

Roman Empire 71

Chapter 71: Covert Reforms

Croatia. After Kossuth issued the Declaration of Independence for Hungary, many Croatian nobles were hesitant about whether to join the Hungarian Republic or remain in the Austrian Empire. However, soon reality forced them to make a decision. The interim government of Hungary excluded the Croats from their sphere of power, which sparked dissatisfaction among the local nobility. The vast majority of land in the region of Croatia was under the control of the Hungarian aristocracy, who looked down upon the Croatian "upstarts." This created a division between the local minor nobility and the Hungarian nobility. This situation provided an opportunity for the Vienna government. Franz immediately extended goodwill to the local minor nobility, promising them a place in the future Austrian government. Specifically, it involved the establishment of an Austrian National Union, which would exercise the rights of the parliament. Within this union, there would be 2 to 5 seats allocated for representatives of the Croatian people. The specific number will depend on their performance. In any case, this transitional institution of national integration will serve as one of the highest governing bodies of the Austrian Empire for the foreseeable future. To gain political influence, it is necessary to actively participate. In theory, each percentage point of the population would be allocated a representative seat. The Croatian population is less than three percent of the total population of Austria. If they can secure five representative seats, their political influence will significantly increase. After winning over the upper class of the Croatian people, Franz did not neglect to win the support of the lower-class masses. It was the ordinary people in the lower strata of society who were truly willing to sacrifice themselves for him. After the declaration of Hungarian independence, the Austrian government authorized Josip Jelačić, the Ban of Croatia, to seize the lands of Hungarian nobility and abolish serfdom. TN: "Ban of Croatia" refers to a historical position in Croatia, which was part of the Habsburg Empire during that time. The Ban of Croatia was a high-ranking official appointed by the monarch to govern and administer the region. The support for the Austrian government quickly gained the upper hand. By May, Ban Josip Jelačić, the appointed governor, already had 80,000 Croatian volunteer soldiers under his command. On May 1st, Franz issued the Military Merit Land Grant Decree. Since the common people helped the government suppress the rebellion, they were eligible to receive land. The loyal soldiers who were devoted to the Emperor were naturally included in this decree as well. Currently, the Austrian government has confiscated a significant amount of land, and there is still a vast amount of land in the Kingdom of Hungary awaiting confiscation. The Austrian Empire also possesses plenty of land available for development. Allocating a portion of it to the soldiers should not pose a major problem. Certainly, in order to curb land consolidation, there are restrictions on the land grants. The maximum land grant allowed is not to exceed fifty hectares. For the common people, fifty hectares is already a significant number. Especially for those who have just gained their freedom and have no land or serfdom, it is enough to make them willing to serve the emperor. After the issuance of the Military Merit Land Grant, there was a constant stream of people joining the military. For the majority of the population, the cost of purchasing land was too high, so they preferred to go to the battlefield instead. As the day began to break, the recruitment point in Morkes had already gathered a considerable number of people. "Madich, are you here to sign up as well?" "Yes, Gorrich. After careful consideration, I believe that men should indeed be on the battlefield!" Madich replied earnestly. "But Madich, didn't you say last time that you wanted to become a great blacksmith?" Gorrich asked, confused. In Croatia, where the Industrial Revolution has not yet taken hold,

ordinary agricultural tools are still crafted by hand. For the common people, being a blacksmith is a lucrative job. "No, I've changed my mind now. Being a blacksmith can wait, but I want to join the battlefield and become a great knight!" Madich answered earnestly.

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No one doesn't want to become a noble, and being a knight is the lowest rank of nobility. For ordinary people, this is the highest pursuit in life. Before the Great Revolution of 1848, the entire European world operated on the principle that a nobleman's son would be a nobleman, a merchant's son would be a merchant, a doctor's son would be a doctor, and a serf's son would remain a serf. In a country as old as Austria, there are already many nobles. These people occupy the upper echelons of society, leaving limited opportunities for social advancement for the lower classes. For many ambitious people, the Hungarian uprising is seen as an opportunity, a chance to break through class barriers. Like most young people, Madic has ambition. He is not content to be a blacksmith like his father for his whole life. Before, there was no opportunity and he had to face reality. ... The wave of enlistment that occurred in Croatia was just a small episode. These troops were only local forces and were not part of the Austrian army's organization. In other words, these troops do not require direct funding from the central government, and their primary role is not combat but rather logistical support and transportation. Governor Josip Jelačić apparently did not explain clearly, or deliberately omitted the fact that the central government's control of so much land in its hands does not conform to the development of the bourgeois economy. To cultivate the domestic market, it is natural to need the farmers, who make up the largest population, to have money in their hands. And land is their main source of income. Austria did not carry out a thorough land revolution, and the nobles still held a large amount of land in their hands. Therefore, Franz could not distribute the land for free. In that case, the land can only be distributed to subjects loyal to the emperor. The criterion for this judgment is very simple: those who are willing to fight for the emperor are naturally loyal subjects. As long as they step onto the battlefield, even without achievements, they will have made sacrifices. At that time, with the emperor's grace, the land they would have had to purchase can be turned into rewards directly bestowed upon them. The specific criteria are still being formulated. Once these individuals obtain land, they will quickly be able to escape extreme poverty and have money in their hands. With money in hand, they will naturally engage in consumption, and with consumption, a market will emerge. After the market prospers, it is certain that industrial development will follow. With industrial growth, the government can generate more tax revenue, and the initial investment costs will gradually be recovered. This forms a virtuous economic cycle. The war to suppress the rebellion has now become a tool for Franz to reform Austrian society. Under the guise of war, Austria's social system is being reshaped without people realizing it. Croatia is just a microcosm of the social changes occurring in other regions of Austria, such as Slovenia, Transylvania, Bohemia, and others. Similar scenes are unfolding there as well. It can be said that as soon as the Hungarian uprising began, the greatest losses were suffered by the Hungarian nobility. Franz sold them out without even thinking about it. A commoner is not guilty; he who carries the jade is guilty. Regardless of whether they were involved in the rebellion or not, having a large amount of land in their possession is considered a sin. The crucial point is that they were exploiting their positions in Austria and the Hungarian Republic for personal gain. Greed leads people into the abyss. They wanted to gain greater benefits, and now Franz has taken decisive action by seizing their lands. Even if it is proven afterwards that they have nothing to do with the rebellion, the land cannot be taken back. At most, the government will compensate them with a land redemption fee.

Chapter 72: Hungary's Power Struggle

The military operations have not yet begun, but under the political and economic pressures, the newly formed Hungarian Republic has already found itself in a predicament.

The republican government helplessly watched as regions such as Croatia, Transylvania, Slovakia, and others were being coaxed by the Austrian government.

The Austrian government had not yet initiated repression, but the Hungarian Republic had already lost a significant portion of its territory and continued to shrink. President Kossuth was extremely angry but powerless to stop it.

The fact has proven that bloodless revolutions are often incomplete. The newly formed Hungarian Republic is now plagued with internal conflicts and lacks the ability to deal firmly with regional governments.

Budapest.

Kossuth, the Prime Minister, passionately exclaimed in his speech, "Ladies and gentlemen, do you still harbor illusions about the Austrians? Wake up! The Austrian government will never easily grant us independence!

"In just a short span of two weeks, the great nation of Hungary has lost nearly six layers of territory. If this continues, it won't be long before Budapest changes hands once again.

"We have all experienced the Austrian government's treatment of the revolutionary parties. From Vienna to Italy, from Prague to Galicia, the enemy has wielded the butcher's knife and unleashed massacres.

"Do you believe that Hungary will be an exception? Once the revolution fails, all of us involved will either become exiled dogs or headless ghosts under the enemy's control!

"God, it is truly terrifying! I dare not even imagine the extent of damage it would inflict upon Hungary."

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The people present had different expressions on their faces - some were excited, some were alarmed, and some were disdainful.

A representative of the nobility suddenly spoke up, interrupting, "Mr. Kossuth, everyone understands these grand principles. Let's hear something more practical!"

"We have experienced the threat posed by Austria firsthand, but what practical solution does mere discussion offer? Are we supposed to sit here and engage in empty rhetoric, expecting the problem to be solved?"

Certainly, one of the significant weaknesses of the Hungarian Republic is its lack of effective implementation. It is a common trait among republican nations to engage in constant bickering and disagreements.

Well, except perhaps Finland in later years, which could be seen as an exception. After a president's term expires, people seem to be too apathetic to bother with elections. If it weren't for constitutional restrictions, presidents could practically serve for a lifetime.

Currently, it seems that the Republic of Hungary has not reached its full potential. The level of awareness among its citizens is not very high. Since its inception, the republican government has been plagued by significant internal conflicts and contradictions.

Even now, there are still many people who oppose the separation from Austria. Despite the imminent conflict, they are reluctant to remove the crown of the Habsburg dynasty.

The revolutionary party led by Kossuth, lacking any governing experience, faced numerous issues as soon as they came to power. The chaotic political agenda was a major factor contributing to the deteriorating situation.

From the perspective of the Hungarian nation, Kossuth was a great defender of national interests. However, from the standpoint of other Hungarian minority groups, he was seen as an oppressor of their ethnic rights.

Under the influence of extreme nationalism, the Hungarian revolution from the very beginning found itself in opposition to the domestic minority groups, while the Austrian government portrayed itself as the protector of these minorities.

What's even more tragic is that during this era, the Hungarian nation was narrow-minded, segregating the numerous serfs, workers, and impoverished people from the hundreds of thousands of nobles, capitalists, and middle class.

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Regardless of how it is portrayed, the Hungarian Republic government has failed to consider the interests of the lower-class population. The highly concerning issue of serfdom has remained unresolved and neglected.

The laws of the republic are treated as toilet paper by the nobles and capitalists, while the weak republican government is powerless to stop it.

Speeches and inspiring people are Kossuth's strengths, but when it comes to concrete issues, things become troublesome. He went from being a critic to suddenly becoming a policy maker, and he has yet to fully adjust to this new role.

Furrowing his brow, Kossuth bravely spoke up, "Duke Leopold, the most important task now is to organize the army and suppress those rebel elements. We cannot allow this situation to continue deteriorating."

For the Hungarian Republic, it is indeed a betrayal that these regional governments have aligned themselves with Austria.

Unfortunately, they don't see it that way themselves. The majority of people consider the Hungarian Republic to be traitors, and they view their allegiance to the Austrian Emperor as the rightful path.

Duke Leopold sneered, "If that's the case, why doesn't the government deploy the troops sooner? If they had acted immediately, the situation wouldn't have deteriorated to this extent!"

As members of the high nobility, they have indeed suffered heavy losses. The Austrian government seized a significant amount of their land with a single stroke.

Behind the scenes, they have also had communication with the Austrian government. However, under Franz's leadership, the Cabinet strongly disapproved of their actions during the Hungarian rebellion and outright rejected their demands for property protection.

Without their landed estates, is there still a distinction between the high nobility and the minor nobility? It should be noted that their influence on the country is primarily built upon this land.

A major noble family, with control over tens of thousands or even millions of hectares of land and a large number of serfs, holds tremendous power. They have the capacity to assemble armies consisting of thousands or even tens of thousands of individuals at their disposal. This vast wealth and military force serve as the foundation of their authority and confidence.

At this moment, it is natural for Leopold to feel discontent towards the Kossuth government. If it weren't for this revolution, they would still be the privileged high-ranking nobility, untouched by the winds of change. Unlike the present situation, where they are constantly at risk of being knocked down.

Kossuth also has his subordinates, and at this moment, the Minister of War, Liszt, spoke up: "Your Grace, you should be aware that military preparations take time, and we must also consider the influence of the Austrian government. If we were to take military action without adequate preparation, it could potentially invite military strikes from Austria, and it would be difficult for us to achieve victory in a situation where we are caught off guard!"

His explanation was regarded with disdain by many, as the so-called military preparations remained only on paper until now. The revolutionary party also harbored distrust towards the nobility.

After the establishment of the Hungarian Republic, Kossuth appointed a large number of "commoner generals."

Not all commoner generals were overlooked talents, but the majority of them indeed lacked sufficient capabilities. Their military knowledge and skills were not significantly better than those of the noble officers.

Such a situation cannot be resolved in a short period of time; leading troops into battle requires years of cultivation from an early age.

In Europe, only the noble aristocracy had a comprehensive system for military talent development, so until the 20th century, most renowned European generals came from noble families.

Under the Austrian System, the European continent enjoyed relative peace for several decades. Without actual combat experiences, even if there were exceptionally talented commoner generals, they lacked the opportunity to grow and flourish.

In Hungarian history, due to the lack of competent leaders, they sought the assistance of seasoned Polish commanders, which further deepened the divide between the Hungarian nobility and the republican government.

Even now, the Hungarian Republic refrains from taking military action. On one hand, they fear provoking the Austrian government, and on the other hand, there is a lack of trust between the revolutionary party and the aristocracy.

Chapter 73: Hungary's Financial Struggles

Leopold sneered and asked, "So, is the reason for calling us here today just to listen to a speech? I must admit that Mr. Kossuth's speech was impressive, but we've all heard this kind of speech before. How about trying something different?"

Kossuth's face turned dark and dreadful. He couldn't possibly say that he had previously doubted their loyalty and suspected them of being potential traitors. Now that the Austrian government has seized their lands, they are all in the same boat.

Everyone knows these things deep down, and it's better to leave them unsaid. If we break through that thin veneer, how can we continue to coexist?

Don't be fooled into thinking that these aristocrats, despite appearing to have suffered significant losses and a blow to their prestige, are now weak and vulnerable to be easily taken advantage of. In reality, their power and influence remain formidable.

"Duke, enough!"

"Austria has already raised its sword, and now what we need is unity. If you want to hold someone accountable, I can resign from my position. Gentlemen, whoever believes they have the capability to lead Hungary out of this predicament, I am willing to step down from the presidency and let a more capable individual take the helm!"

In anger, Kossuth simply threw down the gauntlet. The people present couldn't help but have a drastic change in their expressions. Being the President of the Hungarian Republic at this time was not an easy task, and at least Duke Leopold had no interest in it.

Everyone knows that being the President of the Hungarian Republic is not an easy job. In history, after the Austrian government decided to suppress the rebellion by force, the Hungarian government closed its doors, and then the revolutionary party led by Kossuth came to power.

Under the butterfly effect of Franz, the current situation in the Hungarian Republic is even worse, and no one wants to be the scapegoat. That's why Kossuth became the leader.

Due to his low popularity, Kossuth does not hold much prestige within the government, and many nobles do not regard him highly.

Seemingly childish in his act of defiance, it can also be seen as Kossuth's way of resistance.

Regardless of Kossuth's shortcomings and politically naive views, he is one of the founding figures of the Hungarian nation.

Sensing the unfavorable situation, another representative, Count Thallóczy, a nobleman, stood up and shifted the topic of discussion.

"Alright, let's not dwell on the past anymore. The urgent matter at hand is to think about how to deal with the current situation. We need to make a decision on whether to fight or seek peace!"

The "war or peace" debate is undoubtedly led by the revolutionary party headed by Kossuth. Most of these individuals are idealists and young university students, while the weak nobles and capitalists lean towards seeking peace.

Kossuth's face turned grim as he said, "Do we still need to consider this? The Vienna government is already moving to dismantle Hungary. Even if we can reach an agreement with Austria, Hungary will be left with less than 35% of its territory and less than 40% of its population. With such a diminished Hungary, if we remain under Austria, we won't even be able to maintain our current status. Are we going to sit idly by and watch the Austrians exploit us day after day?"

Kossuth also realized that he had been too naive in the past. Due to the opposition of the nobility, he couldn't resolve the land issue, and due to the opposition of emerging capitalists, he couldn't address the national question.

Indeed, the disastrous national policy of the Hungarian Republic was a result of the concerns of the emerging bourgeoisie regarding competition.

This has been confirmed in the Austrian Empire, where due to political advantages, almost all industries in the country were controlled by Germans. Hungarian capitalists also survived through tariffs and local protectionism.

Now that it's their turn to take charge, they naturally emulate this approach, as no capitalist can resist such temptation. In fact, they have even gone further and acted more excessively.

Under the impetus of self-interest, extreme nationalism has become the mainstream ideology in Hungary, which has caused great dissatisfaction among other ethnic minorities within the country. After the olive branch was extended by the Austrian government, everyone decisively changed sides.

Kossuth's words awakened the emerging bourgeoisie. For the sake of their own interests and survival, they had no choice but to support the government and engage in war with Austria. Only by winning the war could they obtain everything they desired.

Although the chances of victory were low, they had already boarded the ship. The Austrian government might show some leniency towards the nobility, but there was no reason for them to spare the capitalists.

Throughout history, both past and present, the notion of "no merchant without deceit" has been deeply ingrained in people's minds. Killing the deceitful businessmen is considered the politically correct action.

I'm sorry, but as the earliest capitalists, they couldn't get any darker. They are the epitome of unscrupulous capitalists described in history books. Eliminating them not only brings wealth but also helps win the support of the people.

"Mr. Kossuth, Hungary is now surrounded by enemies on all sides. How should we wage this war?" Count Thallóczy asked with concern.

Undoubtedly, Count Thallóczy was deliberate in his words. As a prominent Hungarian aristocrat, he had no fear of any retribution from the Austrian government.

As long as the Habsburg family remained in control of Austria, they would not dare to harm the noble families. This was the advantage of having many relatives in influential positions.

Without the pressure for survival, the concerns of the major nobles differ from those of the capitalists. Their main objective is to limit the damage.

After speaking, Count Thallóczy opened a map that had been prepared in advance. The map clearly marked the position of Hungary, sandwiched between the three major powers of Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and Austria.

Undoubtedly, Hungary found itself surrounded by enemies. Russia and Austria were allies, and the Russian government openly announced its intention to assist Austria and Prussia in suppressing the revolution. Although they may not be direct enemies, their actions and alliances positioned them as adversaries to Hungary.

"Currently, we are facing a stronger enemy, but they also have their vulnerabilities. The Austrian government is currently engaged in warfare with the Kingdom of Italy, and that presents an opportunity for us," Kossuth proposed what he believed to be a reasonable plan.

Indeed, in theory, this does present an opportunity, a straightforward military strategy of picking off the enemies one by one.

However, Duke Leopold shook his head and sighed, saying, "Mr. Kossuth, this strategy lacks practical feasibility in military terms. The enemy is not foolish; they will not give us the luxury of time to pick them off one by one."

Kossuth chuckled and said, "Your Grace, as long as we have sufficient forces to hold off the enemy from other directions, it will suffice. Austria may be powerful, but it is also fragile. Once we achieve a victory, it will trigger a chain reaction, and the revolution will erupt once again!"

Everyone understood that Kossuth had circled around to the same point - it was all about money in the end!

Chapter 74: War Tax

To have a sufficient military force, besides expanding the army, are there any other choices? Expanding the army naturally requires money.

Since its establishment, the financial situation of the Hungarian Republic has been teetering on the brink of bankruptcy.

The newly formed government has no idea how to manage finances. The tax revenues they managed to collect were quickly spent without any proper planning.

In this matter, Kossuth bears direct responsibility. It can be said that the newly formed Hungarian Republic has surpassed Austria in terms of corruption.

This issue can be compared to the situation after the Xinhai Revolution in the Republic of China, where in the absence of a stable new order following the collapse of the old order, officials in positions of power became even more unrestrained.

"Mr. Kossuth, the government has already imposed two war taxes this year!" reminded Count Thallóczy.

Hungary's taxation has always been dependent on hidden dealings. During the period when the decaying aristocracy controlled the government, there were often various chaotic taxes, making life difficult for the people.

Originally, it was expected that after independence, everyone would be able to live a better life. However, the reality turned out to be the opposite. Without the "exploitation by the Austrians," their lives became even more difficult.

The new republican government has granted greater autonomy to local authorities, and in their eyes, any government elected is presumed to be righteous and upright.

However, reality often differs from ideals. Hungary has followed the example of the United States, where not only the central government has the right to levy taxes but also local governments have the same authority.

In simple terms, the number of tax-collecting bodies has increased without any effective oversight. Officials take advantage of this situation to amass wealth, and even certain local governments have devised numerous confusing and burdensome tax categories.

Of course, these convoluted taxes are not applicable to the nobility, nor do the capitalists have to bear their burden. It is the common people who end up paying the price for these taxes.

However, the war tax is an exception where even the nobility and capitalists are required to contribute. It's not just about the obligation to pay, but the issue lies in the excessive frequency of these tax collections, which makes it difficult for everyone to accept.

How long has the Hungarian Republic been established? Even if we include the pre-establishment preparations, it's barely been three months, right?

Within such a short period, two war taxes have already been imposed, and now they are proposing a third one. The enemy hasn't even arrived yet, and people are already burdened with excessive taxation.

Unlike capitalists who can find ways to evade taxes, the main industry of the nobles is land, which cannot be easily hidden. It's not easy for them to evade taxes.

"Yes, Your Lordship, the Count!"

"But the situation is beyond our control. According to the intelligence we have gathered, Austria can deploy up to 400,000 troops to wage war against us, while our National Guard is less than 300,000.

Moreover, their forces are well-trained regular soldiers, while our army consists mainly of recently laid-off workers or farmers who have set aside their tools. We rely solely on our passion and determination.

The disparity between the two sides is immense. Without an equal number of troops, we simply have no chance of winning this war!" Kossuth argued fervently.

Well, the situation of the Hungarian National Guard is actually worse than he described because the ordinary soldiers don't possess that passionate determination he mentioned.

Even the number of soldiers doesn't exceed 300,000. The National Guard is nothing more than an improvised organization with lax control over its subordinates. After deductions at each level, there simply isn't enough money to sustain such a large force.

However, it doesn't matter. When there are policies, there are always countermeasures. In this regard, capitalists are the most experienced. Influenced by what they've seen and heard, the military officers from bourgeois backgrounds quickly came up with a deceptive strategy.

Apart from recruiting a few people to maintain appearances, the rest can just be names on paper. If there's an inspection from above, they can temporarily pull in some people to make up the numbers. After all, everyone at every level has received benefits, and no one dares to expose this fragile facade.

Among all the military forces in Hungary, the only ones with actual combat capabilities are the student militias. They are the true revolutionaries, fighting for national independence. The rest, including Kossuth, are no longer pure revolutionaries.

"Mr. Kossuth, I believe it is necessary for the government to disclose its financial expenditures. The republican government has only recently been established, and you have already spent the equivalent of a year's normal expenses for the Hungarian government!

If the government's spending continues to be this high, perhaps we don't need to wait for the Austrians to act. You will have already destroyed the new government yourselves!" warned Duke Leopold sternly.

This is an embarrassing issue, and Kossuth's face turned grim. Everyone knows that the new government has significant financial expenses, and in the past, he used war as an excuse.

But if the war hasn't even started yet, and the expenses are already this high, what will they do if it really breaks out?

International loans? Dream on. No financial institution dares to lend them money. It would mean borrowing without repayment, and Austria is also a major power that wouldn't recognize treaties signed by these insurgents.

Apart from that, the only option left is to increase taxes. But that's not a good solution either. It can't solve internal problems, and no matter how much money is poured in, it won't fill this bottomless pit.

"Yes, the government can disclose its financial expenditure for public oversight. However, we are currently facing financial difficulties and need a sum of money to overcome the crisis.

This time, the government won't take this money for free. We will issue bonds and allow everyone to subscribe to them. The annual interest rate will be set at 7%, and the initial issuance will be 200 million shields (equivalent to 11.69 grams of silver).

If the bonds do not sell out, then we will have to impose another round of war taxes."

Kossuth chose to compromise. He still needed the support of these people at this moment. Without the cooperation of the nobility, imposing taxes would be futile. Therefore, making appropriate concessions was a feasible approach.

The Kossuth government lacked governing experience, and some people suggested that the government should issue its own currency. After tasting the benefits of currency issuance, the cash-strapped republican government resorted to printing money in an attempt to alleviate the financial crisis.

However, reality harshly taught Kossuth a lesson. Without sufficient reserves in hand, relying solely on the government's credibility to issue currency turned it into worthless paper.

After the failed currency issuance, the Hungarian Republic was plunged into a financial crisis, paving the way for a path of increasing taxes.

Chapter 75: War Is Meant to Serve Politics

Kossuth, not being an economist, and the senior officials of the republican government lacking economic acumen themselves, have never truly pondered the significance of 200 million shields for Hungary!

Their ignorance does not imply that everyone present is equally clueless. Representative Howell from the banking consortium directly confronted them, asking:

“Mr. Kossuth, do you know what 200 million shields signify?”

This question caught Kossuth off guard. While he had anticipated that the aristocrats and big capitalists would haggle, he did not expect them to ask this question.

In terms of currency value, 1 shield is approximately equivalent to 11.69 grams of silver. So 200 million shields would be equivalent to 46.76 million taels of silver. In this era, silver has not depreciated in value, so when converted to pounds, it would still be over 20 million pounds. (The gold-silver ratio is around 1:10.)

In 1847, Austria's fiscal revenue was only 155 million shields (excluding Hungary), and the fiscal revenue of the British was just over 50 million pounds.

Prior to the revolution, it was considered quite good for Hungary to have a fiscal revenue of 100 million shields. However, after the establishment of the republic, they quickly depleted this entire fortune of 100 million shields.

These funds were mainly obtained through the sale of a large number of state-owned assets, along with government-imposed taxes. This included the assets of the emperor and the public property owned by the nation.

This question hasn't been raised before because everyone here is a beneficiary, having acquired industries at low prices. No one would refuse money that comes knocking on their door.

Not being aware is not a problem either. Thick skin is a key attribute of politicians. If one still cares about their reputation, then they shouldn't be a politician, especially in a republican country.

"Of course, 200 million shields is indeed a significant figure, but for everyone present here, it's not beyond their means!" Kossuth calmly replied.

Indeed, for everyone present, not to mention 200 million shields, even if it were increased three or fivefold, they would still be able to afford it.

Being able to afford and being willing to contribute are two different concepts. No one is willing to dig into their own pockets and give away their money, no matter how high the interest rate may be. The fear of borrowing without repayment is hard to overcome.

Considering the speed at which the new government is spending money, no amount of funds can fill this bottomless pit. This is also why many revolutionary governments around the world have failed.

Idealistic governments often have grand ambitions, but they end up achieving very little, while draining the resources of the nation in the process.

"Mr. Kossuth, when you were in school, you probably didn't do well in economics. Please take the trouble to find out how much currency is circulating in the Hungarian market and then answer this question!" Howell mocked.

Having wealth does not necessarily mean having an equal amount of currency. In reality, there are limitations on the currency circulating in the market. If there is too much circulating currency, it will depreciate, and if there is too little, a financial crisis may occur.

From an economic perspective, suddenly withdrawing 200 million shields from Hungary would trigger a monetary crisis, followed by a bank run, financial crises, and eventually, the Great Depression.

In this era, unlike later times where everyone used credit currency and could directly transfer money through banks, buying bonds required cash. It was not a matter of whether they wanted to spend the money or not, but rather that it was simply impossible for them to come up with the cash.

(Information: In 1848, Austria's national savings amounted to 48 million shields, while the United Kingdom had 28.2 million pounds (1 pound \approx 9.6 shields).

There is no doubt that Kossuth has embarrassed himself this time, or one could say that his team is inexperienced and has made such a glaring mistake.

Of course, there are many others who have made similar mistakes. It is a common trait among those who talk big but often have a narrow perspective when considering issues.

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Before Kossuth could resolve the financial issues, the war had already begun.

On May 8, 1848, the Austrian army from the province of Croatia launched the first attack on the Hungarian Republic.

On May 9, the Austrian armies from Bohemia and Transylvania also initiated attacks on the Hungarian Republic.

On May 10th, the anti-rebellion army led by Albrecht arrived at the frontlines, and the Austro-Hungarian War broke out in full force.

Adding fuel to the fire did not work, and Kossuth's prediction proved true this time. Four armies launched simultaneous attacks, and if logistical transport units were included, the total military force truly exceeded four hundred thousand.

However, only half of the troops were actually committed to the offensive, and even with that, the Hungarian Republic couldn't hold on.

Vienna.

The Hungarian battlefield was full of good news. Under absolute strength, it was not possible to reverse the unfavorable situation by shouting slogans.

In order to ensure victory, Franz also used the need of the overall situation as an excuse to transfer back the commander-in-chief of the Bohemian army, Prince Windisch-Grätz, to serve as the Minister of War, and replaced him with Julius as the commander-in-chief.

Prince Windisch-Grätz took up the command baton and confidently pointed and gestured on a map hanging on the wall, saying:

"Your Majesty, Governor Jelačić's Croatian Corps has already reached Lake Balaton and captured the fortress of Kalocsa.

General Albrecht's Austrian Corps is currently attacking Komárom.

General Julius's Bohemian Corps has just defeated the Hungarian People's Army and is now less than a hundred kilometers away from Budapest.

General Vécsey's Transylvanian Corps, due to transportation issues, is still in Debrecen at this time.

Overall, so far, this campaign against the rebellion has been progressing very smoothly. The Bohemian Corps has a force of one hundred thousand troops, and if everything goes well, we can launch the assault on Budapest as early as the day after tomorrow."

He had reasons to be proud as this war was conducted under his leadership. However, due to the limitations of communication during this era, the Army Headquarters could only establish a general strategy.

The specific tactics and execution are left to the commanders in the field, and they have some autonomy in following the military orders.

Regarding Prince Windisch-Grätz's military abilities, Franz didn't rush to draw conclusions. Although he had experienced defeat in suppressing the Hungarian rebellion in history, the operational plans he is currently devising are still feasible.

"The plan to attack Budapest is temporarily postponed. It is sufficient for General Julius to contain the enemy and wait for the Austrian Army to join forces with them before launching the offensive!"

Don't underestimate the Hungarian insurgents. In history, it was the Austrian army that ultimately met with failure and had to seek assistance from the Russians to resolve the situation.

At least the strongest fighting force in the Hungarian Republic, the Student Army, has not yet appeared on the battlefield.

Franz is also unsure about the current public sentiment in the Hungarian Republic. If the government has the full support of the people, then Budapest will become a battleground.

"Your Majesty, the rebels are nothing more than a disorganized mob. Within a week, we can capture Budapest and suppress this rebellion!" said Prince Windisch-Grätz, passionately, as if accusing Franz of interfering in military affairs and delaying the opportunity.

Franz calmly explained, "Your Highness, the military serves the political agenda. War is merely a means to an end, not the end itself."

Chapter 76: Desperate Times Call For Desperate Measures

"War is meant to serve politics" - this was the best excuse Franz came up with. He couldn't simply say that he was worried about history repeating itself. The Hungarians suddenly erupted and pushed back the Bohemian army?

No one would believe this. The Bohemian army had 100,000 troops. Even if it were halved, there would still be 50,000 regular troops. How many Hungarian troops are there in Budapest now?

The Hungarian Republic may have a considerable number of military forces on paper, the reality is that Kossuth's ability to mobilize active troops is severely limited. While various local governments have their own National Guard units, many of them are understaffed or vacant.

The Kossuth government has managed to gather some of the retreating soldiers from the front lines, bringing the total military force in Budapest to 80,000 on paper. However, with an average of only two to three soldiers per rifle and a complete lack of morale, how much combat effectiveness can these units truly have?

Prince Windisch-Grätz, who was a soldier as well as a politician, naturally would not refute this statement.

"Your Majesty, could it be that the government has some plan?"

Franz smiled and replied, "Your Highness, have you forgotten about the Italian front?"

Prince Windisch-Grätz nodded, acknowledging that while he didn't consider the Kingdom of Sardinia a major threat, he wouldn't refuse an easier victory in the war.

With Austria's main forces fully deployed, the Hungarian Republic is on the brink of collapse. If the Kingdom of Sardinia does not attack Venice soon, they may face not just 100,000 Austrian troops, but possibly 200,000 or even 300,000.

They cannot afford any more delays. Suppressing the Hungarian rebellion is an internal campaign, and the Habsburg family has managed to avoid widespread grievances within the realm. It is only with a solid base of public support that they can sustain a war of this scale.

"Order the frontline units to proceed steadily and advance step by step, leaving no room for the enemy to exploit!" Franz added.

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The Kingdom of Hungary, with its vast expanse encompassing over three hundred thousand square kilometers, surpassed the future Hungarian Republic by more than triple its size.

At this juncture, two-thirds of the regions had already aligned themselves with the Austrian government. From a political standpoint, the Austrian government's previous political maneuvers had been remarkably successful.

The Bohemian Army, stationed closest to Budapest, had only a few dozen kilometers left to reach their destination. As for the Transylvanian Army, situated farthest away, they were no more than three hundred kilometers from the capital.

Since the outbreak of the war, the Hungarian government has been filled with anxiety, and many people have begun to regret their decisions.

The Austrian response has far exceeded their expectations. Normally, the usual course of action would involve dispatching the police initially to make arrests, followed by deploying a few thousand troops to quell the unrest after initial failures, and subsequently increasing reinforcements...

Nevertheless, the Hungarian Republic has placed its trust in a strategy of successive victories over Austria, exerting pressure on the Austrian government to acknowledge their independence. This

strategy draws inspiration from the American Revolutionary War, envisioning a Hungarian War of Independence.

Undoubtedly, there may be obstacles and failures along the path, yet ultimate triumph shall belong to the Hungarian Republic.

Truly, the apex of deception lies in deceiving oneself as well.

Indeed, they may not really be deceivers, but they have certainly woven such a grand dream. Without the existence of such a dream, they would not have been able to endure until now.

Regrettably, from the very beginning, the director seemed to have picked up the wrong script. What was supposed to be a novice dungeon for gaining experience suddenly turned into a hell raid. And they were supposed to fight the BOSS when they were merely at Level 0?

Budapest.

Driven by the circumstances, Kossuth found himself compelled to seek help from his greatest political adversary, Count István.

István Széchenyi, one of the prominent Hungarian aristocrats, stood as Hungary's greatest reformer, commanding immense respect within the country.

Diverging from Kossuth's reliance on oratory skills, István was a man of action, having made remarkable contributions in the fields of education, transportation, culture, politics, and economy. He was hailed as the greatest figure in Hungarian history, known for his pragmatic approach and tangible achievements.

It has been proven that pragmatists, despite their effectiveness, are overshadowed by eloquent orators, which is why the Hungarian Republic came into existence, as István remained loyal to the emperor and opposed any violent revolution.

In the realm of politics, István believed that any economic, political, and social reforms must be carried out slowly and cautiously to avoid unforeseen consequences.

While Kossuth advocated for the establishment of a rapidly industrialized nation, István advocated for preserving the traditional strength of agriculture and continuing along the path of an agricultural nation.

The biggest conflict between them arose in the realm of ethnic issues. István believed that Hungary was a multi-ethnic country, where people were divided by language, culture, and religion. He considered the implementation of nationalism to be highly dangerous.

He believed that Hungary needed gradual progress in terms of economy, society, and culture from the beginning, and opposed excessive radicalism and nationalism.

Indeed, the facts have proven that Kossuth's implementation of nationalism was unsuccessful, as the Austrian government easily managed to sow division within Hungary.

Helpless, Kossuth had no choice but to seek assistance from his former political rival.

"Count, for the future of the 13 million people of the Hungarian Republic, I implore you to step forward!" he pleaded.

István shook his head and, after a pause, finally spoke, “Your Hungarian Republic doesn't have over 13 million people. It may not even have half a million. The rest are subjects of His Majesty, Emperor Ferdinand!”

The invisible pretense was exposed, as István directly pinpointed the true reason behind the Hungarian Republic's plight.

Due to the government's implementation of radical nationalist policies, the minority groups in the Hungarian Republic chose to remain loyal to the emperor.

The republican government failed to address the issue of land ownership, leading the peasants to pledge their loyalty to the emperor. Similarly, the government neglected the interests of the working class, causing them to align themselves with the emperor.

In the end, only the capitalists and nobles remained. Undoubtedly, a significant portion of them remained loyal to the emperor, while the true supporters of the Hungarian Republic were few in number.

“Your Excellency, now that the Hungarian Republic has been established and the Austrian army is about to attack, can you bear to watch Hungary meet its doom?” Kossuth angrily questioned.

István calmly replied, “Mr. Kossuth, there's no use in saying such things. I joined the military at the age of 17 and participated in the anti-French war. I served in the army for 18 years before retiring. I have a better understanding of military affairs than you do. From a military standpoint, I don't see any possibility of victory. Tell me, what can I do now?”

Of course, if you are ready to give up independence and negotiate with the Austrian government, that's a different story!”

Kossuth's face turned dark and terrifying. Although deep down he acknowledged István's words, he couldn't admit it openly.

As the head of the Hungarian Republic, he had no other choice apart from fighting to the bitter end. In reality, his only option was to face them until the end, as engaging in negotiations meant the end of his political career.

Chapter 77: The Liberators of Hungary

The accompanying Hungarian patriotic poet and one of the leaders of the Hungarian revolution, Petőfi, couldn't help but speak up.

“Lord Count, are you just going to stand by and watch Hungary fall apart? Even if the chances of success are low, you can't do nothing, can you?”

For God's sake, at a time like this, you must do something for this country!”

István sighed and shook his head. “I only regret not stopping you. If I had been firmer back then, perhaps this situation wouldn't have arisen.

You're right, I do need to do something now, but it's not about joining the government. Please don't rush to refuse, let me finish what I have to say.

When it comes to military command, I am just an average person. Both Duke Leopold and Marquis L?rinc are far more capable than I am. Regarding military matters, I suggest you seek their assistance.

As for propaganda skills, Kossuth, you are much better than me. I don't need to help in that regard. The only advantage I have is self-awareness. I won't meddle in government affairs.

My role is to mediate and coordinate the ethnic relations. At this point, Kossuth, you should put away your damn nationalist theories!"

Kossuth was infuriated to the point of nearly losing control. If it weren't for István's support being indispensable at this moment, he feared he would be unable to resist the urge to go up and give him a beating.

This guy is just so annoying. Not only does he come up with rotten ideas, but he also constantly rubs salt into people's wounds.

If there were any other choice, Kossuth wouldn't want to pursue nationalism either, but his supporters wouldn't agree!

The capitalists need cheap labor, and the majority of people who are excluded from the gates of power are the cheap labor left for the capitalists.

Indeed, Kossuth's nationalism doesn't just exclude ethnic minorities, but rather the entire lower class. Aside from the 500-600 thousand capitalists, nobles, and middle class, everyone else is a target for oppression.

Of course, on the surface, this division only excludes ethnic minorities, while Hungarians are excluded based on factors such as wealth, titles, and cultural level.

In theory, these people have the possibility of obtaining political rights, but the prerequisite is that you must first become wealthy. Once you've amassed wealth, you will then have political rights.

Other than that, forget about it. Nobility is something you're born into, predetermined from the moment you're born. Access to cultural knowledge isn't something poor folks can afford. Without money, how can you afford to study? Hungary doesn't have compulsory education.

The high-ranking members of the revolutionary party, including Sándor Pet?fi, who came from the lowest background, were not truly at the bottom of society. At the very least, they had the economic means to afford an education.

Pet?fi's mother was a serf who served as a maid for the nobility, belonging to the knowledgeable household servants. His father was a butcher, a small capitalist with economic acumen.

In the novel "Romance of the Three Kingdoms," Hé Jìn was also a butcher. Why doesn't anyone mention that his family monopolized the meat supply in most of Nanyang County?

One's position determines their standpoint. Perhaps they sympathize with the plight of the lower class, but their class position dictates that they cannot sacrifice their own interests for the sake of the lower class.

From István's perspective as a high-ranking aristocrat, it is only natural for him to seek assistance on military matters from fellow aristocrats such as Duke Leopold and Marquis L?rinc, who also come from noble backgrounds.

However, for Kossuth, this is seen as walking into a trap. Given the current dire situation, who can guarantee that these aristocrats won't switch sides?

Even if the Austrian government encroached upon their estates, there is still a possibility of compromise between the two sides, likely revolving around the price. The nobility naturally leans towards a monarchic form of government, and this class-based stance is unlikely to change.

Once the objective was achieved, Kossuth had no intention of enduring further hardships. He hasn't even had a sip of water and doesn't expect István to provide him with food either.

"Mr. Kossuth, what should we do now?" asked Pet?fi with anticipation.

There was no way around it. Kossuth was unreliable, and Pet?fi was even worse. His talent lies in writing poetry, with notable works such as "Song of the Nation" and "Against the King".

"Life is precious, love is even more valuable. But if it's for the sake of freedom, both can be sacrificed!"

He is the originator of this phrase, which has gained popularity among intellectuals. However, he also exhibits typical traits of an artsy person, lacking practical experience.

There was no way around it. Sándor Pet?fi, born in 1823, was just 25 years old now. It was a great pressure to expect him to concern himself with the fate of a whole nation.

"I have already sent someone to contact the Kingdom of Sardinia. Now we can only hope that they will defeat the Austrian army in Venice as quickly as possible and force the Austrians to divert their forces."

Kossuth did not mention the matter of seeking assistance from the Ottomans. It was still too sensitive to reveal, especially in front of Pet?fi, as he would surely oppose it.

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Bohemian Army.

After receiving the orders from Vienna, Julius found himself in a state of confusion. Budapest was within reach, yet he was not allowed to launch an attack, which seemed highly unreasonable.

A young staff officer voiced his dissatisfaction and asked, "Commander, what does this imply domestically? Why aren't we allowed to attack Budapest? Are they planning to resolve the situation through negotiations at this critical moment?"

"This question, you can only ask the Austrian government. Perhaps the Army Headquarters might have some information as well. Our duty is to simply follow orders!" Julius pondered for a moment before responding.

His greatest strength lay in his ability to wholeheartedly carry out the tasks assigned by his superiors. Even if doubts lingered in his mind, he would not let them affect his mission.

"But, Commander, does that mean we have nothing to do now?" another young officer complained, expressing his dissatisfaction.

Not having any battles means there are no military achievements. Among the four main Austrian armies, the Bohemian Army has the most favorable geographical position, with Budapest within close proximity. If they can capture it, they will achieve great merit.

The Chief of Staff, Jelačić, spoke calmly, “Do you all feel bored without any battles to fight? Well, then, go and spread propaganda slogans for me. Start by establishing military control over the surrounding areas and liberating the serfs. That's also part of our mission this time!”

Indeed, Franz entrusted the task of liberating the serfs to the army. In these times, it's not easy to deal with the nobles, especially the Hungarian aristocracy who have grown accustomed to their privileges. Without resorting to force, their words hold little weight.

“Make sure to control your subordinates well. Our purpose here is to liberate Hungary and bring happiness to its people. Anyone who dares to violate military discipline will be executed!” sternly declared Julius.

As loyal hounds, their allegiance naturally lies with the Emperor. This time, they came as “liberators” to win the hearts of the Hungarian people on behalf of the Emperor. Upholding good military discipline was a good starting point.

Chapter 78: Emergence of Sensationalized Headlines

The Kingdom of Sardinia.

In order to defeat Austria, an alliance was reluctantly formed by Charles-Albert with the republican government that he detested the most. The Austro-Hungarian War had just broken out, and before they could even have a chance to celebrate, an urgent plea for help was received.

Upon receiving the plea for assistance from the Hungarians, Charles-Albert was filled with despair and an immediate roar escaped his lips:

“Damn it, are all these Hungarians useless? The war has just begun, and they are already on the verge of collapse.

Even if they have 300,000 National Guard troops, they might as well be 300,000 pigs. The Austrians won't be able to kill them all in such a short time!

Do the Hungarians have no courage to fight for their freedom at all?”

“Your Majesty, Hungary is a multiethnic country where, while striving for national independence, the Hungarian people have also oppressed other ethnic minorities.

The Austrians have managed to buy off these minority groups, and from the very beginning of the war, the Hungarian Republic has been on the losing side,” Prime Minister Azeglio explained helplessly.

On the surface, Hungary appears formidable, seemingly independent, while Austria's national strength has decreased significantly. Furthermore, with the alliance formed with the Kingdom of Sardinia, both sides seemed evenly matched.

However, it turns out that Hungary, despite its outward display of strength, is internally weak. Just as they fell out with Austria, two-thirds of their territory changed hands.

Apologies for the confusion. If "Liqi" is the name of the Minister, the corrected translation would be as follows:

“Useless!”

Charles-Albert angrily cursed, but it was unclear whether he was cursing Hungary or the Prime Minister.

“Minister Liqi, based on the current situation, how long do you think the Hungarians can hold on?”

The summoned Minister Liqi immediately replied, “Your Majesty, no one can answer that question. Currently, the Austrians are advancing rapidly, mainly because there are too many Hungarians who lean towards Austria. It can be said that it is not so much the defeat of the Hungarian National Guard troops by the Austrian forces but rather the voluntary surrender of the Hungarian people themselves.”

Charles-Albert’s face changed as he realized that if the Hungarian Republic were to be defeated, the situation on the Venice battlefield would be disastrous without them to hold back the main Austrian forces.

When the lips perish, the teeth feel the cold. Even though Charles-Albert felt that engaging in a sudden decisive battle with the Austrians in Venice might be unwise, the Kingdom of Sardinia had no other choice. They could not afford to lose the Hungarian Republic at this critical moment. They had to jump into this pit.

TN: When the lips perish, the teeth feel the cold is an idiom that expresses the idea of interdependence or mutual reliance. It suggests that when one entity or group is in trouble or faces a threat, it affects others connected to them as well.

Public opinion within the Kingdom of Sardinia was constantly pressuring the government to engage in a decisive battle with Austria. Charles-Albert was also influenced by this sentiment and has finally made up his mind.

“Order Marshal Badoer to expedite the operation. At all costs, we must occupy Venice before the Hungarian Republic collapses!”

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Frankfurt.

This city, known as the commercial capital of Germany, has become more vibrant with the arrival of delegates from various places. Discussions about this grand event can be heard in every street and corner.

Although the legitimacy of the Frankfurt Congress was still under scrutiny, the enthusiasm of the people remains undiminished.

The discussions regarding Greater Germany and Lesser Germany continued, with neither faction gaining the upper hand. Nevertheless, the participants remained eager and spirited in their deliberations.

As of now, besides Prussia openly supporting this conference, only a few free cities and small states have expressed their support.

Regardless of their support or lack thereof, representatives from all the states have arrived in Frankfurt. Some representatives were elected, while many others were appointed to represent their respective states.

The phrase “money knows no borders” was no joke. These capitalists, driven by the desire for the unification of the German region and the creation of a large market, have long abandoned their moral principles.

In the lodgings of the Austrian delegation, Lauter questioned with confusion, “Andersen, are all these people we met today elected representatives?”

“Probably so!” Andersen replied with uncertainty.

“But why do I feel like these worker representatives are more like hired thugs?” Lauter furrowed his brow and said.

“Perhaps they are supervisors in the factories. Why bother about it? As long as we have enough people, it’ll be fine. After all, weren’t we elected as well?” Andersen thought for a moment and said.

“Thugs can be considered supervisors, and supervisors are certainly workers too,” they said, exchanging a glance. They no longer held any expectations on this conference.

This is the social reality, whether it be for workers or farmers, even if they are elected as representatives, they still do not have the qualifications to participate in the conference, and they may not even have enough funds to cover their travel expenses.

The conference, orchestrated entirely by capitalists, how could they possibly surrender their dominant power? If they were to hold democratic elections, only fools would support them based on their favorable reputation.

Whitewashing and getting off the hook? That doesn’t exist. It was still the 19th century, and morally upright capitalists are as rare as phoenix feathers and unicorn horns. The social backdrop is dark, and even if you start off clean, you’ll be tainted.

They even believe that even if they don’t attend this conference, they’ll still be represented. With the capitalists’ lack of principles, they can easily carry out such actions without any pressure.

“Oh no, Mr. Andersen, the organizers have informed us that regions like Bohemia and Hungary do not belong to the German territories, and their representatives cannot participate in this conference.”

Andersen’s face changed, first expressing anger, then turning into delight. This was a perfect excuse handed to them on a silver platter, how could they not make use of it?

“Quick, spread this news to the newspapers and publish it. Describe the situation even more severely, emphasizing the arrogance of the organizers,” Andersen hurriedly instructed.

“Wait, I think we can add some more spice to it. Let's spread a rumor that the Prussians are controlling this conference with the intention of passing laws to annex all other states!” Lauter added.

“Since that's the case, let's go even further. Let's fabricate a rumor that the Prussians are planning to establish Protestantism as the official religion of Germany and use the constitution to ban the existence of Catholicism!” Andersen continued.

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Since they were all here to make trouble, they did not feel any pressure fabricating news. In this era, limited by communication, it was difficult to ascertain the truth.

In Vienna, Franz even formed an expert group specifically tasked with collecting information sent back from the front lines and creating topics to guide Austria in the desired direction.

By the time the Frankfurt Congress began, rumors had already spread throughout the German territories that the Prussians were attempting to annex other countries through this conference.

“Representatives of the working class with backgrounds as capitalist henchmen!”

“Representatives of the farmers who own a hundred thousand hectares of land!”

“Who elected these representatives?”

“Who granted the capitalists the right to run this country?”

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With the aid of artistic embellishment, sensationalized headlines boldly claimed the top spots on the front pages of mainstream European media, presenting images as the ultimate truth.

The truth became intertwined with rumors, making it challenging to discern what was real. Many people only believed what they personally witnessed, but the reality was harsh. The media's exposure of the capitalist's dark history was no different from what they observed.

The Frankfurt Congress undermined the authority of monarchs in various countries, and under Franz's leadership, they collectively ignited this battle of public opinion.

Chapter 79: The Dirtiest Congress

The Frankfurt Preparatory Committee, with their faces looking very grim, faced a strong protest from the Austrian delegation, who argued that the Austrian Empire should be considered as a unified entity.

The representatives at the Frankfurt Congress were allocated seats based on population. In theory, one representative was elected for every fifty thousand people. If the non-German-speaking regions were not excluded, this conference would become an exclusive platform for Austria.

During this period, the states of Schleswig-Holstein and Holstein still belonged to Denmark, while Austria also controlled parts of Italy. In terms of population, Austria surpassed the combined population of the smaller German-speaking regions.

The protests could be shrugged off since, after all, regions like Hungary did not belong to the German-speaking area, and they were not afraid of engaging in debates.

However, it was unexpected that the Austrian delegation would cleverly leak the information to the journalists, openly revealing the conference's hidden agenda.

Due to the influence of the Zollverein (German Customs Union), Prussia, the most industrially advanced among the German states, held significant influence among the capitalists. This conference indeed displayed a clear bias.

At this point, everyone understood that the Austrian delegation was deliberately causing disruptions. How can Austrians be excluded from participating in the conference?

Can this still be considered a preparatory parliament for Germany? I reckon the Austrian delegates would be delighted to leave. Originally, this parliament had very little legitimacy, and with a missing piece, it would become a laughingstock.

“Ladies and gentlemen, we must take action. The recent public opinion has been highly unfavorable to us. If it continues, the enemy's conspiracy will succeed!” said Merlin with seriousness.

The exposure of their dark history by the media did not raise their vigilance. After all, capitalists worldwide are cut from the same cloth. Who doesn't have a dark history?

Now their biggest concern was the trouble caused by the Austrian delegation. As the largest state in the German region, Austria often plays the role of the leading figure.

Regardless of their willingness, Austria's influence among the German states is enormous. A parliament without Austria's participation would never gain public acceptance.

“Then why don't we just change the name to ‘Lesser German Congress’ and kick the Austrians out!” proposed a representative from Prussia.

“Impossible! Winstor, you're trying to divide the Great German Empire. If it's just the Lesser German Congress, then we will withdraw too!” objected the representative from Bavaria.

The main purpose of this congress was to expand the political influence of the bourgeoisie. Unifying the German territories was actually secondary, and the Frankfurt Congress was not as historically significant as described in books.

Otherwise, even the Kingdom of Prussia wouldn't recognize this conference. It has become excessively idealistic, expanding the rights of capitalists without any feasibility.

The interests of capitalists are not the same. Capitalists from different regions and industries often have diverging interests.

Establishing a smaller German Empire aligns with the interests of capitalists in northern Germany. As they can avoid competition from Austrian capitalists.

However, it's different for many capitalists in southern Germany, especially in the Kingdom of Bavaria. The local economy has close ties with Austria, and severing those ties would be a disaster for them.

Due to the protests from the Austrian delegation, the conference hasn't even started yet, so the option of resolving issues through voting doesn't exist. If they lose the support of representatives from southern Germany, there would be no point in continuing this conference.

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The bourgeoisie are naturally inclined to compromise. After a week of arguments, they finally reached a compromise. They agreed to let representatives from Bohemia and Hungary join the congress, but with some limits on their quotas.

They set a maximum limit for the number of representatives from each state. No state could have more than 200 representatives. Only Austria and Prussia had that many.

Of course, there will be more squabbles to come. Austria and Prussia, being the biggest states in Germany, will definitely want equal status.

The Austrian delegation, led by Andersen, was determined to cause trouble. How could they possibly back down?

They insisted that Austria must have the most representative seats. After all, Austria had the largest population, and in those days there were no professional statistics to accurately determine how many German-speaking people were in the Austrian region.

The Prussian delegates, who wanted to attain equal status with Austria, naturally refused. It was known that this congress was orchestrated by an internal interest group in Prussia with the aim of excluding Austria.

Under Andersen's leadership, the Austrian delegation engaged in a tug-of-war that quickly escalated into a territorial conflict between North and South Germany, involving all the representatives.

The dispute continued until June, and the Austrian delegation gradually found themselves at a disadvantage. However, it didn't matter much, as by this time the scandal-ridden Frankfurt Congress had become a joke.

The Vienna Daily described it as a "feast of capitalists" and even featured an illustration of a group of overweight capitalists wielding knives and forks while slaughtering a cow.

The Neue Rheinische Zeitung (New Rhenish Newspaper) published an article by Engels strongly criticizing the Frankfurt Congress, mocking it as a "conference for the distribution of interests among capitalists."

The Munich Post even conducted a series of reports on the Frankfurt Congress, providing detailed profiles of all the attending members. Undoubtedly, the focus was on exposing their dark histories.

In the end, this conference was described as the "dirtiest congress in history," and there was no way to whitewash it. All the representatives who attended the conference were tainted. This included

scholars, civil servants, and members of society, with no exceptions. Electoral fraud was the biggest stain on their history.

For example, a certain representative was elected with 30,000 votes, but there were fewer than a hundred participants in the voting. In another case, in a certain region, there was only one candidate in the election, who was automatically elected with all the votes...

In summary, it was electoral fraud. This election lasted less than a week from start to finish, and in many places, there was not even enough time to transmit information, let alone prevent manipulation.

Experts and scholars formed groups to criticize the election from a technical standpoint. For example, newspapers reported that the elections were held in a certain location, and the next day the voting began, leaving no time for proper preparation.

Countless surveys showed that 90% of Germans were unaware of the elections, and 99% of people did not participate in them.

At this point, Franz no longer needed to intervene. The representatives who participated in the conference were heavily criticized from head to toe, and many couldn't withstand the pressure of public opinion, voluntarily withdrawing from the conference.

The assembly persisted until July, but due to changes in the political situation and internal and external challenges, this spontaneously organized bourgeois conference collapsed.

Chapter 80: Winds of Change

After the triumph of the bourgeois revolution, the situation in Europe did not improve; on the contrary, it deteriorated further.

The capitalist class, who had just seized power, swiftly revealed their greedy nature even before firmly establishing their rule.

The newly formed bourgeois governments not only failed to deliver on their previous promises but also intensified the exploitation of the lower classes.

Where there is oppression, there is resistance, and thus, the workers' and peasants' movements started to thrive.

Before Marshal Radetzky withdrew from Lombardy, he requisitioned a large amount of food. After the Kingdom of Sardinia occupied the region, Milan suffered from a food shortage. In order to gather provisions, they borrowed a portion of food from the local population as an emergency measure.

Borrowing and repaying seemed easy enough.

However, the Kingdom of Sardinia appeared to forget about repaying the borrowed provisions, which sparked discontent among the local population.

That was not the end of it. To raise funds for the war, the Kingdom of Sardinia started levying war taxes.

After successive increases by the bureaucrats, the amount of war taxes had already exceeded the capacity of the lower-class population to bear.

On April 21, 1848, unable to cope with the exorbitant taxes, the peasants in Brianza revolted, and the uprising quickly spread to regions like Salerno and Calabria.

The rebel forces occupied noble estates, seized granaries, and distributed food among the common people. They set fire to loan documents and paperwork, and in some places, even redistributed land.

The actions of the peasant uprising instilled fear in the capitalists and nobles. The Lombard government swiftly deployed troops to forcefully suppress the rebellion. This spontaneous uprising of the peasant class was quelled within a week.

The peasant uprising was just the beginning. After the occupation of Milan by the Kingdom of Sardinia, prices began to skyrocket. Taking bread as an example, its price surged by a staggering 74% from March to early May.

Capitalists seized this opportunity to profit from the national crisis, while the impoverished lower-class population struggled to make ends meet. This deeply hurt many of the supporters of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

On April 25, organized by the Workers' Mutual Aid Society, over 5,000 workers in Milan took to the streets, petitioning the interim government appointed by the Kingdom of Sardinia to address soaring prices and safeguard workers' rights.

During this era, there were no comprehensive laws protecting workers' rights. The best they had was the "Labour Protection Law" enacted by the Austrian government, along with its associated legislation.

However, the literacy rate among Milan's workers was quite low, and political considerations were not at the forefront of their minds. The workers' representatives simply copied a portion of Austria's "Labour Protection Law" and added some clauses they thought were reasonable, submitting the petition.

In order to win over local capitalists and nobility, the interim government of the Kingdom of Sardinia naturally included individuals from the capitalist class. They promptly exploited this loophole, accusing the workers' representatives of being Austrian spies and arrested them. Furthermore, troops were deployed to suppress the protest.

On April 28, a massive strike erupted in Milan as tens of thousands of workers took to the streets to fight for their rights. The interim government issued an order for the National Guard to "shoot at those disrupting social order," resulting in the deaths of over three hundred people and the arrest of more than five hundred.

Milan was engulfed in a reign of White Terror. Under the repression of the bourgeois liberal government, the workers' movement in Milan reached a low point.

TN: White Terror is the name of several episodes of mass violence in history, carried out by conservative or nationalist groups against anarchists, communists, socialists, liberals, revolutionaries, or other opponents.

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The suppression of the workers' and peasants' movement was not limited to the Kingdom of Sardinia alone. In the southern states of Italy, the bourgeois liberal governments also suppressed the workers' and peasants' movement one after another.

In Naples, the National Guard ruthlessly shot workers on strike in the printing factories. In Rome, they mercilessly massacred the people who were demanding bread in front of the bakeries. In Palermo, the National Guard turned their swords against their fellow comrades from the January Revolution...

These reactionary actions of the bourgeois governments provided powerful support for the restoration of feudal powers.

No matter how they boast about the progress of capitalism over feudalism, the common people have realized that the capitalist regime is even more despicable than the feudal aristocracy.

The monarchs and aristocratic groups also seized this opportunity and launched a counterattack. Among them, the leading representative was the Austrian counter-revolutionary group led by Franz, which had already suppressed the majority of the revolution within Austria.

In the Italian region, Pope Pius IX, fearing that Italian unification would jeopardize his own throne and concerned about the possibility of war with Austria, which could result in the loss of support from Catholics, took action.

Thanks to the efforts of the Austrian Foreign Ministry, on April 29, 1848, Pope Pius IX issued the "Manifesto," sounding the trumpet for the counterattack.

On May 15th, King Ferdinand II of Naples demanded that the members of parliament swear allegiance to the constitution, but he faced opposition from the bourgeois lawmakers.

That night, Ferdinand II deployed troops into the city and raised the sword against the bourgeois parliament.

In the Kingdom of Prussia, the disgruntled Junker nobility was plotting a counterattack, while King Frederick William III continued to engage in futile negotiations with the bourgeois government. France.

As the birthplace of the European revolution, it naturally became the most vibrant place.

On April 23rd, France held constitutional elections, and the bourgeois republican faction achieved an overwhelming victory, excluding the working class from the core of power.

The rise of right-wing forces in France sparked discontent among the working class.

On April 26th, French workers launched armed uprisings in cities like Lyon and Limoges, but they failed. Workers' Leader Blanqui issued a statement condemning the government's betrayal of the revolution and declared that the revolution would be carried out to the end.

Class contradictions have escalated to become the main contradiction in France, with the working class and the bourgeoisie going their separate ways.

During the same period, the royalists were not idle either, silently extending their influence into the military.

If it weren't for the fact that the royalists in France are divided into three factions, restraining each other, the bourgeoisie would have no concerns by now.

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Vienna.

As Franz looked at the intelligence gathered in his hands, he breathed a sigh of relief. History hadn't undergone significant changes yet, and his butterfly effect hadn't completely altered the world.

The uprising in Lombardy meant that the support base of the Kingdom of Sardinia in the region was now on par with Austria. They no longer had to worry about being drawn into a people's war.

TN: People's war (Chinese: 人民战争), also called protracted people's war, is a Maoist military strategy. First developed by the Chinese communist revolutionary leader Mao Zedong (1893–1976), the basic concept behind people's war is to maintain the support of the population and draw the enemy deep into the countryside (stretching their supply lines) where the population will bleed them dry through a mix of mobile warfare and guerrilla warfare.

Venice.

"Marshal, the enemy has arrived!" General Victor whispered into Marshal Radetzky's ear.

"Hmm, since the enemy has arrived, there's no need to hold back any longer. Order the 6th Division to teach those Tuscan troops a lesson, and order the 9th Division to eliminate the Papal Army attempting to cross the river!" Marshal Radetzky commanded coldly.

Leading the forces of the Kingdom of Sardinia into Venice had already been a challenging task, and Radetzky did not rely on strategies alone to defeat the enemy.

"Lord Marshal, I heard that King Charles Albert intends to personally command the front lines. If he gets involved, it could be our opportunity!" Edmond suggested.

"No need for that. We will set up our formations and engage the enemy in a decisive battle in the Mincio area. They have no choice but to face us.

In the Venetian region, the Kingdom of Sardinia's logistical costs are twice as high as ours. You can calculate how much supplies they need to transport every day to maintain the frontline." Marshal Radetzky calmly replied.