

## The Fox 171

### Chapter 171: Strengthening Security (2)

Before setting foot in Ireland, the Duke of Norfolk had done some careful preparations. He studied previous battles between the rebels and the British forces and identified a significant weakness in the rebels' strategy. They lacked the capability to assault and hold fortified positions, a vulnerability the Duke believed the British could exploit.

Furthermore, the British had learned some hard lessons from previous engagements, primarily stemming from their dispersed forces and falling into ambushes. However, these encounters also revealed the rebels' inferior combat capabilities. Their attacks mainly relied on hit-and-run tactics and the use of landmines, hardly ever resulting in a full annihilation of British forces, even against a single platoon.

Of course, the Duke also recognized the rebels' advantages. Most Irish people supported the rebels, at least in spirit, and even some who still served the United Kingdom in various capacities sympathized with the cause.

The Irish might be unreliable, but in many areas, the British had to make use of them. This gave the rebel sympathizers an edge, particularly in gathering intelligence.

"Ladies and gentlemen, looking back at our previous battles, when we strike, if our forces remain concentrated, we can't locate those rebels. However, once we disperse our troops, we fall victim to superior rebel ambushes. If we can't address this issue, our efforts might be in vain," the Duke of Norfolk addressed his officers in a pre-deployment military meeting.

"In fact, the Irish problem is not primarily a military one; at least, not the main problem. The main issue is political. To solve the Irish rebellion problem, we need a combination of political and military means. In fact, it's seven parts political and three parts military.

What are these seven parts of politics? Firstly, we need to eliminate enemy spies. If every move we make is under their watchful eyes, while we remain blind to their actions, we become both blind and deaf. A blind and deaf person, no matter how strong, cannot win against anyone. So, our first step is to blind them. Then, we need to find a way to enlist those among them who are willing to cooperate with us, to act as our eyes. That's how we can achieve real victory.

Secondly, our actions must be cautious, and we must avoid falling into the enemy's traps. Look at this map, I've divided the whole of Ireland into three categories.

The first category is the areas under our complete control, like where we are now. I call these areas security zones, marked in green on the map. In these zones, the enemy mainly operates underground, and their main method of sabotage is stealing various secrets.

The second category includes areas where both our forces and the rebels' can penetrate deeply, such as the outskirts of the cities we control. These areas are close to us, and our response time is short. While the enemy has some presence in these areas, their actions are limited in scope. I call these semi-security zones, marked in orange.

The third category is the rebels' controlled areas, mostly rural and far from our strongholds, challenging to control. These are the rebels' strongholds. In these areas, the rebels can operate

openly, while our sympathizers are forced to operate underground if they enter. I call this the non-security zone.

Gentlemen, our tasks are different in these different zones. In the security zones, our main task is to root out spies and make the rebels blind.

We need to establish a strict system of secrecy to avoid leaks while strengthening security and eliminating spies. We must enforce a strict system of identification and residence registration. Everyone in the city must carry identity documents, which we can call 'Citizen's Pass.' Irish citizens holding this 'Citizen's Pass' must have sponsors, allowing them to vouch for each other. If anyone is a spy or has connections to spies, all their sponsors will be prosecuted together.

Additionally, we should organize Irish sympathizers in these areas, granting them some authority and benefits to help us deal with Irish spies, even utilizing them in semi-security and non-security zones to aid our operations.

Gentlemen, our forces are limited, and we have many areas to control. The United Kingdom needs to contend with France and expand overseas while suppressing this rebellion. If the United Kingdom has to deploy a massive army to crush the rebellion, even if we win, the strategic cost could be too high.

So, don't dream of mobilizing thirty or fifty thousand troops from home to suppress the rebellion. While not entirely impossible, if it comes to that, the United Kingdom will pay a higher price elsewhere. If it comes to that, all of us, including me, will become a laughingstock in the entire United Kingdom due to our incompetence. Utilizing the Irish against the Irish is the most economical and rational approach. I hope you all understand that.

In semi-security zones, we need to gradually reinforce our presence, establish more strongholds, expand our control, protect those who support us, and strongly combat those leaning toward the rebels.

In these areas, we need to construct a robust fortress in every village and station troops. Between several small strongholds, establish a large one to quickly support the others. Build roads for easy mutual support between these strongholds. Additionally, create blockades and ditches to impede enemy mobility.

Ultimately, we need to make the people in this area look up and see our watchtowers, look down and see our blockades. Our streets should be our own, and they should encounter our reconnaissance teams shortly after stepping out. Only then can we consolidate these areas and transform semi-security zones into security zones.

As for non-security zones, our primary focus will be on military action.

Gentlemen, the rebels are incapable of confronting our forces head-on. In non-security zones, we must maintain large military groups and avoid dispersing our forces. Our objective is not just the rebels themselves but the foundation of their existence. The rebels can survive because the local Irish support them. These Irish people support the rebels because they believe it is beneficial to them.

Therefore, our actions aim to persuade them, make them realize that the rebels cannot protect them and will only bring them suffering. Once they no longer support the rebels, the rebels will be

helpless. So, gentlemen, our guiding principle in non-security zones is to make the Irish people there fearful and miserable.

In simple terms, it means..."

At this point, the Duke of Norfolk stood up, leaned forward, and placed his hands on the table, his eyes gleaming with determination.

"Kill anything we see that moves, whether it's a man, woman, or child. Burn down every structure we encounter, whether it's a mansion or a hut. Take everything valuable we can carry, be it money, goods, or even a single chicken.

Gentlemen, this is a necessary political action, it's our policy! You must strictly enforce this policy, without hesitation or so-called compassion. Any wavering or knightly spirit is treason against His Majesty the King and the United Kingdom, understood?"

All the officers stood up simultaneously, replying loudly, "Understood!"

"Very well," the Duke of Norfolk said. "Please be seated. Now, let me explain the objectives of our operation. The goal of this operation is to instill tremendous fear in the non-security zones, weakening the rebels' strength and allowing us to consolidate security zones and buy time for the semi-security zones.

Gentlemen, the more you kill, burn, and loot in the non-security zones, the easier it will be for us to consolidate the security and semi-security zones. We've named this operation 'Noose.' Now, let General Anderson lay out the specific battle arrangements..."

Following this meeting, a swift deployment of 40,000 British troops began, dividing into eight teams departing from Dublin to sweep eastward. According to their operational plan, they would first encircle a vast rural area to the east of Dublin, tightening the noose progressively, much like a strangulation. British forces would destroy everything in the areas they passed through.

The Duke of Norfolk believed that if this operation succeeded, it would deliver a severe blow to the Irish, potentially reversing the entire situation.

Regarding the operation, he felt that his chances of success were relatively high. Firstly, only a limited number of senior officers were aware of the entire plan, minimizing the risk of leaks. Secondly, even if the rebels somehow discovered the plan's purpose, he didn't believe they could relocate so many rural inhabitants in such a short time. Now, the Duke felt he could simply await the good news at the Governor's Mansion.

### Chapter 172: Strengthening Security (3)

"The first major sweep by the British brought us immense losses, mainly because we underestimated the brutality of the struggle. We were deluded by previous victories, including me, and the leadership, including me, bears an undeniable responsibility for this failure.

In fact, we had seen the British tactics before. During battle training in the Toulon camp, Comrade Joseph, when playing the role of the British, used similar methods to inflict significant losses on us.

Despite this experience, many of us, including myself, underestimated these tactics when facing the enemy's first major sweep. It resulted in significant losses for the people and the revolutionary

forces. This, I must say, is nothing short of a crime..." - Russell's "Memoirs of the Revolutionary War"

After the Duke of Norfolk's army launched a massive operation, the Irish United Federation was initially unprepared. The terrain in central Ireland was mostly flat, with few hills, and extensive forests were scarce due to long-term development. This made it exceptionally challenging to relocate the population.

Joseph had proposed some solutions for them during their battle training in Toulon, such as digging tunnels. However, the tunneling plan was not executed effectively. The frequent rainfall in Ireland made the soil unsuitable for digging, and the high water table in many areas made it impossible to dig tunnels without water seeping in. Only on slightly elevated hills could they manage to dig simple hiding holes.

However, the people were not entirely without refuge. Due to the abundant rainfall in Ireland, there were swamps all over the plains. These swamps were quite dangerous, with deep and bottomless mud pits. For those unfamiliar with these areas, one misstep could lead to a dire farewell to this beautiful world.

But if prepared meticulously in advance, taking refuge in the swamps was not impossible. This required significant risk and thorough preparations in terms of personnel and supplies.

So, after the battle training in Toulon, Joseph also proposed the idea of using swamps to shelter the displaced people. After discussions, many believed this approach was quite feasible. However, almost no one had made serious preparations for this before the major sweep.

When the noose of the major sweep began to tighten, the Irish people started to suffer significant losses.

Lieutenant Taveton saw the same Irish village that had left him with nightmarish memories during their last encounter. This time, he didn't come with just a cavalry unit; he had a thousand-strong army with cavalry, infantry, and artillery.

"Artillery, target locked. Prepare for incendiary shelling!" Lieutenant Taveton received the command. Yes, incendiary shells. After learning from their previous encounters, the British had no intention of entering the villages. They started with incendiary shells, burning down the entire village. In the blaze, most of the village's defensive structures became ineffective.

In this era, there were no white phosphorus incendiary bombs, napalm, or thermite grenades like those in the future - except for some secret laboratories. These so-called incendiary shells were essentially iron balls heated until they were red-hot and then fired at the target using cannons to start a fire.

The effectiveness of these incendiary shells was far from the ruthless modern versions. They were primarily used by the navy; the army seldom used such tactics. However, the houses in Irish villages were mostly made of wood, making these incendiary shells quite suitable.

As the artillery barrage began, the village started to emit smoke. Soon, orange flames erupted, and in these villages, the houses were close to each other, making it easy for the flames to spread from one building to another. The entire village quickly went up in flames.

There were no people or animals running out of the burning village. It seemed the villagers had already evacuated.

Near the village, there was a not particularly large forest, the source of firewood for the villagers. If the villagers had fled there, this forest should have been the most likely hiding place. When Lieutenant Taveton came here last time, he had only a cavalry unit, so there was little he could do about it. If he had ventured into the forest that time, he would have faced an even worse fate.

But this time was different. Before a thousand-strong army, this forest was too small. Moreover, Irish forests were different from some forests in the south, relatively open and not easy for concealment.

Lieutenant Taveton received orders. His cavalry would intercept the villagers near the forest, preventing their escape. Meanwhile, infantry soldiers in skirmish formation entered the forest.

Soon, shouts, gunshots, and the sounds of grenades echoed in the forest. Clearly, a fierce battle was taking place within. Shortly, Lieutenant Taveton saw a group of people running out of the forest aimlessly, scattering in all directions.

"They are Irish rebels! Chase them down, kill them all!" Lieutenant Taveton ordered. He spurred his horse and drew his revolver, giving chase.

Many of those fleeing were women and children, but the British cavalry cared little about that. They pursued and used revolvers, cavalry charges, and sabers to quickly eliminate these "rebels."

By now, the battle within the forest had also ended. The British army had engaged in a fierce battle with the "well-trained Irish rebels." They suffered considerable casualties but managed to kill numerous rebels, including nearly twenty elite rebels armed with revolvers and rifles. The "well-trained male rebels," wielding dangerous weapons like pitchforks, numbered over a hundred.

After this battle, most of what could burn in the village had been consumed by the flames, and the fire had gradually died down. On the commander's order, soldiers decapitated all the rebels, whether male, female, young, or old, and then impaled their heads on the ruins of the village to deter those who dared to resist the rule of the British Empire.

This scene played out in many other Irish villages. According to statistics from the Irish United Federation, during the British's sweeping operation, a total of 171 villages were burned, more than 10,000 people were killed, and over a thousand Irish independence fighters were sacrificed. The founder and chairman of the United Federation, Mr. Tone, also met a glorious end due to the treachery of informants. It can be said that the Irish people suffered a heavy blow in this campaign, and if it weren't for the timely support from the beacon of freedom and democracy in all of Europe, Big Brother France, Irish history would have added another heroic lament.

Seizing the opportunity of the United Irishmen's significant weakening, the Duke of Norfolk swiftly implemented his iron-fisted system. In the cities, a new identification system was introduced, and anyone leaving home without a "civilian ID" would face severe punishment. First-time offenders would be flogged, second-time offenders would be sentenced to hard labor, and if there was a third time, they would face the gallows.

The new parish system was also enforced. As the revolution was stifled, some less steadfast opportunists began to defect to the British side. Many who leaned toward the United Federation or worked as informants for the United Federation were sent to the gallows, and those who remained

had effectively severed their connections. According to the successor chairman, Mr. Russell, "We have lost almost all of our work in the cities."

"How long can the flag of Irish independence continue to fly?" This question weighed heavily on the hearts of every United Irishmen warrior.

At this most critical moment, the remaining high-ranking members of the United Federation held an emergency meeting on a new French high-speed communication ship called the "Independence." It was said that a mysterious French friend also attended the meeting. During the meeting, this French friend offered some suggestions to these steadfast Irish warriors and assured them that they had not failed. The support from the French people would be even greater than it was now, including weapons and military advisors.

On this ship, the United Irishmen re-elected a new leadership structure and formulated their plans for the next phase.

"In this major sweep, we suffered enormous losses. The blood of United Irishmen flowed like a river, and the bodies of the Irish people piled up like mountains. However, revolutionaries cannot be killed! Cut off one head, and two more will grow in its place." - Russell's "Memoirs of the Revolutionary War"

#### Chapter 173: The Greek Fire

Just five days after the British's first major sweep in Paris, the renowned "Science and Truth Gazette" published an exceptionally lengthy news report with the headline: "Eyewitness to Hell Reports from the Battlefields of Ireland."

This article stretched over thirty thousand words, a remarkable length for the times when newspapers, due to printing constraints, were typically no larger than a folio. To accommodate this extensive piece, the Gazette had to thicken its issue to book-like proportions.

In this article, the author, a certain Mr. Verfou, detailed his firsthand observations in Ireland, particularly the ruthless British campaign in the Irish countryside and the horrifying atrocities committed.

French people, in general, had no particular fondness for the English, so they were more prone to believe any negative news involving them. However, even by French standards, the level of brutality depicted in this report surpassed all imagination.

Soon, further evidence surfaced, including British military reports. The British army, eager to flaunt its "achievements" and strike fear into the Irish, had no reservations in their reports and boasted of their "efforts" in the "hanging operations." These boasted "achievements" inadvertently confirmed the seemingly exaggerated accounts in the Science and Truth Gazette.

Two days later, the French Directory held an emergency meeting and declared increased support for the Irish people's struggle. Simultaneously, the Pope generously donated a million francs to aid the "suffering Irish brothers" and denounced British atrocities, urging all Catholic Europeans to lend a helping hand to the "suffering Irish brethren."

Joseph understood that the Irish revolution was at a critical juncture, and if the Irish couldn't hold out, his future profits would dwindle. So, this time, upon receiving the funds, he surprisingly, for the

first time, didn't divert the money into covert operations but genuinely loaded whatever could be bought onto ships headed for Ireland. Of course, there was no shortage of "grease" along the way.

In addition to weapons, more advisors were dispatched to Ireland. They would experiment with new weaponry and tactics in Ireland, utilizing both British and Irish blood.

Military advisor Arnold de Verfou boarded a swift clipper ship bound for Ireland at this time. He was a tall young man in his twenties, boasting exceptionally long arms and hands that seemed a bit oversized. In a later era, he would likely have been a star player on the basketball court. He hailed from a fallen noble family but had embraced the revolution. His brother Victor was the author of the extensive article in the Science and Truth Gazette.

"Mr. Verfou, there have been some recent changes at sea, and I thought it best to inform you and the others," said Captain Morel as Verfou and a few others boarded the ship.

"What's going on? What's changed?" Verfou inquired.

"Recently, the English have designed some ships specifically for intercepting us," Captain Morel replied.

"For intercepting us? Those are their warships, right? Their warships are so slow, even doing six knots isn't easy," a young man named Lclerc scoffed.

"No, not warships. Ships like ours, clippers. The English have replicated some clippers," Morel said.

"Clipper ships? But clippers can't carry cannons," Verfou questioned.

Clipper ships couldn't accommodate cannons due to their low decks and excessive rolling, rendering it impractical to mount artillery. If not for this, Joseph would have used them for more profitable ventures rather than transporting goods.

"They may lack cannons, but they aren't unarmed," Morel corrected. "In the days before artillery, were there no pirates at sea? Back then, the Vikings rowed their longships, armed with just an axe, and still managed to plunder at sea."

"Are you saying the English are like Vikings, using boarding tactics to intercept us?" Verfou asked.

"Not exactly boarding tactics. They approach us, and then they hurl 'small melons' at us. We, of course, respond with 'small melons' of our own. But if it ever escalates to boarding, it would be detrimental for us. Our ships are mainly for cargo, with fewer crew members. But their ships carry no cargo, only soldiers."

"Have we suffered any losses?" Verfou inquired.

"Yes, Durand, the one-eyed Dutchman, encountered an English clipper a few days ago. At first, he thought it was one of ours because the ship looked identical to ours, even flying the tricolor flag. The ship approached them, and the people aboard waved at them, as if there was some business to discuss."

"And then?" Verfou asked.

"Then? Well, the one-eyed Dutchman fell for it. He allowed the enemy to approach, thinking it was a friendly ship. If not for the other side's lack of patience and them throwing an unlit 'small melon' first, the one-eyed Dutchman would have been a goner. Once the ship was exposed, it raised the

English flag and exchanged 'small melons' with the Dutchman's crew. Fortunately, Durand's ship was returning at the time, nearly empty, which made it a bit faster. He managed to escape, but four of his crewmen were killed, and he himself was wounded."

"So, gentlemen, if any English ships appear, I hope you are prepared for battle," Captain Morel warned.

"We understand," the passengers replied in unison.

This news left Verfou excited yet nervous. Although he was not a novice on the battlefield, having served in Napoleon's Italian army and earned two medals, his experience had been on land. This time, they were at sea.

But perhaps due to the limited number of English clipper ships and the vastness of the sea, Verfou's group encountered no other ships during their journey.

Joseph had learned about the English clipper ships and the potential threat they posed. Although they hadn't caused significant damage yet, he knew this couldn't be underestimated.

For now, their losses were minimal because the English were still uncertain about the effectiveness of this tactic. Once they realized its potential, with the British shipbuilding capabilities and a large reservoir of sailors, they could quickly flood the seas with clipper ships. As Captain Morel mentioned, these English clippers didn't need to carry cargo, so they had an advantage in combat.

"Maybe I should prepare a specialized weapon for clipper ships," Joseph pondered.

Originally, Joseph didn't plan to invest much research into clipper ships. He knew that ultimately, steamships would replace them. Continuing to invest in this technology tree didn't make sense. However, given the current situation, he had to dedicate more time and effort to improving clipper ships.

"Clearly, clipper ships can't carry cannons. They can't even accommodate crossbows because of the heavy rolling. Besides 'small melons,' what else can we use?" Joseph considered several options, eventually landing on the idea of "Greek fire."

Greek fire, invented by the Eastern Roman Empire, was a liquid incendiary weapon that could burn on water, primarily used in naval battles. In essence, it was the world's earliest flamethrower.

"As long as we can extend the flamethrower's range beyond 'small melons,' our clipper ships will regain the upper hand against the English. The situation will be that whoever can catch us can't beat us, and those who can beat us can't catch us," Joseph reasoned.

Joseph had been aware of the properties of Greek fire since before. Although it wasn't initially a priority, it seemed that due to the current strategic significance of clipper ships, he had to invest more time into this project.

"Without cannons, Greek fire is our best option. And I'll make sure to adapt it for land use as well," Joseph resolved.

He assigned the task to Armand Lavasie, instructing him to create a system capable of shooting Greek fire, emphasizing that it shouldn't take up too much space, especially the space intended for cargo. Joseph was willing to provide substantial rewards for each ship outfitted with this weapon.



Lavasie mulled it over and, as was customary, began haggling with Joseph. They eventually reached a new agreement: if Lavasie could develop a functional Greek fire system for use in combat within a month, he would receive two hundred francs per ship; within a month and a half, the reward would be one hundred francs per ship; exceeding a month and a half, it would decrease to fifty francs per ship. If the project extended past two and a half months with no results, the reward would be canceled, and each day of delay would incur a ten-franc penalty.

With this agreement in place, Lavasie set to work with renewed determination, believing he had secured better terms for himself. However, he didn't realize that the Greek fire system used on the ships, with some modifications, could be adapted for land warfare. Joseph had a different plan in mind when that became apparent, the promised rewards for Lavasie would become redundant.

In the end, Lavasie was the last to understand the true implications of the deal, but Joseph had already outwitted him.

#### Chapter 174: Regrouping

Verlaine and others rowed the boat, towing a series of boxes, silently approaching the shore. In the glow of the fire beneath the cliffs, they saw several people approaching.

"Cut off one head," someone over there said.

"Two heads will grow in its place," Verlaine replied.

The code was confirmed, and both sides quickened their pace to meet each other, hands tightly clasped.

"Comrades, we've finally been waiting for you!"

"Comrades, we're late, and we apologize for the hardship you've endured!"

"Not late, not late, we're glad you're here!"

After exchanging a few words, they together dragged the floating crates ashore.

"What's the situation now? How's the team's morale?" Verlaine asked while dragging a heavy crate with a slender resistance fighter beside him.

"Morale is not a problem; we all want revenge and can't sleep at night just thinking about it. The only issue is that most of the experienced comrades sacrificed themselves in previous battles, and many people don't even know how to handle a rifle."

The voice of the resistance fighter was clear, almost like a child's.

Verlaine asked, "Can you handle this? It's quite heavy." At the same time, he added some extra strength.

The little guy seemed to feel doubted and belittled, so he also exerted more effort. Together, they dragged the crate next to the bonfire. In the firelight, Verlaine saw the appearance of the "comrade" who had just helped him with the crate a thin, small figure with a hint of peach fuzz on the lips, looking no more than twelve or thirteen.

At that moment, another larger figure arrived at the bonfire, dragging an even bigger crate. In the firelight, Verlaine recognized his Irish friend from his time in Toulon.

"Kevin!" Verlaine exclaimed.

"Arnold! I didn't expect it to be you! When I was dragging the crate just now, I saw your back, and I felt like... It's great to work with you again!" Kevin gave Verlaine a bear hug, almost leaving him breathless.

"Alright, Kevin, let go of me. I'm not a little girl."

Kevin released Verlaine.

"How are Glenn and Jeff?" Verlaine asked.

Kevin fell silent, and Verlaine instantly had a bad feeling.

"They both sacrificed themselves not long ago," Kevin said in a low voice.

At this moment, the child heard them talking and saw two more people coming with crates, so he went to help. Verlaine asked Kevin, "How did you let such a young child join the team?"

"Oh..." Kevin sighed.

The child had sharp ears and heard their conversation. He turned around and said, "What's wrong with being a kid? Can't kids seek revenge on the British? When the British were killing the Irish, did they spare the children?"

"He's Glenn's little brother, the only one left in their family," Kevin explained.

Verlaine gazed at the child's innocent face, where he could see a faint resemblance to Glenn.

"Though Theo is young, he's clever and capable. He's a qualified young soldier," Kevin added.

"If you can remove the 'little' from that, I'd be very happy," the child grumbled and turned to help others with the crates.

"It's getting light; we need to hurry," Verlaine said, glancing at the sky and turning to Kevin.

Before daybreak, they had brought all the crates ashore, loaded them onto wagons, and left the coast.

In a village near a large swamp, Verlaine distributed weapons to the revitalized guerrilla fighters of Kilken County. The county brigade had been rebuilt after the recent sweep, and now they had more than eighty members, not significantly fewer than before. According to Kevin, if they kept expanding, they could easily recruit more people.

"However, we don't have many veteran members left here. Most of them either sacrificed themselves during the resistance or in the swamps while leading everyone, paving the way. Right now, it's mainly me, Elliott, and West among the old members. The rest of them hardly know anything. Their training will depend on you," Kevin said.

"By the way, most of these guys don't speak French or English, only Irish. While I've learned a bit of Irish and West is here to help, it's still quite inconvenient," Verlaine noted.

For instance, when one fool accidentally reversed the fuse on a landmine, Verlaine was about to scold him but realized a significant problem: he didn't know how to swear in Irish. So, he yelled in French and then looked at West.

West shrugged and said, "Sorry, Arnold, you spoke too fast. There were parts I didn't catch clearly, and some phrases I don't know how to translate. Well, anyway..."

West turned to the guy who made the mistake and said, "Verlaine instructor thinks you're a fool!"

So, with this brief and concise sentence, West translated Verlaine's one-minute-plus tirade and insults.

However, these new recruits were genuinely committed to learning. Their grasp of the skills taught by Verlaine on the first day was indeed quite poor, but by the second day, their understanding had noticeably improved. They devoted all available time to practicing. Soon, Verlaine discovered another problem: he lacked vocabulary not only for swearing but also for praising people.

During this month, these new fighters learned from Verlaine the art of pistol and rifle shooting, landmine placement, setting various traps, as well as various fieldwork, demolitions, and explosive techniques.

After about a month, the emergency training of the county brigade concluded, and it was time to put what they had learned into practice.

During this period, the British were not idle. They had largely enforced the "loyalty certificates" in the cities, organized a tight neighborhood watch system, and set up garrisons and strongholds in areas close to the cities.

In an era without radios or machine guns, controlling a large area with just a guard tower and a platoon of soldiers was quite impossible. So, every garrison required a significant number of British troops, at least a company. However, if every stronghold had to be manned by that many soldiers, it would consume too many resources. Therefore, the British devised a solution by combining authentic British troops with Irish police.

The British stationed the Irish police, dubbed the "Irish Constabulary," in villages near the garrisons, forming neighborhood watch posts and maintaining order and safety committees. These Irish police officers were responsible for conveying British orders and collecting various fees.

The British knew very well that putting the power to collect fees into the hands of these "Irish police" meant that they would take advantage of the situation to exploit the population and line their own pockets. This might lead to widespread dissatisfaction, but, as the Duke of Norfolk, the Viceroy of Ireland, asked, "If these 'Irish police' don't act like this, can they be trusted?"

The Duke's meaning was quite clear: if an Irish person cannot gain unreasonable benefits from the English, why should they serve the English? If they are not foolish, they must be up to something. Fools are not worth considering because they will only mess things up and have no value; as for those who have ulterior motives or, to be more explicit, spies for the guerrilla side, shouldn't they be quickly found and hanged?

Therefore, if any Irish police officer did not exploit the population, did not embezzle and extort, they were better off being arrested and hanged. The worst case would be mistakenly killing a few Irish fools, but what's the big deal? The main drawback would be that it would raise the average intelligence of the Irish people slightly.

On the contrary, if the Irish police officers exploited the people and were corrupt, what would it matter? This meant that they would become enemies with most Irish people, which, in turn, meant that everything they did depended on the English. So, these were the ones to trust.

With such reasoning in place, one could easily imagine the kind of individuals in the new "Irish Constabulary." The resistance, on the other hand, believed that to break the British strategy of sweeps, imprisonments, and consolidation, they had to target these Irish turncoats.

Additionally, these "Irish Constabulary" members were relatively poorly equipped and trained, and their combat spirit couldn't compare to genuine British troops. First, striking against them would disrupt British plans, deter the turncoats, and help train the guerrilla force.

In a relatively short time, a "Irish Constabulary" post became the first target of the newly revitalized Kilkenny County Brigade.

#### Chapter 175: Night Raid

Early in the morning, Matt got up and prepared to leave the village with his father. They were headed to the fields to hill the potatoes. This was a busy time for farming. The potato plants in the fields had already started to bloom, indicating that the tubers beneath the soil were growing. Hilling the potatoes at this stage was crucial to ensure good yields.

A group of farmers gathered at the village entrance. The village was surrounded by a ditch about twelve to thirteen feet wide and more than two feet deep. Wooden stakes were driven into the bottom of the ditch, and there was about half a foot of water at the bottom, thanks to seeping groundwater and rain.

At the village entrance, a collapsible wooden bridge spanned the ditch. Several Irish police officers from the garrison were stationed there, checking the people leaving the village.

The British had forcibly gathered people from nearby villages into this one for "management," as they claimed. However, it had created difficulties for the local residents. Some families had homes in this village, but those forced to move here had no proper shelter and had to make do with makeshift huts of branches and mud.

The other challenge was the distance to their fields, which was far from the village. The British imposed curfews, so people couldn't leave the village until it was nearly dawn, and in the afternoon, the bridge was raised, preventing those returning late from entering the village. Missing the curfew meant being considered suspicious and subjected to investigation. Even if someone could prove they were not involved with the rebels and it was their first offense, they would be whipped. A second offense would result in a year of hard labor in a quarry or similar place. If they survived the year and reoffended, they would be hanged.

This put the lives of nearly all the villagers in the hands of the "Black Dogs," as they called the Irish police. These officers deliberately delayed opening the bridge in the morning and closed it early in the evening. Those who couldn't get in had to bribe them for entry.

Matt's family's field was about four miles from the village. Even if they rushed, they could work for only an hour in the field before having to hurry back to make it before the bridge closed. However, Matt's father had recently given a bribe to their captain, Captain Hulahan, which had bought them some leniency.

Captain Hulahan was infamous for his greed and ruthlessness. In just one month after arriving, he had sent ten people to the gallows and over twenty to the quarries through various means. Through such methods, he made everyone in the village bow to him.

After Matt's father had given him a sum of money, Hulahan issued a loan note, allowing them to return later each day. He didn't specify how late "later" was, though. He just said, "I'm Irish too. How can I not know it's the time when potatoes are flowering? If your crops fail and you can't repay what you owe, when will you ever be able to? Don't worry; now you're working for me. Why would I make things difficult for myself?"

Hulahan didn't cause any more trouble on this matter after that. Even if people returned late, they were allowed in as long as they owed him money. It was said that Hulahan's subordinates had suggested that it wasn't safe, and they should leave the farmers to fend for themselves in the open fields until morning. Hulahan had brushed it off, saying, "The rebels are finished now. What's there to be afraid of? Besides, Robert's mounted police patrol at night sometimes. If these folks run into them, it'll be trouble, big or small."

Many people in the village had taken a page from Hulahan's book. They, too, had used his connections to secure some leniency and started returning late.

On their way to the field, Matt passed through the village where he used to live. It had been burned to the ground. He remembered that when they were forcibly relocated, an old man from the village had clung to a large tree near the village entrance, vowing never to leave. A British soldier had used his bayonet to fulfill that promise. To this day, there was a deep mark from the bayonet on that tree.

Matt's family's field was right beside the abandoned village, and the potato plants were growing beautifully, with tiny buds forming on the stems. In another ten days, the field would be covered in white flowers.

This was a critical time for the potatoes, and if they didn't tend to them properly, it could affect the yield. Failing to repay Hulahan's loan, let alone the rent to Lord Anderson, was not an option.

The farmers worked in the field. Since they were allowed to return late, they worked a bit longer. They toiled until the setting sun painted the sky red, then started packing up to head back.

As they reached the village entrance, the sun had set, and the moon had risen. A group of farmers, each carrying various tools, walked to the village entrance. If some bourgeois with a touch of romanticism saw this scene, they might have recited a verse like "Awakening at dawn to reclaim the wilderness, returning under the moonlight with hoes in hand."

However, no one was in a leisurely mood. They were all waiting for Hulahan to lay the bridge for them to enter the village.

A narrow plank, much narrower than in the morning and only wide enough for one person at a time, was passed over the ditch and placed on the bridge. Several Irish police officers, holding knives and torches, stood there.

"One at a time, come over here. Put down your tools and raise your hands for a search," one of them ordered.

The villagers, one by one, walked over the narrow plank, left their tools on the ground, and raised their hands for a search. The officers would search one person, then allow the next one to come over.

After a while, Matt's father was next in line. However, someone suddenly cut in front of him, stepping onto the plank.

"Who's this?" Matt whispered.

The person was carrying a hoe, and the brim of their hat slightly covered their face. They calmly walked over, placed the hoe on the ground, and raised their hands for the search by the Black Dogs. The officers moved to remove their hat, but in that instant, the person's raised hands dropped swiftly. Their wrists flicked, and two knives appeared out of nowhere. They thrust the knives into the throats of the two officers searching them.

That person was Verfuh. Having killed these four Irish police officers, he felt a sudden danger. This feeling had saved his life on the battlefield more than once, and he didn't hesitate. He immediately ducked and rolled. Almost simultaneously, two gunshots rang out, hitting where he had been standing moments ago. Hulahan had prepared two hidden sentries. However, Verfuh was too fast, and they had just reacted.

As he rolled on the ground, Verfuh drew two revolvers from his back. He fired several shots toward the source of the gunfire and heard a muffled groan and the sound of bodies hitting the ground. In the darkness, he heard someone drop a rifle and run. That person shouted, "The guerrillas have broken in! The guerrillas have broken in!"

More people rushed from the bridge, holding guns, and stormed into the village. Matt saw his father among them.

"Follow me! I know the way in there! I know where they are!" Matt's father yelled.

Verfuh followed Matt's father and the other fighters into the village.

The ensuing battle was one-sided. When the guerrillas shouted "Surrender your weapons, and you won't be harmed," almost all of the Irish police officers chose to surrender. Only Hulahan was nowhere to be found. Upon hearing the gunshots, he had immediately lit a pre-prepared beacon and disappeared into the darkness.

Now that the beacon was lit, the guerrillas had to consider the possibility of British reinforcements. Estimating the distance, the British could arrive within approximately two hours after seeing the beacon. However, they still had to decide whether the British would dare to come out on such a night. If they did, Verfuh had a surprise waiting for them.

Even so, the guerrillas had to think about a retreat. They gathered the relocated villagers and told them they were an anti-British guerrilla group, here to defend the Irish people. They explained that the British might retaliate against the villagers, but they had the option to abandon the village and follow the guerrillas to the "free lands" where the British wouldn't dare to go. Most of the relocated villagers chose to follow the guerrillas, while those who originally belonged to the village decided to stay.

Chapter 176: Driving Fish to the Abyss

"Those bastards! Scum! What are they all doing?" The Duke of Norfolk angrily threw the report on the battle to the ground and then kicked it, displaying a lack of composure.

"My Lord Governor, even though our forces have suffered some losses... they don't seem to be significant... My Lord Governor," his adjutant, Algin, stuttered nervously.

"It's not about the losses; this is a long-term struggle, and it's expected that we'll face such losses. Not to mention, these casualties are well within our expectations. Tony, do you think I'd get so angry over the deaths of just over forty men?" the Duke questioned.

"But, my Lord..."

The Duke of Norfolk had calmed down at this point and continued, "The real issue is the commander of this unit. After enduring such losses, he decided to vent his frustration by massacring the villagers left behind in a place called..."

"Blackstone Village," Algin interjected.

"Yes, Blackstone Village. That fool actually, in his fit of rage, killed all the villagers left in Blackstone and claimed it was a warning to the insurgents. Doesn't he realize that at this point, the villagers who chose to remain when he arrived hours later were at least not directly opposing our rule? What is he doing? Is he trying to drive all the Irish people to the insurgent's side? Whose side is he working for, us or those insurgents?" The Duke of Norfolk was infuriated again.

"Tony, I came to Ireland, and we had things in such good shape here. But this idiot, this scoundrel, has undone all our efforts..." The Duke sighed and leaned back in his chair, removing his glasses from his nose and tossing them onto the table. He closed his eyes for a moment and then waved his hand. "Tony, find out who this idiot is, and then have him retired. Otherwise, who knows what other foolish things he might do!"

Algin picked up the report and examined it. With a troubled expression, he spoke, "My Lord Governor, that captain's name is..."

"What is it?" The Duke of Norfolk opened his eyes.

"The commanding officer, his name is Captain Taverton, and if I'm not mistaken, he is Count Taverton's son," Algin replied.

"Count Taverton's son?" The Duke of Norfolk sat up straight. Count Taverton was a Tory Party member in the House of Lords with significant influence. He also had a good relationship with the Duke of Norfolk due to their shared affiliation with the Tory Party.

"Damn it! How could that old fox Taverton have such a dim-witted son? This is... But for young people, perhaps we shouldn't be too harsh. Tony, what do you think? Young people make mistakes, but they also need guidance..."

Captain Taverton, or rather Major Taverton now, felt quite proud after the "Operation Gallows." However, the incident two days ago was a rude awakening.

Late one night, not long after dark, a sentry reported the sighting of a signal fire in the west, most likely Blackstone Village according to the recorded coordinates. If it had been the newly arrived Taverton, he would have immediately taken his troops and rushed to the location. But the present Taverton only considered it and then said, "The Irish insurgents are cunning, launching attacks at night, which gives them an advantage. Stay vigilant, don't give those rebels an opportunity."

Of course, what Taverton didn't say was, "Blackstone Village is only occupied by some worthless Irish police. Risking the lives of United Kingdom soldiers for such trifles is sheer madness."

Thus, they waited until daylight, well into the morning, with the sun high in the sky, before Taverton led around two hundred men toward Blackstone Village.

To avoid potential ambushes, the British had cleared out the easily concealed trees along the road. This made it difficult for the guerrillas to ambush them, but what Taverton didn't expect was that, due to the influence of certain covert forces, ambushes weren't always required.

In the tall grass ahead, two camouflaged objects, measuring nine inches in length and four inches in width, lay concealed with alternating shades of grass green and dark green. These objects were virtually invisible from a distance. However, if one examined them closely, they would find a small line of fine black text on the side facing the road: "This side faces the enemy."

These were one of the latest weapons provided by France to the Irish guerrillas directional mines. These mines were imitations created by Joseph Fouch, based on post-era designs.

These mines had two long copper wires trailing behind them, buried in the ground and extending over a hundred meters to a small ridge covered in wild grass. Behind that ridge, someone intently watched the approaching British troops through binoculars.

Two inconspicuous stones sat at the roadside, similar to many other stones in Ireland. However, in this moment, these stones had unique significance: they marked the coverage area of two directional mines.

Taverton rode at the head of the column with a few other cavalymen, while the infantry lagged a bit behind. As a result, fewer soldiers were within the coverage area of the mines. Therefore, the guerrillas hiding behind the ridge spared him.

Gradually, the infantry entered the mine's coverage area. The person watching through binoculars raised their hand and made a gentle downward gesture. Next to them, another guerrilla began to crank a small hand generator forcefully. Shortly afterward, a distant explosion signaled the detonation of the directional mines.

Napoleon's version of the directional mine had a similar structure to later designs. It had an arched iron plate on the back, filled with uniform nitrocellulose explosive. Since nitrocellulose's explosive power was unstable, this version used significantly more explosive than its modern counterparts. In front of the explosive was a payload of eight hundred iron balls, enclosed by a thin wooden shell.

Following the explosion, the eight hundred iron balls swept through the British marching formation like a giant broom.

Taverton was startled by the explosion and immediately dismounted, taking cover behind his horse. He cautiously peered around, but he couldn't see anything. Turning to look back at his troops, he was stunned.

The ground was littered with the bodies of British soldiers, many of them nearly unrecognizable. More were lying on the ground, emitting strange, inhuman sounds of agony.

The devastating impact of the explosion soon became apparent. All the surrounding villages saw an influx of fleeing residents, and with the help of these escapees, the guerrillas obtained more information. They intensified their attacks on the villages controlled by the black dogs. With their assistance, over a thousand Irish farmers fled from County Kilkenny to the non-security zone controlled by the guerrillas in just a month.



In response to the current situation, the Duke of Norfolk devised two plans:

First, he recommended expanding the navy's fleet of clipper ships for intercepting French smugglers.

Second, he gathered resources and prepared for a second round of extensive operations in the guerrilla-controlled zones.

Third, he initiated a phased training program for British officers to help them understand the United Kingdom's interests and policies, ensuring they didn't hinder the United Kingdom's efforts.

#### Chapter 177: The Fire Dragon

"Look, I've fulfilled all your requests!" Lavasio exclaimed with pride as he patted a machine beside him, addressing Joseph.

The machine wasn't particularly large; it was essentially a cast-iron container with a nozzle.

"How do you use this thing?" Joseph inquired.

"You pour fuel in through this opening," Lavasio explained. "The Greek fire of the Eastern Roman Empire was, in fact, a primitive version of petroleum. By simple distillation of petroleum, you can obtain highly flammable substances. These substances are lighter than water, so they can float on the surface and burn. I followed your suggestion and added some sugar, which made it much more viscous and sticky. When sprayed onto a target, it sticks and ignites. If it's sprayed on an enemy ship, haha, besides covering it with sand, there's hardly any way to extinguish the flames. But on a ship, where would you get that much sand?"

Joseph scrutinized the device and then asked, "How far can this thing shoot?"

"Under calm conditions, it can reach about sixty meters," Lavasio replied.

"So far? How did you manage that?" Joseph was taken aback.

"Of course, it's using gunpowder," Lavasio explained. "Gunpowder generates high pressure, and we use that pressure to spray the fuel. Otherwise, it wouldn't be possible to reach such distances."

"Can this thing be reloaded?" Joseph inquired.

"Absolutely not. This device can withstand gunpowder once, maybe, but a second ignition, and it might blow itself up. Besides, Joseph, let's get this clear, when you initially made the request, you didn't specify that it should be reusable," Lavasio promptly responded.

"Damn it! I let that old man take advantage of me!" Joseph cursed himself inwardly.

"Can we create a reusable version, then?" Joseph persisted.

"Impossible! At least, not within the volume and weight constraints you specified. Do you think I have nothing better to do than use gunpowder as a pressure source? A range of forty meters! It's beyond the realm of possibility to achieve it with any other method within such a small size. However, a range of twenty to thirty meters is achievable. But it'll cost you extra," Lavasio firmly rejected the idea.

"Well, I think that's not a bad idea. With two of these on a ship, it should be more than enough to give the British a hard time," Joseph conceded. Many of the technical challenges for this device had

already been overcome, and it was entirely feasible to let others work on different types, which could lower the cost.

"Alright, can we experiment with it?" Joseph quickly changed the subject, noticing that Lavasie still had an intention to push for further projects.

Captain Morel's ship, the "Moonflower," was fully loaded and ready to set sail for Ireland. Lately, there had been an increasing number of British frigates in the waters near Ireland. These cunning British often disguised themselves as French vessels, and sometimes even feigned having just been through a battle, damaged by the British, and urgently needing assistance to deceive French frigates into approaching them, only to launch an attack.

Morel wasn't too concerned about this tactic since, after the recent incident with the Dutch one-eyed pirate, all captains bound for Ireland kept a little notebook. This notebook contained the identification numbers of their ships, along with the corresponding flags they should fly on specific dates. Because each ship had a unique set of signals, and the signals changed daily, it made the British ruse almost ineffective.

Of course, the British could still chase them directly. If they encountered the French ships en route to Ireland, the British frigates, being lighter, had the advantage, making it challenging to evade them. If it weren't for the British being relatively unfamiliar with these vessels, often not fully utilizing their potential, the French losses would be more than just the cargo thrown overboard to reduce weight.

As the "Moonflower" was preparing to depart from the dock, a carriage arrived alongside the ship. Four individuals presented credentials to Morel, exchanged words with him, and then proceeded to load two heavily sealed packages onto the ship.

Once aboard, these individuals took the packages to the bow and stern of the ship, where they began working on them. After several hours, these two peculiar items were securely installed.

"What are these?" Morel asked.

"Greek fire, ever heard of it?" one of the bearded men replied with a heavy accent, indicating that he was from the Lower Rhine region.

"Greek fire? That's the stuff from the Byzantine Empire, right? I thought it was lost to history," Morel said, clearly aware of this historical fact.

"It's resurfaced in our hands," the bearded man replied smugly. "With this, you don't have to fear the British anymore."

"It's the British who should be careful not to encounter us," another man, missing a finger on his hand, added.

"Encountering the British isn't easy," Morel said. "At least, I've never encountered them before."

Perhaps it was the flag that Morel had hoisted. Generally, at sea, it was best not to talk recklessly, as it could lead to problems. For example, if someone said, "Even if it were God, He couldn't sink this ship," God might send an iceberg their way.

On the morning following Morel's statement, just as the sun was rising over the horizon, the lookout on the "Moonflower" sounded the alarm: "Flying cutter sighted, thirty degrees starboard!"

Captain Morel hurried to the deck, raising his spyglass in the direction indicated and indeed saw a flying cutter approaching.

"Sail number 15, Edward, check to see which signal flags this ship should be flying today," Captain Morel instructed the first mate.

"It should be yellow from front to back, then blue, and at the highest point, it should be green," the first mate replied.

"Ha, the British. They've actually come," Captain Morel shook his head.

"Is it the British?" At this point, the four individuals who had boarded the ship just before departure emerged on deck.

"Yes, it's the British," Morel confirmed. While they had a secret weapon, avoiding combat was still preferable.

"Are they getting closer to us?" the bearded man asked.

"Yes, they're flying the flag for help. Haha, they think they can fool us," Captain Morel chuckled.

"Approach them, maintaining a distance of about fifty meters. We'll give them a surprise. Your ship isn't as fast as theirs, and outrunning them may not work. It's better to pretend to be fooled and then strike when they least expect it," the bearded man advised.

Captain Morel considered for a moment and asked, "Is your device reliable?"

"Don't worry, this thing is fantastic," the bearded man assured. "We've tested it many times."

So Morel ordered the "Moonflower" to approach and intentionally reduced its speed.

The other ship also slowed down. The two vessels drew closer, quickly closing the gap to less than a hundred meters.

"Shout to them, ask what's wrong, befuddle them for a moment," Morel said.

One of the sailors shouted, "What's happened to you?"

"We ran into the British; our doctor has died, and others are injured. Can your doctor come and help?" the other side replied in French.

"This French is quite good," the man missing a finger remarked. "Ardche's accent is even more authentic."

"Is his accent more authentic than mine? Are you praising him or making fun of him?" the bearded man chuckled nonchalantly.

"All right, come closer!"

Amidst casual conversation, the two ships continued to draw closer, and the distance quickly shrank to less than fifty meters, then less than forty meters.

Just then, the bearded man ripped away the canvas covering the flamethrower installed at the ship's bow, revealing the device. With a sharp whistle, a long streak of fire leaped across the sea, heading straight for the British flying cutter.

In the blink of an eye, the British ship turned into a blazing inferno.

"Full sail! Hard to port three!" Morel promptly gave the orders.

Now that he had ignited the British ship, the priority was to put some distance between them and the British, just in case they attempted to ram them.

However, this risk was not significant, primarily because this surprise attack caught the British entirely off guard. Additionally, the attack had been remarkably effective. The viscous fuel caused a massive fire and ignited the sails of the British ship, making it challenging to control.

A bit further away, the crew of the British ship initially tried to use buckets to scoop seawater for firefighting. However, their efforts had the opposite effect. The fuel floated on the water's surface, flowing with the currents, igniting more areas. In the blink of an eye, the fire spiraled out of control. British sailors began jumping overboard one after another. Many of them, while leaping into the sea, were already ablaze with orange flames.

The fire spread rapidly, and in no time, the ship's masts broke in the blaze, falling overboard. Then, the hull itself, too, quickly disintegrated into pieces amidst the inferno.

"What about those British sailors?" Morel pointed at some struggling in the water.

"Let them die!" the bearded man said.

"It's not good to ignore their plight," Morel said. "Besides, we're almost in Ireland. Once we arrive there, we can hand them over to the Irish."

"Oh, I see," the bearded man nodded. "Well, I don't disagree with that approach. However, from a humanitarian perspective, you might as well not save them."

#### Chapter 178: The Second Alliance

In the waters near Ireland, the British had several frigates lost in succession. After a few ships were lost, the British finally understood what they were up against. However, they couldn't replicate the "Greek fire" yet, so they had to temporarily suspend their interception of these French frigates.

On the other hand, British diplomats began traveling across Europe once more, attempting to organize a new anti-French alliance.

Their first target for recruitment was, of course, Austria. At this point, Austria was also dissatisfied with the previous peace negotiations, which had not been in their favor. Furthermore, the areas that the French had occupied still had poor security, and the nobility had a hard time collecting rents, receiving only half of what they used to.

If it were just this region, Austria might have endured, but trouble was brewing elsewhere too. Other regions were following suit, demanding reduced rents and interest rates. This situation was becoming intolerable.

So, even though the British were persecuting Catholics and the Pope had called on all European Catholics to support the "Irish brothers," in the eyes of the self-proclaimed Emperor of the counterfeit Roman Empire, the French were worse than the British.

Of course, if the Austrian army couldn't defeat the French, the Emperor had no choice but to bear with it. But now, the Austrians had just made significant progress in military technology. In the previous war, Austria had successfully replicated the Mini rifles and revolvers, which had

previously caused chaos in their ranks. So when the Emperor asked Archduke Karl, "Can our army now stand against the French?" The Archduke replied:

"Your Majesty, the situation is much better than before. However, our infantry still can't compare to the French. Their infantry, especially their skirmishers, are superior to ours. And I believe that, after all this time, their line infantry won't be as untrained as they were at the beginning of the last war. So, while we have similar weapons now, overall, our infantry is still inferior to the French infantry.

Of course, we have some advantages. With our cavalry, equipped with these new weapons, we should be able to regain our edge against the French. But, Your Majesty, even with these improvements, France remains stronger overall. Austria cannot win against France in the short term."

"What if Prussia joins us?"

"Even that won't be enough," Archduke Karl said. "Unless Russia also joins. Without both Prussia and Russia, Austria will not be able to join the war against France. Moreover, Russia must send its troops openly, not like the last time when they claimed to be at war with the French but the French soldiers didn't even know the color of their uniforms until the peace talks."

So the British went to find the Russians and the Prussians.

The Russians were quite willing to teach the French a lesson this time. This was because the great Empress had passed away, and her successor was not as cunning. It was also because the French had been ungrateful. They forgot how Russia had helped them in the past, delaying Prussia and Austria significantly. Without Russian support, Paris would have fallen long ago.

However, the French were ungrateful and sold dangerous goods to the Poles. The Poles used these to carry out assassinations daily. Although there weren't that many assassinations in reality, it frightened the Russian nobility in Poland. They were afraid to hold parties as they used to, which was intolerable.

Furthermore, Russia and France did not share a border, so if they sent troops and the war went badly, they could simply withdraw. The risk was limited. They could also use this opportunity to ask the British and their other allies for money and technology.

Persuading Prussia, on the other hand, was not as easy. The Russians were not concerned about their safety, but the Prussians were. After all, unlike the previous time, after occupying the Rhine region, the French were at Prussia's doorstep. If they got into a war and didn't win and that was a real possibility what would Prussia do then?

So, the Russians asked for money and technology, and the Prussians initially said they loved peace and suggested that the British should retake Hanover before they would consider joining. However, the British didn't have the forces to do that with their hands full in Ireland.

At this time, Duke of Norfolk's second major sweep had been prepared for a while and was officially underway. This time, he used 40,000 British troops and an equal number of "Irish Security Forces." The Duke believed that these people, although poorly trained for battle, still had their uses. They could clear mines and set off explosives while advancing. They could also be sent to deal with rebel forces that were not well-trained or fully armed, including women and children. They had their uses.

Of course, using them came with problems. Secrecy decreased due to their involvement, and the military's speed of movement dropped significantly. The "Irish Security Forces" couldn't match the training of the British troops.

However, considering that the Irish United Federation had learned its lesson after the first major sweep, there was no way they'd make the same mistake twice. So, this time, even without the 40,000 "Irish Security Forces," it wouldn't be easy for the British to achieve the same surprise attack as before. But, for the tasks these people were assigned, it didn't require high levels of training. As for capturing guerrilla forces that might evade due to slower movement, the clergy had donkeys, and the church didn't have legs. The guerrillas couldn't run away forever. Even if the villagers had hidden and run, their villages couldn't move. Although the British army didn't have time or energy to destroy crops, they had brought 40,000 pigs. Was there a more efficient way to ruin crops than letting those pigs loose?

However, pigs were not good at keeping secrets. Especially after the recent attacks by the guerrillas on the "Irish Security Forces," many of them had started to cooperate secretly with the guerrillas. They claimed to be Irish themselves, only doing this for a meal, and they didn't really want to harm their fellow Irish. Some even openly said, "We're Irish at heart, even though we're with the English." This made the upcoming sweep almost an open secret. The Irish United Federation had already gathered information about the British forces' timing, numbers, and targets.

Still, this didn't alleviate the pressure of the impending sweep. It was like playing poker, and the opponent had an excellent hand. Even if the cards were face up, there wasn't necessarily a way to counter them. Of course, the United Federation had prepared over time, improvising as necessary for moving the population. For example, they dug hiding holes in hilly villages, created safe passages and temporary shelters in marshy areas, and utilized intelligence.

Although these efforts helped, they didn't ease everyone's worries because the primary target of the British sweep wasn't people but the agricultural production in the United Federation. The potato harvest season was approaching, and if the British wreaked havoc at this critical time, it would lead to significant agricultural damage, possibly plunging the entire Federation into an artificial famine.

This grim prospect weighed heavily on the minds of most United Federation members. Some comrades hoped that our comrades in France could send us more food to ensure there would be no famine in the Federation. But when we calculated the amount of food needed, we quickly realized that this hope was unrealistic.

Others hoped that our comrades in France could organize a large army to land in Ireland and fight alongside us on the main battlefield against the British. However, when we were in Toulon, we knew that the shipping capacity from France to Ireland couldn't support a large army for regular warfare.

So, some comrades suggested that we fight the British head-on, even if it meant risking our lives, which would be better than starving. But that was not a solution. We were fighting for the betterment of the Irish people, not to lead them to their deaths.

At a time when everyone felt hopeless, our friend, Mr. Joseph Bonaparte, after understanding the current situation, sent us a letter. His letter was like a gust of wind that blew away the dark clouds and fog that blocked our path to victory, revealing a golden road to success."

Launching a major offensive during the busy farming season to disrupt agricultural production was nothing new, at least not in Joseph's eyes. In another time and place, the Japanese locust armies loved to employ this tactic. But this strategy was thoroughly foiled by the heroes of the revolution. The approach of these revolutionary heroes in countering such unscrupulous methods had been portrayed in many classic wartime films that Joseph had watched in his previous life

This tactic was known as "turning the tables" during that time. Its essence was simple: when the enemy encroached upon our territory with their "incursions" and "raids," it was necessary to implement the "turning the tables" tactic in military terms, meaning when the enemy entered our territory, we would counterattack and push back into their territory (Adapted from "Guerrilla Warfare and Political Offensives Against the Enemy").

In his previous life, history enthusiast Joseph hadn't read professional military documents, but that didn't matter. He had watched many relatively accurate war movies, even those that were labeled as "educational films" about resistance against foreign invasion. In these movies, he often saw scenes like this.

The commander of the main force, shaking hands with the local leader, would say, "The enemy is launching another raid. We must move to the outer lines to strike them, protect the civilians, and handle the task of impeding the enemy's progress."

The local leader would respond resolutely, "Rest assured, Commander. We will accomplish the mission!"

In this context, "moving to the outer lines" referred to the "enemy enters, we enter" strategy, where our main forces, exploiting the gaps between the enemy units, would penetrate deep into the enemy's rear. At this point, the enemy's rear would be particularly vulnerable, as the enemy heavily relied on rear supply lines. When the rear, thinly defended due to the diversion of the main enemy forces, was attacked, the enemy had to recall its troops, effectively terminating the large-scale sweep of the base.

Of course, this method of warfare demanded a high level of organization within the executing army. It required the ability to disperse and consolidate troops at any moment. Otherwise, while taking advantage of the gaps between the enemy units, the army could easily be caught, leading to severe losses. In the present world, including the Irish guerrilla groups, there was no such highly organized army. Thus, it was quite challenging to have the Irish execute such a high-difficulty tactic.

But the Irish terrain provided them with significant assistance, making it relatively easy for them to cross the British encirclement. The key was the widespread marshland in Ireland.

These marshlands covered extensive areas and were filled with various dangers. Even the locals dared not enter them. However, for the prepared guerrilla units, these marshes became the best hiding places and passages. After the first major sweep by the British army, the Federations highlighted the importance of building marshland shelters. They drove stakes into the marshes and placed boards on top of them to create safe pathways. When necessary, they would remove the boards and even use ropes to pull the stakes out, turning the original path into deadly traps.

The British army couldn't possibly encircle these vast marshlands. They didn't have enough manpower for that, and attempting to do so would only lead to overextending their forces, making them vulnerable to guerrilla actions that could annihilate them. Their main forces had to cross the

marshes to attack the heartland of the base. However, this allowed the main force of the guerrillas to use these marshland passages to bypass the British army and strike at their rear targets.

So, when Joseph included this type of tactic in the letters he sent to the leadership of the Unified Irish People's Federation, almost everyone's eyes lit up.

"Unbelievable... I never thought we could pull off something like this! Haha, when they come to sweep us, we'll sweep them right back. We'll dismantle the supply depots they've painstakingly constructed near those cities, strip them of everything stored inside, and take care of those guarding them in other words, we'll give them a triple whammy!" Joyce, the commander of the Independent Division of the Federation, had once served as a platoon leader in Napoleon's Italian Army and had received special military training in Toulon. He was now leading the First Division formed by the Federation.

The divisions of the Federation were more like brigades in modern armies, not traditional divisions. In other words, a division had fewer than a thousand soldiers. However, in the Irish Independent Army, this was considered their main force. Under the command of the Federation, there were only two divisions.

"Our strategic goal is to mobilize the enemy, prevent them from damaging the base, avoid unnecessary revenge, and keep emotions from affecting our work," President Russell said sternly.

"I understand, President. I was just speaking without thinking. It won't affect our work," Joyce hurriedly replied.

"Don't speak so casually, even in front of our warriors. When you need to promote, do it from the perspective of helping our brothers in the base," Russell emphasized.

"Understood."

"All right, let's get to work."

Preparations were hectic. Especially after deciding on the turning-the-tables tactic. Various types of intelligence were gathered and enemy configurations gradually became clear...

The small mining village was situated between the "quasi-pacified zone" and the "non-pacified zone." Many years ago, there used to be a small copper mine in the vicinity, giving the village its name. However, the mine in the area had long been depleted due to ore extraction, and the miners had left. The remaining people had become potato farmers.

After the last major sweep, the population of the village had been decimated. However, it didn't fall into disrepair. Thanks to the arrangements made by the Federation, those farmers who had escaped from the area controlled by the British became the new residents of the small mining village.

News about the impending major sweep had already been relayed to every household in the village by the local militia. They even added, "Make sure to follow our training. After receiving the notice, organize yourselves and take refuge in the nearby marshlands. Don't hide in the mines. During the last major sweep, the villagers took refuge in the mines, and the British simply smoked them out. The entire village was wiped out!"

Everyone in the village had already heard this story, and there were even terrifying legends about that mine. But everyone expressed their gratitude to the local militia.



One noon, while everyone was busy in the fields, a whistle sounded.

Everyone quickly looked up towards the small hill, where they saw the signaling tree had fallen.

"Follow me, everyone, hurry to the shelter!" Village chief Sean shouted.

"Village Chief, my wife is still in the village!" someone yelled.

"Don't worry, there are people in the village to take care of it. You just come with me directly to the shelter," the village chief replied.

The village chief led the people to the edge of the marsh. At the entrance to the marsh, a member of the local militia was guarding, holding a rifle confiscated from the "Black Dogs." Behind him, a wooden path extended dozens of meters ahead.

"Edgar, have all the people who stayed in the village gone inside?" the village chief asked.

"They've all gone inside, and the livestock too," Edgar replied.

The village chief waved his hand to the crowd and said, "Alright, everyone, hurry inside!"

One by one, everyone stepped onto the wooden path. As they moved forward, they picked up the boards that had been laid and repositioned them in front. They also used ropes to pull up the wooden stakes supporting the boards or adjusted them. As a result, the path they had walked on was once again covered in various aquatic plants.

"Village Chief, look, smoke is rising over there!" someone shouted.

"It looks like it's in the direction of our village!"

"The British are really coming. Do you think they'll dare to enter the marsh?"

"I'm afraid they won't. These scoundrels dare to enter, we'll take as many as we can. Let's give them a taste of their own medicine!" Edgar held the rifle in his hand and cursed.

After a while, a group of British soldiers and "Black Dogs" arrived at the edge of the marsh.

"Report, sir. Judging by the tracks, it seems the villagers have entered the marsh," a Black Dog officer said to another British officer who was mounted on a horse.

"Good. Very good." The British officer raised his binoculars and looked into the marsh. The marsh was full of various tall and short reeds and other aquatic plants. Occasionally, a few waterbirds could be seen, but that was all they could see.

"Very good." The British officer nodded again and said to the militia officer standing next to him, "Take your men and scout ahead."

The Black Dog officer was so frightened that he trembled all over, almost falling to his knees. "Sir, this marsh is impassable. You see the water doesn't look very deep, but... below it, the mud could be much deeper. Stepping into it might cause a person to sink completely! We can't go in there!"

"Can't go in? Then how did those rebels get in there?"

"Sir, they're locals; they might know how to navigate. We're outsiders, and we have no idea which parts of the marsh are deep and which are shallow. Going in without knowing is a death sentence!"

"Death? Captain, we're at war! If you're afraid of death, why are you even fighting? You Irish people, each and every one of you is a devious, slippery rogue... What's wrong? Are you trying to disobey orders?"

Seeing the British officer reaching for his pistol, the militia captain quickly said, "Sir, we are following orders..."

Then he went back to his troops, randomly picking a few men and waving his pistol, saying, "You guys, go ahead and scout. If anyone refuses, I'll shoot them..."

#### Chapter 180: Turning the Tables (2)

Several black dogs, each wielding a stick they had somehow found, cautiously advanced into the swamp. They probed the ground with their sticks, ensuring it was firm before taking a step forward, for fear of getting trapped in the muck. Every time they thrust their sticks into the swamp, it took considerable effort and time to pull them back out. Despite walking for quite a while, they hadn't covered even ten meters.

"You idiots!" the British officer cursed, dismounting from his horse and drawing his revolver. He approached the water's edge, and the local "security force" officer, with a servile grin, followed.

"Sir, do you have any orders?" the local officer inquired, bowing respectfully.

The British officer retorted angrily, "Tell your men to stop dawdling and move forward quickly! Otherwise, I'll order my men to open fire!"

"Yes, yes, I understand, I understand," the local "security force" officer nodded repeatedly, bowing. He then turned and yelled at the black dogs still cautiously navigating the swamp, "The officer said you're too slow! Move forward quickly! If you keep dilly-dallying, I'll have my men open fire..."

The black dogs up ahead were still taking their time.

"You fools!" the British officer exclaimed. He turned around and prepared to have his men ready their rifles.

The local officer quickly shouted, "Don't dawdle, the officer is about to open fire! I'm telling you, the officer is ruthless, he's not one to hesitate to kill or eat...!"

Before he could finish his sentence, the local "security force" soldiers immediately abandoned their sticks and began running forward.

"These guys..." the local "security force" officer shook his head, turned to the British officer, and grinned, giving a thumbs up. "Sir, you certainly know how to handle them!"

"All you Irish are worthless! You won't move unless you get a whipping!" the British officer sneered.

"That's right, Sir," the local officer nodded vigorously. "Those Irish, they're all worthless. They won't work unless you give them a good thrashing!"

"Damn," the British officer said, "You said 'those Irish,' aren't you Irish too?"

The local officer quickly replied, "Oh, you see, how could I be Irish? Sir, look at my body, it may look Irish, but my heart is loyal to the United Kingdom..."

"Unbelievable," the British officer muttered. But just then, a prolonged cry for help echoed from the swamp: "Help! Help! Please, brothers, lend a hand, help a brother out!"

Everyone looked in the direction of the cry and saw not just one, but two black dogs sinking halfway into the mud, with the water barely reaching their chests.

Other black dogs nearby were frantically moving aside, but one of them accidentally stepped on a submerged log, and he too started shouting for help in the name of the United Kingdom.

However, the plea for the "United Kingdom" didn't hold much sway, especially considering that the men trapped in the mud were in dire straits. Even just freeing a single leg stuck in the muck required a great deal of effort. In this situation, the camaraderie of the "security force" didn't hold much water.

As a result, the remaining men all turned and ran back. This irked the British officer.

"Don't run back! Keep going, or I, representing the United Kingdom, will shoot you all!" Captain Jarvis seized a rifle from one of his men and fired a shot into the air.

Hearing the gunshot, the black dogs stopped in their tracks. One of them cried, "Captain, please spare us. We'll move forward, but it's life or death out there..."

"You fools!" Captain Jarvis exclaimed. "The officer said there's no war without casualties. If you don't go, do you think I will? If you don't, the officer will blame me, and before the officer gets to me, I'll get to you first."

With that, Captain Jarvis snatched a rope from one of his men and ordered them to fetch two more.

"Captain, pulling like this could kill them," a soldier quietly warned.

"You think I don't know?" Captain Jarvis whispered back. "They're as good as dead anyway, and the officer is in a good mood. Let the officer have some fun. Understand?"

"Got it. As long as the officer is happy, we don't care if they die..."

So, the unfortunate fellows were finally dragged out of the mud.

Meanwhile, the First Division of the Irish Independence Army was quietly slipping out of the British encirclement through a swamp passage. After leaving a small detachment to keep watch, the entire division hurried toward the vicinity of Dublin.

Their goal wasn't to capture Dublin itself. Even with the British rear exposed, Dublin was a formidable target for the less than a thousand men in the First Division. Their objective was a series of supply depots near Dublin.

These depots were key nodes supporting the British logistics in the countryside around Dublin and played a vital role in storing and transporting supplies for the British "counter-insurgency" operations. Taking down these depots would reduce the efficiency of the British forces by at least a third.

Ordinarily, these depots would have been well defended with a garrison of five hundred British troops and six heavy guns, along with trenches and high walls. But with most of the British forces redirected to the "counter-insurgency" campaign, the garrison had been reduced to fewer than a hundred British soldiers, along with over two hundred "security force" personnel. The defense had been significantly weakened.

Furthermore, due to the extensive supply operations, a large number of Irish laborers were entering and exiting the depots daily. This made the depots vulnerable in multiple ways, despite the facade of security put in place.

The commander of the First Division, Brigadier General Joyce, focused on the Yellow Willow Ridge Depot. This depot was a crucial logistics hub supporting the British "counter-insurgency" campaign. Capturing it would significantly hamper the British forces' rear support.

The depot was indeed important, but its defenses had been relaxed due to the assumption that the rebels lacked the ability to attack. The diminished garrison and the lackluster preparations were indications of their complacency. They hadn't expected such a large force of "Irish rebels" to strike.

As the main force of the First Division closed in, the British and "security force" personnel assumed the approaching troops were their own. They were completely caught off guard and never considered they'd encounter such a large group of "Irish rebels" at this location. In addition, a squad of disguised "rebels" had already infiltrated the depot and were busy arguing with the depot's commander, a captain.

When the main force of the First Division drew near, someone finally grew suspicious and asked. But this clever British officer was shot in the head before he could react. Inside the depot, the rebel infiltrators shot the depot commander, who was already engaged in a heated argument with them. Simultaneously, the reconnaissance troops opened fire and threw grenades at the enemy.

Under the sudden onslaught, the British troops and the "security force" were mowed down. With this pincer attack, it took only about ten minutes for the depot to fall into the hands of the First Division of the Independence Army.

And that's how they accomplished their mission, with both a ruse from within and a surprise attack from outside.