

Roman Empire 51

Chapter 51: Which Is More Important, Politics or the Military?

"Why don't we also convene an assembly with the German Confederation? We can invite the state governments to attend and discuss the issue of unification.

I'm sure that for an assembly on the governmental level, its influence will definitely be beyond anything a bunch of capitalists could hope to compare to!" proposed Archduke Louis.

"But an assembly of that scale will never produce anything conclusive. The various countries all have their own differing interests. Reaching an agreement is virtually impossible!" said Prime Minister Felix, frowning.

The alternative solution, one that everyone had failed to mention, was to exert diplomatic pressure and force the dissolution of the capitalist Parliament.

The chances of success were very low, however, as revolutions were breaking out across many countries in the German Confederation. The Frankfurt region was practically already in the hands of the capitalists--unless troops were sent in.

Of course, this wouldn't do for Franz. Had he the strength, he would have long ago suppressed the civil unrest within the country and restored national power.

After deliberating for a moment, Metterlich suggested, "Why don't we contact the other countries in the German Confederation? We can declare the Frankfurt Parliament illegal and refuse to ratify any of their agreements!"

Historically, Austria did, in fact, do this, but only in response to a constitution stipulated by the Frankfurt Parliament in 1849, which the monarchies desperately avoided until a group of countries including Austria, Prussia, Bavaria jointly denied its legitimacy.

But there were still twenty-nine other German states, and, forced by domestic public opinion, they had no choice but to accept the constitution. This was the legal basis that would allow Prussia to unify Germany later on.

This was no conspiracy, however. Although there were Prussians behind this Parliament, it did not necessarily reflect the sentiments of the royal family. Prussia was not monolithic, and various opposing forces were at play within its borders.

"Why don't we do this then: send some capitalists in to cause trouble and bring up a bunch of complicated issues. Buy us as much time as possible before they can reach an agreement. Once we settle our internal affairs, then we can deal with them!"

In the end, Franz came up with this devious idea. From the start, the Frankfurt Parliament had a slew of internal conflicts and were constantly quarreling amongst themselves.

Sending in representatives to deliberately buy time would make reaching an agreement much more difficult. Historically, the constitution was only finally drafted in March 1849.

A little more delay should give them enough time to deal with Austria's internal affairs. At present, the Austrian government possessed much more power than its historical counterpart.

"Your Highness, we can also spark a war of public opinion against them. It was the bourgeoisie who convened the Parliament, but they are unable to represent the German people," added Metternich.

"Now they are merely using their resources to rally support, but even the so-called representatives were mostly not democratically elected by the people.

We can expose this atrocity and publicly declare it as a conspiracy by the capitalists to enslave the people."

Franz lightly smiled and thought, "No wonder he is a strongman who dominated European politics for over 30 years. Having him serve as the Minister of Foreign Affairs was indeed a wise choice!"

Was it not obvious what the capitalists' true colors were? If one had too much ugly history, it would be only too easy to dig it up.

Exposing the Parliament delegates' dirty laundry would certainly destroy their reputations.

Then, they could attack any decisions made at the Frankfurt Parliament, expose the evil intentions of the capitalists, and bring about a very different outcome.

If anyone dared to exclude Austria from Germany, he would be seen as a traitor attempting to divide a unified Germany. No matter what others might think, advocates of Greater Germany would certainly agree.

When ideologies clashed between supporters of Greater and Lesser Germany, there would also be infighting amongst the capitalists. Even if they were unwilling to fight, it would not be beyond the Austrian representatives to stir up trouble.

If there were no scandals to be found, one could always be created, such as proposing a capitalist-favoring bill. It would certainly not pass, but it would make a joke out of the Frankfurt Parliament.

In the first place, the Parliament itself was held against a background of some state governments' powerlessness to suppress their domestic revolutionary movements. These governments had allowed the Parliament to convene simply to divert attention.

As these revolutions were raging, instead of staying in their countries to continue the movement, capitalists abruptly appearing in large numbers at the Frankfurt Parliament would only cause people to associate the two.

While the capitalist representatives were nominally democratically elected, in reality, it was all nonsense.

Running a nation-wide election at this time would be a hugely complicated undertaking. Any sensible government would do what they could to prevent it, so most election activities would not have even been possible.

Therefore, right from the beginning, the Parliament had nothing to do with the general public. They only represented the interests of the capitalists.

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Just as everyone was discussing ways to disrupt the Frankfurt Parliament, a flustered-looking, middle-aged officer hurried over and announced from outside the room, "Your Highness, urgent military intelligence!"

Franz frowned. "Bring in the report!"

Cabinet meetings were not to be interrupted, save for urgent military matters. But they first had to be granted permission by Franz.

Receiving the report, Franz grimly read the news. Milan was lost, and nearly all of Lombardy had fallen into enemy hands. Now, the war had spread into Venice.

After reading, Franz handed the report to the Prime Minister, for circulation amongst the Cabinet members.

The contents of the report were very vague, and many things were not explained clearly.

Apart from descriptions of the Italian pincer attack, losses of cities and territory by the Austrian army, and heavy damages, the specific number of losses and the reasons for failure were not detailed.

Franz was aware that this was not Field Marshal Radetzky's usual style. Even if he had lost the front line, he was not one to fail at something as simple as writing a battle report clearly.

Under normal circumstances, one would call for reinforcements upon losing a battle. Although Radetzky had indeed requested reinforcements in the report, he did not ask for them to be sent immediately, which meant that he wanted the government to deal with the matter as they saw fit.

This could only mean one thing: he was planning something. For the sake of secrecy, many key details had been omitted.

"Your Highness, this is not the time for us to be suffering defeats!" scowled Foreign Minister Metternich.

Indeed, it was untimely. Were they not just preparing to disrupt the Frankfurt Parliament? A defeat in battle was not good for Austria's reputation.

In future diplomatic talks with other countries, Austria would be at a disadvantage.

Glancing at the map and gathering his historical knowledge, Franz more or less understood Radetzky's plan.

As all politicians in Europe were aware, given the current situation both at home and abroad, Austria could not afford to lose this war with Italy.

Under these circumstances, Radetzky was doing the opposite, using his defeat to lure the enemy. Strategically speaking, his plan was actually quite feasible..

Chapter 52: Aftermath

Which was more important, politics or the military?

There was no right answer to this question.

Militarily, Marshal Radsky's decision was completely correct; politically, it was a big mistake.

In the eyes of the outside world, his retreat meant that Austria had lost on the battlefield, or that the Austrian Empire had decayed.

This would give confidence to the domestic rebels and make the domestic situation more complicated; at the same time, Austria's international status in the world would be shaken.

"What's done is done, so there's no more to be said!"

"First, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should go communicate with Britain and France, in case they are furnishing substantial support to the Kingdom of Sardinia, and between them, your focus should be on the French. If necessary, we can let the French enter northern Italy," Franz said decisively.

Deep in his heart, Franz actually supported Marshal Radsky's approach: as long as he could win the war, it was totally acceptable to pay a small price.

As for the political fallout of that approach, it was not a big deal, for the Cabinet would be the one to take the blame for it. He was a new regent and a good young man, so the public would not scold him.

Prime Minister Felix's face was gloomy and terrible. It was a pity that Marshal Radsky was far away in Venice. Even if he was angry, there was no way for him to vent it.

He surely could not order Marshal Radsky to retake Lombardy immediately. War was not child's play, and orders could not just be given according to his whims.

Was it necessary to replace him? This idea flashed in his brain repeatedly: it was taboo for officers to change military leaders. Saying nothing of Franz, who would surely not agree, even he himself did not dare to take this risk.

Franz had already expressed his attitude: the priority was to solve the problems of the aftermath first. If the war ended up a victory, Marshal Radsky would be a hero of Austria; otherwise, the consequences would be very serious.

"Your Highness, there is no need to worry about the French. Since the end of the war against France, the strength of the French army has been restricted, and they only got rid of the restriction after the February Revolution in Paris.

At present, the internal struggle in France is serious, and the Conservatives, unwilling to accept their failure, are fighting back. The French are too busy to take care of themselves, let alone Sardinia, so at most, they could only furnish some goods and materials.

The British, meanwhile, are very troublesome. They are less affected by the revolutions than the French, so they have the strength to intervene on the Italian front. Since we have a good relationship with the British, I think we should ask for their support now!"

On the surface, that was indeed the case. Since the era of Metternich, diplomatic relations between Austria and Britain had always been good, and everyone wanted to maintain the balance of the European continent.

Since their political purposes were the same, the relationship between the two sides was surely in a good situation. When it came to maintaining the balance of the European continent, Austria had always been an ally of the British.

Metternich shook his head and said, "Prime Minister, from the position of the British, establishing a united Italian Kingdom and balancing Austria and France at the same time is more in line with their interests.

On this issue, it is almost impossible for us to get their support. The best we can hope is that the British will stay neutral."

Metternich's understanding of Britain was quite thorough: there was no perpetual friend, nor perpetual enemy, only perpetual interest.

They were allied in maintaining the balance of Europe, but the British did not need a strong Austria; they only needed an Austria that could block the expansion of the Russians.

They did not take France seriously, but all countries remained vigilant towards France since the Vienna system had collapsed already. The news of the February revolution in Paris had spread to St. Petersburg, and Tsar Nicholas I had wanted to carry out an armed intervention. In the end, though, he had to give up this plan due to financial constraints.

However, the Tsarist government did still announce that it had cut off diplomatic relations with France. Before the Russian ambassador to France, Kiselev, withdrew from Paris, he had warned the Paris government and asked the French to abide by the agreement on territorial boundaries determined by the Vienna conference and the Paris peace treaty.

The British had also expressed concern about this issue. They were still watching the foreign policy of the Paris government and had not yet recognized their legitimacy.

Against this background, if the French government dared to send troops to Italy, it was likely to set off a new round of war against France, which, obviously, the Paris government did not have the courage to handle.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Carl, suddenly said, "Your Highness, our war with the Kingdom of Sardinia has just begun. Even if the British want to support the Kingdom of Sardinia, their reaction won't be quick.

For now, our biggest problem is actually at home: the defeat on the Italian battlefield will stimulate the rebels' ambitions."

It was not possible for the Kingdom of Sardinia to finish Austria with verbal support alone.

Either the British had to send troops directly, or they had to send large amounts of money, food, and materials. It was highly doubtful that the British would send troops directly unless they wanted Austria to turn to Russia; still, the money and food needed for support would not be a small amount, costing millions of pounds at the least.

This decision was not easy to make. If the money and food were given, and Sardinia still lost, their investment would be wasted.

Austria was also a big power and not easy to mess with. Maybe if France and Austria compromised and divided Italy evenly, the British would only stand by anxiously.

Carl's last words brought everyone's attention back to the domestic front again. Compared to Italy, in fact, the domestic rebellion was the real problem.

Leaving the other places aside, the Hungarian Kingdom would definitely have a rebellion, and it was only a matter of time.

"Well, the defeat in Italy will surely cause a chain reaction, but we are not unprepared.

Order the troops to raise their alert and immediately suppress it if there is a rebellion," Franz said aggressively.

After suppressing the rebellion in Vienna, Franz immediately began to prepare for the war. Many reserve forces were drafted into the army, and the total military forces of Austria had increased to 578,000 troops.

If it weren't for the recruits who still needed time for training, Franz would not argue with the Hungarians: he would simply solve the Hungarian problem by force.

But Franz was not prepared to fight a protracted war, and the rebellion had to be suppressed swiftly and ruthlessly. A war that dragged on for a year or two like in history would kill him.

Fighting a war took money. In history, the domestic rebellion was delayed and could not be suppressed, which not only caused huge economic losses but also led the Austrian government to suffer immense foreign debts.

As a result, in its later development, Austria slowed down a step, which caused it to fall into the abyss.

"Your Highness, do you want to send more reinforcements to Marshal Radsky?" the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Carl, asked with some worry.

"No need! After giving up the Lombardy area, Marshal Radsky has enough troops that he will have no problem for him defending Venice!" Franz thought for a moment and said.

The goal was to lure the enemy inside, and if there were too many troops there, the Italians might not dare to come.

The strength of the Kingdom of Sardinia was limited: they would, at most, send eighty or a hundred thousand troops to the front. So the forces of both sides were equal. Franz did not believe that the Austrian army could possibly be beaten by the Italians!

Chapter 53: A Trap

On April 1, 1848, after the Austrian army had given up Lombardy, the Army of the Kingdom of Sardinia could not wait another minute and quickly took over.

The soldiers of the Kingdom of Sardinia entered the Lombardy region to the cheers of the people and without shedding a drop of blood, as if the good days they expected were already coming.

Marshal Radsky had given them a hand with propaganda before he left. As a result, in everyone's mind, it seemed that the Kingdom of Sardinia could meet the interests of all people, including the Republicans.

The three-color flag was flying in the wind, and the people in the streets were congratulating each other.

"Long live the Republic!"

The noise spread throughout Lombardy, and during that time, an interim government headed by Kazzati was established.

The Austrian army seemed to leave in such a hurry that they did not even have time to bring their political prisoners with them--so they then became members of the interim government.

If someone thought to check, they would find that the granary in Milan was empty. After the declaration of war between the Kingdom of Sardinia and Austria, Marshal Radsky had collected the food from the Lombardy region on the grounds that he would ensure fair distribution of food.

Though the policy was not implemented in rural areas, food in Milan was indeed concentrated.

The Austrian army secretly transported a portion of the supplies out of the city, and the rest was, as planned, doused with oil and set on fire.

Even though all the food was gone, the public was not panicked at all, as the Army of the Kingdom of Sardinia had already entered the city.

Before the withdrawal of the Austrian army, there had been rumors that King Charles wanted everyone to burn all the food in the city and force the Austrians to withdraw, so as not to destroy Milan in the war.

Therefore, Marshal Radsky sent people to burn most of the food two days in advance, and Austrian soldiers also called on the citizens to put out the fire.

The Milanese, who were eager for independence, surely would not give in. They chose to refuse very bravely. Even if they were beaten, they still would not give in.

In the end, they won the battle, successfully burned the granary, forced back the Austrian army, and saved the city of Milan.

President Kazzati, who was extremely proud of his success, had just had an unfriendly talk with General Bardolio of the Kingdom of Sardinia, which quickly wiped out his good mood.

The timid army of the Kingdom of Sardinia did not dare to pursue the Austrian army, which simply ruined the reputation of the great Italian nation.

This time, it was different from history. The Austrian army was evacuated by itself and not driven out. The rebels in the city had long been wiped out.

The army, subject to the interim government of Kazzati, was still being formed, and even he himself had just come out of prison.

Those with so much weight on their shoulders had to bow.

The interim government did not have the chips to negotiate with the Kingdom of Sardinia. If they did not go after the enemy, Kazzati had no way to force them. Anyway, the interim government could not send even one soldier to chase the enemy.

Zilaya, the new Minister of the Interior, ran over in a hurry and said, "Mr. President, there is no food in the city, so we have no ability to provide rations for ally troops!"

This was an embarrassing problem. They should have discovered these problems long ago, but they were all in prison when the food was set on fire.

In addition, without any ruling experience, everyone was celebrating the hard-won victory. Who had the time to care about food?

Kazzati asked uncertainly, "What should I do, then? I have just made a promise to them that I will provide food and fodder to the army of the Kingdom of Sardinia. Can we collect a batch of food from the people for this emergency?"

Zilaya explained, "Mr. President, that is impossible. In order to hold the city of Milan, the Austrian army collected all the food in the whole city. Everyone was given food according to the ration system, and only two days of food were distributed each time.

In order to defeat the Austrians, the Kingdom of Sardinia sent spies to burn the food in the city of Milan, and our people cooperated with them.

In fact, the Austrian army still had the power to fight us. It was because we burned the granary that they fled in a hurry!"

Feeling tricked, Kazzati's anger could no longer be suppressed, and he shouted, "Damn it! The Sardinians did it on purpose. And they didn't mention anything about burning food at all, so I promised to provide food and fodder to the Army entering the city!

They are toying with us! No, things are not that simple. In the conversation just now, the Sardinians' intent to annex Lombardy was clear. This is their conspiracy!"

Hearing the news, Zilaya was scared stiff. The interim government had no negotiating power. If Sardinia threatened to withhold food, they would not be able to refuse their conditions.

He hurriedly said, "Mr. President, we must take action. When we set fire to the food, they promised to provide us with food; otherwise, our people wouldn't have cooperated with them!"

Kazzati came over. He knew that swearing would not solve the problem. Even if they had to be merged into the Kingdom of Sardinia, they would have to sell at a good price; anyway, it was impossible for him to make it simple to the Kingdom of Sardinia.

"You are right. Spread the news and warn our people to be careful and vigilant. I am worried that the Sardinians will be angry and turn against us!"

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At that time, Charles Albert, the King of Sardinia, was still feeling the joy of winning Lombardy without a fight.

The top officials of the Kingdom of Sardinia were also celebrating, and some were thinking about how to annex Lombardy. In short, everyone was feeling very optimistic.

No one noticed that they were falling into a trap. Everyone was a politician, and their way of looking at a problem was naturally different.

Deliberately giving up Lombardy was not something a politician could imagine. The fact was that the situation in Austria was not very good. The normal way of managing it was to concentrate on suppressing the rebellion to scare off the ambitious schemers.

In the Sardinian military camp in Milan, it was time to eat, but the food promised by President Kazzati had still not arrived.

The senior officers didn't care. They had been invited to dinner by celebrities in the city. No matter how short they were of food in Milan, these wealthy men wouldn't starve.

The European nobles were all related, and everybody accepted that. The nobles in Milan and the nobles in Sardinia had a strong relationship that could not be broken by anything.

However, the remaining officer, Colonel Manstu, had a headache: when it came time for supper, the soldiers all looked to him. If they hadn't all been suffering together, these soldiers might have gone mad.

Even so, Colonel Manstu had a hard time. First, he comforted the army to calm them down, and then he sent someone to urge the interim government to send food quickly.

The Austrian army had withdrawn too fast, so they'd entered the city early without much preparation. All the goods and materials were left in the camp twenty miles away. At the time, it was natural to reach out to the interim government.

Chapter 54: The Title of Marshal

President Kazzati, who thought that he had been cheated, surely would not pay any attention to the rudeness of the Sardinians. Even if he was willing to share, he did not have any food to give them.

Ordinary people had only a little food left, and it would not be long before they reached out to the interim government. At the time, it was only nobles and capitalists who had food in stock, and even they could not possibly have very much.

If they were not in the food business, who would hoard a pile of food at home?

If there were any food, the Austrian army would have come to collect it. Austria was not popular here, so they had no need to worry about the adverse effects.

Essentially, President Kazzati had no way to get the requested supplies. To put it bluntly, the interim government was like a troupe of actors with no script or props, though whether it was admitted or not was another thing entirely.

They had not seen those senior generals socialize with local nobles and capitalists after the Sardinian army entered the city, which meant that the officers didn't take this interim government seriously.

It was no secret at all to top officials that the Kingdom of Sardinia wanted to annex Lombardy. Once they reached an agreement with the local power, the interim government could be dismissed.

The food still had not been delivered, and Manstu had no choice but to send someone to the officers who were attending the banquet to make a decision and pacify the troops.

The joy of entering the city had disappeared. If it weren't for their patriotic enthusiasm, the Sardinian army would have taught the citizens the meaning of the anger of soldiers.

So, hunger it was. Anyway, they wouldn't die from one missed meal. Soldiers in that era could bear plenty of hardship. Two meals a day were the norm in many places, so it was not unusual to be hungry at night.

The first night passed just like that. Early in the morning of the next day, the officers who came back from the banquet interrogated the interim government.

Originally, they just wanted to find an excuse to dismiss the interim government, in order to achieve the strategic purpose of annexing Lombardy, but then a good excuse was delivered to their doorstep.

Here was a turning point in history. Marshal Radsky had already prepared for it, and Kazzati and the others were arrested and put into prison right away, with no time to reach an agreement with the Kingdom of Sardinia.

When they were released from prison, the Army of the Kingdom of Sardinia had arrived just outside the city of Milan, and the negotiations between the two sides had begun.

Then, something happened that meant the Kingdom of Sardinia would surely not give up and could hold a gun to Kazzati's head when they negotiated.

People with so much weight on their shoulders had to bow.

There was no doubt that at the time that Kazzati did not have the courage to refuse and would surely accept all the conditions of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

If it weren't for their cooperation before, and the Kingdom of Sardinia's need for the cooperation of local leaders to stabilize the Lombardy region, it was estimated that there would be no negotiations.

After the conditions were settled, General Bardolio took over the armed forces of the interim government right away, which really only entailed the local militia.

Everything went very smoothly, and the local nobles and capitalists also contributed a part of their food to resolve the urgent need.

But Bardolio was not happy at all: there was no food in Milan, and moreover, the whole Lombardy area was short of food.

The local people still said eloquently that they burned down the granary to drive away the Austrian army. At the time, they were waiting for the Kingdom of Sardinia to provide food.

Bardolio swore to God that he had never sent anyone to burn the granaries, but unfortunately, he could not make himself believe it.

When two armies fought, burning the enemy's food was usually a good strategy to break them. If he could take the city of Milan without shedding blood, he could not be blamed for any mistakes.

After he made up his mind, for his political future, Bardolio took credit for the achievement. After all, the Austrian people said that it was he who sent people to set the fire, and the people of Milan also swore it, so there was no chance that anybody would find out the truth.

If it had been the case that the Austrian army gave up the Lombardy area, and he had led the troops to take over, then there would be no military merit to speak of.

So he changed the claim: it was he who sent a spy to burn the Austrian granary and defeated Marshal Radsky without shedding blood. This would definitely make him a famous general!

Bardolio, together with several generals in the Army, had a discussion. Everyone divided the credit for military exploits, which meant the matter was made real and another famous general appeared on the European continent.

After the benefits were divided, the aftermath was troublesome. If it weren't for the bad reputation of the Austrian government in the local area, and the local people's mistrust of them, when the Austrian army had collected food, people would have run out of food right away. Instead, most of them tried to hide some.

Although the capitalists had promised that they would buy food from the outside as soon as possible, water from far away could not quench their urgent thirst!

Upset as he was, in fact, Bardolio was not too worried. He had already reported the situation to the authorities. As long as the situation was stable, the food issue would be other people's problem.

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Bad things came out of nowhere!

That was how King Charles Albert felt. The Kingdom of Sardinia was not ready, and if it was not for the pressure of domestic public opinion, he would not attack Austria.

Since he understood his own country's affairs very well, he was definitely clear about the capacity of his own country. Only when Austria was busy with something else did he dare to send troops to test them.

He didn't expect that General Bardolio would be so fierce that the Austrian army was driven away by only one trick. It was good that they had occupied Milan, but the problem of feeding 100,000 people in the city was thorny.

The Kingdom of Sardinia was also not wealthy, and it was not a grain-producing area. Instead, the Milan plain was the main grain-producing area in Italy.

Since it had to be done, it must be done thoroughly. The Austrian army forcibly took over the grain stores and warehouses of the local capitalists, and even the grain processing plants were not spared. All if it was destroyed in the fire.

Milan had already been occupied, and there was no way to return it to the way it was before. They could not give up Milan, either, because unifying Italy was the highest goal of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

"Castanto, immediately gather a batch of grain to be shipped to Milan. The more, the faster, the better!"

Charles Albert was still capable and made the right choice in the first place. No matter what happened, he must feed the local people first.

"Yes, Your Majesty!"

"Your Majesty, what do you think of the commendation of the front-line generals?"

Castanto's words improved King Charlie's mood in an instant: it was not just anyone, it was the famous Austrian Marshal Radsky who he'd defeated.

Whether there had been a fight or not, winning was winning, and this win was perfect, which earned him a great honor.

The press of the Kingdom of Sardinia had already praised Bardolio fiercely, as if he was the world's No. 1 General, and King Charles surely could not mistreat the meritorious statesman.

"All the meritorious generals will be promoted one rank, and general Bardolio will be appointed the Marshal of the Kingdom of Sardinia. When the war is over, I will personally award him the title!"

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(Note: Marshal Radsky became famous in the war against France, was promoted for stepping on Napoleon's shoulder in the battle of Aspen-Aslin, and later planned the Battle of Leipzig. However,

his role was not the commander-in-chief, but the chief of staff, and his reputation in history books was not outstanding.)

Chapter 55: Bitter Days Coming

Bardolio surely underestimated the impact of defeating Austria, and for political reasons, King Charles personally awarded him the military rank of marshal.

For the Italians, defeating Austria in that era was really exciting. If they continued to win, it was certain that all the other Italian states would also award him the rank of marshal.

Thanks to the campaign of the Kingdom of Sardinia, Bardolio soon became a hero of Italy, which was not easy, and he had to be careful with his new status.

For example, since people in Milan could not obtain food, they would find him to solve the problem, as he had planned the burning of food supplies.

As a hero of Italy, he must stick to his word. He had to fulfill his promise of food.

General Bardolio's political skill was adequate. No, it should be Marshal Bardolio now. Although it had not yet been officially awarded, it would be soon enough.

The Lombardy region was so large that it was impossible for the Austrian army to collect all the food in the short time allotted. The food in the hands of the grain dealers was gone, but still, there must be something left to eat in the noble manors.

First, he emphasized the domestic transportation of grain; then, he also coerced the nobles in the Lombardy area into sharing some grain from their manors.

It was a pity that, since the light industry in Lombardy had developed well in this era, most of the nobles sold their grain to the processing factories. At the time, the spring plowing period was just beginning, and no one had much grain on their hands.

After searching around helplessly, Bardolio found that what he could rustle up was only a drop in the bucket. Anywhere that had been searched before by the Austrian army didn't have much left.

"Marshal, domestic food transports have not been delivered yet. The food we collected in the city is very limited. In the current situation, all the food plus our military's supply will last only three days.

The grain-collecting team sent out may find something yet. But since it has already been searched by the Austrians, I am afraid that there will not be much to find in the areas surrounding Milan!" Major General Manstu said unhappily. (He had already been promoted to general.)

At the time, the grain of the Kingdom of Sardinia was actually on its way to Milan, but the transportation in Italy in that era was not very good, and its capacity was limited.

It was not so easy to meet the needs of the 100,000 people in the city. This was only the beginning. It wouldn't be long before there was a food shortage in the countryside, too.

It could be said that in the short term, the Kingdom of Sardinia's occupation of the Lombardy region was not an enhancement to its strength, but a heavy economic burden.

Bardolio had already felt the pressure: democrats in Milan had already asked him for independence, which he'd put aside for the time being.

Besides, at the time, they had to rely on the Kingdom of Sardinia to stabilize the area. Once the crisis was over, there might be another option.

"I will explain the situation to the public. At present, many residents in the city still have a little food in their homes, and from tomorrow on, everyone will only receive seventy percent of the food they need.

In addition, the grain collected from the surrounding areas of Milan should be able to support the city for five or six days, and then the domestic grain will arrive," Marshal Bardolio analyzed.

There was no doubt that reducing rations would arouse people's dissatisfaction with them, but he could not produce food from nothing, no matter how he racked his brain.

The Kingdom of Sardinia had no foundation in Lombardy. To maintain the stability of Milan, they had to rely on the nobles and capitalists in the city.

These local leaders were also responsible for distributing rations to the people. These people were not nice ones. They could live well under Austrian rule, which was not possible for honest people.

Under the condition that Marshal Bardolio knew nothing about it, the underground black market had already opened. If someone checked, they would find that the food sold here was the relief food from the city.

Corruption was a tradition left over from the Austrian era. The local nobles were also tools for the Austrian government to rule the local area, so naturally, they had inherited this "fine" tradition.

Not to mention the capitalists: their state of moral integrity was that they had no moral integrity, and none could refuse to profit from the present situation, even some of the officers in the Sardinian army.

When distributing food, they could make a big profit by deducting a little food every time. How could they resist such an opportunity?

They had to make up for the losses caused by the war. It was a perfect opportunity for them to become rich.

Marshal Bardolio might have really not known, or he might have just been pretending to be confused.

Ultimately, the seventy percent of rations everyone should have received became less than fifty percent by the time they got it. And in that last fifty percent, the bread was mixed with a mess of other things.

For the lucky ones, it was just bran and some wheat straw powder; for the unlucky ones with "black bread," wood chips, leaves, pebbles, and other materials could be found in the loaves.

To us, that seems impossible. Fortunately, the people at the bottom had long been used to these things. It was the same as the black bread they usually ate. When fighting, they could even use it like a brick! It was multipurpose.

People with means became customers of the black market one after another. It could not be said to be a real black market; they did their business openly.

However, the price was a little higher, especially the price of grain, which quickly soared to more than ten times what it was before the war. Even some capitalists could not bear it.

Of course, for the poor, there was only one option: to endure it. Anyway, Marshal Baidoglio assured them, they only needed to wait another few days.

Everyone was a patriot. For the sake of the country and the nation, they could surely endure hunger for a few days.

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Paris, France.

At the time, the capitalist interim government was busy with an internal struggle.

On March 17, 150,000 people were organized by the Blanquist Party, and they took to the streets to demonstrate. The conflict between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie was ignited in Paris.

When the Kingdom of Sardinia decided to send troops to attack Austria, the interim government still supported it. Of course, this kind of support was limited to words, as they were unable to give practical support.

Franz obviously underestimated the situation in France, which was not good. The interim government, which represented the interests of the capitalists, had issued a series of policies that favored the capitalists, which naturally damaged the interests of ordinary people.

For example, on March 9, the interim government issued a decree stipulating that cash payments from savings banks should be reduced. Anyone who withdrew more than 100 francs would be paid in devalued national securities.

Another example: on March 16, the interim government issued a decree stipulating that the farmers should pay four kinds of taxes on land, movable property, doors and windows, and business, on which 45 centimes were added per franc for surtax.

(1 franc = 100 centimes, about 0.29 grams of gold, though the value of the franc changed during the Great Revolution.)

Chapter 56: Empty Promise

The news that the Kingdom of Sardinia was occupying Lombardy spread to France, causing a shock in the interim government.

The French had supported the war between the Kingdom of Sardinia and Austria, but only to expel Austria from Italy and make Lombardy and Venice independent. They did not intend to unify the Kingdom of Sardinia into Italy.

Since he'd received the news that the Kingdom of Sardinia took over Lombardy without shedding blood, the head of the interim government, Alfons De La Martin, had been in a bad mood.

Austria was one of the four major powers of the European continent. How could they be so frightened that they gave up Lombardy?

In his opinion, the correct way to see the situation was this: fighting caused destruction to both sides, so Austria had been unable to suppress the domestic rebellion and was forced to give up the Italian region. Meanwhile, the Kingdom of Sardinia also suffered heavy losses in the war and was unable to annex the Lombardy region. They had been expecting the situation to go this way like a script they all compiled, but it had been changed at the beginning.

However, screenwriters like him had no right to change the plot back, because the investors sent them away early.

"Your Excellency, the Austrian ambassador, Mr. Mentneid, is here."

The servant officer's voice sounded in his ear. Alfons came back to himself and said, "Please show him in."

After a period of routine diplomatic greetings, Mantneid got straight to the point.

"Mr. President, what do you think of the Italian issue?"

Alfons smiled slightly. This was a good opportunity to increase the influence of France since Austria had sent representatives to negotiate with them.

"Mr. Mentneid, every nation has the right to pursue national independence. I think it is a good choice to make Lombardy an independent country!"

Mentneid was already cursing him in his heart: since it was not French territory, of course the French president did not feel distressed. Lombardy and Venice were important fiscal and taxation regions, and Austria could not possibly give them up easily!

"Mr. President, I think this issue should be considered in context. Lombardy is an integral part of the Austrian Empire. We will not make any concessions on this issue.

Why don't we discuss other parts of the Italy issue, such as the division of power over the Kingdom of Sardinia? I believe we should have common opinions on this issue!"

The French had to be interested in carving up Italy. Even if the interim government was busy with domestic struggle, it also knew that it could not be silent on this issue.

A unified Italy was not in the interest of Austria, and it was also not in the interest of the French. The Mediterranean was too small to accommodate so many big countries.

If Austria was not willing to give up the Lombardy region, then the war with the Kingdom of Sardinia would certainly continue.

Since the Austrian ambassador had come to him, obviously, the purpose of carving up Italy was to exchange interests with France and get the French government to give up its support for the Kingdom of Sardinia.

Alfons didn't have many choices. He had already made it clear that there was no fighting at all between the two sides, which meant that the Austrian army had not suffered any losses.

Without foreign support, he did not think that the Kingdom of Sardinia could beat Austria. The difference in strength between the two sides was too great, and it could not be made up by personal ability alone.

It was impossible for the interim government to provide too much support to the Kingdom of Sardinia then; moreover, what benefits could they get from supporting the Kingdom of Sardinia?

It was true that France wanted to take Italy for itself, but Alfons himself did not have that kind of ambition.

Although the Vienna system had collapsed, he had not forgotten the warning of the Russians, and the British were also watching him closely. If this step was taken, he would have to fight alone against the European continent.

"Mr. Mentneid, how do you think the division could be more reasonable?" Alfons asked with concern.

If the Austrians wanted to buy them over, he would look at their bid first; as long as the price was high enough, he would consider stabbing the Kingdom of Sardinia in the back.

Anyway, at that time, France and the Kingdom of Sardinia had not yet formed an alliance. The two sides had only a verbal agreement, and there was no shame in betraying that.

"Austria will have the Genoa and Turin regions, and the remaining regions will be owned by France. The two countries will ally to fight international pressure!"

Having said that, Mentneid took up a pen and drew a line on the map, dividing the Kingdom of Sardinia into two parts. The two parts were equal in size.

Alfons's expression changed, for he hadn't expected the Austrians to have such a big appetite that they wanted to take over the whole Kingdom of Sardinia.

On the surface, France had taken a big advantage this time: Austria had taken the responsibility of fighting the Kingdom of Sardinia, while the French only waited for the war to end and sent troops to occupy it.

In fact, it was not like that. The core areas of the Kingdom of Sardinia were in Turin and Genoa, which held more than eighty percent of the industries in the country.

If these two places fell into Austria's hands, it would be difficult for France to take them back again. In that era, France's military strength did not match Austria's.

Alfons said, "Mr. Mentneid, I'm afraid this will not work. The essence of the Kingdom of Sardinia ..."

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Actually, it was just a strategy of negotiation.

The order received by Mentneid was to hold the French back and not allow them to provide support to the Kingdom of Sardinia. As for the division of the Kingdom of Sardinia, it was just a pretense.

Austria had a lot of internal problems, and Franz would not expand outside until all of those were dealt with completely.

Moreover, if the history had not changed, when the proletarian uprising broke out in Paris in June, the French would be too busy to support the Kingdom of Sardinia.

After the suppression of the uprising, the French government would be replaced again, and a new round of political struggle would begin, which would continue until the restoration of Napoleon III.

The so-called division of Sardinia was just an empty promise.

Alfons was not too stupid to see that there might be problems in the division of the Kingdom of Sardinia as proposed by Austria, but, for the time being, the interim government urgently needed to achieve something to ease the domestic conflict.

It could be said that the two sides became good partners after brief contact. Even if it was an empty promise, as long as the French had the strength, the promise could also be fulfilled.

At that time, any treaty that was beneficial to France was an achievement for the interim government and could be a good way to divert domestic attention.

The two of them then started a protracted war: in addition to carving up the Italian region, Alfons also needed Austria to admit the legitimacy of the interim government and abolish the shackles imposed on France by the Vienna system.

All these issues were used to negotiate. In that era, the French were very isolated in diplomacy, and the interim government was in urgent need of the world's recognition.

The widely-criticized July Dynasty was actually not bad in terms of diplomacy. Since the war against France, the French government had been forced to act as a public enemy in Europe, even though they did not want to.

Of course, the interim government could not be too tough. Just look at the attitude of the Russians: if there was money to be had, the soldiers of Russia would have been killing in Paris.

Chapter 57: John's Idea

While handling the Paris government, the Austrian Foreign Ministry could not possibly forget the London government. The British Empire was still very powerful in that era.

As the only industrial country in the world then, it was the right time for them to be bullish. Fortunately, the small size of Britain restricted its population growth; otherwise, there would be no such thing as industrial latecomers.

The British also couldn't avoid the great revolution in 1848, but compared with the ones in France, Austria, and other countries, theirs were just too small.

The ambitious and untalented revolutionaries were arrested by the police before they started. Ultimately, there were just a few strikes, which ended hastily.

Franz knew clearly in his heart that the war between Austria and the Kingdom of Sardinia was actually planned by the British. Even before the dispatch of troops from the Kingdom of Sardinia, British Foreign Secretary Palmerston had begun to lobby King Charles Albert.

In this context, Austria's diplomatic activities in London naturally couldn't achieve any real results.

Moreover, the reputation of the British was not very reassuring, because as long as it served their interests, they were known to change positions at any time.

Fortunately, Franz didn't expect to get the support of the British. The mission for Hummelauer, the ambassador to Britain, was very simple: to visit the counselors of the pro-Austrian countries and prevent the London government from providing substantial support to the Kingdom of Sardinia.

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Downing Street.

Prime Minister John Russell was thinking about the world situation. First of all, the issue of France: the newly established interim government had already expressed friendship to the British Empire diplomatically, but whether to accept it was still under consideration.

Since the Vienna system had collapsed, how should the future European political situation be established?

The British were surely good at diplomatic tactics. Before the collapse of the Vienna system, John Russell hadn't thought anything of it; however, since the system had collapsed, he was struggling.

Under the Vienna system, European countries had maintained a close balance, and the British could rest assured and boldly expand their territory overseas.

"Prime Minister, in the current situation, we can continue the previous strategic plan to establish a unified Italian dynasty, weaken the strength of Austria, and block the French expansion into Italy!" Foreign Secretary Palmerston suggested.

John Russell frowned and said, "Mr. Palmerston, this is the most ideal state for now. In fact, for the balance of strength among European countries, we will need Austria.

Now Austria's internal conflicts are serious, and it may disintegrate. If there is no restriction, the Hapsburg family will return to the German region.

Now the idea of the unification of the German region is very popular. With the reputation of the Hapsburg family, their return is likely to unify the German region."

In Europe, where bloodlines mattered, John Russell was not alarmist. Once Austria disintegrated, it was almost inevitable that the rest of Austria would return to Germany.

In this case, the Hapsburg family was really liable to unify Germany. It was no joke to conquer the world from the waist down (meaning, by bloodline).

Even if the Hapsburg family did not unify Germany, the Prussians would. The emergence of a unified Great German Empire was definitely not a good thing for the British.

Franz had also considered whether to give up Hungary and Italy and to re-form the German Empire. However, after careful analysis, he decided to resist the temptation.

It might be easy to unify the German region, but what about internal conflicts? And he had no way to subdue the Prussians. The Catholicism of South Germany and the Protestantism of North Germany were clearly different.

In history, the Germans were not able to solve this problem, and the Second Empire had been full of contradictions since its establishment.

And that was just in a small Germany. If a great Germany was established, these conflicts would be even more horrible, as North and South Germany were evenly matched, and the internal friction alone could cause the nation to collapse.

Looking at the map again, the strategic position of the German region was truly unfortunate, for there were no natural barriers at all to defend the area.

Even if Franz had much more confidence, he didn't think he could punch France, kick Russia, and beat England to death at the same time against a background of constant internal conflict.

Franz thought that it was a daydream to think of giving up the Austrian Empire to unify the German region. Specifically, we could refer to the case of Napoleon's one-on-one fights against major European powers.

Otherwise, he would not have waited. After the war against France was over would be the best time for Austria to unify Germany.

There was no doubt that Franz was not the only smart leader involved. Metternich had refrained from a similar temptation and established the Vienna system, instead of unifying Germany, which was political suicide.

A bird in the hand is worth a thousand in the bush.

After integrating the Austrian Empire, in fact, the overall national strength would not be less than that of a unified German region. Then he would slowly strive to develop over time. Waiting for the opportunity was the right way to go.

If he moved forward, he could fight his way across the European continent and rebuild the Holy Roman Empire; if he retreated, he could dominate southern Europe and become a major power there.

"The situation in Austria may not be as serious as we thought. The Vienna revolution has been suppressed. Although other places are unstable, there is no outbreak of major rebellions.

In order for the European revolution not to affect Russia, the Tsar's government has to support Austria, and with our support, even if the Hungarian rebellion breaks out, it will soon be suppressed!

Besides, we don't need the Kingdom of Sardinia to completely defeat Austria. If necessary, we can mediate. As long as the French are not allowed to send troops to support the kingdom of Sardinia, the situation is under our control," Palmerston said after a moment's thought.

John Russell replied, "It should not be difficult to mediate the Austrian war. However, how are you going to reply to Austria? If there is no support from here, they will turn to the Russians for help.

The Russians will not give up this opportunity. Once Russia and Austria reach an agreement, no one in the region can check them."

The greatest conflict in the world at that time was the conflict between Britain and Russia. With its immense strength, the Russian Empire had become one of the greatest enemies of the British.

Austria was the biggest power to balance the Russian expansion in the Near East. If Austria turned to the Russians then, it was inevitable that they would give up some of their interests in the Balkan region.

The British definitely did not want the Russians to enter the Mediterranean. In history, the Crimean War broke out for this reason, and the British and French joined their forces together to beat the Russians back.

"No problem. We don't need to reply directly to the Austrian people, just give them some ambiguous hints so that they will think we support them.

The Kingdom of Sardinia wants to unify Italy, and they have to work hard on that alone. We must only provide limited support. If they succeed, it is for the best; if they fail, it will not be our business.

It is also a good choice to let France and Austria contain each other. The diplomacy of the British empire cannot take sides!" Palmerston said superciliously.

Chapter 58: To Close the Net

On March 19, 1848, Frederick William IV was forced to announce the end of publication censorship and to send diplomatic notes to the German states, requesting the convening of the Confederate conference.

On March 23, Frederick William IV announced the merger of Prussia into Germany.

Metternich's hope of establishing a three-nation alliance between Prussia, Austria, and Russia was shattered, and the diplomatic relations between Prussia, Austria, and Russia deteriorated sharply.

If Germany wanted to be unified, then Austria was an obstacle, and the core question was who would be the boss.

In terms of strength, Austria seemed to be a little stronger than Prussia, but because of its domestic problems, it did not have an absolute advantage over Prussia; in terms of influence, Austria was far greater than Prussia.

In history, Bismarck, the iron-and-blood Prime Minister, discovered this problem early. He first used diplomatic means to isolate Austria, then took advantage of the opportunity of the Austrian-French war to defeat Austria, and finally kicked Austria out of Germany.

Frederick William IV's practices clearly exposed Prussia's ambition to unify Germany, which Austria could not tolerate.

Also, it was also unacceptable to the Russians. The Tsar's government did not want to see the reunification of Middle Europe, as it would shake their European hegemony.

Against this background, the relationship between Russia and Austria began to heat up. Franz waited and got the good news: Tsar Nicholas I had made a public statement that he was willing to help Austria suppress the Italian revolution.

Although this support was only verbal, as Russia would not send troops to help Austria fight the Kingdom of Sardinia, it was enough for Franz.

Since the war against France, there had remained a pattern of two major powers in Europe: Britain and Russia. At this point, with Russia supporting Austria, the British could not support the Kingdom of Sardinia without risking full-scale war.

"Prime Minister, we can close the net," Franz said calmly.

"Yes, your Highness!" Felix replied.

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Prague.

"Mr. Ryan, hurry up, there's bad news!"

"Coulson, slow down. What happened?" the man named Ryan asked with concern.

"The Austrian government decided to execute Vera and the rest of them, a total of more than one hundred political prisoners, all of whom will be executed in three days!" Coulson said with trepidation.

This was definitely the worst-case scenario. It was rare to execute political prisoners on a large scale in Europe, especially when capitalists and nobles, more than one hundred of them, were among the prisoners.

Ryan was silent. He was not a simple-headed teenager. The Austrian government had suddenly played tough, which was obviously not normal.

However, he could not abandon his people; otherwise, the cohesion of his team would evaporate, and he would not be able to lead them.

The enthusiasm of the people in the Czech region for the revolution was originally low, so they had relied on capitalists and nobles to launch the revolution. If he could not take effective measures, it would not be long before people began to change sides in the war.

In history, the outbreak of the Prague uprising was quickly suppressed because the local nobles and capitalists found that it was hopeless to work with the revolutionary party and sold them out.

How could he mobilize the people to revolution?

He couldn't even think about it. The Revolutionary Party in the Czech region was formed mainly of the children of the capitalists and the branches of the noble families, and at the lowest, the middle class.

They wanted revolution only to protect their own rights and interests. They would never sacrifice their own interests to attract the people at the bottom.

In history, after the suppression of the Prague uprising, Austria could still organize troops to suppress the Hungarian rebellion in the Czech region, which showed where the popular opinion was leaning.

"How many troops left in the city?" Ryan asked with concern.

"I heard that the situation in the Italian battlefield is pretty serious, so yesterday, two thousand troops were transferred from here. The number of soldiers in the city will not exceed eighteen hundred," the man with glasses whispered.

"Is this news reliable?" Ryan asked skeptically.

"This is what I heard when I chatted with friends in the City Defense Army this morning. It should be reliable. The Army transfer is obvious!" the man with glasses explained.

"Mr. Ryan, the news should be accurate. Yesterday, I saw an army march out of town, and it has not come back!" Coulson added.

"Well, we will make preparations immediately and take action tomorrow night to overthrow this decadent Austrian Empire and establish an independent Czech Republic!" Ryan said with passion.

"Mr. Ryan, how will we solve the problem of weapons? We can't overthrow the Austrian government with only these few guns in our hands, can we?" an old man asked.

As a conservative in the revolutionary party, he opposed the most extreme military revolution. If it were not for the Austrian government's plans to kill his comrades, he would not agree to launch an uprising.

"I can find a way to raise 20 guns from relatives and friends!" the man with glasses said.

"I can also collect a dozen guns from my home!" Colson thought for a moment and said.

In this way, everyone reported their contributions. After a while, the weapons to equip an infantry battalion were settled.

Obviously, the recent policy of the Vienna government had made the local nobles very dissatisfied; otherwise, the revolutionary party could not obtain weapons and equipment so easily.

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A premeditated rebellion was launched just like this. All the members of the revolutionary party were there voluntarily, and there was not any mandatory binding force between them. They relied solely on the charisma of their leader.

It was impossible to keep it a secret. The Czech revolutionary party was originally a temporarily established team, so anyone from anywhere could be admitted in.

The people who attended the meeting were all of high status and considered reliable. In fact, after the meeting was over, the notes from the meeting were sorted out and sent to Prince Wentishgreitz that same night.

If the Vienna government wanted to put down the rebellion, the police in Prague could do it.

Obviously, this was not what the Vienna government wanted. Since the rebellion had not broken out yet, they would only catch some nobodies if they tried.

In this way, the Vienna government would miss the big boss behind the scenes, which would bring serious hidden threats to the future stability of the Czech region.

It seemed that Prince Wentishgreitz didn't know anything. Before the revolution broke out, he organized a field training, in which most of the policemen and armies in Prague took part.

On April 12, 1848, taking the opportunity of Prince Wentishgreitz's absence, the Prague uprising broke out. With the cooperation of local nobles and capitalists, the city of Prague was taken over in one stroke.

"Mr. Ryan, bad news: the arsenal is empty. It is said that the government's corrupt officials sold all the ammunition inside; what should I do now?" Colson said with fear.

This statement had to be false. Even if the Austrian government was corrupt, it was impossible for them to sell off all their weapons and ammunition.

"You must be being fooled by someone!"

This was his first reaction. Originally, the uprising was so smooth that it seemed unreasonable. He encountered almost no resistance before taking Prague. If he couldn't see it then, Ryan would have to be a real fool.

Chapter 59: Conditions

The rebellion was not a joke, and the revolution was not a dinner party; in both regards, it was not easy to get off the boat once you were on it. Even if he knew he had been trapped, Ryan had no choice but to follow the plan to the end.

He had no choice, though that did not mean that others had no choice either. Well-informed nobles already knew the danger.

There was no doubt that this was a trap designed just for them, but they jumped in anyway. The rebel army lacked weapons and ammunition, as well as the support of the public. There was no possibility for them to succeed.

Relying on the strength they currently had, there weren't even any bargaining chips to negotiate with the Vienna government.

Most of the nobles in the Czech region came from the German region, and they were inextricably linked with the Viennese nobles, but this kind of connection was not enough to keep them safe in the rebellion.

In a luxurious house in Prague's noble district, seven well-dressed men gathered together. If someone knew them, they would immediately see that all of them were Czech big shots.

But for now, these big shots looked flustered, without the elegant demeanor of the past. It would shock the whole of Prague if caught by the public.

What could possibly make so many important men so scared?

"Count Carochi, what should we do now? I'm afraid there are traitors among us. What we have done is exposed to the eyes of the Vienna government!"

"Count Scott, don't worry. We didn't participate personally in this rebellion. At most, we only had some collateral members involved, which gave us room to maneuver.

Now, as long as we help Prince Wentishgreitz to suppress the rebellion, we can clear our suspicion in this rebellion. The Vienna government cannot kill us because of this!" Count Carochi strived to maintain an appearance of calm.

They did not have any concern about selling out their partners. It was nothing more than abandoning a few offspring. What they were worried about was whether the Vienna government would rake things up against them afterward.

Under normal circumstances, the Europeans did not kill nobles, but if an accident occurred on the battlefield, no one would say anything.

At this point, only God knew the plan of Prince Wentishgreitz. After such a great game, he must expect to catch some big fish.

Count Carochi's statement obviously could not reassure everyone. If it was any other crime, maybe they would be alright, because everyone was related and there must be some powerful people who would help them.

But not this time. Although they didn't really want to be independent--they just wanted to use this opportunity to fight for greater rights--it was still a rebellion in the eyes of the Vienna government.

Since ancient times, rebellion had been the most hateful thing for the ruling class. Even if it was not immediately investigated to find out who was responsible, it was still necessary for them to clear out all the rebels.

"Count Carochi, I am not worried about personal safety. As long as we do not participate in rebellion directly, the Vienna government will not cut off our heads. Still, what price will we pay for this?

Everyone sitting here has a big family. Many industries in Prague seemingly belong to capitalists, but in fact, everyone here holds shares.

These things cannot go public. Even if the Vienna government directly confiscates all of our property, we cannot raise objections. It is even possible that the government would involve them in the rebellion.

Don't tell me that no one here has any contact with the rebels. Even keeping it secret isn't enough at this point.

As long as Prince Wentishgreitz thinks that we have joined the rebellion, then everyone will have a tough time of it. You all know what kind of end it was for the nobles involved in the rebellion in Vienna.

Quite a few families, because the younger generation or the family officials participated in the rebellion, were tangled up in it, and ultimately they were deprived of their titles and property!"

Count Scott's voice trembled. Obviously, he was worried that what happened in Vienna would repeat itself here.

The European nobles were a family, but the interests of the nobles were not all the same. Here, they wanted the Czech region to gain greater autonomy so they could gain benefits.

However, the nobles in Austria hoped to centralize their power and let it penetrate all parts of the country through the influence of the central government. The interests of the two sides had already clashed.

This was what Scott was most worried about. Would the Austrian nobles who dominated the Vienna government just let go of the opportunity to suppress them?

Just at that moment, the old Butler's voice sounded. "Count Carochi, there is someone outside who claims to be a secret envoy of Prince Wentishgreitz!"

The faces of the people in the room changed greatly. They were already exposed, so it was not surprising that Prince Wentishgreitz had sent someone to the door.

"Invite him in! And Linda will guide everyone to the next room!" Count Carochi thought for a moment and said.

No one had an objection. The maid took everyone quickly to the room next door, where the conversation in the reception room could be heard. Everyone wanted to find out what Prince Wentishgreitz was up to.

Seeing the man who entered, Carochi asked in surprise, "Candleley, how can it be you?"

"Why can't it be me? My dear brother, don't forget that I have been serving in the Austrian army all this time. For now, I happened to have transferred to the army of Prince Wentishgreitz, so I took the initiative to come see you!" Candleley laughed.

Sometimes it seemed like no one could figure out the complicated relationships among the European nobles. Candleley and Carochi were cousins, but the Carochi branch had inherited the family's titles; as part of a collateral branch, Candleley had to fend for himself.

Since they were one family, it was easy to talk. Carochi had already felt the goodwill sent by Prince Wentishgreitz.

"Candlely, I'm relieved to see you at a time like this!" Carochi said, relaxing a bit.

"No, my brother, you've spoken too soon. I have brought the conditions from Prince Wentishgreitz, or should I say, from the Vienna government.

If you agree, then, for now, nothing will happen; if not, I don't need to say what will happen. If you don't want the family to decline, you'd better think about it carefully!" Candlely said seriously.

Carochi smiled slightly. There was always a price to pay if one did something wrong. If the Vienna government had not put forward the conditions, he would be even more worried.

"Go ahead. As long as I can save the family, I can accept any conditions!"

Candlely looked at the footprints on the floor and said, "Since everyone is there somewhere, please come out together. Anyway, you can't hide all your lives.

Sooner or later, everyone will have to face their problems. The conditions I bring are set by the Cabinet. There is no room for discussion; either accept them or refuse them!"

Count Carochi looked a little abashed, but he soon recovered and said calmly, "Well, you've already been found, so come out, all of you!"

In the crowd that emerged, everyone was an acquaintance and greeted each other. Candlely said, "The conditions of the Vienna government are..."

Chapter 60: Can't Say It, Can Do It

People are realistic, especially nobles who have passed on their own ways of surviving for hundreds of years. The functions of their survival strategies became clear now.

On April 13, 1848, after receiving the news of the Prague rebellion, Prince Wentishgreitz immediately led troops back to the city to suppress the uprising. With the cooperation of the local nobles, he recovered the whole city in less than three days.

In order to deter the local powers, Prince Wentishgreitz ordered the execution of all the leaders who took part in the rebellion. Basically, the small leaders and anyone above them were all executed.

More than two thousand heads hung on the streets of Prague, terrifying the remaining nobles.

The point was that it was not only the ordinary people who were killed this time, and at Franz's request, the priority was to execute the big shots.

Ordinary people could still be used as laborers, while nobles and capitalists who'd participated in the rebellion weren't useful for anything, so people with higher social status died faster.

At the time of the execution, the municipal government also picked out a group of notorious people and conducted a public trial to expose the crimes they'd committed in the past.

With these executions, the Vienna government also strengthened the loyalty of the local people. Looking at the cheering citizens of Prague, the government knew that these people had been hated.

There was no need for them to pay back the usury owed. A series of laws formulated by the Vienna government to protect the public's interests would all be launched here, and capitalists, local ruffians, and oppressive hooligans were all guillotined.

The Czechs were Slavic, and they were similar to the Polish in terms of race, but their culture, national traditions, ways of thinking, reactions to reality, and even eating habits were very close to the Austrians, so much so that they were even known as "Slavic-speaking Austrians."

Because they shared a cultural tradition, the Czech people considered themselves part of Austria.

In Franz's view, the Austrian government could integrate the Czechs into the Austrian family with just a little more effort.

"Mr. Candley, I recommended you to the Vienna government as the Chief of Education in Bohemia. What do you think?" Prince Wentishgreitz asked.

(The Bohemia region is now the Czech region.)

Chief of Education? What kind of nonsense was that? He, an Austrian army colonel, was to be civilian staff?

The boundary between civil and military forces in Austria was not strict, and it was common for generals to become prime minister, but this change was just too much.

Under normal circumstances, changing from a military officer to a civil officer required a transition period, and only after the person had adapted to it would the transfer happen. It was rare to take such a big leap all at once.

However, in terms of administrative level, it was a promotion. Candley knew that he didn't have much choice. Prince Wentishgreitz didn't like to be refused.

"No, Prince!" Candley replied.

"Well, that's it. You know that the Vienna government wants to unify the language and culture of the whole country, for which purpose we even spared some of the nobles who took part in the rebellion.

For now, your task is to urge them to fulfill their promised conditions. If someone dares to go back on their word, you should report it right away.

Of course, it is not enough to rely on them alone. A number of state-owned enterprises have been added to the Czech region, and you have to organize teachers to teach ordinary workers German, as it is spoken in the factories.

In other places, you can do it your own way. In short, you should popularize German as soon as possible. In textbooks, you should emphasize Austria and downplay other local names!" Prince Wentishgreitz said forcefully.

The benefits of unifying language were self-evident, but it was not so simple to do, and for now, the Vienna government could only promote it quietly.

Considering the resistance of the people, Franz dared not even publish the documents abolishing other languages and replacing them with German.

Still, not being able to say it doesn't mean you can't do it. Franz was a pragmatist, and the subtle promotion of German could also achieve the goal.

Before long, many people would see the advantage of being able to speak German. For example, being able to speak German could get them higher wages in factories.

Most of the time, the carrot was more effective than the stick, and it didn't cause as much resistance.

The act in the Czech region was just the beginning. After approaching the local powers, some nobles were recruited to promote German.

After all, these nobles were all from Germany. German was their mother tongue, and they could speak Slavic, too, so they were left to close the gap between language teachers and locals.

With the cooperation of these local powers, the people who dared to make trouble were almost cleared out. Ordinary people would not care so much and would learn anything for a higher salary.

"Don't worry, Prince, I will do this job well!" Candley promised.

Since the Prague rebellion, Candley had found that the Vienna government attached great importance to popularizing German, which meant he was doing a promising job.

The Vienna government had not yet introduced specific incentives, but well-informed people already knew that the Crown Prince put great importance on this matter.

At that time, it was only because of the war that the energy of the government was restricted; once the domestic rebellion was suppressed, language unification would probably become Austria's national policy.

There were many smart people remaining. There was never any harm in following the national policy. Many politicians had already started approaching educational leaders from all over the country.

Candley was able to serve as the Chief of Education in the Bohemian Region; there was no doubt that not only had he made a major contribution, but also Prince Wentishgreitz had something to do with it, too.

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This plan of Franz's was obviously not just for Bohemia.

On April 13, a rebellion broke out in Galicia. The rebels occupied most of Austrian Poland and established a Polish interim government.

However, the rebellion came and went quickly. On April 16, the Austrian army began to suppress the rebellion. With the support of the local people, the massive rebellion was suppressed in less than a week.

Then, the government of Vienna cleaned up the local powers, and Franz showed his fangs by taking away the local nobles and capitalists, and even the middle class, who'd supported the rebellion.

This time, it was truly up to the local people to divide the nobles' land. Anyone who helped the government suppress the rebellion could get a piece of land for free, and as for others, they would have to redeem it slowly according to the rules.

Only preferential treatment could show the superiority of being loyal to the emperor. If everyone were treated the same, who would be willing to die for the Emperor?

In the short time of half a month, more than 20 thousand people in Austrian Poland were beheaded. This could be said to be the most thorough suppression since the outbreak of the European revolutions.

After that battle, the newborn Polish nationalism quickly died off in Austria. All who remained were either the people at the bottom or the loyal ministers of the Hapsburg family, while all the rebels were sent to God.