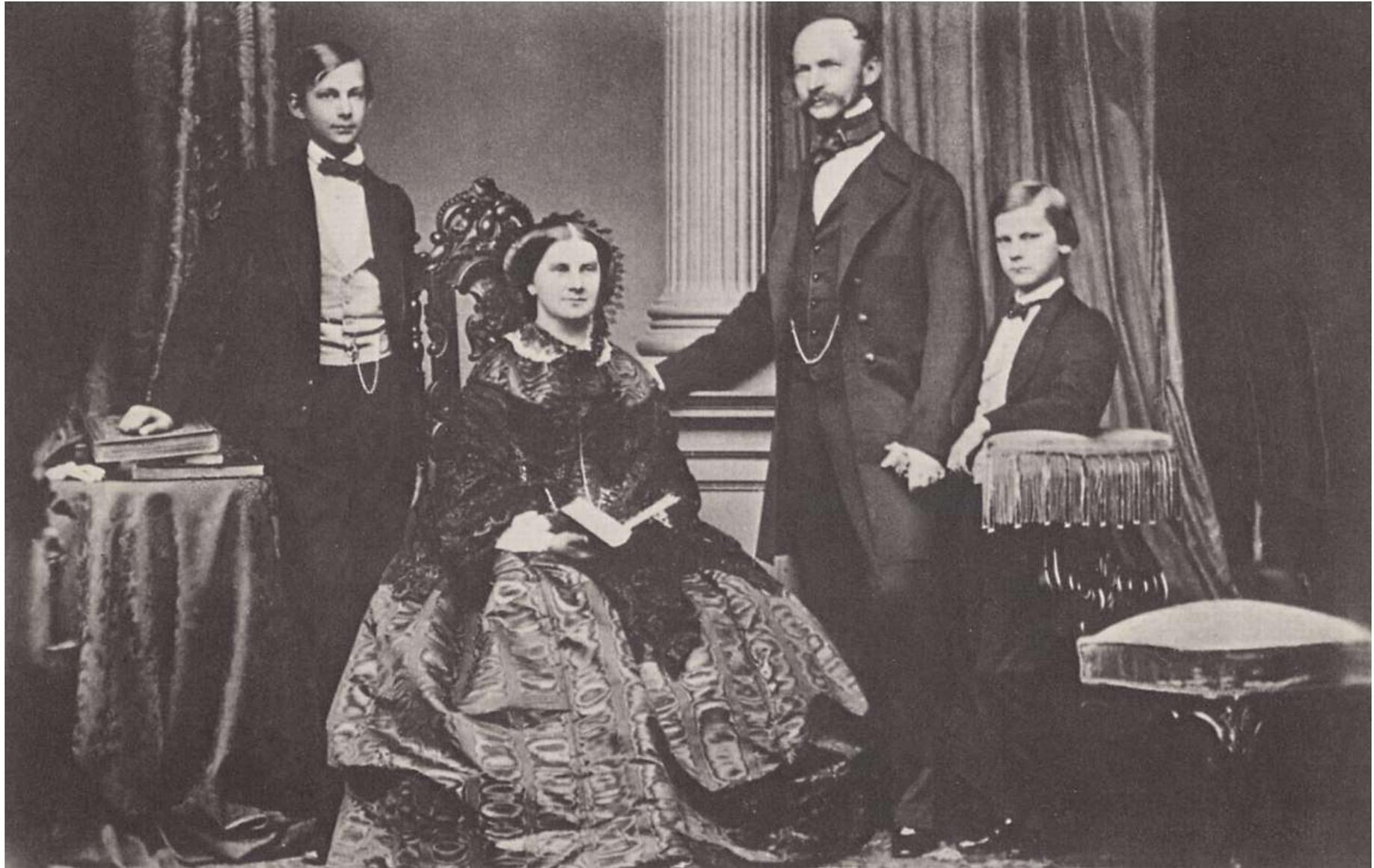
13 June 1886

A second telegram: the king and
his psychiatrist found in the lake
(on the shore)

Third telegram: *“the king and
Gudden both dead”*

Official statement released







King at 18 (1864)

Unprepared

Early symptoms of **schizophrenia**

Hallucinations

Key symptom: autism

Fear of interacting with people



Louis's adoration for Richard Wagner

Communicated with his ministers via his secretary (whom he stopped receiving altogether)

Later years: servants forbidden to look at him (communicated with them through written notes)



Increasingly cut off from the world

Wagner's greed: a national scandal

Painful and destabilizing separation

A marriage that was not to be...

Coming to terms with his homosexuality





Two wars



Bismarck and the unification of Germany:
the growing influence of Prussia in Europe

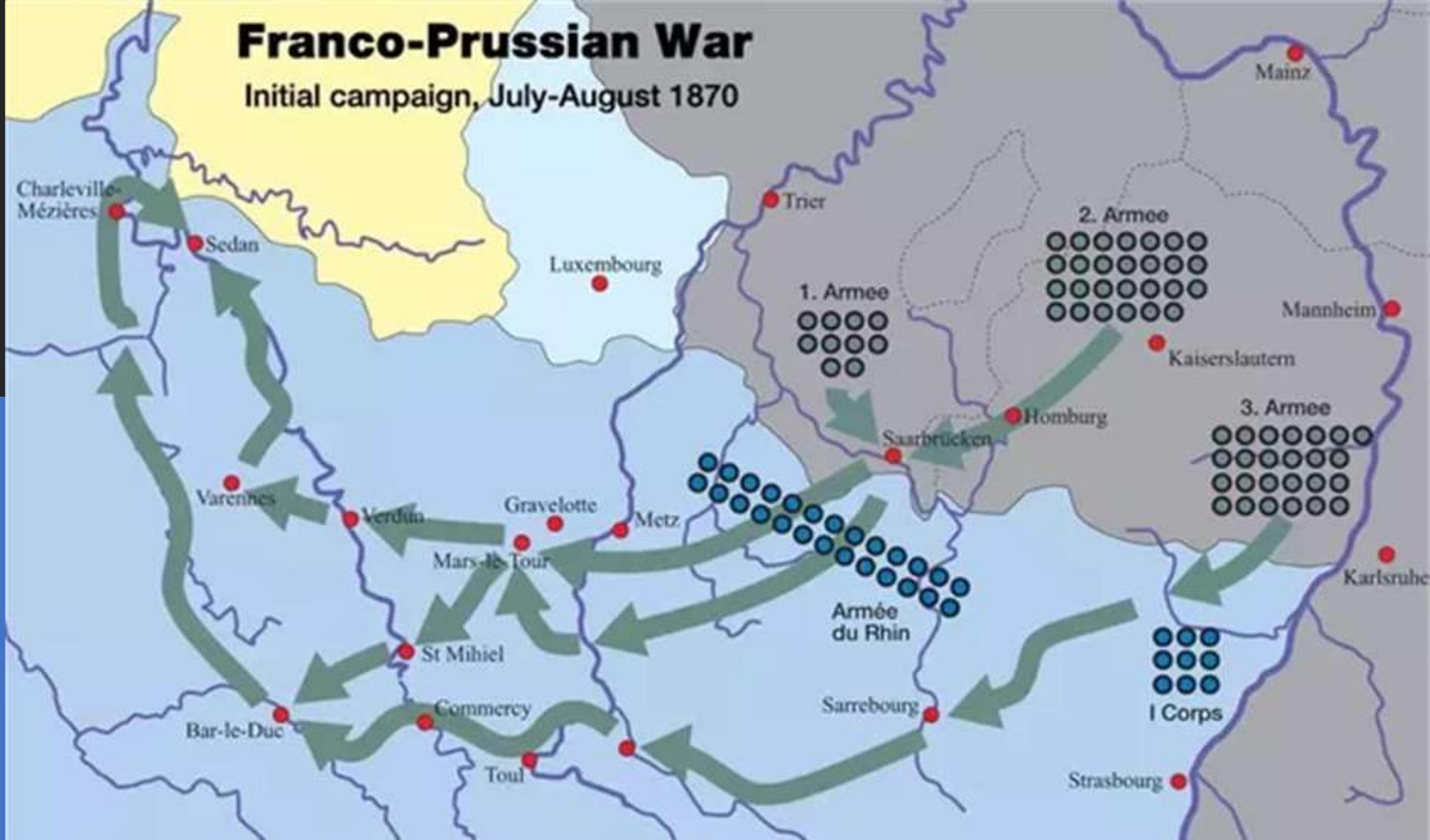


July 1866: the battle of Sadowa against Austria



Franco-Prussian War

Initial campaign, July-August 1870





Bavaria integrated to the new German Empire

Louis II never recovered from the humiliation



Linderhof



Neuschwanstein



Herrenchiemsee



A bankrupt king

Wagner

Chateaux

Gifts

Corruption

Drastic action required



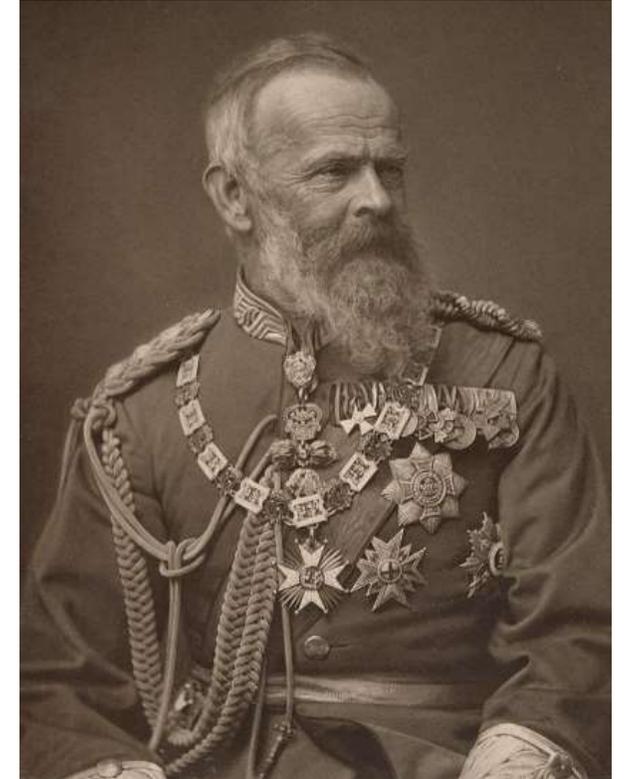
Friedrich von Lutz

Bavarian PM agreed to take action

His friend (Professor von Gudden) to
declare Louis II mad

8 June 1886: Gudden's conclusions
(without having examined the king!):
severe paranoia

Louis II *“incapable of ruling... for the
rest of his life”*





Breaking the news to
the king

Louis II at **Neuschwanstein**: no idea as to what was
coming (isolated)

Arrested on June 12 and taken to Berg

Close surveillance

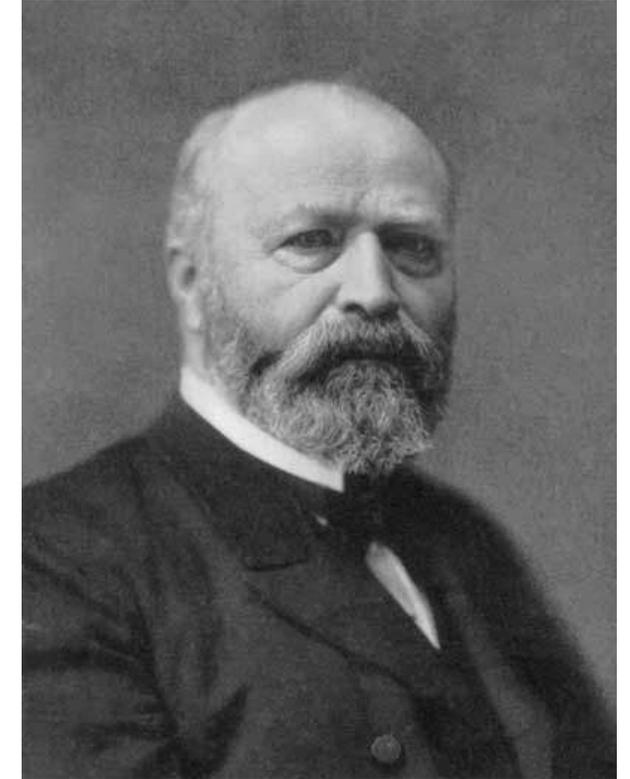
Von Gudden: a proponent of the “*no restraint*” method

Louis II calm and cooperative

A stroll in the park scheduled for the evening

Heavy dinner + alcohol

6.30pm: Louis & Von Gudden left Berg castle



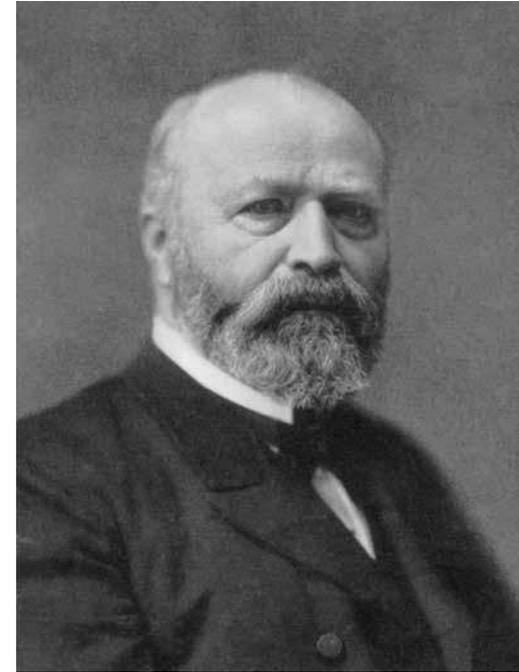
8.30pm: a search party

10.30pm: Louis's hat, umbrella and jacket found near the water

Louis' body quickly discovered in 1.20m of water

Von Gudden's body nearby (also in the water)

Midnight: both men declared dead



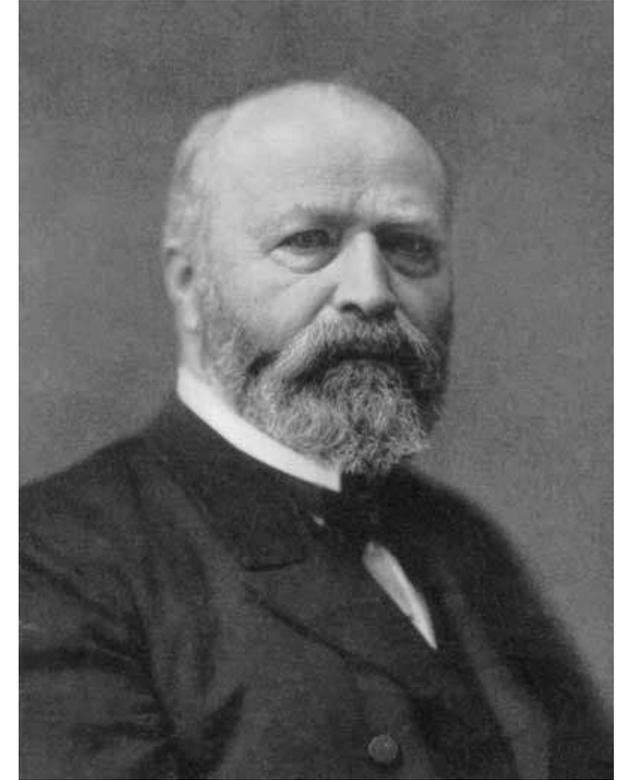
What the autopsy revealed...

No water in the lungs

Von Gudden's face showing traces of violence

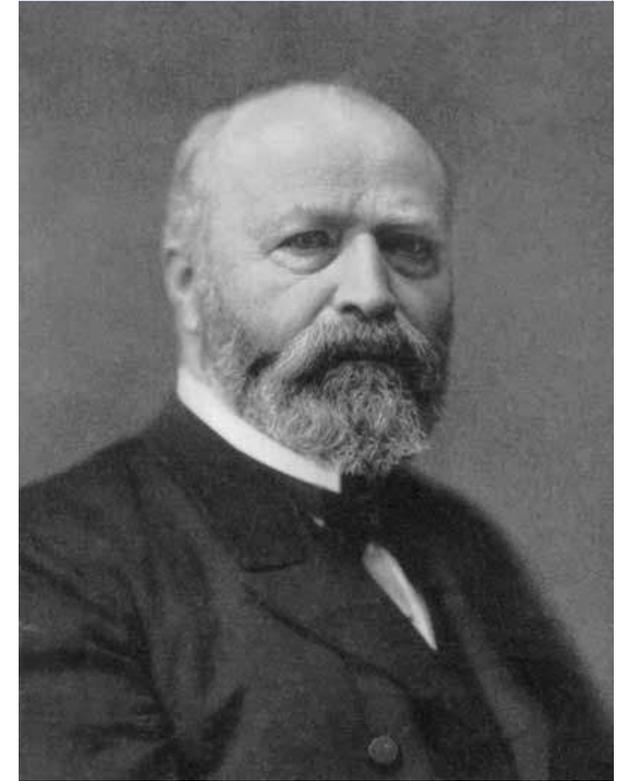
Royal watch stopped at 6.54pm

Von Gudden's watch at 8.06pm



What happened?

Multiple theories



A black and white photograph of Empress Elisabeth of Austria. She is seated on a chair, wearing a dark, long-sleeved dress with a large white collar and a long, flowing train. Her hair is styled in a high bun. In front of her, a large, fluffy dog is lying on a patterned rug. The background shows a wooden wall and a window with curtains.

Did his cousin (**Empress Elisabeth** of Austria) try to help him escape?

Elisabeth vacationing
nearby

Bavaria integrated to the
German Empire

The regency legally proclaimed

What would she have done with
Louis?



Three theses

1. Louis was assassinated
2. A police blunder (a policeman shot at the king as he was attempting to flee)

Lies and manipulations
(conspiracy theories)

Multiple contradictions



Three theses

3. Louis drowned
Suicide or accident?

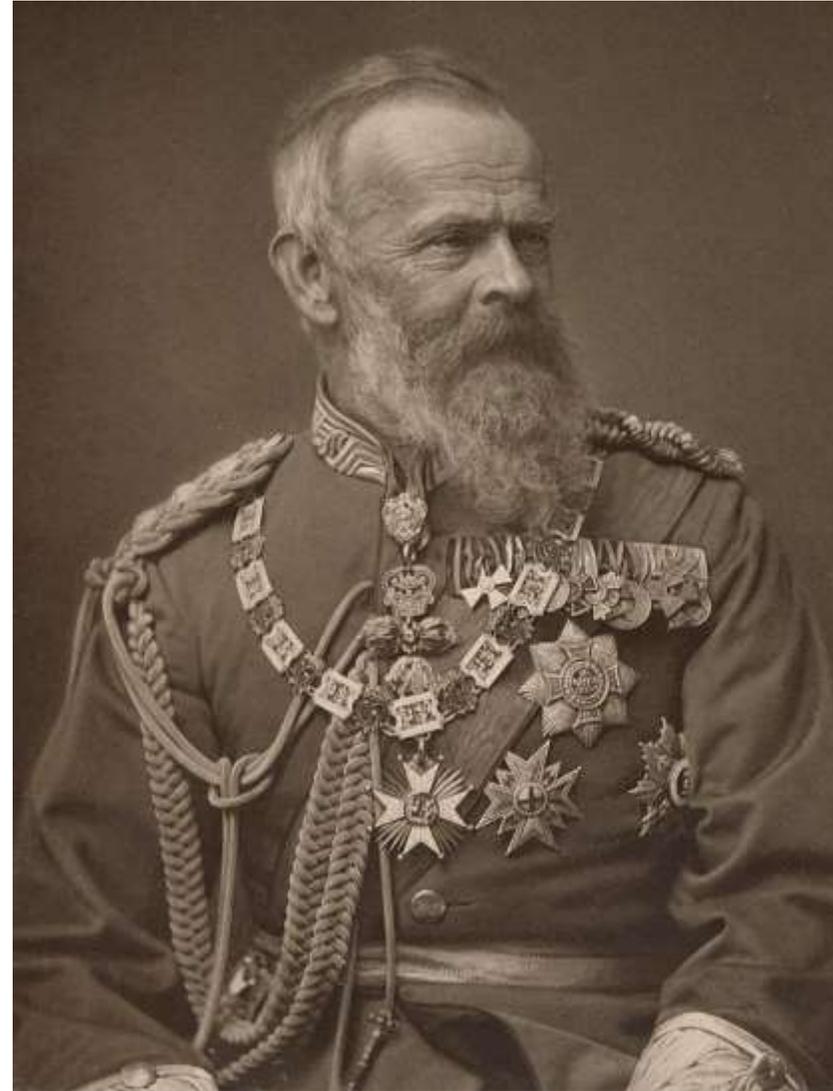


Assassination?

Who was to benefit?

Regent and his government?
German chancellor Bismarck?

What motives?



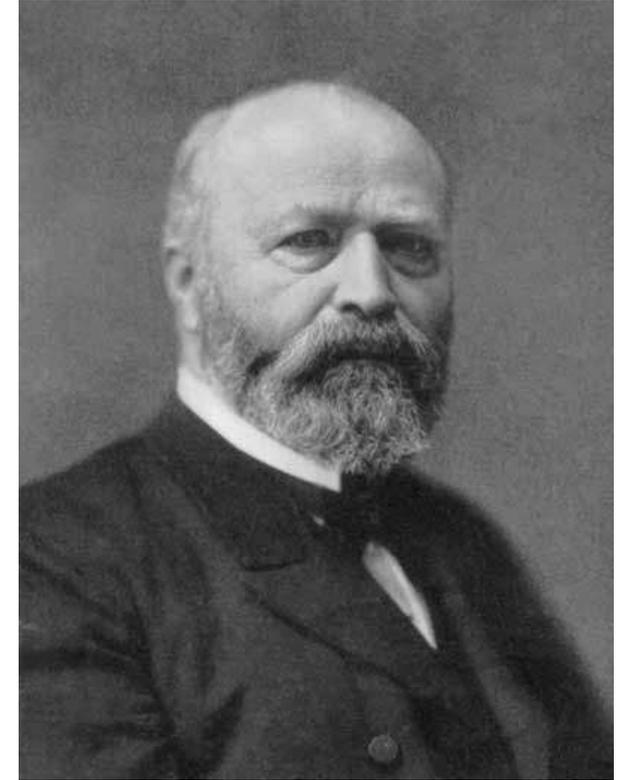
A police blunder?

But then what about von
Gudden?



Did Louis II kill von Gudden?

A few keys to solve the mystery...



Three reliable sources

Detailed account by **Dr. Franz Carl Muller**

Fisherman Jacob Lidl's account (lost) + small **diary**: Louis II was not shot at!

Autopsy report



Autopsy report

Autopsy performed in presence
of 2 government members & 12
doctors

Conclusions: no noticeable
injuries other than a few
scratches on the knees
No traces of violence



Autopsy report

Louis II **drowned** after killing his psychiatrist

But how to explain the absence of water in the lungs?

Death by **hydrocution**

Initial syncope following by cardiac arrest (sudden entry into cold water)

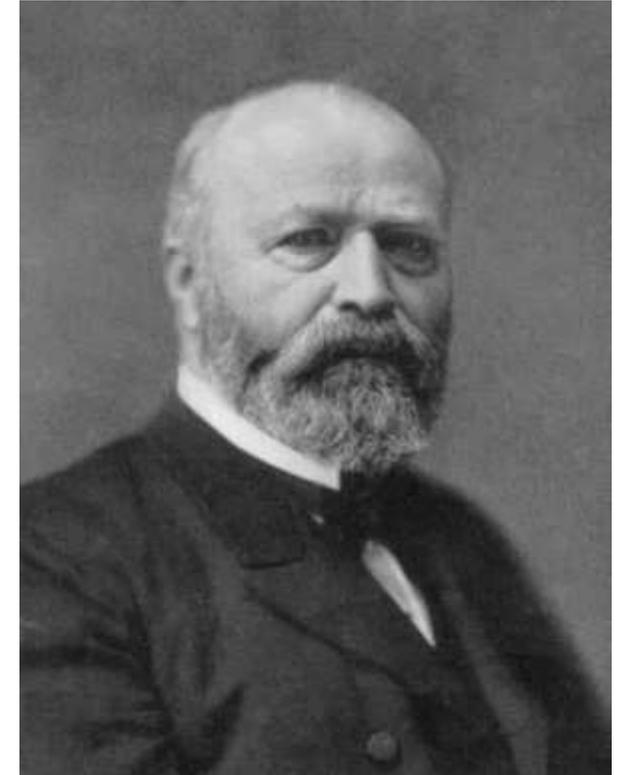


Likely same cause of death for von Gudden

Lake's temperature: 12 degrees Celsius

His body was floating

No autopsy performed



One last question...

Did Louis II try to escape or
did he commit suicide?





Archduke Rudolf and the secrets of Mayerling



30 January 1889

Hunting lodge of **Mayerling** (early morning)

Archduke Rudolph (heir to the Austrian throne) found dead

Did not die alone: the body of his young mistress Maria Vetsera (17)

What really happen?



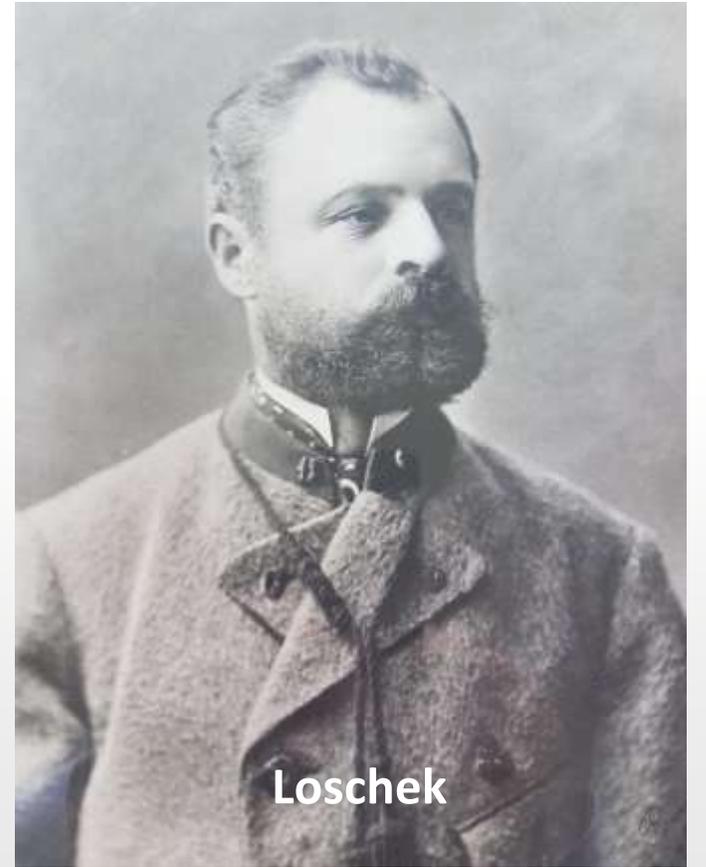
Mayerling, Altes Jagdschloß des Kronprinzen Rudolf vor 1889



Count Hoyos



**Prince Philipp of Saxe-
Coburg**



Loschek

Official version

Loschek discovered the bodies

Rudolf died from a wound in his **left**
temple

Letters written by the lovers

Maria Vetsera to her mother: *“We
are at present very curious to find
out what the other world is about.
Forgive me for what I have done; I
could not resist to love”*



Official version

Rudolf: *"I no longer have the right to live. I killed"*

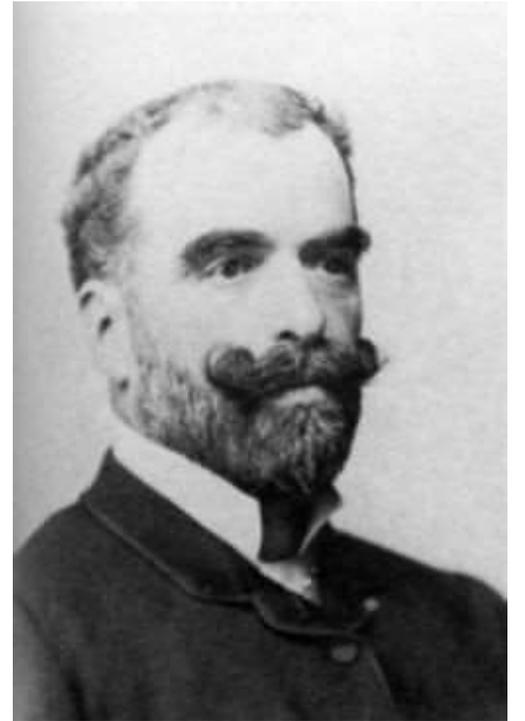


The body of Maria Vetsera
quickly removed from the
scene

Maria's uncles discreetly
summoned

Maria's mother not allowed to
see her daughter's body by the
Austrian police (reasons of
state)





The three witnesses
summoned by emperor **Franz
Joseph** the same day

Pledge to remain silent



Prince Philipp of Saxe-Coburg

His version: he never saw the bodies

Confidence to his wife: *“It is horrible, horrible what I witness over there; but I cannot, I must not say anything except that they died together”*



Official statement

No mention of Maria Vetsera
Rudolf's cause of death: a heart
attack!

Rumors: a shot heard
An accident? A suicide? A conspiracy?



1 February

A correction to the initial statement:
Rudolf committed suicide *“in an act
of madness”*

Autopsy report confirmed the suicide

Act of madness confirmed by a
cerebral exam



No, Rudolf was not mad

Why the official version?

To obtain religious funeral from the
Vatican

Franz-Joseph **telegram** to Pope Leo XIII
(never made public)



1 February

Autopsy report also indicated that Rudolf died as a result of a head injury

Head injury caused by a shot in the **right** temple (Rudolf was right-handed)

Bullet not found!



Why a bandage around the head?

Hands wearing gloves

More rumors: Crown Prince unable to accept his father's ultimatum (to end his relationship with Maria)

The truth? NO!

French ambassador: *"Many consider that there is a mystery one cannot reveal"*



Austria-Hungary in 1889:
the leading **Catholic power**
in Europe



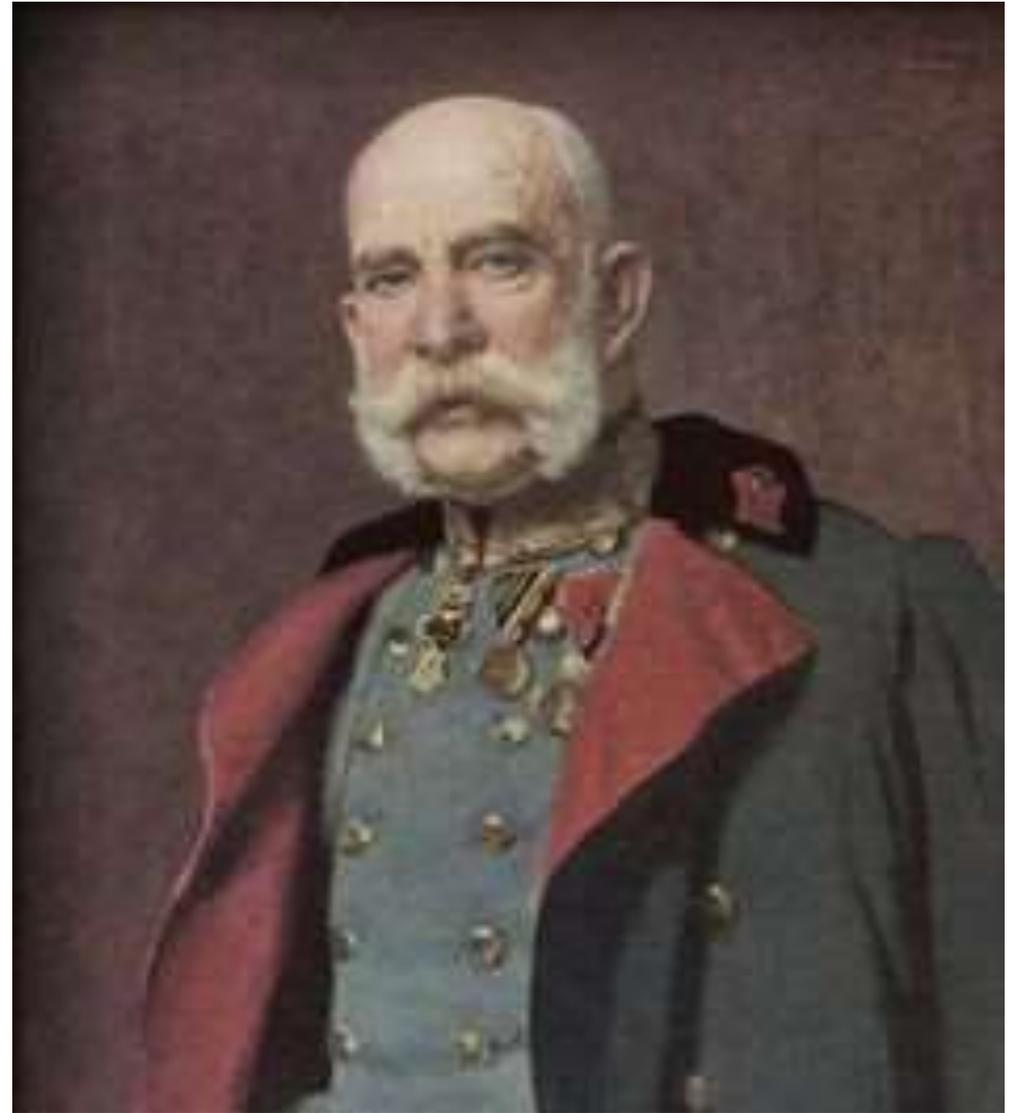
Franz-Joseph: on the throne
since **1848**

Franz-Joseph: a **unifying** figure
(multinational monarchy)

Tolerance, moderation, respectful of
minorities

Traditions, duty and... conservatism

Alliance with Germany



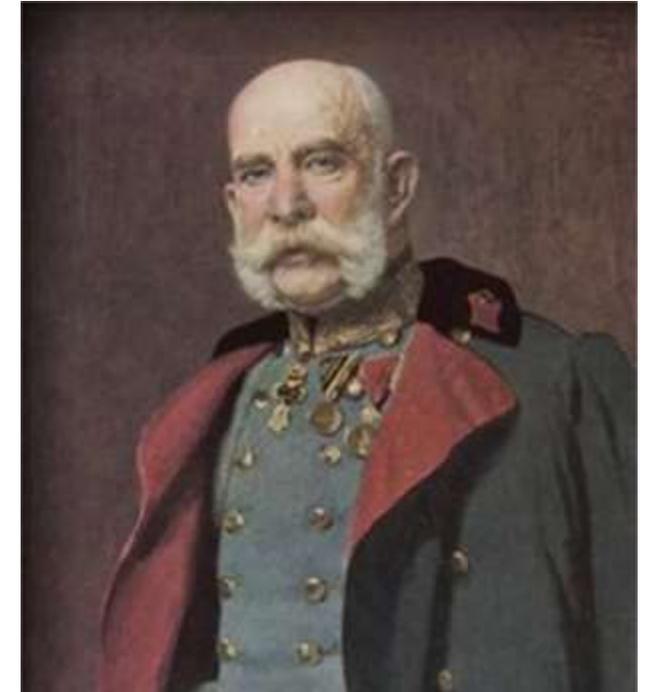


Rudolf: **opposition** to his father's policies

No to the alliance with Germany
Friend of the French Republic
A liberal prince (social issues)

Rudolf: an alternative to his father's conservatism

The tragic death of Rudolf: a major blow to liberal ideas in Europe



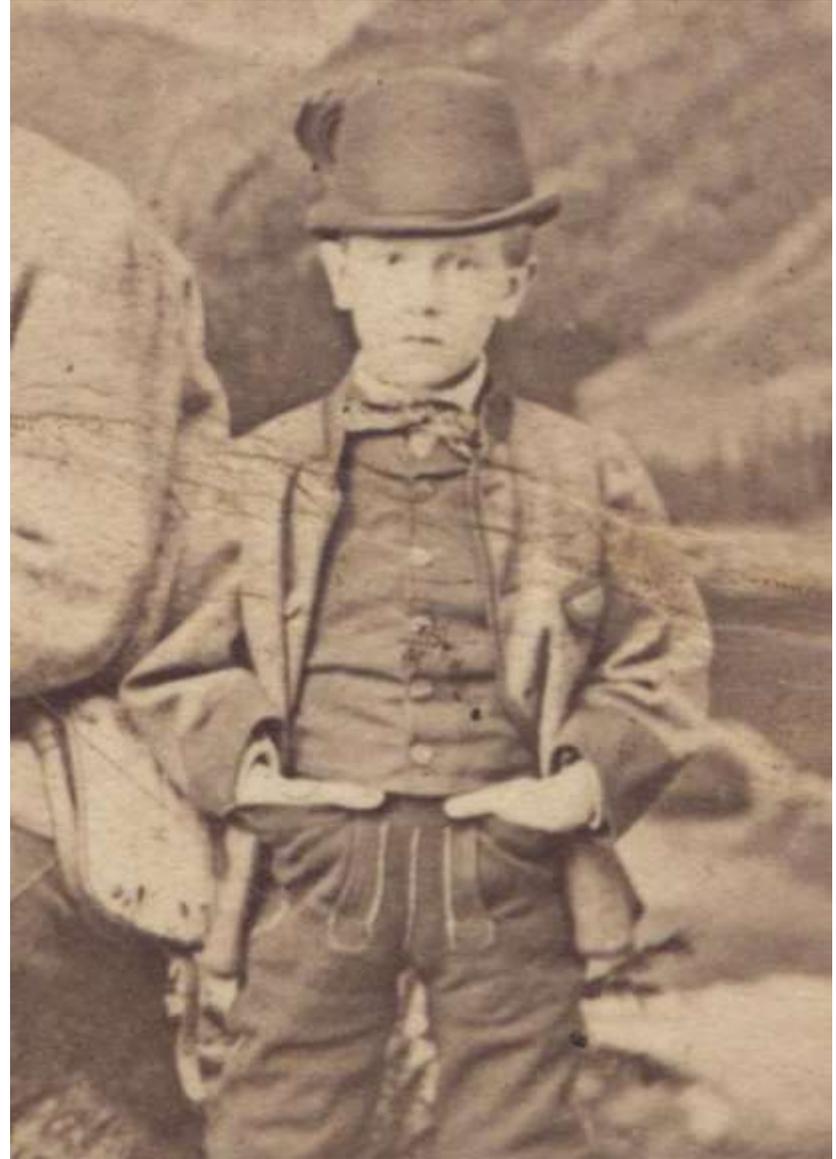




Rudolf: the **only son** of Franz-Joseph and Empress Elisabeth (Sissi)

A father always occupied and unavailable (duty first)

An absent mother unable to offer stability and security to young Rudolf

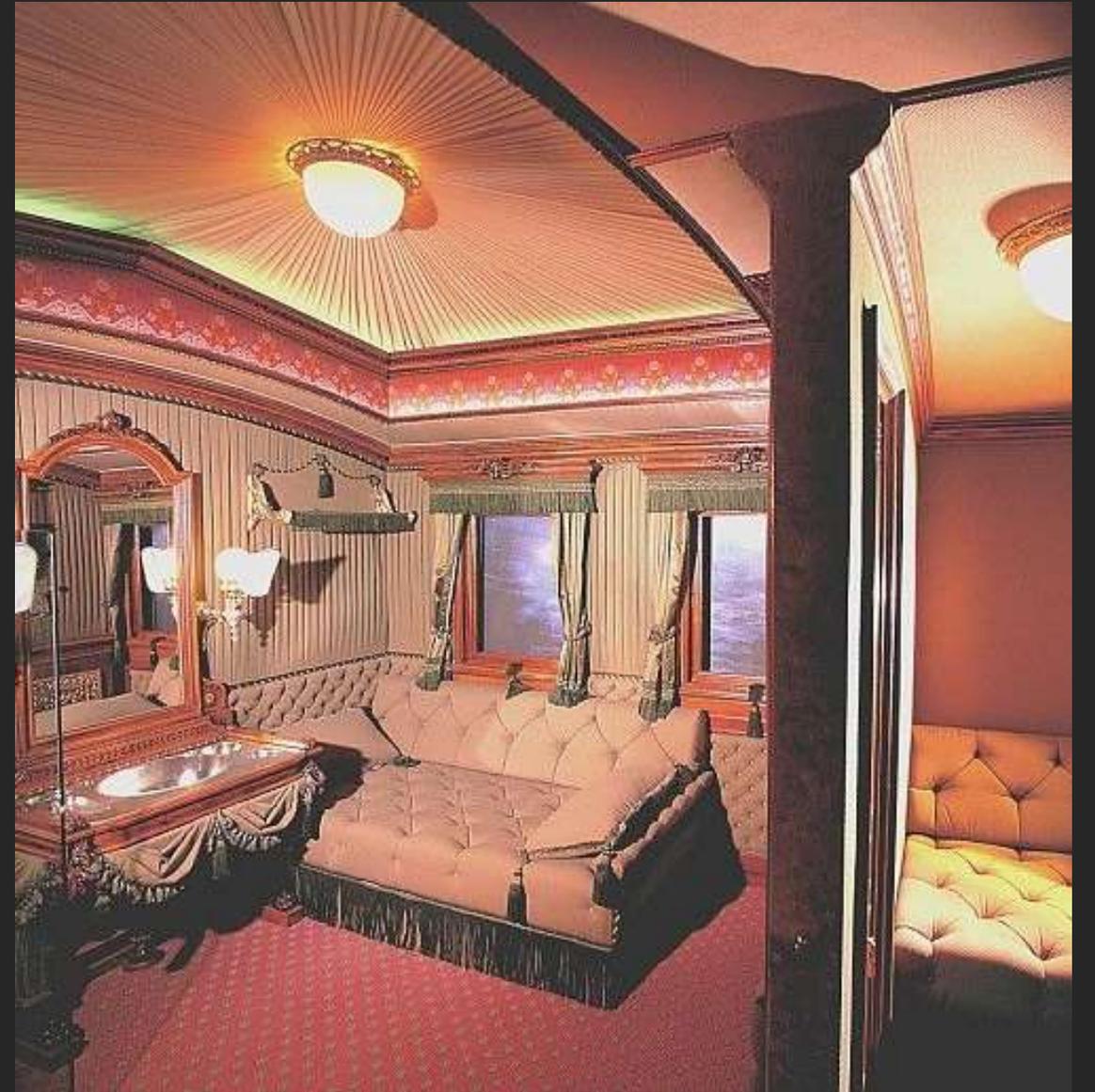






Elisabeth: the
wandering empress

Villa Achilleion (Corfu)



Rudolf: a rebellious teenager

Fierce independence

Prone to **depression**

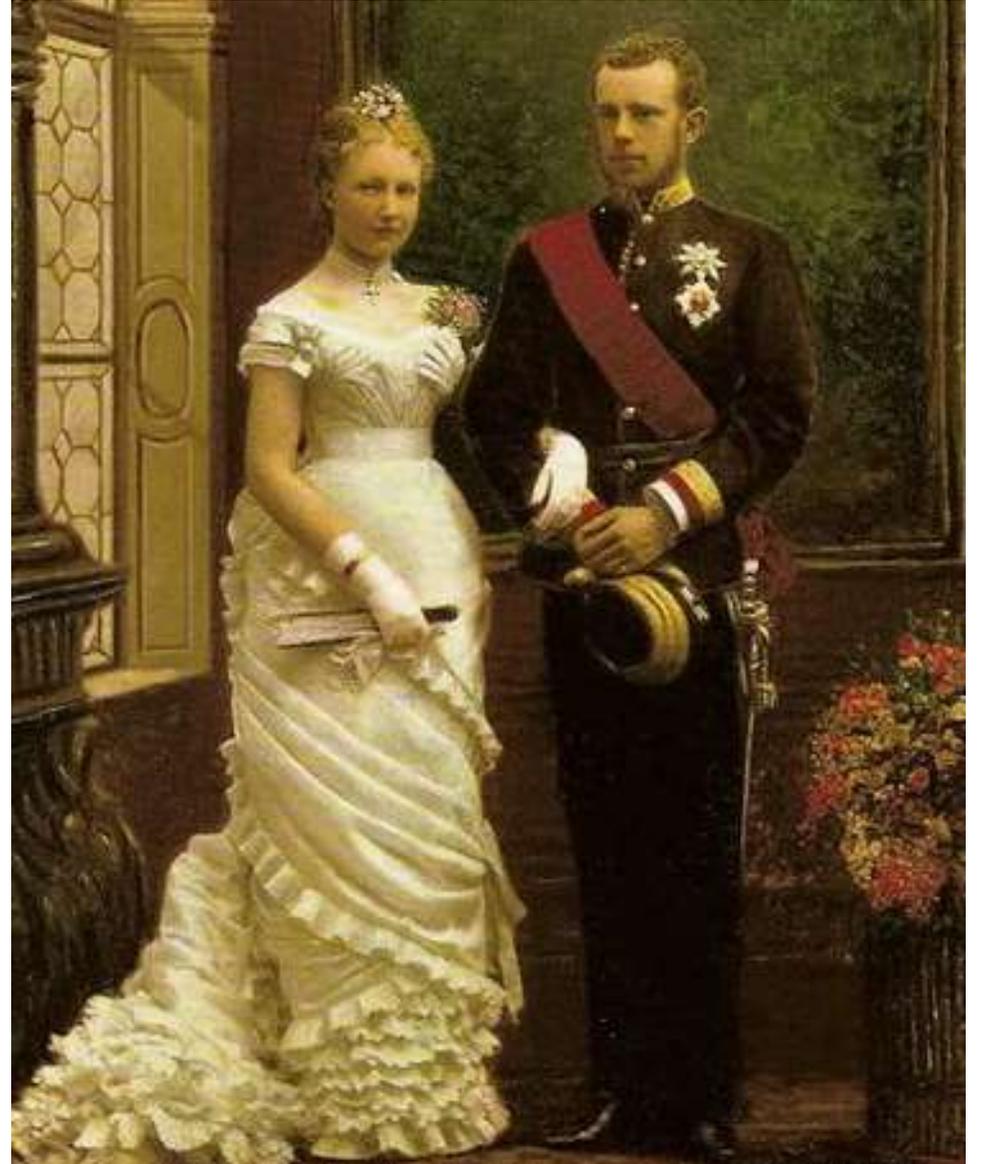


Marriage with Stephanie
of Belgium at 23

Stephanie unable to cope with
Rudolf's moods

Sterile following the birth of a
daughter

Rudolf unfaithful



Maria Vetsera: the last of a long series of mistresses

Met at a ball

Rudolf's affair with Maria initiated by **Countess Larisch** (a niece of Empress Elisabeth)





A passionate affair

Maria responsive to Rudolf self-destructive personality

13 January 1889: an engraved snuffbox as a gift

“Thank you to the happy destiny”



A request to Pope Leo XIII

An **annulment** of his marriage
with Stephanie

Marriage with Maria?

27 January: scandal at court







28 January

Rudolf summoned by his father: heated conversation
Ultimatum: to end the affair with Maria or lost of his rights to the throne

29 January: Maria Vetsera
brought to the Hofburg for
an abortion?

Maria then sent to Mayerling

**What about the archives?
Incomplete!**

Rumors, conspiracy theories...





Empress Elisabeth



Confidence to Empress Eugénie of France: Maria told
Rudolf she was pregnant

Incest? Maria and Rudolf brother & sister??

1983

Empress Zita's revelations:
Franz-Joseph told the truth to
her husband (archduke Charles)

Rudolf: the victim of a political
conspiracy





What conspiracy?

Rudolf was on the verge of revealing a conspiracy against his father (a group of French conspirators)

LES FILMS MARCEAU PRÉSENTENT

UNE PRODUCTION
CLAUDE DOLBERT

DE
CODO
CINÉMA



JEAN MARAIS • DOMINIQUE BLANCHAR

DANS UN FILM DE **JEAN DELANNOY**

Le SECRET de MAYERLING

Scénario de JACQUES REMY. Adaptation de JEAN DELANNOY et J. REMY

Dir. de la photographie
ROBERT LE FÉVRE

DIALOGUES DE **PHILIPPE HERIAT**

Musique de
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MARGUERITE JAMOIS et **JANE MARKEN** avec **SYLVIA MONTFORT** et **JACQUES DACQMINÉ**

