

# Holy Roman Empire

## *Chapter 6: Standard Operation — Rip-off*

Since becoming the capital of the Hapsburg empire in the 13th century, Vienna had grown into not only the political, economic, and cultural center of the European continent but also one of the world's most prosperous cities.

The current moment was no exception. Austria had established once again its status as a great power, after the war against France, and it was known, along with Russia, as Europe's policemen.

After the foundation of the Holy Alliance in 1815, Austria became the representative of the forces of restoration, a leader against capitalism, and a major military force in Europe.

However, behind the splendor, Austria was experiencing rapid decline. Its hegemony in Europe ended when the revolution broke out in 1848.

As Franz walked heavy-hearted down a busy street, a line of Du Fu's verse came to mind: "The portals of the rich reek of flesh and wine while frozen bodies lie by the roadside."

From time to time, ragged people hurried by, shivering with cold in the bustling streets of Vienna.

Occasionally he saw police officers hurrying to drive beggars away or even taking them away by force.

He couldn't imagine what kind of sight it would be if he went to the slums if this was the view in the most bustling downtown street.

"The Little Match Girl" was not a fairytale any more there, for, along the way, Franz saw too many children selling cigarettes, newspapers, matches...

Franz didn't bother to blame the evils of capitalism. For most of the children in those days, a job like that to feed themselves was a wild wish.

Over the course of a month, Franz traveled through all the main districts of Vienna and saw what the empire, nearing its end, was really like.

Perhaps what the people would really need in the Vienna Revolution, one year later, would be bread to feed themselves and clothing to keep them warm, rather than something as abstract as constitutionalism or freedom.

When the public conversation became dominated by the bourgeoisie and nobles, the so-called revolution became their tool in the power struggle. Meanwhile, ordinary people became victims of it.

Later, Franz remembered an article about Polish nationalists trying to persuade farmers in a village to rise up against the Austrians. They claimed that they would live happily ever after, as long as Austrians were expelled.

But the peasants answered:

No, dear sir, things would not develop as you say they would. You would just drive the most benevolent ruler, the Hapsburg Emperor, away from this land and bring the country to its end.

My grandfather once told me that when the Polish Federation was still in existence, the lords were allowed to beat the peasants any way they liked, and the peasants had nowhere to go for help.

After you drive the emperor out of this land, every one of you will want to get a taste of power and turn us into slaves again! *freewebnovel.com*

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Franz knew from history that, when the Vienna uprising failed, the bourgeoisie who claimed to be patriots would suffer massive damage, while the standard of living of the subjects would actually increase significantly.

It was hard not to say that this kind of situation created a sense of irony: the ones who kept on shouting all day to knock down the exploitative class were actually a group of capitalists, while the emperor, who was the object of the revolution launched by those capitalists, took up what was actually revolutionary work.

When these thoughts came into his mind, Franz realized he already knew what to do next. Uniting the majority to fight against a handful was always the right move in politics.

In Franz's view, any constitutional reform before the country achieved its universal compulsory education was just nonsense, and any reform beyond the people's capacity to accept could only cause harm.

"Raul, prepare for a visit to the Prime Minister's house!" Franz calmly said.

An incarnation who wouldn't stir things up, a man who wasn't actually a reincarnation — this had been Franz's motto. Now, he changed his mind: it was time to go to stir things up.

An hour later, Franz arrived at the Prime Minister's House. He didn't have an appointment, however, so Prime Minister Metternich was not at home.

This was reasonable to Franz: a Prime Minister was always busy, especially a powerful one like Metternich.

This was another difference between Europe and the East: even a powerful authority like Metternich would find that his power is limited, and to be dominant in the politics of Austria, he had to rely on the support of the emperor.

"Archduke, please have a seat. We have sent someone to inform the Prime Minister," said the smooth, slick housekeeper.

His implication was quite obvious: He had sent someone to inform the Prime Minister, but as for when the Prime Minister would come back, well, that would be unknown and out of his control, and since he had done his job properly, if there were any problems between the influential people there, they certainly would not involve him.

Franz smiled without saying a word, as it wasn't his habit to show his temper in front of irrelevant people. The relationship between the original Franz and Prime Minister Metternich was close, and he had maintained that relationship after his reincarnation.

In Franz's opinion, it was a classic tradition to rip off powerful ministers; the Austrian Empire would need someone to take the blame for its reform, and the best choice would be Prime Minister Metternich, who was already notorious.

Too much debt would be no burden. Presumably, Metternich didn't mind taking more blame than he already did for Austria.

In the evening, Metternich returned hurriedly. Franz was not annoyed about that: he had eaten and drunk whatever he wanted, for no one dared disrespect his position.

"Sorry to keep you waiting! Little Franz, what can I do for you today?" Metternich said kindly.

As always, Franz was a junior in his eyes, for Metternich was an old minister. He had been Prime Minister since the era of Franz's grandfather.

"Dear Metternich, when you speak to me, could you leave out "Little"? I am 16 years old already!"

Franz had to express his dissatisfaction before Metternich's question could be answered.

"Well, dear Archduke Franz, how can I help you today?" Metternich asked with a smile.

"Mr. Metternich, I came here today for reform!" Franz said, getting straight to the point.

"Reform? Franz, since when did you start to concern yourself with this? Or did someone say something to you?" Metternich asked with surprise.

"No one said anything, but I have been exploring Vienna for more than a month. I have some questions in my mind, and I want to ask your advice." Franz replied.

"Oh, I am all ears." Metternich pretended his interest.

"Mr. Metternich, the public voice for constitutional reform is very loud at present, but the workers I met don't care about that. They are busy doing everything they can just to get three square meals a day. Is money more important than dignity?" Franz asked, already knowing the answer.

"No, Franz! They are trying to survive. Missing even a day of work could mean starvation for them. Nothing else matters in the face of survival!" asserted Metternich, resolute and decisive.

"Oh. If that's the case, then why don't we make our reforms weighted towards them? At least allow them to have enough bread before anything else!" Franz said innocently.

"Franz, it is more complicated than that: it's not possible for capitalists to improve the treatment of workers!" Metternich shook his head and said.

"Yes, and isn't that terrible!" Franz said, with an affected sigh.

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#### *Chapter 7: The Court of Public Opinion*

Since his point had been made, Franz did not press the subject.

The capitalists were not people to toy with, possessing power that couldn't be ignored even if they didn't have a major position in government.

It was fine for Franz to question the social inequity; however, it would be out of the question to fight seriously against the bourgeois for the interests of the working class.

Franz thought it would be better to let the aristocratic conservatives finish this great and challenging task, and Prime Minister Metternich would be one of them.

Perhaps one day, capitalists would demand the expansion of voting rights, the implementation of constitutionalism, and the liberation of serfs, while the noble lords would call for labor laws to protect the rights and interests of the working class.

That hypothetical would only happen, however, when these two groups shouted their ideas out loud, and then the Austrian people would probably be dumbfounded anyway.  
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It was also the case in Austria that the aristocracy, who were still holding on to feudalism, had a natural conflict of interest with the capitalists and thus had not merged with them.

If by the beginning of the 20th century, nobles and capitalists formed a single interest group, then there would really be no way to solve the issue by political means. The only option would be to overthrow it and rebuild.

Franz had plans beyond just stirring up trouble in front of Metternich, for he didn't expect that what he said would impress the old, sly prime minister too much.

He also couldn't rely on their good relationship, because friendship was easy to dismiss in politics.

During the meeting, Franz had also gotten the qualification to run a newspaper. Newspapers were still under the control of the Austrian Empire's censorship.

Before the Vienna Revolution in March of 1848, there were 79 newspapers in all of Austria. 79 papers, not presses!

Given that a press always issued more than one newspaper, until the revolution, the number of presses was only going to get smaller.

From these numbers, you can see how hard it could be to run a newspaper at that time.

However, this was not much a problem for Franz. since the control of newspapers was intended to curb the spread of revolutionary ideas. Others might be in danger of supporting the Revolutionary Party, but not the heir to the throne, who surely could not revolutionize himself.

Franz, as a morally cultivated person, was concerned about the people, so his newspaper's name was "We Want Bread, We Want Cheese".

The definition of the newspaper was exactly the same as its name, and for the sake of security, he decided to place the newspaper office adjacent to the police station.

In those days, running a newspaper could be pretty troublesome: even Franz, who could omit the most cumbersome part—procedures--had to struggle to find the right staff and location.

The most essential part was editors and reporters: These people needed to have the zeal to face up to this cruel society, but not be too hot-tempered to remember who their boss was.

The unfortunate poet of the country, fortunately, was given a sorrowful sentence.

This verse was quite sensible. In the middle of the 19th century, a large number of literati emerged in Austria, some of whom insisted on putting their creative work first, while others diverted themselves with political games.

Still, the public influence of a pen was not comparable to that of the nobility.

For example, the Hungarian politician Kossuth, a major figure in propaganda, started working toward Hungary's revolution in 1847 and then became the head of the Republic of Hungary.

But because he was an idealist with the common faults of literati, often he drew up unrealistic plans, and thus his uprising was suppressed.

Franz was not in favor of Kossuth, even with his capability in propaganda, because he was an ultra-nationalist.

They were natural opposites, but if Franz wanted to, it would not be impossible to buy off him. However, Franz wasn't interested.

In his view, loyalty was far more important in an employee than ability. Even if it wasn't, at the very least, he should avoid the employment of an enemy.

After a moment of pondering, Franz listed a few names on a piece of paper, and then said: "Raul, send someone to investigate the background of these people, and if nothing abnormal comes up, send them each an invitation letter on behalf of the newspaper office."

"Yes, Archduke!" Raul replied quickly.

It was not easy to recruit people in those days, for the university was still an ivory tower to average people, where the children of the petty-bourgeois and nobles could study.

The so-called inspirational stories were full of lies, as the tuition fees were simply too high to be covered by any work-study program for impoverished families.

Thus, the situation of intellectuals was not as poor as people thought, except for those whose families had sunk back into poverty.

If you wanted to recruit newspaper staff, then, you would need to hang a billboard in a busy place, advertise in another newspaper, or get introductions from your acquaintances.

The last one—the introduction by acquaintances— certainly did not work for Franz, for none of his acquainted contacts were so low in rank that they would know any average worker. After all, dragons do not dwell with snakes.

Ultimately, though, it was nothing that required that much worry. It was not that hard to recruit ordinary workers to work in the newspaper office, compared to other industries. More than enough people would apply for the positions in the office since they were still comparably good jobs.

Journalists and editors, on the other hand, would take much more time to recruit, and for those positions, Franz invited only well-known intellectuals.

It didn't matter whether they came or not. If nothing else, the invitations would inform them that a new newspaper was being published in Austria, which could become an additional channel to earn a fee for publishing their articles.

Throughout the process, Franz never showed his face in public, although most of the staff would find out that he was the boss behind the scenes in the end.

If it weren't for the cost, Franz would not mind opening dozens of newspapers, all at once, to compete all-out for dominance of publicity.

But considering the issue of return on investment, Franz gave up that idea immediately and decisively. It was adequate for Franz to call the shots or set trends when needed by controlling one newspaper. free(w)ebnov(e)l

Reform in Austria had been going on for many years, and Prime Minister Metternich was a representative of the reformists.

He was beset from within and without: the domestic bourgeoisie was discontented with his reform, which didn't go far enough to fully satisfy their interests.

Meanwhile, the aristocratic conservatives also were averse to him, because he posed a problem for their interests by advocating the liberation of serfs.

Even the staff inside Vienna Court, in fact, took unkindly to him. The reason was simple: his bark was worse than his bite.

At this point, Franz was probably the one who understood him best. To paint a picture: the Austrian Empire was like a worm-eaten house, and no one knew how badly it would fall apart if any part of it were removed.

Thus, out of a cautious and responsible attitude, Metternich's reform was feeble for fear of triggering total collapse.

A reform led with cowardice or excess hesitation was doomed to fail. How could a reform succeed without bloodshed?

*Chapter 8: Edward von Bowenfield*

"After you start a newspaper the way you want, have you thought about how to make a profit from it?" Princess Sophie asked with concern.

Make a profit?

It was impossible to make a profit, at least in the short term!

A newspaper was not so easy to start, let alone get the sales to surge in one day, which meant there would be no advertising revenue right away.

In most cases, a net loss for the newspaper would persist through the early months, and then the sales would increase gradually. After that, the paper could profit by taking some advertising, little by little.

Considering that most of the people in Vienna were not yet rich at that time, as well as the small size of the middle class, the sales of newspapers were unsurprisingly meager.

"I would like to publish novels first, to cultivate a stable audience to attract attention, with occasional news for public interest. It will be more practical, I believe, for profit to be put aside at first, and we can arrange it after we get more than 20,000 copies out," said Franz with confidence and decisiveness.

"20,000 copies will not be an easy endeavor, from what I know. Only three newspapers' sales pass 20,000 locally, apart from the ones on the national market!" said Princess Sophie, her voice full of doubt.

Apparently, she had done her homework, and she knew what she was talking about.

Franz nodded. Even the three papers his mother was talking about could not sell 20,000 copies in Vienna every day; only when there was some major news event.

That was the way it was: the population of Vienna at that time was less than half a million, and the number of people who could afford to buy newspapers was not more than 80,000, among whom even fewer were actually willing to pay for newspapers.

According to Franz's estimation, the number of people who subscribed to newspapers was between 20,000 and 30,000 in Vienna, while some others would buy a paper occasionally.



The environment for publishers at the time was quite harsh; coupled with the strict publication censorship, this meant nothing was ever easy in this industry.

To achieve his goal, Franz had to increase the sales of newspapers to 10,000 copies in a year, while 6,000 copies in Vienna would be a satisfying success.

Princess Sophie thought for a moment, then said, "Franz, now that you have thought it through, go for it! Here's a piece of advice from me: recruit a reliable editor; it will minimize your loss. And better not to get involved in politics blindly; it will save you a load of trouble!"

"Thank you, and as you can see from the title of my newspaper, it is in favor of giving a voice to the public; as for the specifics, that's not really my concern!" Franz said with a smile.

He was too smart to be used as a weapon by others: he might get involved in politics, but he wouldn't necessarily take a side between the capitalists and nobles.

As the heir to the empire, Franz's attitude not only had an influence on many people choosing their position, but it also related to his public image.

Franz had decided on his persona: a merciful crown prince who cared for people's livelihood. To maintain it, he had to stay above the fight between nobles and capitalists.

Lots of propaganda would be needed for all this. Without it, how would ordinary people know what he was?

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Time flew by, and a person named Edward von Bowenfield was hired as the editor-in-chief by Franz for one reason and one reason only—his big name.

As one of the most famous Austrian authors of the time, he was a radically enthusiastic youth in his early years, though he tended to be conservative in his later life.

By the time he had reached middle-age, his blood was almost burned out, but he was not completely exhausted.

"Mr. Bowenfield, welcome in!" Franz said, smiling.

"Dear Archduke, it's a pleasure to serve you!" Edward von Bowenfield replied.

"Mr. Bowenfield, the main purpose of our meeting today is to discuss the newspaper's orientation. Do you have any ideas about that?" Franz asked.

"Your excellency, it is the duty of every journalist to expose the dark side of society, and we must have the bravery to lay it all bare!" Edward von Bowenfield said, full of enthusiasm.

At that moment, Franz finally understood why this person was willing to accept his invitation: he saw the newspaper as a platform from which he could attack people with abandon.

Without strong backing, people like this did not have as many venues for verbally abusing people as they would've liked, thanks to the censorship of Austrian publications.

There was no doubt that Franz, the heir to the empire, was a perfect patron. Even if something happened, how could a person like him not find a way to save the paper and its staff?

Edward von Bowenfield was old and mature enough to compromise with reality. Recently, he had authored a satire on government — "Adulthood."

He was worried about possible imprisonment after the release of his book, which had been published privately without the permission of the government.

He had been planning to run away, but just before his departure, he received Franz's invitation, and he took it immediately and decisively.

During those years, the Austrian secret police, like everyone else, treated people according to their social positions. Thus, if he worked for Franz, they would not make it hard for him as long as he didn't really cross the line.

Franz shook his head and said: "Mr. Bowenfield, there are so many newspapers doing that already; there wouldn't be a shortage without us. Our purpose, as seen in the name, is to give a voice to the lowest class of society.

With our efforts, I look forward to changing the living conditions of the people at the bottom. They need bread and cheese, which are the most basic human needs, needs which should be satisfied!"

Every newspaper has a political orientation, but at that time, Austria did not have a publication specifically for the underprivileged. They were just too poor to afford even one piece of them.

"Your excellency, I must say that your intentions are good, but for the sake of achievement, we must change our current political system!" Edward von Bowenfield began to spill his theories without hesitation.

Franz smiled: "The Austrian system does need to be changed, but I don't yet know how. I will keep silent on this issue because I can't make the right judgment with my limited knowledge, even if there is a possible solution in front of me. However, I am more certain of things the other way around: the living conditions of the people at the bottom need to be changed, no matter how the system changes. To achieve such change requires the authority to enact more laws to protect their interests!

Mr. Bowenfield, you have the heavy burden of letting more and more people in society know the reality of the poorest among us, and then arousing their concern! It would be so much better if we could push the government into protecting their interests through legislation!"

Franz was not afraid of anyone relying on big talk. He left Edward von Bowenfield speechless with just a few words. Everyone knew that Austria needed reform, but how could it be done?

Different people had different interests, and consequently, various plans of reform. Franz simply took advantage of his youth: they hadn't counted on a 16-year-old kid to plan the country's destiny.

#### *Chapter 9: Building a Public Persona*

Countless lessons drawn from his past life had taught Franz a profound truth: you didn't necessarily have to take the side of the majority, but at the very least, you had to make them think you were with them.

That's the route Franz was pursuing. He surely had to tell the outside world that he was in support of reform, as reform was mainstream in Austria at that time.

Meanwhile, the power of Austrian conservatives could not be underestimated. The Vienna Court was the base camp of conservatives, and Franz could not betray his class.

His youth was the best solution for a dilemma like that, as it was satisfying enough for the reformists to know that he was on their side. No one was counting on a 16-year-old to lead the reform in Austria.

From the conservatives' point of view, Franz was reserved enough not to comment on specifics of reform. Everyone understood it was necessary for Austria but didn't know how to implement it, causing the lasting debate on the subject.

As the Crown Prince of the Empire, there was nothing wrong with Franz advocating reform. However, he would be taught a lesson if he was cocky enough to put forward his own reform plan.

By contrast, it was no problem for Franz to focus on the living conditions of the people at the bottom, as a merciful leader benefitted everyone.

Before the mystery was solved, neither the capitalists nor the aristocracy gave a damn about Franz raising his profile with the people, since no one understood it was all a diversion.

Bowenfield was convinced by Franz, or by reality, really, and there was nothing wrong with listening to the words of this young archduke. It would make things even better if he could influence this archduke and let him accept his ideas.

Though Franz understood Bowenfield's plan as clear as day, he did not care about it. At that point, the only thing he needed was to use Bowenfield's influence to start up the newspaper in the shortest time possible.

The matters of political reform in Austria were beyond their concern. Franz had a plan sketched out already; however, before carrying it out, he had to weaken the bourgeois and the aristocracy.

Things like raising the status of capitalists would never happen in his reform.

"Capital is borderless," Franz had heard. The capitalists, who could never be satisfied, would betray the noble class immediately if it were in their interest, so Franz would not dare count on them as the backbone of the empire.

The specific conditions of Austria were such that, to integrate this country truly, he must take into account the interests of the vast majority of the underprivileged population and let the nobility and the capitalist class make sacrifices.

Franz had a chance to succeed only in this particular time when the conflict between the nobility and the capitalist class was intense.

The more he learned about the country, the more Franz was sure that various powers simmered under the surface of this empire.

In 1846, Austria was affected by the crop failure of Germany. As a matter of course, the Austrian Empire, with the Great Hungarian Plain, should not have been severely affected by this event, for it always was the most important food exporter in Europe.

However, the facts suggested the opposite. For their own profit, the capitalists excessively exaggerated food shortages to raise food prices, while at the same time, they depressed the purchase price of food in the Hungarian region, because of the great local harvest of grain.

By the beginning of 1847, the price of food in Vienna had risen by fifty-four percent, and ordinary Viennese citizens had felt the pinch.

As the capitalists manipulated food prices, a large number of farmers went bankrupt, and even some nobles suffered heavy losses; consequently, various undercurrents were agitated in the Hungarian region.

For a while, Franz had noticed the growth of the foreign population in Vienna. It was clear that they were bankrupt farmers who came into the city to try to make a living.

Some of them might have been serfs, still in service for the nobility. The nobles had loosened their control because by then, Austria's population had exceeded 30 million. Since the labor force was plentiful, they had no shortage of serfs. *freewe&novel.com*

Serfs were wealth to the nobles, certainly, but they also had to eat; after they had enough laborers to guarantee the completion of production tasks, any excess would become a burden to them.

However, the European countries' successful liberation of serfs was not as simple as it looked. One factor was the fact that more machinery, like animal-powered harvesters, made a large number of laborers unnecessary for farming.

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the nobles' demand for a labor force was in decline, and resistance to the abolition of serfdom was less intense. Most open-minded nobles preferred to release serfs in exchange for compensation from the government.

The reason nobles still resisted Prime Minister Metternich's promotion of the abolitionist movement in Austria was simply that the offering was too low, a point on which Franz supported the Prime Minister.

Austria did not have sufficient funds to pay any more, so a lower settlement was inevitable.

However, this was not a dead-end problem: For example, abolitionist aristocracy could be given preferential tax rates, or, at the expense of capitalists, the government could intervene in the market and set a cap on food prices to safeguard everyone's interests.

There was always a way to resolve a conflict, as long as there was an appropriate distribution of benefits. Franz would not put forward these resolutions then, though, because they were his bargaining chips in exchange for benefits from Prime Minister Metternich.

On January 11, 1847, Franz's newspaper, "We Want Bread, We Want Cheese," was officially published.

He himself fiddled around a bit, writing the article "Caring for the People at the Bottom, Building a Better Austria Together" at the top of the page.

There was no doubt that it was just sentimental chicken soup, meant to make people feel better with no actual change. Franz dedicated a significant portion of his article to the importance of the role played by the people at the bottom in the country. The article asserted that the Austrian Empire could improve only if it met the basic living needs of those people.

The article's influence was indisputable, and many people were fooled by it since it was the first appearance of such chicken soup in the world.

Though they were not averse to Franz, the aristocrats and capitalists thought Franz to be an overwhelmingly merciful Crown Prince, who was leisurely enough to worry about the lives of the people at the bottom.

A merciful emperor was better than a tyrant; at the very least, they didn't have to worry about being killed without reason.

The influence on the poor, meanwhile, was quite enormous. A Crown Prince who cared about their living conditions must be a real sage.

It was a pity that the Crown Prince was too young to have a voice in politics. The perfect situation would be that he held power as an emperor.

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"What a pity!" Franz said to himself. If only he had a group of people to lead publicity throughout the country, to make the impact even greater!

Franz had, in fact, sent people to do that, but the problem was that his team was short-handed. Accordingly, their influence was limited to Vienna, and he had to wait for it to spread slowly to other places.

#### *Chapter 10: Intelligence Agents at Minimum Cost*

It was not Franz's intention to show up so early, and he wouldn't mind being behind the curtain all the time if he could help it.

Unfortunately, that was impossible. As the Crown Prince of the Austrian Empire, Franz's every move was scrutinized by men with serious intentions.

Franz's frequent contact with the military could have caused a kerfuffle if he were not young and hadn't had power in hand. But such was the advantage that power and youth provided him.

Still, Franz had to show up behind the scenes, either to find a way to manipulate public opinion or to act as one who could and would speak for the public. The only difference

would be whether he was pushed out in front of the public reluctantly or proactively stepped out into the open.

Franz did not want to be anyone's pawn, so he chose to take the initiative this time around and step forward of his own volition. If everything stayed on course, Vienna would have a revolution in March 1848, and he would ascend the throne in December of that year.

In order not to be tarnished by the rebels and have to ascend the throne with the shame of an executioner, thus marring his reign before it even began, Franz had to make the first move to act a leader of the public.

Because everyone had a preconceived notion of who he was, Franz had to establish the image of a merciful emperor to prevent any attacks or mudslinging before they damaged the reputation of the Austrian royal family.

"Raul, how goes the secret staff recruitment I asked for?" Franz asked with concern.

"Dear Archduke, I'm afraid not very well, as too few people meet your requirements. So far, I have only poached two people from the secret police, and their ability only meets your minimum requirements!" Raul replied perplexedly.

Franz was slightly taken aback by this, as he did not expect it to be so difficult to recruit intelligence agents. Was it because the standards he set were too high?

He thought he had made were the most basic of demands: loyalty to the imperial family, no political affiliation, a certain amount of wisdom, courage, alertness, patience, and a keen sense of judgment, and preferably a certain level of professional ability.

Aside from those, he didn't even bring up the generally typical requests for agents: good personal temperament, a wide range of knowledge, keen political instincts, and strong analytical ability.

"Exactly what requirements are they unable to meet?" Franz asked with concern.

"Your excellency! Plenty of candidates can meet one or several of your requirements, but very few can meet them all!" Raul said, as a second thought.

Franz was dumbfounded by the answer. Now that he thought about it, Franz found it was true: professional intelligence agents, at that time, were rather rare, while amateur ones were plentiful.

It was challenging to set up an intelligence agency. Even if Franz, the imperial Crown Prince, could poach government agents, how could he guarantee the loyalty of these people?



What if they were spies controlled by someone else?

He couldn't ignore the possibility. In those days, professional intelligence agents always had a boss. Franz could only establish an agency by either cultivating agents himself or poaching ones from the government.

"Don't hold back if you have any suggestions!" said Franz with a frown, looking at Raul, whose words stopped all of a sudden.

"Archduke, in fact, you don't have to establish this agency by yourself since the royal family already has one. But all these years..."

Raul stopped in the middle of a sentence.

Franz nodded, as he knew of the Royal Intelligence. Typically, this agency answered only to the emperor.

While its scale was small, its purpose was singular—to keep an eye on the internal condition of the state and its neighbors.

After his uncle took office, the Intelligence was almost deserted, and many agents were poached by Prime Minister Metternich.

There was also the question of how much loyalty was left among those who remained.

On the other hand, even Franz would despise them if they didn't seize the opportunity to take advantage of these departments when the emperor was weak.

Because of that weakness, intelligence under the royal family was more like a sieve than armor.

That was why Franz tried to start a separate agency to begin with, one which would be entirely loyal to himself alone.

The problem was that time was running out: one year remained before the breakout of the Vienna Revolution, and there was nothing he could do to get his agents ready before that time came.

"Well, Raul, first send someone to check out, in secret, what big forces had infiltrated the organization. I believe there must be some people still loyal to the royal family in there!" Franz said, resolute and decisive.

If there were no such people, then the Habsburg family would be damned. They had stood at the peak of Europe from the 11th century to the present, and there had to be a reason for that, one that was more complex than met the eye.



Franz could tell some of that from the situation in Austria. Since Franz's uncle, Ferdinand I, couldn't manage government affairs, power over major issues fell upon Prime Minister Metternich.

However, Prime Minister Metternich, as a ruler, behaved unlike any other. He bullied and suppressed the royal family, and his policies were even frequently affected by the Vienna Court.

The chief representative of the next generation of the royal family, Archduke Franz Karl, also had a congenital defect, and his IQ in politics was definitely zero.

Franz could quickly obtain support from the military on the basis of his origins as an heir to the Habsburg family and the Crown Prince of the Austrian Empire.

Beyond that, he could not make any difference, no matter how hard he tried. In fact, in history, Prime Minister Metternich was forced to resign after the outbreak of the Vienna Revolution, simply because he had no support from the military.

Then the situation would not be as bad as previously thought. Perhaps the aristocracy infiltrated the intelligence, but this didn't necessarily mean that they had betrayed the royal family. As long as their interests were not involved, the intelligence could still be used under normal service conditions.

When he realized this, Franz breathed a sigh of relief. Conflicts of interest between them might exist on other issues, but the Viennese aristocrats definitely stood with the emperor on the subject of suppressing the rebellion.

As for the bourgeois, without contempt, Franz just didn't see them being able to infiltrate the intelligence, considering that most of the members of the intelligence were nobles. Otherwise, with no money granted for more than ten years, the agency would have been dismissed long since.

Through these nobles scattered throughout the country, the royal family could easily collect domestic intelligence, and no salary was needed for the vast majority of them.

Agents in the intelligence agency of the Hapsburg family were not killer spies, and they had no law enforcement powers except to collect ordinary information.

Because of the tribute system of European nobles, the emperor had no access to anything inside their fiefdoms, and they could hide any information they chose since they themselves were the providers of the messages.

After a long hesitation, Franz finally decided to take this agency in hand first, because a rotten agency was better than no agency. At least, before a local rebellion broke out, he could get news in advance.

Moreover, a poor person like him could only support a self-sustaining organization like that.