

Roman Empire 361

Chapter 361: The Power of Boasting

As a desperate, last-ditch effort, the federal government funded revolutionary organizations to incite rebellions in various countries, a provocation that the ruling governments of those nations would undoubtedly not tolerate.

If the news was leaked, the Union government might not be doomed, as the countries still needed a divided United States and would not hit them with full force. But Lincolns administration would definitely be finished immediately.

Even the capitalists supporting them would abandon them at the first opportunity, and might even come out to step on them.

There was no way around it; the great powers would unreasonably stir up trouble. If they dont give Britain, France, Austria, and Spain a reasonable explanation, the federal government wont be able to pass this hurdle.

Of course, this was no longer important for President Lincoln. Based on the current situation, even without making trouble, he would still step down. If he did make trouble, the worst outcome would just be an earlier resignation.

He did not directly plan these actions or covertly sponsor these revolutionary organizations. As long as no one was caught with direct evidence, it would be within the reasonable scope of political struggle, and he could resign to settle the matter.

The ones truly responsible would be the federal government; its just a matter of how much money to compensate. Its still better than having several great powers intervene with full force.

The division of the United States was the common desire of the countries. How it would be divided would depend on the actual situation. Lincoln did not want to pin his hopes on the integrity of other nations, so he chose to take a gamble.

If successful and domestic unrest broke out in those countries, they could turn the tables. If the anti-war factions gained the upper hand in any country, then the intervention alliance would be down one member. At the very least, these anti-war factions could delay things for a while.

Historically, the British government delayed its decision-making and missed the opportunity to intervene because of the constraining influence of the anti-war faction.

In this era, most Europeans are very proud and dont see the United States, a newcomer, as a significant threat.

This kind of disdain undoubtedly provided an opportunity for the federal government to get through this crisis. President Lincoln decided to seize this opportunity and take a gamble.

By the end of 1864, under the protection of the federal government, members of these revolutionary organizations began to return to the European continent in batches secretly.

Across the ocean, some were happy, while others were worried.

Genuine revolutionaries were naturally enthusiastic and prepared to immerse themselves in revolutionary activities back in their home country. However, those who were just pretending to be

revolutionaries to swindle funds had a different mindset. They were living comfortably in the United States, occasionally publishing a few articles as revolutionary leaders. Who would be willing to risk their lives in actual revolutions?

Revolutions lead to deaths, and the more conservative a country is, the greater the risk to those who start a revolution.

Conversely, countries more heavily influenced by liberalism were a bit safer. At least there was no need to worry about being executed without trial.

Stephen and Garibaldi happened to be placed on the same ship. The Americans probably intended for them to cooperate by arranging leaders of organizations with similar political stances together.

On the surface, there was no conflict between the Hungarian Independence Organization and the Italian Independence Organization.

After all, Hungarian independence wouldn't make any territorial demands on Italy, and the Italian Independence Organization had no interest in Hungarian territory.

In contrast, there was serious conflict between the French Revolutionary Party and the Italian Independence Organization. Many young French people believed that the Italian territories should belong to France, simply because Napoleon was Italian.

Don't dismiss this reasoning as nonsense, merely having a rationale is already good. Frankly speaking, for a French revolution, as long as the Parisians joined in, it would suffice; other areas would simply follow suit, with no need to ally with the Italians.

In this case, what had already been swallowed could not naturally be vomited back out.

Giving up the Kingdom of Sardinia sounded simple, but if the government actually did it, the French people would surely launch another revolution.

As for the leaders of the two organizations considered capable of cooperating amicably, they did not have a pleasant exchange.

Stephen explained: Mr. Garibaldi, if you take action in the Venetian territories, we can still cooperate to some extent. But if you take action elsewhere, then I'm sorry, we cannot guarantee being able to hold back the Austrians.

This was the truth. Stephen felt that if he went to recruit in the Hungarian territories, being able to muster troops in the triple digits would only be possible with a miracle.

During the revolution of 1848, the Hungarian Republic caused a major uproar but still did not gain the support of the people. Now all they had left was the slogan of Hungarian independence. Could they still garner support from the people?

Back then, everyone was very arrogant. When defining the Magyar ethnicity, they did not consider the lower-class serfs to be their compatriots and did not give them corresponding treatment.

On this point, the Hungarian nobility bears the main responsibility. To safeguard their own interests, they refused to recognize these people as part of the same ethnicity.

In terms of bloodlines, it was actually the middle and lower classes of Hungarians who were the true Magyars, while the upper-class nobles were largely immigrants, not ethnic Magyars.

Culturally, Hungarian nobility is deeply influenced by German culture. German is often used in writing, followed by Latin, with less than five percent proficient in normal Hungarian script, and less than half proficient in the Hungarian language.

On the other hand, the middle and lower-class populace mostly use Hungarian, with about one-third also learning German. Influenced by the nobility, writing is predominantly in German.

This was due to historical reasons. A careful study would reveal that a large portion of the nobles across European countries originated from Germany.

As kings were exported, so were nobles. Adding to that, medieval Europe saw frequent wars, and the German territories were extremely impoverished at the time, leaving people no choice but to take up military service.

Through fighting and with some luck, some outstanding individuals would rise up and gradually become nobles over time. As time passed, nobles originating from Germany gradually increased.

The Hungarian Republic existed for too short a time and did not manage to acknowledge the status of the lower classes, so naturally the lower classes could not be expected to deeply identify with this republic.

To permanently resolve the issue, Franz directly created the Austrian nationality. Initially, he wanted to use German directly, but this term faced resistance from many, so he settled for Austrian.

This is a characteristic of European culture. Many people in Austria only identify with Austria, not with the German Confederation at the time.

However, later when Austria established the new Holy Roman Empire, they did identify with it, for a simple reason: Austria held absolute dominance.

This is human nature. For instance, if someone wants to take over your company, naturally you would be unwilling. But if you were the one taking over someone else's company, it would be a different story.

The Austrian nationality not only includes Hungarians but also many others of unclear ethnicity, all merged by Franz. It has become the second-largest ethnicity in present-day Austria.

Ethnicities can all be created, let alone others. Germans were called North Austrians, while the Austrian nationality was called South Austrians, a branch of the Germanic ethnic group.

Due to long-term intermarriage with South Austrian nomadic tribes and invasions by the Ottoman Empire, among other factors, different living habits were formed.

Whether outsiders believe it or not, the Austrian government believed it. The family histories of local nobles can prove that their ancestors came from the German region.

These various factors directly contribute to the struggles of the Hungarian independence organization. Even within the designated Magyar ethnicity, many still consider themselves a branch of the Germanic ethnic group.

Unfortunately, there is insufficient evidence in hand. Coupled with centuries of intermarriage, most people are of mixed heritage, making it impossible to prove lineage.

The only way was to prove it culturally, which left Stephen feeling hopeless. Most members of the Hungarian independence organization could use German, with those who could use Hungarian actually being the minority.

Without István Széchenyi's revival of the Hungarian language and traditional culture, where would the Hungarian nationality come from?

In this era of inconvenient transportation and restricted communications, even with the telegraph, given the exorbitant costs, no one would extravagantly use it to transmit such unimportant messages. Garibaldi naturally would not know these circumstances.

He thought Stephen was refusing out of self-interest because, on such major issues, no one would dare be a philanthropist. So he promised:

Mr. Stephen, don't rush to refuse. This matter won't go unrewarded for you. The Austrians are our common enemy, and their strength is formidable. Only by uniting can we have a chance of victory.

Now that you're helping to hold off the Austrians, I can guarantee that in the future, when you need assistance, we will spare no effort to help you.

Lombardy and Venetia are still under Austrian control, and there will be plenty of opportunities for cooperation in the future. You don't need to worry about my promise becoming void.

At the moment, Garibaldi could only offer empty promises, as he couldn't provide tangible benefits. The entire Italian National Salvation Army consisted of only about one thousand men.

If the revolution succeeded and he was able to take control of a territory, perhaps he could then offer real money and resources. For now, they lacked sufficient funds for even themselves.

Stephen's situation was even more tragic. The Hungarian Independence Organization appears formidable on the surface. And the 1848 Hungarian independence movement demonstrated their strength. However, their rise was followed by a swift decline.

They did have domestic supporters, but over the years, the people's desire for independence had waned.

When young, one could disregard everything for ideals. But once they had a wife, children, and elders to care for, it was not so simple to make them take risks.

Moreover, even if these people were mobilized, they could not make much of an impact. The oversight of ethnic divisions in the past has marginalized them into a minority.

At this moment, Stephen even had the urge to rename their group into the Austrian Revolutionary Party. No matter what, that name at least had broad appeal, not limited to a single ethnicity.

Although Austria had developed quite well in recent years, there were still many dissatisfied people. Raising the banner of the Austrian Revolutionary Party would likely make recruitment much easier.

But he was also unwilling to compromise and admit defeat. Once renamed to the Austrian Revolutionary Party, the Hungarian Independence Organization would cease to exist, abandoning the goal of Hungarian independence and acknowledging that Hungarians were a part of Austria.

After hesitating for a moment, Stephen still didn't want to lose face, so he blustered, Mr. Garibaldi, it's not that we're unwilling to help, but we really can't do it.

To divert the Austrians would require organizing an uprising of at least hundreds of thousands of people. Do you think after the last Hungarian independence war, the Austrian government would not be on guard?

For so many years, they have never stopped suppressing us. You must have heard that among the various exiled revolutionary groups, Austrian revolutionary groups have had the fewest survivors.

The Austrian governments infamous wanted orders hang like a sword over our heads. Over the years, more than a dozen branches have been destroyed, with hundreds of people slaughtered, and the organizational structure has been severely damaged.

For secrecy, many of our communications were single-line with no backup data. As these branches were destroyed, we lost contact with over 90% of our members.

Seeing Stephens anguished expression, Garibaldi did not know what to say. He had heard of the Austrian governments viciousness in cracking down on revolutionary organizations.

The Italian National Salvation Army had not been targeted yet because they were newly established and hadnt caused trouble on Austrian territory, so they naturally didnt attract the Austrian governments attention.

Garibaldi said with an embarrassed look, Sorry, I did not know the situation you were facing was so dire.

Seeing that Garibaldi had been hoodwinked, Stephen breathed a sigh of relief. He still had some integrity and didnt want to make promises lightly, especially since their allies were few.

Without a few major rebels leading the charge, if the Austrian governments attention fell on them, it would be a tragedy.

Stephen didnt want to become the primary target, as it meant being at risk of dying in an accident at any moment. Unless he retired to the mountains and forests, nowhere would be safe.

The Hungarian independence organization managed to survive by learning to conceal themselves, not by being militarily powerful.

Ever since the revolution failed, they had long remained at the stage of just spouting rhetoric, never launching any substantive rebellion.

Their so-called disruptive activities amounted to nothing more than writing a few articles criticizing the Austrian government or distributing nationalist independence propaganda slogans.

This was not Stephens fault. It was mainly that those revolutionaries with actual combat ability had participated in the Hungarian independence movement and basically died in the independence war.

The fish that slipped through the net and survived were mostly loudmouths responsible for propaganda, lacking combat ability so they never appeared in the rebel armies.

Since too many were implicated, and they had been small fry at the time, they slipped through the cracks during the post-war purge.

After escaping the initial crackdown, everyone became worried and feared being caught and imprisoned, so they chose to exile overseas one after another.

Since they were already relying on their tongues to make a living, even after changing the time and place, there wasn't a significant change.

Over the years, their theoretical foundations and organizational abilities had indeed improved, but taking up arms to fight for independence was too much to ask of them.

Being able to talk big is also a kind of skill, and based on this ability, the Hungarian Independence Organization thrived in the United States.

By relying on their eloquence, they successfully deceived many people, and everyone thought they were a bunch of desperados. Even the criminal organizations in the United States kept their distance from them.

Thanks to the reputation they built, they also sheltered many Hungarian immigrants in the United States, gradually establishing themselves in the country.

The better life they had, the more they feared death.

Now, people like Stephen no longer had the will for revolution. Bearing the banner of the Hungarian Independence Organization was more about protecting their own interests than leading Hungarian independence.

America in this era wasn't exactly a pristine land either. Over the years, they had also amassed a considerable fortune. If not for their adept boasting, which intimidated a pack of jackals, tigers, and leopards, their good days would have ended long ago.

Chapter 362: Strategic Gamble

After returning to the European continent, Stephen and Garibaldi went their separate ways. One wanted to go and cause an uproar for independence, while the other wanted to find a place to observe the situation.

Stephen and his group did not immediately return to Hungary. Their experience in exile told them they had to be cautious, as any carelessness could be fatal.

Despite more than a decade passing and everyone undergoing significant changes, no one could guarantee that they wouldn't be recognized by their acquaintances.

Once the news leaked out, they would all be taken down together. In Montenegro, Stephen and his group got off the boat and disguised themselves as merchants to investigate the market in Montenegro.

Then they sent out several young members who had never passed through Austria to gather intelligence in Hungary.

Adversity is most conducive to growth. The current Hungarian Independence Organization is different from a decade ago. Not only had they learned to understand themselves and their enemies, but their ability to survive had also improved by many levels.

At a time when a wave of rebels was sweeping across the European continent, the Prussian-Danish War was also nearing its end. Fortunately, the Russian government took action in time.

This could not be actually considered timely. The Russian government should have taken action more than two months earlier. Unfortunately, the Russians wanted to suppress the Polish uprising first before dealing with the Prussians.

As a result, although the Polish rebels were defeated, the rebellion continued. There were too many supporters behind the Polish rebellion this time, and the strength of the rebels exceeded the expectations of the Russians.

Defeating them was easy, but eliminating them was difficult. The existence of the Polish rebellion bought time for the Prussians.

It was not until the Danes could no longer hold out that the Russian government had to intervene. Otherwise, if the Kingdom of Denmark fell, the prestige of the Russian Empire would be lost.

On December 28, 1864, the Russian government issued an ultimatum to the Kingdom of Prussia, ordering them to withdraw from Denmark within 24 hours.

In Berlin, although they were mentally prepared, the Prussian government still felt repressed when that day finally arrived.

This time, the enemy was the European hegemon the Russian Empire, which was completely incomparable to the Danes.

Things had reached this point, and now they could no longer retreat. Otherwise, they would not only offend the Russians but also the English and French who were secretly supporting them.

William I couldn't afford to be at odds with the military anymore. If they lost this war, even if the Russians didn't swallow Prussia whole, they would at least take a big bite out of them.

Are you ready? Do you have confidence in defeating the Russians?

The Minister of War and the Navy, Roon, replied, We have completed a national mobilization, and all reserves have been recalled to active duty. 427,000 Prussian troops can be deployed for battle at any time.

The most important thing now is to seek more loans from the English and French. As long as we solve the funding problem, we can fight a war of attrition with the Russians.

While it is true that the Kingdom of Prussia mobilized 427,000 troops, it does not mean that all these troops could be deployed in the war against Russia.

Having such powerful neighbors was a tragedy. Each of the three neighbors can crush them, so the Prussian government must proceed with caution.

It was no problem to send the main force against the Russians, but how to ensure they would not be taken advantage of by the French and Austrians was a big issue.

Even if everyone needed them to fight against the Russians, and the French and Austrians would not take action against them for the time being, what about after the war ended?

Whether they failed or succeeded, there was a possibility of facing attacks from the French and Austrians.

If they were defeated, needless to say, the Russians would want a share, and the French and Austrians would want some as well. Unless Prussia paid a heavy price, they could not escape.

Winning this war did not equate to victory either; the Russian government can still come back stronger. The days ahead were long!

The European continent was too small to accommodate so many strong nations. Neither France nor Austria wanted to see the emergence of a powerful Prussia.

After defeating the Russians, Prussia's role would be over, and it would be perfectly normal for them to be stabbed in the back by then.

Precautions must be taken, and the Prussian government has to prepare in advance. In case of unexpected circumstances, they need to be able to react.

With so many realistic problems in front of them, the Prussian military naturally dared not take risks. They not only had to win but also had to minimize losses as much as possible to deal with possible opportunistic attacks from the French and Austrians after the war.

In this era, the international environment for the Kingdom of Prussia was much harsher than in history, and there were too few options for them.

In history, Bismarck was able to lead Prussia to unify Germany, but that was based on the premise of Russia losing the Crimean War and Austria losing the Franco-Austrian War.

The current situation was completely different. The Franco-Austrian War had not even happened. The Kingdom of Sardinia wanted to use the cession of territory to lure the French into attacking Austria, but the Austrian government directly sold out the entire Kingdom of Sardinia.

Although France, which had swallowed the Kingdom of Sardinia, seemed to have profited greatly on the surface, it had fallen into a strategically passive position and become isolated by European countries.

To some extent, this was also a good thing for the Kingdom of Prussia. With France in a diplomatic predicament, they would not dare to have designs on the Rhineland in the short term, greatly reducing the pressure on their national defense.

The formidable Russians, on the other hand, were different. Despite suffering greater losses in the Near East War than in the Crimean War in history, they emerged victorious!

The Russian people weren't afraid of heavy losses, and the Russian government's occupation of Constantinople had been met with great satisfaction across society, overshadowing any losses incurred.

The Russian army, having been baptized by the flames of war, possesses a combat capability that cannot be compared to what it was in the original history. Not only did they have weaponry that surpassed those of the same period in history, but their morale and military spirit were also on a different level.

It was not surprising that the Prussian military chose a conservative approach. After all, the Russian government had no shortage of soldiers, and with the Austro-Russian alliance, even if Austria did not support the Russians, it would not prevent them from selling weaponry.

Under such circumstances, it would obviously be unwise to engage in a test of strength with the Russians. Russia could lose three or five times without issue, but if Prussia lost even once, they would be finished.

War is no child's play. Whether it was Roon or Moltke, they were the most outstanding military strategists of this era. Their perspective was naturally not just about winning a single battle but winning the war.

The biggest weakness of the Russian government was poverty. Prussia had financial backers, so the first to be unable to hold out in a war of attrition would definitely be the Russians.

Prime Minister Franck raised a question, How can we ensure we can stop the Russians? From a practical standpoint, we must keep the enemy outside our borders.

You're all well aware of the quality of the Cossack cavalry. Once they penetrate into our territory and wreak havoc, the consequences would be unimaginable.

This was the most troubling problem. The Prussian-Russian border was too long, and the Polish Plain was flat and open. These areas were also the base of the Junker nobility, and could not be lost.

Not to mention the entry of large Russian forces, even if just thousands of cavalry broke through and caused destruction, the Prussian government would not be able to afford the losses.

Moltke said gravely, We need to abandon the border, moving all civilians within 50 kilometers of the Prussian-Russian border to the rear areas.

Then we will carry out a second mobilization, increasing the service period of soldiers to five years and adjusting the service age to 16-55. We can add another 300,000 troops, give them simple training, and use them to deal with a Russian invasion.

Everyone's expressions changed drastically. It was easy to say abandon the border, but doing so would incur a heavy price.

The Kingdom of Prussia was not large, and retreating fifty kilometers might sound easy, but in practice, it meant relocating millions of people. One-fifth of the country's territory would become a no man's land.

William I said sternly, This is impossible. Your plan to abandon the countryside has exceeded our capacity to bear. If we were to proceed with it, we would be the first to collapse, not the Russians.

Moltke sighed and said, If that's the case, we can only take the risk and launch an offensive, keeping the battlefield in Poland as much as possible.

In this era, trenches and barbed wire have not yet appeared, and there are no such cheap defense facilities. With the Prussian-Russian border being so long, fortifications can only be built in key areas.

The enemy's large forces wouldn't dare to bypass these fortifications and launch attacks deep into enemy territory, but it's a different story for smaller units.

Of course, there are also defensive fortifications in the rear. The nobles' castles are the best fortresses, and dealing with small enemy forces without heavy firepower is not a big problem.

The main reason for abandoning the areas was to reduce casualties. After all, civilians could not stay in castles indefinitely, and everyone needed to live.

The cavalry comes and goes like the wind, and even with prior notice, it still takes time to prepare. Retreating fifty kilometers to the rear is to buy this time.

William I began to hesitate. The greatest risk of taking a gamble wasn't the military aspect. With the Polish Independence Organization now an ally of Prussia, even if the war were to be fought within Polish territory, they would still have the support of the people.

The trouble was that it would anger the Russians and turn a regional war into an all-out war between the two countries. It was not that the Prussians were timid. The biggest problem was that after completing military reforms, they had not experienced a major war and lacked confidence.

Prime Minister Franck said, Your Majesty, since we have come this far, why hesitate? Winning this war, the independent Kingdom of Poland will serve as a buffer between Prussia and Russia in the future; losing this war, the Kingdom of Prussia will lose its future.

As a member of the Junker nobility, the Prime Minister ultimately stood on the side of the Junkers at a critical moment. No matter what, class interests had to be protected.

Prussia's path of retreat was blocked, but the Junkers path of retreat still existed. These battle-ready nobles were still highly sought after in this era and did not have to worry about finding a way out.

William I nodded heavily and said, Go ahead and do it boldly!

With things having reached this point, he decided to take a big gamble. Placing the battlefield in Russian-controlled Polish territory could not only reduce losses on home soil but also offer a chance to take a bite out of Russia after the war.

The British supported their expansion in the Baltic region. Since there was no opportunity for expansion in the German region, eastward expansion became the only choice.

European nations wouldn't mind seeing a Prussian Empire emerge that would stand toe-to-toe with Russia and take on the responsibility of containing the Russian Empire. That was why John Bull wouldn't stand by and watch Prussia fall.

Prime Minister Franck proposed, Your Majesty, we must seek more supporters, at least ensuring Austria remains neutral.

A Russian Empire supported by Austria is completely different from one without Austrian support. We cannot take on two empires at the same time.

Since it was going to be a war of attrition, they naturally had to consider the comparison of strength between the two sides. Although Austria may not have as much money as Britain and France, Austria's industrial strength was no weaker than France's.

Support didn't necessarily have to be in the form of money; providing materials could be just as effective. As long as there was an ample supply of food, weapons, ammunition, and necessary military supplies, the Russians could sustain themselves indefinitely.

In this era, most conscripted European soldiers did not receive salaries, and the salaries of the noble officers could also be owed first they would not go on strike just because the king could not pay them.

William I thought for a moment and said, Hmm, send someone to negotiate with the Austrian government. Unless it's a core issue, everything can be discussed.

In Vienna, Franz was still unaware that Austria had once again become the focus of contention among various parties. At this time, both Prussia and Russia were in need of Austria's support.

Geopolitics was always an unavoidable topic. The role that nearby Austria could play was unmatched by distant powers like Britain and France.

He was still worrying about the letter in his hand. Maximilian, who had encountered difficulties, finally realized the need for help, putting Franz in a difficult position.

With the Prussian-Russian war about to erupt, the Austrian government had to be on high alert. As the outcome of the American Civil War between the North and the South was about to be decided, Austrias forces in the Americas had to be mobilized for intervention in the aftermath.

Interfering further in Mexican affairs would simply be asking for trouble.

Directly refusing would seem somewhat unkind, considering that Maximilian simply believed that diplomatic support would suffice, unaware that behind every instance of diplomatic support lay a power struggle.

Diplomacy without the backing of power was hardly worth mentioning. After much hesitation, Franz decided to give Maximilian some encouragement to inspire him to strive on his own.

As a supportive elder brother, Franz still provided some practical advice.

He deeply analyzed the internal contradictions of the Mexican Empire and suggested that Maximilian first win over the constitutionalists to establish a stable government, leaving the issue of reform for later.

When it came to lacking funds, it was simpler: boldly ask the French for a loan. Use influence, trade routes, fiscal revenue, mineral resources... as long as the price was right, everything could be used as collateral.

Whether Maximilian listened or not was beyond Franz's control. At least he had given his advice. If Maximilian followed these suggestions, although it would not make the Mexican Empire strong, at least it could ensure the stability of Maximilian's throne.

It would increase the difficulty of future reforms, but Franz ignored that. In the face of survival, any other factor could be abandoned.

The saying that the one who lends money is the uncle may not necessarily apply in this era, but at least it ensured that Napoleon III would not easily abandon his support for him.

The issue of repaying the debt would have to wait until the throne was secure. If Maximilian were ousted halfway through, these debts would no longer concern him.

It was the Mexican government borrowing money, not Maximilian himself. If he were to be driven from power by his enemies, leaving them with a mess would be a small form of retaliation.

Chapter 363: Ruthlessness of a Motley Crew

In the Vienna Palace, after dispatching the letter to Maximilian, Franz was no longer focused on the issue of Mexico.

There were many recent developments, with the Russo-Prussian war consuming much attention. John Bull was also not staying quiet, stirring up trouble in the African continent.

Seeing the expansionism of France and Austria, they could no longer restrain themselves. In previous years, the Indian Rebellion had kept the British government occupied, leaving them without the energy to meddle elsewhere.

Relying solely on private colonization teams, they were clearly no match for France and Austria. It was perfectly normal for a colonization team of a few hundred people to be wiped out on the African continent.

Both France and Austria, having taken the initiative, had nurtured their own thugs. Not long ago in Zimbabwe, there was an armed conflict between Britain and Austria, leading to tens of thousands of indigenous people pouring into the South African colonies, turning the region upside down.

The British government lodged a strong protest against Austria. Fortunately, the colonial government still knew its limits, only manipulating local indigenous tribes to attack the British, without taking direct action themselves.

The British had no evidence that it was Austrias doing, so the two governments could only engage in a drawn-out dispute. As for the heavily damaged South African Colonial Company, that was not within Franz's considerations.

African colonization was a high-risk business. If they could not bear the losses, it was best to leave early. In opening up African colonies, Austria also had to endure casualties in the four-digit range almost every year.

These individuals either perished in combat or succumbed to illness during the expansion. For those unable to bear the losses, it was best to remain in coastal areas; venturing deep inland came at a price.

While some colonial teams struck it rich, many suffered heavy losses. Breaking even was exceedingly difficult.

To put it bluntly, in this era, unless precious metal mines were discovered, there was no way to get rich overnight from colonizing the African continent.

The majority of private colonial teams, after establishing colonies and finding no gold or silver mines, resorted to trading in labor, clearing the area, and then selling it to the colonial government.

Long-term operations were not something ordinary teams could bear. Once the cash ran out, they would move elsewhere. Many people were hoping to discover a gold mine and get rich overnight.

Steadily developing plantations and slowly profiting was only suitable for well-funded teams.

Consider this: a colonization team of a thousand people could occupy tens of thousands of square kilometers of land, but how could they develop it?

Coal mines, iron mines, copper mines... these mineral resources that would be extremely valuable in later times had no value to mine in this era.

If they could not be smelted on-site, the cost of transporting them back to Europe would be astronomical.

To build such factories in the colonies to develop these resources, not to mention the uncertain profit prospects, just the huge investment alone was unaffordable for anyone.

Labor costs in the colonies were higher than those in the homeland, as there was a shortage of labor everywhere. After immigrating, people usually worked hard for a few years, earned money, then went to invest in farms.

This was a tradition of the German people, which later saw most American farmers being Germans.

Before the labor shortage issue was resolved, industrial development in the colonies was impossible. Of course, Franz did not intend to develop industry in the colonies either.

After all, the resources of these Austrian colonies were fundamentally limited. For instance, regions abundant in coal mines lacked iron mines, while areas rich in iron mines lacked coal.

Without addressing transportation issues, there was no future for industrial development in the colonies. Unless Austria experienced a severe capital surplus and had to export abroad, these problems could not be solved.

In the short term, the most suitable economic development was still agriculture, opening up plantations along the rivers. The Austrian government had been encouraging everyone to grow cash crops.

Especially industrial raw materials that Austria did not have domestically and needed to import, such as rubber, cotton, tung oil, etc.

(Authors Note: Rubber was not just used for car tires, it had widespread applications even before the invention of cars, such as umbrellas, raincoats, rain boots, plastic water pipes, components of weapons and equipment, etc. Its uses were very broad, and before the invention of synthetic rubber, there were no worries about market demand.)

The head of intelligence, Tyron, reported, Your Majesty, according to the intelligence we have gathered, many members of revolutionary organizations exiled in America have recently returned to Europe.

This includes the Hungarian Independence Organization, the Italian Independence Organization, and the Polish Independence Organization these revolutionary groups may cause us trouble.

Currently, we've only located traces of the Polish Independence Organization; they've practically appeared in the open, raising funds to support the Polish insurgents on the European continent.

It was naturally impossible for the intelligence agency to keep track of these people who were thousands of miles away in America, as information transmission was too slow.

Even though the first transoceanic telegraph was laid in 1858, truly achieving connectivity between Europe and America would have to wait until the completion of the second transoceanic cable in 1866.

(Authors Note: Technical limitations mean that communication may not always be reliable, with a certain probability of errors.)

Moreover, this telegraph line was controlled by the Americans. As long as the federal government wanted to block information, it could not be transmitted at all, or could even be distorted beyond recognition.

However, the situation was different once they entered Europe. As long as it was not information that the governments deliberately blocked, it could be transmitted by telegraph.

These active revolutionary organizations, each eager to increase their fame, had their leaders practically become household names. The moment they surfaced, they would attract the attention of those with ulterior motives.

Franz disdainfully said, The Americans are truly desperate; what use can this motley crew possibly have? Report this to the police department and let them deal with these riffraff.

In this era, there were not many revolutionary groups with real combat power. Most were just big talkers, with the French Revolutionary Party being the most prominent they had even won victories through their tongues alone.

The dramatic events of the February Revolution, if it had not been for the unexpected occurrence of bloodshed and sacrifice later on, would have overthrown the House of Orleans through banquets.

The Banquet movement was essentially just eating and drinking while propagating revolutionary ideals and plotting some conspiracies.

They had always remained at the stage of rhetoric, never actually launching an armed uprising. Otherwise, Napoleon III would not have been able to rise to power.

From start to finish, the revolutionaries never had their own armed forces. It was only by buying over the military that Napoleon III was able to make his comeback.

Among these numerous revolutionary groups, the most formidable were the Poles. Not because they were particularly diligent, but mainly due to the multitude of supporters.

With European countries sponsoring them a little here and there, an armed group was born. For example, even Austria which was merely a bystander had over 800 armed men participating in the Polish uprising.

Of course, this was mainly because the Austrian government wanted to eliminate unstable elements. Sending the Polish people who leaned towards the Polish independence movement away and using the hands of the Russian people to deal with them was simply to avoid disrupting the current ethnic harmony within the country.

Causing trouble for the Russians was secondary. Franz was not that petty as to not realize that if he was going to stab someone with a knife, he might as well use a bigger one!

As for other revolutionary groups, they basically had no armed forces. Franz had never even heard of Garibaldi's Italian National Salvation Army, so he naturally did not know they were planning an armed uprising in southern Italy.

An independence organization that had never made any waves being overlooked was simply unavoidable.

Even the Hungarian independence organization, which had been minding its own business, caught Franz's attention simply because they could talk the talk. It just goes to show that in this era, if you don't boast, you won't get anywhere!

This oversight directly led to the tragedy in Naples. Otherwise, if the Austrian government had warned them, they might have been able to take out Garibaldi's National Salvation Army right away.

In the Principality of Montenegro, the leaders of the Hungarian Independence Organization gathered together to discuss countermeasures. The atmosphere was somewhat tense, indicating that they had received bad news.

Stephen spoke up, saying, Everyone knows the situation. If anyone has any suggestions, please speak up.

Buzios, with a look of anger, said, What suggestions could there possibly be? Now Hungary is just a geographical term. We Magyars have become a minority, and a minority despised by the locals at that.

Austrians, oh God! Who could tell me that there is still such an ethnic group as the great Hungarians?

It was completely different experiencing it firsthand versus knowing about it from thousands of miles away. Over such a distance, even transmitting a message was difficult.

The Hungarian Independence Organization was originally a fraudulent organization for siphoning funds, and those dispatched to carry out missions were repeatedly reminded that safety was the top priority.

It was not because of deep camaraderie, but partly for fear of falling into the hands of the Austrian government and revealing everything, and partly because they had so few people that they could not afford losses.

Most of the time, they set up their base in the Kingdom of Sardinia. Because of their relationship with Austria, even if their identities were exposed, the Sardinian government would immediately notify them to flee.

After all, they were just putting up small ads and propagating revolutionary ideas. In the Kingdom of Sardinia, they could deceive passionate teenagers. With Austrian-Sardinian enmity and financial incentives, there was no shortage of recruits.

As long as they were cautious, the chances of being caught were very low. Even in the future with surveillance everywhere, small advertisements could not be eradicated, let alone in this era.

At this point, a middle-aged man said discontentedly, Mr. Buzios, regarding the issue of Austrians, I have already reported it to the organization previously.

He had indeed reported it, but they did not take it seriously. In the eyes of many, it was just the Austrian government deceiving themselves and others.

Normally it would be like that, but they overlooked the existence of compulsory education.

It was difficult to indoctrinate adults, but children were different. With a closed education from childhood, after a few years, their worldview will be shaped and they will see themselves as Austrians, a branch of the Germanic people, specifically South Austrians.

The older generation did not even have a concept of their own ethnicity. Combined with the Austrian governments distribution of land, their identification with Austria was at its highest, seeing no problem with being Austrians.

Against this backdrop, the Magyar ethnic group played the role of attracting hatred.

Because some members of their families had participated in the Hungarian independence movement, they had their noble titles, land, and assets stripped away, becoming commoners. As the former rulers who had enslaved the local populace, they were naturally shunned.

Over a decade later, their past glory and arrogance were long gone, but as relatives of insurgents, they were still under close surveillance.

Those with connections quickly changed their ethnicity and moved away. After all, they were not true Magyars, only joining for interests. Changing their identity now was not an issue.

And then, in a period of rapid population growth in Austria, the number of Magyars declined rapidly to less than one-third of their peak population.

Not only were their numbers dwindling, but they were also scattered and resettled. In a village, there would only be one or two households; would they still dare to cause trouble knowing that they would be suppressed by their neighbors?

For the Hungarian Independence Organization, this was extremely unfavorable. Originally, these losers in power struggles were most likely to become one of them. Unfortunately, given the current situation, these people couldnt even make a ripple.

In fact, it would not take many years before this ethnic group could only be found in history books.

An elder interrupted, Enough, theres no need to dwell on this issue. There may be many people in Austria who are dissatisfied with the Austrian government, but those willing to launch an uprising with us are definitely few and far between.

Those willing to see Hungary independent, aside from the Magyars, probably only include some Italians.

I propose abandoning our actions in the Hungarian region and moving the revolutionary front to Italy. The Americans only need to see results; they wont care whether the uprising breaks out in Hungary or Italy.

Stephen objected, Mr. Mariut, do you think we have the capability to launch a rebellion in Italy? We may have some connections domestically, but those people are all our relatives and friends. I know you dont want to involve them, and I dont want to implicate them either.

But the movement still has to continue, even if its just for show. All these years, weve taken quite a bit of money from the Americans. If theres no activity, it will be inexcusable.

Mariut shook his head and said, Since Austria annexed Serbia, Hungary has become a hinterland, and we have no way to launch an uprising there.

But its different in their border regions. Over the years, the organizations operations in the Kingdom of Sardinia have established some foundations, and we can take advantage of the Austro-Sardinian conflict.

For example, persuade a group of Sardinians to attack the Kingdom of Lombardy, maybe go to a tavern and instigate some drunkards to cause havoc.

As long as we stir up some commotion and take a few photos, we can tell the Americans that we are provoking Austro-French conflicts.

We can also put on a ruse and get injured on purpose to prove that we have indeed suffered heavy losses and cannot continue to launch an uprising.

In any case, I'm already old and can't keep carrying on. After this, I'll retire and no longer meddle in the organization's affairs.

They were professionals at boasting, and also masters of fakery. Mariut never intended to incite conflict between France and Austria. If real conflict broke out, they wouldn't be able to go back to America.

The current federal government could not shelter them. With pressure from France and Austria, the chances of them being sold out would be nine out of ten.

Stephen rebuked sharply, Mr. Mariut, don't forget the oath we once made. No one can leave the organization before Hungary gains independence.

Dreaming of leaving was futile. Stephen had already made his decision. Either they would all land safely and enjoy the rest of their lives, or they would all go down together. He would not allow himself to become a scapegoat.

As the leader of the Hungarian Independence Organization, Stephen had no way to retire. Aside from the teenage rebels who joined later, the upper echelons were all considering their future paths.

If the Magyars were a large ethnic group, they might still be able to persevere. Unfortunately, even during the Hungarian Republic era, their peak population was only 600,000.

The rest of the Hungarians were actively excluded by them. If it had been like history, where they were not completely wiped out, they could have slowly absorbed the lower classes to swell the Magyar population.

That was no longer possible. Those who participated in or supported Hungarian independence were done for, and sympathizers were also excluded from the center of power.

In the divided Kingdom of Hungary, the Austrian government directly sent officials to manage it, strictly implementing an ethnic integration policy, leaving no opportunity for the local nobility to intervene.

Even if they rose again, they would not be allowed to serve as officials locally. Any thoughts of biding their time were simply impossible.

Mariut slammed the table and went into a rant, Stephen, spare us your nonsense. Where is Hungary now?

Take this nonsense about Hungarian independence and go deceive fools with it! Others may not understand what's going on, but don't we?

From start to finish, it was all about vying for power with the Austrian government. Originally, we agreed to negotiate slowly to avoid provoking Austria into an irreparable situation.

But seeing Austria's weakness, that guy Kossuth shamelessly boasted the benefits of independence to us, and one by one we were blinded by self-interest and went mad with revolution.

We did achieve independence in the end, and a republic was established. But before Hungary could recover, the Austrian army came marching in.

You've made quite a bit of money in America over the years; it's about time you called it quits! Keep stirring the pot, and sooner or later, it'll backfire. Do you think the Americans will spare you then?

Stephen was so angry he almost rushed over to beat up this guy relying on his old age. Did he really not want to quit? The problem was the Americans would not agree!

Where in the world could you take money without delivering results? Even though they hadn't made any significant moves over the years, they never gave up on propaganda efforts.

Regardless of how effective they were, they had at least put in some effort. It brought political benefits to the Americans and demonstrated the superiority of the American system.

If it weren't for the Hungarian Independence Organization as a front, how could those present live such affluent lives in America? They should know that when they first went into exile, every single one of them was dirt poor.

Their first pot of gold was a subsidy from the federal government. Everyone used these funds to get through the first hurdle before embarking on their path of boasting.

Giving speeches everywhere, deceiving people to raise funds this money was not invested in the Hungarian independence cause but became their private assets for investment and real estate purchases in America.

Now that they had sensed the danger and wanted to withdraw, everyone else could retire, but Stephen, as the leader of the Hungarian Independence Organization, could not.

He had been packaged as a revolutionary, and stepping back meant falling into an abyss. Otherwise, Stephen would have disbanded the Hungarian Independence Organization long ago and lived a decadent life as a wealthy man.

Stephen sneered and asked, Mr. Mariut, I know you have your concerns. So, tell me, how can we retreat now?

It depends on whether you're ruthless enough!

As soon as Mariut finished speaking, the temperature in the room seemed to drop to ten degrees below zero, and everyone's faces turned pale.

Being ruthless definitely did not mean having those present die. Otherwise, Mariut would not have proclaimed it so openly. So the ones to be sacrificed could only be the lower-level members of the organization.

Under what situation would a revolutionary give up?

Chapter 364: Two Countries on the Brink of Bankruptcy (Bonus Chapter)

Vienna Palace

The Foreign Minister, Wessenberg, smiled as he said, Your Majesty, in seeking our support, both Russia and Prussia have offered almost identical conditions.

The Russians promise that if we support them, we can obtain Silesia after the war; Prussia promises that if we remain neutral, they will cede Silesia after the war.

The Russians' promise showed a blatant disregard for others' interests, as the Russian government did not hesitate to trade away Prussia's interests to win over Austria.

Meanwhile, the Prussian governments promise was made out of desperation. They were also unwilling to give up Silesia but to win the war, they had to appease Austria.

If they win this war, all their efforts can be repaid twofold; if they lose the war, Galicia cannot be retained at all.

Despite the years that have passed, Austria still harbored resentment over Silesia. Especially in recent years, as its strength increased, the voices in the Austrian government calling for the recovery of Silesia grew louder.

Once the Kingdom of Prussia shows signs of weakness, Austria will definitely kick them when they're down. Now, the Prussian government has no choice but to first stabilize Austria.

Looking at Felix, who seemed hesitant to speak, Franz asked, Prime Minister, what do you think?

Prime Minister Felix replied, Your Majesty, neither of these options is ideal. What we need is for both Prussia and Russia to be weakened.

Currently, our alliance with Russia is already causing discomfort, with various European countries working to dismantle this alliance. If the Russian government continues to succeed, we will only encounter more trouble in the future.

For us, the current Russian Empire is already powerful enough. It is hard to say whether the Russo-Austrian alliance will still have value once the Russian government completes its internal reforms.

Similarly, a stronger Kingdom of Prussia does not serve our interests. Europe is too small to accommodate so many powerful nations.

The ideal scenario is for both Prussia and Russia to be weakened. Not only can this disrupt Alexander II's reforms by using the Prussians' hands, making the Russian government's reforms less thorough than in history, but it can also thwart Prussia's ambitions, leaving them with no chance of rising up after this failure.

However, achieving this is extremely difficult. At least Franz does not believe that Austria can play this balancing act.

The Kingdom of Prussia would be ruined if it lost once, while on the surface it seemed that Russia could lose many times. In reality, this was not true. The Russian government has too many internal problems, and Franz is also unsure of their capacity to endure losses.

This is unlike the Near East War, where the Russian army reached the gates of Constantinople. All classes within the country supported the war, and no matter how great the losses, the Russian government had to persevere.

Franz pondered for a moment before stating, Let's dispense with these idealistic plans; they're too prone to failing, ultimately pleasing neither side. Based on practical needs, we only need to accomplish two things:

First, utilize the Prussians to disrupt the Russian government's reforms. As long as the Russians cannot achieve victory in the short term, Alexander II will concede to the conservatives, and the reforms will not be thorough.

Second, the Kingdom of Prussia must not be allowed to expand. One powerful nation in Germany is sufficient; there's no need to add another competitor.

The task of strengthening Prussia's power can be left to England and France. Our role is simply to provide support to the Russian government when necessary, bolstering their resolve to continue the fight.

It was impossible to please both sides. If they really tried to do that, the most likely result would be both sides hating them, rendering the situation untenable.

The role of the Austro-Russian alliance is diminishing, but as long as the treaty remains in effect, Austria cannot openly betray Russia.

This concerns Austria's credibility in international politics and diplomacy. A country without credibility will never earn the respect of others.

Fortunately, the Prussian government was smart enough not to wage any undeclared wars or invade Russia directly. Otherwise, according to the pact, Austria would also have been dragged into the war.

Currently, the situation involves the Kingdom of Prussia's invasion of Denmark, prompting Russia to declare war on Prussia to protect its ally.

Such a scenario falls outside the scope of the Austro-Russian alliance's mandatory participation in warfare.

The Kingdom of Denmark was an ally of Russia, but not necessarily an ally of Austria. The Austrian government did not need to stand with Russia.

The Minister of Finance, Karl, reminded, Your Majesty, the financial situation of the Russian government is extremely dire. The slow action of the Russians is largely due to financial constraints.

Not long ago, bonds issued by the Russian government received a cold reception in the capital markets, with investors concerned that the Russians might default.

According to our analysis of the information available to us, if the financial situation of the Russians does not improve, the Russian government may declare bankruptcy again.

Within the Austro-Russian alliance, there are provisions stipulating that, without harming its own interests, it is obliged to provide material assistance to its allies.

In theory, under such circumstances, the Austrian government should provide assistance, but this is a matter of choice. However, the manner of support depends on the actual situation.

Providing loans constitutes assistance, as does donating supplies. The specifics depend on interests.

Without sufficient interest, they could just take some weapons and ammunition from the warehouses to make up the numbers.

The attitude of the Minister of Finance is very clear, indicating that the financial situation of the Russian government is extremely dire, and it is highly likely to go bankrupt after the war. Austria does not need to jump into this pit.

Government bankruptcy had never been anything new on the European continent, especially for the Russian government. Once government debt exceeded their ability to repay, they would declare bankruptcy.

Government bankruptcy meant that they would indefinitely suspend payment of previous debts, or in other words, not repay them. The Russian government had done this many times, leaving many creditors in tears.

Of course, not every country had the privilege of defaulting. In this era, there was still a way to collect debts forcible debt collection.

Small countries, even if they declared bankruptcy, usually only defaulted on personal debts. The debts to great powers still had to be repaid, such as through monitoring of finances by the powers.

Mexico is just a negative example, lacking strength yet daring to emulate others in defaulting on debts. In 1862, President Jurez announced a suspension of debt payments, and then French creditors came knocking at the door.

This approach is ineffective against the Russians; no creditor has the capability to demand money in St. Petersburg. After numerous instances of default, no lenders were willing to loan money to the Tsar on the capital market.

Franz asked in surprise, Has the Russian governments finances deteriorated to such an extent?

In his memory, while the Russian governments finances were poor, they had not reached the point of collapse. Even in the event of a Russo-Prussian war, they would not immediately go bankrupt.

Finance Minister Karl explained, Your Majesty, in recent times, ordinary European countries, as long as they can persevere, will try their best to repay debts and rarely default. However, the Russians are an exception.

Based on past experience, when the Russian governments debt reaches a certain level, it will declare bankruptcy. Recently, we have gathered intelligence indicating that the Russian government has prepared a bankruptcy plan.

Franz had nothing to say. In fact, during the Middle Ages, kings declaring bankruptcy and defaulting on debts was quite common, occurring almost every few decades.

Many capitalists were left in tears, with Jewish financiers being among the most heavily affected. This was largely due to their immense wealth; as the majority of money was concentrated in their hands, who else would people turn to for loans?

Of course, many kings were also victims. The Jewish capitalists attracted hatred precisely because they often included hidden clauses in loan contracts, and not a few borrowing kings fell into their traps, having to pay extra interest.

Facts proved that rulers were not to be trifled with, especially in the age of monarchies. Anyone who dared to cheat them out of money would have to pay the price. Most anti-Semitic movements on the European continent stemmed from this.

As we entered the modern era, the power of capital continued to grow, and governments around the world resorted to bankruptcy and default on debts less and less frequently. Especially for international loans with backing from great powers, defaulting became even more unthinkable.

During times when everyone defaulted together, it didnt matter much, as everyone was in the same boat. However, when suddenly everyone else began to abide by the rules, being the only one left defaulting on debts became highly conspicuous.

Once creditors spread the word, the Russian governments credibility was ruined. Without credibility, many things became difficult, leading to the awkward situation of Russia having to use gold and silver coins.

Franz pondered for a moment before saying, Then we should also tighten the purse strings externally and remind the domestic financial sector to be more vigilant. Our support for the Russians should primarily be in the form of tangible assistance. All large loans to Russia must be backed by collateral.

This could also be considered taking advantage of Russias difficulties. These restrictive conditions undoubtedly increased the difficulty for the Russian government to raise funds in the Austrian capital markets. However, as long as the Russian government did not default, providing collateral was acceptable no matter how much.

With collateral, even if Russia declared bankruptcy, they could not default on these debts. After all, the value of the collateral was usually higher than the loan amount.

Franz had no choice but to do this. It was only recently that the Russian government had used Alaska as collateral to offset 2.57 million guilders in debt, while also incurring a debt of gratitude. If they were not really struggling, the Russians would never have done such a thing.

While Austria worried about the possibility of Russia declaring bankruptcy, the British government faced the same issue. As the continents most impoverished and militaristic country, the Kingdom of Prussia was far from being wealthy.

Lending money to the Prussian government now carried no less risk than lending to the Russians. War bonds issued by the Prussian government met with a chilly reception in the London financial market.

If Prussia were to emerge victorious, there might still be a chance of repayment. However, if Prussia were to lose or if both sides were to suffer, these investments would all go down the drain.

Few held a positive outlook on Prussia, and people were unwilling to risk their money. Even though bond interest rates had been raised to 15.8% per annum, sales remained far from optimistic.

As the primary financier of the Kingdom of Prussia, the British government naturally could not stand idly by in such a situation. Without sufficient funds, how could Prussia wage this war?

Chancellor of the Exchequer Agarwal said, The war bonds we have issued to the Prussians have only sold 1.869 million pounds so far, far from the 15 million pounds issuance target.

The public does not have confidence in their ability to win this war. Unless someone can provide them with guarantees, these bonds cannot be sold.

The financial situation of the Kingdom of Prussia is extremely dire. Since 1848, they have been running deficits continuously.

Several domestic financial institutions believe Prussias finances are on the verge of bankruptcy and refuse to provide them with loans.

It was not easy being a financier, requiring a real investment of money. The cost of the Prussian-Russian War was bound to be an enormous expenditure, with a very real possibility of getting nothing in return.

Prime Minister John Russell rubbed his forehead and said, So, you're saying that our promised assistance to the Kingdom of Prussia has only raised less than one-fifth of the target in the past two months?

According to the agreement, the British are supposed to provide a loan of 10 million pounds to the Kingdom of Prussia, in addition to issuing 15 million pounds in war bonds.

However, in reality, aside from the 5 million pounds advanced by the British government to the Prussian government, there has been no interest whatsoever in the capital market.

This is the aftermath of the Near East War; neither Britain nor France managed to defeat the Russians, let alone the Kingdom of Prussia.

Even the British government did not believe that Prussia could win this war. Supporting them is simply aimed at disrupting Russian reforms, not expecting Prussia to emerge victorious.

Yes, Prime Minister. People lack confidence in Prussia, so they are cautious when it comes to investing, the Chancellor of the Exchequer Agarwal replied.

The British public was still very supportive of backing Prussia against Russia, but it was different when they had to pay for it.

Some newspapers in London were betting on when the Kingdom of Prussia would fall.

The most optimistic estimated that the Kingdom of Prussia could only last a year before losing the war; the most pessimistic believed the Prussian government would surrender in less than a month.

It was widely believed that for the Kingdom of Prussia to win this war, nothing less than direct English and French participation would suffice. Otherwise, defeat was only a matter of time.

Chapter 366: Abandoning Principles

In a manor on the island of Sicily, a meeting was held between Garibaldi and local revolutionaries.

Mr. Garibaldi, our strength has been severely depleted since the last uprising, and we are currently unable to launch another armed rebellion, objected the local revolutionary leader, Dreikurs.

The revolutionary organization in Sicily has a long history, with the January Uprising of 1848 marking the beginning of the 1848 revolutions.

However, its influence in Europe was limited, and it was quickly suppressed after a short period, with the outside world defaulting to the February Revolution in France as the true starting point of the great revolutions.

In 1860, Sicilian revolutionaries launched another armed uprising. Upon hearing the news, Garibaldi organized the famous Redshirts to enter Sicily, ushering in the revolution of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.

However, due to changes in this alternate timeline, the Kingdom of Sardinia fell into the hands of the French in 1860, making it impossible for Garibaldi to organize the Redshirts.

Without a capable fighting force, the armed uprising in Sicily was once again suppressed, resulting in heavy losses for the local revolutionary organization.

Dreikurs opposition to launching the uprising now is also out of necessity. In recent years, the government of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies has been closely monitoring the revolutionaries, forcing them to operate clandestinely and preventing them from expanding their forces.

Garibaldi calmly reassured him, Mr. Dreikurs, this opportunity is very rare. Revolutionary organizations across Europe will launch uprisings in January, allowing us to minimize the chances of intervention by the great powers.

If we miss this opportunity, we will not only face the government of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, but also intervention from the three countries of Austria, France, and Spain.

To say something disheartening, faced with intervention from the three major powers, even if our strength were ten or a hundred times greater, I do not think we would have any hope of victory.

The risk of launching an uprising now is lower than facing intervention from the three major powers. If we miss this opportunity, we may not see a successful revolution in our lifetimes.

Everyone is indeed launching uprisings together, but how effective it will be is hard to say. Whether the three major powers will intervene is completely unknown.

Garibaldi was also unsure in his heart, which is why he chose Sicily as the first stop of the revolution. The great powers are not philanthropists; they would not help without substantial benefit.

Unless it is certain that there is no way to suppress the rebellion, the government of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies will do its utmost to suppress it themselves and will not easily seek outside aid.

This presents an opportunity. As long as the most difficult period is overcome, even if the major powers intervene later, they will have amassed a bit of strength and won't be easily defeated upon intervention.

Dreikurs hesitated; intervention by the major powers has always been their foremost concern. Some have even suggested retaining the king to mitigate this risk.

Mr. Garibaldi, we can coordinate with your actions, but I can only organize a hundred or so people to participate in the uprising.

This meant that Dreikurs gave up the leading role in the revolution. It's not that he doesn't want to contend for it, but rather, there is no way to do so. While there are many revolutionaries in Sicily, there are few who can participate in the uprising.

Not everyone can sacrifice their heads and shed their blood for the revolution. Most people support the revolution only to the extent of doing some revolutionary propaganda and providing some financial support. As for risking their lives, forget about it.

Whether in terms of strength or reputation, Dreikurs could not compare with Garibaldi. Giving up the leading role was inevitable.

On January 5, 1865, the Italian National Salvation Army, led by Garibaldi, launched an armed uprising in Corleone, becoming known as the Redshirts due to the insurgents wearing red shirts as their symbol.

The prelude to revolution was set, and three days later, the Spanish Revolutionary Party initiated an uprising in Elda.

Queen Isabella II led a scandalous life, with a notorious reputation among the populace. Due to her father's early demise and a lack of proper education for a monarch, her political performance was considered inept.

Faced with incessant revolutions and palace conspiracies, she resorted to frequent changes in government to cope. Over her 25-year reign, Spain saw 34 different governments and seven constitutions enacted.

If it were not for Spain's solid foundation, it would have been torn apart long ago. Such circumstances created favorable conditions for revolutions.

However, as a stronghold of conservatives, traditional forces in Spain were formidable. Though they disliked the incompetent and corrupt Isabella II, they detested the rule-breaking revolutionaries even more.

With the assistance of the conservatives, Isabella II managed to barely maintain her rule. However, this support was not unconditional, and by the later stages, the conservatives could no longer tolerate her. In 1868, the Glorious Revolution erupted, forcing Isabella II into exile in France.

In Venice, after some persuasion, Stephen and others finally organized a revolutionary force. Although most of the people were unaware that they had been recruited into the revolutionary party.

The Hungarian independence organization fragmented, and under the guise of English, French, and Austrian colonial companies, they recruited a large number of Italians in the Kingdom of Sardinia, the Papal States, Lombardy, and Venetia, providing them with basic military training.

They went through the whole charade; these colonial companies were indeed real entities, and Stephen and others utilized American influence to register them in England and France.

Being adept at acting, they quickly adapted to their roles. It was common for colonial companies to hire armed personnel to establish overseas colonies, even in Austria.

However, Austrian colonial teams rarely hired Italians, and even if they did, they were mostly employed as sailors or laborers, rarely seeing combat.

Romantic Italians were not suited for combat; this was the conclusion drawn from many years of experience.

Of course, there would always be those who refused to believe it. Despite doubts about Italian combat capabilities, they were hard to resist due to their cost-effectiveness!

Although the overall combat strength of Italians was considered low, occasionally there were still a few exceptions, right? If they were lucky and carefully screened the candidates, it was still possible to hire ferocious Italian fighters.

Seeing the amassed large force at his disposal, Stephen was torn. He even entertained the idea of attempting a genuine armed uprising perhaps it could succeed?

However, he quickly dismissed the thought. With thousands of armed personnel converging in Venetia, how could they not attract the attention of the local government?

If it were for contacting the Austrian intelligence organization in advance, they would likely have been suppressed long ago. Even now, the situation wasn't much better. If Austria wasn't intent on purging dissidents, they wouldn't have had much room to maneuver.

Lombardy-Venetia had always been the most unstable region under Austrian rule, although this instability didn't mean there were uprisings every day. In fact, since the revolutions, there hadn't been an uprising involving more than a hundred people here.

The awakening of nationalism in the Italian region had primarily fueled the instability, with many Italian intellectuals, some capitalists, and declining nobility harboring desires for independence.

These individuals had been clandestinely networking for some time but hadn't taken any substantive action. As a legalistic state, Austria couldn't simply convict them for their potential independence leanings.

This is where the role of Stephen and others came into play. Now, under the guise of colonial company merchants, they were constantly visiting the prominent figures here.

In a manor outside the city of Milan, members of the Hungarian independence organization gathered in small groups. Prudence complained, "I'm exhausted. Finally, the task is complete, but I don't know if what we're doing is right or wrong."

Mariut scoffed, "Since the decision has been made, there's no room for regret. Once we finish this act, we'll be free."

Once someone abandons their principles, there's nothing they won't do. To erase their names from the list of Austrian political prisoners, they had to choose to cooperate with them.

Stephen cautioned, "Enough, now that these people have been targeted, even if we don't act, other revolutionary organizations will still approach them."

Anyway, they're doomed sooner or later, so we might as well make use of them to get ourselves out of trouble.

We've visited everyone in Lombardy and Venetia. The next step is Hungary, but to avoid complications, we won't go there ourselves.

Pass the list to the people below and let them rally these members to initiate armed uprisings. Everyone, go and make your own arrangements!

Be sure to remind them not to lose the list. It's of great importance and represents the results of our independence organizations' years of effort.

Looking at Stephen's serious expression, the others couldn't be bothered to make any sarcastic remarks. Indeed, it was the result of many years of effort. The list was provided by the Austrian intelligence organization, and their task was simply to coordinate.

No, it should not be called coordination, but rather dragging these people into the water.

Currently, the internal situation in Austria is stable, and there is no future in rebellion. Those influenced by nationalism and desiring independence dare not cause trouble.

But their secret propagation of nationalism is something Franz cannot tolerate. The most difficult adversaries are always the ones operating in the shadows.

Following the principle of striking first, since these people wanted independence, Franz decided to give them an opportunity. Conveniently, the Hungarian independence organization came knocking, so Franz decided to have them join the organization.

Even if they aren't Hungarians, they can collaborate with the Hungarian independence organization. In any case, Franz will not provide these people the chance to develop and grow.

Stephen and others now have their own families and businesses and are not interested in continuing the revolution. He also needs to provide an explanation to the Americans, proving that these years of taking money weren't in vain. It was a mutually beneficial arrangement.

These thousands of Italian mercenaries are just a bunch of unlucky people. They originally had nothing to do with them, but they've now been unwittingly dragged into the situation.

Involving a large number of rebels in one go, how could this not be a major case? And they are the instigators of this, with thousands of armed personnel launching a rebellion, enough to ensnare all those involved.

Mariut nodded in agreement, Mr. Stephen is right. Both the Spanish Revolutionary Party and the Italian Revolutionary Party have initiated uprisings. Now it's our turn for revolution.

A revolution is indeed taking place, however, the intended target has been altered. They've gone through the whole charade and have fabricated numerous letters from important figures.

Now they are just one step away from the end. According to the script, they will encounter an accident, forcing them to launch an uprising prematurely, followed by brutal suppression and ultimately exile abroad.

Since it's an accident, there's naturally no time to destroy these letters. When the time comes, these letters, along with the secret meetings before the outbreak of the rebellion, will serve as evidence that these people supported the rebellion.

Stephen said with feigned seriousness, Now, everyone go and prepare! According to the agreed time, we will launch the armed uprising precisely at 4:30 a.m. on February 15, 1865. Make sure to notify everyone of the news.

Chapter 367: Entrapment (Bonus Chapter)

The actions of the Hungarian Independence Organization could only be considered minor disturbances, while the activities of the French Revolutionary Party were more significant.

In January 1865, from Paris to Montauban, there were marches and demonstrations in over 30 cities across France, as if France had returned to the era of revolutions.

Many people joined the protests in a daze, shouting various slogans.

Some demanded government support for the Polish independence movement, some opposed a particular government policy, some advocated support for the Spanish revolutionary party, and others opposed colonial movements...

There was practically no slogan one couldn't think of; nothing was not thought of.

Clearly, the French Revolutionary Party had also become clever. In recent years, the domestic economy has been developing well, and people have been living relatively comfortable lives. At such a time, rebellion was simply not feasible.

Those who were strongly dissatisfied with the government were the losers in the struggle for influence and a group of idealists.

The only way to overthrow the rule of Napoleon III was to first destabilize France; only when the country was in turmoil would there be an opportunity.

The French people were imbued with an internationalist spirit and were often very emotional, thinking they should meddle in whatever they deemed unreasonable, which provided an opportunity for the revolutionaries.

At the Palace of Versailles, the chaotic marches raised Napoleon III's vigilance. On the surface, these seemed like ordinary marches, of which there were countless in France every year.

However, the recent frequency of these events raised suspicions for the experienced Napoleon III, who could discern that there was organized activity behind them.

Napoleon III ordered, Adair, uncover the rats behind this for me. I want to see who is causing trouble.

Demonstrations are legal in France, and the government has no authority to interfere. However, when demonstrations occur daily, the situation changes; this not only affects the economy but also influences public sentiment.

This was not yet the good era of working in spring, vacationing in summer, going on a strike in autumn, and celebrating Christmas in winter.

This era was about establishing dominance. After the Napoleonic Wars, the French colonial empire had already collapsed, and now Napoleon III was working hard to build a second colonial empire.

Naturally, the government cannot tolerate ongoing demonstrations that impact the national economy. After all, in this day and age, there are many competitors, and one can easily fall behind with a single misstep.

Yes, Your Majesty! replied Minister of Police Adair nervously.

This was not an easy job. Over the years, due to the deterioration of public order caused by protests, 15 Ministers of Police have been forced to step down, with an average tenure of only 10.5 months.

Despite the economic prosperity and internal social stability during Napoleon III's era, it would be a mistake to assume that their days were easy. In reality, they were constantly criticized as if they were the worst government in history.

Reasons weren't necessary; when smearing the enemy, who needs reasons? Since the government could not control public opinion, the opposition would criticize, and Napoleon III could at most find people to argue with them.

Perhaps due to his position, Napoleon III had become a maintainer of the rules. He didn't resort to extreme measures against these enemies, which provided the revolutionary party with room for maneuver.

Foreign Minister Abraham spoke up, Your Majesty, perhaps influenced by the Polish independence movement, the revolutionary movements in Europe have surged again in recent times.

First, there was an uprising in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, and currently, the rebels have seized control of one-third of Sicily. Then, revolutions erupted in Spain and Portugal.

The atmosphere in other European countries has also become tense, and a new wave of revolutions may erupt again. We must remain vigilant.

Although the Americans only instigated the revolutionary groups of these major nations to return to Europe and cause trouble, the revolutionary groups of other countries were also affected.

Seeing the momentum of the Polish independence movement, many naturally assumed that a new wave of revolution was coming and rushed to stir up trouble.

For other countries, perhaps the problem wasn't too serious. But for France, it was a major headache.

For some reason, the French could not be absent from every wave of revolution, and Paris was even hailed as the holy land of revolution.

Napoleon III had no interest in this reputation; if possible, he would prefer Paris to be a poor and backward city rather than a holy land of revolution.

Any monarch residing in the holy land of revolution would feel like Alexander, fearing being overthrown by a revolution at any moment.

Before ascending the throne, Napoleon III took pride in Paris; after ascending, this sentiment disappeared forever.

Leaving aside other matters, the number of strikes and demonstrations that occur annually in Paris alone exceeds the total for the entire nation of Austria.

The number of marches, demonstrations, and strikes in France every year surpassed the total for all other European countries combined. It was truly not easy for Napoleon III to remain firmly on the throne.

If given the choice, Franz would rather rule as a despot in the colonies than be the Emperor of France.

This has nothing to do with how well or poorly a monarch governs; one need only look at the history of revolutions in France to understand.

As an outside observer, one could laugh it off, but for those directly involved, it was a cause for despair. Sitting on a powder keg every day, any policy displeasing even a portion of the people could trigger a revolution.

Monarchy is not suited to the wastefulness and excess energy of the French people, as the citizens of Paris have demonstrated through their actions. They have shown that only a republic suits them.

Napoleon III thought for a moment and said, This is indeed a problem. Order the police forces in various regions to strengthen their vigilance and have the Paris City Guards and the Seventh Division in Nantes switch positions.

The rotation of troops was Napoleon III's most frequently used tactic. To prevent the collusion of revolutionaries with the military, the garrison in Paris was never permanently stationed.

The lesson from the downfall of the House of Orlans had already informed him that without control over a reliable force, the stability of the regime could not be assured.

Atessa was an Italian businessman and, subsequently, a nationalist; this order could not be reversed.

Therefore, during the 1848 revolutions, he decisively sided with the victors and escaped unscathed.

However, this did not change his nature as a nationalist. Over the years, he and a group of like-minded friends spared no effort in promoting Italian nationalism.

Given the backdrop of the Austrian governments promotion of national integration, Atessa naturally dared not swim against the tide. However, covertly, they established the Venice Cultural and Art Exchange Center.

This was solely for academic exchange, but the exchanges all involved Italian national culture and arts. If it were just a personal interest and hobby, it would not have attracted the attention of the Austrian intelligence organization.

The key was their daring move to organize youth art and cultural training classes, covertly propagating nationalism, and occasionally expressing a desire for Venetian independence.

Austria had freedom of speech, and as long as they did not expound these ideas in public, they could not be convicted under the law.

From start to finish, they only talked and never acted on it. Even when instilling these ideas in youth, they left no evidence behind.

During the period of the German unification war, local governments intentionally left loopholes, hoping they would take action to capture this group of people in one fell swoop.

Unfortunately, Atessa and others were all seasoned veterans who put their ideals aside in the face of interests.

Without the unification of Italy, if Venetia broke away from Austrian independence, they would lose most of their current market, which did not align with their interests.

So, instead of seizing the opportunity for independence, they persuaded radical nationalists not to act rashly.

These dormant forces were the most terrifying; they would not recklessly rebel but were working tirelessly towards rebellion.

Atessa had been feeling uneasy lately, always sensing that something bad was happening. Just as he returned home, the butler handed him a letter.

Mr. Atessa, this is a letter that Mr. Stephen sent someone to deliver to you.

Stephen was someone Atessa had met by chance at a banquet. They chatted amiably, and Stephen even invited him to join the colonial company to open up colonies in Africa.

Encountering a professional con man, and with a large number of mercenaries as evidence, Attisa did not doubt Stephens identity.

There are too many people in Europe with the same name, and Stephens name is so commonplace that Austria alone has 70,000 to 80,000. No one would connect a colonial businessman with the Hungarian Independence Organization.

Upon opening the letter and glancing through it briefly, Atessas face underwent a significant change.

Nile, did anyone else see you receive this letter?

The butler Nile replied with a dismayed expression, The person delivering the letter handed it to me at the front gate. Besides a few street vendors, there were no suspicious individuals.

He was very puzzled, completely unable to understand Atessa's nervousness. Isn't it just a letter? Even if someone saw it, they wouldn't know its contents anyway!

Upon hearing this response, Atessa confirmed again, 'Were any of those street vendors new?'

Nile replied with great certainty, 'No, they're all the usual ones, almost every day.'

Atessa breathed a sigh of relief, then immediately felt troubled again. In this day and age, stirring up revolution, wasn't that just courting death?

He couldn't fathom Stephens thinking at all. As the leader of the Hungarian Independence Organization, he had evaded pursuit by the Austrian government for over a decade. So why come back now just to meet his demise?

Indeed, from Atessa's perspective, Stephen was essentially marching to his death. While others might be unaware of the situation in Hungary, well-informed merchants like them couldn't possibly be ignorant.

Not to mention independence, they would likely be suppressed by the local people without the Austrian government even needing to act.

The same situation could possibly occur in Venetia. The Austrian government's efforts in ethnic integration had been effective.

No matter how hard they tried, the increasing Germanization of the region was becoming evident. Especially among the younger generation, who were all learning German, the Italian language had already disappeared from compulsory education.

Even though some still persist in instilling values into the next generation, Austrian compulsory education is very demanding, and students are busy every day. How many would voluntarily study things that aren't tested in school exams?

A few years ago, private schools were still teaching Italian. However, the Ministry of Education ceased funding them and classified them as operating in the profiteering industry, subjecting them to high taxes like those imposed on the industry.

If it were only a matter of government defunding, schools could still operate. However, being classified in the profiteering industry left them with no options. With tax rates as high as ninety-five percent, they couldn't possibly raise tuition fees twentyfold, could they?

Even the wealthiest couldn't endure it. Currently, there are no schools within the entire Austrian Empire operating outside the supervision of the Ministry of Education.

Legally recognized schools receive government funding, while the rest are considered training institutions of an enterprise nature.

These institutions had to pay taxes, with the tax rate based on industry profit standards. Unfortunately for schools, their reference was compulsory education schools, and compared to zero fees, any amount of tuition was considered profiteering.

The training center established by Atessa and others was supported solely by donations without any fees. Otherwise, the profiteering label would have been slapped on them long ago.

There have been troublemakers, but the Austrian government is very firm. If a thousand people cause trouble, a thousand are arrested; if ten thousand cause trouble, ten thousand are arrested. The

ringleaders are enlisted in the road-building army, while accomplices, including their families, are all exiled to the colonies.

After exiling tens of thousands of people, the rest settled down. Even if not for themselves, they had to consider their families!

The treatment of exiled criminals was far inferior to that of immigrants. They were usually assigned to the most harsh conditions and undertook the most dangerous work.

Now receiving Stephens invitation to join the revolutionary forces, Atessa immediately decided to distance himself from them. He did not want to stake his life and property on it.

Without hesitation, Atessa immediately lit a match, igniting the letter in his hand.

He did not report it to the authorities, as that would be a disservice to his friend. As for the meeting location specified in the letter, Atessa chose to ignore it outright.

Even being in contact with the revolutionary party in Austria carried risks. The Austrian government had always had zero tolerance for such matters, and Atessa was not willing to take that risk.

After burning the letter, Atessa instructed again, Nile, do not mention this letter to anyone. Stephen and I only met at a banquet, we are not friends, understand?

The butler Nile answered, Understood, Mr. Atessa.

Unbeknownst to the cautious Atessa, he had already stepped halfway into hell since the moment he began promoting nationalism.

Now, by burning the letter and not reporting it to the government, he had effectively placed his other foot inside as well.

There was no doubt that this was a case of entrapment. If he had taken the letter and immediately reported it to the local police station, there would have been no way for him to be implicated.

Having missed the opportunity, there was nothing he could do. Even if he did not participate in the rebellion, failing to report it was still a crime, and he was not being wronged.

Chapter 368: You Won't Die If You Don't Court Death

In the city of Milan, Treos was a newly rising textile tycoon. The Austro-Sardinian War of 1848 directly reshuffled the capitalist circles in Lombardy, and Treos took advantage of this gap to rise.

With money, ones pursuit of goals changes. Treos came from a noble background, although his family had fallen from grace in his grandfathers generation.

At this time, Treos was considering whether to obtain a title and restore his familys glory.

Obtaining a title in Austria was not easy, but as a wealthy pay-to-win player, he had an advantage over ordinary players.

The colonial system created opportunities for them. If they were willing to spend money recruiting a large number of mercenaries to establish colonies in Africa in exchange for merits, they could eventually obtain a title.

This was not the easiest path, but it was the most suitable for Treos. Joining the military on the battlefield was an easier way to obtain a title, but this had never been the choice of capitalists.

Nobles enjoy higher social status, but in the business world, they do not have any particular advantages, as many privileges have already been reduced.

Treos had always been weighing the pros and cons. Obtaining merits through overseas colonization also depended on luck, and the input and output were often not proportional.

In this regard, nobles actually have more advantages. They have been trained in military command from a young age, and some nobles even have retainers and private armies left by their ancestors. Therefore, the colonial teams they form are naturally more combat-effective.

Colonial teams that can engage in combat generally do not incur losses. Even if no resources are discovered along the way, they can still profit by seizing opportunities and cooperating with labor export companies to assist African tribes in immigration.

As long as colonial teams do not incur losses, they can operate for the long term, and over time, merits naturally accumulate.

This is something that capitalists cannot compare with. Their advantage lies in having money. Where there is money, there are people, and in recent years, retired officers and soldiers have been in high demand. Most capitalists recruit them to form colonial teams, and their combat effectiveness is not too shabby.

Unfortunately, not everyone was willing to venture into the African continent. As the number of colonial teams increased, there were not enough willing retired officers and soldiers to be hired, driving up wages.

As latecomers, they had to lower their recruitment standards, inevitably leading to a decline in the combat capabilities of their colonial teams.

Lacking formidable combat capabilities does not mean that colonization in the African continent is impossible. Even with poor combat capabilities, dealing with some indigenous tribes is not a big problem, although casualties may be high.

If luck is not on their side, the casualties from just one battle can exhaust the entire compensation fund. Currently, the compensation standards set by Austrian colonial teams range from 500 to 1800 guilders, which is simply unsustainable.

Stephens' emergence caught Treos' attention. While others were mocking Stephen for recruiting ineffective Italian mercenaries, Treos saw another aspect of affordability.

As a qualified capitalist, Treos never forgot the virtue of cost-saving.

Recruiting an ordinary German mercenary costs as much as recruiting two Italian mercenaries; the price for an elite mercenary is even enough to recruit five Italian mercenaries.

Apart from low wages, compensation for casualties can also be kept under 300 guilders. If recruited from various Italian states, in case of heavy losses, they can also evade paying compensation altogether.

As long as they were careful and did not act recklessly, the slightly lower combat capabilities of Italian mercenaries could still overwhelm indigenous tribes. After all, with lower costs, they could recruit more people, giving them an advantage in the labor export business.

Just as Treos made up his mind to cooperate with Stephen, a letter shattered all his fantasies.

Not everyone wanted revolution or independence. Treos did not want to change the status quo, even though he was also influenced by Italian nationalism.

Donating money during peacetime to preserve Italian traditional culture is acceptable, but it is impossible for him to personally go to the battlefield.

Even supporting revolutionaries is something he would not do. Treos is very shrewd, and he never engages in deals that are destined to yield no returns.

Even among nationalists, their political ideologies often differed, especially when interests were involved, as interests often determined ideologies.

As a textile tycoon, on the surface, leaving Austria would reduce many competitors for Treos, even enabling him to dominate the Italian market.

In reality, however, leaving Austria meant raw materials could become a matter of life and death for him.

While importing from overseas might sound easy, if he were to fully depend on imports, any turmoil in the international cotton market could immediately spell disaster for him.

The reason Britain could become the dominant force in the cotton-spinning industry is not only due to its strong textile industry but also because of its powerful Royal Navy as a backing and vast colonies as a market, ensuring its own interests.

After independence, Italy did not have the capability to protect his interests. Treos was merely dissatisfied with the policies of the Austrian government, calling for the abolition of the current national integration policy and labor protection laws.

This was completely different from rebellion. There were plenty of people dissatisfied with national policies, as no policy could satisfy everyone.

If rebellion broke out every time someone was dissatisfied with a government policy, wouldn't the world descend into chaos? No matter who took over, they could not possibly satisfy everyone, right?

Thinking of the large number of mercenaries in the hands of Stephen and the others, Treos' expression changed immediately, and he shouted, Martin, prepare the carriage immediately. I need to go to the city hall.

Regardless of whether the revolution succeeds, business becomes difficult once there is war. In the unfortunate event of being targeted by rebel soldiers, bankruptcy is also a possibility.

As a victor of the previous reshuffle, Treos did not want to go through it again. He was not only a capitalist but also an industrialist, not a merchant who simply bought low and sold high. With his factories in place, he could not escape once the fires of war were ignited.

In the town of Pcs in Western Hungary, several members of the Hungarian independence organization were nervously delivering letters according to the contact list.

For safety reasons, everyone employed various methods. Some concealed letters in the soles of their shoes, others sewed them into their clothes, while the more resourceful ones encoded them numerically, using the Bible as a medium.

In the event of betrayal, all these efforts would be in vain. Compared to the Austrian-occupied Italian region, Hungary had been cleansed more thoroughly; those who survived were the cunning ones.

The messenger, Domicci, met with misfortune; he happened to run into the recipient and was forced to stay.

Upon reading the letter, Brooks couldn't help but curse Stephens entire family. In their earlier years, the two were like-minded friends, working together for Hungarian independence.

However, times have changed. Brooks, now well past his prime, was no longer the naive idealist he once was.

Back then, Brooks managed to escape unscathed due to good luck; he fell ill at the right moment and couldn't participate in the rebellion.

After recovering from his illness, the rebellion had already erupted, and Brooks, who had revolutionary leanings, was placed under house arrest by those still loyal to the emperor.

Thanks to his father's voluntary participation in suppressing the rebellion and earning merit, Brooks' suspicion was alleviated.

Time proved to be the best weapon. In the blink of an eye, his father passed away, freeing Brooks from constraints once again and allowing him to mingle with the surviving nationalists.

At this point, they were no longer chanting slogans for independence every day but were instead opposing the ethnic divisions and unified language policies of the Austrian government.

Violent resistance was out of the question; the die-hard rebels had long since met their demise during the independence movement. Brooks wasn't foolish; he was well aware of the consequences of defying the government.

Due to personal friendships, Brooks maintained covert contact with some members of the Hungarian independence organization except for Stephen.

It was unavoidable, as Stephen was a political fugitive in exile. With many members of the Hungarian independence organization and numerous incidents to their name, most members are not actually being sought.

Brooks was a smart person; anyway, these people were in exile overseas and not wanted, so he could just feign ignorance if he contacted them, even if it were exposed.

There is a smooth way to walk on when you have more friends. Just like this time when the Hungarian independence organization was planning something, a friend had hinted for him to keep his distance.

Upon seeing this letter, Brooks became highly suspicious that someone was trying to set him up. There is too much information in the letter, even including the time of the uprising.

Under normal circumstances, someone like him who had never joined the Hungarian independence organization would never be trusted. Were they not afraid he would report them?

Brooks probed, Mr. Domicci, why start the uprising on February 15th? Are we not unprepared?

Domicci didnt think much about it; they were all on the same side, after all, so there was no need for secrecy.

Sir Brooks, a new wave of revolution has arrived in Europe. Weve coordinated with other revolutionary groups to launch uprisings together in January and February.

Since we were not adequately prepared, we postponed our uprising date to February 15th. But dont worry, the first to rise against Austria will be in Italy.

Currently, weve recruited thousands of mercenaries and have the cooperation of local revolutionary groups. This uprising will definitely succeed!

Upon hearing Domiccis words, half of Brooks suspicions were dispelled. It seemed like he really was a member of the Hungarian Independence Organization, with the same solemn expression he had in his youth.

Brooks continued to inquire, Did my old friends have any message for me?

Since they hinted for him to keep his distance, under normal circumstances, these friends wouldnt drag him into trouble again. This letter was obviously not simple.

After a moments thought, Domicci said, Mr. Paul asked to convey his regards upon meeting you. And he mentioned for you to save the ham from December, hell come to enjoy it later.

Mr. Soram asked if your old place was still fine. Hes longing for the days of the revolution but regrets the failure last time. Hes determined not to let it happen again this time.

These cryptic words didnt raise any suspicion for Domicci; he simply regarded them as old friends catching up on old times.

However, when they reached Brooks ears, it was a different story. Ham was the code for retreat back in those days, undoubtedly telling him to run away.

The days of the revolution were certainly not a fond memory for them, watching comrades fall one by one and countless like-minded friends being purged.

Understanding the situation, cold sweat dripped down Brooks forehead.

While others might not be aware that the Hungarian Independence Organization received support from Americans, Brooks was well aware. Their friends had complained about American interference countless times.

Thinking about the ongoing American Civil War, Brooks instantly grasped many things.

He definitely could not participate in this uprising. Either he had to immediately pack up and flee until the situation passed, or immediately go and report it to remove himself from the situation.

Domicci asked in confusion, Sir Brooks, whats wrong?

Looking at Domiccis innocent face, Brooks felt some reluctance. After hesitating for a moment, he said, Im fine. The situation in Hungary is very complicated. Domicci, you should complete your task quickly and leave. Take a ship to Russia to avoid the storm.

Domicci was surprised and asked, Why?

Shaking his head, Brooks replied, The police in Pcs have a keen nose. With the contact list on you, if anything happens, the organizations efforts here will be ruined.

Domicci said resolutely, Dont worry, Sir Brooks. I did not bring the list with me. Even if something happens, the enemy will gain nothing.

Brooks did not continue to persuade. Although he didnt know the purpose of the Hungarian Independence Organization this time, he was very clear that these people sent out were sacrificial pawns.

His persuasion was only out of concern that if Domicci was arrested, he might reveal Brooks connection to the organization.

But upon further reflection, Brooks realized that even if Domicci escaped, these matters could not remain secret.

During normal times, this kind of contact between friends wouldnt amount to anything incriminating. However, during times of upheaval, it would be different. He might even lose his title.

Only two options remained for Brooks: either flee into exile overseas or report to the government and his past actions could be wiped clean.

After hesitating for a while, Brooks ultimately decided to play the role of a traitor. After all, the situation this time was too bizarre, shrouded in layers of mystery.

Domicci, I do not doubt your loyalty. This is merely the caution we should exercise. We shouldnt make unnecessary sacrifices.

If youre willing to help, you can assist me in delivering a few letters. Its a critical moment, and Im not suitable to meet with them myself. I dont trust my subordinates to deliver them either.

There was no doubt that Brooks was preparing to kill with a borrowed knife.

When you go out into the world, you inevitably make a few enemies. Brooks was no exception. He took the opportunity to implicate them, removing a few obstacles in his path without feeling any pressure.

Chapter 369: The War of the Poor

In Vienna, Foreign Minister Wessenberg analyzed, While the Polish independence movement has struck a blow to the Russians, it has also ignited the flames of revolution across the European continent.

Influenced by the success of the Polish uprising, in recent times, revolutions have erupted frequently across the European continent. A new wave of revolution has arrived.

Starting from January, the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Papal States, Spain, and Portugal have all seen uprisings. Switzerland, France, Ireland, and other regions have also experienced varying degrees of turmoil.

Most of these revolutionary organizations have recently returned to the European continent from the United States. The initial assessments suggest that this is a desperate move by the federal government; they have both the motive and the capability.

The decisive battle that President Lincoln pinned high hopes on ended up becoming a war of attrition because neither side could afford to lose and both chose to play it safe.

The federal government was concerned that countries would continue to divide the United States, so they chose this moment to sow chaos in the European continent to divert the attention of various governments.

Its no secret that the Americans have funded revolutionary parties, and their influence over them is self-evident. Its just that they havent caused any major disturbances, and this paper-thin facade has never been pierced.

Now that things have happened, it wont be long before the European countries react. At that time, the Americans are likely to abandon these revolutionary organizations as pawns in exchange for the understanding of various countries.

If the pressure exerted by everyone is significant enough, they might even be made to pay a price. However, by stirring up these matters, its unlikely that Britain, France, and Spain will be able to increase their military involvement in America in the short term.

With the alliances current strength in the Americas, it is not a big problem for the North and South to split. This is the result the Southern government has fought for.

Attempting to divide the United States again would be beyond their capabilities. At most, the Indian regions allied with the South might gain independence. However, this wouldnt affect the strength of the federal government; even after division, they would remain two medium-sized powers.

In terms of potential development, both the Union and the Confederacy have the potential to become strong nations.

In the Americas, they have no real competitors. The split will only delay the time for them to become powerful nations. As long as they have sufficient population, they can and will develop.

This American Civil War has really shocked many Europeans. The American Civil War, which was originally thought to be a farce, has surprisingly revealed a shocking war potential.

If no split occurs, the strength of the Americans would be almost on par with Spain, an almost invincible existence dominating an entire continent.

Just as everyone was conspiring to divide America, the defiant federal government ultimately made a last-ditch effort, disrupting the plans of all parties involved.

Prime Minister Felix added, Its not just chaos abroad. Many individuals in our country cant contain themselves any longer and are beginning to take action.

These people are doing things behind the scenes, and its estimated that before long, they will create a major stir. To capture all these individuals in one fell swoop, we havent disturbed the grass to avoid startling the snake.

With the outbreak of the Russo-Prussian War, weve been distracted by European affairs, which has consumed the majority of our resources. At this moment, with domestic issues arising, were also unable to increase our investment in the Americas in the short term.

They are openly conspiring, and despite every country knowing the Americans are responsible, there is nothing that can be done to stop them currently, and there is no need to worry about consequences down the road.

Internal contradictions run deep in Spain, and now that the opening act of revolution has begun, it is unknown when it will be quelled.

The Irish Independence Organization and the revolutionary parties are causing trouble, with the opposition parties exacerbating matters. These internal conflicts are enough to keep the British government busy for years.

As for France, with Napoleon III's style, he is likely to take the opportunity to extend his reach into southern Italy, and France and Austria may very well come into conflict over this.

With the Russo-Prussian War and the potential Franco-Austrian conflict, Franz doesn't dare to risk seeking retribution against the Americans at this time.

By the time everyone calms things down, the American Civil War will have long ended. If everything goes as expected, Lincoln will have run away by then, and even if countries seek retribution later, it will have nothing to do with him.

Fortunately, the army of the Northern government did not perform well, and they were unable to achieve the strategy of quickly defeating the Southern government. Otherwise, the strength of various countries in the Americas might not have been sufficient to compel them to compromise.

Franz thought for a moment and said, The Italian issue can be postponed. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies has not called for aid, and even if the French want to intervene, they dare not act at this time.

Napoleon III is not a fool. The joint defense treaty against them by various countries still stands. Continuing to expand their influence now would bring about the anti-French alliance sooner.

There must be no issues with the intervention coalition now. The Foreign Ministry should quickly coordinate relations; we cannot wait for the Americans to determine the outcome, lest we have more troubles.

At this point, both the North and the South have weakened considerably; splitting the United States is our top priority. Currently, the British share our stance, and the British government surely does not dare to wait any longer.

The European situation is changing too rapidly, and there is a possibility of changes occurring within the intervention alliance. Under such circumstances, it is highly unwise to continue attempting to weaken the United States as much as possible.

Even if the Confederacy wins the Civil War, the development potential of plantation economies is limited. Unless they can monopolize the world's food supply, they will never become a world power.

Obviously, this is impossible, as there are too many regions worldwide suitable for food cultivation. While American agriculture does have advantages, these advantages are not sufficient to establish a monopoly.

No country is foolish enough to entrust its lifeline to the Americans. At least agricultural export countries like Russia and Austria would not purchase their grain.

Once the Union government achieves victory, the United States in history will reappear. Franz's plans in the Americas will at most delay the rise of the United States.

Even if there is no war on the European continent, in the 20th century, Americans will actively challenge the world order.

Given the relationships among European countries, Franz does not believe that everyone can cooperate sincerely. At least in the issue of the North American continent, everyone is happy to see the British become a joke.

Perhaps the next unlucky one will be Austria. Currently, Central America is inconspicuous, and Alaska is also worthless but it will be different in a few decades.

The combined interests in both places are second only to the British. However, Franz is not confident whether Britain and Austria can suppress the Americans in North America.

After all, with that kind of social system in the United States, without full confidence, they will find it very difficult to take strategic gambles.

Looking at history, after the end of World War I, they already had the strength to dominate the world but endured until after World War II before unleashing it.

Franz simply ignored the domestic contradictions. The net has already been laid, just waiting for the fish to take the bait. If there are still problems, it would mean he has failed as emperor.

After this wave, the last obstacle hindering national integration will no longer exist. No matter how fierce nationalism is, it still takes time to spread.

Even if there are survivors, after experiencing this wave, if they dare to secretly cause trouble, those would truly be the brave ones.

In St. Petersburg, Alexander II's temper has been increasingly fiery lately, with vases and jars in the palace suffering as a result.

The poor performance of the Russian army on the battlefield has left him utterly disappointed. Fortunately, due to budget constraints, the Kingdom of Prussia's early military reforms did not go smoothly, and only a scaled-down version of the reforms was completed before the outbreak of war.

Overall, the two sides fought to a stalemate. This result was already enough for the Prussian government, as they were originally prepared to bleed the Russians to death.

With England and France backing them, there was no need for risky decisive battles with the Russians. If they rashly launched an attack and defeated the Russian army, the infuriated Russian government would surely fight them to the bitter end.

For the Russian Empire, losing hundreds of thousands of troops is not a big deal. However, for the Kingdom of Prussia, it's a different story. They really can't afford such losses.

The Russian army is not an easy opponent, and as long as the commanders don't make fatal strategic mistakes, the exchange ratios on the battlefield won't be too disparate.

The Near East War is an example where field battles between the Anglo-French coalition and the Russian forces typically saw ratios of 1.5:1, while situations of 3:1 or 4:1 were frequent during defense battles.

If they were to recklessly charge in, they would find that defeating the enemy army is easy, but completely annihilating them is difficult. In an era without airplanes, tanks, and machine guns, once infantry leaves the fortress, encountering cavalry on the plains is almost inevitable.

The current situation involves 546,000 Russian troops versus 328,000 Prussian troops and 231,000 Polish insurgents. Both sides ended up evenly matched, with the Russians even suffering a slight disadvantage.

Can anyone tell me what kind of war were fighting?

As the enraged Tsar glared at them, everyone tacitly lowered their heads.

They had originally thought they could easily win this war, but more than a month into it, not only have they failed to bring the flames of war into Prussian territory, they have even been forced to withdraw from Poland.

Minister of War Nicholas Cage reluctantly explained, Your Majesty, the Polish region is teeming with rebels. While engaging the enemy, we've had to allocate a significant portion of our forces to transport strategic supplies.

General Menshikov chose to retract our front line because Warsaw was not suitable for a battlefield. To avoid giving the enemy an advantage, he decided to shift the battleground to East Prussia.

TN: Yes, you read that right. It's the man, the legend, Nicholas Cage. This is the raw: -

Currently, guerrillas are everywhere in Warsaw. Fighting here, the Russians do not enjoy the advantages of fighting on home soil but are instead trapped in the vast sea of a people's war.

From a military perspective, temporarily giving up Warsaw and directly shifting the strategic focus to East Prussia is not a problem.

Compared to the Polish rebels, the Kingdom of Prussia is the real threat. Once the Prussians are defeated, the Polish insurgents will not last much longer.

Moreover, the Polish uprising was jointly launched by multiple revolutionary organizations. In the face of crisis, they can cooperate wholeheartedly, but once the Russian threat diminishes, they will fall into infighting.

After the uprising broke out, the temporary Polish provisional government promised to attract more people to join by distributing land for free and implementing labor protection laws, among other conditions.

These provisions seriously undermined the interests of capitalists and nobles and did not gain their approval. From the very beginning, the insurgents were divided.

Mere verbal promises aside, if these conditions were to be fulfilled, internal strife within the insurgents would be inevitable. Regardless of which faction emerges victorious, the strength of the insurgents would be significantly weakened.

If the proletarian faction were to fail, these conditions would remain unfulfilled, leading to an immediate dissipation of morale within the uprising forces. If the nobles and capitalists were to fail, the Russian government would gain collaborators.

While this choice is correct militarily, it is a mistake politically. Conservative nobles within the country continued to cause trouble for Tsar Alexander II, attributing the battlefield defeats to his reforms.

Alexander II is not a fool solely pursuing political victories; he is acutely aware that short-term gains and losses are inconsequential, and that the ultimate outcome of the war is the most important.

Humph! Tell General Menshikov that, regardless of the cost, he must quickly spread the flames of war into the territory of the Kingdom of Prussia.

If the main force cannot break through the enemys lines, then dispatch small groups to go in and cause disruptions, weakening the enemys war potential as much as possible.

The Prussians have gained the support of England and France, and want to drag out the war. We cannot give them this opportunity.

For the poor, war can only be fought swiftly. As long as the war drags on, it spells failure for the Russian government.

Due to this war, Alexander II had to temporarily halt his next round of reform plans and exert all efforts to raise funds for the war.

Financial shortages largely caused the early setbacks of the Russian army. Engaging the enemy in Warsaw and the significant losses of supplies during transportation exceeded the Russian governments capacity to endure.

Faced with pressure, Menshikov decided to abandon the Warsaw region due to logistical supply issues. With a shortage of funds and limited strategic supplies, subsequent batches would be difficult to procure in a timely manner once losses occurred during transportation.

Under the implicit guidance of various government departments, Menshikov had no choice but to make this decision. Alexander II was well aware of these matters, but despite his knowledge, he could not intervene.

The funds the Russian government has currently raised are still less than half of what was raised before the Near East War, making it very difficult to sustain a prolonged war.

Chapter 370: Currently Selling Out Teammates

The high-level members of the Hungarian Independence Organization gathered in Venice, making final preparations for the uprising. No, to be precise, they were making final preparations to flee.

Putting on a complete show, one can never escape the words fame and fortune in life.

Stephen and the others had already gained enough wealth to comfortably spend the rest of their lives. Now, the most important thing was to preserve their reputation.

While others could be traitors, these high-ranking members of the independence organization could not afford to, or rather, they could not let it be known that they had become traitors.

Otherwise, how could the Americans who funded them possibly let them off the hook? Their assets were now in America they could flee the missionaries but not the church.

Stephen spoke up, The ship has been arranged. Once the uprising fails, well immediately head to Albania, then proceed by land to Greece, and then through the Ottoman Empire to the Persian Gulf to Asia, detouring to Japan before taking a ship to San Francisco.

Soram questioned with confusion, Mr. Stephen, why go through such a big detour? The Austrians have promised they will only symbolically pursue us. We could simply take a boat directly to the United States.

Stephen explained, Youre right, the Austrians have promised to let us leave, but what if something goes wrong?

The decision to let us leave is highly confidential. The Mediterranean is full of Austrian naval activity. What if were unlucky and get caught?

To reduce the risk, we have no choice but to take a detour. Well take an unnoticed fishing boat from Venice into the Balkans, and depart from areas not covered by Austrian influence. Thats the best option.

To make it look more realistic, Stephen had also gone all out. It wouldnt do if only the underlings suffered; even if just a little, they had to put on a show of fleeing in panic.

Paul chimed in, Mr. Stephen is right. We must be cautious at this time. Rushing back to the United States may not be wise as the civil war is nearing its end.

If the federal government wins, thats one thing, but if they lose, theyll need foreign intervention to maintain power.

In such a scenario, to seek assistance from other countries, the Lincoln administration is likely to hand over all of us revolutionaries.

For safety's sake, its best to wait until after everything settles down before returning to the United States.

Everyones expressions changed drastically. If the Americans really did plead for help from the European nations and hand over all domestic revolutionary organization members, then their fortunes in America would be gone.

Seeing everyones concern, Stephen reassured them, Dont worry. As long as were still on the wanted list, no one will dare to touch everyones property.

No one would dare to rob the money of fugitives. This meant having money but no life to spend it at all.

Ottokr was a rising star of the Hungarian independence organization. He was a graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and had participated in the American Civil War as a battalion commander.

On the battlefield, his daring fighting spirit earned him fame. The bigwigs of the Hungarian independence organization were all people who did not seek glory or fortune, so the critical task of commanding this Venice uprising fell to him.

Looking at the thousands of soldiers under his command, Ottokr was full of vigor. The only regret was the lack of weapons. According to Mr. Stephen, this was for safety reasons.

After all, they were in Austrian territory, and if thousands of armed men appeared, the local garrison would have attacked long ago.

Ottokr found it very reasonable. The Austrian system was already very strict. Although firearms were not completely banned and there were plenty of firearms in civilian hands, most of them were hunting rifles.

To legally obtain proper infantry rifles, one had to register with the police and apply for a firearms license.

Getting a firearms license isn't something just anyone can obtain, at least none of them met the requirements.

Buying guns in Austria is very easy; Venice alone has no fewer than ten firearms shops, and even cannons are available for sale. It's a colonial empire; how could overseas colonial teams survive without weapons and equipment?

But while weapons are easy to buy, ammunition is another matter.

If for overseas colonial use, then any amount was available. But for domestic use, one could only obtain ammunition by showing a firearms license to the local police station.

The government harshly cracks down on all illicit weapons and ammunition production, as well as the smuggling of arms. Those involved in underground arms trading can be legally shot on sight by the police.

Over time, everyone got used to it. If you wanted to play with weapons, you could just go to the hunting grounds or clubs; as long as you had money, you could even play with cannons.

There was no need to risk one's life in the black market, where being mistaken for an arms dealer could get you killed with no opportunity to explain.

Without a market, there's no buying or selling.

To purchase enough weapons and ammunition for several thousand men was absolutely impossible. So Ottokr, the commander-in-chief of this rebel army, had only ten guns at his disposal, including eight hunting rifles and two old revolvers.

These were sponsored by local Italians inclined towards the revolution. There's no way to acquire more; they can only wait until the uprising erupts to seize them from the enemy.

On February 1, 1865, in the headquarters of the uprising, several spirited youths were devising battle plans.

Don't underestimate them because of their youth; these individuals are among the few military talents in the Hungarian Independence Organization, most of whom have participated in the American Civil War.

If not for the dire situation, the Federal Army would not have released them, as everyone knew how badly the Americans needed officers now.

Ottokr opened a draft of a map and said, This is the information provided by Mr. Amco. Although Austria allows firearms, ammunition control is very strict.

All the weapons stores have no ammunition. Only hunting grounds, firearms clubs, police stations, and local garrisons have stockpiles of ammunition.

The garrison is out of the question; with just these few guns in our hands, we probably won't even get close to their gates before being gunned down.

The hunting grounds are far from the city; we can't raid them dozens of miles away to seize weapons and then rush back to launch the uprising.

The ammunition reserves in the firearms clubs are probably not much; their ammunition also comes from the police station, and it's basically replenished every 2-3 days, which cannot meet our needs.

To ensure the success of the uprising, we must first take over the police station and seize enough ammunition.

After saying this, Ottokar felt extremely frustrated. The ammunition depot in Venice was right next to the naval base, making it impossible to seize.

Or rather, even if they did seize it, it would be useless, as they would be torn apart by naval artillery before being able to move the ammunition away.

Venice is not suitable for launching an uprising. Whenever we go out, we have to take a boat, and these small boats cannot leverage our manpower advantage.

With just these few guns in our hands, it's almost impossible to seize the police station. Even the smallest north branch of the city is not something we can take over.

Moreover, these Italian mercenaries are not reliable. If something goes wrong, they are likely to scatter and flee.

The one raising objections was a youth named Taft, who had also participated in the Civil War and had some military knowledge.

However, he was too straightforward in character and had always been marginalized within the revolutionary organization. If this uprising were not so important and he did not possess military capabilities, there would be no place for him in the command headquarters.

Ottokar patiently explained, From a military perspective, Venice is indeed not suitable for launching an uprising. Even if we occupy it, this city on the water would still be under the threat of the Austrian navy.

But politically, we must do this. The military must serve politics. To achieve a sensational effect, the organization has decided to launch the uprising simultaneously in Milan and Venice.

Once successful in these two cities, Lombardy and Venetia will be shaken, and the entire Italian region of Austria will seek independence.

By utilizing the independence of the Italian region, we can attract the attention of the Austrian government and provide cover for the organization's uprising in Hungary.

The Austrians cannot bombard Venice at the very moment of the uprising, and that is our opportunity. By leveraging this time gap, we can assemble a revolutionary army and extend the war into the inland regions.

The greater the commotion we create in Italy, the higher the chances of success for our uprising in Hungary. So from the beginning, this uprising has no strategic objective.

We only need to create a greater commotion, disrupt the Venetian region, and enlist more people into the revolutionary army. Victory or defeat is not important. Even if the uprising fails, only Italians will die.

This explanation satisfied the group. Having grown up in America from a young age, everyone was naturally influenced and believed politics took precedence over the military.

Little did they know that before seizing power, the order should be reversed. Only by first achieving military victory can there be room for political maneuvering.

The final statement, Even if the uprising fails, only Italians will die, left Taft speechless.

Stephen had not ordered them to fight to the last drop of blood. From the very start, he had told them that stirring up trouble in the Italian region was merely a diversion, providing cover for the uprising in Hungary.

As long as they could create a commotion and attract the enemys attention, the ultimate outcome of the uprising was not within the organizations considerations.

It was almost an outright statement telling them to flee if the uprising failed, treating these Italian mercenaries as expendable pawns.

Otherwise, Ottokr wouldnt be so relaxed. To expect a bunch of rabble to overthrow Austrian rule in the region, wouldnt that be madness?