

Roman Empire 351

Chapter 351: Disappearing Foresight, Change In Mentality

Intentionally or unintentionally, the Russians soon paid the price for their actions, as the Polish independence movement erupted more swiftly than in history.

Britain and France increased financial aid to the independence organizations. After the uprising broke out, the independence organizations rapidly raised an army and began sweeping across the region.

As a mere onlooker, Franz soon received a letter of protest from the Russian government.

In disbelief, Franz asked, Prime Minister, are you sure the contents of this letter of protest are genuine?

It was shocking for Franz to learn that in this Polish uprising, Austria had four hundred volunteers participating, most of whom were retired officers from Austrian-controlled Polish territories.

It was unbelievable that under the nose of the Austrian government, Polish independence could muster such an armed force. Something fishy was going on if there were no issues.

Undermining the Russians behind the scenes is one thing, but having so many volunteers emerge openly is practically telling the world that Austria supports the Polish independence movement.

The Russo-Austrian alliance had not been dissolved yet. Stabbing the Russian government in the back like this was indefensible on moral grounds!

Prime Minister Felix answered awkwardly, Your Majesty, there are indeed many Poles in Galicia supporting this uprising. The number participating is not just four hundred, our statistics show eight hundred people.

And if things continue as they are, this number will still increase. We made a miscalculation beforehand; we didn't anticipate so many people would join this uprising, so we didn't take precautions.

Franz rubbed his forehead, unsure of what to say. After the Polish independence movement erupted, Poles from all over the world participated.

There are several million Poles in Austria alone, so having some volunteers was inevitable, but this quantity is a bit too much.

Could someone be framing us? Franz asked uncertainly.

He strongly suspected it was a plot by Britain and France aimed at sowing discord between Russia and Austria to dismantle the Russo-Austrian alliance.

Prime Minister Felix replied, Your Majesty, please rest assured. We have investigated, and these people are not problematic and did indeed volunteer for the uprising.

Many of them were originally residents of the Russian-controlled Polish territories and migrated to Galicia due to dissatisfaction with Russian rule.

Now, their participation in the uprising is likely fueled by resentment. We have taken action, and such occurrences will not continue in the future.

Faced with this outcome, Franz could only attribute it to Russias self-destructive actions. If they could drive people to flee the country, only to have those exiles still seek vengeance, what could be done?

Of course, there must have been someone in the Austrian government facilitating their entry; otherwise, it would be impossible for so many people to enter Poland smoothly.

Franz pondered for a moment before saying, Let the Foreign Ministry slowly explain things to the Russians and meanwhile, issue a diplomatic statement clarifying that the Polish issue in Russian Poland is an internal matter of the Russian Empire, and other countries should not interfere.

Regardless of the circumstances, the event had already occurred, and they could only try to manage the aftermath. Coincidentally, after Britain and France voiced support for the Polish independence movement internationally, other European countries followed suit, so the Russian government still needed Austrias support.

Given the situation, Franz did not expect any benefits. The priority was to express their stance, and whether the Russians believed it or not was beyond their control.

As for the rift in relations caused by this incident, it was significant but still fell short of breaking the Russo-Austrian alliance. As long as the alliance remained intact, they could gradually mend the relationship later on.

Foreign Minister Wessenberg replied, Your Majesty, the Russians will soon have their hands full. According to the information from our embassy in St. Petersburg, the Polish uprising forces have already exceeded one hundred thousand.

The Polish independence movement had been premeditated. After the uprising began, with both internal and external support, the one hundred thousand Russian troops deployed in the Polish region were routed by the Polish uprising forces.

Many units became captives before they could react, and numerous soldiers directly joined the Polish independence movement, seemingly in alliance with the Russian revolutionary organizations.

From the information we have gathered, the uprising forces are not entirely an unruly mob; their leadership should have undergone short-term military training.

Since the outbreak of the Polish uprising, at least five thousand volunteers from around the world have participated. Most of these individuals have received military training and have become officers in the rebel army.

The Foreign Ministry suspects that someone provided military training to the Polish independence organization. These volunteers are likely to have been trained in advance and swiftly entered Poland after the uprising broke out, leading the uprising.

Franzs expression changed gravely. This was likely the truth. If even Austrias covert meddling could produce a few hundred volunteers, the overt actions of Britain and France would surely be more excessive.

Is it difficult to train personnel for the Polish independence organization?

For seasoned troublemakers, its far too easy. Recruit a bunch of anti-Russian Poles, give them basic training, send them to the colonies to fight a few battles, and those who survive would become qualified soldiers.

If the Russian revolutionary organizations were also involved, then the situation became even more complex, meaning the rebellion would not be limited to just Poland, with the possibility of revolution erupting across the vast Russian Empire.

The reforming Russian Empire was undoubtedly at a crossroads. Now is the most vulnerable time; there are too many within the country dissatisfied with the reforms of the Russian government.

Radicals dislike the Tsars reforms for not being thorough enough, while conservatives feel that the reforms have harmed their interests. Once these dissatisfied individuals are provoked, who knows what they might do?

In fact, there has never been peace within the Russian Empire since the reforms of Alexander II began. Newly liberated serfs sigh as they look at the exorbitant redemption payments for land.

The land redemption process in Russia is not as harmonious as in Austria. These redemption payments also include interest, which is not the same concept as the unified payment standards set by Franz.

In Austria, the land redemption payments are basically based on 5-10 years of land output as the baseline, collected uniformly by the government and then transferred to the landowners.

Farmers can pay in installments for up to forty years, without considering interest. The annual redemption payments are within everyones means.

Due to the unified distribution, the collection standard is also set at 20% of the actual annual land output, which can be paid more or less, as long as it is cleared within the specified period.

Due to the factors of rebellion, the government confiscated a considerable amount of land. This collection actually earns the Austrian government a lot of profit, so naturally, they can use some of the money to alleviate the situation when there is insufficient redemption payment during years of disasters.

When it comes to the Russian government, things are different. The landowners are still alive and well, and most of the land belongs to these nobles. Before the reforms, there were fewer than twenty peasant estates in Russia, and even the free peasants owned only a small amount of land.

In this context, its definitely impossible to reduce land redemption prices. Unified collection and distribution without interest payments are also out of the question.

If it werent for the revolution, Franz wouldnt have had the ability to force the nobles to accept such harsh conditions. In reality, Austrias land reform wasnt thorough either.

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Many nobles who were not involved in or affected by the rebellion still owned large amounts of land, and the government couldnt force them to sell if they were unwilling.

The lack of social conflicts mainly stemmed from the Austrian governments reduction of the per capita land redemption area, ensuring that everyone could redeem land, albeit uncertain in location.

Later, with expansion in the Balkans and the establishment of overseas colonies, the previously scarce land supply became more abundant, and land conflicts were finally completely resolved.

Now the Colonial Ministry's immigration slogan was:

Want your own farm? Go to the colonies and cultivate the land.

Want your own plantation? Go to the colonies and cultivate the land.

As much land as you can cultivate, that's how much land you can own.

This was something the Russian government couldn't do. Although there was plenty of uncultivated land available domestically, these lands still had owners.

The average land area acquired by peasants through redemption was even lower than that in Austria, surprisingly. Of course, this calculation includes those from the Balkan Peninsula, where Romania and Serbia provided a significant amount of arable land.

Alexander II's reforms only provided enough land for 13% of the serfs to live on; for the 42% of serfs, the land acquired barely sustained them after paying redemption dues; the rest had to resort to working elsewhere since they couldn't survive solely on the land.

This provided an abundant labor force for the development of capitalism in Russia. Historically, with the development of the capitalist economy, a portion of the rural population moved to cities, gradually alleviating the previously scarce land supply issue.

In the late 19th century, the Russian Empire regained strength thanks to the reforms of Alexander II.

Unfortunately, at present, Russia's capitalist economy is just beginning to develop and cannot absorb too much population.

The social benefits brought about by the reforms have not yet been fully realized, but the social contradictions brought about by them have already begun to manifest.

We must closely monitor the direction of the situation in Russia, understand the forces involved, and be prepared to intervene. We cannot allow Russia to undergo major upheaval.

Franz made a decisive decision: it's acceptable to cause some trouble for the Russians, but it's better not to destroy the Russian Empire completely!

Unless it's possible to dismantle the Russian Empire and permanently eliminate the threat, it's better to preserve the Russian government.

After all, Russia ruled by the current Russian government posed a limited threat to Austria. There are too many people internally dragging their feet, and even the talented Alexander II couldn't change this.

But if the rules are broken, then it's a different story. Franz could even take advantage of the chaos to consolidate Hungary and integrate Austria. Who can guarantee that Russia won't produce a formidable figure to turn the tables?

At least Alexander II had that capability. He couldn't solve the problem completely within the rules. But once the order is disrupted, the situation changes. Nicholas I left him the greatest legacy: a military loyal to the Tsar.

As long as the military was controlled, many problems essentially ceased being problems. By overturning the chessboard, Alexander II had a strong possibility of regaining power.

If it were any other country, a coalition of nations could intervene, but when it comes to Russia, Franz admits he fears the cold.

TN: Never invade Russia in winter!

If Russia rises from the ashes, then Austria could do nothing much except act as Europe's gatekeeper, responsible for keeping an eye on the bear.

Prime Minister Felix objected, Your Majesty, we should not act rashly now. Although Alexander II's reforms harmed many interests, they did not cross the conservatives' bottom line.

As long as these people stay quiet, Russia won't descend into chaos. The collapse of the Russian forces in Poland is mainly because there are too many Polish soldiers among them.

To ensure stability in Poland, the Russian government recently ordered conscription from the Polish region in an attempt to relocate these people away from Poland, but the plan backfired as the uprising broke out as soon as it began.

The Russian army remains loyal to the Tsar, and the revolutionary parties have not yet influenced the military. A minor rebellion cannot shake the foundations of Russia.

As long as Britain and France don't personally intervene with military force, it won't be long before the rebellion is suppressed.

Hearing the Prime Minister's explanation, Franz breathed a sigh of relief. As an insider, he had overlooked that Britain and France would not directly intervene.

After losing the Near East War, Britain became much more cautious on European issues, trying its best to stay out when possible.

As for France, Napoleon III had nearly lost his throne, how could it be possible for him to wade into the Russian quagmire again?

The Kingdom of Prussia was simply disregarded. Despite their later reputation, if Russia so much as sneezed, the Prussian government would be trembling with fear.

For Austria now, the best option was to sit back and watch the show rather than prepare for intervention. Any action by the Austrian government could potentially send the wrong signal to the outside world, leading to an uncontrollable situation.

Franz thought for a while and then said, The Prime Minister is correct, I was too anxious. For now, inaction is better than action. Have the Foreign Ministry tell the Russian government that we support any of their actions on the Polish issue, and attribute the volunteer matter to Britain and France. As for everything else, we're not involved and know nothing about it.

Since the strategy is to remain passive, they could simply feign ignorance.

Britain and France can afford to provoke hatred because they are far enough from the Russians to not fear retaliation from them.

If they can strike a blow against the Russians, great. If not, they can still irritate them and use the Polish independence movement to delay the Russian government's reform process.

Is it really that simple? In today's world, the international situation has changed beyond recognition, and Franz's early advantage of foresight no longer exists.

After organizing his thoughts, Franz quickly came to a realization.

Austria is no longer the Austria of history. It has already accumulated enough advantages, and even without the advantage of foresight, it still maintains a favorable position in international competition.

Being overly concerned about the upheaval in the Russian Empire is actually due to Franz's lack of confidence. After all, the influence of past beliefs is too great, to the extent that he has overlooked the changes in his own strength.

Compared to any competitor, Austria has one or more advantages in certain areas, and all that needs to be done is to leverage these advantages.

First and foremost is the quality of the population. By taking the initiative to implement compulsory education, Austria is now reaping the benefits of this.

Once the Second Industrial Revolution kicks off, the advantage of being first in the game is already predetermined. By the time competitors react, Austria would have already taken the lead.

It would even seem that Austria was not lagging behind currently; it was keeping pace with the British and even surpassing them in certain industries.

On the other hand, the empire of usury has already shown signs of deviation. The inadequate domestic coal production has raised the costs of many industries in France, leading capitalists to increasingly favor profiting in finance.

Short-term competitors like Britain and France, constrained by population size and domestic territory, have already reached their development limits.

The constraints of domestic territory and resources can still be compensated for using colonies. Everyone is a colonial empire, so resources are not lacking. However, the shortage of population cannot be resolved.

Wait, the French are already figuring out a solution. That's through external expansion. Napoleon III has just annexed the Kingdom of Sardinia, supplementing the domestic labor shortage.

The British are the ones truly helpless. Surrounded by the sea on all sides, if they want to expand, they have to go to the continent. It's a pity that John Bull doesn't dare; as soon as they set foot on the European mainland, they'll be taught a lesson.

Mid-term competitors like the Russian Empire are still undergoing reforms, but they are at least twenty years behind industrially. This gap cannot be bridged in the short term.

Even if they cheat, it will take over a decade to catch up. In this era of rapid technological change, opponents cannot afford to wait for them to catch up.

As long as it was under Tsarist rule, such cheat-like accelerated development was impossible. If they can ensure normal development speed, it is already God's blessing.

As for long-term competitors like the Americans, after the turmoil of the Civil War, it's estimated that their development will be delayed by another 20-30 years. At least they have to wait until they achieve national unity again before they can compete for world dominance.

These advantages can only be considered superficial. The real advantage is that competitors have not yet recognized their own weaknesses or taken appropriate measures to address these issues.

Chapter 352: Diplomatic Turmoil

In St. Petersburg, the oblivious Russian government has finally realized what's happening. There's no doubt that someone was out to get them.

Having won the Near East War and seized Constantinople, the Russian Empire appeared unstoppable, but in reality, it also incurred the utmost hatred.

As the defeated powers, Britain and France were unwilling to accept their failure and constantly sought revenge. Meanwhile, other European countries, as bystanders, fear that the growing power of Russia could threaten their own security.

Under these circumstances, with everyone inadvertently or intentionally pushing, the current situation has arisen. With each party contributing, even inadvertently, the Polish independence movement has gained momentum.

In the Winter Palace

Alexander II roared: These bastards, when did the great Russian Empire allow them to interfere!

The foreign interference from various countries has ignited the wrath of His Majesty the Tsar. It has always been them interfering in others' internal affairs, but when did others dare to interfere in theirs?

As for whether the Polish issue counts as Russia's internal affairs, is there even a need to consider it? As long as it's occupied by Russia, it's Russian territory, and whether the outside world recognizes it or not is irrelevant.

No one dares to provoke the enraged Tsar, and everyone tacitly watches as Alexander II vents his anger.

Has the army for suppressing the rebellion set out? I want all these traitors hanged! Alexander II said through gritted teeth.

Upon hearing Alexander II's inquiry, everyone knew that the Tsar had regained his composure.

The Minister of War, Dmitry Milyutin, replied, A hundred thousand troops for suppressing the rebellion have already set out from the Baltic Sea and will enter the Polish region to quell the rebellion the day after tomorrow.

The Polish independence activists were not taken seriously by everyone. If the Russian Empire were that fragile, it would have been torn apart long ago.

Alexander II continued, What do the Austrians say? Have they provided a reasonable explanation?

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Gorchakov, replied, The Austrian government claims to be unaware of these matters. They believe it's the handiwork of Britain and France, intentionally sowing discord between the two countries.

They provided some information on the insurgents, many of whom are not permanent residents of Austria but have entered Austria in recent years. There are also records of their service in the armies of Britain and France.

Undoubtedly, most of this information is fabricated. To absolve themselves of responsibility, the Austrian government didn't mind letting Britain and France take the blame, as it was difficult to ascertain the truth in this era.

This answer is undoubtedly difficult for the Russian government to accept, but they have no choice but to accept it. Among the great powers, Austria is the only one left supporting them. They can't turn allies into enemies over such trivial matters, can they?

Alexander II asked in a displeased tone, And what about Prussia? Are Britain and France trying to sow discord between Prussia and Russia as well?

Despite being pro-Prussia, his stance can change at any moment in the face of national interests.

The Foreign Minister Gorchakov replied, No, the Prussian government states that these are spontaneous actions by the people, having nothing to do with them.

To prevent such situations from occurring again in the future, the Prussian government has announced it is stripping these people of their citizenship, leaving them for us to deal with as we see fit.

This explanation is even more nonsensical than the one from the Austrian government. The Prussian government is also helpless. The level of support they have provided to the Polish independence organization is even greater, so much so that they cannot even cover it up.

Austro-Russian relations have been quite good in recent decades. The Austrian government could be thick-skinned and just pin the blame on the English and French. But Prussia cannot do the same. The relationship between the two countries was already poor to begin with, with no need for further provocation.

Moreover, Prussia is preparing to attack Denmark next. Even if it mends relations with the Russian government now, it would be of no use.

After pondering for a moment, Alexander II connected the dots. Essentially, it boils down to the fact that European countries don't want to see Russia complete its reforms and become even stronger.

Realizing the truth, Alexander II calmed down.

No matter how the outside world reacts, the Polish rebellion must be suppressed. The Foreign Ministry must work hard. Looking around, the entire European continent has become an enemy of Russia. Where are our allies?

We cannot rely solely on Austria. When one day our interests clash, or when the Austrian government feels this alliance can no longer benefit them, it will be too late to find a solution then!

The Russian Empire needs new allies to change its passiveness in diplomacy.

Yes, Your Majesty, Foreign Minister Gorchakov replied with a bitter smile.

It's not that they haven't been working hard, but Russia simply cannot find suitable allies now. Geopolitics has determined that the countries of the European continent naturally stand in opposition to them. Unless the Russian government gives up its European strategy and vows never to expand in the European region again, such conflicts are inevitable.

No European country wants to see the Russian Empire continue to grow stronger. A powerful Russia threatens everyone's existence.

The deterioration of Russo-Prussian relations is not just because of the Danish issue, but more so because the Russian government wants to expand in Europe. Franz merely punctured through this thin layer of paper.

Feeling that its own security is threatened, the Kingdom of Prussia has no choice but to lean towards Britain and France. The growth of anti-Russian sentiment is because the Sword of Damocles of Russo-Austrian partition hangs over the Kingdom of Prussia.

The impasse in Europe provided favorable conditions for closer ties between the United States and Russia. In the autumn of 1864, the Russian government dispatched a naval fleet to visit the United States.

This may not be the best choice, but it is the only choice for Russia and the United States. Two isolated parties choosing to huddle together for warmth is only natural.

Franz's butterfly effect merely delayed the closing of ties between the United States and Russia by two years.

The Russian government intends to use the federal government to divert the attention of the European powers, easing their diplomatic pressures on the European continent; while the federal government hopes to gain Russia's support to offset some of the pressure from the great powers.

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By the end of 1864, at a crucial moment when the outcome of the American Civil War was about to be determined, the Russians stood by the side of the Union, injecting some morale into the federal government which had relocated its capital to New York.

On the American West Coast, development was still in its early stages during this era. Even the renowned California of later years was just beginning to emerge and was far behind the various states on the East Coast.

After the outbreak of the American Civil War, the main strength of the federal government's navy was concentrated on the East Coast. This was not favoritism by the Lincoln administration but rather a result of practical circumstances.

During this era, the shipbuilding industry in the United States was concentrated on the East Coast, while the shipbuilding industry on the West Coast lagged behind and did not have the capability to build warships.

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, the federal navy was never sufficiently equipped. The conflict zones of both the North and the South were on the East Coast, and due to the intervention of foreign powers, the Federal Navy was unable to gain an advantage. Consequently, the federal government could not send naval vessels to reinforce the West Coast.

Of course, the navy of the Confederate government also did not appear on the West Coast. The enemies faced by the coastal states in the West were privateer fleets, in other words, legally sanctioned pirates.

After the outbreak of the Civil War, both the North and the South issued letters of marque to privateers to attack the maritime transportation of the opposing side.

Due to the limited number of islands on the Pacific West Coast, pirates lacked supply points. Relatively speaking, the American West Coast was still peaceful.

Apart from occasional attacks by temporary pirate gangs, most of the time they were far from the threat of war. However, a few months ago, the situation changed when pirate activities suddenly increased on the West Coast.

The rampant pirates once occupied the Channel Islands several tens of miles off the coast of California, frequently raiding coastal ports, causing great suffering to the states along the West Coast.

It was well known that the main base of the pirates was in the Mexican Empire. The two countries had long-standing enmity, so it was no surprise that the Mexican government was causing trouble for them at this time.

Eliminating the pirates was out of the question. The federal government was already struggling amid the Civil War; if they started another war, they would surely be overwhelmed.

No matter how weak Mexico was, it was not something that several states on the West Coast could handle. Besides diplomatic protests, there was little the federal government could do.

Against this backdrop, the Russian Far East Fleet visited San Francisco during its tour, conveniently eliminating a pirate ship. The Russian fleet was immediately welcomed enthusiastically by the Californian populace, who had suffered grievously under the pirate threat.

Vice Admiral Popov, who was originally there to foster relations, after a few drinks, became so flattered that he lost his bearings and made a promise to combat the pirates.

Though he didn't mean it, they were taken to heart by the listeners.

Those attending the banquet were not just Americans. Envoys from various countries stationed in California were also present. Although everyone was suspected of taking sides in the Civil War, the Americans still had to observe diplomatic etiquette.

After the banquet, the British representative appeared at the Austrian consulate in California.

Carter, don't you think the Russians are being too arrogant? With just those few broken ships of theirs, they still want to fight against the pirates. I think the pirates will beat them instead! The British representative Rhodes probed.

The Russian Far East Fleet originally didn't have many ships to begin with, much less just the portion that made this visit. Getting defeated by pirates would be no surprise. After all, these were no ordinary pirates.

If someone were to investigate, they would find that these pirates hailed from the regions of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Their appearance on the West Coast was definitely orchestrated by someone.

The main reason for such a situation is, of course, profit. Even pirates need to sell their loot, so there are naturally vested interests involved.

Many may think piracy, a seemingly effortless endeavor, is a highly profitable industry. However, the real profit lies in controlling the distribution channels.

For the same goods, when sold on the black market, the price is only 30-40% of the market price at most. The biggest profits are always reaped not by the pirates, but by the black market channels behind the scenes.

Opening such a channel in Mexico is obviously not that simple. Without a group of protectors, they would likely have been wiped out by naval forces from various countries long ago.

Without a doubt, Rhodes was involved in this. The Russians aiming to combat piracy are essentially cutting off their source of income.

His probing of Austrias stance was merely out of concern that the Austrian naval forces in Central America might back up the Russians. He couldnt eliminate the Russians with one hand, only to invite even bigger troubles with the other.

Austrian representative Carter cooperatively responded, Theres no way around it. Perhaps the Russians have always been this arrogant. Maybe theyre even hoping to make a fortune by fighting against pirates.

You see, in recent months, the loot plundered by the pirates amounts to tens of millions of dollars. Even if only one-tenth of it remains, thats still a huge sum.

He might as well spell it out money solves everything. As long as the interests are taken care of, even if the entire Russian fleet is destroyed, it doesnt matter.

Russia and Austria may be allies, but that doesnt mean there are no conflicts of interest between them. Take the current situation, for example, Austria supports the Confederacy, while the Russians support the Union, putting them on opposite sides.

In such a situation, to avoid affecting the relationship between the two countries, both sides naturally need to avoid each other. Apart from the courtesy of exchanging greetings, Carter and the Russian representative have had no further contact.

This also indicated their respective stances. On American issues, Russia cannot expect to receive help from Austria.

The British targeting the Russian fleet is not as simple as it appears on the surface. Privately speaking, its because personal interests are hurt; publicly, its about knocking the Russians down a peg.

For a visiting naval fleet to be defeated by pirates while trying to suppress them if such a thing were to happen, the Russian government would be mocked for at least twenty years to come.

The diplomatic support Russia provides to the Union government by aligning with them will also be completely lost as a result.

Chapter 353: Besieging the Throne

In the Berlin Palace, the Junker nobles took a stand against the government. They were intelligent enough to understand that before launching an attack on Denmark, they should have notified the government for cooperation, rather than striking first and then informing them later.

Prime Minister Franck was livid. He was from the Junker nobility himself, but they went ahead without properly informing him, clearly not treating him as one of their own.

This was a serious matter; during this period, the Prussian government had fallen into the hands of the Junker nobility. Political parties and parliament controlled by the bourgeoisie had become mere extras.

If divided like a joint-stock company, the Junker nobles already control 65% of the shares in the Prussian Company, making them the absolute majority shareholder.

The occurrence of such an event meant that Francks position within the Junker nobility had been shaken. This was a political signal indicating a decrease in support for him within the Junker nobility.

William I also looked displeased, having been kept in the dark as well. He glared fiercely at the military representatives, indicating that if they didnt provide a reasonable explanation, he wouldnt be lenient.

There was nothing he could do about the Junkers, but that didnt mean he couldnt make a move against a few high-ranking military officers. Moreover, were the Junkers still unified now?

The emergence of the maritime faction and continental faction was partially thanks to William Is efforts. As a monarch, no one likes to have a monolithic group of subordinates; dividing them is simply instinctual.

Feeling pressured under William Is gaze, Roon, who served as both the Minister of the Army and the Navy, hurriedly explained, Your Majesty, look at this map of Europe. Here is the position of our Kingdom of Prussia. Our homeland is divided into two by the German Federal Empire.

The Rhineland in the west is under threat from the French military, while Prussian Poland in the east faces threats from the Russians. Additionally, the Silesia region in the south is under Austrian threat.

There is no other country in the world facing such dire strategic circumstances, simultaneously threatened by three great powers.

In such a situation, our options for breaking this deadlock are limited. Attempting to annex the German Federal Empire would inevitably be met with opposition from various European countries.

He continued, The French covet the Rhineland and do not want our homeland to be united; the Austrians aim to unify Germany themselves and will not allow us to encroach on the German Federal Empire; the British are unwilling to relinquish their foothold on the European continent and will not support our annexation of the German Federal Empire.

As for the Russians, their ambitions in Prussian Poland are known to all theyll pounce on us at the first opportunity.

To strengthen ourselves, our only option now is to recapture the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein from the Danes. If luck is on our side, we might even be able to take a big bite out of Denmark itself.

The recapture of the two duchies holds great significance for Germany. Under the influence of national righteousness, Austria will not stand against us; in fact, diplomatically, they may even support our actions.

Denmark leans toward Russia politically, so Britain and France wont mind us dealing a blow to Russian influence. They may even give us a push to pit us against Russia.

This is Russias most vulnerable moment. Alexander IIs reforms are not yet complete, and with the Polish uprising, the conservatives are bound to strike back.

With Russia beset by internal and external troubles, even if they wanted to intervene in this war, their financial situation severely limits their capabilities.

If Russia were to send troops, we would not be fighting alone. Britain and France would surely support us, and even Austria would hope for Russias failure.

Our chances of success in this endeavor are very high. With just a months time, we can occupy the Kingdom of Denmark, catch the Russians off guard, and then negotiate to resolve subsequent issues.

This is a gamble, betting on whether the Russians will intervene in this war. If they win, naturally they will reclaim the two duchies and take a chunk out of the Kingdom of Denmark in the process.

If they lose, theyll simply turn to Britain and France, acting as their proxies and engaging in a fight against the Russians with the support of both countries.

Theres no doubt the Prussian military has no confidence in a full-scale showdown with Russia. But a limited regional conflict supported by their full national strength is another matter.

The Russian Empire is powerful, but unfortunately, the Russian government is poor. The reforming Russian government is even poorer than before.

Though the Prussian government lacks funds, Britain and France are wealthy. Since they would be acting as their hired hands, the bosses will naturally foot the bill.

This explanation merely dampened William Is anger slightly. Clearly, more was needed for him to let this matter go.

William I sneered and said, Is that so, my Minister of War and Navy, my Chief of Staff? Since when did you take charge of all domestic and foreign affairs of the Kingdom of Prussia?

Minister of War and Navy, Roon and the Chief of Staff, Moltke, both lowered their heads, pretending to be ostriches.

It wasnt that they wanted to strike first and report later. The problem was that if they had reported this plan in advance, it would never have been approved.

On the surface, the risks of this gamble are within manageable limits. The worst-case scenario is a limited war with Russia, but with the support of Britain and France, Prussias chances of success are not low.

But in reality, this is just all assumptions. If any link in the chain encounters a problem, the Kingdom of Prussia could immediately face catastrophic consequences.

For instance, what if Russia went berserk and fought with everything they had? Not to mention English and French support, even if those two directly intervened, Prussia would still be doomed.

What if Russia and Austria reached a compromise to partition Prussia? Their enemies would instantly double.

Dont think that this possibility doesnt exist. In this era, the Kingdom of Prussia had a total area of 305,000 square kilometers, of which Prussian-controlled Polish territories alone accounted for 141,100 square kilometers.

Austria dared not relinquish Prussian German territories, but giving up those 141,100 sq km of Prussian Poland would pose no pressure for the Austrian government.

Under normal circumstances, the Russian government wouldnt do this. Thats because Austrias annexation of these territories would rapidly expand its power. Without Prussia to balance things out, the German Federal Empire wouldnt be able to hold up for long.

Or what if the English and French bureaucracies reacted too slowly, and by the time aid arrived, Prussia was already crippled?

Or perhaps an unexpected incident occurs during the attack on Denmark, and victory is not achieved in the war immediately. As a result, Russia launches an attack too, forcing Prussia to fight on two fronts.

Any one of these unexpected factors could doom the Kingdom of Prussia. Even if Prussia fell, the domestic nobles and capitalists wouldnt necessarily go down with it the only one doomed to misfortune would be William I.

As a competent monarch, why take such a risk? Wouldnt steady development under current conditions be better?

In plain terms, its the Junker nobility dragging Prussia onto the gambling table for their own interests, and doing so underprepared.

Prime Minister Franck advised, Your Majesty, at this point, lets set aside the issue of assigning blame for later! The most important thing now is to immediately communicate with other countries and seek diplomatic support.

Recovering the two duchies of Schleswig and Holstein is a great cause for the entire German nation. We cannot bear this burden alone.

Whether he wanted to or not, the Prussian government had to clean up this mess. If left to the military, who knows what kind of chaos would ensue?

Franck dared not take that risk. The Kingdom of Prussia could not afford the consequences of failure. Had he been in charge from the start, he would never have taken such a gamble without first securing the backing of Britain, France, and Austria.

William I sighed and said, I dont care how you do it, immediately order all military actions to cease. We need a valid excuse; weve already used the upholding of German sovereignty excuse once.

At the Paris Peace Conference, the German territories were divided, and Prussia was no longer qualified to represent all the German states. This cannot be our pretext for war.

To rally morale, invoking upholding German sovereignty best arouses soldiers patriotic fervor. But politically, its a losing argument.

In the First Schleswig War, under pressure from Russia, the Kingdom of Prussia again relinquished the territories of Schleswig and Holstein, tarnishing its reputation across German lands.

Using this excuse wont be accepted by either Austria or the German Federal Empire. The international resolution to divide the German territories at the Paris Peace Conference means that Britain and France wont recognize it as a pretext for war either.

Roon hesitated before responding, Your Majesty, its already too late. Although the plan was to launch the attack the day after tomorrow, the troops had already cut off telegraph communications. In such a short time, we simply cant notify the troops.

You see, we might just have to come up with a makeshift excuse, like: Liberating German compatriots oppressed by the Kingdom of Denmark.

Clearly, the military was prepared in advance. Whether the Prussian government cooperates or not, the attack will still proceed as scheduled. The time left for the government is just for delivering the declaration of war.

Delaying tactics? Dont even dream about it. After all the hustle and bustle, how could they possibly back out now?

Chief of the General Staff Moltke hesitated, wanting to speak but ultimately remaining silent throughout.

This plan originated from the General Staff, and the accompanying operational plans were personally overseen by him. Just based on this, he dared not speak up rashly, lest he anger the king.

William I glared at Roon and scoffed, So youve already prepared everything? Then why bother telling me? Since youre all so capable, just handle it yourselves!

With that, he stormed out without looking back. The king had left in a huff, but the matter still needed to be handled. At the very least, the declaration of war had to be issued; Prussia couldnt afford to wage war without formal notice.

Prime Minister Franck, fuming, said, Since the military has already decided everything, then you can just have someone deliver the declaration to the Danes yourselves! The Foreign Ministry is busy enough, and they still have to take care of the aftermath for you. No need to bother them even more.

In ordinary times, whoever dares to encroach on the duties of the Foreign Ministry would have faced the wrath of the Foreign Minister long ago. But now, its an exception. The Prime Minister wants to shift all the responsibility onto the military, so naturally, he wont object.

If they won, everything would be fine. But if any mishap occurred and they lost this war, the military would have to shoulder all the blame.

Moltke and Roon exchanged glances and smiled bitterly. Its clear that their actions this time have angered both the king and the government, and they shouldnt expect to have an easy time in the future.

Unless this war yielded satisfactory gains for all, the two of them would definitely be sacked, possibly even court-martialed.

Unauthorized deployment of troops without the kings approval is already a grave offense. Now, the government is adding another charge, sending the military to deliver the declaration of war.

If they won, it would be credited as the governments decision. If they lost the war, this declaration would probably be branded as fabricated by the military.

With so many crimes, winning the war would erase all problems. If they lose, one more or one less charge made no difference.

In any case, its the military that broke the rules first and must naturally bear the corresponding responsibility.

Moltke replied, No problem. However, the government must cooperate in other aspects. If any departments negligence contributes to the failure of the war, then well all go to hell together!

This is Prussia, where the military holds the power of the state. As Chief of the General Staff, Moltke is only accountable to the king. He wouldnt dare to disobey William I, but he doesnt care much about government officials.

Since the relationship has already soured, using threats is more effective than trying to persuade them nicely.

Prime Minister Franck retorted mockingly, Youd better focus on doing your own jobs properly. Dont create another mess that we have to constantly clean up after you. Were convening a government meeting now, and you two arent welcome to participate. Please leave!

Theres no such thing as indolence. If the war fails, no one in the governments top ranks will be able to escape unscathed. Even if they arent directly responsible, theyll still be implicated and forced to resign.

Chapter 354: Getting Further and Further Away from the Truth

On the morning of October 25, 1864, Franz, who had just awakened from his sleep, was stunned by the news of the Prussian government declaring war on the Kingdom of Denmark.

To be precise, the two countries had already declared war the previous afternoon. The news only reached Vienna late at night, so the quick-witted staff delayed reporting it until Franz awoke.

With absolutely no prior indication, the two nations had suddenly gone to war. As for Prussias casus belli of liberating German compatriots, Franz dismissed it outright.

A pretext was just pretext. Historically, the Prussians had also carried the banner of upholding German sovereignty, but under Franz's butterfly effect, the Prussian government no longer dared to wave that flag.

With Austrias resurgence, slogans and mottos related to German unification gradually disappeared from the official documents of the Prussian government.

Especially after the Paris Peace Conference, both the Kingdom of Prussia and the newly established German Federal Empire tacitly suppressed the idea of greater unification.

No one was a fool if they kept propagating it, theyd just be tailoring a wedding dress for Austria.

Once the idea of greater unification takes root, they would become the targets of that unification. While unification may seem beneficial to the populace, for the rulers, its an entirely different story.

Despite the significant powers granted to the various states governments within the new Holy Roman Empire, compared to being their own masters, the rulers authority was significantly reduced.

Driven by self-interest, the international agreements from the Paris Peace Conference that divided the German territories became the legal basis for Prussias departure from the German territories.

Legally speaking, the Kingdom of Prussia, like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, is an independent country.

Continuing to carry the banner of maintaining sovereignty over the German territories would not only signal to the world that the Kingdom of Prussia remains part of Germany but also provide Austria with a legal basis for annexing them, wouldnt it?

The Prussian government wont engage in such foolishness. While the pretext of liberating German compatriots may seem a bit of a stretch, its still preferable to planting a political bomb.

This Prusso-Danish War involved the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, so the Austrian government will definitely need to take a stance.

After a simple breakfast, Franz convened a cabinet meeting in the palace.

Foreign Minister Wessenberg analyzed, Your Majesty, based on the intelligence weve gathered, we can preliminarily conclude that Prussia had premeditated this war, including its involvement in the recent Polish independence movement.

The Prussian governments daring declaration of war against Denmark likely has the shadow of Britain and France behind it; they may seek to capitalize on this opportunity to strike at the Russians.

The situation of the Russian government is currently precarious, with ongoing domestic reforms, the Central Asian War underway, and the outbreak of the Polish independence movement.

With so much happening simultaneously, the Russian governments finances would find it difficult to sustain another war.

If they were to intervene in the Prusso-Danish War, Britain and France would likely support Prussia in a proxy war against them, further draining their resources and disrupting the Russian governments reforms.

If Russia chooses to concede, its international reputation will suffer a significant blow. If they fail to protect their ally Denmark, the Russians would lose their status as a continental hegemon.

Whatever choice the Russian government makes, it will come with significant costs.

Perhaps the British are more inclined towards a proxy war to weaken Russias strength, while the French are more eager to seize the opportunity to pull down the Russians from their hegemonic position.

From a superficial analysis, the sudden declaration of war by the Prussian government against the Kingdom of Denmark undoubtedly suggests collusion between Britain, France, and Prussia. Otherwise, the Prussian government would not have the courage to challenge the Russians.

Only a few individuals are aware of the actions taken by the Junker aristocracy, and these individuals are unlikely to leak such information.

Many people within the Prussian military, including high-ranking officials, believe that this operation was planned jointly by the king, the cabinet, and the military, and nobody considers it a decision made independently by the military high command.

Certainly, only the top leadership could have planned this operation to cover up the most basic loopholes. If it had been planned by the lower ranks of the military, they would likely have foolishly launched the attack chanting slogans of For the unification of Germany.

This is also why Franz did not anticipate the actions of the Prussians in advance. Otherwise, he would have surely employed secret channels and launched an attack against the Danes under the banner of unifying Germany.

Those lacking political acumen could never foresee the ramifications of such a slogan. To them, it would suffice as long as it could arouse passion and bolster morale!

Political propaganda slogans cannot be shouted randomly; once they are out, they cannot be taken back.

Prime Minister Felix asked doubtfully, But why would the Prussian government play into the hands of Britain and France?

Just for the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, they have become mortal enemies with the Russians. Even if the Russian government currently cannot afford to deal with them, they will surely seek revenge in the future.

Even if the Prussian government is anti-Russian, they cannot ignore the power disparity between the two countries and blindly antagonize the Russians, can they?

The current situation is different from history. In the original timeline, during the Crimean War, the Russians lost their status as hegemon in Europe. At that time, the importance of the Kingdom of Denmark to the Russian government has decreased. Its merely a matter of prestige.

However, at this time, for the Russians, the Kingdom of Denmark is not just a matter of prestige but also a matter that preserves their position as the European hegemon.

Hegemony isnt just about having strength; it also requires gaining everyones recognition.

If a small kingdom like the Kingdom of Prussia can challenge its hegemony, what right does the Russian Empire have to claim European dominance?

Even if Alexander II swallows it for now due to domestic reforms, in the future, if Russia wants to vie for European hegemony again, they must make an example of the Kingdom of Prussia.

In this sense, the Prussian governments actions are very unwise. Even if they gain short-term benefits, endless troubles await in the future.

If unlucky, the Russian government may throw caution to the wind and attack. Even with English and French support, even if they may win the war, they would suffer crippling losses.

After mulling it over, Franz replied, It seems that from the very beginning, the Prussian government regarded the Russians as mortal enemies, regardless of whether they offended them or not.

I recall that in Russias European expansion strategy, the first target was Prussian Poland.

Prussian Poland occupies 46.3% of the Kingdom of Prussia's territory. From the perspective of the Prussians, there is simply no room for compromise.

Faced with a powerful and potentially hostile Russian Empire, they had no choice but to align themselves with Britain and France.

Now, with the backing of these two great powers, they are being encouraged to cause trouble for the Russians, with the reward being the Schleswig and Holstein Duchies.

The Prussian government also does not want to see Russia's reforms succeed. Since they have backers, they might as well strike first and catch Russia off-guard.

They're not without a chance of victory. If they take the risk and defeat Russia once, not only can they swallow the two duchies, but also make Prussian Poland independent as a buffer between them, dramatically changing their strategically passive position.

Franz's level of imagination was quite decent; many in the Prussian government shared this view, though getting further and further away from the truth.

The Junker nobility responsible for planning this operation could guarantee with their family honor that they never intended to go as far as Franz imagined. Their motives were purely self-serving.

Defeating the Russians was never part of their plan.

Moltke's strategic plan was simply to quickly defeat the Danes and then hold the border fortresses against the Russian advance.

After all, the current Russian government was impoverished, with conservative factions at home obstructing reforms. Just drag things out for a few months and the Russian military would collapse on its own.

Furthermore, there's the Polish independence movement to contend with. Before suppressing the Polish uprising, the Russian army's incursion into Prussia could easily be cut off by the insurgents.

In the eyes of many, by the time the Russian government suppresses the Polish uprising, their coffers would already be depleted, leaving no funds to continue fighting.

However, the truth of the matter does not directly influence the decisions of the Austrian government. Even if the Prussians suddenly act irrationally, it doesn't affect Austria's choices.

After struggling to embrace the Prussian perspective, Prime Minister Felix spoke up: Your Majesty, since Prussia and Russia are on the verge of conflict, we too must make a choice.

With the involvement of the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, we are compelled to support Prussia in the upcoming conflict.

However, due to the Russo-Austrian alliance, in the potential war that follows, we may find ourselves supporting Russia. We are now at a crossroads, facing a difficult decision.

I suggest kicking the ball to the Russians. If they seek Austria's assistance, then let Russia and Austria divide Prussia. Russia can obtain the Polish territories of Prussia, while we gain the German territories. The disparity in benefits can be compensated with cash.

If the Russians do not agree to these terms, then we declare neutrality and refrain from participating in this Prusso-Russian conflict.

Franz rolled his eyes. This wasn't about dividing Prussia between the two nations; it was clearly about getting the Russians to express support for Austria's unification of the German territories.

Just look at the map: if Austria were to occupy the German territories of Prussia, the German Federal Empire would be surrounded by the Holy Roman Empire.

In such a scenario, if Franz still could not use political means to split up and gradually absorb the German Federal Empire, he would be ashamed to call himself master of the Habsburg monarchy.

Although the remaining German territories are not large in terms of land area, they are mostly fertile lands with a high level of economic development compared to the rest of Europe.

In addition to their economic significance, these regions also have sizable populations. Even without the Polish territories of Prussia, the remaining half of the Kingdom of Prussia along with the German Federal Empire still account for a population of around 17 to 18 million people.

When combined with the 60 million population of the new Holy Roman Empire, the merged Holy Roman Empire would surpass the total population of Britain and France. In terms of economic output alone, it would also surpass John Bull.

Unless the Russian government has gone collectively mad, such terms are simply not up for negotiation. Letting loose such a Central European behemoth would just be asking for trouble, wouldn't it?

Prime Minister Felix's real purpose is still to shut the Russians up and prevent them from asking Austria for help.

Otherwise, with the Russo-Austrian alliance treaty in hand, how will Austria respond to constant requests from the Russian government for loans and assistance?

If they give in, it could easily provoke resentment among German nationalists; if they don't, it would violate the alliance treaty, which wouldn't sit well morally.

Now by raising this issue, if Russia rejects supporting Austria's unification of the German territories, then the Russian government can no longer make demands for aid with a straight face.

Without Austria stepping forward, and with the support of Russia, the Kingdom of Denmark successfully annexed the two duchies.

Chapter 355: The Second Schleswig War

It turned out that this gain was not so easily obtained. The Prussians swallowed their anger at the time but were actually preparing a major counterattack. As soon as the Russians were preoccupied, they struck.

The war was declared on the afternoon of October 24th, and it wasn't until October 25th that the Prussian government began nationwide mobilization. On October 27th, the Prussian army crossed the border and invaded Danish territory.

On the surface, this was completely in accordance with international law, with military mobilization starting the day after the declaration of war, making it seem like a sudden decision.

However, not every country is like Prussia, with its vast military resources. Denmark did not boast a large standing army; they only had a few tens of thousands of troops.

Normally, with the protection of Russia, this force was sufficient. But once war broke out, they could hardly cope when Prussia casually drew out several tens of thousands of troops.

Christian IX demanded, Why did Prussia start this war without any prior warning? The last Schleswig War was not long ago. Have they forgotten their lesson so quickly?

Naturally, no one answered this self-contradictory question. Without any indication, who knew the Prussians would suddenly attack?

This is a matter of mentality. With the emergence of railways, the speed of military mobilization has greatly increased. Two days is already enough for Prussia to assemble tens of thousands of troops, which is more than sufficient for this.

The Council President Ditlev Gothard Monrad advised, Your Majesty, the situation has already occurred, we should immediately mobilize the entire nation to resist the Prussian invasion.

At the same time, we must instruct our ambassadors in various European countries to engage in diplomatic mediation, especially to secure Russian support.

Christian IX nodded. Regardless of whether the government was responsible, this was not the time to assign blame. The most important thing in wartime was stability.

If the government was bewildered, the Danish populace was even more confused. How did this fighting just break out?

Normally, the standard procedure is for both countries to engage in diplomatic wrangling, exchanging verbal blows in newspapers for months or even longer. After negotiations fail, the war hawks gradually gain momentum and then find a pretext to declare war.

But this time, it is anything but normal. The Prussian government found a pretext and declared war without any diplomatic efforts.

The Danish capital, Copenhagen, is already boiling with anger. Countless Danes felt their dignity had been provoked. After all, Denmark also has a proud history. How could they tolerate being provoked by Prussian brutes?

In a bakery, several customers are murmuring to each other, and the owner, Lax, can vaguely overhear their conversation.

Rbert, the king has issued a mobilization order. Im planning to go and beat up those Prussian brutes. Do you want to come along?

Rbert confidently replied, Klfggen, have you lost your mind? Do you really think those Prussian brutes are easy to deal with? Were simply no match for them!

For now, you should stay put and wait for the intervention of the European powers. Dont forget our geographical position we control the gateway to the Baltic Sea. The Russians certainly wont tolerate Prussian brutes occupying this area.

Klfggen, feeling dissatisfied, retorted, But werent you the one who always boasted about bravery? How can you be such a coward now? The valiant Danish people shouldnt fear a bunch of brutes!

Rbert chuckled coldly, Dont be naive. The military strength of the Kingdom of Prussia is well-known to everyone.

In the last Prusso-Danish War, our forces were overwhelmed by the Prussians. Do you know that we sacrificed over thirty thousand people and still ended up losing the war?

The Prussians weren't driven away by us; they were scared off by the threat of Russian force. If we had relied solely on our own strength, the Jutland Peninsula would have changed hands.

The Kingdom of Denmark has already declined. Now we're just a small nation surviving under the protection of great powers. Such a war is not suitable for us.

As the two men walked further away, their voices gradually faded from Lax's ears. He had heard such conversations before. Lax, now elderly, sighed deeply. Denmark was no longer the Denmark it used to be.

Even in the First Schleswig War over a decade ago, the courage displayed by the Danes was unmatched by today's standards. Lax had personally participated in that war.

Despite heavy losses and repeated defeats, they still kept fighting. Many young men voluntarily joined the army to fight hard against the Prussians.

Despite the Prussian onslaught, they had resisted for over a year without surrendering. Now, the younger generation was placing their hopes on the intervention of the great powers.

There was no denying it; the Kingdom of Denmark had truly declined. Excluding the two duchies, the population of Denmark was barely two million, around 1.66 million to be precise.

Population is not everything for a nation, but without a sufficient population, that nation cannot become powerful.

In the last war, although the Prussians did not seize the two duchies, they severely wounded the vitality of the Kingdom of Denmark, leaving many still traumatized by the war to this day.

Despite their loud bravado, when it comes to actually going to the battlefield, each one of them is more cowardly than the next.

In contrast, the Kingdom of Prussia presents a different picture. Since the Prussian government issued the mobilization order, militia reserves from all over the country spontaneously gathered at designated locations.

After being forced to surrender in the last Prusso-Danish War, the Prussians were deeply resentful. They would have recklessly attacked if it weren't for the Russian Bear being a bit too powerful.

The ridicule from the German lands that followed further fueled the shame felt by the younger generation of Prussians, driving them to want to wash away the disgrace of the past.

Indeed, the Russians are formidable, but the younger generation is not afraid. Like inexperienced calves unafraid of tigers, a group of teenagers in their rebellious phase believe that once the war starts, all the countries in Germany will support them.

There was some truth to this claim. The Prussian government could indeed gain the support of the various German states if it wished.

The execution is straightforward: just return to the embrace of the Holy Roman Empire. As long as the Prussian government dares to do so, the Austrian government won't mind tearing up the Russo-Austrian alliance.

After all, the current Russian Empire was weak, and with Britain and France as allies, everyone could join together to kick the Russian Empire down, and then stomp on it a few more times to finish the job.

The specific strategy is to dismantle Russia, granting independence to Finland, the Baltic States, Poland, Belarus, Ukraine, Bulgaria, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East.

With this series of actions, the population of the Russian Empire would be halved instantly. Even if they wanted to spark a Soviet-style revolution, Comrade Lenin hadn't even been born yet.

After neutralizing one side of the threats to them, Franz won't be intimidated anymore when facing Britain and France. At worst, they'll just appease Napoleon III first, and if Italy isn't enough, they'll add the Low Countries too.

In the face of interests, any conflicts can be set aside for later. Currently, there is no deep-seated animosity between Germany and France, and when such a lucrative opportunity presents itself, it's impossible not to seize it.

With the emergence of Greater Germany and Greater France simultaneously, even John Bull would be bewildered, unsure of which side to attack first. One wrong move and another hegemon will emerge in Europe.

As long as the British hesitated, allowing Austria to unite Germany, they would then stand undefeated.

A human wave tactic could even crush the French. In this era, John Bull could not organize and send millions of cannon fodder to the European continent for attrition warfare.

Undoubtedly, this was just the vision of German nationalist idealists, based on the premise that the rulers of the German states all lacked selfish motives.

This idea was a bit naive, but you can't ask too much of idealists. For now, those brave enough to take up arms and fight for German unification were outstanding talents.

The Prussian Chief of the General Staff, Moltke, has personally entered the army to command. However, it's now difficult to come up with inspiring propaganda slogans since they cannot rally under the banner of German unification.

Even more troublesome is having to explain to the soldiers why they cannot use the banner of German unification. Simply stating it's due to interests won't suffice; Austria's efforts to establish the new Holy Roman Empire have gained the acceptance of the majority of Germanic peoples.

The rights of the ruling class may have been compromised, but that's none of the concern of ordinary people. Since their interests haven't been affected, there's even a greater possibility of benefiting from it.

Frowning at the combat reports bearing the term Germany, Moltke remarked, Change all these references. From now on, all military documents should center around Prussia. Germany is merely the name of a region and cannot represent our nation.

A middle-aged officer objected, Sir, by not using this term, are we not undermining our claim to reclaim the two duchies of Germany?

Without using this banner, there's insufficient legal basis, or one could even argue there's no legal basis at all.

They can't continue using the term Germany, and surely they can't use the banner of the Germanic people, right? This involves a broader scope; even the Danish people can be considered part of the northern branch of the Germanic people.

Directly using the banner of the Kingdom of Prussia, the people of Schleswig and Holstein wouldn't buy it. This is a unique cultural characteristic of Europe; if the terminology is changed, people won't recognize it.

However, in politics, there are no ifs. Upon realizing that there was no opportunity to unify Germany, the Prussian government decided to de-Germanize, just like Belgium, the Netherlands, and Switzerland which had established their own systems.

This is also the will of Britain and France. The most effective way to permanently prevent the unification of Germany was to divide them.

Moltke gave him a fierce glare and said, Major General Armand, I don't want to hear any excuses. Now, you just need to execute the order!

Chapter 356: The Second Collapse of the Vienna System

The sudden outbreak of the Second Schleswig War instantly escalated the situation in Europe.

The Danish government demanded that countries intervene in this war following the Treaty of Peace in the previous Prusso-Danish War and the agreements reached with the countries of the Vienna System, and sanction the rule-breaking Kingdom of Prussia.

In theory, the Danish government's request would be supported, and the Kingdom of Prussia would face joint pressure from European countries, including significant war reparations or cede territory as punishment.

Undoubtedly, due to the complex relationships between the four powers of Britain, France, Russia, and Austria, it was difficult for Denmark's demands to be met.

After the lessons learned from a recent Near East War, isolationism prevailed within the British government, advocating to avoid involvement in European disputes as much as possible.

At 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister's official residence, discussions are underway on how the British government should handle itself amidst the changing dynamics of the European situation.

Foreign Secretary Raistlin analyzed, The sudden outbreak of the Prusso-Danish War is mainly due to the immense pressure exerted by the three powers of Russia, France, and Austria on them.

Being bordered by these three great powers and having their territory divided into two parts, the Prussian government has always had a strong sense of anxiety, fearing that these three countries might partition them if they weren't careful.

As early as the Paris Peace Conference of 1853, when discussing the partition of the German territories, we proposed an exchange of territories between the Kingdom of Prussia and the German Federal Empire. However, due to significant disagreements, this proposal failed to push through.

The Kingdom of Prussia missed an opportunity to merge its territories and was forced to maintain a large military to ensure the security of its territory.

Now, the French are eyeing their Rhineland, the Austrians want to regain Silesia and the Prussian Saxony region, and the Russians harbor ambitious plans for Prussian Poland.

The three powers have not taken action mainly because they are restraining each other, unable to reach a consensus on interests.

The dispute between Austria and France over the ownership of the Rhineland region has been unable to reach a compromise, and there is also a dispute between Russia and Austria regarding the ownership of Silesia.

By exploiting the conflicts among various countries and leveraging its own strength, the Kingdom of Prussia has managed to preserve itself temporarily, but the crisis has not been resolved.

In fact, as early as 1853, there were suggestions domestically to support Prussia, merging the German Federal Empire and the Kingdom of Prussia to achieve a balance of power on the European continent.

This plan was aborted before it began because the price we would have to pay to support the Kingdom of Prussia was too high, and the effect would be very limited.

This country would even face annihilation as soon as it was established. To maintain its leading position in Germany, Austria would very likely compromise with France and Russia for an incomplete unification of Germany.

Specifically, the French would obtain the German territories west of the Rhine, and Austria would relinquish its territories in Italy; the Russians would acquire East Prussia, West Prussia, Pomerania, Posen, Silesia, and some areas of Austrian-controlled Poland; Austria would unify the remaining German territories.

To avoid the worst-case scenario, we opted for the plan to divide the German territories into three parts and also advocated for the establishment of the Second Vienna System, which fostered over a decade of peace and stability on the European continent.

After the French annexation of the Kingdom of Sardinia, everyone realized that the Vienna System was doomed to collapse, with Prussia being the most acutely aware of the crisis.

They chose to engage in military action when Russia was at its weakest, out of necessity. As soon as unrest occurred on the European continent, they would inevitably be drawn into it.

Now the Prussian government wants to take advantage of the fact that European countries, including us, do not want to see Russia complete its reforms, to act as a weapon against Russia.

Supporting the Kingdom of Prussia is impossible; it's the age of industrialization now. Where do we find markets for them? However, supporting them in fighting against the Russians seems somewhat feasible.

If we could seize this opportunity, unite with various European countries to collectively hinder Russia's path of reform, or even divide Russia, that would be ideal, Chancellor of the Exchequer Agarwal remarked.

This is a real problem. Just flip through the history books, and you'll see that the British have supported numerous countries. However, in reality, such support has always been very limited, often just empty promises.

Presently, the troublemaker isn't taking action on the European mainland and Prussia's neighbors are not to be trifled with. They would be divided up before they even have a chance to grow.

Putting it bluntly, the cake has already been divided up, so emerging nations could only snatch food from the old empires, which France, Austria, and Russia would never allow. The greater Britain's support, the faster Prussia would perish.

First Lord of the Admiralty Edward objected, It's not that easy. If Russia were to collapse so readily, it would not deserve to be our greatest enemy.

Whether it's the Polish independence movement or the Kingdom of Prussia, they can only give the Russians a bit of trouble.

To defeat this empire, it would require the direct intervention of France and Austria. I don't believe we can currently convince France and Austria to join forces to suppress the Russians.

Austria has always maintained the Russo-Austrian alliance, fearing becoming the target of Russian invasion, even willing to let the Russians into the Balkan Peninsula.

They border too many regions with the Russians. Unless we can convince the Austrians that we can cripple Russia, the Austrian government will not take such a risk.

I suggest limited involvement, just enough to cause trouble for Russia. Resolving the Russian issue once and for all is very unrealistic; we need not take such risks.

Foreign Secretary Raistrick said, I also support limited involvement. We can provide loans, weapons, and ammunition to the Kingdom of Prussia and the Polish independence movement. There is no need for direct intervention.

The Russian government seems to be facing issues, but the Russian army remains intact. The troops annihilated in the Polish region were mostly locally recruited Poles, which cannot represent the true strength of the Russian army.

If we can drain some of Russia's strength and disrupt or delay their reform process, that would count as a success.

In Paris, the French government made almost the same decision as that of the British: providing money, weapons, and even volunteers, but refraining from direct military intervention.

Napoleon III even prepared to take advantage of the situation, but his target was not Russia, but rather the barely an ally Prussia.

Having successfully annexed the Kingdom of Sardinia had already awakened French ambitions. Capitalists could not bear the predicament of insufficient coal supply and high import prices, continuously urging the government to take action against the Rhineland.

The power of capital is formidable. Under the onslaught of money, the French government was inevitably influenced. Not taking action showed Napoleon III's mind was clear and aware of other countries' bottom lines.

One should not underestimate the seriousness of the joint defense treaties among nations. If they were to cross the line, it could lead to another anti-French coalition.

The probability of this was as high as 80%. Naturally, Napoleon III would not take such a risk. Even if he wanted to take action, he would have to drag others in to share the international pressure together.

Supporting the Kingdom of Prussia now is simply to boost the morale of the Prussian government. Regardless of the outcome, the French stand to benefit.

If by chance the Prussians manage to topple the Russians from their dominant position on the continent, the French stand to profit even more.

As for whether the Kingdom of Prussia would expand, that was not within Napoleon III's considerations at all. Even if they wanted to expand, there would have to be territories available.

If the Prussians dared to annex Russian lands, various European countries would likely support their righteous action, which would be a cause for celebration for everyone.

The premise was surviving Russia's retaliation. Otherwise, all the gains would only be temporary and destined to be lost again.

Without a doubt, the decisions of Britain and France have directly declared the collapse of the Second Vienna System. As great powers, how could these two countries lead the way in breaking the rules and still expect the system to be upheld?

After Britain and France have made their positions clear, Franz naturally will not choose to persist in a thankless task. After all, the historical role of this system has already been fulfilled.

After over a decade of development, Austria's strength has undergone a tremendous change and can withstand the impact of turmoil in Europe.

The only great power still adhering to this system was the Russian Empire. The reason they wanted to continue to uphold it was because the current terms of the Vienna System were favorable to them.

For example, in the issue of the Prusso-Danish War, the Russian government could use the agreements reached under the Second Vienna System as legal justification to attack Prussia.

With legal justification in hand, the immediate consequence was that the majority of public opinion in Europe supported the Kingdom of Denmark, and this war was perceived by the public as Prussia invading Denmark.

Under pressure from public opinion, Britain and France have limited their support for Prussia to behind-the-scenes actions. Publicly, apart from the German Federal Empire and Austria, various countries are condemning the Prussian government.

However, not condemning the Prussian government does not equate to supporting them. After experiencing the previous Prusso-Danish War, the people of Germany have little confidence in the Prussian government.

The Munich Daily criticized the Prussian government as nothing but robbers, accusing them of sending troops to Denmark to plunder to alleviate their financial difficulties, rather than to uphold German sovereignty.

This was based on evidence left over from the previous Prusso-Danish War, including pictures and facts proving the Prussian military had organized looting activities.

There's no need for explanation; in this era, the armies of various European countries were all like this. As long as the army did not engage in looting on its own territory, it could already be considered disciplined.

The Vienna Daily directly commented that the Prussian government, having run out of money, was preparing to use the Prusso-Danish War to solicit donations.

The people who have been deceived have the most right to speak. Many still remember it vividly, and even after over a decade, the Prussian government was still frequently dredged up for criticism.

In response to public opinion, the Austrian Foreign Ministry promptly issued a declaration of neutrality. Support was simply non-existent, not even verbal support.

The Prussian government did not even dare to chant the slogan of upholding German sovereignty, much to the dissatisfaction of German nationalists.

Originally, some had intended to support the Kingdom of Prussia in recovering the two duchies, but at this point also backed down. Many worried that Prussia's actions were aimed at completely separating from Germany to form an independent system like Switzerland and the Netherlands.

Chapter 357: Isolated and Alone

The Second Schleswig War led to the collapse of the Vienna System, causing discord among many small countries in Europe. Without the protection of this system, everyone is back to the era of turmoil.

As the disruptor of order, Prussia naturally drew a lot of hatred. The most immediate consequence is that in the Second Schleswig War, various countries sided with the Danes.

Of course, this did not prevent them from supporting Prussia in the Russo-Prussian confrontation. International politics has always been about supporting what benefits oneself, and opposing what affects one's interests.

In St. Petersburg, the whole world was waiting for what the Russian government would do.

If it were during the time of Nicholas I, then there would be only one word fight. With its strong power, it wouldn't be difficult for the Russian Empire to cripple Prussia.

However, it is difficult to say how much the cost would be. At least one thing is certain, as long as the Russian government does not make a fatal mistake, the Kingdom of Prussia would not be able to make a counterattack.

Just look at the map, and you'll see how vast the Russian Empire is. Prussia simply couldn't launch a direct attack; once a war began, it would be a war of attrition.

The Russians were not afraid of a war of attrition but at the same time, also most afraid of it. Apart from lacking money, the Russian government lacked nothing else.

Alexander II hesitated; he didn't want to engage in this war. Being financially strapped makes him uncertain. Dealing with Prussia might be manageable, but dealing with Britain and France behind them is much harder.

Foreign Minister Gorchakov analyzed, Your Majesty, the positions of various European countries have become clear. They all condemn Prussia's illegal actions, but no country has taken concrete action.

It can be initially judged that Britain and France are exerting pressure on other countries to remain neutral in the Prusso-Danish War, to undermine us.

If we cannot protect the Kingdom of Denmark, our international reputation will inevitably suffer, and we may even lose our current international status.

The Prussian attitude is very firm, they have already rejected our advice. Diplomatic means are no longer viable to preserve the Kingdom of Denmark, only force can be relied upon.

Have the Austrians taken no action? Are they just letting the Vienna System collapse? Alexander II asked with concern.

As early as last year, when the Kingdom of Denmark merged with the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, Austria severed diplomatic ties with Denmark.

Now, the relationship between the two countries has not normalized, and the likelihood of the Austrian government supporting Denmark is almost zero, Foreign Minister Gorchakov replied.

Clearly, this was not the answer Alexander II was hoping for. The Austro-Prussian diplomatic rupture was not primarily due to conflicting interests between the two countries; rather, it was more of a political necessity.

The Austrian government deliberately made a gesture for the German people to see, demonstrating that their determination to unify the German region had never diminished.

Political correctness is effective for every government. Now that Prussia has broken the Vienna System and launched a war against Denmark, it is understandable that Austria has not taken action.

No matter what, Prussia is still a German country, while Denmark is not. Whether to help kin or help the righteous cause is an obvious question, the Austrian governments neutrality is simply because of its bad relationship with Prussia.

After a long silence, Alexander II continued to ask, If we go to war with the Kingdom of Prussia, on which side will Austria stand?

This is the crux of the matter. Prussia has already gained the support of Britain and France, and most European countries would prefer to see Russia fail. Without Austrias support, this war simply could not be waged.

Foreign Minister Gorchakov explained, It cannot be fully determined yet. Based on the intelligence we have gathered so far, the Austrian government is more likely to support us.

They want to unify the German territories, and Prussia is the biggest obstacle. A strong Prussia does not serve their interests.

Even if the Kingdom of Prussia were willing to join the Holy Roman Empire, the Austrian government would not want to see a powerful member state emerge, weakening their control over the empire.

After hesitating for a moment, Alexander II made a decision, Tell the Austrian government that as long as we win this war, the Silesia region will be theirs. Apart from preventing them from unifying the German territories, the Foreign Ministry can negotiate other conditions on its own. We cannot succeed in this war without their support.

To fight is a must. The position of the Russian Empire was earned through battles and conquests. A Tsar who hesitates to wage war has no right to lead Russia.

It was not feasible to completely eliminate the Kingdom of Prussia, as it would create an opportunity for Austria to unify the German territories. However, it's essential to give this rebellious junior a proper lesson.

Alexander II had come to a clear understanding; there was no escaping it. European countries all wanted to thwart Russia's reforms. Even if they evade this time, there will be a next time.

At the slightest sign of weakness from the Russian Empire, a pack of wolves will pounce on the tiger. Even their staunchest ally, Austria, could become the vanguard of Russia's partition.

Defeating Prussia to assert authority was the best choice, otherwise the Russian Empire would inevitably have to make sacrifices.

In the Royal Palace of Mexico, since ascending to the imperial throne, Maximilian I burst forth with boundless enthusiasm, striving to build Mexico into a great empire.

He governed diligently, loved his people, and worked hard to administer the realm, without leaning towards any interest group, striving for fairness and justice. He even granted amnesty to the republicans and spared his political enemies.

However, as time passed, he reluctantly discovered that the domestic situation did not improve as a result; instead, it worsened.

Granting amnesty to the republicans did not ease the political strife within the country. These individuals quickly regrouped and turned against him, the emperor.

Despite the emperor's diligent governance and love for the people, the bureaucrats below him acted recklessly, rendering his efforts futile.

The most frustrating aspect was his pursuit of fairness and justice. The constitutionalists who supported his rise to power did not dominate the new government. Instead, Maximilian I shared power with the neutrals and opposing factions, which only fueled their dissatisfaction.

Many constitutionalist members felt hopeless about the emperor, believing that their investment had been wasted, and chose to withdraw their support, essentially watching coldly from the sidelines.

After all, Maximilian I was already the emperor, and even if the constitutionalists regretted their decision, there was no way to replace him with a new emperor.

Maximilian I selectively retained much of the reforms implemented by the previous government at the beginning of his reign, without considering the resistance from various sectors of society, which led to widespread discontent.

For example, at the start of his reign, the Catholic Church exerted significant influence, hoping to reclaim the land they had lost.

However, this land was not distributed to the people; instead, the majority fell into the hands of republican bureaucrats and their supporters, such as wealthy landowners and capitalists. Now that the republicans were losing political ground, the Church naturally sought to regain its power.

Under normal circumstances, Maximilian I would definitely stand on the side of his supporters and deal a blow at the Republicans, their enemy.

However, he believed that the Church should not hold too much land. These lands were reclaimed as state-owned and the government resold them to private individuals, which was a legal transaction.

Undoubtedly, this violated the principle of supporting one's own side while attacking the other side. If he could not bring benefits to his supporters, it was natural that they would not continue supporting him.

Within just a few short months, not only did Maximilian I fail to cultivate his own trusted regime, but he also drove many of his supporters to the opposing camp.

This is just one example of his many blunders. The most typical case of this was shortly after Maximilian I ascended the throne, he tripled the debt of the Mexican Empire.

As an idealist, he was naturally very easy to deceive.

Facing a financial crisis shortly after his coronation, the government needed funds to operate, the French forces intervening in the Mexican Civil War needed compensation, and the treasury had long been depleted.

Faced with this dilemma, Maximilian I had no choice but to borrow money abroad. Naturally, as his supporters, the French gladly accepted this offer, although their appetite was quite large.

In addition to the French, the interests of the other two intervening countries also had to be guaranteed. One of these was recognizing the debts owed by the previous government.

Here, Maximilian I made another mistake. Many of these debts were actually illegal and did not need to be inherited by the new government, yet he took them all on.

The famous Treaty of Miramar was signed in this context. Maximilian I entrusted a French bank to issue bonds worth 114 million pesos, of which the French retained one-third to repay their own debt and one-quarter to repay debts owed to other countries.

Adding various miscellaneous fees, only 42.18 million pesos eventually reached Maximilian's hands, and this money still had to pay for the expenses of the French garrison troops and maintain the operations of the government.

Without achieving anything, the debt tripled. Naturally, the discerning individuals in Mexico looked down on this emperor.

Even if borrowing was necessary, at least the actual situation should have been considered. The Mexican government had no money to repay this debt, and now the French were demanding that Maximilian I pledge customs duties as collateral.

Maximilian I suddenly realized that he had been deceived.

The Mexican Empire was nowhere near as wealthy as rumored. While it did produce silver abundantly, most of these mineral resources were owned by foreign powers, and little tax revenue could be collected from them.

Understanding the importance of customs duties, Maximilian I was unwilling to hand them over to the French, and the secret agreement between the two sides came to an end.

Your Majesty, this is the treaty, sign it!

General Bazin, the French commander in Mexico, directly handed a document to Maximilian I showing no respect for the emperor whatsoever.

Maximilian I picked up the document, tore it to shreds without even looking at it, and scattered it all over the floor. In a cold tone, he said, Alright, you may leave now.

As a direct descendant of the Habsburgs, Maximilian also had a temper. If the French didnt show him respect, he certainly wouldnt show them any either.

Bazin left the palace with a livid face, refraining from making any threatening remarks. Disregarding Maximilian was one thing, but openly challenging him was another matter altogether.

After all, he was not some republican rabble. France was also a monarchy, and upholding the dignity of the monarchy was the shared will of the monarchies of Europe. Bazin would naturally not commit such a taboo.

Not getting the emperors signature was no problem, getting the signature of the cabinet would be the same. The French had originally planned to get any high official to sign, and then create a fait accompli.

Now that the French government had even appointed the officials for the Mexican customs, they were just waiting to complete the remaining formalities and take office.

However, a conflict arose between Bazin and Maximilian I during a banquet, prompting Bazin to deliberately take out the document to provoke Maximilian.

From the very beginning, the French had only wanted a puppet emperor. Unfortunately, Maximilian I was completely uncooperative, still striving to be a good monarch.

However, this effort had largely exacerbated the situation. As an emperor installed by the French in conjunction with the constitutionalists, conservatives, and the Church, Maximilian I did not stand politically with the classes that supported him.

He naively aspired to become the most impartial monarch, not acting as a spokesperson for any political faction. He hoped to establish a moderate government that would gain the common recognition of all sides.

Currently, he has succeeded in accomplishing half of his goal by achieving fairness and impartiality, without becoming a mouthpiece for any class or interest group.

But the remaining half was probably something he would never be able to achieve. If the domestic political groups were to demand he defy French coercion, Maximilian I would find himself truly isolated and alone.

Chapter 358: The Federal Government's Counterattack (Bonus Chapter)

The brazen French expansion of influence in Mexico naturally sparked discontent among various sectors of Mexican society, with Maximilian I becoming embroiled in the matter.

Failing to recognize his change in status, Maximilian took measures to escalate the conflict, poking through this thin veneer.

He directly protested to Napoleon III that the French troops were acting wantonly and violating Mexicos sovereignty, resulting in tragedy as expected.

From the perspective of France, these actions by the French troops undoubtedly served their interests.

The skilled chameleon Napoleon III ignored the protest. Instead, he accused Maximilian and the Mexican government of lacking governing ability, unable even to maintain national stability, requiring the French to do the work.

Both sides engaged in a verbal battle, hitting each others weak spots directly. Due to this intensified internal struggle, Jurezs republican rebel forces narrowly escaped destruction.

Its worth noting that at their most desperate moment, Jurezs republican guerrilla forces had dwindled to just a few hundred men, hiding away in the mountain forests to cling to life.

Maximilian did not realize the danger posed by the rebels. He pardoned many Republican political prisoners and even had these individuals deliver a letter to Jurez.

In the letter, Maximilian promised that as long as Jurez acknowledged his reign and surrendered the armed rebellion, he would pardon all the rebels.

Well, in reality, Maximilian admired patriots like Jurez and he attempted to resolve the issue through peaceful means, intending to win over these individuals to his side.

Deep in the canyon, at the headquarters of the Mexican Liberation Army, Jurez warmly welcomed his comrades who had narrowly escaped.

A middle-aged man said, Mr. President, this is a letter to you from Maximilian I.

Without a doubt, Maximilian Is actions did not yield the expected results. The pardoned political prisoners still did not recognize him as their emperor, let alone feel any gratitude towards him.

The reasons were very pragmatic; Maximilian could not satisfy their interests, and thus, they were destined to be enemies.

In the eyes of many, this political pardon became a stain in their lives, casting doubt on their loyalty to the revolution. Only by overthrowing the emperor could they hope to cleanse themselves of this.

After reading the letter, Jurez snickered, This fool is just daydreaming, thinking we would actually surrender.

With that, Jurez scanned the crowd, observing their reactions. He was pleased to see that no one advocated surrender.

One close aide proposed, Mr. President, this is also an opportunity. If we can take advantage of this situation to get rid of the government troops outside, our crisis will be resolved.

Jurez nodded. The French and Mexican government forces had jointly encircled them, confining the liberation army to a narrow area.

Despite the vastness of the canyon, the population was sparse, consisting mostly of indigenous tribes.

Jurez himself was indigenous, and the liberation army comprised mostly of indigenous people who managed to survive. However, conflicts between indigenous tribes were no less intense than with whites, and persuading them to become cannon fodder was not easy.

Those who have been able to persevere until now are mostly his loyalists, but the loyalty of these recently pardoned Republicans is questionable.

Jurez rallied their spirits, saying, Rest assured, everyone. Our difficulties are only temporary. The American Civil War is about to end, and whoever emerges victorious will not want to see a Mexican emperor.

Soon, we will have a steady supply of weapons and ammunition, drive out the French invaders, and overthrow that foolish emperor.

Undoubtedly, they had already established ties with both the Union and the Confederacy, though neither side provided support due to the ongoing war.

The Confederate government dared not offend the great powers and did not provide a clear response. Although the Union government openly opposed Maximilians ascension, they also did not want to provoke Britain, France, Austria, and Spain.

Despite Maximilian appearing to be solely supported by the French, in reality, Britain, Austria, and Spain had also expressed their support.

It's just that the French directly deployed troops and took a dominant position in Mexico. Maximilians political tactics were inadequate, failing to leverage the support of these other countries to counterbalance the French.

This was also one of the reasons why Jurez refused to compromise. A political imbecile was bound to lose his position. If Maximilian were a cunning strategist, he would never have engaged in such childish acts.

The pardoning of political prisoners undoubtedly strengthened the organizational capacity of the Liberation Army. Perhaps these individuals may not be skilled fighters, but they can certainly rally more people to rebel.

The news of the collapse of the Vienna System spread to the United States at the fastest speed. President Lincoln breathed a sigh of relief; changes in the European situation would surely divert the attention of various countries, creating an opportunity for the United States to unify.

However, he soon wore a bitter expression. Regardless of how the situation in Europe changed, at least he needed to defeat the Confederacy first!

But the major battle he meticulously prepared for turned into a war of attrition with the Confederacy. On average, losing one regiment per day had continued for several months, yet there was still no sign of victory.

Even though the Union government had the manpower advantage, it had decreased from 1.65:1 before the outbreak of the war to the current 1.3:1, making this advantage less pronounced.

The butterfly effect proved powerful; the weakening of the population advantage directly led to a significant decline in the Union's war potential.

If it weren't for Lincoln's insistence on implementing the Emancipation Proclamation and the Homestead Act, which mobilized people's enthusiasm for joining the army, the Confederacy would likely have emerged victorious by now.

Secretary of State Seward spoke up, Mr. President, based on the intelligence analysis we've received, the probability of war between Russia and the Kingdom of Prussia is extremely high.

Britain and France will likely support Prussia, while Spain's stance remains unclear, and the Austrians are likely to be conflicted.

The Austrian government wants to see Russia fail and increase its influence within the Russo-Austrian alliance but it doesn't want to see the Kingdom of Prussia grow stronger, which would increase the difficulty of its efforts to unify Germany.

Once war erupts, Britain and France will surely create trouble for Russia in other regions, so the Tsar's support for us will likely cease immediately.

Seward's words undoubtedly conveyed to Lincoln the message that he shouldn't expect European turmoil to prevent intervention in the American Civil War.

This shift in European dynamics is most deeply entwined with the rupture in relations between Britain, France, and Russia, while the intervention alliance of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain has not experienced internal conflicts.

Even if the European situation diverted their attention, the powers still had forces in the Americas that could intervene. After all, the strength of the North and the South is too evenly matched, and external forces can disrupt this balance at any time.

After hesitating for a moment, Lincoln prepared for the worst.

Let's fabricate public opinion, emphasizing the interference of Britain, France, Austria, and Spain in our internal affairs, and shift the blame for the ongoing civil war onto them!

At the same time, contact the revolutionary parties and independence organizations we support. We need their help now. We don't necessarily need them to achieve results, just to divert the attention of the various countries.

The United States drew resentment for good reason. After 1848, revolutionary parties and independence groups from across Europe essentially converged there.

For example, the Hungarian Independence Organization, the French Revolutionary Party, the Spanish Revolutionary Party, the Irish Independence Organization, the Italian Carbonari... These organizations have all received assistance from Americans.

Of course, during this era, the U.S. government wasn't as assertive. They didn't dare to directly provide financial assistance to these organizations; instead, they mostly raised funds through donations from the American public.

Nevertheless, the federal government still assisted them. Otherwise, organizations like the Hungarian Independence Organization, which had lost their footing, would have long disappeared into the annals of history.

After all, ethnic Hungarians numbered only 600,000, half of whom entered labor camps to build transportation infrastructure for Austria.

Meanwhile, the lower-class people in the Hungarian region underwent a transformation and became Austrians. Regardless of bloodline and cultural traditions, if they considered themselves Austrians, they were Austrians.

There was no other choice. When they were Hungarians, their status was that of serfs, and they never obtained human rights in the Hungarian Republic.

Even though this illegal organization only existed for a few months, it was enough for propaganda purposes.

Even the previous serfdom system could only be blamed on the rulers of the Kingdom of Hungary. Anyway, it had nothing to do with the great emperor. It was the emperor who abolished serfdom and gave land to everyone.

The numerous lower-class people didn't buy into the propaganda, and the high-level leaders were all executed during the revolution. Normally, the Hungarian independence movement should have disappeared, but it was still supported by the Americans.

Perhaps this was just habitual, but it made the Austrian government very unhappy. This time, Austria's participation in intervening in the American Civil War included eliminating the Hungarian independence organization, which was one of the reasons Franz persuaded the government.

Similarly, after the failure of the French Revolution, the French Revolutionary Party sought political asylum in the United States. Although the Spanish Revolutionary Party was still fighting the government, it also received financial support from the United States.

As for the Irish independence organization, almost all the Irish people moved to America, and naturally, the independence movement followed suit, being the largest among these organizations.

Secretary of State Seward objected, saying, Mr. President, these organizations have limited strength and can only cause minor disturbances at most. They are unlikely to have much effect. Moreover, such actions could have serious consequences and might anger other countries, worsening our situation.

It's not that Seward looks down on these organizations, it's just that except for Spain, the three countries of Britain, France, and Austria are currently stable and don't have the conditions for a revolution to happen.

After hesitating for a moment, President Lincoln sighed and said, At this point, whether we take action or not, they will stand against us. Of course, if we lose this battle, they might become our allies again, who knows?

Let's handle this discreetly. Federal government officials shouldn't get involved. Instead, we should find their financial backers and pressure them into action.

Whether it's starting a rebellion, assassinating officials, or organizing demonstrations, as long as it distracts the attention of various countries, it will suffice.

I remember the Italian Carbonari once planned an assassination to provoke the Franco-Austrian War. We can also hint to various organizations to follow suit.

There's no bottom line to speak of. If it could disrupt various countries and alleviate their pressure, President Lincoln didn't mind going even further.

Secretary of State Seward nodded, acknowledging that at this point, they had no choice but to take risks.

After all, the worst-case scenario was the division of the United States. With the interference of the great powers, the possibility of American unity was already very low. If they didn't take risks, there would be no chance at all.

In a mansion in Delaware, the Hungarian Independence Organization is holding a meeting. It's more accurate to say that it's a session where the backers behind the Hungarian Independence Organization are holding the group accountable.

The American-Hungarian capitalist, Mr. Aleister, questioned, Stephen, it's been so many years, and you haven't made any moves. Have you forgotten our pledge to revive the great nation of Hungary?

Stephen was one of the survivors who slipped through the cracks after the failed Hungarian war for independence. He had avoided the Austrian government's purge by traveling to the Ottoman Empire to seek aid at the time.

With the senior leadership gone, individuals like him in the mid-level ranks of the revolutionary party became leaders. Later, the Ottoman Empire backed off, refusing to continue supporting them, forcing them into exile in the United States.

Tempered by the years of experience, the once passionate young Stephen no longer exists. Now, as the head of the Hungarian revolutionary organization, he has turned into a politician.

Stephen explained calmly, Mr. Aleister, achieving Hungarian independence is not something that can be accomplished overnight. Mr. Kossuth failed precisely because he was too impatient.

Today, Austria still possesses significant strength, and after the revolutions, Hungary was divided into seven parts. The Austrian government has exploited the ethnic minorities within Hungary to maintain balance, making it very difficult for us to succeed in starting a rebellion.

Aleister sneered, I understand why Kossuth, that idiot, failed, but can't you aim for something less ambitious? Even if complete independence is not achievable, can't you secure a seat for Hungary within the new Holy Roman Empire? Or at least attain provincial status?

You don't even need an armed uprising. Just mobilize the people into street protests and demonstrations. Take it step-by-step and the Austrian government will have to make concessions.

Where there are people, there are circles. The influence of the Hungarian community in the United States is almost nonexistent and cannot provide any assistance to him. As a successful capitalist, Aleister's moral standards are naturally not high.

For better development, he chose to cooperate with the federal government and act as the manipulator behind the Hungarian independence movement.

From his assessment of Kossuth, it can be seen that he has no respect for the Hungarian independence organization. He completely stands on the side of the ruling class, issuing orders.

As for whether Hungary can become independent, what does it have to do with him? From a personal interest perspective, Aleister would rather Hungary remain non-independent so that he can continue to maintain his current unique position.

The instructions he is giving now are only meant to create chaos in Austria. Whether the Austrian government will compromise is not important; as long as the Hungarian independence organization causes trouble, he will have fulfilled his duty to the federal government.

Having known each other for so long, Stephen naturally understands Aleister's true nature, and both sides are mutually using each other.

People need to make a living. Over the past decade or so, including Stephen, many members of the Hungarian independence organization have established industries in the United States. The energy they devote to managing their own businesses far exceeds their investment in the independence movement.

As for the grand cause of Hungarian independence, it's naturally left to the delusional youth. Do they expect these old folks to charge into battle?

After so many years, the fact that there are only two hundred thousand Hungarians registered in Austria speaks volumes.

Faced with reality, many people selectively change their ethnicity. Perhaps in a few decades, this ethnicity will disappear into the annals of history.

Everyone is well aware of these circumstances. If there are no people left, what's the point of independence? Many young people in Hungary don't even know about the Hungarian ethnicity.

Simply put, the Hungarian ethnic identity had only emerged a few decades ago. If no disruptions occurred, their father of the nation may still be alive.

Before this, people didn't even have the concept of the Hungarian ethnicity. This is also why many Hungarian citizens accepted an Austrian identity; nobody had ever told them that they belonged to the Hungarian ethnicity.

Now, some people are proposing to rename the Hungarian Independence Organization to the Austrian Revolutionary Party, but they have faced opposition from the older generation as this implies a complete denial of their efforts.

Stephen thought for a moment and said, Mr. Aleister, changing our approach to the struggle now would require a significant investment of manpower and resources, as well as a certain amount of preparation time.

Until then, the independence movement had only two functions: recruiting secret party members and assassinations.

They had attempted to organize the people before, but the outcomes were usually tragic. With so many people involved, there was always the risk of someone reporting them during the process of mobilization.

Not everyone is willing to push for independence with them; the majority of the population in Hungary is satisfied with their current way of life and lacks the desire for revolution.

The older generation who experienced the revolution saw them as marauding beasts. When operating in Hungarian territories, the independence movement dared not even mention separatism.

Causing unrest was just to extract funding. If their American backers stopped support, the organization would disband within years.

In fact, historically, this independence organization met an untimely end; the leaders who later led Hungary to independence had no connection with them.

Aleister pretended to complain, saying, I know, but I need to see results first. Your inactivity and passiveness will wear away the peoples patience with you.

Its already difficult to raise donations now, especially in recent years with fewer Hungarian immigrants coming to America.

The faces of the members of the independence organization darkened; this was the most crucial issue. Without Hungarian immigrants to America, it meant that their organization would struggle to attract new members.

This also meant that their importance to the American government was diminishing. If one day they completely lost their value, the federal government might compromise with Austria and sell them out directly.

Before this, the Hungarian independence organization had already been sold off by many countries, such as Britain, France, and the Ottoman Empire.

Hungarian independence organization members who stayed in these countries were suddenly met with accidents and then given boxed lunches.

Sweat beads formed on Stephens forehead; he understood that this was not negotiation but a direct threat. If they didnt handle this well, the Americans would trade their heads with the Austrian government.

Dont think its easy to hide in this era and evade pursuit by the Austrian government. If it were just a few individuals, they could easily hide in some remote countryside and be safe.

But for the independence organization, if they truly had to leave America, their good days would be over. Not every country would grant them refuge.

Stephen assured, Mr. Aleister, please rest assured, we will do our best in this operation. You will see results within six months.

Chapter 359: The Worst Organization

After seeing Aleister off, Stephen was left with a headache. It was easy to talk about it, doing it was an entirely different matter.

Austria wasnt America. The Hungarian territories were deeply influenced by German culture, especially the compulsory education pushed in recent decades which impacted an entire generation.

What is at the core of German culture? Thats a difficult question to answer, but theres one tradition that has always influenced this race: military culture.

In a country where military training is included in elementary school textbooks, discipline is ingrained from an early age. Discipline has become deeply rooted in many peoples marrows.

With such discipline, its not as easy as just saying a few words to convince people to take to the streets in protest. If you cant persuade them, theres a greater likelihood of being taken to the police station.

In theory, as long as theyre willing to spend the time to persuade, they can organize people. In practice, however, if theres even a slight mishap along the way and someone reports it, it will be a total failure.

If the Hungarian independence organization could rally tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands of people to take to the streets, they wouldn't have ended up in their current predicament.

Stephen asked, What do you all think? It seems the Americans are afraid of foreign intervention in this civil war and want us to stir up trouble for the Austrians.

As the leader of this independence organization, Stephen had gradually become more of a nominal leader. This is America, where liberalism is cherished. As a result, Stephen's authority has been greatly diminished, and he cannot order around any of the members.

Senior revolutionary Cesar frowned and said, Mr. Stephen, the current situation is very troublesome. We know our strength very well, as does Aleister. If he hadn't seen a profit in it and helped us cover our tracks, the federal government would have likely cut off our funding long ago.

We've lost our foundation in the country, and even if some of us still have connections, they're dwindling with each passing day. Occasionally helping out might be fine, but if they catch wind of our plans and don't use it to claim credit or rewards for themselves, that would already be considered friendly enough.

Nominally, we still have over 28,000 members, but everyone knows most have either already met their maker or are on that path. As for political prisoners, the Austrian road-building army has always been a one-way trip.

Our members now consist of just a few hundred who have settled in the United States. Occasionally causing a bit of trouble might be manageable, but to pull off something, just us will not be enough.

It was precisely because Aleister understood the situation of the independent organization that he came up with this idea of organizing protests rather than armed revolution.

However, Aleister immigrated to the United States at a young age with his parents and was unfamiliar with the situation in Austria. His worldview and perspective are all based on the American system, so he naturally assumes that organizing protests would be very easy.

Even without support, he thinks that money can easily create momentum. While this might not be a problem in the United States, in Austria, it's a different story altogether, and it's simply not doable.

Cesar's so-called sabotage wasn't all carried out by the Hungarian independence movement; most was self-proclaimed.

Just like terrorist groups claiming responsibility for unrelated events to assert their presence, they did the same to gain visibility. They have taken credit for over 80% of major cases in Austria.

The Americans cannot and dare not verify. The American government of this era does not have the confidence to meddle in Europe. If they were to send people to investigate and were discovered, the federal government would not be able to bear the consequences.

Throughout, the federal government has never actively contacted them, nor assigned any tasks. Even the relationship between Aleister and the federal government is mere speculation.

An elderly man spoke sternly, Why don't we just go through the motions? Worst case, we won't take any more funding for future activities. We all have businesses and livelihoods anyway, it's not like we'll starve. I don't believe the Americans would really dare hand us over. Aren't they afraid we'll rat them out too?

Stephen calmly replied, Mr. Szalay, lets not entertain such childish notions. The Americans naturally wouldnt dare let us fall into Austrian hands, as that would create immense trouble for them.

But with the style of the Austrian government, even if we were dead, it wouldnt matter. The Americans wouldnt mind trading our bodies.

Among all the revolutionary organizations in Europe, the Austrian revolutionary organization is the least numerous. Their attitude towards political prisoners has always been to kill them and be done with it.

This was the most chilling part. Since Franz's ascension, the Austrian government had not pardoned a single political prisoner. Once labeled as such, they would be captured regardless of life or death.

Aside from outright defectors who surrendered to Austria, the only way for others to avoid pursuit was death itself revoking the warrant.

The revolution involved too many people. As long as they are not true high-ranking officials, and kept a low profile, not openly advocating for independence, revolution, or rebellion, who would recognize these small fries?

Unfortunately, many of the people present ended up in the United States without much money in their pockets. They used the banner of the Hungarian independence movement to seek help from fellow Hungarians. Now, they found themselves eligible for the Austrian political prisoners list.

Of course, such revolutionary groups defrauding funds weren't unique in America.

The federal government does not investigate. On the one hand, it's difficult to investigate such matters and can easily backfire. On the other hand, they politically need these organizations to exist to prove that the monarchy is not popular.

Historically, America had great success with this ploy. It was thanks to these ramshackle revolutionary groups that the American political model spread, laying the foundation to seize the global narrative.

Cesar hesitated a bit and said, Over here in the United States, there are plenty of these chaotic revolutionary organizations. In earlier years, there was even the Austrian Revolutionary Party, which had much more momentum than us.

But then Brooks, that guy, met with an accident, lost his leadership, and eventually surrendered to the Austrian government during internal strife, leading to the dissolution of the organization.

I think we should first try to muddle through if possible. If the Americans insist, we can always announce the dissolution of the Hungarian Independence Organization.

Without the organization, we probably wouldn't qualify as political prisoners. Then, we can use our domestic connections to help persuade the Austrian government to cancel their warrants against us, which is highly likely.

This was more a non-solution than a real solution. After over a decade in exile abroad, everyone's lofty ambitions had been utterly worn down.

Nowadays, with wives and children to care for, how many people can abandon their families and wholeheartedly continue down a path that seems hopeless?

After some thought, Stephen said, Lets first reach out to other revolutionary organizations. The Italian Independence Organization and the Polish Independence Organization both have some strength, and we can collaborate with them.

Unless absolutely necessary, its best not to dissolve the Hungarian Independence Organization. Offending the federal government means our future prospects in America wont be good either.

The strongest revolutionary organizations in Austria are the Italian Independence Organization and the Polish Independence Organization, both of which are multinational revolutionary groups.

The Polish Independence Organization spans Russia, Austria, and Prussia, while the Italian Independence Organizations members are spread across regions like Sardinia, Lombardy, Venetia, the Papal States, Naples, and Tuscany.

These two multinational organizations are a hundred times better off than the Hungarian Independence Organization. Just looking at the number of immigrants they have in the United States shows the disparity.

The number of Italian immigrants in the United States ranks only behind the three major groups from England, Ireland, and Germany. Even Polish immigrants number in the hundreds of thousands, while Hungarian immigrants are fewer than ten thousand.

This makes it significantly more difficult for the Hungarian Independence Organization to grow and expand. With a smaller population base, how can they develop their membership? Its even more challenging to organize volunteers or paramilitary units to return to their homeland and initiate a revolution.

Stephen now pinned his hopes on collaborating with other revolutionary groups out of desperation.

Although the federal government lacked authority and many people didnt take it seriously, for this group of people at the bottom of American society and with no nation to rely on, they still couldnt afford to offend them.

In a country of immigrants like the United States, there is also a hierarchy. Generally, the stronger the mother country, the higher the social status within American society.

This is one of the reasons why many Hungarians refuse to join the independence organization. By not associating with them, they can at least identify themselves as Austrian immigrants. If they encounter any problems, they can still seek assistance from the Austrian embassy.

This was the reason Italian American criminal gangs became notorious. With large immigrant numbers but no protection from their homeland, they could only band together into societies that bred criminal organizations.

Hungarians are even more tragic because their small immigrant population means they have no influence, even if they do stick together in the United States.

In an estate outside of New York City, the Polish Independence Organization was also facing pressure from its financiers. Of course, their treatment was much better, at least no one threatened to hand them over.

Alexandra, a core member of the Polish Independence Organization, said, We should reject these unreasonable demands. All of the organizations strength is currently devoted to the uprising against the Russians. Provoking the Austrians now would be very unwise.

Kecia objected, But these capitalists have provided us with a lot of funding. Refusing their requests outright could make it difficult for us to seek help from them in the future.

Kecia was a second-generation immigrant; both her parents were members of the Polish Independence Organization, and she inherited their legacy.

However, while supporting Polish independence, it was also unavoidable to lean towards the United States. When considering issues, she often looked both ways.

Alexandra shook her head and said, Theres no need. If this uprising succeeds, the Kingdom of Poland will be restored, and whether or not we have their support wont matter.

Right now, ensuring the independence of Russian Poland is our top priority. The issue of Austrian Poland can be addressed in the future. To increase our chances of success, we cannot simultaneously face two enemies.

Clearly, the support from various European countries has given her confidence. In Alexandras view, this is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If dispersing forces led to the failure of the current uprising, she would become a sinner in Polish history.

However, the Polish Independence Organization is no longer a unified entity. Everyone is only temporarily united for Polish independence, with numerous internal interest groups.

Although many people knew that Alexandras opinion was correct, unfortunately, driven by their own interests, some still spoke out against her.

Youre acting like a coward. The whole world is supporting the independence of the Kingdom of Poland. If we dont break free from Austrian rule now, when will the next opportunity come?

If we miss this chance, the Kingdom of Poland will be permanently divided, and well never have another chance to reclaim Galicia from Austria.

It wasnt that Radzi objected to letting Russian Poland become independent first, the problem was that the big boss behind him wouldnt agree! He was a spy planted by the federal government within the Polish Independence Organization, so at this time, he had to make his stance clear.

Unlike small groups like the Hungarian Independence Organization, the Polish Independence Organization is a federation. Joining this organization is very simple just sign up. If one is good at organizing and deceiving, one can easily rise to high positions.

If the Polish Independence Organization were truly well-organized, with their scale, they would have achieved national independence long ago, without having to wait until after the World War.

The organizational structure is scattered around the world, but there is no central leadership; it relies solely on individual prestige for command.

Not only have Americans bought off some of its members, but almost every country has informants within it, including the Russians.

This organization has long been infiltrated like a sieve, including this Polish uprising, which leaked out in advance.

Before the uprising erupted, most of the leaders were arrested. To eliminate the threat, the Russian government decided temporarily to conscript locals and prepare to send all these suspicious individuals to Central Asia as cannon fodder.

If it weren't for the fact that the Russian government was similarly rotten, with bureaucrats acting too slowly, creating an opportunity to reorganize the uprising, this uprising would have been aborted.

Of course, the arrest of a large number of leaders might also have been a good thing. In the historical January Uprising, it was precisely because these people were arrested that they were able to resist for over a year.

If these loud-mouthed strongmen had been left in command, resisting the Russian army for a month would have been considered a stroke of luck.

This is not a joke; it's a fact. Just look at the history of the Polish revolutions, and you'll see that the more leaders there are after the uprising, the shorter the revolution lasts.

Radzi's remark coward directly angered Alexandra, who immediately threw a punch, and the two began to fight. With the persuasion of others, it quickly escalated into a brawl.

Of course, the fight ended as soon as it started. After it was over, everyone continued with the meeting. The wounded naturally left early, which was also a unique way of resolving things.

Without a doubt, Radzi was kicked out. Everyone wasn't foolish; his identity had long been discovered, but they were still in American territory so they had to give him some face.

Now it's time to decide the fate of Poland, and these superficial niceties no longer matter. Basically, anyone suspected of being a spy from another country was kicked out in this manner.

The highly respected Mr. Chuscott spoke up, saying, Alright, the flies have been swatted away. Firstly, I must say that this uprising went more smoothly than expected. Despite the leak before the uprising, the insurgents still managed to occupy Warsaw.

From the current situation, our chances of success are very high, but we still need to see if we can withstand the Russian counterattack.

Whether to launch an uprising in Galicia or not, everyone can express their opinions. Our views can only serve as references; the ultimate decision-making power lies with the frontline commanders.

Clearly, after consecutive failures, the Polish Independence Organization has learned from its mistakes and is no longer so blindly arrogant.

This is also why various countries support the Polish Independence Organization. If things were chaotic all the time, money wouldn't just fall from the sky, and investments in them wouldn't be made haphazardly.

Of course, this is also related to the numerous groups within the Polish Independence Organization. Everyone is not subordinate to each other; they are only allies. The Polish Independence Organization in America is not the leader of the Polish independence movement.

Basically, whoever initiates the uprising calls the shots, and the opinions of other groups are merely for reference and do not have enforceable power.

Alexandra said, I've already stated my opinion. Currently, it's not suitable to make too many enemies. Galicia is not an important region to us, and the local population base is not mature. Austria's control over the region is much stronger than that of the Russians, and the Habsburgs are more popular than the Tsar.

In previous uprisings, whether in 1846 or 1848, they faced strong resistance from the local population. Many revolutionaries didn't die at the hands of the Austrian government but rather at the hands of local peasants and workers. I don't believe that initiating an uprising now will lead to success.

This is an embarrassing issue for many revolutionaries. The grassroots support in the Galicia region has always been poor. It's not that they haven't tried, but the key issue is that the Poles did not dominate the local region.

After years of management by the Habsburgs, the local population of Ukrainians, Czechs, Germans, Slavs, and other ethnicities far outnumber the Poles.

Talking about Polish independence with these people naturally leads to tragedy. Thanks to the good reputation left behind by Polish nobles in the past, the local population decisively stood against them.

What hurt them the most was that many Poles thought it would be good to stay in Austria and also stood on the opposite side of them.

Before the cat is out of the bag, there can still be discussions. Now that it's out, no one will foolishly propose to go ahead.

It's not just in Galicia; in fact, the same applies to Prussian Poland. After the Kingdom of Prussia's Germanization efforts, the Polish Independence Organization also lost its grassroots support there.

This is also why whenever the Polish independence movement is mentioned, people think of Russia.

It's just too risky to stir up trouble on the territories of the other two powers; one misstep could land oneself in trouble. They can only agitate for independence in Russian Poland.

Seeing the atmosphere become awkward, Chuscott broke the silence. Since nobody has any objections, let's continue according to the original plan.

After the Kingdom of Poland is established, we can then consider reclaiming our territories from Austria and Prussia. Puhar, please organize our opinions and send them to Traugott as soon as possible.

The young Puhar replied, No problem, Mr. Chuscott.

Chapter 360: Myriad Aspects of The Human World

The Bronx, one of the main gathering places for Italian Americans, was also the headquarters of the Italian Independence Organization.

The Italian Independence Organization was far more lively compared to other revolutionary groups. They originally operated under a designated leader, with the supremely influential Carbonari Party forming their primary strength and wielding power across the Italian regions.

With the occurrence of the assassination attempt of a monarch, the Carbonari suddenly became the most well-known terrorist organization internationally. As a result, the Kingdom of Sardinia, once seen as a land of hope, also fell.

Divisions also arose among the Italian revolutionary groups themselves. While initially granting the leadership role to the Carbonari, which was due to their significant power and wide-reaching influence, and not out of genuine obedience from all parties.

Now that something has happened, of course, everyone wanted to cut ties with the Carbonari. With the name of Carbonari attached to them, even if the revolution succeeded, they would be killed by the intervention forces.

Even overseas, members of the Carbonari dare not reveal their identities. They are wanted not by one or two countries but are on the blacklist of all the monarchies in Europe, and even in the United States, they must hide their identities.

After going into exile overseas, the Carbonari erupted into fierce infighting. Everyone blamed and scolded each other, criticizing the other side for acting recklessly and ruining the great situation in Italy.

In any case, the regicide case was plotted by others and had nothing to do with themselves. Even if they were involved, they now deny any connection, for fear of being associated with this crime.

External pressures coupled with internal conflicts naturally led to the splintering of the once glorious Carbonari. Now there's the Italian National Salvation Army, the Italian Liberal Party, the Italian Mafia...

Dont misunderstand, the Mafia of this era in Italy is not the same as the organized crime syndicate of later times; it played a very important role in the process of Italian independence.

(Authors Note: The Italian name for the Mafia is the abbreviation of *Morto Alla Francia, Italia Anela*, meaning Death to the French is Italys Cry!)

After the Kingdom of Sardinia was occupied by France, the French became the greatest enemy in the hearts of Italians. The Italian Mafia adopted the slogan used by the Sicilian people six hundred years ago against French invaders.

The Carbonari, after the split, were far less influential and powerful than before. Because of their different ideologies, the various revolutionary organizations also had very different styles of operation.

Initially, Italian revolutionaries were mostly active on the European mainland, especially in Paris, where they were most welcomed. France had always been their biggest supporter in causing trouble for Austria.

But things always change. After the regicide case, their lives became difficult. When the French government decided to annex the Kingdom of Sardinia, these revolutionary organizations became a threat.

If it werent for the Parisian people kindly warning them ahead of time, the core members of these revolutionary organizations would probably have been captured by the French government.

As the repercussions of the assassination case intensified, many people realized that the situation was not favorable and began fleeing the European mainland.

At this time, choosing the United States was also a last resort. Revolutions also required capital, and initially, the British were good sponsors. However, things escalated too much, and the diplomatic pressure from France and Austria became too great to bear for even the British government.

After all, such things can be done secretly, but if it goes too far it will only end in mutual harm. The British could support the Italian Revolutionary Party, and France and Austria could also support the Irish Independence Organization.

It's different when they go into exile in America. Firstly, the distance is sufficient, so everyone can keep a low profile, making it difficult for France and Austria to detect. Secondly, there are many Italian immigrants in America, providing ample manpower and financial support.

Nowadays, Italian revolutionary organizations are all using local mafia organizations as cover. The federal government pretends not to see, and the wanted notices from the joint investigation team became just for show.

One of the immigrant leaders of Italian Americans, Goulart, asked, What do you all think of the proposal from the Americans?

There is strength in numbers. Although Italian Americans are heavily discriminated against in the United States, there are still over a million of them, with social influence that Poles and Hungarians cannot compare to.

The federal government naturally cannot threaten them outright but instead opts for cooperation by providing them with funds and weapons in exchange for their involvement in inciting uprisings in Italy.

Garibaldi, Leader of the Italian National Salvation Army, proposed, Since we will eventually launch an uprising anyway, having American sponsorship can still lighten our burden, so we can agree to them.

Unable to accept defeat directly after the French occupation of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Garibaldi, along with his supporters, launched an armed uprising.

Unsurprisingly, the rebel army was quickly suppressed by the French forces. If they hadn't fled quickly when the timing was right, they would have been captured.

After the failed uprising, they became wanted fugitives by the French, unable to stay in the Italian territories. On the issue of cracking down on the Italian revolutionary organizations, France and Austria had already reached a consensus, so the European continent was no longer safe.

After the Polish uprising broke out, the Italian independence organizations were inspired, and the armed revolutionary faction led by Garibaldi became restless, wanting to continue launching armed uprisings.

Antonio, leader of the Italian Liberal Party, objected, But now France and Austria are too powerful. Even if the uprising succeeds, we won't be able to withstand their counterattack.

Before the situation on the European continent changes, we should not act rashly, to avoid wasting precious revolutionary forces in vain.

This was the opinion of most people. Among the revolutionary organizations of various countries, aside from Poland, the situation of Italy was the direst.

Although Poland was occupied by Russia, Prussia, and Austria, as long as the revolutionaries remained calm, they would only be fighting for independence from Russia and still had the support of other European countries. In the short term, they only had one enemy.

For Italy to fight for independence would be tragic. They could not avoid France and Austria, and even Spain was an obstacle. Many European countries sympathized with them, but very few dared to provide support.

Even the British, who originally supported them, have now suspended their support. John Bull certainly did not think they could overthrow the twin mountains of France and Austria to unify the Italian territories.

Under this background, not only was the probability of a successful uprising low, but it was also easy to bring trouble upon themselves. Don't think that being in America made them safe. If France and Austria were enraged enough, they would dare to organize a joint force to land directly in New York to teach them a lesson.

In this era, the great powers were so domineering. Previously, they had not made a big fuss because they did not take the revolutionaries seriously and hadn't deemed them worthy of mobilizing troops for a battle.

But if they truly provoke France and Austria, they'll stop at nothing to crush them, and the current federal government of the United States can't shelter them when that happens.

If France and Austria were willing to compromise with the federal government, perhaps the next day the revolutionaries would be deported as wanted criminals. Politicians' promises are only effective within the scope of their own interests.

Garibaldi explained, We only agreed to launch an uprising in the Italian territories, but did not commit to as to where to do it.

In regions like Sardinia, Lombardy, and Venetia, where the enemy's strength is strong, we simply don't have the possibility of success.

But, why not consider a different approach? Why must we start with the difficult and end with the easy? Can't we go to regions where the enemy's strength is weak?

History has already taught us that the path to Italian unification cannot succeed starting from northern Italy.

Why did the Kingdom of Sardinia fail? It's because they targeted the wrong place from the very beginning!

What if in 1848, instead of Lombardy and Venetia, we attacked Central and Southern Italy first?

At that time, France and Austria were deeply embroiled in revolutions and incapable of intervening. If we had first unified the central and southern regions of Italy, leaving only Lombardy and Venetia, could the French have swallowed us whole?

People always reflect. Although there was some hindsight bias, everyone had to admit that their strategic thinking had been wrong from the start.

The strategic mistakes of the Kingdom of Sardinia were made by many present. They naively believed that Austria was vulnerable and could be easily defeated, leading to the unification of Italy.

Under this mistaken belief, they manipulated public opinion to force the government to launch the Austro-Sardinian War, which ultimately doomed the Kingdom of Sardinia.

Whats even more disastrous was the assassination attempt of a monarch, masterminded by who knows which genius, which directly buried the Kingdom of Sardinia and made the road to Italian unification even more distant.

Varghese, leader of the Italian Mafia, expressed his doubts, Its not that easy. The central and southern regions of Italy are also controlled by the great powers. Once we launch an uprising, Austria, Spain, and France are all likely to intervene militarily.

The current turmoil in Europe is not enough to keep them at bay. Regardless of which one sends troops, we will find it difficult to handle.

Garibaldi gave a cold laugh and said, What is there to be afraid of? This uprising is not just us alone.

The Americans want to alleviate the pressure theyre facing, so its not just us theyll support. The French Revolutionary Party, the Spanish Revolutionary Party, the Hungarian Independence Organization, and others are all our allies.

If we all launch uprisings together, the enemy will have to prioritize based on severity. As long as we defeat those few decadent Italian states, we will have succeeded in the first step.

Once we unify the central and southern regions of Italy, well be a medium-sized country. Even France and Austria wont be able to swallow us whole. By exploiting the contradictions between European countries, we can survive.

With capital, we can then gradually accumulate strength and look for an opportune moment to unify the whole of Italy.

This was meant to boost morale, but among the many European revolutionary organizations, few had real strength.

The Polish Independence Organization was already in action, in a deadly struggle with the Russians, so they could not be relied upon.

The French Revolutionary Partys recent enthusiasm for revolution has greatly diminished. Many have turned their allegiance to Napoleon IIIs rule, especially after the annexation of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

The Irish Independence Organization had nothing to do with them since Britain was not an obstacle to Italian independence, so there was no basis for cooperation.

The Spanish Revolutionary Party has been persistently fighting, and launching uprisings is common for them. Their headquarters are in Spain itself; the branch in the United States is just a small one.

It seemed the only ones capable of creating a diversion were the Spanish Revolutionary Party. But the question was, why would they help? Dont think that all revolutionary organizations truly acted as one family when interests clashed, there were many conflicts.

The most typical example is the conflict between the French Revolutionary Party and the Italian Revolutionary Party. The radical ideals of Greater France inherently include the Italian region, and most of the French Revolutionary Party supports Napoleon III's annexation of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

This conflict is irreconcilable. Moreover, French revolutions are almost always highly dramatic; they hardly need leadership from others.

As long as the monarch acted in a way that incurred heaven's wrath and people's resentment, or suddenly angered the people, then regardless of who launched the uprising, Parisian citizens would spontaneously join in.

A specific example was the February Revolution. After a demonstration, a few people got angry, attacked some policemen, and then declared a revolution. From the start of the uprising to its success, casualties were fewer than ten.

This kind of jaw-dropping revolutionary movement was unique to the situation in France. Other countries could not replicate it if they really tried, there would surely be bodies strewn everywhere.

The bloody sacrifices of the French Revolution typically occur after the revolution.

Before that, or during the revolutionary process, even thousands dying would be considered severe casualties; while in the later struggles, it was nothing to be proud of if tens of thousands did not die.

Garibaldi had long wanted to start an uprising in Sicily, but unfortunately, his strength was insufficient, and he had too few supporters to be confident.

After all, with the Kingdom of Sardinia gone, even if he wanted to gather a thousand men for the Redshirts, it wouldn't be an easy task.

Leaving aside funding and personnel, just getting people to their destination was a huge challenge. Without coordination, they might be thrown into the sea to feed the fish along the way.

Even if they landed in batches, without the cooperation and cover of local revolutionary organizations, such a major operation would never escape the rulers' notice.

After a heated argument, everyone finally decided to go ahead with it. They agreed to launch armed uprisings in the central and southern regions of Italy. As for Sardinia, Lombardy, and Venetia, whoever wanted to tackle those tough nuts could go right ahead.

Even if they could not unify all of Italy, many would be satisfied with unifying central and southern Italy. After all, they were only using this slogan to deceive ordinary people if they actually believed it themselves, that would truly be foolish.

The Italian territories had never been unified before. Now it was only the capitalists pushing for unification for their own benefit; one must not think that the Italian people were that committed to the idea of unification.

During this period, the United States was not peaceful. Many revolutionary organizations in exile here were holding meetings to discuss. Some were deciding to take action, some were watching from the sidelines with indifference, and most were fishing in troubled waters.

The most bewildered by the sudden declaration of war by the Prussian government was King Christian IX of Denmark. He had no idea what was going on before the war suddenly erupted.

In 1863, Christian IX ascended the throne, and shortly after his accession, he modified the constitution to incorporate the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein into the Kingdom of Denmark. This was the cause of the Second Schleswig War in history.

In this alternate timeline, Christian IX did the same. Naturally, this sparked outrage among the people in the German territories, and the three German states issued warnings.

However, because the Paris Peace Conference provided them with legal support, and these territories did not border Austria, the Austrian government just shouted a few times and let it go.