

The Fox 161

Chapter 161: Light Cavalry and a True Understanding

Orelot's position was quite a distance from Napoleon's main force, and their food supplies were limited. Orelot knew that their actions had to be swift to prevent more aristocrats from burning the food stores. So he immediately divided his cavalry into groups of fifty, led by their guides, and charged towards the nearby estates.

However, most of these estates had already seen the thick smoke rising, and some had begun to set fire to their own granaries. In these estates, there were Austrian soldiers stationed, not to protect the estates but to oversee their managers and ensure that the granaries were set on fire when the French army approached.

But not all Austrian soldiers were loyal to their posts. Upon seeing the smoke, some of them would shout, "Quick, set fire to the granary!" and then ride away. As they left, those who remained in the estates, closely associated with the fleeing aristocrats, quickly followed the retreating soldiers, leaving the task of burning the granaries to others.

However, when the higher-ups had fled, those who remained in the estates and saw the food inside the granaries had a different thought: Why burn it? What was the benefit in doing so? So, naturally, they refrained from setting the granaries ablaze.

In this way, Orelot swiftly acquired a significant amount of food. He sent messengers back to suggest to Napoleon that the main army move closer to the areas where they could easily gather supplies. It would be more advantageous to control the nearby villages, accumulate enough provisions, and cause trouble for the Austrians, even making it appear as if they aimed to turn Austria into Italy. Then they could observe the reactions of the Austrian forces.

Napoleon gathered his other commanders to discuss Orelot's suggestion. In the end, Napoleon, with far-reaching vision, stated, "Austria has a significant weakness, which lies in its diversity of ethnicities, languages, and internal contradictions. Even in peacetime, internal uprisings are frequent it is essentially a conglomerate nation with no true cohesiveness. Their army is their most crucial and almost sole means to hold the country together. So long as we prove the feebleness of the Austrian army to the Austrian people, the foundation of this nation will continue to weaken."

"How can we prove the weakness of the Austrian army?" Napoleon continued. "Directly attacking their fortresses would only expose our vulnerabilities. Instead, we must provoke them, force them into open field battles with us. Starting now, let us temporarily forget about Vienna and go to the Austrian countryside to rouse, arm, and organize the local farmers. As long as the Austrians have some political awareness left, they will understand that they cannot allow us to do this. I anticipate a series of small-scale cavalry and infantry skirmishes ahead. If we consistently inflict damage on the Austrians in these battles, they will have no choice but to submit to us."

Napoleon's speech gained widespread support from the commanders. So the next morning, the French army left their camp. Archduke Charles immediately ordered all his soldiers to prepare for the imminent French attack.

However, the French forces did not launch any assaults. Instead, they left the main road to Vienna and headed north.

"Archduke, should we send our cavalry to pursue them?" a officer named Fritz asked.

"Let the cavalry follow them, but do not engage the enemy too easily," Archduke Charles replied. "You take a thousand light cavalry and follow them."

So Fritz took a thousand light cavalry and followed.

Napoleon, of course, noticed the Austrian cavalry following them. He turned to Mura and said, "I'll give you two hundred cavalry. Can you drive them back?"

Mura looked at the Austrian cavalry and smirked, "No problem."

With that, Mura led two hundred riders to the rear.

Mura's cavalry came to a halt on a small hill. The Austrian cavalry gradually approached. Archduke Charles did not order Fritz to directly attack the French forces. Attacking a force of thousands with only a thousand cavalry was a daunting prospect, and Austrian morale was not at its highest. But seeing only two hundred French riders, they felt there was nothing to fear. If they didn't confront these cavalry now, how could they keep tracking the main French army?

Fritz observed the French cavalry and noticed that they were just like their own light cavalry, armed with sabers, and pistols. He recalled how cavalry retreating from previous battles mentioned that the French had pistols capable of continuous firing without reloading, even until the end of the world.

Fritz didn't fully believe these claims and thought that the so-called continuous firing pistols must be a double-barreled or even triple-barreled pistol. Such a weapon would be cumbersome and not necessarily effective. Given the numerical advantage of their one thousand strong force against the two hundred French riders, there was no reason to hesitate.

Thinking this, Fritz led his troops toward the French. In the midst of the gunfire, Mura calmly judged the distances and speeds of both sides. As the Austrian horseman raised his saber high and prepared to charge, Mura fired two shots when they were only about three meters apart.

This approach had been proven most effective in numerous drills on the training ground, though it was not the recommended tactic in the cavalry manual. The manual suggested firing at a distance of about fifteen meters, shooting the horses with the first two shots and the riders at closer range. However, Mura believed that at such a distance, not only were the enemy's sabers out of reach but his continuous firing pistols could maintain precise accuracy. With two quick shots, he could significantly increase his chances of a successful hit. However, this approach required excellent judgment of both speed and distance, and a small mistake could lead to a disastrous outcome.

Fritz, having been hit by Mura, tumbled from his horse. But Mura had no time to check on him as another Austrian cavalryman charged toward him. Mura calmly assessed the distance, fired two shots as the Austrian horseman raised his saber high.

The cavalrymen of both sides passed each other. Fritz held his horse, turned around, and saw that the battlefield was littered with scores of dead and a significant number of horse carcasses, but he could still see around two hundred French riders.

This was, of course, an illusion. The French cavalry had not escaped unscathed, but in terms of casualties, the Austrians had suffered significantly more. Fritz did not stay to examine the outcome this time. He quickly turned back and galloped away. Mura led his riders in pursuit.

Both were light cavalry, and neither side had a significant speed advantage. Fritz's direct retreat meant he didn't need to make any turns, while Mura had to turn around to chase. This made it impossible for Mura to catch up to Fritz. However, Mura continued to follow, with the aim of pursuing the Austrian cavalry until they were near their own fortresses. This would help the observing Austrians gain a more accurate understanding of their strength.

Chapter 162: Negotiations

Murat, leading his cavalry, pursued the Austrian cavalry relentlessly until they reached the vicinity of an Austrian redoubt. The cannons on the redoubt opened fire fiercely, forcing Murat to halt the pursuit.

Murat and his cavalry withdrew out of range of the redoubt's cannons. They took a moment to regroup and display their prowess before turning their attention to catching up with Napoleon's main force.

When he caught up with Napoleon, Murat, with an air of self-importance, recounted the recent battle to him in detail.

"Ah, Murat, why do you persist in such thoughtless actions?" Napoleon remarked. "Why didn't you consider escaping first to draw them into pursuit? It would be easier to control the distance and engage in ranged combat. In the pursuit, they would become more zealous and less aware of their losses. By the time they realized, their casualties would be significant, and they'd have to retreat. This way, not only are they slower, but you could catch up and eliminate even more, then continue pursuing, minimizing your losses while increasing theirs. Isn't that better? You, my friend, really..."

Napoleon had initially thought about using a comment like "too young, too naive" on Murat, but then he remembered that Murat was a few years older than himself, so he bit his tongue.

Although Murat's performance in the battle wasn't as flawless as Napoleon had hoped, the fact that two hundred French cavalry had defeated five times their number of Austrian cavalry still left the Austrians highly unnerved.

Under Archduke Charles's orders, the Austrian cavalry set out again to search for Napoleon's main force. This time, they thoroughly dispersed their cavalry, with ten men in each squad, to search. They were instructed not to initiate attacks unless they encountered isolated French cavalymen. When the French cavalry showed aggression, the Austrians were allowed to withdraw at their discretion.

The information received by the Austrians indicated that Napoleon's main force had not entered any cities but had rapidly taken control of vast stretches of the countryside. They obtained plentiful supplies in those areas and gathered the villagers to educate them on revolutionary principles.

Archduke Charles knew that he couldn't allow the French to continue this chaos, as any area visited by the French would likely become a hotbed of rebellion. However, he was wary of a direct confrontation with the French army. Luckily, the Austrians had a clear numerical advantage in cavalry. They decided to use this advantage to attack the scattered French forces and the locals who supported them.

As a result, both sides engaged in a series of small-scale battles continuously. Each side claimed victory in these skirmishes, depending on their perspective.

According to the French, they had successfully repelled Austrian forces in most battles and achieved favorable exchange rates. On the other hand, the Austrians emphasized their ability to rapidly concentrate their forces and encircle French troops at a numerical disadvantage. Thus, they claimed more victories.

Both claims had some truth to them. The French had a clear advantage in weaponry and, thus, an overall advantage in the exchanges. Nevertheless, in terms of tactics, the Austrian cavalry's ability to rapidly concentrate superior forces was an advantage. Both sides suffered losses during these skirmishes, which reflected in their subsequent actions.

The French began constructing relatively simple fortifications in the manors they occupied. They demolished the nobility's houses and used the materials to build two to three-story circular fortifications that resembled watchtowers. At the top of the fortifications, they added signal fires. The French took this defensive measure after experiencing some losses in skirmishes.

The Austrians changed their narrative. They now focused on eliminating rebels as well as invaders. They argued that if they couldn't defeat the invaders, how could they eliminate the so-called "rebels"?

After some time, both sides had established an operational pattern. French and "rebel" observers were placed on elevated positions to signal any movement. Upon receiving a warning, small groups of French soldiers and even local peasants, regardless of their "rebel" status, would take cover in the fortifications. The French cavalry also maintained a state of alert, ready to provide support.

Initially, the warning signals were simple and could only indicate the presence of Austrian troops, without detailing their direction or numbers. However, the warning system rapidly improved. More "rebels" joined, using horses to transmit messages between various manors. As a result, Austrian attacks became increasingly challenging and prone to failure.

In the process, the Austrians learned about the secrets of French weaponry. They captured Minie rifles and revolvers during previous skirmishes. While manufacturing these weapons in large quantities was not an immediate possibility, it was a significant discovery.

While Napoleon stirred up the Austrian countryside, General Joubert led the Northern Army in a fresh offensive against the Austrians and the beleaguered Prussians. With new rifles and tactics, Joubert achieved a series of victories, capturing the entire Rhine region.

Although the Austrians were trying to produce new weapons quickly, their recent defeat in the Rhine region and their growing concerns about the expanding territories controlled by Napoleon made them reconsider. They decided to reach out to France for peace once again.

This time, the Austrians agreed to France's control over Lombardy and the Rhine region. They asked only for Napoleon to withdraw from Austrian territory as quickly as possible.

However, Napoleon wasn't satisfied and demanded additional compensation. "How can I abandon my Austrian brethren?" he argued. "So... they must pay."

The negotiation over the price was heated, but eventually, both sides reached an agreement. The Austrians not only gave up the territories they had already lost but also paid France a compensation of ten million francs. Napoleon grumbled, "For a nation as vast as Austria, they only managed to squeeze out so little. Compared to the riches of the Papal States, the Emperor is truly stingy."

Such a price was equivalent to selling his own brethren, how could Napoleon agree? However, as a soldier, he had to obey orders, and so, he reluctantly prepared to depart from Austrian soil.

During this time, Napoleon continued to meet with representatives of the peasants in his controlled regions. He assured them that, upon his departure, he would leave a portion of the weaponry with them. He had already taught them how to use various weapons.

"My brethren, I must leave you now. Once we depart, the nobles will surely attempt to reclaim what was lost. They will desire to reclaim their possessions and may even be more relentless. However, as long as you hold a weapon in your hand, they cannot oppress you as they did before.

My brethren, remember all that we have taught you and hold on to the weapons we leave behind.

In the future, when the nobles see you armed, they will approach you with a friendly smile, reduce your taxes, and act as if they are your friends. But my brethren, remember, it's not because they have grown kinder or genuinely like you; it's because they see you bearing arms. As long as you hold a weapon, even a black bear will appear gentle.

They may pretend to care for you, saying, 'Friend, why carry such a heavy weapon? This place is safe, and we are all friends. Why do you need to bear this heavy burden?'

But my brethren, never lay down your arms. For once you do, they will shed their sheepskins and reveal the wolves they truly are. They will devour you completely.

My brethren, be vigilant against those who want you to disarm. They are all serpents, wolves in sheep's clothing. While they speak with oily tongues, their hearts are filled with a hunger for destruction.

Our brethren, how do we deal with these wolves? When a friend brings wine, welcome him. But if a wolf approaches, the only welcome he'll receive is from the barrel of a gun. So, my brethren, hold your weapons close, for they represent freedom, and they shape your destiny."

As Napoleon's army began its gradual withdrawal, he left behind a substantial amount of weapons for the peasants. He even assisted them in forming their own associations. Napoleon believed that, for a considerable time, this region would remain a thorn in the side of the Austrians.

Chapter 163: Peace and Business (1)

After Austria withdrew from the war, the entire anti-French alliance essentially fell apart. Following Austria's request for peace, the Prussians immediately chimed in, saying, "We don't actually bear any ill will towards France; we were only fighting due to misunderstandings. So, we should sit down and talk, after all, we all love peace."

At this point, France and Prussia didn't share a border yet, and after Austria withdrew, there was no feasible way for the French and Prussians to fight unless they crossed through neutral countries. Therefore, both countries began negotiations, but due to their limited military options, the talks dragged on.

Prussia was willing to exit the war, but they demanded assurances from the French not to take any action in Hanover. However, the French saw Hanover as a crucial tool to threaten England and force them out of the war.

At that time, the ruling family of England was also the Hanoverian royal house. While legally, England and Hanover were two separate countries, they shared a common monarch.

For a long time, the French navy had been no match for the British navy. After the losses suffered during the Toulon revolt, the French navy was even less able to challenge British naval power. As for a potential invasion of England, that was even more daunting after all, the English Channel wasn't so narrow that one could simply float a bathtub across.

Thus, the only viable option for the French was to strike at British interests on the European mainland. After Napoleon conquered Northern Italy and extorted various Italian states, not even the Pope's territory was spared, other countries grew fearful. They dared not have any dealings with the British. This was a heavy blow to British interests.

General Joubert, after seizing the Rhine, moved into the Netherlands, forcing the entire country to join the French camp. The Netherlands was a crucial gateway for British goods entering the European mainland, so this was another blow to the British.

However, the British remained stubborn. They didn't oppose peace talks but set a condition that France must return to its original borders while keeping the colonial territories they had seized during the war, essentially treating France as a defeated nation.

Hence, the French had to use Hanover to pressure the British. But if they truly occupied Hanover, they'd share a border with Prussia, which was not in Prussia's interest. Therefore, negotiations with Prussia were delayed.

Nevertheless, Prussia's objections were not enough to prevent the French from taking action in Hanover. Shortly after Napoleon left Austria, the French launched an offensive against Hanover and quickly occupied it. Prussia, despite some protests, didn't dare to act.

So, while some issues remained unresolved, the war was effectively over. The last conflict now was on the seas.

In fact, after the French took control of Hanover, the British stance slightly relaxed. It was because they couldn't find any substantial allies on the continent anymore, and their economic situation had worsened due to the loss of markets on the European mainland.

The British offered to recognize French control over the Rhine region, but on the condition that the French must withdraw from Hanover. Dutch independence had to be guaranteed, and European nations, including France, would reopen their markets to British trade.

This condition was open to discussion, but the military establishment in France opposed it. Ostensibly, their reasons were, "Why should we easily give up what we've conquered?" But the deeper reason was that, for some individuals, continuing naval conflicts at sea was more profitable.

The British had been effectively blockading French overseas trade routes, although they showed restraint towards some neutral vessels, French ships on various routes suffered relentless attacks.

One type of French vessel, however, remained unharmed: the clipper ship. These ships easily evaded British naval interception with their remarkable speed and reached foreign ports. As long as the British continued their blockade, the demand for clipper ships remained high, and their profit margins were substantial.

Due to the blockade, conventional French ships couldn't sail overseas, or if they did, they might never return. Shipowners who wanted to continue maritime trade had to sell their old ships at low prices to foreign buyers and then order new clipper ships from certain individuals. This meant shipowners had to buy new ships to continue their trade.

With France now controlling Northern Italy and the Netherlands, most of Europe's major seaports were in French hands. This gave certain individuals even greater ambitions.

"England is France's most dangerous enemy. We can compromise with other foes, but as long as we wish for France to become the king of Europe, there is no possibility of compromise with England. Well, of course, that's just the surface reasoning. Do you understand, my dear?" Joseph said to Lucien, crossing his legs.

By now, Joseph had moved part of his research institutions back to Paris, which meant he had more time to educate his younger brother.

"I understand, of course. You want to use the English to your advantage, not only blocking French ships but also ships from Italy and the Netherlands. This way, you can sell clipper ships at higher prices," Lucien replied.

"No, no, no. Lucien, you are too young and naive. I don't want that, as it would lead to significant backlash. I just need you to create a buzz in the Parliament; I don't need you to pass resolutions like prohibiting British goods from entering other countries' ports. This kind of rumor, in itself, can exert considerable pressure on various people from different angles. If Parliament doesn't pass it this time, what about next time? Will the next Parliament pass it? Once such a resolution is passed, will the British start blocking other countries' ship routes in response? With such concerns, who will purchase those old-style ships that are difficult to evade British blockades? Do you understand now?"

"In this way, Europe's traditional shipbuilding industry will be in crisis, and we can buy it cheap. I'm excited," Lucien said.

"You're my foolish brother!" Joseph shook his head. "You're so dense. Even if those shipyards are cheap, buying them will still cost a fortune. Why should we spend money? What are we spending it for?"

"What do you plan to do, then? Is it that alliance thing again?" Lucien said. "I honestly don't see the appeal of this alliance. I think it's better to handle things on our own."

"This situation is created by political circumstances. Politics is fickle, and considering too far ahead brings risks. I believe that, if we want France to become the king of Europe, there's no room for compromise with the British. But, of course, this is just the surface reasoning. My dear brother, do you understand?"

"But only the British would see through this immediately, right?"

"This doesn't affect our ability to outperform their ships. We'll cut off their trade routes, and it will be profitable."

"Oh, I see it now! If we spend too much on buying shipyards, it's the same as establishing an alliance and rapidly gaining profits through it. I think you..." Lucien's voice faded. He had indeed overlooked this variable.

"That's not the most important variable you've overlooked," Joseph continued. "Our business isn't just one-dimensional. We have multiple lines of business, and the allocation of funds among them results in different income fluctuations. The same amount of money invested in shipbuilding can bring in some income, but investing it in another business can bring in equivalent income. It's a much more complex problem to figure out how to coordinate these limited funds to maximize efficiency. I think it's not any simpler than solving the four-color problem. And you claim you can calculate it all in a second!"

Joseph set his leg down and sat up, staring at Lucien. "So, Lucien, stop arguing. Your mathematical abilities have clearly deteriorated recently. Well, it might be time to help you regain your intellectual faculties."

"Fine, but I have other work too," Lucien said with a pale face.

"Don't worry; it won't be too difficult or too tiring for you," Joseph said. "Actually, it will help you gain a deeper understanding of the direction our business is taking."

Chapter 164: Peace and Business (2)

Joseph didn't make Lucien work too hard this time. He simply had Lucien organize some of the family's current investments, giving Lucien a more comprehensive understanding of Joseph's strategic vision.

"Joseph, what is this 'Zeus' project? Why is it consuming so much funding, and it looks like there will be more investment in the future?" Lucien inquired.

"This project," Joseph began, "is a revolutionary one, something that could put us decades ahead of the competition. Its impact can be compared to Watt's steam engine, perhaps even more profound."

In this era, James Watt had already improved the steam engine. In 1776, Watt's improved steam engine was already being used in mines to power pumps. In fact, there were several Watt steam engines imported from England in the Duke of Orleans' mines. Over time, Watt's steam engine had found widespread application in the textile industry, giving British textiles a dominant position in the global market.

However, the true potential of the steam engine had not been fully realized. Trains and ships were yet to be invented. So when Joseph likened the 'Zeus' project to Watt's steam engine, Lucien raised an eyebrow and responded, "Compared to the steam engine, it doesn't seem that remarkable."

Joseph shook his head and said, "You, my friend, are not a true scientist or an industrialist. You can't see the direction in which things are developing. This is of utmost importance. If successful, it could bury all existing modes of production in the annals of history."

Lucien recognized Joseph's credibility in matters of science, and he rarely boasted about such things. So, his curiosity was piqued. "Alright, Joseph. What is this 'Zeus' project?"

"Your security clearance is high enough," Joseph replied, "but remember, you must not breathe a word of this to anyone, especially those questionable women of yours. Do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal clear," Lucien affirmed. "I have plenty of other topics to discuss with those women. After all, there is no shortage of things to brag about, but who talks to women about academic matters? Although, I must say, there's one eccentric individual in this world who does."

"You know what? If you talk to her about science, she actually listens attentively, which only proves your charm," Joseph retorted.

"Alright, enough of this. For the sake of your pride," Lucien said, "let's get back to the main topic. What is this 'Zeus' project?"

"Well," Joseph began, "after Armand Lavasie developed the electric detonator, we conducted an underwater explosive test. Someone left a compass nearby, and I observed that when the wire was electrified, the compass needle suddenly moved. Though it might have been due to the ship's rocking in the sea, I repeated the experiment in the laboratory. I found that when current flowed through the wire, it indeed caused the compass needle to move."

"And how is that significant?" Lucien asked.

"Significant?" Joseph smiled. "Very significant. In the afternoon, I'll take you to the lab to see for yourself. But for now, let's deal with this issue."

"Damn, this seems like a complicated issue," Lucien said. "Although it involves some secrecy, Armand Lavasie should be able to handle this level of secrecy. Why am I being dragged into it? Joseph, you're heartless!"

After lunch, Joseph took Lucien to the new laboratory. The lab was a bit far from Paris, and they arrived at sunset.

Joseph led Lucien into a room with two machines on a table, both covered in wires. One had a crank handle, and the other was connected to a water pump with three wires.

"Go and crank that handle," Joseph instructed.

Lucien approached and began turning the handle.

"Faster, have you not eaten?" Joseph remarked.

"I really haven't eaten; my stomach is grumbling!" Lucien complained, increasing the speed of his cranking.

As Lucien cranked, the other machine connected by wires started to turn, and the water pump came to life, water flowing vigorously.

"How do you like this, my friend? Isn't it marvelous?" Joseph asked proudly.

"Well, it's entertaining," Lucien replied while continuing to turn the handle.

"Do you understand its significance now?" Joseph inquired.

Lucien paused and thought carefully. Then he nodded and said, "This is more useful than a steam engine."

Lucien had been with Joseph long enough to grasp the value of these two machines. Steam engines required complex transmission systems, clutches, and variable systems when used as industrial power to drive machines. To facilitate placement, multiple steam engines had to be set up in areas where steam engines weren't originally intended to be, such as textile factories. In the textile workshops, for fire safety reasons, steam engines shouldn't be present, but the transmission shaft couldn't be too long, resulting in machines and steam engines being only a meter apart.

Furthermore, different machines required different power and operated at different speeds, which meant either one machine per steam engine or a set of clutches and variable systems for each working machine.

This made the entire machine system highly complex. The more complicated the mechanical system, the more expensive and inefficient it became. However, the system showcased in the laboratory, transferring power from one machine to another, was much simpler and more efficient. This one advantage alone made it more suitable for use in various applications.

"If we widely use this machine to drive all our various machines, our production can greatly increase, and costs will decrease to unimaginable levels. No one will be able to compete with us," Joseph explained.

"I see," Lucien said, "but what are the main problems with the current plan?"

"Problems? They're everywhere," Joseph sighed. "First, we need a power source. I can't use you as a power source, can I? Using steam engines is good, but it requires a lot of fuel. France's coal mines are not under our control, and currently, there are no excellent coal mines in France. I've sent quite a few people to search for minerals on our newly acquired territories. If Providence blesses France and we find such a place, we'll need a significant sum to purchase these lands."

"Well, if we find it, the expense is certainly worth it. I understand, we need to make financial preparations," Lucien said.

"Of course, I have a backup plan. In the era before the steam engine, textile factories had to be situated along rivers with large waterfalls to harness hydraulic power for machinery," Joseph continued. "So, inspired by this, I proposed building a dam on a river with a significant drop, raising the water level, using the flowing water to drive a waterwheel, which powers the generator. Then, we use conductors to deliver electricity to the required electric motors."

"That's a good plan!" Lucien exclaimed.

"It is, but electric currents still suffer losses in conductors, which means the machines cannot be too far from the power station. Additionally, many aspects of this plan are still experimental. To make it practical, we don't know how many issues will arise and how much money will be needed. So... Lucien, do you understand why we need a lot of cash right now?"

Lucien nodded, "This will indeed require a substantial amount of money. But if successful, it will be worth it. Damn it, we need money for so many things... that scoundrel Napoleon, he only got a small amount of money from Austria!"

"The Austrian indemnity goes to the government, and Napoleon didn't receive much from it. Despite plundering Austrian villages during his conquest, the Austrian nobility was prepared. They quickly moved their wealth, such as gold, silver, and jewels, and didn't leave such valuables on their estates. So, the loot from the nobles was quite limited."

"Austria and Italy are not comparable," Joseph lamented. "Especially the Crown Under the Sun, he's a great guy. So, for now, we have to make as much money as possible on our own. Damn this peace! By the way, any progress in your dealings with the Irish lately?"

"They want to purchase weapons, but... the Irish don't have much money," Lucien said, shaking his head.

The Irish, after over a century of exploitation by the English due to King Henry VIII's split from the Papal Church, were quite impoverished.

"They share our common enemies," Joseph stated. "France and Britain's war is ongoing, and our government should support the just struggle of the Irish people without charge. I believe the government should fund the purchase of weapons for the Irish."

"Agreed!" Lucien said. "Let the government provide us with funds, and we can supply weapons to the Irish. Then we can tell the government that our ships ran aground and encountered storms near Ireland, so they need to order more weapons to effectively support the just cause of the Irish people."

Chapter 165: Peace and Business (3)

After a month of tireless efforts in France, Sean, the representative of the Irish resistance organization, finally had the opportunity to meet a significant figure in Madame Rousseau's salon, the Member of the National Convention, Lucien Bonaparte.

At that time, the beautiful Madame Fleurette made him wait at the entrance of the ballroom while she gracefully walked through the brilliantly lit hall, making her way to a row of sofas where two people were seated, one of them a young man.

"Lucien, do you remember the Irishman I told you about last time? The one with so many stories that broke my heart," Madame Fleurette said, casting a seductive look towards Lucien. "I want to help him, and among all my friends, only you have the power, kindness, and sympathy to assist the poor Irish. So, I brought him here. Would you like to meet him?"

Lucien knew that Madame Fleurette's willingness to speak for an Irishman was likely driven by motives other than pure sympathy. His gaze shifted from Madame Fleurette's slender, graceful neck, adorned with an unfamiliar, rustic-looking necklace. At the bottom of the necklace hung a gem almost as large as a pigeon's egg. If these impoverished Irish people had truly given her this, they had invested quite a sum.

"Well, can I bring him over?" Madame Fleurette asked, her enchanting smile intact.

"Of course, my dear!" Lucien raised his wine glass toward Madame Fleurette. "But after a while, you must sit next to me, so I can properly admire your new necklace."

"Is there a problem with that?" Madame Fleurette leaned closer, her hand embracing Lucien's arm, gently pressing her chest to make her assets appear closer, allowing him a better view of the gem nestled in the valley between them.

"Unique design, beautiful gem, and a perfect match with you, my dear," Lucien leaned in, his lips almost touching Madame Fleurette's earlobe. "But, my dear, have you had enough?"

"Not at all. How could I get enough in such a short time? I still need to examine it carefully later," Lucien whispered, gently biting Madame Fleurette's earlobe. "But for now, my dear, you can let your friend come over."

With Lucien's permission, Madame Fleurette straightened her posture and waved Sean over from the doorway.

Sean hurriedly approached, and Madame Fleurette slightly furrowed her delicate eyebrows as she introduced him to Lucien. "Lucien, this is Mr. Sean from Ireland, the one I mentioned to you. He's a man with many stories, some of which have broken my heart. I want to help him, and among all my friends, only you have the power, kindness, and sympathy to assist the unfortunate Irish. So, I brought him here. Would you like to get to know him?"

"Hello, Mr. Bonaparte," Sean said quickly. Clearly, a luxurious and ambiguous French salon was uncomfortable for Irishmen accustomed to simpler surroundings.

"Hello, Mr. Sean," Lucien gestured towards an empty seat beside him. "You can sit down, and we can talk."

As Sean took his seat, Lucien continued, "Allow me to introduce my friend sitting beside me. This is Armand, Armand Duson. He's my best friend and business partner, one of the wealthiest bankers in Paris. He is a man of great reputation, entirely trustworthy. You don't need to hold anything back in his presence."

"Hello, Mr. Duson," Sean quickly stood up again.

In this dim corner, Lucien and Sean conversed for quite some time. Later, Sean would recall this part of history:

"Mr. Lucien Bonaparte is indeed as Madame Fleurette described - a man of great compassion. After learning about the Irish people's suffering, he showed profound sympathy. He promised to provide me with an opportunity to appeal to the honorable members of the National Convention. However, I am not skilled at public speaking, and my French is heavily accented. For this, Mr. Bonaparte even helped me find a teacher to train my speaking skills and personally guided me in drafting speeches. The most famous part of that speech was actually written by Mr. Bonaparte. Behind the scenes, he made countless unknown efforts to support the Irish people's quest for independence."

With Lucien's efforts, the National Convention passed the "Irish Relations Act," declaring an unbreakable alliance with the Irish people to jointly confront their common enemy, the English. The Convention urged the Directory to immediately take practical action and allocate funds to support the just struggle of the Irish people.

Taking money from the "Military-Industrial Consortium," the Directory acted swiftly. Soon, a substantial sum of money was allocated to support the Irish revolution. However, rumors circulated that at least a third of these funds never left Paris and were used as a lubricant for government actions.

The "Military-Industrial Consortium" was exceptionally efficient. On the day the funds were allocated, Sean received word that the "French Military-Industrial Consortium" would produce and ship the first batch of weapons to the Irish brothers free of charge within two weeks. Now, they needed Sean to make immediate contact with the Irish people so they could deliver these precious weapons to those who needed them most.

A month later, the "Flyer" clipper ship, loaded with various weapons and Sean, along with another Irishman named Liam, set sail.

The delay wasn't due to slow action on the French side, but because the Irish had to arrange things on their end.

"Would you gentlemen get seasick?" Captain Van der Deken asked as they boarded the ship.

"No, we don't," Sean replied.

"That's good. Do you know how to swim?" Captain Van der Deken inquired.

"Yes, is there a problem?" Sean felt that something was not quite right.

"You see, our ship has to risk breaking through the English fleet's blockade. Therefore, this ship's design is solely focused on speed. Everything else can be sacrificed, including safety. Do you understand what I mean?" Sean nodded in acknowledgment, realizing the high-risk nature of smuggling.

"We understand," Sean said.

Sean believed he understood the danger of this ship, but once they were at sea, he realized he had underestimated the peril. The ship rocked violently, and even Sean and Liam, who had never been seasick before, found themselves vomiting. It was important to remember that the weather was still relatively calm. This was a clear sign of how treacherous it could be if they encountered larger waves. French support for the Irish people was truly a perilous endeavor.

The "Flyer" clipper ship, despite its intense rocking, had decent resistance to rough seas. Captain Van der Deken's warning had been to make the Irish believe that many of the items they were transporting had "disappeared."

Days later, on a dark night, the "Flyer" arrived in the vicinity of Ireland. Looking from the land towards the sea, everything was pitch black, impossible to see. But looking from the sea towards the land was different. Beneath a cliff close to the sea, two fires were lit - the agreed-upon signal between those on the shore and the ship. Due to the cliff's cover, the fires couldn't be seen from the land.

The "Flyer" responded with two lanterns as agreed, and after a while, the left fire disappeared. A bit further to the right, two fires were ignited, signaling that everything was safe onshore.

In the darkness, the sailors lowered a small boat into the water, followed by packages tied to inflated leather floats and wrapped in oiled paper, all connected by ropes. After all the packages were in the water, Sean, Liam, and the sailors boarded the small boat, using oars to slowly row towards the shore.

By the time dawn was approaching, the sailors returned to the "Flyer." The ship retrieved the small boat and immediately hoisted its sails, leaving the dangerous area. Meanwhile, below the silhouette of the cliff, Sean, Liam, and a group of others were busy inspecting the weapons that had been delivered.

Chapter 166: Peace and Business (4)

It's great when the French government foots the bill, and they do it promptly. Negotiating prices with them is also a breeze. You know, the French government has a peculiar trait they always choose the expensive option, not necessarily the right one. Even for a simple coffee cup, they opt for the priciest choice. If you dare to set a high price, even 1,500 francs, they'll go for it. Cheap prices, on the other hand, make them unhappy because it messes up their bookkeeping.

In contrast, the Polish people are a bit stingy. They buy simple versions of revolvers without rifling, the "Little Melons" without engravings, or landmines without explosives they'd rather chisel their own stones.

So, boat after boat filled with weapons continuously shipped to Ireland. Meanwhile, members of the Irish resistance organization kept coming to France for special operations training.

The French government may be generous with money, but they're eager to see a return on their investment. They want to witness a spectacular outcome. Only then will they have a reason to increase their investment.

On the morning of May 7, 1797, as the sun rose, Dublin woke up like any other day. People started filling the streets, and the British soldiers were changing guard outside the Governor's residence. Inside, Duke Anderson Russell, Governor of Dublin, was receiving a report from the sheriff, Darcy.

"Are you saying that some rebels are actively operating, and they might be getting help from France?"

"Yes, Your Excellency. Some time ago, our patrol found signs of fires under some cliffs on the west coast. Sometimes, we also find many footprints on the nearby beaches. Your Excellency, we believe these fires are used for nighttime communication with ships at sea, and the footprints indicate that either many people landed here, or a lot of cargo did. Your Excellency, you know there are no strategic supplies from France that are crucial for Ireland, so I suspect the French are secretly aiding these rebels."

"Darcy," Duke Bedford said, "I just noticed you said you found signs of fires 'under some cliffs' and sometimes footprints. That means people are engaging in illegal activities at night. Have you taken any action?"

"Your Excellency, soldiers are highly reluctant to act at night. It's unsafe, and accidents can easily happen when patrolling these areas."

"What kind of accidents? Are they being attacked?" Duke Bedford's eyebrows twitched.

"Yes, Your Excellency, the security in those areas has never been good."

"These cursed Irish. Well, I know this situation didn't happen overnight, and it's not all your fault. Darcy, you reported this to me for a reason. What kind of assistance are you seeking from me?"

"I believe that to curb this situation, we must rely on the naval power. I know that if the French are involved, they likely use cutters. In normal circumstances, our warships can't intercept these vessels. However, I think when they load or unload cargo, they have to stop. If our navy could show up at that moment, we might catch them."

"Darcy, you're thinking right," Duke Bedford, who regarded Darcy as family due to their shared English nobility, said. "Our coastal defense is already working on such matters. The problem is the long coastline, limited personnel, and minimal results."

"Your Excellency, could we allocate more ships to the navy, to..."

"Darcy, I've told you before, when you consider a problem, you must think on a broader scale, not just focus on what's under your nose. Do you want to stay in your current position forever?"

"Your Excellency..."

"Darcy, you know the Spanish have already tilted toward the French. Our naval advantage over the enemy isn't significant, and to limit French trade, our patrol ships must cruise along the French coast. Though they can't intercept French cutters, these ships effectively hamper French maritime capabilities. If we move our patrol fleet, we need to consider the impact on the recovery of French maritime power. If we deploy our main fleet, we must also consider what the French and Spanish fleets might do. In any case, this matter..."

While the two were talking, there was a sudden loud explosion from outside.

The entire Governor's residence shook from the blast. The large windows shattered instantly, sending glass shards everywhere. Duke Bedford's chair, which held his portly frame, jumped up a bit. Darcy, who had been standing there, collapsed to the floor. Dust began falling from the ceiling. The Duke's desk and his hair were both covered in dust.

"What's going on? What's going on?" Duke Bedford, using the armrests of his chair to help him stand.

"I'll go check," Darcy said, getting up from the floor.

At that moment, a series of gunshots rang out from the direction of the front door.

"It's the rebels!" Darcy immediately made this assessment and drew his pistol, heading for the front door. Duke Bedford took off his wig, shook off the dust, and adjusted his appearance.

The gunfire outside intensified, and after a while, there were hurried footsteps. Darcy burst back into the room. "Your Excellency, Your Excellency, you must leave immediately. The rebels have broken in, and we can't stop them!"

"What?" Duke Bedford's hands trembled, and the wig he had just put on fell to the ground...

Let's rewind a bit. As Duke Bedford was still lecturing Darcy on seeing the bigger picture, an elaborately decorated four-horse carriage slowly arrived in the square outside the Governor's residence.

Such carriages, pulled by four large horses, were not uncommon in Dublin, and their owners were usually high-ranking figures from England. The carriage gradually approached the Governor's residence, slowing down as it appeared ready to stop and undergo the guards' questioning.

The carriage neared the front entrance of the Governor's residence and came to a halt. Several guards approached, preparing to inquire. But at that moment, the carriage suddenly exploded.

This stolen carriage was loaded with a whopping 150 kilograms of nitrocellulose. It was being driven by an Irish patriot determined to sacrifice for his country. He controlled it. This explosion obliterated the soldiers surrounding it, the main gates of the Governor's residence, and the nearby barracks. It created chaos and destruction.

With the explosion, people who had been wandering further away suddenly pulled out their concealed revolvers and Bonaparte Little Melons. They stormed the Governor's residence, shooting anyone who moved, whether they were soldiers or servants, men or women.

Occasionally, a few soldiers from further away fired at them, but they were quickly brought down by dozens of revolvers or hit by Bonaparte Little Melon grenades that seemed to come from nowhere. These people couldn't stop the Irish advance.

Darcy, along with Duke Bedford, escaped toward the back door. But just as they reached the area near the rear door, they heard gunshots and Bonaparte Little Melon explosions from that direction too.

Darcy led the Duke to a drainage ditch. It ran through the wall and led outside. The water in the ditch was quite shallow now, seemingly allowing them to crawl out.

"Your Excellency, the situation is dire. We must escape through here," Darcy said.

"I'll go first!" Duke Bedford didn't bother with noble decorum at this point. He knew how much these rebels hated him, and what would happen if they got their hands on him.

Duke Bedford jumped into the drainage ditch, crouched down, and started crawling out. But he was a bit too plump, and halfway through, he got stuck.

"Darcy, Darcy, come push me!" Duke Bedford shouted.

Then he heard someone jump into the ditch behind him. Soon, a push against his buttocks and then... he got stuck even tighter.

"Push harder, a little harder! Ah... like that, Darcy, push harder!"

But just at that moment, there were several gunshots, and the pushing on his backside stopped. He knew it was not good and quickly redoubled his efforts to get through. With this last-ditch effort, he seemed to inch forward a bit, his widest part finally passing the narrow passage. But just then, several hands grabbed his legs...

Chapter 167: Peace and Business (5)

When the British troops stationed in Dublin arrived at the Governor's Mansion, the despicable attackers had already disappeared. The mansion was in ruins, littered with bodies in all directions. As the soldiers began to clear the bodies, several explosions occurred - the attackers had planted booby traps near the corpses. For instance, there were fine wires attached to the belts of the bodies, connected to landmines. There were also several such devices behind doors and windows.

As a result, the arriving British troops were killed or injured by a dozen or so more explosions, causing everyone to become terrified while they continued to search the area.

The British soldiers cautiously approached the entrance to the Governor's office. The office's mahogany door was slightly ajar, and it seemed like the owner was still inside. They exchanged uneasy glances, afraid to push the door open, not knowing if it would explode upon doing so.

"Um, does anyone have something long?" an officer asked.

"I remember there's a half of a flagpole over there," a soldier shouted, "I'll go fetch it."

The soldier went outside and, moments later - "Boom!"

"Captain, Captain, Jim's dead!"

"Damn it!" The captain angrily threw his hat to the ground. "Harry, go to the neighboring houses and requisition a clothesline pole."

A small soldier quickly complied and returned with several clothesline poles.

"Lieutenant, we have a few clothesline poles here. Let's connect them; it'll be safer."

"Good idea! Sharp lad!" the captain praised.

A group of them skillfully connected the clothesline poles, and the captain waved his hand. Everyone silently stepped back. The captain lay on the ground and extended the nearly ten-meter-long pole, carefully pushing the door open. The door opened quietly without any explosion.

The captain angrily rose to his feet, suddenly experiencing the painful and infuriating feeling of his intelligence being trampled, thinking of Jim, who had been killed earlier for fetching the broken flagpole.

However, despite his anger, the captain reminded himself to remain calm; otherwise, they might fall into a trap.

He carefully approached the door, peered inside, and saw a naked, obese corpse hanging under the crystal chandelier in the middle of the office. The captain recognized this body as the Duke of Bedford, the governor!

"This is a big problem!" the captain thought, "I wonder how many people will lose their heads over this incident..."

At this moment, other soldiers started to enter the office.

"Don't wander around, don't touch anything! Don't lower the body, there might be explosives," the captain quickly warned.

"Lieutenant, there's writing on the governor's body!" a soldier shouted.

The captain, who had been focused on looking for mines, was now drawn to this information. He hurried to the body of the Duke and saw that the rebels had inscribed the words "The fate of invaders!" on his chest with a knife.

Suddenly, a gust of wind blew in, causing the hanged corpse to rotate, revealing more writing on its back, "This is your future!" Between the buttocks was a long knife.

The British people were shaken by this attack on their empire, and it reverberated throughout the entire United Kingdom and even Europe. After all, it had been many years since such a high-ranking figure in the British Empire had been killed in one fell swoop.

Prime Minister Pitt addressed the members of Parliament in the House of Commons, condemning the crime of "shocking terrorism" committed by the French and local insurgents and vowing to "fight fire with fire." He also proposed additional funds to conscript and train more troops to suppress the rebellion in Ireland.

"We will make those rebels regret their actions, and they, as well as their descendants, will never dare to look us in the eye or entertain thoughts of rebellion again!"

Pitt made these strong statements.

As for European nations, Prussia expressed its deep regret over the incident and urged restraint, warning against actions that could worsen the situation. Austria suggested that French merchants should control the export of dangerous weapons, especially to unstable regions, and consider the moral implications of arms trade. The Russian government sympathized with the British, suggesting that the French should stop exporting dangerous weapons, especially those easy to conceal. However, the new Tsar also called for a reflection on the British government's actions in Ireland.

Even the Pope issued a statement, hoping that in these tragic times, Irish Catholics would not suffer unfair treatment and calling on the British government to learn from the incident and stop the persecution of Irish Catholics.

As for the French, Lucien Robespierre, in the National Assembly, stated, "What happened in Ireland is not a rebellion but a desperate cry from oppressed and enslaved people. The great French people will forever stand with those oppressed and enslaved around the world, with truth and justice. We are not afraid of the British's loud and empty threats; we will continue to support the Irish people in their struggle for freedom and liberation."

Of course, after leaving the National Assembly, Lucien Robespierre visited the Minister of Public Safety, Joseph Fouch, under heavy protection, to discuss how to combat the possible destructive actions of British terrorists.

In Ireland, the British army had already set out to subdue the areas where the rebels were most likely hiding...

A squadron of British cavalry charged into a remote Irish village. Lieutenant William Tarleton was ordered to clear out the insurgents here. Of course, the insurgents would never admit to being insurgents. So, he told the soldiers that any Irishman who ran upon seeing them was surely a frightened insurgent. Any Irishman who didn't run was a trained and elite insurgent. Any Irishman who claimed to be an insurgent was undoubtedly lawless. Any Irishman who denied being an insurgent was the most dangerous and cunning insurgent. In short, behead them all, burn down their village.

However, as the cavalry charged into the village, they found that not a single person was left. All the doors were securely shut.

"Where are the people? Where did they all go?" Lieutenant Tarleton looked around in confusion.

"I can't believe they all managed to hide underground!" Lieutenant Tarleton muttered. "Dismount, and let's find those scoundrels!"

The cavalry dismounted, and a soldier kicked open a door of a dilapidated house, then - "Boom!"

"Don't enter the house! Set it on fire, burn down the buildings!" Lieutenant Tarleton shouted.

Someone went to the woodpile to prepare to burn the houses, and then they stepped on something - "Boom!" They suddenly had a boot with a foot still inside right in front of them.

At that moment, a gunshot rang out from the distance, and a soldier fell to the ground.

"Insurgents! Insurgents over there!" Lieutenant Tarleton drew his command sword and pointed to the left. Everyone turned to look, and they saw a figure holding a rifle, running toward them.

The cavalrymen began to shoot at the figure, but their guns were ineffective at a distance and their aim was off. So, several of them mounted their horses, drew their sabers, and galloped after the person, and then - "Boom!"

At the same time, several gunshots rang out from another direction.

"Insurgents, insurgents over there!"

A soldier rushed to a corner to avoid the insurgents' gunfire, but then - "Boom!"

Bullets were coming from all directions. However, the insurgents had limited firepower, but their shots caused "Boom" after "Boom." This inflicted significant casualties on the British troops as they tried to evade the gunfire or chase after the insurgents. This continuous "Boom" led to more casualties.

Lieutenant Tarleton realized that if they continued like this, he would only suffer further losses. Additionally, it was getting dark, and with nightfall, who knew how many insurgents would...

Suddenly, an unidentified individual took the initiative, and everyone joined in singing a rhythmic, uplifting song they had learned in their training camp in Toulon:

"Bury the landmines, take up your guns,

Lay out a battlefield far and wide.

Definitely eliminate the invaders,

Arm ourselves to defend our homeland..."

Chapter 168: The British Counterattack

Detective milien and his partner, Daniel, walked into the foyer of the Ministry of Public Safety, showing their credentials to the approaching guards and announcing, "Detective milien and Daniel reporting for duty."

The guard glanced at their credentials, then at their faces, and replied, "Wait here, please." He took their credentials and walked away.

milien and Daniel waited, observing the guard as he approached several other guards, exchanged a few words, and then moved to a counter where a civilian staff member sat. They engaged in a brief conversation, after which the civilian staff member rose and retrieved a large folder from a filing cabinet.

The civilian staff member checked the folder, compared it with the credentials, nodded at the guard, and said something before returning the credentials to him.

The guard approached the two men, handed back their credentials, and pointed at a nearby table, saying, "Do you have any weapons with you? If so, please place them here."

milien nodded and stepped forward, reaching into his coat to pull out a revolver, which he placed on the table. Daniel followed suit, producing two standard pistols from his waist and two folding knives from the pockets on either side of his jacket. He then unbuttoned his coat, revealing a multitude of small pockets inside, each containing knives of varying sizes and shapes.

The staff member, sitting behind the table, didn't seem surprised by this. He simply handed them a piece of paper and said, "Please write down the names and quantities of these items in this column."

milien quickly filled in the form and stood by, waiting for Daniel.

"I told you, when you come to the Ministry of Public Safety, you don't need to bring so many things," milien couldn't help but complain as he watched Daniel diligently complete the form.

After a considerable amount of time, Daniel finished listing all his various belongings. A guard even conducted an additional check before allowing them to proceed to the office area.

Accompanied by two guards, they passed through the foyer, went through another door, crossed a garden, and finally arrived at the rear administrative offices.

The guards escorted them to the door of a small building. Two other guards checked their credentials and then ushered them into the building, taking them to a second-floor office.

One of the guards knocked on the door gently. "Minister, Detectives milien and Daniel are here."

"Please, come in," came the minister's voice from inside.

The guards pushed the door open, and milien and Daniel entered.

"Please, have a seat," Fouch said, glancing at them briefly, indicating the chairs. He continued, "I've read your report. You've discovered..."

"Breaking news: Around 10 AM today, an assassination attempt was made against Congressman Lucien Bonaparte in the heart of Paris. The assailant threw several bombs at a carriage believed to be carrying Congressman Lucien. The attack resulted in dozens of casualties among innocent civilians. However, Congressman Lucien was not in the carriage that day..."

Lucien put down the newspaper and turned to Fouch. "Minister Fouch, can we start tightening the noose now?"

"Not yet," Fouch replied. "We still have hurdles to overcome if we want to expand our powers without causing widespread panic."

"But aren't you worried about being accused of incompetence by others?" Lucien asked.

Fouch chuckled. "In ordinary times, everyone would be eyeing this chair I'm sitting in, ready to pounce. But right now, this chair is scalding hot. Who would dare to sit in it at a time like this? Besides, even if someone is ignorant enough not to know what they're getting into, do you really think they would want to occupy this position in such a dire situation?"

A week later, a fierce battle erupted near the residence of the Director Jean-Francois Leber, where an unidentified armed group attempted to attack his home. They engaged in a firefight with the rapidly arriving Paris police.

"Our police arrived in time and protected Director Leber's family, eliminating at least three assailants," Fouch reported during a parliamentary hearing.

"Fouch, as per your own account, the police were aware of these criminals' activities before the incident. Why couldn't you apprehend them before the attack? Why let them launch the assault?" one of the parliamentarians asked.

Fouch responded, "If you want us to arrest and interrogate suspects on mere suspicion, like the old Committee of Public Safety, then sure, we could have rounded them up beforehand. Is that what you want?"

"That's not what I meant, but... can't you enhance the efficiency of the police department and gather evidence to capture them all?" the parliamentarian inquired.

Fouch laughed heartily, as if he had heard the funniest joke. "Bzons, do you know how much of the budget the entire police system in Paris consumes today? Two-thirds of what the old Committee of Public Safety spent! Do you know how many detectives are in the police force today? Half of what there was during the Committee of Public Safety! In such conditions, we have constraints to abide

by; we cannot arrest and interrogate based on suspicion alone. Frankly, I'm content that my team even identified the suspects in advance.

Of course, if Mr. Bzons is unsatisfied and willing to sit in my chair, I can certainly oblige."

Bzons, of course, knew that these assailants were still at large and might even launch new attacks. Moreover, their decisiveness and experience appeared far beyond the previous ruffraff of royalists. These individuals showed no signs of backing down. In this situation, taking Fouch's position would be synonymous with taking the blame.

"Fouch, that wasn't what I meant," Bzons hastily responded. "I simply hope that the police department can find ways to enhance security. Of course, you're the expert..."

Seeing Bzons backtrack, another parliamentarian stood up and asked, "Minister Fouch, you mentioned earlier that the police department swiftly responded to the situation, engaged with the assailants, and protected Director Leber's family. But why did the attackers manage to breach Director Leber's residence and cause significant damage? I heard that the police suffered even greater losses than the assailants. Is this true?"

Fouch replied, "Indeed. In last night's battle, once we sensed the potential threat, we immediately dispatched all available police forces. However, due to the shortage of police personnel in Paris, the number we could send was not significantly higher than that of the assailants. Furthermore, the assailants were better trained and equipped than our officers. In our police force, due to budget constraints, only police chiefs and above carry revolvers capable of semi-automatic firing. Regular officers are equipped with single-shot pistols, batons, and knives. But the assailants who attacked last night were each armed with two British-made revolvers, as well as 'Bonaparte's Sweet Melon,' a British imitation. I examined the bodies of the three slain assailants, and they all had a common feature, gentlemen. Do you know what it was?"

"I... I have no idea," Bzons replied.

"The second joint of their right index fingers had thick calluses," Fouch revealed. "Those with calluses in this location, please raise your hand. Let everyone see what commonality these individuals share."

Several individuals, including Carnot, raised their hands. They all had military backgrounds.

"Only those who frequently fire guns have calluses in this spot. Gentlemen, these assailants are not what you imagine petty thugs lurking in dark alleys, brandishing knives to rob innocent girls. They are a well-organized, highly trained military force.

In yesterday's engagement, we were essentially sacrificing our own officers, using our blood and lives to block them and protect Director Leber's family. Had it not been for our concern that the nearby National Guard might arrive, these assailants could have wiped out our officers entirely. The skirmish lasted less than ten minutes, and we initially had them surrounded. But in those few minutes, we lost over twenty young men. Gentlemen, what we face now is not a gang of ruffians but an infiltrated army within Paris!"

The entire parliamentary hall erupted in chaos. People were talking loudly to each other, some shouting at Fouch, while others argued among themselves. The presiding officer, Mr. Oudot, pounded his gavel on the table in vain. "Order, order! Those who wish to ask Minister Fouch questions, please do so in an orderly fashion. Maintain order!"

However, the reminder had little effect, as the parliamentarians largely ignored it. After a considerable amount of time, Mr. Oudot's arm grew sore, and the assembly finally managed to regain some semblance of order.

"All right," Oudot said. "It's now the turn of the representatives from District 3 to ask questions. Mr. Grizmann, do you have any questions for Minister Fouch?"

Grizmann stood up and asked, "Minister Fouch, I'd like to know what kind of support you need to capture or eliminate these individuals."

Fouch replied, "Support? Well, if we want to apprehend or eliminate them, we need a lot of support, gentlemen."

Chapter 169: National Army Law Enforcement Task Force

"What do I need?" Fouch asked, "First and foremost, I need money! I can't have my men going up against enemies with single-shot pistols while they wield revolvers. They can't be using knives against opponents armed with handguns and melons!"

"Anything else?" Grzmann inquired.

"In the short term, I need the authority to mobilize the National Guard. They're scattered throughout the neighborhoods, and I need to be able to call upon them. Of course, we can discuss the numbers."

"The National Guard isn't a regular army, and there won't always be people available. Most of the time, they're going about their own business," a parliamentarian chimed in. "Mobilizing them would take time, and if there's a crisis, it might be too late."

"In that case, we can amend the National Guard's regulations and establish a duty roster. There must be a certain number of personnel on standby in fixed locations every day. At least until the situation is resolved, the National Guard must maintain this state of readiness," Fouch replied.

"But can the National Guard really handle these unruly mobs?" Grzmann questioned.

"Yeah, can they? I honestly think they're not as reliable as the police."

"You're absolutely right. Remember last time when a few thousand National Guard members were chased by a couple of hundred insurgents? Just as Minister Fouch said, those rioters are well-trained soldiers, and the numbers of National Guard in each district aren't that large to begin with, and even fewer can be on duty. Even if we add them..."

"That's right... I don't trust the National Guard at all. If there's trouble, they'll probably run faster than us."

The debate continued, and overall, many had reservations about the National Guard.

"Quiet, please, quiet!" Odom raised his gavel again.

After a while, the bustling parliamentary hall gradually fell silent.

"In addition, I hope to establish an independent, well-equipped, highly trained, 24/7-ready police force to handle high-intensity violent incidents like these," Fouch continued.

Fouch made a long list of demands, and it was clear that they wouldn't get immediate responses. It involved too many trade-offs and power allocation issues, so it would take time.

But Fouch wasn't in a hurry. He believed that the longer he waited, the heavier the blow they would deliver, and the heavier their blow, the more advantageous it would be for him. Of course, provided that their targets didn't include Fouch's side.

This waiting period was particularly tough for Lucien. Before, Joseph's constraints on him weren't very severe since his main job was socializing outside. However, after both Fouch and his own people issued safety warnings to him, Lucien no longer dared to visit the ladies and miss the ladies like he used to.

Even when he had to travel and negotiate with important figures, he had to disguise himself and return discreetly as soon as the business was done.

If only it were that simple. What was more frustrating for Lucien was that Joseph started dumping a bunch of random tasks on him once he noticed Lucien's recent increase in leisure time (due to his reduced time spent with his mistresses).

From Joseph's perspective, the tasks he assigned to Lucien weren't overly complicated. When Lucien initially received the assignment from Joseph, he even thought it was a good task. The task was to teach mathematics to Louis and Jerome.

"Hahahahaha..." When Lucien received this task from Joseph, he couldn't help but burst into laughter and found himself grinning as he walked down the street.

"Why are you laughing, Mr. Bonaparte?" Edgar, Lucien's bodyguard, asked.

Lucien replied, "I just remembered something that makes me happy."

"What's making you so happy?"

"I'm going to be a math teacher for my little brother!" Lucien flashed a brilliant smile.

"Mr. Bonaparte is such a good older brother!"

But soon, Lucien discovered that the task wasn't as interesting as he had imagined. Because sometimes, those not-so-bright kids could really get on your nerves.

"Louis, didn't I just explain this problem to you an hour ago?"

"Did you? I don't remember. Are you sure? I can show you the problems I did just now."

"Let me see them."

Louis handed over his practice book. Lucien flipped it open and pointed to a problem. "Louis, you dolt, this problem is exactly the same as the one I explained earlier. It's just rotated!"

"What?... Ah? No wonder it felt a bit familiar when I was doing it... Lucien, you're so cunning!"

"Shut up! Do you understand it now?"

"Yes!"

"Then get it done quickly!" Lucien scolded. "My goodness, how can I have such a dim-witted little brother..."

After scolding him, Lucien looked up and saw Jerome holding a small notebook, standing in front of him. "Lucien, I can't figure out this problem no matter how I think about it. Can you explain it to me?"

After a period of silence, the rioters launched another terrifying attack, this time targeting the parliamentary building. Although their attack didn't succeed, the parliamentarians inside were left shaken.

A few days later, the various parties finally reached a new consensus.

The budget for the police department was significantly increased, and they were granted temporary authority to mobilize the National Guard on duty in various districts. But allowing the police department to have a combat-ready elite force, many people, especially those who had witnessed a few hundred insurgents overwhelming several thousand National Guard members, found this hard to accept. Could they really let Fouch, a Jacobin remnant, control such power? People feared that they wouldn't be able to sleep peacefully.

Nevertheless, Paris needed a force like this, and it had to be under the jurisdiction of the police department. But the control of this force could not be given to the police department. After some negotiations, a compromise was reached.

This force would consist of no more than three hundred individuals, and its organization and command would fall under the War Ministry. The Ministry of War, which already had numerous military units under its command, could easily incorporate this additional force. As for how the police department would utilize them, it was quite simple; an office would be established within the Ministry of Public Safety to oversee this matter.

Thus, this force acquired a unique name: the National Army Law Enforcement Task Force.

Regarding personnel, there were readily available soldiers from the "Red Army," so it was a matter of reassigning troops from there. After suppressing the Royalist uprising earlier, the Red Army had been restored to a thousand-strong force. At this moment, transferring three hundred soldiers was relatively straightforward.

Lieutenant Bruto, also from the "Red Army," became the first commander of this force.

Since these targets had been mostly achieved, Fouch immediately sprang into action. In reality, these insurgents, though well-trained soldiers and supported by Royalists, couldn't have hidden in Paris without leaving any traces.

Fouch had been keeping a close eye on their hideouts. They were mostly holed up in the Saint-Antoine district, a poor neighborhood with minimal police presence, which seemed relatively safe.

Around noon, the Saint-Antoine district began to empty out as large numbers of people left for work elsewhere. At this moment, a squad of soldiers quietly entered the district.

"Everyone, be quiet, and approach stealthily. Do not open fire indiscriminately," Lieutenant Bruto, who led the squad personally, instructed.

Chapter 170: Strengthening Security (1)

When it came to organizing acts of terror, the British were still novices at this point, and the royalists who collaborated with them were far from experts. These royalists could only manage to spread rumors and were not even good at gathering intelligence, let alone carrying out terrorist attacks.

If you were to ask the royalists who they despised and wanted to eliminate the most, it would undoubtedly be the Jacobins, especially the likes of Robespierre. With Robespierre's inclination to keep a low profile and avoid unnecessary risks, the royalists, with a bit of courage, could have easily assassinated him. As for berl, it would have been even easier, as he lived in the chaotic slums.

In fact, the top leaders of the Jacobins, including Robespierre, were not adequately protected from assassination attempts. The royalists did not need to be highly intelligent or skilled; all they required was the courage to face the guillotine, and they could eliminate any of the prominent Jacobin leaders, be it Robespierre, Saint-Just, Danton, or berl. Even someone like Kotte, a sympathizer of the Brissotins, who had received no formal training, could have easily killed Marat.

This meant that the royalists were nothing more than a bunch of ineffective troublemakers with no moral values.

So, the British infiltrators were surrounded by a special task force from the National Army, whose main objective was to maintain law and order.

However, compared to the royalists, the British had more expertise. As soon as they realized they were surrounded, they launched a breakout attempt. If their opponents had been regular police officers or the poorly trained National Guard, they might have succeeded in breaking free.

But this time, they were up against the National Army's Law Enforcement Intervention Group, which specialized in urban warfare tactics. Following their well-presearched battle plan, they swiftly placed personnel mines on the streets and positioned three-pound cannons in the expected direction of the enemy's breakout.

As expected, the British walked right into the trap during their escape. They stepped on landmines, endured cannon fire, and faced gunfire and bombardment from small arms, creating chaos. In the end, the National Army's Law Enforcement Intervention Group suffered only single-digit casualties and annihilated this group of "rebels."

Since the British infiltrators were operating under the guise of royalists in France, the French had to respond. Thus, the Irish launched a new offensive in Ireland while the British were still unprepared. With a significant portion of the British forces diverted overseas, Irish forces saw an opportunity to launch large-scale attacks when the British presence in Ireland was relatively weak.

In the original history, the influence of the French Revolution led to an uprising by the United Irishmen in Ireland. However, due to their lack of combat experience and poor security, their major leaders, like Tone, Tandy, and Russell, were arrested before the uprising, resulting in their failed rebellion. Nevertheless, the remaining United Irishmen continued to rise against British rule.

However, the situation was significantly different in this timeline. Several of their leaders had received training in covert operations at Toulon, and the organization's overall efficiency had improved greatly. Although they couldn't yet compare to the later Leninist political parties, they were no longer the club-like organization they had been in the original history. While not on par with the Vanguard Party, they could now compete with some of the criminal organizations of the future.

It was during their training at Toulon that they met the spiritual mentor of the Irish revolution, Mr. Joseph Bonaparte. Later, after the Irish had fought bravely and achieved independence, Joseph's

image was featured on the first edition of currency issued by the independent Irish government, appearing on the gold coin worth one Irish pound.

Joseph's most significant contribution to the Irish cause was not just providing weapons and training; it was his analysis of the situation in Ireland. He pointed out the correct path for the Irish to achieve independence:

"Most Irish people are farmers, and the majority of the Irish population lives in rural areas. This is different from England, where cities are the economic centers and the main sources of power. However, in Ireland, cities are merely appendages to the countryside. Without cities, the lives of most people will go on. In England, without cities, the entire economic life would collapse. But in Ireland, the cities are consumers, not producers. In a sense, in war, English cities are sources of strength, while Irish cities are burdens.

So, the Irish revolution must be a rural revolution. Whoever controls the countryside in Ireland can truly control Ireland. Therefore, there is no rush to attack cities, to carry the burden of cities. What's in the Irish cities? They cannot produce cannons or muskmelons. The colonizers will not allow them to have such capabilities.

So, let them stay in the hands of the English for now. We first need to control all the rural areas, and let those English in the cities be surrounded by the vast Irish countryside. They won't get anything in the cities; they will have to enter the countryside, the favorable territory for our people's war. I personally believe that this is the correct path for Ireland to achieve independence."

These ideas were accepted by the Irish, and at the first All-Ireland Assembly of the United Irishmen, held in Toulon, it was established as the "revolutionary general line": "Surround the city with the countryside and seize independence through armed struggle."

So, even during the phase when British forces were weak in Ireland, the Irish didn't blindly target cities. Initially, they took advantage of British arrogance and their eagerness for retaliation to lure them into the countryside, into the predetermined battleground. Then, they concentrated their superior forces to inflict damage and even annihilate the British forces.

As the British suffered losses and became reluctant to leave their fortified positions, the United Irishmen quickly filled the power vacuum, eliminating those who remained loyal to the British or forcing them to retreat to the British strongholds. This meant the British lost control of the entire Irish countryside.

The brutal British rule in Ireland, in a sense, had been helpful to the Irish revolution. For years, the British had looted the Irish and confiscated their land, placing most Irish land in the hands of the English. Therefore, in Ireland, the majority of landowners were English, or even if they weren't English, they were stooges of the English.

This made land reform in Ireland relatively straightforward, as national and class conflicts were in perfect alignment. The revolutionary ranks had no difficulty in achieving ideological unity. Once British forces were confined to their urban strongholds, land reform in the countryside became straightforward. Ireland was now a whirlwind of land redistribution, and during this time, the United Irishmen swiftly established their organizations in each village.

The British were not oblivious to these "Irish rebels' " actions. Such large-scale movements could never remain entirely secret. However, the British did not view the situation with great concern.

They either thought the Irish rebels were powerless because the largest city they had captured was just a small town, or they ridiculed the rebels for being "backward country bumpkins" who didn't know to capture cities first. They couldn't comprehend why these rebels were in such a hurry to divide the spoils before winning the war.

"Once our large army arrives, we'll be able to sweep them away immediately." In reality, despite being besieged in various towns and strongholds, the British forces' morale was still quite good. Of course, this depended on not letting them venture into the countryside.

The British were efficient in mobilizing, and after the Parliament approved special appropriations, they quickly raised an army of over 40,000 soldiers. After about a month of training, they were deployed to Ireland. The Duke of Norfolk became the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and would lead this army to restore order.

The British troops landed in Dublin, and the Duke of Norfolk took residence in the recently restored Viceroy's Residence. He first inspected the security measures of the residence to ensure that the previous attack would not be repeated.

After his inspection, the Duke of Norfolk was dissatisfied with the current security measures at the Viceroy's Residence. He immediately issued new instructions: first, the square in front of the Viceroy's Residence was designated a restricted military area, and no one was allowed to enter without special permission. Second, some houses near the Viceroy's Residence were considered a significant security risk due to their proximity; thus, they needed to be demolished. In short, no other structures should exist within 300 feet of the Viceroy's Residence. Finally, the number of garrison troops at the Viceroy's Residence had to be increased to ensure security.

After addressing the security issues at the Viceroy's Residence, the Duke of Norfolk ordered the commencement of the campaign against the Irish rebels.