

## Roman Empire 301

### Chapter 301: The Class That Shouldn't Degenerate

Seeing the two letters of resignation in his hands, Franz could only sigh helplessly.

Time spares no one. It is beyond the control of mere mortals.

Marshal Radetzky was already 91 years old. Historically, he should have passed away by now. In fact, he was nearing the end of his life. Although he was nominally still the Chief of Staff, he had actually retired three years ago.

Anyway, the position of Chief of Staff only carries significant weight in wartime, and in peacetime, it mainly involves strategic planning, with few specific duties. Franz decided to keep the position for the old marshal.

Clearly, Marshal Radetzky was unwilling to simply occupy the post. Upon finding his health unable to keep up, he repeatedly submitted resignation letters to Franz.

The wording grew increasingly intense. If resignation was still not approved, the Marshal would have died in office. After some hesitation, Franz reluctantly agreed to his resignation.

While Marshal Radetzky's resignation was emotionally difficult for him, Metternich's resignation was truly giving him a headache.

The Foreign Minister was not just an empty title. It was one of the three most important roles that could rival the Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

Metternich was also already 85 years old and clearly could not keep up with the demands of the position at that age. Most of the affairs of the foreign ministry were already being handled by the deputy, with Metternich only getting involved in important matters.

Two years ago, Franz had given him special permission to set his own hours, choose where he worked, and take leave without having to report it.

After sighing for a while, Franz had no choice but to accept the departure of the two veteran ministers. Or perhaps it was not two, but three. Archduke Louis would also be leaving soon.

Franz was certain that the moment Metternich stepped down, Archduke Louis would not stay either. At his age of over eighty, and with his decades-long political rival gone, what was the point of staying?

This man's abilities were average, not comparable at all to the previous two. He was even somewhat mediocre. But in the early days, when Franz was provoking conflicts between the bourgeoisie and the nobility, this man had been his loyal supporter.

In politics, many problems cannot be judged by surface appearances. At the time, Archduke Louis had taken the fall for Franz. He had even sacrificed a son during the Vienna Uprising.

Setting aside his capabilities, Louis' loyalty was unquestionable. Over the years, he had zealously led the nobility in suppressing the bourgeoisie, earning the resentment of the capitalists on Franz's behalf.

Without them, the domestic capitalists would probably not be so docile. Among other things, labor protection laws would not have been implemented, child workers would not have returned to school, and domestic class conflicts would not have been suppressed.

There was no way around it; governance requires, above all, balance. During periods of rapid economic development, the power of the bourgeoisie would naturally grow rapidly. Without restraint, they would have plunged the country into chaos long ago.

The primitive accumulation of capital was always bloody. These people were still in the stage of pure profit-seeking and cared little about the consequences.

To ensure domestic stability, Franz had no choice but to put a leash on them. And that leash needed someone to enforce it; the Conservatives took on that role, acting as executioners.

The results were also remarkably obvious. With constraints in place, capitalists finally realized the immensity of heaven and earth, improving their behavior somewhat.

Franz wasn't about to buy into their nonsense. Claims that rising labor costs were undermining market competitiveness were mostly smoke and mirrors.

Speaking of labor costs, why don't they compare with their industry peers in Britain and France? As a major agricultural exporter, Austria's cost of living was still below those two countries.

It was for illegally seeking excessive gains that they violated the law, yet they made the preposterous claim that it was caused by market competition. If one were to make a case for high labor costs, one would have to make relevant comparisons before the truth would be revealed.

In this era, the only nations with qualifications to compare with Austria were Britain and France. And Austria still had some advantages over them.

Comparing labor costs with the Russian Bear was, of course, pointless. Their factories were still using free serf labor. Surely they couldn't go back to such backward practices?

Franz can confidently say that in this era, investment in industry was still in its golden age. Any enterprise with a gross profit margin of less than 30% was considered ripe for elimination.

Even if profits increased tenfold, capitalists would still find them too low. Franz deeply understood this point. Even he felt that the returns on gold mining were low!

The biggest cautionary tale was Britain and France. After the Second Industrial Revolution, their industrial production fell behind.

The reason they were falling behind was not technology or markets. The real reason was absurdly simple: if you can make money lying down, why bother making an effort?

In any case, they had cheaper raw materials and abundant markets. Profits could still be made without technological innovation.

From a profit perspective, upgrading machinery also requires investment. And in this fast-changing era, the pace of machine upgrades was also fast. To maximize profits, they simply decided not to upgrade.

On the other hand, the German Reich, with its higher labor and raw material costs, faced ruthless market competition. They had no choice but to encourage technological innovation; it was the only way to survive.

Over time, despite their absolute advantages, Britain and France were overtaken.

Were it not for the pressure to survive, Franz deeply suspected that Austria would have followed in the footsteps of Britain and France. Once everyone had picked up this bad habit, it would have been difficult to correct it later.

To obtain even cheaper labor, these capitalists may even have promoted some absurd policies without any concept of national interests.

Not only did they have to guard against capitalist degeneration, but they also had to guard against aristocratic decline. All people were the same once the pressure was relieved, it was easy to slip down the slope.

For Franz, the degeneration of the aristocracy was even more frightening than capitalist corruption. They were the foundation of his rule. If there were problems with this class, his rule would become unstable.

These were the people truly bound together with the Emperor. Their roots were all in Austria, and the cost of betrayal was extremely high. They would not be like capitalists, betraying as soon as greater profits appeared somewhere else.

The current promotion of overseas colonial movements and the domestic civil service examination system have sparked conflicts between the nobility and the bourgeoisie. In reality, these are all means of putting pressure on the nobility.

They must know that if they don't work hard today, they will be replaced tomorrow. Faced with this harsh reality, many nobles who are on the verge of bankruptcy or are already bankrupt have become pioneers of colonization.

In order not to let the elite of his nation degenerate, Franz also racked his brains. Many policies were devised with this problem in mind.

The subsequent personnel changes gave Franz further headaches.

The position of Chief of Staff is relatively easy to fill; there are many candidates, and many of them are capable.

In the later stages, wars became contests of national power. The most reliable strategy and tactic was to develop comprehensive national power and to crush the enemy directly by force.

A successor to the Foreign Minister has also been cultivated. His abilities may not match those of Metternich, but he was still above the average of other countries.

Essentially, diplomacy is also based on national strength. A weak country has no diplomacy; if there is no strength, even the most talented diplomats are useless.

It's the Minister of Internal Affairs that poses more trouble. For the sake of political balance in the country, this person must come from the conservatives, possess certain abilities that can convince others, and be willing to act according to Franz's will.

While countless people met one of those criteria, people who satisfied all conditions were rare even across Austria's entire government.

Chapter 302: Personnel Changes

The Paris Conference, due to Austrias interference, was concluded with almost lightning speed, depriving the Kingdom of Sardinia of its bargaining power, which is extremely rare in diplomatic history.

The French, who had been hogging the limelight, once again became the focus of public opinion. Concerns about the French threat once again attracted much attention.

Of course, this minor issue did not attract much attention from the French government. Talk of the French threat had been going on not just for a day or two, but for decades that everyone had become numb to it.

Let them all talk, it wasnt like they had anything to lose. At that time, the French were still celebrating this diplomatic victory.

Franz could only attribute it to the French obsession with Italy, just like the Habsburg obsession with annexing Switzerland. They always wanted to occupy those territories.

In his view, these regions offered very limited practical benefits beyond sentimental value.

Of course, what the French were doing suited Austrian interests. With France in the lead, the vigilance of Britain and Russia toward Austria dropped a notch.

Human thinking was complex, and judgments were often made on the basis of subjective awareness. In terms of overall national power, Austria was no weaker than France. But in everyones subconscious, the French threat felt greater.

This was not something that could be changed overnight. Historically, Bismarck had exploited this subconscious perception to isolate France diplomatically.

If it werent for the later blunders of William II, which made the British government realize that Germany posed a greater threat, the Allied Powers would not have been formed.

With France riding high now, they probably couldnt even dream of the price the French government has historically paid to dispel the French Threat idea.

In order to get closer to Russia, huge amounts of French capital flowed out in the form of loans, slowing down domestic economic growth.

To win over the British, they deliberately acted weak, giving up the naval arms race in the early 20th century. Of course, inadequate government finances were also a factor.

Many people believed that British diplomacy was formidable, but French diplomacy was also amazing. In an absolutely disadvantageous position, they brought Britain and Russia together to form the Allied Powers.

It was just that the French were far too prone to infighting and cabinet changes were too frequent, resulting in many strategies not being implemented due to power struggles.

Having sabotaged Napoleon III, Franz felt wonderful. No, this could not be called sabotaging, it should be called a win-win situation, with both sides getting what they needed.

The presently boisterous France was still at its peak, feeling no threat to its existence. The French still dreamed of world domination, and of course, they were indifferent to the envy and hatred of others.

In the face of tangible interests, what does a little hatred matter? Back when Napoleon took on the entire European continent alone, the French were not afraid of anything, let alone now, when they were just making a scene. There was no way they would back down.

Vienna Palace

At the cabinet meeting, Franz announced the new personnel appointments.

After the resignations of Prince Metternich and Marshal Radetzky, the Foreign Minister will be succeeded by Ambassador to Russia, Wessenberg, while Marshal Edmund shall succeed as the Chief of Staff.

Originally, Franz actually favored Marshal Julius Jacob von Haynau more for the position of Chief of Staff, but unfortunately, the Habsburg Tiger was already on his last legs, forcing Franz to make do with second best.

In the eyes of many, Julius might seem a butcher who killed indiscriminately. But in Franz's eyes, it was the exact opposite.

Everything he did was to uphold the rule of the Habsburg dynasty. In order to put an end to the hidden dangers once and for all, he did not hesitate to bear the infamy and bloodily suppress the rebels. He was the epitome of loyalty and service.

Under Franz's forceful intervention, Marshal Julius became a positive figure in history instead of being vilified as he had been in history.

Facts have proven that mood affects lifespan. Under Franz's butterfly effect, the destinies of many people were rewritten.

Archduke Louis asked anxiously: Your Majesty, what about my resignation?

The previous two had had their resignations approved, but when it was his turn, it came to a sudden halt. Archduke Louis was no longer willing to struggle. It had nothing to do with power, but simply with the fact that his body could take no more.

There was no culture of dying in office in Europe. When their health deteriorated, most people would choose to retire.

Franz explained: Let us wait two months. I plan to have Prince Windisch-Grätz take over as Minister of Internal Affairs. He needs some time to familiarize himself with the affairs first.

Upon the appointment of Prince Windisch-Grätz, the Governor General of the Balkans, Albrecht, will assume the office of Minister of War. The position of Governor General of the Balkans will be filled by Lieutenant General Morquez.

This was the rule Franz had established after taking the throne. For appointments across ministries, prior familiarization with the affairs was necessary to avoid embarrassing blunders.

Franz personally took charge of important personnel appointments. As for lower-level appointments, Franz didn't concern himself with them.

Human energy was limited, and Franz did not consider himself superhuman. As long as the central government and local officials were tightly controlled, supervising over a hundred people was enough. Everything else would naturally be left to them.

The appointment of the Minister of Internal Affairs was a last-minute decision by Franz, and no one knew about it beforehand.

The cabinet had already discussed the matter, but there were far too few suitable candidates. Franz had settled on Prince Windisch-Grätz as a last resort.

This was not due to a lack of talent among the Austrians, but rather a lack of talent among the Austrian nobility in particular. Such an occurrence was inevitable. Just look at the population base how could every generation produce talents?

Because of medical limitations, many family lines were indeed in danger of dying out. Without new blood to replenish them, the aristocracy was destined to be unable to maintain power indefinitely.

These changing times of old and new powers were also often the bloodiest periods. Failure to properly handle things could easily lead to domestic turmoil.

As an emperor, when it comes to appointing people, you cannot solely consider their status, but at the same time, you cannot ignore it either. This was the line that left the deepest impression on Franz during his education to be the emperor.

Now he truly understood this principle. To govern a country well, it was essential to nurture talent, and in such times, status should not be the sole criterion.

However, when it comes to balancing power, status must be taken into account. Otherwise, things would end up being dominated by one faction, making the Emperor irrelevant.

Relatively speaking, the so-called class was not truly important because such status could change. Franz suppressed the bourgeoisie, but not the capitalists themselves.

The suppression of this class was mainly because the aggressiveness of the bourgeoisie was too strong.

Once they gain power, driven by their interests, they could turn the country into a plutocratic system more in line with their interests.

The emperor and the nobility would be labeled as feudal tumors so they could be purged. If he were lucky, the emperor might become a figurehead. If unlucky, he would end up on the guillotine.

Since they are destined to be on opposing sides, they must be suppressed.

Moreover, the bourgeoisie itself was already a contradictory combination, with internal struggles far outweighing external ones. Their competition prevailed over any cooperation.

Their threat could be contained only by preventing them from banding together as a unified interest group.

Franz had no objection to them doing business honestly and making money. If they wanted to participate in politics, that was fine too, as long as they entered the system according to the rules, he would not object to that either.

But if they use their money to corrupt government officials and attempt to manipulate state politics from behind the scenes, then they must be suppressed.

Chapter 303: A Barracks Is an Iron-Forged Whole, Where Soldiers Come and Go Like Water

Economic crises in the capitalist world often come and go very quickly. The first global economic crisis finally drew to a close in early 1859.

By the end of 1858, Austrias industrial production had fallen by 29.7% compared to the previous year, while the overall economy shrank by 17.3%. More than three thousand companies went bankrupt, and the number of unemployed at one point exceeded one million...

Franz finally understood why everyone was so afraid of economic crises. The Austrian government took proactive measures, but the losses were still significant. Needless to say, countries that didnt take action suffered even more.

Of course, Austrias significant economic losses were also directly related to the previous period of rapid economic growth. The railway companies that Franz had inflated saw their market value plummet to one-tenth of its peak.

However, the losses caused by the economic crisis were not entirely negative. From another perspective, it also meant that Austrias industrialization was nearing completion. Only when capitalist economies reach a certain stage of development do such losses occur.

If the capitalist economy hadnt developed, they wouldnt be affected by economic crises, even when they occur.

The neighboring Russian Empire was an example; did the economic crisis have any effect on them?

The United States and Austria were hit hardest by the economic crisis. The United States suffered because the British withdrew funds, causing a liquidity crisis in the market, and leaving the weak central government completely at a loss.

Of course, Austria suffered from the aftermath of the crazy influx of capital and the blind investments of capitalists. After the economic crisis, the market returned to rationality, which wasnt necessarily a bad thing.

After a cursory glance at the economic reports, Franz nodded in satisfaction.

In a situation where there was no previous experience to draw upon, the Austrian governments performance in quickly overcoming the economic crisis was still deemed satisfactory.

Prime Minister Felix spoke up and said, Your Majesty, the economic crisis has ended and the global economy is beginning to recover. The Cabinet has decided to end the economic stimulus policies to prevent a recurrence of feverish blind investment.

To combat this economic crisis, the government increased investment in infrastructure. Our budget deficit reached a staggering 280 million guilders in 1858, far exceeding the governments fiscal burden capacity.

To ease fiscal pressure, the government plans to gradually reduce fiscal spending over the next three years and gradually reduce debt by 30 million guilders.

Projects that have already started construction will continue, while those that are planned or have not yet started will be postponed.

Infrastructure development also requires money, and as the biggest rescuer in this economic crisis, the Austrian government has also incurred massive expenses.

A portion of the funds raised by issuing bonds went towards bailing out unfinished projects, while another portion entered railway companies and nationally important industries via equity investments.

The 280 million guilders fiscal deficit was money that had already been spent. Two and a half years of fiscal revenues have now been transformed into infrastructure projects and corporate equity.

As for the unspent funds, they were earmarked. Not every project was left unfinished. Their schemes still managed to ensnare quite a few.

As people continued to work to complete the projects, the government naturally had to pay for them. The Austrian governments reputation was at stake, so it had to make prompt payments as soon as inspections and acceptance checks were passed.

With the government running out of money, it naturally has to cut spending, and the first cut fell on infrastructure investment.

The massive infrastructure development this time was already equivalent to 10 years of investment. This pace couldnt continue.

No matter how crazy he was, Franz could not possibly allocate twice the annual fiscal revenue to infrastructure development every year.

Emergency investments in the midst of an economic crisis could still make sense. But with the crisis over, building infrastructure needs to take into account economic returns.

Franz thought for a moment and said, This is inevitable. Our total debt is already the fourth highest in the world, so its really necessary to reduce some of it.

Important urban infrastructure in the country has been largely covered now. In the absence of urgent projects in the short term, infrastructure development could be temporarily halted.

The fiscal pressure on the government could be quite severe over the next two to three years. After that, the massive corporate equity we hold should begin to generate returns.

As he said this, Franz himself lacked confidence. While it was true that they could make a profit, unfortunately, the largest investment had been made in railway companies, and it was unlikely that they would see a profit from this investment.

Unless, of course, he relaxes his policies and allows the railway companies to abandon some of the less profitable lines and operate railways only in economically prosperous areas.

Economically, it would be the most beneficial. Politically, it was out of the question.

Building railroads to every city in the country that needed one was not just a matter of economic growth, but more a matter of strengthening central control over local regions.

In this context, Franz could only apologize to the speculators who were late and got trapped. For the sake of national development, the railway companies must first operate at a loss, with profitability not being the immediate goal.

If the government had not bundled railway projects amid the economic fever but had left the capitalists free to build railways as they saw fit, 3-5 parallel lines would probably have been built in prosperous areas, while economically backward provinces would not have seen a single rail.



This has already been proven in Britain and France. Railroads without economic value simply don't get built, while economically prosperous areas see a great deal of redundant construction.

If it were just this one pitfall, it would be acceptable, but the problem is that many of the companies the government has invested in are in heavy industries, which are characterized by high investment, long cycles, and high returns.

In the short term, these companies need to expand production and drive technological innovation, so dividends are essentially nonexistent, and relying on these investments to offset the budget deficit seems like a distant prospect.

Of course, from the beginning, the Austrian government did not expect to make much profit from them.

More importantly, through government investment, it provides vital funding to these core industries, essentially saving them.

It was equivalent to the current government suffering hardship to leave ample reserves for subsequent governments. This can only happen in politically stable countries.

For countries with frequent changes of government, even leaving no problems for successors would already be considered decent. Want to build up reserves for them? Keep dreaming!

This is also one of the reasons why the national debts of many countries are increasing. As long as the current government is happy during its term, who cares about the fate of its successors?

As the debt piles up from one administration to the next, eventually reaching insurmountable heights, the government has no choice but to succumb to the influence of the financial conglomerates, gradually becoming a mere mouthpiece for money.

A barracks is an iron-forged whole, where soldiers come and go like water.

Monarchies were different. While cabinets changed, Emperor Franz would remain, and even future successors would be his descendants. Naturally, he would not allow anyone to sacrifice future development for immediate gain.

#### Chapter 304: Strategic Immigration

During the economic crisis, the Immigration Bureau of the Colonial Ministry was probably the busiest. From the end of 1857 to the beginning of 1859, in just over a year, the Immigration Bureau's accomplishments surpassed those of the previous years combined.

In order to survive, many people had no choice but to leave their hometowns. Among them, the largest number of immigrants went to the Balkans, accounting for 40% of the total number of immigrants.

This was still the result of deliberate government control. Otherwise, more than 80% of the immigrants would have chosen to go to the Balkans.

There were only two types of people who went to the African colonies voluntarily: those who were ambitious for wealth, and those who were desperately impoverished, struggling to survive, and forced to leave out of necessity.

Immigrants to the African continent could sign employment contracts with the government, plantation owners, or mine owners to have a stable income without worrying about the livelihood of their families.

Many people saw immigrating to the African continent as a form of labor migration. After all, it wasn't compulsory to migrate. At the end of their contract, they could choose to stay or return home.

For those struggling to make ends meet, as long as they could earn an income to support their families, it was considered enough, even if it meant going to a distant place.

After the personnel adjustments were completed, Franz spoke again: Colonial Ministry, let's discuss the development situation of the colonies.

Minister of the Colonies Josip Jelai replied: Your Majesty, at present we have already opened colonies in the Gulf of Guinea, Nigeria, Congo, Cameroon, Libya, and other areas.

We have established 68 colonial outposts and have 18 cities. The number of immigrants to the colonies has exceeded one million, and the directly controlled colonial territory covers an area of over three million square kilometers.

Among them, in the Gulf of Guinea, we have 25 colonial outposts, including eight cities, with a controlled territory of about 700,000 square kilometers. The total population there is 1.848 million, of which 284,000 are immigrants and the rest are natives.

In the Congo region, we have 14 colonial outposts, including four cities, covering a territory of about 680,000 square kilometers. The total population under its jurisdiction is about 3 million, of which about 318,000 are immigrants and the rest are natives.

The Nigeria colony was recently established, with only eight colonial outposts, including three cities, covering a territory of about 280,000 square kilometers. The total population under its jurisdiction is about 2.18 million, with immigrants accounting for about 185,000.

The Cameroon region was developed even later. At present, there are only 5 colonial outposts, including 2 cities, which control over 100,000 square kilometers of territory. The total population under their jurisdiction is about 560,000, with only 58,000 immigrants.

We continue to implement the replace-the-population strategy in the Libya region. Progress has been much slower than expected due to local resistance. Approximately 150,000 people remain stranded and the plan may not be completed until next year.

We have control over all the cities in the region and transported 86,000 immigrants. All the coastal oases have been controlled, and we still nominally control 1 million square kilometers of desert.

The Sinai Peninsula has few resources, so we did not develop it. We have only transported two thousand immigrants, and nominally rule over more than 60,000 square kilometers of the peninsula.

The European islands are directly under our rule and do not count as colonies.

In more distant overseas regions, colonial outposts have been spontaneously established by the private sector and have not yet been incorporated into government administration.

So far, with the exception of the Gulf of Guinea colony, which has managed to break even and even achieve a surplus due to gold mining, other regions are still in a state of loss.

In total, our colonial income in 1858 was negative 9.85 million guilders. Immigration expenses and military expenditures for foreign expeditions accounted for the majority of it.

It is expected that in the next two to three years we will recoup our investment in the Congo region, which was developed much earlier. For the rest of the colonies, it will take more time, at least five years, before they can contribute positively to our finances.

Franz nodded. Obviously, Austrias colonies still have a lot of potential. What the colonial government currently controls is only a small part, and there is still a lot of land waiting to be occupied.

However, Franz was not so optimistic about using colonial revenues to supplement the central governments finances. As long as the colonies could break even, it would already be a profit.

After hesitating for a moment, Franz said, The population ratio in the colonies is a big problem. The number of natives is too large, which is not conducive to our long-term rule.

Next, the Colonial Ministry will focus on immigration. Try to send these natives to the Americas as much as possible to reduce the hidden threat to our rule.

If the progress is not smooth, then expel them. You can decide to what extent.

Anyway, I dont care what method you use. Within 5 years, the native population must be reduced by 30%, and within 10 years, our immigrant population must exceed the native population.

Under normal circumstances, this would be an almost impossible task. In this era, however, it was not difficult to accomplish. After all, the integrity of the colonialists could not be doubted.

Even if they didnt know what to do, they could learn from their British and French counterparts, especially the British, who had the most experience in this area.

Yes, Your Majesty! Minister of the Colonies Josip Jelai replied in a deep voice.

Knowing that this task would not be easy, Josip Jelai would still not refuse because the Emperor had ordered it. After all, the fact that it wasnt easy didnt mean that it couldnt be done. How would they know if they didnt even try?

Franz did not know whether to laugh or cry because, after the economic crisis, the enthusiasm of the nobility to invest in plantations increased dramatically.

Compared to unfamiliar industries and finance, people were more willing to invest in industries they were familiar with. After all, the returns from plantations are relatively stable and the risks are not as great.

There are so many immigrants on the African continent now, and they are not just organized by the government. Many of them have been recruited by these plantation owners.

The royal family was among the most prominent, being one of the earliest investors in the colonies and developing tens of thousands of hectares of plantations.

Everyone was enthusiastic about growing wheat, cotton, cocoa, coffee, and other crops that yield returns in a short period.

By contrast, Franz, who focused on rubber plantation investments, had become an outlier. Rubber was not as widely used now as it would be in the future, and with the longer investment cycle, it was naturally less popular.

If there were enough labor, Franz would be willing to plant higher-yielding crops like cotton and coffee, but unfortunately, there is a shortage of labor. In desperation, he had to resort to planting rubber trees for now.

At present, the imperial plantations had recruited more than 30,000 workers, which was still a drop in the bucket. They had no choice but to use the natives as workers.

They were still in the process of recruiting high-quality overseas workers. At that time, a round trip to Asia took almost half a year. It was difficult to speed things up.

Franz was now very concerned that, if left unchecked, plantation and mine owners would soon become obsessed with using cheap local labor. He did not want to see the revival of slavery in the colonies.

At this time, it was only because of the inexperience and lack of domestication of these natives, which resulted in frequent riots, injuries, and runaways, that farm and plantation owners had doubts about the extensive use of native labor.

Meanwhile, the gold mine owners had already begun to use local laborers on a large scale, suppressing resistance with the formidable force at their disposal.

Franz did not believe that everyone's integrity would be high in the face of interests. Those who care about appearances simply emulate the royal plantations, hiring people by trading with tribal chiefs for commodities such as salt and cloth.

The ruthless ones would send people directly to capture slaves. The African continent was so chaotic, and there were many places that the authority of the colonial government could not reach. Thus, it was common for gold mine owners to be slave owners and slave traders.

From a short-term perspective, this is indeed a good thing, as it lowers production costs and yields more profit.

From a long-term development perspective, the extensive use of slave labor would encroach on the job opportunities of immigrants, not only severely hampering the economic development of the colonies, but also increasing social contradictions.

There was another reason that couldn't be said out loud, and that was Franz's desire to undermine his biggest competitors and weaken their development potential.

Historically, nearly half of the immigrants to the United States during this period came from the German, Italian, and southern European regions. Now most of these immigrants had been redirected elsewhere by Franz.

The labor shortage in the United States was more severe than in history. Against this backdrop, the conflicts between northern industrialists and southern plantation owners were even more intense.

The enthusiastic Franz naturally wanted to help them out. If there were not enough white immigrants, black immigrants would be used to fill the gap. If the quality was lacking, they would make up for it in quantity.

Just imagine, if half of the annual immigrants to the United States are black, then the future is bound to be very interesting. For this reason, what's a small cost compared to the potential gains?

#### Chapter 305: Seizing the Cotton Market

Prime Minister Felix took out a document and handed it to Franz, saying, Your Majesty, considering the rich resources in the African colonies and the large number of immigrants, we have formulated a colonial economic development plan for your review.

A colonial economic development plan? The term was very avant-garde. As Franz recalled, it was only after the emergence of self-governing dominions that autonomous governments formulated systematic economic development plans.

In most peoples minds, the purpose of establishing colonies was to plunder wealth. Local economic development was basically laissez-faire, with no long-term planning.

Despite his doubts, Franz took the document and read it carefully. He soon understood the reasoning behind the plan.

It wasn't the farsightedness of the Austrian government or the influence of interest groups; rather, it was the instinct of the ruling class.

When the ruling class formulates policy, there's a natural tendency toward self-interest. At present, the aristocratic group dominates the colonization of Africa, just as it dominates the Austrian government.

Before the successful establishment of farms and plantations, many people had doubts. Now that the first plantations were beginning to profit, with successful examples right in front of their eyes, the level of attention had increased significantly.

In the eyes of many traditional nobles, this was God-given wealth that could be passed on to future generations. The better the colonies developed, the more everyone's wealth would increase in value.

The ruling class naturally sought to protect its interests, so the Austrian government formulated a colonial development plan without being urged.

Franz's question reflected his concern: Has there been a survey of the terrain from Guinea to the Congo for the construction of a railway? Are there technical difficulties? And how will the financing issues be addressed?

Well, he decidedly ignored the fact that there were still many regions in between that were not under Austrian control.

Anyway, this was a time when might made right. Since Austria had formulated this plan, they must have made preparations to conquer these territories.

Prime Minister Felix explained: The terrain and topography have been preliminarily surveyed by the colonial government. Theoretically, with our current railway construction technology, we are capable of completing this railway construction.

Considering the economic needs, this railway must pass through most cities, and adding in branch lines, the total mileage may exceed 10,000 kilometers. We plan to build it in stages, and areas with harsh geographical conditions can be left for later.

Construction funds will continue to come mainly from private equity financing. The government will finance the shortfall. To stimulate everyone's investment enthusiasm, we can allocate the unowned land within 20 kilometers on both sides of the railway to the railway company.

Franz knew that this railway would definitely not be easy to build. Many theoretically feasible technologies would crumble under the high costs during actual construction.

The African colonies were not mainland Austria. Most areas have not been effectively developed, and many raw materials have to be transported from the mainland, which will greatly increase construction costs.

Judging by the economic development of the African colonies, this railroad with both strategic and economic functions may not be profitable for decades to come.

The profit point of the railway company was in the land on both sides of the railways. Whoever builds this railroad will be the biggest landlord.

This was a method learned from the construction of railways in the United States. Now, of course, this land has little value, but once the railway is completed, the value of this land will appreciate.

The railway company could easily build a station in each area and expand to the surrounding regions. By solving the transportation problem, whether its opening plantations or mining in these areas, one can make a decent profit.

If this were the future, such business opportunities would probably be highly sought after. With a radius of twenty kilometers on either side of the railway, that's forty kilometers in total. When the railway is completed, four hundred thousand square kilometers of land could be acquired.

With such a large area, even if there were no resources, the sale of timber alone could cover the cost of construction.

Unfortunately, neither lumber nor minerals buried underground were valuable now. Unless gold and silver mines were discovered, it was uncertain whether or not this investment would be profitable.

After careful calculation, Franz realized that this was indeed a high-quality project.

Building railroads in Africa would save on labor costs. Even with labor protection laws, the natives wouldn't know where to file complaints.

Of course, it would be useless even if they found where to file complaints. Complainants must first learn German for their cases to be accepted.

Natives who could learn German would not be low-level laborers. These talents would have been promoted to overseers long ago. If they were to complain, they would be the first to suffer.

No one wants to lose face, so it's usually the overseers who abuse the laborers. No higher-up would humiliate himself by personally going to the railroad construction site to whip people.

Basic materials such as sand, stone, and sleepers can be sourced locally. Cement doesn't need to be imported either; a cement plant can be built locally, saving a significant amount of material costs.

Even for mechanical equipment and rails that had to be shipped from the homeland, only transportation costs would be increased. Overall, construction costs would still be in a manageable range.

With the railway company owning such vast land, even if the development is subpar, selling resources alone could be profitable.

Franz calmly said, Since these problems have been solved, let's proceed with the construction of this railway. But remember to control costs; the government cannot invest a large amount of funds in this railway.

It is reasonable to focus on developing the plantation economy, but there must be a priority on what to grow.

The colonial government can send experts to inspect the area to determine which crops are suitable for each location. Then guide everyone to grow those crops.

The government can compile data on soil quality, climate, hydrology, and other factors for each region and list suitable cash crops for dissemination to the public.

As for the specific crops to be planted, everyone is free to choose; the government won't dictate anything.

Given the current international situation, with the threat of civil war in the United States, their cotton and tobacco exports are likely to be affected. We can make preparations in this area first.

This railway was in everyone's interest. Once land transportation was solved, there would be more land for development, instead of being limited to coastal and river areas as it is now.

Of course, as one of the stakeholders, Franz would not object. He even wanted to participate and get a share.

As to when this railway would be completed, or whether it would become an abandoned project, Franz was not worried at all.

Colonial territories are not like the homeland. If there are areas with difficult terrain where construction costs are too high, it doesn't matter if the project is delayed for a few years; the construction deadline is not urgent anyway.

The focus on cotton cultivation was primarily to seize the American cotton market. When the Civil War erupts, cotton exports will definitely be affected.

It should be noted that the value of U.S. cotton exports during this period was nearly \$190 million, accounting for two-thirds of the world's cotton export market share.

Historically, the American Civil War led to a halt in cotton exports, which severely affected the British cotton textile industry.

To avoid being stifled, John Bull forcibly implemented cotton cultivation in India.

After the war, when trade resumed as usual, American cotton exports had already fallen to \$6 million, never to regain their dominant position in the cotton market.

The Austrian colonies also had plenty of land suitable for growing cotton. As long as they could seize the opportunity to grab a third of the U.S. market share, the colonial finances would be turned around.

Chapter 306: Harsh Laws for Chaotic Times

The New Holy Roman Empire was a major importer and consumer of cotton, importing 5,000,000-6,000,000 guilders of cotton from overseas each year.

Still, it was not enough to meet the needs of domestic industry and commerce. And so Austria was also a major importer of cotton cloth.

Of course, this was also related to the economic development policies of the Austrian government. The cotton textile industry was not included in the key development projects.

To maintain its position as the largest grain exporter in Europe, the government did not encourage domestic cotton cultivation. The lack of raw materials had become an important factor limiting the development of the Austrian cotton textile industry.

In this context, the promotion of cotton cultivation in the colonies could not only save a lot of foreign exchange but also attract domestic textile capitalists.

For example: Bavaria was the traditional center of the cotton textile industry in Germany. Many capitalists went to West Africa to establish their own plantations because of the lack of raw materials.

Everyone could account for the political and economic considerations.

After some thought, Prime Minister Felix said, Your Majesty, the biggest problem with growing cotton is that it requires a large number of laborers during the harvest. The colonies are different from the mainland. It is too difficult to hire a large number of workers in a short time.

Unless we learn from the Americans to train a group of cheap black slave laborers, we will not be able to solve this problem. But the extensive use of native laborers contradicts our long-term strategy and is not conducive to long-term peace and stability.

That was the most realistic problem. Otherwise, Franz would not have gone to plant rubber trees. Now, the amount of land used by the imperial plantations for cotton cultivation remained limited, mainly due to the lack of labor.

In fact, rubber plantations also require a lot of labor, but rubber trees don't grow overnight, so the labor required before the rubber is harvested is much less.

The current number of immigrants was still limited. It was impossible for all these people to go and grow cotton, nor were all the areas suitable for growing cotton.

In addition to cotton, cash crops such as coffee, palm, cocoa, rubber, tobacco, soybeans, and peanuts were also priorities for development.

Although agricultural products such as wheat, corn, rice, and potatoes were not development priorities, self-sufficiency had to be achieved. The meticulous plantation owners could not bear to spend money to purchase them.

These industries all require labor, but unfortunately, the colonies are vast and sparsely populated. The labor shortage is not a trivial matter. Franz has no doubt that even with tens of millions of immigrants, they could easily be absorbed.

Franz said helplessly, Everyone can only find their own solutions to the labor shortage. In addition to recruiting immigrants domestically, overseas workers can also be recruited.



There is only one principle: overseas workers must complete assimilation and meet all our requirements before they can obtain permanent residency.

At that moment, Franz suddenly hoped that Russia would abolish serfdom. If the Russian government liberated the serfs, there would soon be a large number of penniless peasants.

These illiterate, penniless peasants would make quality immigrants. With no cultural heritage, they would be the easiest to assimilate.

Now under the system of serfdom, serfs were the property of the nobility. If you wanted to recruit workers from Tsarist Russia, you had to pay!

Although it was not possible to conduct such population transactions on the surface, this market still existed in the underground. It was a pity that the cost was too high.

Recruiting overseas workers was easier said than done. Migrants on the European continent had too many choices, and everyone had their own circles.

Beyond its own borders, Austria only has some influence in the German and Italian regions, where it can recruit immigrants. In Western Europe, however, hardly anyone is interested.

As a last resort, everyone's attention turned to the Far East. In any case, the labor from these regions was better than the local natives.

Anyway, Europe's per capita income at the time was more than ten times that of Asia. Hiring workers from East Asia was cost-effective.

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However, this approach is not without risks. At least in terms of ethnic integration, the difficulties are multiplied. Of course, this is still better than not being able to integrate with the local indigenous population.

Colonial Minister Josip Jelai reminded: Your Majesty, if a large number of overseas laborers are recruited, public security and labor conflicts will become serious social problems in the future.

He was not worried about domestic immigrants being bullied. On the contrary, Josip Jelai feared that domestic immigrants would pick on foreign laborers, creating social contradictions.

Never test the morality of the colonizers. Aside from individuals like Franz who care about their reputations, many landowners, plantation owners, and mine owners do not care about anything but their own interests.

Old aristocratic families were even better at this. The workers they recruited were mostly their original serfs, so they had a deeper understanding of them and exercised more restraint for the sake of their family's reputation.

It's a different story for the nouveau riche, who are still in the midst of primitive capital accumulation. Cases of wage arrears, deductions, and even non-payment are not uncommon. They treat their own people this way, how much more to foreign laborers.

Because of their misconduct, the workload of the colonial government increased significantly. Eventually, they had to establish a system for registering hired workers.

The household registration system, which was not even implemented domestically, was first implemented in the colonies. Were it not for technical problems, Franz would have already issued ID cards.

For now, managing the colonies with their small populations is manageable. However, as the population grows in the future, the difficulty of managing them will increase significantly.

After hesitating for a moment, Franz said harshly: Harsh laws for chaotic times. The colonial government needs to establish social order and clamp down on criminals. Throw all gang members, street thugs, and long-term unemployed vagrants into the mines.

As for labor disputes, we'll deal with them severely by making an example of a few. Catch a few serious offenders and deal with them severely, and then spread the word.

Frankly, Franz's actions were in contradiction to the law. However, the colonies were not mainland Austria, and the Austrian government never said that domestic laws would be applied.

Unemployment was the main cause of public security issues. If everyone had a legitimate job, the space for organized crime would shrink.

Franz's orders effectively cut off the development of gang organizations at the source. With the revised rules, there's no need to wait for a crime to occur before making arrests. Anyone associated with gangs would now be sent to work in the mines.

Even punks who commit petty crimes all the time could be sent by the police to work in the mines without any evidence of a crime.

The same was true for unemployed vagrants. In colonies suffering from severe labor shortages, they couldn't even find jobs, so the government might as well provide them directly.

Rest assured, Franz still had integrity. People sent to the mines without evidence of crime would still be paid fair market wages by the government. There's no issue of injustice.

With criminals and potential criminals sent to the mines, if public security still deteriorates, the colonial officials should go digging in the mines themselves!

Compared to public security, labor-management conflict is actually a minor issue. Market demand determines the relationship between labor and management.

In the face of such a severe labor shortage, who would dare to embezzle wages without fear that the workers would leave?

Franz did not believe that there would be many such idiots. Those who had behaved like this before were idiots who had failed to keep their mentality in order and had since paid a painful price.

The real trouble comes when there's an oversupply of labor. That's when these people would dare to act recklessly. The government wants to regulate strictly, but it also has to consider the unemployment problem it may create.

#### Chapter 307: A Pit That They Have To Jump Into (Bonus Chapter)

The fighting power that can be unleashed by a strong government is often beyond imagination. With Franz's order, trade between the Austrian colonies in Africa and the Americas suddenly became active.

A large number of labor export companies settled in the Austrian colonies, exporting surplus local labor to the Americas and the Arab world.

With everyone's combined efforts, the embarrassing situation of labor shortages in various countries improved significantly. Under the new labor export model, international slave prices also dropped across the board.

The labor export companies were actually forced to come into being. As the saying goes, when there is a policy from above, there is a countermeasure from below.

The Austrian government outlawed the slave trade, so resourceful slave traders immediately changed tactics to get around the law.

They appeared in the Austrian colonies under the name of labor export companies and blatantly continued their activities. In any case, they were free to do whatever they wanted after they left the Austrian colonies.

Whether these migrants ended up as slaves or contract workers depended on which country they ended up in.

These matters were not on the minds of the colonial bureaucrats. After all, they had an important mission to reduce the native population by 30% in 5 years, so they had no choice but to work hard.

The pressure was even greater as the colonies continued to expand. The Colonial Ministry assigned tasks to every colonial government, and the Ministry of Finance also allocated 2 million guilders annually as a special fund for immigration.

All profits from immigration work belonged to individuals. Officials with outstanding skills in the immigration business were directly promoted, while those who failed to perform their duties were all dismissed.

With everyone's livelihood at stake, no one dared take things lightly, not to mention the generous profits to be made based on everyone's personal abilities.

Beginning in 1859, Austrian colonies began a frenzy of exporting immigrants overseas.

Take the United States, for example. In 1858, 183,000 immigrants were accepted from the Austrian colonies. In 1859, this number suddenly jumped to 346,000, and in 1860, to 378,000...

The immediate result of this policy was that when the American Civil War erupted, the number of white people in the country decreased by half a million compared to historical figures, while the number of black people increased by one million.

Interest is always the best catalyst. Procuring black slaves from other countries' colonies would require heavy taxes or even bribes to colonial officials. Engaging in labor export in the Austrian colonies, however, would qualify for subsidies.

Colonial private military forces also frequently launched attacks on indigenous kingdoms.

At the end of 1859, Josip Jelai enacted the infamous Relocation Law.

The law stipulated that in the event of attacks on immigrants, military personnel, or government officials by the local population, all indigenous tribes within a fifty-kilometer radius would be forcibly relocated.

This immediately provoked strong protests from the labor export companies. How could good laborers be expelled? Wasnt it cutting off their source of income?

Inevitable changes occurred during implementation by the colonial government. In any case, relocation was relocation, regardless of the final destination; handing them over to labor export companies made no difference.

There was not much to say; in this era, no colonial government was cleaner than another. As long as there was no genocide, it would already be considered harmonious.

With Russian support, the rebel Indian army once exceeded 2 million men and occupied more than half of India.

Without a doubt, they were a ragtag army. Though their numbers swelled, their pitiful fighting ability was abysmal. They were armed with Russian-discarded junk, with an average of three men sharing one rifle.

After the rebels gained the upper hand, the British employed their most adept tactic sowing discord. With no unified leadership, the various rebel armies soon fell into infighting and lost their best chance to drive the British out of India.

John Bull, realizing the situation, continuously reinforced the troops in India. The strategic advantage the rebels had gained early on was completely lost in the infighting.

Next came the time to demonstrate comprehensive national strength. By 1859, the British had 350,000 troops in India and were gradually gaining the initiative on the battlefield.

After receiving intelligence reports, Franz could only lament John Bulls formidable might in being able to deploy so many troops on such a distant expedition.

Undoubtedly, only the British could afford such a large expenditure. Clearly, the Russian governments actions had struck Britains nerves.

They have effectively shown the Russians that if they want to take India, they need to think about how many troops they can actually commit to the region!

With these thoughts in mind, Franz could only smile coldly. It seems the British have miscalculated this time.

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Neither Nicholas I nor his successor Alexander II were pushovers. Trying to intimidate them was merely wishful thinking.

Historically, the Russians had been licking their wounds from their defeat in the Crimean War, and their support for the Indian rebellion was limited, allowing the British to quickly suppress it.

The current Russian government was also licking its wounds, but Nicholas I, who had seized Constantinople and was at the height of his power, suppressed internal contradictions.

Moreover, with Austrias financial support, the Russian governments finances were not as dire as they had been in the original timeline, allowing it to continue to support the rebels.

Moreover, India was by no means poor. The rebels also had considerable loot that could be used to purchase weapons.

If the Indians show some determination, they still have a chance to win the war. After all, they have a large population, and as long as they organize enough cannon fodder and wear down the British, they can succeed.

In any case, with the Russian governments support, the Indians could still hold out for some time.

With these thoughts in mind, Franz once again felt conflicted. On the one hand, he wanted to weaken the British and undermine their hegemony. On the other hand, he didnt want to weaken the British because they were the main force intervening in the American Civil War.

In the face of such contradictions, the Austrian government remained neutral, watching the fun without supporting any side.

Franz sighed, lit the intelligence reports in his hand on the candle flame, and then said: Thats it for the Indian matter. Just keep up the routine intelligence reports. Next comes the United States. If conditions permit, we can add a little to their chaos as de facto supporters of the Southern plantation owners.

Yes, Your Majesty! Tyron responded.

This task was very difficult because transoceanic telegraph lines did not yet exist. Communication became the greatest obstacle to the transmission of intelligence.

By the time ships relay messages from America back to the homeland, its often too late. Franz can only delegate authority. Whether they achieve results or not is up to fate.

In the short term, supporting the capitalists in the North could bring greater benefits. If they win, exports of cotton, tobacco, and grain from the United States will be greatly reduced. As a competitor, Austria will reap enormous economic benefits.

In the long run, however, a truly united United States is too formidable. The term Gods chosen nation is not just a figure of speech; they actually occupy the most fertile land in the world.

Even if the entire German region were unified, Austria could not compare with the development potential of the United States, which was inherently determined.

Even if no wars broke out on the European continent, allowing for stable development, it would only be a matter of time before they would be surpassed by the United States.

Unless Austria could swallow half the African continent and digest it perfectly, Franz thought it best to divide the United States.

Even if the United States were split in two, each part would still have the potential to become a world hegemon. Theres no way around it; the natural conditions in the United States are just too superior.

Even if the United States were divided, the strength of the North and South would gradually diverge over time. Hoping that the South could keep the North in check after independence is simply wishful thinking.

How long such independence could last was also a serious problem. The capitalist economy of the North far outstripped the plantation economy of the South in development potential.

Once a serious imbalance of power arose, if a strong leader appeared in the north, a reunification war would break out sooner or later.

When he thought about it, Franz felt like crying. Interfering in the American Civil War might not just be a one-time thing; it might turn into a bottomless pit.

It was at this point that Franz began to understand the actions of Napoleon III in history. Perhaps it was because he saw how terrifying this pit was that he chose to target Mexico, which was easier to bully.

When the French abruptly withdrew, the British and Spanish were immediately displeased. Werent we supposed to intervene together? Youre going to attack Mexico instead, ignoring collective interests?

With Frances withdrawal, Britain and Spain also began to withdraw, and the intervention coalition disintegrated before it even took the stage.

At that time, the European countries watched the American Civil War from the sidelines. The British government wanted to intervene several times, but internal disputes delayed their actions. Before they could make up their minds, the war was already over.

To pursue great things while cherishing ones own safety, and to see small gains and forget righteousness. described Napoleon III well. Just wanting profits without risk how was that possible?

Even though he knew there was a pit ahead, Franz decided to jump into it this time. Franz had no choice it was the lesser of two evils.

Regardless of whether the intervention succeeds, it will cause greater losses to America and delay its development.

If, by some stroke of luck, it succeeds, it would be a great victory. A country of immigrants like the United States naturally lacks cohesion. A war of unification cannot be waged indefinitely; after 2-3 failures, it will be difficult for the people to muster the courage to wage another war.

Prime Minister Felix took out a document and handed it to Franz, saying, "Your Majesty, considering the richness of the African colonies and the large number of immigrants, we have formulated a set of colonial economic development plans, please look over."

Colonial Economic Development Plan? This statement is very avant-garde. In Franz's memory, it should be after the emergence of the autonomous territory that the autonomous government formulated a systematic economic development plan.

In everyone's consciousness, the purpose of opening a colony is to plunder wealth. The local economic development is basically laissez-faire, without long-term planning.

Confused, Franz still took the papers and looked carefully, and soon he knew why there was such a plan.

It is not how far-sighted the Vienna government is, nor is it driven by interest groups, this is just an instinct of the ruling class.

When formulating policies as the ruling class, they naturally lean towards themselves. The aristocratic group now dominates the colonization of Africa, and it is also the aristocratic group that dominates the Austrian government.

Before the successful opening of farms and plantations, many people still had doubts. Now the plantations opened in the early days have started to make money, and successful examples are now in front of us, and everyone's attention has been greatly different.

To many traditional aristocrats, these are the wealth God has given them, and they can inherit the family business. The better the colony develops, the greater the value of your wealth.

The ruling class naturally defends its own interests and does not need to be promoted. The Vienna government has formulated a colonial development plan.

Franz asked with concern: "Has a railway been constructed from Guinea to the Congo, have you explored the terrain? Are there technical difficulties? How can we solve the funding problem?"

Well, he decisively ignored that there were many other areas on the way, beyond Austria's control.

Anyway, in this era, you are talking with your fists. Since Vienna has formulated this plan, it is naturally ready to seize these areas.

Prime Minister Felix explained: "The landform and terrain have been preliminary explored by the colonial government. In theory, our current railway construction technology is sufficient to complete this railway construction.

Considering economic needs, this railway must run through most cities. In addition to the branch railway, the total mileage may exceed 10,000 kilometers. We plan to construct it in sections. Geographically poor areas can be placed behind.

The construction funds are still mainly based on private equity, and the shortfall is supplemented by government funding. In order to stimulate everyone's enthusiasm for investment, we can allocate the ownerless land within 20 kilometers on both sides of the railway to the railway company. "

Franz knows that this railway is definitely not so easy to complete. Many theoretically achievable technologies will cause people to collapse in the high cost of actual construction.

The African colonies are not indigenous, and most areas have not been effectively developed. Many raw materials have to be transported from within the country, and construction costs will definitely increase significantly.

Judging from the economic development of the African colonies, this strategic + economic dual role railway may not be profitable in the next few decades.

The profit point of the railway company is on the land on both sides of the railway. Whoever undertakes this railway is the biggest landowner.

This is the way to learn about the construction of American railways. Now such land is naturally worthless, but when the railway construction is completed, the land will also increase in value.

The railway company can build a station every other area and radiate to the surrounding area. The traffic problem has been solved, and no matter whether it is a plantation or mining in these areas, good returns can be obtained.

If left in the afterlife, it is estimated that such a business will be crowded. Twenty kilometers on both sides of the railway, that is, forty kilometers. After the completion of this railway, more than 400,000 square kilometers of land ownership can be obtained.

With such a large area, even if there are no resources, the construction cost can be recovered by selling wood alone.

Unfortunately, nowadays, neither wood nor minerals buried in the ground are worth much. Unless a gold or silver mine is discovered, it is unknown whether this investment will be profitable.

After careful calculation, Franz found that this was actually a good project.

In the construction of railways in Africa, first of all, labor costs can be saved. Even if there are labor protection laws, local indigenous people do not know where to go to complain.

Of course, even if a complaint is found, it is useless. The complainant must learn German first, otherwise the case will not be accepted.

Indigenous people who can learn German will not be workers at the bottom. Such talents have long been promoted to supervisors. They are going to complain. The first unlucky one is themselves.

Everyone is face-to-face, and the abuse of workers must be a supervisor. No high-level official will drop himself and rush to the railway site to take a whip.

Basic materials such as gravel and sleepers can be taken by yourself, and cement does not need to be purchased. It is entirely possible to build a local cement plant, which saves most of the raw material costs.

Even mechanical equipment and rails need to be transported from within the country, in fact the freight is increased. Overall, construction costs are within controllable limits.

The railway company owns such a large area of land, even if the development is even worse, the sale of resources can also make a profit.

Franz said calmly: "Since these problems have been solved, then the railway should be repaired! But remember to control costs, the government cannot invest a lot of financial resources on this railway.

It is a good idea to focus on the development of the plantation economy, but there is still a need for focus.

The colonial government can organize experts to conduct on-site inspections on where to plant what crops, and then guide everyone to plant what.

The government sorted out the local soil, climate, hydrology and other data, and then listed the economic crops suitable for planting and distributed them to the people.

The specific planting should be left to everyone's choice, and the government will not force it.

According to the current international situation, the civil war in the United States is imminent, and their cotton and tobacco exports will be affected by then. We can make preparations in this regard. "

This railway is in everyone's interest. Once the land transportation problem is resolved, everyone can develop more land. There is no need to only develop coastal and riverine areas.

As one of the vested interests, Franz will naturally not object. He even has to get involved and take a piece of it.

As for when this railway can be repaired, will it become a bad project, Franz is not worried at all.



The colony is not native. If it encounters terrible terrain, the construction cost is too high, so it doesn't matter if the construction is stopped for a few years, and the construction period is not urgent anyway.

The focus on the development of cotton planting is mainly to grab the US cotton market. Cotton exports will definitely be affected once the civil war breaks out.

You know, American cotton exports in this era were close to \$ 190 million, accounting for two-thirds of the global cotton export market.

Historically, the U.S. civil war caused the export of cotton to be cut off, and the British cotton textile industry was hit hard. In order to avoid getting stuck in his neck, John Bull forced cotton cultivation directly in India.

By the end of the war and when trade returned to normal, US cotton exports had fallen to \$ 6 million, and no longer dominated the cotton market.

Austria's colonies are also suitable for growing cotton. As long as they can seize a third of the American market share, the colony's finances will turn over.

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#### Chapter 309: State Funeral

By 1859, constitutionalism had become a hot topic in Austria, even the birth of the little prince had become a backdrop.

There was no way around it. The eldest son, Frederick, was already over two years old, and his position as crown prince was secure. As the second son, there would be much less public attention.

The Vienna Court still held celebrations as usual. Since medical technology was limited at that time, every family placed great importance on the next generation.

Almost every core member's birth was celebrated, as this showed the prosperity of the family.

The House of Habsburg was able to rise above the many noble families of Europe and establish a great empire by relying on having many sons and daughters.

Not only the Habsburgs, but all families with a long history have one thing in common: a strong reproductive ability.

The nobility of Europe were not simply locusts that fed on the people, even into the 19th century they had to be ready to go to the battlefield at any time as this was their responsibility and duty.

For families with few offspring, things were not so pleasant. In case of injury or accident on the battlefield, with the medical conditions of that era, they might just meet their maker directly.

Then it would only benefit others. There is no doubt that intermarriages between nobles were complex, but as long as a noble family existed for hundreds of years, heirs could basically be found among relatives.

This time Franz learned to be clever. He put all the prepared names together to draw lots. That's right, he would let the little guy draw it himself.

It cant really be considered drawing lots. The first crumpled paper he would grab with the name written on it would be the little guys name.

Archduchess Sophie objected: Franz, wouldnt that be too childish? When the child grows up, he will feel that you dont care about him!

Franz firmly denied, How could that be? It is precisely because I respect his opinion that I will let the little one decide for himself!

Archduchess Sophie asked, puzzled: But how are you going to explain this to Frederick?

Franz replied without changing his expression, Its fine, we just wont tell him.

What if he grabs several paper balls at the same time, do we combine them? Helene asked doubtfully.

Franz almost broke out in a cold sweat. He finally understood why some Europeans have such long names.

He hurriedly denied: Of course not. If that happens, well start over.

They absolutely could not do such a stupid thing. A name that was too long was not a good thing. As a father, if he couldnt even remember his sons name, he would be screwed.

Archduke Karl, who was enjoying the spectacle, added, Let us get started then, but I think it would be better if Frederick, his older brother, helped. The little one may be willing, but not able.

Two icy glares shot his way, and Franz smiled awkwardly. The newborn may not be able to accomplish this daunting task.

His carefully devised plan suddenly seemed like a joke. Getting Frederick to do it instead was impossible. If he went through with it, it would be a stain on Franzs reputation that he could never rid himself of.

After pondering for a moment, Franz said, Then let God decide. Ill draw for the little one!

Before anyone could respond, his hand had already grabbed one of the crumpled pieces of paper, which he then opened in front of everyone Peter.

After confirming the little ones name, Franz quickly left the scene.

Your Majesty, the old Marshal passed away last night!

The maids slightly panicked voice rang out. Franzs expression changed. There was only one man in the entirety of Austria who could be respectfully called old Marshal Johann Josef Wenzel Anton Franz Karl, Graf Radetzky von Radetz.

In terms of age, Marshal Radetzky was already 92 years old, one year more than in history. In an era where the average lifespan was less than 40, this was considered a long life.

Franz was mentally prepared for this, but Marshal Radetzkys passing still came somewhat unexpectedly, without the slightest sign beforehand.

Inform the cabinet to prepare for a state funeral. I will personally preside over the old Marshals funeral. Order the nation to observe a period of mourning for 14 days.

The Marshal, of Bohemian noble descent, had devoted his life to the Habsburg dynasty, earning great merit, yet never involved himself in politics.

Even when he was appointed Chief of Staff, he remained focused on his duties, never engaging in power struggles, but remaining loyal to the Emperor. He was a model for military men.

Out of a monarch's instinct, Franz didn't quite dare to glorify him while he was alive; death made things different, of course, he would have to arrange things to the highest standards.

With Marshal Radetzky's achievements, he well deserved such treatment, and Franz was not afraid anyone would object.

Little Peter's situation was tragic. His birth was overshadowed by constitutional matters, and just as he was named, the death of Marshal Radetzky diverted the attention of the world from him.

Franz was sure that tomorrow's newspapers in Vienna would be filled with news of Marshal Radetzky's death and the state funeral arrangements.

The emergence of telegraphs made communication across the European continent even closer. News of Marshal Radetzky's death was not kept secret and quickly spread.

Some were joyous, some were sorrowful.

Of course, Austria was in mourning; the old Marshal was still very popular. Many people spontaneously organized to see him off.

Even Napoleon III sent representatives to attend the funeral. A pure soldier always garners respect from others, even former enemies.

Of course, time was also a factor. So many years had passed since the Napoleonic Wars, and the animosity between the two sides had long since faded.

What was more likely was that France's enemies at that time were too numerous to count that Austria wasn't even noticed. It was Britain and Russia that attracted the most hatred.

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In the Napoleonic Wars, Marshal Radetzky was just a minor player, despite winning several local battles. Each side had its own agenda on the battlefield, so there wasn't any deep-seated animosity.

If there was any joy, it would have been in the Kingdom of Sardinia. They didn't even send representatives; if it weren't for Marshal Radetzky, they wouldn't have suffered so much in the Austro-Sardinian War.

After all, Austria wasn't in a great situation at the time. Without the old Marshal's leadership, Franz wouldn't have dared to launch a counteroffensive.

Without the devastating war a decade ago, which cost 200,000-300,000 young lives, they wouldn't be in such a tragic state now, lacking even the ability to resist.

It turned out that Franz had overthought it. The Sardinian government was not happy at all.

Prime Minister Cavour had already been dismissed from his position. Undoubtedly, this must have had something to do with the Carbonari.

Not only him but all members of the Carbonari in the government had been dismissed and were undergoing investigation by the delegation.

As for the top brass of the Carbonari, they had long since fled. With such a major event, if a few people weren't killed as a warning, how could the supreme authority of the monarchy be upheld?

Franz was not Napoleon III; he would show no mercy in this matter. Since the Carbonari had plotted the assassination, he was determined to get to the bottom of it.

Whether or not the Carbonari leadership was directly involved, they must all face the guillotine. Failure to control their subordinates was a crime in itself.

If they hadn't stirred up those young hotheads, with the kind of brains they have, they probably wouldn't have become assassins.

Staying in the Kingdom of Sardinia and participating in the protests would have been much better. Even if they had besieged the parliament building, Franz wouldn't have intervened. But attempting assassination was unacceptable.

Without setting an example, who knows when another assassin might appear?

If these individuals hadn't fled, charges would still need to be fabricated. But now, it's unnecessary, as the joint investigation team has already issued wanted notices.

Franz had low hopes of catching them. With no modern identity registration system in this era, simply changing one's name and moving to a place where no one would recognize you was enough to avoid being found.

Those who knew to flee at the first chance were the smart ones. The unlucky ones who reacted a step slower were already in prison.

A young man appeared at Cavours home, his face about to cry as he asked, Count, what should we do now? My father has been arrested, and the investigation team is demanding that we prove our innocence. If we can't prove we had no involvement in the assassination attempt, they'll consider us accomplices.

Cavours face darkened as he replied, Kelder, I need to know if you were involved in the planning of this assassination attempt or if you knew of their plans beforehand. This is very important. You must tell the truth so I can try to get your father and the others out.

Kelder was on the verge of tears. He swore by the heavens that he really didn't know anything about the assassination attempt, even though he had a good relationship with the radicals and occasionally participated in their activities.

Not to mention his father. As a Sardinian businessman, he usually did not participate in specific activities, but only provided the Carbonari with funds for their activities.

To facilitate his business dealings, he held an honorary position within the party.

The tragedy was that this honorary position, elevated ever so slightly, resulted in his father, a titular high-level member, being arrested after several big shots fled.

Count, I really don't know anything. As you know clearly, my father is not even a high-level member at all, he never participates in party affairs.

Cavour nodded. He also knew this was the case. Under normal circumstances, he would certainly protect Kelders father to the death, since he was also his financial backer.

But the current situation was different, things were completely out of control. Even if he wanted to save them, it was beyond his power.

Regardless, the mastermind behind this assassination attempt must be found, or there would be no way to explain it to the international community.

If this case remains unsolved for too long, the longer the French occupy Sardinia, the more it becomes a fait accompli.

The British were still using the other countries to restrain France and had not allowed the French to occupy the entire Kingdom of Sardinia. If the perpetrator was found in time, international pressure could still be used to force the French to withdraw their troops, although surrendering land and paying reparations would be inevitable.

Cavour explained: The current situation is very complex. The positions of representatives from various countries are different. We have already been stripped of the power of discourse.

The Austrians goal this time is to find the mastermind behind the scenes. If theres an answer they can accept, coupled with an apology, then this matter can be resolved.

The problem lies with the French. They want to take advantage of this assassination attempt to annex the Kingdom of Sardinia. What is even more frightening is that the Austrian government has already tacitly approved of their actions.

Russias whip does not reach far enough. As long as the Austrian government does not object, the Russian government will not support us either. It is said that Nicholas I is also very angry about this assassination attempt.

Fortunately, the British are still supporting us for now. As long as we find the mastermind behind the scenes, theres still room for maneuver.

Kelder was no fool; he had already discerned Cavour's implied meaning. If they couldn't find the mastermind, they would have to find someone to take the blame.

And it would not be easy to take the fall. Not only would he have to face the guillotine, but he would also have to gain the approval of the investigation team.

Those who could afford to take the blame had all fled. The remaining people did not have the qualifications, even if they wanted to take the blame they would not be eligible.

So for now my father is in no danger, right? Kelder asked.

Cavour nodded and said, For now, you need to find a way to raise some money and grease the palms of the investigation team, explaining the situation to them. Everyone knows the real mastermind has already fled. As long as you keep them satisfied, your father should be safe.

When saying this, Cavour did not even believe it himself. The representatives of other countries were easy to deal with. As long as there was money, they would turn a blind eye and let it go.

But would the Austrian and French representatives dare to let this slide? If the mastermind really could not be found, then the only option was for the entire Carbonari to be the mastermind.

Rather kill wrongly than let anyone slip by. As long as all the suspects were eradicated, it wouldn't matter who the real culprit was.

To avenge two cases of conspiracy to assassinate the monarchy, killing a few hundred possible suspects was no big deal at all.

Do not expect anyone to speak up for them. No monarchy would vote against this.

Kelder nodded reluctantly. He understood that Cavour had already lost the power to speak now. After knowing that Prime Minister Cavour was dismissed, he did not have high hopes to begin with. Being able to find a way out now was not bad already.

Saving his father was only one aspect. More importantly, as the crime was too great, the whole family would not be able to escape being implicated. Once embroiled in a case of attempted regicide, not to mention his nouveau riche family, even old established noble families would be finished.

### Chapter 310: Gatling

In 1859, the British occupied Queensland, and the entire Australia fell under British colonial rule.

Watching helplessly as the British took the Gold Coast, Franz could only sigh in resignation. For Austria, Australia was simply too far away, and they had no means to compete for it.

The only ones in the world capable of challenging the British for Australia were the French, but clearly, Napoleon III had no interest in the continent of exiles.

The French, however, were not idle; they continued to intensify their infiltration of the Kingdom of Sardinia, with most areas bordering France already under French control.

The number of peacekeeping forces was limited, and the troops promised by various countries did not arrive in time; they could only control the Turin region.

As for the French infiltration, apart from the British and their gang of lackeys calling for action, the Russians, who were out of reach, became mere spectators, while the Austrians, busy catching the culprit, turned a blind eye to the actions of the French troops.

The British government was furious, but unfortunately, they were preoccupied with suppressing the Indian rebellion and couldn't spare more resources to intervene.

The French government was indeed pro-British, but that was based on the premise that there was no conflict of interest. The Kingdom of Sardinia, on the other hand, was a juicy target with minimal risks.

Opportunities for expanding territory on the European continent were rare, and Napoleon III might not encounter such a chance again in his lifetime if he missed it.

As for offending the British, the centuries-old enmity between Britain and France was no joke. What more was there to fear by adding another to the tally?

They were just nibbling away now rather than swallowing the entire Kingdom of Sardinia in one bite, already giving the British some face.

While expanding in Europe, the French also intensified their expansion on the African continent, such as invading Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and other regions.

At the end of 1859, Spain, unwilling to be beaten, sent 50,000 troops to invade Morocco, taking Tetouan and approaching Tangier. Under British mediation, the two countries signed the Treaty of Tetouan.

In comparison, Austria was pretty well-behaved this year, although the colonies still expanded a bit, but it was all done in a normal manner, without any major military actions.

Perhaps the most significant move was the frenzied export of immigrants to various countries in the Americas.

First, Marshal Radetzky passed away, followed closely by Metternich, and then Marshal Julius also met his maker.

The funeral for Marshal Radetzky was relatively straightforward; he was highly respected, and there was no opposition to holding a state funeral for him.

Metternich, on the other hand, had a stain on his political career due to the Vienna uprising of 1848, and he had offended many people during his many years in office.

While these people dared not cause trouble while he was alive, many emerged after his death. They found plenty of reasons to argue that he didn't deserve the highest level of state funeral.

Without a doubt, these minor disturbances didn't affect Franz's decision; he forcefully quashed any opposition.

No matter how the government tried to redeem his image, Marshal Julius' nickname 'The Butcher' could not be erased. He had slaughtered the rebels mercilessly when he was suppressing the uprising, offending even more people.

After the announcement of the state funeral, there were protests and demonstrations. Undoubtedly, these people misunderstood the situation and were eventually thrown into prison to reflect.

Giving Marshal Julius a high standard of treatment was something Franz did deliberately for everyone to see. The purpose was to tell people that as long as they worked for him, even if they ended up with a ruined reputation, he as Emperor would still protect them.

In this context, those who dared to cause trouble naturally faced misfortune.

Illegal assembly, gathering to disturb public order, disturbing public order, endangering public safety...

This series of charges added up to more than a decade in prison. This was almost equivalent to life imprisonment. Under current conditions, 90% of people would not survive more than ten years in prison.

Those who followed along for the sake of joining the fun would also be criticized and educated, fined, or sentenced if the circumstances were severe.

Receiving money from others, or being financially hired to participate in protest activities, would lead to hefty fines and prison terms of over a year.

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Indeed, there are financial transactions involved in protests. In many protests that fail to attract enough participants, organizers would hire ordinary people to participate.

Franz clamped down hard on such behavior.

Direct provisions were made in the law, imposing fines of a thousand times the illegal profits obtained and sentenced to over a year of hard labor depending on the severity of the offense.

Organizations or individuals who pay for hired participants are subject to a tenfold increase on top of this.

To combat financial consortiums manipulating politics, Franz racked his brains too, constantly adding targeted laws and regulations.

This was a time of harsh crackdowns, and those convicted of less serious crimes were mostly sent into exile. However, those sentenced to more than three years are all required to serve their sentences in the road construction corps.

During this crackdown period, the punishments are indeed severe. If you happened to get caught then you were just unlucky, who told you to make trouble at this time?

Although the constitution hasn't been finalized yet, everyone already knows that any organization or individual with a criminal record will be stripped of their right to participate in politics.

When it comes to combating enemies, Franz doesn't hold back. In these rapidly changing times, if strict order isn't established, Franz seriously doubts that Austria will be able to withstand the challenges.

Maid Jenny said softly, Your Majesty, the armory has delivered another machine gun sample, please take a look.

Franz replied calmly, Very well, arrange for a test firing tomorrow.

The machine gun had already been invented; in 1851, Belgian engineer Gatling designed the world's first machine gun, but unfortunately, its practical value was too low.

TN: I think the Belgian engineer the author was referring to in this is the Belgian Army Captain Fafschamps who invented the Mitrailleuse in 1851 (with the help of the Belgian gunsmith Joseph Montigny and the Fusnot company) which was considered the world's first machine gun. Not to be confused with the Gatling gun invented ten years later by American inventor Richard Jordan Gatling.

With the advent of the Gatling gun, Franz immediately took notice and ordered the armory to conduct research and development and improve it.

Over time, it went through four or five generations of updates. Designers racked their brains and came up with over thirty machine gun models of varying designs.

However, out of all these machine guns, not a single one satisfied Franz. It's not that he had high demands; it's just that these guns were too disappointing.

How do you use a machine gun that jams when moving? Who can handle a machine gun that weighs one and a half tons? Who can afford a machine gun that costs tens of thousands of guilders?

In short, none achieved the combination of high functionality and low price that Franz had envisioned. These machine guns were of little use for defending fixed positions because they could not turn and could only fire in one direction.



This was the situation with new technological research and development. Without even a reference, everything depended on trial and error. The Maxim gun that Franz had imagined was still nowhere to be seen.

The Gatling machine gun was modified almost to satisfaction and tested in African colonial territories, where it barely met the requirements.

They were not equipped in the army yet, mainly because no other countrys armies had machine guns equipped, and there was no rush since it was still peacetime.

Franz wanted to wait and see if machine guns with better performance would appear. It should be noted that even the lightest machine guns still weighed several hundred pounds and had to be towed by vehicles.

The cost of changing military equipment was extremely high. Many countries had outdated weaponry, not because the government bureaucrats did not know better, but simply because they could not afford to upgrade.

In this era, the iteration of weapons research and development was very fast. Newly equipped advanced weapons could become outdated after just a few years.

If luck isnt on your side, just as you finish equipping, even more advanced equipment comes out.

What to do then?

Not upgrading means falling behind, but upgrading again strains the finances.

Moreover, even if you do upgrade, who can guarantee that even more advanced weapons wont emerge?

In such situations, its a test of everyones judgment.