

## Roman Empire 161

### Chapter 161: Everyone Is Getting Ready

Franz made this decision out of necessity. The Austrian army had just crushed domestic uprisings, defeated the Kingdom of Sardinia, and even intervened in the Papal States.

Now, he had tens of thousands of battle-hardened veterans in his ranks. Anyone with some military knowledge knew that experienced soldiers were incredibly valuable.

This meant that the Austrian army was at its peak fighting condition and was on par with or even superior to any other army of the era.

If they missed this opportunity and their battle-hardened veterans retired, the fighting capabilities of the Austrian army would gradually decline.

No matter how strict the training, there's nothing as effective as having soldiers gain experience on the battlefield. After several victories, they became proud and fierce warriors.

With such a significant advantage, there was no way Franz could give it up. Moreover, the Austrian military's old generals were aging, and if they didn't seize this opportunity, they might not even have a chance to make use of their remaining strength.

For instance, Marshal Radetzky was already in his eighties, and even if he remained healthy, Franz wouldn't feel comfortable sending him to the frontlines to command troops.

At this moment, these veterans could still contribute in strategic planning, but in another decade or so, Franz would have to accept the reality of Austrian military legends fading away.

This is a cycle, and no country can maintain its peak indefinitely. If strategic planning is not completed at the right time, the risks increase significantly in the future.

It's not that there are no successors within the Austrian military, but the problem is that great military leaders are usually forged on the battlefield. Without proving themselves in actual combat, it's hard to know whether a general possesses real capabilities or is just a paper tiger.

In situations where the strength of leaders is uncertain, the best course of action is to engage in minor conflicts, testing and training the next generation of leaders, ensuring they gain real battlefield experience.

This approach also strengthens military advantage through national power and prevents the enemy from exploiting weaknesses.

This principle was demonstrated during the world wars. The Germans had some of the world's most outstanding military leaders and a large number of renowned generals, but they still ended up losing both world wars.

It was clear that Austria couldn't possess that kind of advantage until it consolidated control over Southern Germany. Relying on national strength might allow them to overpower Prussia, but dreaming of defeating the French was far-fetched.

The end result was that Austria's military budget increased once again in 1851, rising from the originally planned 73,957,200 guilders to 112 million guilders.

With such expenditures, if there was no war, the Austrian government will have to give up if it persists for three to five years.

All these increased military expenditures are for the army. The navy shouldn't expect anything. Whether it's westward expansion into the German territories or southward into the Balkan Peninsula, there won't be any opportunities for them to show off.

The direct consequence of increased military spending is that Austria's active duty forces have been expanded to 512,000 troops. At the same time, reserve forces are also being organized and trained among the civilian population. The goal this time is not to increase by 200,000 annually, but to increase the reserves by 350,000 in 1851.

If combined with the existing 586,000 reserve troops, in theory there would be 936,000 reserve troops. In reality this is impossible, as 20-30 thousand reservists age out and leave the reserves each year.

These reserve forces cannot be trained in just one year. Based on past experience, reserve forces need over 3 years of training before they can match up with new recruits who have enlisted for 1 year.

Of course, there definitely needs to be veterans leading them, otherwise the training time would be much longer.

The young and middle-aged men participating in reserve force training naturally receive preferential treatment, such as exemption from agricultural taxes on 3 hectares of land, and access to military pension benefits in case of accidents during training...

Austria's sudden military expansion actions are of course not random. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also notified the Russians that since they are allies, it was important to maintain open channels of communication on such matters.

Saint Petersburg

After receiving Austria's notification, Nicholas I realized that his own strategic intentions had been exposed. This was inevitable, as the movements in war preparations are so massive, how could they be kept confidential?

This is not a myth. From military expansion and war preparations, to finally launching the war, hundreds of thousands or even millions of people are involved, so how could it be kept secret?

Even if the Russian government used the Far East Strategy as a cover, it would be of no use. The Trans-Siberian Railway has not yet been built. If they sent hundreds of thousands of troops to the Far East, they would probably starve to death halfway there.

By just opening a map, one would know that the only place worth mobilizing hundreds of thousands of Russian troops to make trouble is the Ottoman Empire.

Nicholas I asked in puzzlement: "Didn't the Austrian government say they would recuperate and could not start a war for 10 years? How could they not restrain themselves so quickly?"

Foreign Minister Karl Nesselrode replied: "Your Majesty, Austria has already emerged from civil war, and even profited from suppressing the rebels and confiscating large amounts of property.

Our preliminary judgment is that Austria intends to take advantage of the situation when we attack the Ottoman Empire, though it's still uncertain whether they specifically covet Southern Germany or the Balkan Peninsula."

Nesselrode kept his words brief, as he did not dare mention that the Austrian government profited by raiding nobles' homes. In case the Tsar became interested, he would be in big trouble.

The Russian Empire also had an aristocratic system, even more conservative than Austria's. Therefore, the propaganda in Russia was that the Austrian government raided rebellious capitalists, while the involvement of local nobles in the rebellion was glossed over.

Tsar Nicholas I indifferently said: "This is good news. With Austria making a move, they can help share some of the pressure on us, and keep the British occupied over there."

Nicholas I had the arrogance to say this, because the stability in Europe over the past decades was not just due to the constraints of the Vienna System, but more so due to the joint efforts of European countries to contain Russia's expansionism.

Even with their confidence, they did not believe they could take on the whole of Europe alone, so the Russian government was quite docile during the Vienna System era.

After so many years, the Russians could no longer restrain themselves. Now Austria has abandoned its previous position and agreed to their expansion into the Ottoman Empire.

With the signing of the Austro-Russian Secret Treaty, the last shackle restraining their expansionism has been removed. The Russian government can no longer hold back.

In allying with Austria, Russia did not expect to gain military assistance from them. The Tsar has no lack of soldiers, Austria just needs to provide some assistance.

This was Russia's positioning of Austria. The alliance was made like this - in the east, Russia and Austria would jointly contain the Kingdom of Prussia, in the south deal with the Ottoman Empire, and they could fight separately.

Neither Austria nor Russia had any qualms about bullying the Ottoman Empire, and did not see any need to form a joint army.

In fact, due to geographical locations, it was not convenient for the two sides to organize a joint army. This also involved the issue of dividing the spoils after the war.

Do not think a secret treaty can settle everything. It is still more reliable to conquer the spoils of war by oneself. Otherwise if the situation on the battlefield changes and they fail to take the territories originally agreed upon, would the previous agreement still be valid?

If one side conquered an area alone, then there can be no dispute - whoever conquered it, it belongs to them. But if an area was jointly captured, with both sides exerting effort, there would be disputes during the division of spoils.

To avoid such situations, both sides made an agreement to fight according to their own delineated spheres of influence. If one side overstepped the boundary, their efforts would be in vain.

Contrary to later propaganda, the Russian government did not harbor ambitions of unifying the European continent. Not only the Russians lacked this ambition, even Napoleon did not intend to

unify the entire European continent. What they wanted was to establish a consolidated hegemonic position over continental Europe.

It's not that they didn't want to unify the European continent, but that it was simply impossible to achieve. Apart from Ancient Rome, the European continent was never unified again.

Even the overpowered Napoleon only expanded his territory a bit, then propped up pro-French regimes, without unifying the entire European continent. Nicholas I naturally would not think Russia had the ability to unify the continent.

This was also the prerequisite for the Austro-Russian alliance to be established. If the Russian government wanted to unify the European continent, historically when the Hungarian Revolution erupted, Russia would not have helped Austria suppress the rebellion, but would have directly crushed Austria instead.

.....

Russia didn't care and was indifferent to Austria's reaction, but some people could not restrain themselves.

The ones who understand you best are not necessarily friends, more often they are your enemies. The Ottoman Empire was undoubtedly tragic, as they had generations of enmity with both Russia and Austria.

Seeing the reactions of the two neighbors, the Ottoman government was already in a panic. Abdulmejid I dared to swear on his \*\*\* that these two neighbors were definitely harboring malicious intentions.

There was no other way, anyone in his position would think the same. After all, they had been arch-enemies for hundreds of years, who didn't understand the other? Russia and Austria were traditional allies, and traditional enemies of the Ottomans, so what's the issue with them joining hands against the Ottomans?

Forget about the two powers together, even in a one-on-one match, Abdulmejid I felt he could not withstand it.

Do not think that just because reforms were carried out, the Ottoman Empire had become a European power. One knows one's own circumstances best - the Ottoman Empire's core problems were never truly resolved.

On the surface they were also a modernized country, but in reality due to heavy internal contradictions, the Ottoman Empire's strength was only superficial.

Of course, the two enemies of the Ottomans were also not that powerful in reality. Whether Russia or Austria, their outward display of strength was greater than their actual capabilities.

They were all typical cases of paper tigers. It's just that the internal contradictions of Russia and Austria were suppressed better, giving them an edge in this area over the Ottoman Empire.

Regrettably, even in terms of strength on the surface, the Ottoman Empire was much weaker. Compared to most European minor states, the Ottomans could be considered a major power, but when compared to any Great Power, they were a "pushover".

Abdulmejid I asked with concern: "What do Britain and France say?"

The Minister of Foreign Affairs' face darkened. With such a vast distance, and no telegraph connection, how could he know what was happening thousands of miles away?

However, Abdulmejid I was not one to be trifled with either. Compared to other European countries, the Ottoman Empire's ministers had the least job security - offending the Sultan meant losing one's head.

"Your Majesty, there has been no news yet. But previously, when we notified the British that Russia was preparing for war, the British government already replied that should another Russo-Turkish war erupt, they would stand on our side." The Foreign Minister quickly responded.

This news slightly eased Abdulmejid I's nervousness, but the worries were still there.

Even with British support, they still could not withstand it! Facing two enemies alone, the Ottoman Empire at its peak would have no issue, but now they really could not endure it.

"How are our preparations?" Abdulmejid I continued asking.

The Minister of War quickly replied: "Your Majesty, as of now, we have already expanded the army to 530,000 troops, and expect to reach 800,000 within the next three months.

Once war breaks out, we can also mobilize another 300,000 troops, sufficient to deal with any emergencies on any front."

If they really had so many regular troops, then the Ottoman Empire would not have been crushed by Russia in the Crimean War either.

As a declining former empire, the Ottomans had no shortage of problems like corruption, embezzlement, skimming supplies, profiteering from military provisions...

## Chapter 162: Strategic Deception

### London

Since the start of the European arms race, the British government had expressed close attention and kept a firm grasp on every country's movements.

Foreign Secretary Palmerston spoke eloquently: "From the intelligence we have gathered, Austria's military expansion this time should be aimed at the Ottoman Empire. Our plan to divert disaster eastwards has succeeded.

However, some changes have now occurred. The Austrian government may have reached a compromise with the Russians. In the short term, it will not be possible to provoke a Russo-Austrian conflict.

But with more conflicting interests, even the best relationships will crumble. From the moment Austria sets foot in the Balkans, the collapse of the Austro-Russian alliance is destined..."

Prime Minister John Russell frowned and questioned: "Mr. Palmerston, I believe your judgment that the Austro-Russian alliance will eventually collapse is correct. However, now is definitely not the time.

Before their common enemy - the Ottoman Empire - falls, Russia and Austria can still cooperate intimately.

The seeds of hatred were sown hundreds of years ago. Neither the Russians nor the Austrians ever wished for anything but the downfall of the Ottoman Empire.

Apart from hatred, there are even more enticing interests. The Russians covet the Black Sea Straits, while the Austrians covet the Danube River Basin.

The Ottoman Empire is too weak, and has been targeted by these two bandits. Yet we cannot let them fall at this time.

Austria's designs on the Danube River Basin matter little, but once the Black Sea Straits fall into Russian hands, we stand to lose greatly.

I do not believe that just Constantinople alone can satisfy the Russian government's appetite. After being pent up for so many years, their desires once unleashed will surely be earth-shattering.

Once the Ottoman Empire falls, at most Austria will annex half the Balkans, while Russia will occupy all the lands along the Black Sea coast.

By then, not only will our interests in the Ottoman Empire be unsafe, even our interests in the Mediterranean will be greatly affected, and South Africa and India will also face threats from Russia."

This was the crux of the issue - the British needed the Ottoman Empire to block the Russians. No one wanted the Russians as a neighbor, not even John Bull.

If the Russians swallowed up the Ottoman Empire and grasped this central position spanning Asia, Europe and Africa, the situation would spiral completely out of control.

Palmerston explained with a gloomy face: "Prime Minister, the situation is not yet so dire. No European country wishes to see the Russians expand, and this is where opportunity lies.

Whether Austria and Russia have reached a consensus, and where each side's bottom line is, are still unknowns.

But one thing is certain - the Austrians also do not wish to see the Russians expand. As old neighbors, their sense of threat from Russia is probably even more acute.

Therefore, in the upcoming great war, they will most likely just take advantage of the situation, then watch the tigers fight from the mountain top - the Ottoman Empire being beaten with one hit does them no good.

The Ottoman Empire's strength is not weak. As long as they can prioritize defending against the Russian attack, with our support they should be able to hold out for a long period.

During this time, we can unite France, Prussia, Spain and other European countries to jointly intervene in this war."

This explanation was not satisfactory. Judging from the current situation, the British government's previous diplomatic policies have failed.

There was nothing wrong with directing Austria towards the Balkans, but the problem is the unreasonable Russian Bear is preparing to violently upset the situation!

Looking at the time Russia has spent on war preparations, everyone can see this war will absolutely not be small skirmishes. Add in opportunistic Austria, if there is no external intervention, the odds of the Ottoman Empire surviving this are infinitesimally small.

The British had long known a Russo-Turkish war was going to erupt. Not only they knew, European countries were also mentally prepared.

Battles between Russia and the Ottomans had been held many times, everyone understood the pattern - basically every generation, the two sides would have a match.

These battles were not always all-out wars. Often they were just local wars - any excuse could kick things off, and once they fought enough they'd stop.

This could be seen from the preparation time - generally, the more thorough the preparations, the more intense the war would be.

Starting in the second half of 1849, the Russians had been preparing. With still no signs of an outbreak even until now, the scale of this war can be imagined.

In this context, directing Austria into the Balkans naturally intensified the chaos. A Russo-Austrian confrontation would be fine, but a joint Russo-Austrian effort - even God could not save the Ottoman Empire then.

Palmerston naturally had a headache. If he had known this situation would arise, he wouldn't have bothered with the Kingdom of Sardinia, and let Austria sink into the Italian quagmire, unable to extricate itself.

The situation now would be much better - an Austria without the ability to expand outwards would surely be at the forefront of opposing Russian expansion.

This was an inevitable outcome. If there was no benefit for him, Franz would also oppose further Russian expansion.

Not out of jealousy, but because national strategy demanded it. The principle of ebb and flow was clear to all - a stronger Russia meant a relatively weaker Austria.

John Russell pondered and said: "The Ministry of Foreign Affairs can start taking action now. In case Russia and Austria jointly act against the Ottoman Empire, they won't be able to hold out for long."

At this time, the British were not prepared to jump into the fray barehanded. With their pocket-sized army, being deployed would mean being swallowed up by war before long.

The key was that their heavyweight partner France was not yet in place. Napoleon III had not yet returned, with the parliament and president still locked in combat.

The severely internally divided French government carried no weight internationally. It would be enormously difficult for the French Foreign Ministry to fulfill any promises made.

.....

Paris

For many, global turmoil was a disaster, but for Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, it was purely an opportunity.

The British needed a stable French government to play a role in suppressing Russian ambitions in the upcoming Russo-Turkish war.

At this time, apart from supporting him, was there a better choice?

They could hardly support the parliamentarians, right? Their efficiency was in no way comparable to that of a dictator.

Plans for restoration had already been born among the Bonapartists, lacking only a suitable occasion to launch it.

As for Austria's current military buildup and preparations for war, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte believed, just like the British, that Austria's target was the Balkans.

To mislead other countries strategically, the Austrian government did not just make empty claims.

Getting spies caught in the Balkans by the Ottomans was just a small trick. Massing troops on the Austrian-Ottoman border was routine.

Austrian public opinion also brought up old grievances against the Ottoman Empire. Balkan war plans were brought out and discussed every now and then by the military.

If one did not know Austria was preparing vengeance against the Ottomans, then they could not be Austrian.

Various strategic materials were also continuously being transported and stored in Transylvania, seemingly lacking only a pretext for Austria to dispatch troops into the Danube River Basin.

One must fool oneself first before fooling others - Franz still understood this principle. If even their own people believed it, what was there to fear about the enemy not believing?

Apart from the Austrian cabinet members, only a few top generals in the military knew the government's true intentions. The vast majority of Austrians believed the government was going to war with the Ottoman Empire.

Many official media sources even knowledgeably analyzed that a Russo-Turkish war was about to erupt, and Austria just had to pick up the spoils, without having to pay too great a price, and could occupy the Danube River Basin.

With this series of actions, France and Britain naturally believed Austria was going to make a move on the Balkan Peninsula.

Meanwhile, the westward plan was completely obscured. The only action was probably the sudden acceleration of domestic railway construction.

Even the railways Bavaria was overseeing construction received assistance from many enthusiastic members of society, for the benefit of their business.

Many people urged the Royal Bavarian State Railways to accelerate construction, so as not to delay their money-making.

Austria's strategic deception plan not only fooled Britain and France, but also confused Prussia. After determining Austria's target was the Balkans, Frederick William IV could only gaze enviously, then go about his business.



There was no other option - even if they envied greatly, Prussia could not butt in on Russia and Austria's business with the Ottoman Empire.

Geopolitics decided the Ottoman Empire's interests were unrelated to the Kingdom of Prussia. Since that was so, let the Austrians expand their military. Anyway, without interests of their own involved, Prussia naturally had no need to follow suit.

Not only were several Great Powers duped, even the Swiss who had been anxious for a long time breathed a sigh of relief, assured that Austria was not targeting them. The life and death of the Ottomans was none of their concern.

With the media coverage, it was common knowledge that Russia and Austria were preparing to make trouble for the Ottoman Empire.

None of their business, detached from it all. The European populace universally turned into spectators, just waiting for the show to start.

### Chapter 163: Development

Amid the turmoil, 1850 passed quietly and silently. What seems like an ordinary year has had an extremely profound impact on Austria.

Large amounts of foreign capital poured into Austria, driving the development of the domestic economy. All kinds of factories sprouted up like mushrooms after a rain.

The most direct impact of economic growth was the increase in government fiscal revenue. Although many industries were given tax reductions and exemptions, the government still obtained a large amount of tax revenue in the upstream and downstream links.

In 1850, industrial and commercial tax revenue increased by 8% compared to 1849, which was over 4 million guilders. This number may not seem big, but Franz was very satisfied.

This was just the beginning. When the tax exemption period ends, it will be the surge period for tax revenue growth.

The benefits brought by industrial and commercial development were obviously more than this tiny amount. The supporting industrial chains of enterprises also developed accordingly.

This was reflected in raw material production, product sales, transportation, catering and entertainment, and other industries. It could all be seen in finance.

In 1850, Austria's economic growth was 18.7%, and the government's fiscal tax revenue increased by 9.4%.

This number was not high. Any country that opens its market will usher in rapid economic growth, with examples of soaring growth of 30-40%.

In the current time period in Europe, Austria's economic growth was also leading the pack.

Doubtlessly, the dividends from economic growth were directly invested in the military, and could not be further invested in production.

Of course, Franz would not dare to invest in production either. If it weren't for the communication and transportation conditions that restricted this era, Austria's domestic economic growth would have been even faster.

Rapid economic growth is not necessarily a good thing for a country. What is most important is sustainable development. Short-term economic explosions, if the market does not keep up, then overcapacity will be inevitable.

Overcapacity means that large quantities of goods cannot be sold and will rot in warehouses. Capital-rich companies can still cut capacity and transform, while weak companies will naturally only go bankrupt.

Bankruptcies, increased unemployment, and continuous declines in market purchasing power will cause feedback, forcing capitalists to further cut capacity and layoffs, starting a vicious cycle and triggering an economic crisis.

To some extent, this arms race also extended the time of Austria's rapid economic growth. The military itself is a consumer group, and military expansion is expanding the consumer market.

The fastest development in Austria now is railways. Construction started in 1849, and by now hundreds of sections have started construction.

The annual increase in railway mileage was 265 kilometers. Don't get this wrong, this is not new construction, but railways that started construction a few years ago just happened to be completed in 1850.

For the railways that started construction in 1849, there is still no trace of them now. This is different from highways. Highway construction can be built and paved section by section, while railways are different. Unless a section is completed, even if the tracks are laid, trains cannot run on them.

By 1852, it is estimated that some sections in the plains will be open to the public. Whether they will be put into operation in advance is a question that only the railway companies themselves know.

The Austrian government will not care about this minor issue. These private railway operations are self-sustaining, and have nothing to do with the government.

In order to encourage the construction of railways, the Austrian government also announced a tax exemption policy. From the initial planning of railway projects, no railway operating taxes will be levied for the next ten years.

If you want to make money, build the roads early and operate them. Delaying the construction period is not good for your wallet.

Taking advantage of the booming railway environment, the Austrian government packaged a large number of railway lines and gave them to private railway companies.

The relocation costs can be paid by the government, on the condition that they must start construction within one year and complete it within ten years after obtaining the railway construction rights.

According to what Franz knew, the Austrian government has to this date sold more than 40,000 kilometers of railway lines through coaxing and deceiving.

Heaven knows how many unfinished projects will be left in the end. Anyway, the government will not lose money. Even if it takes over unfinished projects later, it will still be cheaper than starting from scratch.

These issues are also clear to the railway companies, but the hot market will deceive people's eyes, and Austria's economic growth also deceived many people.

Coupled with the push from financial consortiums, it further encouraged investors' ambitions. Many speculators thought that when it reached the highest point, they would sell off the stocks and make a fortune.

In order to drive up stock prices, of course a great report needs to be made. If a railway company only has a few hundred kilometers of railway, no matter how you boast, it will not attract many people.

If there are thousands or even tens of thousands of kilometers of railways, then there is no need to boast at all. People will project a blueprint for you.

Making money from railways is just one aspect. After controlling the railway network in certain areas, even investing in other industries can use the transportation network owned to squeeze out peers. A conceptual business empire would emerge.

In the most popular years of railways in Europe, it was possible for four or five railways operated by different companies to appear between two cities, competing directly in the market.

The Austrian government still had integrity, at least it did not authorize the same section to different railway companies, which made many people see the opportunity.

Is there any business in the world that makes more money than "monopoly"? Even low-value railway lines, once a market monopoly is formed, will bring in a huge profit!

Franz would not admit that he used this mentality of capitalists to attract investment in railways. Monopoly operations are acceptable, as this avoids the waste of resources caused by market competition. As long as it does not affect the development of the domestic economy, Franz does not mind the emergence of monopoly enterprises.

If high freight rates affect domestic economic development, then the rule makers can also modify the rules, such as: price management, nationalization of railways...

The Austrian government would never tell investors about these troublesome topics, otherwise how could the British consortiums be fooled?

Americans have done it before, and Franz doesn't mind copying it once. Never mind how many things there are, first fool them into building the railways before talking about business. When the railways are built and have no utilization value, then only then can the issue of a falling out be dealt with.

In Franz's opinion, the public infrastructure projects in Hong Kong in his past life, with the highest profit not exceeding 15%, was a good policy.

If the Austrian government replicated it, the public would probably be very supportive. As for railway companies, 15% profit can still allow them to live prosperously.

When investors can recover their construction costs is another question that is not known. Anyway, previous investors have made money, and subsequent bottom fishers have always been unlucky.

The development of railways naturally stimulated the steel industry, and steel companies have expanded production capacity one after another, preparing to get a share in the upcoming feast.

In order to effectively integrate resources and enhance corporate competitiveness, in March 1850, the Austrian Ministry of Industry ordered the merger of 7 state-owned steel companies into the Austrian Steel Group.

Austria's first steel giant with an annual production of 12,000 tons of crude steel and 184,000 tons of pig iron was born. After some window dressing, it became the world's first steel group with an annual output of 200,000 tons of steel.

Whether it is really the world's first steel group remains to be verified, but it is an indisputable fact that half of Austria's steel production capacity is in this group.

In this era, there were only a handful of countries in the world with steel production exceeding 100,000 tons, with only the British exceeding one million tons.

If it weren't for everyone staying at this level, Austria's media would not dare to boast about this. Overall, journalists of this era still had integrity.

After the merger, these steel mills began to specialize, making full use of their geographical advantages to integrate production capacity.

Simply put, according to the quality of iron ore, those suitable for steelmaking are all used for steelmaking, those suitable for ironmaking are used for ironmaking, and no longer engage in mixed production models.

The most important thing is still to bring together the core technologies of several companies and apply them to industrial production. At the same time, a smelting technology research and development department was established to promote technological innovation.

According to the plan, the production capacity of the Austrian Steel Group will be increased to 240,000 tons in 1851 and 320,000 tons in 1852. It will exceed 450,000 tons in 1853...

These plans are not random, but completely based on market needs. How can they grab orders without expanding production capacity?

Austria's railway network construction is a big fat meat, and related companies are eager to take a bite.

According to the calculation that 1 meter of railway consumes 60 kg of steel, 1 kilometer consumes 60,000 kg of steel. That is to say, Austria's railway network plan alone requires more than 2 million tons of steel.

If steel companies don't expand production capacity again, their brains must be flooded.

To support steel companies, the Austrian government has decided not to take profits from this newly established group in the next five years, and has also injected 10 million guilders for technological innovation.

It's not just steel companies. Many related industries are desperately expanding production capacity. Franz is also quietly making a fortune.

Don't underestimate these seemingly insignificant gravel and sand, people who have done projects know that these insignificant things have very high profits.

It is preliminarily estimated that every kilometer of railway alone consumes more than 100,000 tons of sand and gravel aggregates just for concrete pouring, and the top thick gravel layer requires astronomical stone quantities.

Any commodity, when traded in large enough quantities, would naturally have higher profits. These insignificant little things actually make profit no less than the steel mills that produce rails.

Only most of the time, they are scattered among countless small businesses, so they look inconspicuous. Franz just took advantage of foreknowledge to make advance arrangements and engage in monopolistic practices.

Of course, he would not admit to monopolistic practices. If someone doesn't believe it, they can just check the contracts between the railway companies and the Austrian Mining Group, which can prove that a monopoly does indeed exist.

But those in the know will not say, and the media will not report it.

The external statement is: The Austrian Mining Group is just an agent. These mines are distributed under the names of dozens of companies. In order to avoid vicious competition, everyone joined together to form a group to negotiate with railway companies.

That's right, the truth was made out to be like this. In order to avoid being pressed for prices by railway companies, everyone joined together. Everyone can see that the final transaction prices were almost the same as market prices.

If it was a monopoly, prices would definitely have risen sharply. Since there was no significant price increase, it was not a monopoly.

What it means to make money while lying down, Franz finally felt it in 1850. Just this inconspicuous little business brought him 1.23 million guilders in annual profit.

This was just the beginning. With the advancement of railway construction, he could make money while lying down for a long period of time in the future.

Unfortunately, after the railways are built, these gravel mines in the wild would have no sales channels, and there is no hope of making a big profit again until the highway network is built. From the current situation, there will be no expectations for the next 30-40 years.

#### Chapter 164: Money Makes Things Easier (BONUS)

Salzburg, a hotel. M?rtl, a senior executive of the Austrian Federal Railways, is holding a mobilization meeting for the technical staff.

"Listen up, the board has made a decision. In the next year, we need to connect the railway to Ardning."

There aren't many people who speak politely on construction sites. M?rtl didn't beat around the bush and directly stated the task.

He was only administratively responsible for management, and not a technician by training. He had been in this project team for over a year and was very clear about the progress of the project.

The progress requirement from the headquarters now would be very difficult to complete. But as a qualified manager, he knew he couldn't shrink back when facing difficulties.

The board had made the decision. No matter how big the difficulties, he had to at least try to complete it. This was a matter of attitude.

If there was no actual action made and he just reported difficulties and incompleteness to the top, what value did he provide?

Private companies were very practical. If he provided no value, he could be fired. In this matter, his value was less than that of the technical staff below him.

Technical staff were treasures in this era, indispensable talents no matter which project they were assigned to. Administrative managers were different, there were plenty inside the railway company.

Salvador, the chief engineer of the project, bluntly said: "Mr. M?rtl, with our current construction progress, it would be good if we could complete this task in two years. That was the planned construction period. It is simply impossible to complete it ahead of schedule!"

In the railway construction of this section, M?rtl was nominally responsible for overall management, but technically, Salvador had the final say.

M?rtl couldn't control Salvador at all, or rather, didn't dare interfere recklessly. He was smart enough to know that he didn't understand, and that random commands could easily cause problems.

It was normal for the technical leader to object when the construction task was suddenly increased. But M?rtl was prepared and explained with a smile:

"Mr. Salvador, there are always solutions when people try to think of them. Tell me anything you lack and I will be responsible for coordinating with the headquarters, but the work must be completed on schedule.

In the days to come, everyone will have to work a little harder and sacrifice rest days. Rest assured, the company will not shortchange you.

I assure everyone here that as long as you complete the task ahead of time, the bonuses you receive will definitely not be less than your current wages.

No, just completing it on time will do. I will apply to the headquarters for you. If it is lower than this number, I will pay out of my own pocket to make up the difference!"

M?rtl's performance succeeded. Many problems in this world could be solved with money, and accelerating construction was no exception.

The two-year construction task had to be completed in one year, and two years of wages issued was no problem. Everyone did the same amount of work, and the company's labor cost budget did not increase. Now was the time of labor shortage, so M?rtl was fully confident he could get the money.

Raising wages could appease most of the technical staff, but Salvador still shook his head.

"Mr. M?rtl, no one doubts your integrity. The problem now is that the time is too short. We have been working from both ends towards the middle.

To further increase the progress, we would have to split the current section into two and start dividing again from the middle section. This would not only require more manpower, but also more mechanical equipment. Our technical staff is also insufficient, and the management difficulty will greatly increase.”

M?rtl thought for a moment and said, “These issues can be overcome. I’m sure you also know that in order to accelerate the construction of railways, the state has enacted laws that within ten years from the approval of a railway project, no taxes will be collected for railway operations.

We started construction in 1849 and are expected to fully complete in 1854. This means our tax-free operation time is only 5 years.

The Austrian Federal Railways is a listed company. The head office has to consider the opinions of shareholders. Now everyone hopes the railway can be put into operation sooner.

If we can complete the roadbed construction of 5 sections by 1851, then we can lay tracks and install related equipment in 1852 to trial run in 1853.

Being able to put into operation one year in advance will surely bring huge profits to the company, and everyone will be richly rewarded.”

Profit was only one factor. More importantly, the Austrian government required railway companies to accelerate construction of the main railway lines, for the reason that Austria was preparing to go to war with the Ottoman Empire and wanted to use the railways to transport logistics.

This reason could not be rejected. Moreover, the government did provide compensation, the ten years of tax exemption came from this.

As for fighting with the Ottoman Empire, why the railway connecting the Kingdom of Bavaria also had to accelerate construction was no longer the point.

The point was that His Majesty Emperor Franz himself spoke, and since he said the construction of main railway lines nationwide should be accelerated, then it had to be all the main lines nationwide.

Could they go to the busy Emperor to negotiate conditions for this matter?

Finally, after research, the management of the railway company decided to concentrate on accelerating the construction of the main railway lines and suspend the branch lines that were about to start construction.

.....

In this day and age, railway technicians were in high demand. To retain talent, the Austrian Federal Railways Company also offered some stock options as bonuses to these technicians.

Although the amount each person got was not much, the effect was very good. With their own shares inside, everyone wanted the railway to open ahead of schedule.

Salvador thought for a moment and said, “I have no objection to the company’s decision, but Mr. M?rtl, you have to help me solve these problems.

Also, the number of casualties in our construction process is too high now. It would be best if you could restrain those managers and not go overboard.”

The so-called managers were of course the thugs hired by the railway company. These free laborers were in reality “convict laborers”, cheap but not so convenient to manage.

Each wanted to muddle through, and would slow down if no one watched them, and some even tried to run away. If not for the army guarding them, riots might even happen.

The army sent people to guard them but would not send people to manage them. In order to speed up construction, the managers hired by the railway company naturally used whips and sticks to control them.

This was unbearable to Salvador, who still had some morals left, though he was no saint. He just mentioned it in passing. He also deeply hated these rioters.

M?rtl smiled and said, “No problem. I’ll report right away on the lack of laborers. There is still machinery and equipment in the warehouses. I’ll send people to pick them up directly.

For the lack of technical staff, I will report it to the headquarters. But Mr. Salvador, there is a shortage of technical staff everywhere now. The head office is headhunting people all over Europe. Don’t get your hopes up too high.”

That’s right. There were also technical staff from European countries in Austria’s railway construction teams. For strategic security needs, these people could not be chief designers.

This was required by Franz, mainly because when the British exported railway standards overseas, they added a lot of private interests, and many countries were cheated.

Now all Austrian railway companies use the same approach. When technical staff were insufficient, engineers would bring apprentices to fill the spots.

After all, it was constructed according to drawings. As long as they learned on site for a year or two, they could handle simple technical work. Experienced engineers would give guidance and assign tasks every day, then inspect and accept the work.

Basically, when a section of railway was completed, these apprentices had graduated. That was how railway engineers in this era came about. Graduates from school were the minority.

Seeing his motivated subordinates, Salvador nodded with a wry smile. As chief engineer, his job was even heavier with the additional construction lines opened.

The means of transportation in this era was horse riding. People who couldn’t ride couldn’t do this job. Having to rush back and forth 180 kilometers every few days, this kind of life was not easy.

On the contrary, his subordinates had it easier, following the main force, without needing to run back and forth every few days.

This was the drawback of insufficient engineering staff. If all these tasks were handed over to his subordinates, he wouldn’t feel assured. Basically whenever there were technical difficulties, Salvador had to personally take charge.

In the early 19th century, railway construction in Europe had just begun. By 1850, the total railway mileage in the entire European continent that was in operation would not exceed 15,000 kilometers.

Experienced engineers were naturally rare talents. With this circumstance, when railway construction in Austria started, all the major railway companies started a war for talent.



For Salvador, this was a painful but happy time. More work meant higher pay.

For example, in addition to serving as chief technical engineer, he was also responsible for key technical guidance at the two ends of construction, so he could take two more salaries.

Now with two more construction sites, if the company did not send someone to help share his burden, it also meant he could add another two salaries, totaling five salaries.

If the salary wasn't so good, he would have quit long ago. How could he accept such day and night work otherwise?

Such good days did not come often. With the bonus promised by M<sup>ortl</sup>, once the task was completed, Salvador would have received ten years worth of salary in one year.

The likes of Salvador were still a minority in the end. The railway company could not keep not sending engineers to help. After all, one person's energy was limited. He could barely cope in the early stages, but would be overwhelmed in the later stages of construction.

But it was common for one person to complete the work of two or three people in railway construction.

The capitalists were not philanthropists. They could not always be so generous. They were irreplaceable now, so naturally they were treated preferentially. Once they could be replaced, their good days would be over.

Salvador was very clear that once railway construction was completed, they had to prepare to leave.

The railway companies did not need so many experienced engineers during operation. The capitalists would naturally choose cheaper ordinary technicians to maintain the railways afterwards.

Later, when the number of engineers exceeded demand, even if they did the work of two people, they could still only get one salary in the end.

The law of supply and demand also applied in the human resource market. When capitalists lacked people, they paid high salaries, and naturally wanted to make up for it when they had enough people.

Overall, they had caught up with the good times and made money. After this, there would be no such thing.

Salvador didn't know how long these good days would last. If possible, he hoped these days could last a little longer.

He even had the idea to find a job in the Ministry of Railways. Although the treatment was not as good, it was stable and decent.

Night fell and Salvador lay in bed, lit a cigarette, took a deep puff, and couldn't fall asleep for a long time.

## Chapter 165: Monopoly System for Tobacco and Alcohol

After entering 1851, the situation in the Near East became increasingly tense. Russia and Austria eyed the Ottoman Empire covetously, and the Ottoman government invited Britain and France to mediate the conflict.

Putting aside the price the Ottoman Empire paid, the problem now was that the French government was busy with internal fighting, and the British alone could not deter Russia and Austria.

In the eyes of the British, the core of this Near Eastern crisis lay with the Russians. As long as they do not cause trouble, it would be easy to persuade Austria.

Under this judgment, British-Russian negotiations began. Undoubtedly, the British did not believe the problem could be solved at the negotiating table. The main purpose of initiating these talks was to buy time.

The British government had already colluded with Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. To deal with the increasingly severe Near Eastern crisis, the British decided to support Napoleon III's rise to power.

The British wanted to buy time, and the Russians were not ready either, so negotiations began under these circumstances.

Vienna

The Austrian government was discussing the British-Russian negotiations, which affects Austria's next strategic step. If the British persuaded the Russian Bear, the westward strategy would fail.

Metternich analyzed: "The conflicts between Britain and Russia have long existed, and the conflicts of interest between the two sides are very serious. From the Near East to the Far East, there are focal points of conflicts between the two countries everywhere.

Unless one side can make major concessions, conflict between the two countries is inevitable.

The current Near Eastern crisis is mainly caused by the Russians' core strategy. They have prepared for so long already, it would be as difficult as ascending to heaven for them to stop now."

After the decline of the Ottoman Empire, a voice appeared within Russia to swallow up this old empire and inherit all its legacy.

Because their appetite was too big, Russia's plan was naturally opposed by all countries. Although they did not manage to swallow up the empire, they still got enough benefits in the last two Russo-Turkish wars.

Perhaps feeling it was too difficult to swallow the Ottoman Empire in one go, the Russians also formulated two smaller goals to accomplish this plan in stages.

First, control the Black Sea, move south to the Balkans, and occupy the two straits;

Second, firmly grasp the right to protect Orthodox Christians within the Ottoman Empire, and then encroach on the Ottoman Empire.

The core of the first stage strategic plan was to occupy the two straits. Only by controlling this golden waterway could the strategic security of the Russian Empire be assured, without worrying about being blockaded by the Ottoman Empire.

This was also the first step for Russia to move towards the ocean, the core link in its maritime strategy.

However, this most critical first step had already been cut off by the British in the 1841 London Straits Convention.

The fruits of the Russians' half a century struggle went down the drain. The Russian government would no longer let go of the right to protect Orthodox Christians. Historically, religious contradictions triggered the Crimean War.

Now Russia and Austria are allied, and the diplomatic situation of European powers jointly suppressing Russia has changed. With France not in the picture, if they didn't take this opportunity to occupy the straits, the Russians would never have this chance again.

The Holy Land crisis happened to provide the Russians with a full excuse for war. The reason they hadn't launched it yet was because they were preparing for war.

Did the Ottoman government not know this? Clearly impossible. As old enemies, the Ottoman government had never relaxed its vigilance against the Russians.

The problem was that even if they knew everything, apart from passively defending, they could only hope for international mediation.

Taking the initiative to attack did not exist. If the Russians were not ready for war, neither were the Ottomans.

On paper, their army numbers were not small and looked mighty. But they knew themselves that the seemingly powerful Ottoman army was actually just a facade.

Whether fighting the Russians or Austrians, they feared both. This could not be covered up by saying the government was corrupt and incompetent. The disparity in national power could not be made up overnight.

Prime Minister Felix thought for a moment and said, "It is inevitable for the Russians to make a move. What we are unsure of now is whether they will make a move in the second half of this year or drag it out until 1852.

Not only is when the outbreak of the war uncertain, how long this inevitably large-scale war will last is also unknown.

What is most worrying is whether Britain and France will participate in the war, and how much strength they will commit if they do participate.

Until these issues are determined, any actions we take will be risky. Now we have to find ways to keep the risks within a certain range."

This was the difference between big countries and small countries. Small countries didn't have to consider the aftermath when formulating strategies. Winning could be easily muddled through, losing meant instant doom.

Austria was different. As long as they didn't act blindly and recklessly, even if they failed once, they would still have a second chance. So preemptive risk control was essential.

Marshal Radetzky shook his head and said, "If we want to control risks, then after the Russo-Turkish war breaks out, we can only wait for the war to escalate and not make a move before the French intervene. What if the French don't participate? Do we have to give up this plan?"

Prime Minister Felix affirmatively said, "It depends on the determination of the British. If they want to, they will definitely find a way to pull the French into the fray."

This conclusion was the same as Franz's. After all, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte rose to power relying on the British!

Historically, he himself had a severe Anglophobia, and often acquiesced to the British on many occasions. During his reign, one could hardly see the French government butt heads with the British.

Franz thought for a moment and said, "The key to the success of this strategy lies in secrecy, catching all countries by surprise, creating a *fait accompli*, and forcing Britain and France to recognize it.

As long as the plan is not exposed, we hold the initiative, and when and whether to take action is decided by us.

After the Russo-Turkish war breaks out, whether Britain and France will participate in the war is beyond our control, but the Ottomans must be more anxious.

Pulling Britain and France into the war is their only choice to get out of the crisis. If necessary, we can let the Ottoman Empire know that our goal is only the Danube River Basin."

Deceiving the Ottomans, Franz had no psychological pressure at all. If he told them that the Austrian government had no interest in them this time, the Ottoman government probably wouldn't dare believe it even with the sweetest words.

It was better to expose some false information and let the Ottomans believe it to be true. Compared to the Russians who wanted to swallow them up, Austria's appetite was undoubtedly much smaller.

Once they distinguished the main and secondary enemy, the Ottoman government's choices were few. Being bitten by Austria was nothing but a scratch, but being bitten by the Russians would mean death or being crippled.

.....

Minister of Finance Karl suggested: "Your Majesty, in order to deal with the upcoming war, the Ministry of Finance suggests implementing a tobacco and alcohol monopoly system to raise more war funds."

Austria had war funds to unify Southern Germany, but whether it was enough to face intervention by various countries was uncertain.

The Austrian Empire was huge, and had long passed the stage of adventurism. Franz also disliked taking risks and would not recklessly start a war with just a few months of war funds.

So from the beginning, the strategic plan took into account the intervention of the powers, with the worst case being fighting Britain, France and Prussia at the same time.

Of course, this was based on Russia and Austria being allied. To fight them all alone, Franz was not so reckless as to do that, and the Austrian government was not so confident either.

In war, the side with greater numbers always had some advantage, especially when two-front, or even three-front combat could occur.

With greater numbers, military spending would naturally be higher as well. Raising as much war funds as possible was very necessary.

The most direct approach was to levy war taxes, but Franz would not do so unless war had already broken out. He was a principled person.

“How much more income can be generated after implementing the tobacco and alcohol monopoly system?” Franz asked concernedly.

After thinking about it, Karl replied: “Based on the current domestic economic development, after implementing the tobacco and alcohol monopoly system, at least 35 million guilders or more in additional income can be generated every year.”

On top of existing fiscal revenues, being able to generate an additional 35 million guilders in income showed the huge profits of tobacco and alcohol.

“Prime Minister, what do you think?” Franz asked.

35 million was enough to impress Franz. He had already agreed internally. Now asking the Prime Minister’s opinion was to have the cabinet be responsible for implementing this plan.

Prime Minister Felix answered without hesitation: “Your Majesty, special circumstances call for special measures. The government will work on ‘convincing’ the capitalists. I’m sure they will understand.”

Clearly, everyone’s bottom line was the same. In order to increase fiscal revenue by 35 million guilders, everyone did not mind sacrificing some people’s interests.

Whether the capitalists whose interests would be damaged could think it through was no longer important. Anyway, they had no political voice.

Historically, what the Austrian government implemented was a salt and tobacco monopoly. But the honorable Franz had already included salt and grain in the list of necessities of life in the previous social reform bill.

To allow the people to fill their stomachs and not revolt, the prices of these necessities were strictly controlled by the government.

With prices unable to be raised, including salt in the monopoly would not increase revenue much either. The Ministry of Finance naturally chose alcohol, another item with higher profits.

These two goods were not necessities. It was fine even if prices were a little higher. Smoking and drinking less was also good for health.

This was Franz’s true thinking. Although he smoked and drank himself, it did not prevent him from guiding the nation and nurturing the correct habits.

Franz thought for a moment and said, “Since this is the case, the government should legislate and implement the tobacco and alcohol monopoly as soon as possible.”

“Yes, Your Majesty!” Prime Minister Felix replied.

Chapter 166: France Enters the Scene (BONUS)

On March 21, 1851, the Russian government appointed Prince Alexander Menshikov as envoy to Constantinople to negotiate with the Ottoman government.

After hearing this news, the diplomatic community was in an uproar. Prince Alexander Menshikov had served as the Governor-General of Finland, commanded wars against Persia and the Ottomans, served as the Commander of the Black Sea Fleet, and Minister of the Navy.

As a core figure of the Russian government, Prince Alexander Menshikov being appointed as envoy shows how much importance the Russians placed on this negotiation.

This kind of importance seems to be sending a signal to the outside world that Russia wants to resolve the issue through negotiation.

However, considering that Prince Menshikov was part of the war faction, and had commanded the previous Russo-Turkish war, this also seems like a show of force to the Ottomans.

Before going to Constantinople, Prince Menshikov first went to Bessarabia to inspect the troops stationed there, then went to Sevastopol to inspect the Black Sea Fleet.

Russia even conducted a landing exercise, targeting Constantinople. It was only on March 12 after the exercise was completed that Menshikov boarded the warship “Thor” to Constantinople.

Menshikov was not a qualified diplomat. He despised diplomacy and etiquette himself. As a stalwart member of the war faction, he opposed all compromises and concessions to the Ottoman Empire.

Franz was not optimistic about this Constantinople negotiation. Could the Ottomans compromise given the Russians’ great appetite?

While the Russians negotiated with the Ottoman government, the Austrian Foreign Ministry was also not idle. Diplomatic negotiations with the Ottoman Empire also began, only Franz did not value these talks and directly authorized Minister Bartholom?us Freiherr von Stürmer in Constantinople to be in charge.

Sch?nbrunn Palace

It was a sunny afternoon. Franz was fishing. It seemed he had bad luck today, as the fishes just wouldn’t bite.

In contrast, his father Archduke Franz Karl next to him had caught three, the biggest about 3 pounds. If nothing unexpected happened, this unlucky fish would probably appear on the dinner table tonight.

The maid’s crisp voice rang out: “Your Majesty, Mr. Metternich seeks an audience.”

“Take him to the pavilion. I’ll be right over,” Franz said lightly.

After that, Franz put down his fishing rod and said to his father and brothers not far away, “Carry on, I have work to do.”

Archduke Franz Karl blurted out without thinking: “Go on, unlucky child. May God bless you with good luck!”

Franz was rendered speechless. He had wanted to say “fish eat unlucky food”. But there was no such idiom in Austria, so saying it would just confuse everyone.

Good upbringing made him filter out his father’s words completely. He just glared fiercely at his giggling brothers.

Seeming to recall the days dominated by terrifying homework, the kids cleverly restrained their smiles. Franz left satisfied.

Unable to deal with his old man Karl was a given, yet also can't handle a few brats? Based on the principle of sharing happiness, Franz directly projected the pain he had just personally experienced to his brothers.

It was nothing really, just one person monitored by over 30 tutors, with endless lessons and homework forever incomplete.

Franz was a good elder brother. He directly paid for this education. European aristocrats placed great importance on educating their children. No one would speak for them on this matter.

Then the three kids became good boys. They weren't academically stellar. For the sake of a good life under the blue sky, they decisively surrendered to their evil elder brother.

Otherwise they would still be miserable gnawing on books, and have no chance to cultivate their aristocratic temperament here (fishing and playing).

Perhaps in Archduke Karl's eyes, Franz really was a truly unlucky guy. What was good about being Emperor? Every day there was endless official business, and even during holidays there would be things to handle.

Franz never commented on his father's perspective.

If he had any ambition, the one sitting on the throne now would be him.

In Archduke Karl's view, it was more comfortable to eat, drink and play than to work hard as Emperor.

Under this mentality, Archduke Karl often looked at Franz with pity.

Franz was helpless about this. He could hardly say: without my efforts, you parasite of the Habsburgs, the family would have no more rice to feed on before long.

.....

"Your Majesty, news just came in that the French have intervened in Jerusalem. The Catholic Church hopes to get our support."

The news Metternich brought made Franz only lament the powerful force of historical revisionism. But on careful analysis, this was also an inevitable result.

To restore the monarchy, Louis Napoleon Bonaparte had to win popular support. The current Holy Land crisis was a hassle in others' eyes, but an opportunity in his.

Not only could he take the chance to increase France's international influence, he could also gain the support of Catholics. How could he refuse such a win-win situation?

As for the consequences of doing so, it would only offend the Russians and Ottomans. Others feared the Russian Bear, but he did not. With the German Confederation blocking the way, how would the Russians invade them?

The Ottomans' attitude could be ignored. The current Ottomans were no longer the former Ottomans. Any European power could trample them now.

Franz thought for a moment and said, “It seems the French have entered the fray. It looks like trouble for the Russians. This Russo-Turkish war will probably not be easy to fight.

But this has nothing to do with us. Since the French have already taken action in Jerusalem, with their formidable strength, I’m sure they won’t need our help. Verbally supporting them will suffice.”

Help? The French government would never let Austria get involved. This was Napoleon III’s time to gain prestige. How could he let Austria have a share in his “achievements”?

Metternich frowned and said, “Your Majesty, it is not that simple. Not only are the Russians in trouble, we are in trouble too.”

Franz was taken aback. He didn’t see what this had to do with Austria.

Metternich explained, “Your Majesty, the French intervention means that Louis Napoleon Bonaparte has prepared to seize power. We will hear of their restoration before long.

At that time, a staunchly pro-British French government will appear. In international affairs, Britain and France will cooperate more deeply.

A two-side world will emerge, with the Russia-Austria alliance and the Britain-France alliance. With the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war, the contradictions between the two alliances will intensify, possibly even leading to war.

Britain and Russia have geographical advantages, so the possibility of full-scale war between them is small, at most local conflicts.

But it is different for us and France. Under the contradictions between the two alliances, war between Austria and France is very likely in the future.”

Franz was stunned. Metternich’s analysis made him wonder who the real transmigrator was.

He had also considered the possibility of an Austro-French war, but he had always thought it would be over the Italian issue. Now it seemed the contradictions between the two alliances would be the fuse for future Austro-French conflict.

In this context, Austria only had two paths. One was to ally with Russia and severely damage the French in the upcoming war. Without this pawn, the British would also cower.

The other was to do nothing and wait for the Prussian-French conflict to escalate. The French coveted the Rhineland region, and this had been going on for a while. As industrialization deepened, the Prussian government also increasingly valued this land, leaving almost no room for concessions.

The contribution of the Rhineland region to Germany’s industrial might in the future was enormous. The mineral resources here were indispensable and irreplaceable for the Kingdom of Prussia.

Could the two countries compromise? Franz could decisively answer—impossible. Don’t look at how Bismarck promised to cede the Rhineland to the French multiple times in history.

In the end, Prussia would rather take military risks and have a decisive final battle with France, rather than really cede this region.

This was Prussia’s future. From the start of industrialization, the Prussian government was already aware of the importance of this place. If Prussia gave up this region, then the Ruhr industrial zone would be done for.



Franz frowned and said, "It seems we can do nothing now. French intervention in the Russo-Turkish war is very beneficial to our planned western campaign.

Once the western campaign is completed and Southern Germany unified, the balance of power between France and Austria will change. Even if war breaks out in the future, our chances of winning will be great."

This was not Franz being confident, but the truth. Austria with unified Southern Germany would see an increase in strength far beyond the surface level.

Many people in this era overestimated France. That was the psychological shadow Napoleon left after sweeping across the European continent, ignoring that the France of today was no longer the France of those years.

Whether in comprehensive national strength or military combat effectiveness, they were no longer that first power that made the world tremble.

Metternich had Francophobia. Whenever talking about a war with France, he would be pessimistic, as if Napoleon had returned.

Franz was also helpless about this. Metternich was a politician who came from that era, having personally participated in the Napoleonic Wars and was traumatized by Napoleon. It was inherently unresolvable.

Fortunately, Austria's performance back then was not too bad. The fighting went back and forth, and they were not routed by the French in one go. The generals who came from those years were not cowards.

Led by Marshal Radetzky, the military generals were very dissatisfied with the defeat back then, and still wanted to find a chance to make a comeback.

If the military was not tough enough, Franz would actually cower too. The performance of the Austro-Hungarian military in the future had left him with an impression of incompetence!

Having personally understood the Austrian military, Franz was very clear that imperial Austria was definitely not equal to Austro-Hungary. Whether in troop morale or soldier training, it was much stronger than the Austro-Hungarian period.

Metternich shook his head and said, "Your Majesty, a France embroiled in infighting is indeed negligible. But once Louis Napoleon Bonaparte restored the monarchy, France's internal struggles will be suppressed.

At that time, we must consider the situation of a Prussian-French alliance. If we exert enough pressure on them, Prussia and France may reach a compromise."

Franz was shocked. If Austria annexed Southern Germany, its power would undergo an earth-shaking change.

Then both Prussia and France would feel threatened. To resolve this threat, as long as one side made concessions and jointly dealt Austria a heavy blow, it did not seem impossible.

But then Franz shook his head again. It was too early to consider this issue. The prideful French, without experiencing failure first, would hardly make concessions to the Kingdom of Prussia.

It was obvious that even if they defeated Austria, the French would not allow Prussia to unify the German states. So why would Prussia take risks for this?

If it was an Austro-French war, or Prussian-Austrian war, the Russians might watch the show and use their power to weaken Austria a little. But if it was a Prussian-French alliance, as long as Russia did not want to be isolated, intervention would be inevitable.

France was far away and did not feel the Russian threat, but the closer Prussia did. In the end, Austria might be crippled by a Prussian-French alliance, and the Kingdom of Prussia wiped out first by a Russo-Austrian alliance.

Franz thought for a moment and said, "It seems we have to rein it in a bit from now on. If it arouses suspicion from all countries, then there will be big trouble."

No matter the alliance, interests came first. Once there is a conflict of interests, a falling out could happen faster than a book could be flipped.

To avoid the worst case scenario, Franz chose to feign cowardice first.

#### Chapter 167: Loli Development Plan (BONUS)

##### Constantinople

A negotiation that would decide the fate of three empires began. Russia was represented by Alexander Menshikov, Austria by Stürmer, and the Ottoman Empire by Halil Rifat Pasha.

The three were confrontational, and a heated verbal battle full of the smell of gunpowder began. In reality, the negotiations between the three were very harmonious, at least in the early stages.

Apart from Halil Rifat Pasha's gloomy face, the atmosphere of the negotiations was quite harmonious. At least the negotiations between Menshikov and Stürmer went very smoothly.

The contents agreed upon in the Russian-Austrian Secret Treaty were now brought up, so how could it not go smoothly?

The Ottoman side tried to use the conflicting interests of Russia and Austria in the Balkans to undermine the two countries' strategic goals, but this failed.

The British and French representatives present were dumbfounded. This was clearly not a three-party meeting, but Russia and Austria having already conspired to carve up the Ottoman Empire together.

In less than a morning, the Russian representative Menshikov and the Austrian representative Stürmer reached a consensus and openly divided the spheres of influence in the Balkans.

The Ottoman representative Halil Rifat Pasha was so angry he was fuming, but all of them were civilized people. Even when partitioning the Ottoman Empire, they could not say it outright!

Russia and Austria's stance now was: dividing commercial trade zones to avoid vicious competition and help the Ottoman Empire join civilized society sooner.

Indeed joining civilized society, just not as the Ottoman Empire, but by being annexed by the two countries and then becoming a member of the civilized world.

Halil Rifat Pasha said gloomily, "Gentlemen, we understand your kind intentions, but the Ottoman Empire does not need such help from you!"

Menshikov sneered in response, “It doesn’t matter. Your country does not need such help now, but will need it soon. For the sake of world peace and stability, as the leader of the civilized world, the Russian Empire has the obligation to help the Ottoman Empire progress.”

A weak nation had no diplomatic power. This was thoroughly demonstrated here. Even if Britain and France were inclined towards the Ottoman Empire, Russia and Austria still had greater say on Balkan issues.

“You, you...” Halil Rifat Pasha was too angry to speak.

The Russians’ obstinate interference had been going on for a while. To be so blatant in a diplomatic setting was hard to accept.

Especially the phrase “leader of the civilized world”, which provoked the British representative Joseph Edward, who retorted sharply:

“When did your country become the leader of the civilized world? I wasn’t even aware of that. How can you say so?”

Everyone present wanted to laugh but had to hold it in painfully due to diplomatic etiquette.

Admitting Russia was the leader of the civilized world? How was that possible? Apart from the Russians themselves, no European country had ever acknowledged this.

If phrased differently, such as “a member of the civilized world”, it would probably be acceptable to everyone.

But the leader of the civilized world? Forget about it. Even as an ally, Stürmer could not support the Russians on this issue.

Diplomacy had never been a Russian strong suit. The diplomatic gaffes Russia committed were countless, so one more made no difference.

Menshikov’s face instantly turned ugly at being caught out like this. Wasn’t this how everyone declared things externally?

Whether it was the British or the French, when colonizing and invading overseas, they all claimed to be leaders of the civilized world. Naturally the Russians kept up with the times too.

Unfortunately, saying this in private was fine, but problems arise when brought up in formal diplomatic occasions.

Since it was already said, Menshikov could only brazen it out. He stiffly said, “As the number one power on the European continent, we are naturally the leaders of the civilized world.”

British representative Joseph Edward mocked, “Your Highness seems to have forgotten the word ‘army’ again. Let me remind you that the standard of civilization is not force. That is the way of barbarians.”

Menshikov angrily said, “Who are you calling barbarians? I challenge you to a duel!”

.....

Seeing Menshikov get played, Stürmer shook his head helplessly. He was speechless about Russia sending a general who believed in force as representative.

But he had to help smooth things over, or things could turn violent immediately.

“If you two want to duel, please choose another time and place. Otherwise, we will go down in diplomatic history as a laughingstock.”

Considering the disparity in might, Joseph Edward decisively chose to give up and coldly snorted, “Humph!”

Menshikov was no fool either. He had just been pushed to the wall by the British, so he simply went all out. After all, it wasn’t rare for Russian diplomats to duel others.

Of course, duels rarely happened in such formal diplomatic settings in this century, let alone at the duke level. Menshikov didn’t want to be the first either.

But the tradition of dueling was still prevalent in Russia. Even the father of Russian literature, Pushkin, died in a duel. It was worth mentioning that Pushkin was also a member of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

With the gunpowder smell so strong, the talks naturally could not continue. Since no one was in a hurry, and expectations of resolving contradictions through negotiation were low, it was better to rest for a few days to cool off before continuing the talks.

.....

Vienna

Franz was naturally unaware of the farce in Constantinople as he was busy welcoming guests.

As a neighbor, the Bavarian government had always been very vigilant of Austria. After seeing Austria expand its military, the Bavarian government became worried.

Even if they thought Austria had designs on the Balkans, they still wanted to repair relations between the two countries as soon as possible to eliminate potential threats.

Archduchess Sophie advocated a political marriage between the two royal families. After Franz delayed for some time citing political needs, he did not reject the Bavarian royals’ proposal, but gave an answer to wait a few years.

Worried that more dreams would come the longer the night, the Bavarian royals simply sent Princess Helene to visit her aunt. Of course she did not come alone, but with junior members of the royal family, including the later famous Princess Sisi (Elisabeth).

As the host, Franz naturally had to give his mother face and personally hosted this welcoming banquet.

Europeans matured relatively early. To be frank, both girls had grown into great beauties. From their behavior, Princess Helene seemed to have received a good court education, while Princess Sisi performed much worse.

It shouldn’t be assumed that with the title of princess, they were real princesses. At most they could be considered imperial clan daughters in an Eastern monarchy.

Their father was a duke from a branch of the royal family, a third degree or more distant relative. Normally, they would not be eligible to marry Franz, nor would the Bavarian royals have this idea.

The reason for all this was Archduchess Sophie. She and Princess Helene's mother were close sisters, having been very close since childhood. A marriage alliance had been proposed even before Franz took the throne.

In contrast, Princess Sisi was tragic. Her birth mother was just a maid who seized power after her mistress passed away.

This was also one of the historical reasons for Princess Sisi's tragedy. As Archduchess Sophie's niece, Princess Helene naturally received favoritism. She, the interloper, obviously could not expect Archduchess Sophie to show her kindness.

That could have been let go. The Vienna court also had rules. In principle, mother-in-law conflicts could not affect the Archduchess's status.

But the problem was Princess Sisi was rebellious, not fitting court etiquette at all, and often did things beyond her status, causing scandals for the royals.

As things went back and forth, the Archduchess naturally had to intervene and educate her, and contradictions between them gradually accumulated.

Later, as scandals grew louder, the Vienna court felt Princess Sisi lacked the qualifications to raise the next generation, and Archduchess Sophie deprived her of the right to educate her children. This completely intensified the contradictions.

On these issues, the original host had naturally made decisions he thought were right, but was actually completely ineffective.

Of course, even if it was anyone else, this problem could not be resolved. Unless Princess Sisi's personality was thoroughly altered, tragedy would be inevitable.

If mother-in-law conflicts and children's education could still be reconciled, then political grievances were extremely fatal.

Especially on the issue of birthing Austro-Hungary, as Archduchess she gained the admiration of the Hungarian people, while also standing in opposition to the Austrian people.

For a time, voices calling for her deposition became mainstream in Vienna. This showed how difficult her situation was.

History and movies were completely different concepts. Rather than the court, her tragedy could be said to be caused by herself.

While restricting her, the Vienna court etiquette also protected her. Without these rules, she would probably have become the first deposed Archduchess in Austrian history.

Looking back through history, Franz made no judgment. While enjoying the convenience of birth status, one had to pay a price too.

Before this political marriage, Princess Sisi's parents held no positions and were far removed from power centers.

Country life seemed idyllic on the surface, but in reality, Duke Maximilian had no choice but to stay away from big cities due to financial difficulties.

The unrestrained life in childhood, in other words, meant the family could not afford tutors due to economic hardship, and could only attend public school with others, making truancy easy.

One look at Franz and you would know - with dozens of teachers monitoring a student, could one even dream of truancy? Do you know, your truancy means collective holiday for the teachers!

It shouldn't be assumed that all aristocrats were wealthy. For royals like them, distant relatives far removed from power centers and not engaged in production, and have been long term parasites, how could they maintain the expenses of a life of grandeur?

This could also be seen from Princess Sisi's destitute dowry. The dowry she obtained as Archduchess was actually insufficient even for half of Franz's expenditure for one grand banquet.

Princess Helene could receive good upbringing of course not without the financial aid of her good aunt. After all, Archduchess Sophie had always held economic power. As a close royal relative, Archduke Karl's side had considerable income each year.

Archduchess Sophie smiled and asked, "Franz, what are you thinking about? Are you infatuated?"

Franz casually found an excuse to gloss over, "No, I was just thinking about the Constantinople negotiations."

Archduchess Sophie laughed. "Oh? We have guests today. Please keep those matters for after the banquet!"

Anyway, she was very satisfied with Princess Helene's performance. The only regret was her slightly lower birth, but she was her niece, so she wouldn't mind that.

"Of course, Mother!" Franz laughed.

He had to give his mother some face no matter what. Franz invited both cousins for a dance, then pulled them aside for chat about life.

In fact, nothing happened. Franz simply disliked participating in such aristocratic banquets. Being surrounded by flatterers every day, one would get tired of it after a while.

And then, there were two lolis in the Vienna Palace.

## Chapter 168: Ethnicity on the Verge of Extinction

### Constantinople

Russian representative Alexander Menshikov, who lost face at the negotiating table, soon regained it, though the means were somewhat underhanded.

On April 2, 1851, Menshikov visited the Sultan and, in an extremely overbearing tone, ordered the Ottoman government to dismiss the pro-British and French Foreign Minister Fuad, and appoint the pro-Russian Rifat as the replacement.

It turned out that crude means were often the most direct and effective method. Under pressure from the Russians, the Ottoman government compromised.

Menshikov demonstrated to the world with actual actions who the real boss was in the Near East. The politicians of all countries were rendered speechless. Facing a player who does not follow the rules, everyone got a headache.

Britain and France who had been slapped in the face, naturally would not resign themselves to failure, but in the Near East, their say could not compare with the Russians at all and was even lower than Austria's.

Before they could take action, Menshikov submitted another diplomatic note to the Ottoman government, accusing the Ottoman government of unfair treatment of the Orthodox Church.

He also demanded that the two countries sign an agreement for the Russian government to manage Orthodox believers, with the Ottoman government not interfering in Orthodox Church affairs.

Unfair treatment was inevitable. In fact, the Ottoman government had relaxed religious policies this era, attempting to eliminate domestic religious contradictions.

Unfortunately, such contradictions had persisted since the Ottoman Empire was established. It was not something that could be resolved by a government decree. Plus Russian interference made the situation even more chaotic.

..... (Specific religious issues omitted, 10,000 words)

The Russian demands had touched the Ottoman Empire's bottom line. Agreeing to this condition meant handing over more than one-third of the population to Russian management.

Britain and France could not tolerate such Russian expansion either. By now, the British had determined that war was inevitable, and the Russians were just looking for an excuse for this war.

London

After the proceedings of the Constantinople negotiations was conveyed back, the British government began considering how to make a choice in the upcoming Russo-Turkish war.

Foreign Secretary Palmerston thought for a moment and said, "Prime Minister, we must gain Austria's support to contain the Russians' ambitions. Just winning over the French is not enough.

If necessary, we can organize a European coalition army and jointly contain the Russians' ambitions."

John Russell shook his head and said, "Mr. Palmerston, let's set aside the issue of organizing a coalition army for now. We all know it's not that simple.

European countries have different attitudes on the Russian issue. Many countries have no vested interests and it would be almost impossible to have them jointly act against Russia.

Why don't you talk about how to win over Austria. If we can bring them over, the combined strength of three countries can contain the Russians in the Near East."

Palmerston analyzed, "The intelligence from Constantinople shows that the Russians and Austrians have reached a compromise, though we still don't know the specifics.

The Russians have now recognized Austria's sphere of influence in the Balkans. In return, Austria also supports Russia's ambitions towards the Ottoman Empire.

This compromise does not mean the contradictions between the two countries in the Balkans no longer exist. They are just temporarily pressed down by common interests.

With the Russians' appetite, even if the two countries reach consensus, they will still break up eventually due to conflicts of interest. The Austrian government must know this.

The fact that the old fox Metternich is siding with the Russians this time also signifies a change in Austrian policy.

It seems the collapse of the Vienna System has hit the Austrians hard. They no longer aspire for a European balance. In this sense, we have lost an ally in continental policy.

Being Russia's neighbor, one must stay vigilant at all times. Even a nap means danger. The current Austrian government is ready to divert trouble eastward.

Partitioning the Balkans is just a superficial reason. More importantly is that the Austrian government feels threatened and unwilling to continue shouldering the responsibility of blocking the Russians.

They want to buy time for domestic development by provoking a Russo-Turkish war and dragging the Russians in. Expansion in the Balkans is just a bonus."

By now, the British government regretted letting the Vienna System collapse. Though after its collapse they could get rid of restrictions and intervene in European affairs, the results were not ideal.

From supporting the Kingdom of Sardinia to the current Near East crisis, the British government had almost no decent diplomatic achievements.

Now the European situation was even more complex, taking up much of their energy. It was not as good as the Vienna System era, when continental Europe was balanced and stable, allowing them to boldly expand overseas.

In this sense, the Vienna System also enabled Britain's hegemonic position.

The Minister of State asked in puzzlement, "Mr. Palmerston, according to your judgment, is it impossible for us to win over Austria?"

The Austrian Empire had always been at the forefront of resisting Russia, yet the two did not become enemies. This showed the diplomatic prowess of the House of Habsburg.

Such confrontation was clearly detrimental to Austria's growth and development. The government's energy being completely preoccupied by its neighbor, where would their ability to develop itself be?

Before the collapse of the Vienna System, the Austrian government had asked the British for financial aid to maintain this system, but was rejected by the government back then.

The British suggestion back then was for Austria to carry out social reforms. After completing the reforms, there would be money.

As it turned out, completing social reforms could indeed reverse the fiscal dilemma. But the current Austrian government was no longer interested in the Vienna System.

To work hard for European balance while the biggest beneficiary under the system reaped the profits silently, how could anyone feel okay with that?

After thinking about it, Palmerston replied, "It depends on the Russians. If they can make the Austrian government feel threatened, then we can pull Austria over to our side."



History was the same. Austria's defection was not because of inducements from Britain and France, nor because of conflicts of interest with Russia over the Danube River Basin. The crux was that they felt threatened.

To abandon allies for one's own strategic security was perfectly normal. Even if it was Franz, if the Russians displayed overwhelming might that threatened Austria, he would also choose to defect.

The same went for Russia. If Austria became too powerful and threatened them, they would become enemies too.

.....

Since the military expansion bill passed, a military fever had swept Austria. The lure of land was huge, especially after the war heroes who obtained land in the previous war became role models.

The soldiers who enlisted last time were relatively lucky. That was a smooth journey from start to finish, and they did not experience the cruelty of war. Even if there was cruelty, that was to the enemy.

With this military expansion and preparation for war, it was all but directly said to attack the Ottoman Empire. If it was two hundred years ago, the first reaction to invading the Ottoman Empire would absolutely be fear. Now all that remained in people's eyes were military exploits.

Who made the Ottoman Empire decline? Couldn't Austria and Russia together defeat the Ottomans?

The risks were low and the rewards ample, naturally attracting people.

Not to mention ordinary people, even aristocrats were racking their brains to enter the military and serve, determined to get in on this destined victorious war for exploits.

Such opportunities were rare. Missing it this time, who knew when the next foreign war would come.

Long lines had formed in front of the conscription points. The thinking of "obtaining merit right away" was very prevalent in mainland Europe.

In this era, standing out on the battlefield was the best shortcut to success. Especially for the lower classes, this was almost their only path to high society.

Many reserve officers also shone in the previous war. In many people's eyes, even if they couldn't enter the regular army, the reserves were still a decent choice.

Military status was highly regarded in Austria. Even reserve soldiers were respected.

A young officer looked at the long line and sighed, "There are a lot of people today. It seems we can raise conscription standards."

A middle-aged officer next to him glared discontentedly and said, "Welshton, don't spout nonsense there. Hurry up and organize the tests.

Remember, Austrian speakers get priority this time. I don't want to train them after they get to the troops."

"Yes, Major!" Welshton immediately replied.

Austria had never enacted explicit language discrimination laws, but government, military, corporate and other institutions all tacitly gave priority to speakers of the Austrian language.

To use a folk saying: “You can’t even speak the common language. Do you expect me to assign you a translator?”

This was the most realistic issue. Without a common language for communication, finding a job became the first hurdle after entering society.

Even nationalists had to accept this social reality. Finding a job without learning Austrian was already as difficult as ascending to heaven.

Want preferential treatment and consideration? Sorry, employment institutions in Austria had the right to freely choose talent. The government could not interfere arbitrarily.

After three years of promotion, although Austrian had not achieved universal prevalence nationwide, most urban populations had grasped everyday usage.

This scene could now be seen in many parts of Austria. To achieve this, the Austrian government also paid a considerable price.

Especially when promotion of it first began, it encountered resistance from many nationalist radicals. Unfortunately for them, they happened to have been caught up in the revolution and got harmonized or eliminated.

What angered them most was that not only did the Austrian government’s retrogression not arouse popular indignation after the fact, the domestic situation quickly improved instead.

By now, all schools in Austria used Austrian as the main language. Other languages and scripts were treated the same as foreign languages, elective courses, and fee-based elective courses at that.

People were realistic. With exams not testing these and jobs not requiring them, plus having to pay extra to learn them, people naturally became indifferent. The key words of ethnicity and independence also faded from people’s lives.

Not long ago, Franz even ordered all non-Austrian books and periodicals in the country banned.

Many thought this would cause social turmoil, but reality slapped them hard. Apart from some scholars making noise, the general populace simply did not care.

Nationalism also needed publicity. Cutting off publicity channels, how would commoners even know what this was?

Under government crackdown, it quickly became underground thinking. They had to consider actual circumstances if they wanted to spread it. Ever since education reform, the youth no longer went along with them.

With no desperate youth groups, these people’s fighting power greatly decreased. Stand up against the government? Those daring enough had long been jailed. Where was the chance to mess around till now?

Fikwenna was a Hungarian writer, one of the leading figures of Hungarian nationalism.

However, he belonged to the moderate camp, opposed all violent revolutions, and did not follow Kossuth in seeking independence. He even published articles criticizing the atrocities of revolutionaries multiple times.

Such non-threatening existences were naturally not purged. Recently he had been very worried, even more so than when the Kingdom of Hungary was partitioned back then.

For a nationalist, he could accept Hungary being gone, because he did not oppose becoming Austrian. But without the Hungarian national language and script, he could not stand it.

Not long ago, the Hungarian Vorwärts newspaper he ran was banned. Although this obscure paper's circulation was less than a thousand copies per issue, it was still a cause he struggled for.

What was even harder for him to accept was that the Hungarian National School established by Count István Széchenyi also listed Hungarian as a paid elective course instead of an instructional language.

Now he was going to argue with the school leadership and could not let the Count's efforts go to waste. At this moment, he hated Kossuth and his revolutionary comrades immensely.

If not for the 1848 rebellion, the Kingdom of Hungary would still be the Kingdom of Hungary. Under Count István Széchenyi's leadership, they could still carry out social reforms and build an ideal Hungarian society.

There were no ifs in history. After losing their leader, their group of moderate Hungarians fell apart. Many had been absorbed by the Austrian government.

If nothing unexpected happened, it would not be long before Fikwenna also accepted the Austrian government's goodwill. For now, he still wanted to try once more for the former dream.

"Principal Engels, why did you abolish the Hungarian language?" Fikwenna questioned.

Engels explained, "Mr. Feikwenna, you should know the Hungarian National School relied on outside donations since establishment. We only collect minimal tuition.

In the last two years, the donations we received have decreased greatly. The school's finances have become dire. Since a year ago, we have been unable to pay staff salaries on time.

In order for the school to survive, we had to accept educational grants from the Austrian government.

According to the Austrian Ministry of Education, all schools accepting government grants must use Austrian as the sole language of instruction for primary and secondary education."

Engels had given this explanation to many. The school's actual situation was even worse than what he said.

Learning an additional language undoubtedly took up a lot of study time, affecting grades in other subjects. Many parents suggested abolishing Hungarian.

Let's not talk about grand principles. They only cared about exams for advancement. The chances of entering university were already low in this era. For the next generation's future, many could not care about much else.

“Is there really no other way?” Fikwenna asked with a frown.

Engels sighed and said, “Mr. Fikwenna, we cannot defy reality. After what happened in 1848, the Austrian government became very vigilant against nationalism. It is promoting integrated education comprehensively in the cultural and educational fields.

This is a national policy set by the government. Unless we can make them believe in us again, this suppression will not end. You know this is impossible.”

Rebellion, revolution? They were not unfamiliar with such things, but that was not their expertise. Everyone had a family to care for. Who dared take risks?

Moreover, times had changed. With rapid domestic economic growth and social stability, the populace simply lacked impetus for revolution.

Chapter 169: Only Interests are Eternal

Lack of money was a big problem. Although Fikwenna was a writer with a decent income, he was still unable to resolve the school’s funding issues.

Fundraising? If you study the reasons for establishing the Hungarian National School, it was clear that fundraising was now impossible.

This was related to the 1848 revolution. Those who strongly advocated promoting the Hungarian language and script were mostly inclined towards the revolutionaries, and most of these people had already gone to meet God, or were working hard for Austria’s railway industry.

Of the few moderates who narrowly escaped, they tended to be cautious and small in number, unable to bear this expense.

The Hungarian language and script evolved over ten centuries to take shape. Its origins were early, with eight hundred words already in the Middle Ages, mainly from Turkic, Caucasian, and many borrowed words from Romance, Slavic, and Germanic languages.

In 1836, Hungary launched the language and script reform movement. The modern Hungarian language and script were basically formed during this time. Hungarian became the official language of Hungary in 1844.

Most of the Hungarian aristocracy came from German regions. Many could speak Hungarian, but few had studied the Hungarian script, with Hungarian mainly circulating among the lower classes.

In this context, István Széchenyi established the Hungarian National School to promote Hungarian language and script among the middle and upper classes.

If history had not changed, such language schools would have blossomed all over Hungary, laying the foundation for later Hungarian national culture.

This was also one reason why István Széchenyi was later called “the greatest Hungarian”.

In fact, he made many other contributions to Hungary, such as establishing the Academy of Sciences, establishing the Aristocratic Club, and promoting the abolition of serfdom...

But there were no ifs in history. Due to Franz’s butterfly effect, this great Hungarian nationalist met God prematurely.

When the tree fell, the monkeys scattered. Without their leader, the remaining nationalists fell apart. Along with repression by the Austrian government, many opportunists withdrew from the nationalist movement.

As the social landscape changed, aristocrats and capitalists no longer wanted their children to continue learning Hungarian. They worried this educational background would reduce opportunities for the next generation to enter university, so donations were naturally out of the question.

Without financial backers, these schools naturally fell into dire straits, and had no choice but to accept the decree from the Austrian Ministry of Education.

Pest, once the most splendid city in Hungary, was now in decline. For political reasons, the postwar Austrian government did not allocate funds to rebuild Budapest, and the city was again split into two.

The once bustling aristocratic club was now desolate. Stepping inside and seeing the few familiar faces scattered about, most were now unfamiliar faces. Fikwenna's fiery heart cooled.

Although three years had passed, this place still had not recovered. With the local aristocracy of the former capital severely weakened and many ancient aristocratic families had also vanished.

That so many gathered today was because the famous Hungarian celebrity Liszt had come to perform. They came because of his fame.

Though there were many people, few were willing to donate to the national school. If they were strangers, Fikwenna would also not fail to recognize them, since the moderate nationalist circle was not big to begin with.

Their luxurious, intoxicating, lustful lives continued, as if nothing had happened. In the end, Fikwenna did not speak up. A scholar's pride did not allow him to stoop to their level.

The government established Austrian as the common language, and announced abolishing dialectal newspapers and publications, yet these people showed no reaction. Abolishing dialectal education in schools also did not move them.

At some point, Fikwenna had also accepted calling it a "dialect".

Of course it was not wrong to call it a dialect. Hungarian was mainly concentrated in the Hungarian region, with only about one-fifth of the entire Austrian Empire using it.

A lavishly dressed middle-aged man walked over and greeted, "Fikwenna, come have a drink!"

Fikwenna raised the glass in his hand, clinked it with the middle-aged man, then elegantly took a sip and said, "Hanks, long time no see, what have you been up to?"

Hanks smiled and said, "Indeed, it's been a while since we met. Recently I've been stocking up. It's no secret anymore that the Austrian government intends to make a move on the Ottoman Empire and is hoarding strategic supplies. I'm just taking advantage and profiting a bit.

What about you? Why the worried look? Still upset over your little newspaper?

Don't think too much about it. This was decided by the National Assembly and can't be changed. I heard it's to advance Austria's integration process."

Fikwenna shook his head and said, “You know my barely alive little newspaper doesn’t make any real money. If it’s shut down then it’s shut down.

But if this continues, our Hungarian national culture will be finished. With newspapers and books prohibited, Pest’s last remaining national school has also turned its back on Hungarian. I’m really worried...”

Hanks immediately changed his expression and said, “Stop right there. Unified language is the trend. Don’t think about these messy things.

Think about it. Before this, just the Hungarian region alone had fifteen major languages. Back then you advocated unifying language too. Now it’s not okay?

You haven’t got the right attitude. Unified language is best. We can even save huge amounts on translation fees. This benefits the nation and the people.”

.....

Fikwenna was somewhat exasperated. He had been lectured. He regretted discussing it with this old friend who had now changed. Capitalists always followed profits.

These people used to be the most opposed to the Austrian government, but had now become its staunchest supporters. The world is impermanent, only interests are eternal.

Unified Austria, whether in markets or economic growth and potential, far surpassed the original Hungary.

For capitalists, Austria now was undoubtedly the best era. As long as you had a brain, investing in any industry now would make money.

No one had heard of “economic overheating”. It was believed to be natural economic growth after the Austrian government eliminated obstacles to capitalist development.

From a free market perspective, this reasoning was not wrong. The massive influx of foreign capital was determined by the market economy. Government policies were only a minor factor.

“Fine, pretend I said nothing. Let’s drink!” Fikwenna said helplessly.

If one is unable to change society, then one could only adapt to society. Hadn’t he also accepted this reasoning deep down?

The Habsburgs ruling Hungary was no recent development. People had long become accustomed to being part of Austria.

Independence? The few months of farce resulted in hundreds of thousands of casualties, nearly a million homeless, and halving the Hungarian aristocracy directly.

After such great losses, the surviving people now shuddered at the mention of revolution. The huge army of laborers building railways, where did they come from? It was no secret. Hungary contributed at least 200,000 people.

This living example let people know rebellion came at a price. With no interest groups backing them, the so-called revolutionaries had no place left in Hungary.

From top to bottom, all classes in Hungary hated them to the bone.

The lower classes saw it as these rioters who exploited and oppressed them. Because the Emperor had forbidden their exploitation and oppression, they launched the rebellion.

The evidence was that after suppressing the revolutionary party, people's lives improved considerably. Serfs obtained freedom, workers got labor protection laws, and all kinds of harsh miscellaneous taxes were swept away.

Of course this was the result of Austrian government propaganda. The lower classes didn't care about specifics. They didn't understand profound principles, but believed what they saw before their eyes.

The aristocrats who escaped a calamity dare not provoke the government's authority. Under guidance of the well-intentioned, the most popular saying now was that if not for the rebels, they would not have lost land and privileges.

Whether they believed it or not, they dared not offend the government, and could only redirect hatred. No one knew their inner thoughts, but outwardly they pinned all responsibility on the revolutionaries.

The citizens who suffered heavy losses even more so. They had personally experienced how frightening the revolutionary mob army was. Having suffered, they naturally opposed the revolutionaries.

This resentment would slowly fade over time, but not with this generation. People believed what they saw themselves. After experiencing it once, such notions were ingrained.

The general environment could greatly influence people. Moderates like Fikwenna had begun to change.

In an era of ideological turmoil, once doubts emerged about past ideals, change was imminent.

Hanks, believing he had persuaded his friend, happily said, "Well then, let's drink!"

After a drink, he added, "If you want to resume publication, that's possible too. Just register with the Information Bureau and switch to Austrian."

Fikwenna nodded. Although the paper was barely alive, it represented his status. It was best if it could be kept. Ideals always had to compromise with reality.

## Chapter 170: Industry Regulation

The changes in people's hearts were the most difficult to fathom. Franz was naturally unaware of the little incident in Pest. As an emperor, as long as the world was at peace, the thoughts of individual people were not his concern.

By now, the Austrian government bureaucrats had become accustomed to three key assessment indicators: enlightenment, stability, economy.

The easiest to achieve was social stability. The government was strong enough, local powerful factions were keeping their peace, and the few undesirable elements disrupting stability could be easily dealt with.

Next was "enlightenment". With systems in place, cooperating with the Ministry of Education's plans and steadily advancing was sufficient.

Of course, to produce results in this area, it was essential to adapt measures to local conditions and put in tremendous effort.

The most troublesome was still developing the economy. Prosperous big cities were fine. Now that the domestic economy was developing rapidly, with big cities being the main force, just formulating suitable local policies was adequate.

Economic development in remote regions was much slower, with some areas simply stagnating. Even if bureaucrats wanted to make an effort, they didn't know where to start.

Imbalanced regional economic development had become a conundrum plaguing the Austrian government, and one without a solution.

Franz was also helpless about this. Not just now, even a hundred or two hundred years later, these issues still troubled countries worldwide.

Many factors restricted regional economic growth, including transportation, resources, climate, geography, population...

In comparison, transportation issues were the easiest to resolve. Just build roads. As long as they are willing to invest, it could be resolved sooner or later.

There were also solutions for population issues. But climate, resources, geography could not be resolved by manpower, at least not in the 19th century.

Looking at the economic development report in hand, Franz sighed helplessly.

He knew that the government investing heavily in big cities would intensify imbalanced regional development, yet it had to continue.

There was no alternative. This approach had the highest returns. Investing in poor remote areas wouldn't even produce a ripple. It was truly hopeless.

"Prime Minister, why are these water conservancy project investments all in the plains?" Franz asked concernedly.

Industrial development was in the big cities, this was no issue. But agricultural development couldn't only consider the plains either. Many mountainous areas also had development potential.

For political considerations, when reinvesting, the government also had to take each region into account.

Felix explained, "Your Majesty, it is mainly a population distribution issue. Currently, Austria's population is mainly concentrated in plain regions, with relatively fewer people in other areas.

From the perspective of optimizing resource allocation, we will first concentrate our efforts on developing the densely populated plains areas. In other regions with smaller populations and less competitive pressure, the demand for water conservancy projects is relatively low."

Franz nodded. From the perspective of agricultural development, plains were more suitable for grain cultivation, with greater demand for water conservancy.

Based on different geographical conditions, mountainous areas were more suited for cash crops.



Don't assume cash crops were more lucrative. This was only the 19th century with living standards that were quite limited. Apart from some industrial raw materials in high demand, most cash crops were unsuitable for large-scale development.

There was very little market demand for high value agricultural products in this era. Ordinary citizens simply could not afford them, with few having the purchasing power.

There was no need to promote off-season agriculture at all. Spontaneous production by farm owners alone was sufficient to meet market demand. Large-scale development can be considered when people have the money.

Franz thought for a moment and said, "Prepare an agricultural production report for the whole country. Each place can engage in trial economic agriculture based on actual conditions, and successful results can then be gradually promoted. For example, silk can be grown in Italy.

Grain production has grown very quickly in recent years. We must prepare for contingencies. If an accident happens, low grain prices hurting farmers would be bad."

More food production was not necessarily better. If not for the Holy Roman Economic Alliance, Austrian agriculture would now be experiencing overcapacity.

Under this circumstance, promoting suitable cash crops in certain areas was very necessary.

In this era, growth in food demand couldn't keep up with growth in production. Blindly increasing food output did not suit Austria.

"Yes, Your Majesty," Felix replied.

Continuing to look at the report in hand, Franz was suddenly reminded of industrial pollution in the future. He didn't want Vienna to become like present-day London.

Industrial development inevitably causes environmental pollution, but where the pollution occurs could be artificially controlled.

For his own pleasant life in his later years, Franz believed it necessary to restrict Vienna's industrial development, even at the cost of slowing the city's growth.

Franz thought for a moment and said, "Vienna is developing too rapidly. In just a few years, the city's population will exceed one million. As the population grows, urban infrastructure has not kept up. Problems emerging is inevitable.

Considering the actual circumstances, the government should find ways to divert some businesses to other cities. More polluting enterprises should not be placed in Vienna."

Diverting some of Vienna's resources and investing them in other regions could build a new industrial city. To Franz, this was well worthwhile.

Vienna was an inland city. Concentrating massive resources here was essentially wasteful.

Urban development was not simply the bigger, the better. It was more important to consider the capacity. In Franz's plans, the future Vienna would at most have 2-3 million people.

Austria did not need nor have the capacity to support becoming a megacity of over 10 million people.

Prime Minister Felix thought for a moment and said, “Your Majesty, capital flows are market adjustments. Isn’t it not good for us to interfere like this?”

In this era, the economies of European countries were naturally regulated by the market. Austria was an exception, with the government directly intervening in economic development.

However, this intervention was not through administrative orders, but by formulating some economic development policies to guide the market, or implemented through state-owned enterprises.

What Franz was proposing was for the government to intervene in the market through administrative orders, which rarely happened anywhere in the world.

Franz shook his head and said, “Externally, just explain that Vienna’s capacity has reached its limit, and population growth is too fast for our supply to keep up.

Have the media propagate the adverse consequences of rapid population growth, such as decreasing per capita living space in the city, insufficient supply of goods, etc.

The government can then work on the capitalists. Existing factories can remain, but those not yet built should relocate to other cities.

In the next five years, Vienna will not approve any new factories. Existing factories must also undergo strict audits and cannot engage in heavily polluting industries.

For corporate pollution issues, the government can set pollution grades based on environmental harm. This can optimize allocation during factory construction.

With industrial technology development, heavily polluting industries will continue increasing. Without comprehensive consideration, a single factory could potentially ruin a city.”

Vienna was Austria’s political, economic and cultural center. Franz did not want it to also become an industrial center.

There were plenty of Austrian cities more suitable than Vienna for industrial development. There was no need for factories to cluster here at all.

Investing in Vienna was fine, but establishing factories should be avoided. Franz was not welcoming this from now on.

Refusing entry now was far better than building the factories first, then kicking people out later.

Regarding environmental pollution issues, people of this era were still unaware, or the harm was not yet severe to be noticed.

“Your Majesty, it can’t be so serious for one factory to ruin a city?” Prime Minister Felix said incredulously.

“Is this difficult? Take our steel mills for example. If production is large enough, just the industrial wastewater discharged can pollute a river.

If a city’s water source is polluted, can the city continue existing?” Franz retorted.

This was no scaremongering. In later years, cities that were ultimately ruined due to water source pollution were countless.

It was not that just having industrial wastewater enter rivers polluting the water. In reality, groundwater could not escape either.

Pollution elsewhere could be tolerated, but not in Vienna. Franz had no plans to move the capital. Precautionary actions were inevitable.

Pollution in Vienna was not yet severe currently, but after a few decades, things could change. With chemical industry development, chemical plants would emerge one after another, and the consequences would be serious.

London was a negative example, with tens of thousands dying from smog at its peak every year. Franz could not stand such an environment. If it were him, he would have moved long ago.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” Felix replied.

If you don’t understand, you can just go slowly and understand it later. In any case, the concept of “environmental pollution” having serious consequences was engraved in his mind already.