

Roman Empire 281

Chapter 281: International Reaction

After the outbreak of the Near East War, the Ottoman Empire moved its capital to Ankara. Compared to Constantinople, Ankara was truly a remote and small city.

Located in an inland mountainous area with limited transportation and a population of only tens of thousands, it has less than half the population of the Ottoman government's government staff. Its only advantage was that it was easy to defend but difficult to attack.

The Ottoman government, in keeping with the principle of safety first, has decisively chosen this location. Regarding the issue of limited transportation, railways can be built and both Britain and France are very willing to help.

Despite the modernization reforms, the barbaric nature of the Ottoman Empire remained unchanged. After the failure of the Near East War, the nobles, who had suffered losses due to Abdulmejid I's reforms, launched a counterattack.

They denounced the reforms of Abdulmejid I and advocated the restoration of the traditional feudal religious system, claiming that the reforms had made the Ottoman Empire vulnerable.

These are superficial excuses; the deeper reason is that Ottoman nobles and bureaucrats in the Balkans have lost everything and now want a piece of the pie in Anatolia.

There is no room for compromise in the struggle for interests, so naturally, the two sides cannot come to an agreement. As soon as the Vienna System was established and the country's own security was confirmed, the two factions began to fight.

For now, the reformist faction led by Abdulmejid I still has the upper hand, although this advantage is also the result of outside influence.

As the saying goes, the debtor is the master; the Ottoman government owes a huge debt to Britain and France. If they were to collapse, it is uncertain whether this debt could be repaid.

This is also why the Austrian government has set its sights on the Ottomans; those who lag behind are bound to suffer. The current Ottoman Empire is clearly in decline and has become a great target.

Ankara

Foreign Minister Fuad solemnly said, Your Majesty, the Austrian government has sent an official diplomatic note requesting the purchase of Crete, Rhodes, Cyprus, the Dodecanese Islands...and sovereignty over Libya.

The Austrian Navy has already taken action, forcibly landing on Crete and expelling our officials from the island.

As early as half a year ago, the Austrian government had made territorial purchase demands to the Ottoman government. But at that time, the Austrian government was still reasonable. Under the intervention of Great Britain and France, the two sides failed to reach an agreement, but it was left at that.

News of the Indian rebellion had not yet reached Ankara. The Ottoman government was completely unaware that the British were distracted.

This information disadvantage affected the judgment of the Ottoman government. When Abdulmejid I heard this news, he was immediately furious.

This is simply outrageous! Even if the Ottoman Empire has declined, a broken ship still has three cabbies worth of nails. How could such a vast empire suddenly collapse?

Immediately invite Britain and France to mediate, and at the same time send a strong protest to the Austrian government, demanding that they abide by the rules of the Vienna System!

There's no other way; we only have three nails left. We can't throw them all out at once, can we? With the Ottoman Navy as it is, it is impossible to win a battle. It's better to protest diplomatically.

Foreign Minister Fuad quickly responded, Yes, Your Majesty.

After the Near East War, the Vienna System had been quite hostile to the Ottoman Empire. Foreign Minister Fuad's position has been unstable ever since.

The main reason why he was able to remain in this position was political necessity. The Ottoman Empire lacked diplomatic talents, and even fewer were qualified to become foreign ministers.

Fuad is a leader of the pro-British faction supported by John Bull. In addition, it's clear to everyone that at the Vienna Peace Conference, the Great Powers are in complete control and there is no room for them to negotiate. That's how he managed to keep his position.

Under such circumstances, he has no choice but to be cautious. If he were to incur the displeasure of Abdulmejid I, he would be finished.

London

The British government received news of the Indian rebellion even before the Austrian government, and preparations to put down the rebellion were already underway.

Upon receiving the request for help from the Ottoman government, Grenville frowned and said, We tried to keep the news under wraps, but it seems it has been exposed sooner than expected.

Chancellor of the Exchequer John Russell shrugged his shoulders and remarked, Nothing is surprising about it. As soon as any news is discussed in Parliament, it becomes an open secret.

It won't be long before it's in the London papers. It's not difficult for the Austrians to receive the news.

This is the situation in Great Britain. Major events require parliamentary discussion, and once they are discussed in Parliament, they become public knowledge. The mouths of parliamentarians are essentially loose.

That they were able to keep it secret for a few days shows their integrity, but in fact, by the time they discussed it, the news had already been published in the London newspapers.

Grenville thought for a moment and said, Well, let's leave the leak issue at that. It's not our fault, it's a problem of the system. The problem now is that since the Austrians are aware of the Indian rebellion, I can safely assume that most European countries are aware of this news as well.

The original plan to quell the rebellion in the shortest possible time, denying them any opportunity, is clearly no longer feasible. How does everyone think we should handle this?

The importance of India to the British Empire is self-evident; without India, British hegemony would collapse.

At that time, Australia was still a penal colony, the colony of New Zealand had just been established, South Africa was only a transit station, and Canada had not yet developed.

Without India as a major market and source of raw materials, the British industrial advantage would quickly diminish as their small and resource-poor homeland could not sustain their hegemony.

This was a well-known fact, and there were many who envied the British hegemony. Even if they did not dare to challenge it directly, it was inevitable that they would take advantage of the situation to make some small moves.

Austria was just the first to jump out. Killing the chicken to scare the monkey was an option, but the prerequisite was that the chicken couldn't fly away. If the chicken wasn't killed, it would backfire.

Foreign Secretary Thomas replied, Prime Minister, India is our Achilles heel, and now that a crisis has arisen, our enemies will come out of the woodwork.

However, there are many contradictions between the various countries; they are suspicious of each other and afraid of becoming the next victim. They do not dare to challenge us directly.

The Austrians are likely using the Ottomans as a raft to test our reaction. Since they want to test us, we might as well play along.

Let's delay using negotiations for now. As long as we can crush the Indian rebellion in the shortest possible time, they will retreat on their own.

This is a fact. If the British government can crush the Indian rebellion within a few months, Franz will be forced to retreat.

John Russell reminded him, Mr. Thomas, don't forget the Russians. While other countries may fear our retaliation, the Russian government won't.

At the moment, they are still supporting the Persians against us, so it wouldn't be surprising if they also supported the Indian rebellion. There may even be Russian involvement behind this Indian rebellion.

There is no way around it: unlike the Crimean War in history, the Russian government was nominally victorious in the Near East War, even though it suffered heavy losses.

This preserves the pride of the Russian government. As victors, they cannot bow down to the British. The power struggle between Great Britain and Russia continued.

If they didn't make trouble now, would the Russian Bear still be the Russian Bear? The British could not intimidate the Russians now, even an economic blockade would not work.

After a brief pause, Thomas calmly explained, Of course, the Russians are still as annoying as ever. However, the Russian government is notorious for its inefficiency. By the time they take action to intervene in India, I believe this farce will be over.

The routes through Central Asia are not easy either. Given the reputation of the Russian government, neither Afghanistan nor Persia would dare grant the Russians passage unless they could fight all the way there.

I don't think the Russian government has the financial resources to fight such a war. At most, they could send military advisors and provide weapons and equipment to the rebels.

This may be a minor inconvenience to us, but even if the Indians are armed, their fighting capability remains negligible.

Upon hearing this explanation, Grenville's expression changed, and he said seriously, "What if someone provides funding to the Russians?"

Everyone's expression turned ugly. Russia's greatest weakness was its finances. If someone with money supported them, the situation would change immediately.

Chancellor of the Exchequer John Russell spoke up and said, "At present, there are only two parties capable of funding the Russians: the French and the Austrians. If the Foreign Office can keep them in check, there shouldn't be a problem."

As he said this, he mentally cursed the capitalists in London. Just when they decided not to lend money, they found themselves in a situation where they had just lent money to the Austrians.

If it weren't for the huge construction bonds issued recently by the Austrian government, only the French would be able to support the Russians. So, relatively speaking, half the problem would have already been solved.

Money earmarked for a specific purpose, how much were politicians' promises worth? Not breaking the contract was only a matter of insufficient benefits. Once the benefits were sufficient, a change of heart could happen in a matter of minutes.

Wiping the sweat from his brow, Thomas forced himself to calm down. After a long pause, he said slowly:

"The situation is not as bad as it seems. Neither the French nor the Austrians want the Russians to become too powerful."

If the Russians were to swallow India, Austria would be the first to bear the brunt and would be under enormous pressure. The Austrian government must have considered this.

In such circumstances, the Austrian government is most likely to use this as leverage and engage in a trade of interests with us.

The French just fought a battle with the Russians, so even if they want to mend relations, it will take time. It's not something that can be done overnight.

"We can use our influence within the French government to stir up internal conflicts and prevent this from happening."

This explanation eased everyone's expressions a bit. As long as it wasn't the worst-case scenario, everything was manageable. They were experts at negotiating the exchange of interests.

Chapter 282: Debt Crisis

While putting pressure on the Ottoman government, actions were also initiated in the African colonies. This time, there was no need to send troops from the homeland; instead, strongholds were established along the coast of Nigeria. The colonial forces were considered sufficient.

Not everyone realized that the Indian rebellion would persist. Many believed that once the British responded, they could easily quell the rebellion.

Guided by this mindset, the Austrian government moved quickly to capitalize on the situation and seize the opportunity.

During this time, fear of whites was widespread among Africans. The Austrian military quickly defeated several native tribes and established immigrant strongholds.

Colonel Nicos ordered, Quickly, reinforce the fortifications. The enemys counterattack is imminent.

A young military officer asked in confusion, Colonel, do we really have to be so careful? Its just a native kingdom. Why dont we just go in and wipe them out?

Colonel Nicos glared at him sternly and said, Abate, put away your arrogance. Any carelessness on the battlefield could lead to disastrous losses.

If you want to continue to serve in the military, you must always remain vigilant. Thats the most basic quality of a soldier. If you cant do that, I can send you back home right now.

Are African natives so easy to deal with? Have you never heard of the human wave tactic? This is Tukolor territory, they can gather tens of thousands to counterattack.

Dont think they all carry machetes and spears. They were sold guns and cannons a hundred years ago. Even if their weapons are somewhat outdated, dont take them lightly.

As a noblemans son, Abate came to the colony to make a name for himself, so naturally, he couldnt just go back home dejectedly just like that.

Since Austria began its colonization efforts, it had never lost a battle involving more than a thousand men, leading many to believe that the African natives were pushovers.

Now that he heard that the enemy was powerful, Abate was not afraid but excited.

Powerful is relative. Compared to tribal villages, the native kingdom may indeed be formidable, but compared to European nations, even the smallest states like Montenegro are more formidable.

The mere addition of firearms did not make an army modern. Rigorous training was still required to unleash the full combat potential.

Aside from other factors, the recoil of a gun alone means that someone who isnt trained has no idea where their bullet is going when they fire it.

Thus, in modern times, many ragtag armies may sound impressive on the battlefield. But when it comes time to count the casualties, it often turns out that hardly anyone has been killed.

Austria, as a great power, could afford to provide each soldier with hundreds of rounds of ammunition for marksmanship training, something the African native kingdoms could never afford.

Abate replied with his head bowed, Yes, Colonel!

Facts have proven that the Tukolor Empire is not a capable kingdom, retaining its essence completely. After waiting for more than a month, they finally organized an army that arrived late.

By this time, the preliminary fortifications of the colonial outpost were complete. Colonel Nicos, holding a pair of binoculars at the command post, sneered as he surveyed the chaotic enemy forces, Trash will always be trash!

Seeing the enemy encampment, Nicos couldn't help but admire their courage. To dare to set up camp within range of enemy naval firepower, he didn't know what to say.

Of course, the enemies of the Tukulor Empire were native African kingdoms, so they were unaware of the power of naval artillery. The distance of their encampment was determined based on past experience.

Not to mention the naval forces, even the artillery of the land army could hit them. Nicos lamented inwardly that he hadn't brought heavy artillery with him this time, otherwise, there would have been no need to call in the navy.

The rivalry between the army and navy exists in every country, and Austria is no exception. Of course, this conflict is mainly about military spending and hasn't reached the level of Japan, where the army and navy actively sabotage each other.

Colonel Nicos ordered, Abate, go inform the Navy to send warships for target practice. Tell them a group of fools has arrived who want to serve as targets.

Yes, Colonel! Abate replied.

Nicos somewhat understood how a mere hundred or so colonists could defeat an entire country. It was all down to ignorance. Ignorance breeds fearlessness.

He had already decided to lure as many enemy forces as possible. After all, the more enemies there were, the more glorious his achievements would be.

Unfortunately, exploits against African natives were not highly valued. Otherwise, defeating tens of thousands of enemy soldiers with just one regiment could have made history.

Antalya

Representatives from Great Britain, France, Austria, and the Ottoman Empire gathered to negotiate the conflict between Austria and the Ottoman Empire.

The Foreign Minister of the Ottoman Empire, Fuad, solemnly declared: We protest strongly against the Austrian occupation of Crete, which violates the Treaty of Vienna and infringes on our sovereignty.

The Austrian representative, Johannes, replied calmly: Mr. Fuad, please calm down. We did not occupy Crete, just a warship accident that needed repair, so we borrowed the place for a while. Rest assured that we will compensate you accordingly and will not borrow your territory for free.

As for violating the Treaty of Vienna, that's unfounded. The Treaty of Vienna is aimed at maintaining peace and stability in Europe, and as one of its signatories, we naturally abide by its provisions.

Now we are merely negotiating a transaction. We haven't forced you to cede any land, so how can it be considered a violation of the treaty? Whether it's successful or not, we'll decide after the negotiations are completed. There's no need to get so agitated!

The British representative, Nigel, asked, Since this is a negotiation and the Ottoman Empire has now rejected this deal, shouldn't your country withdraw from Crete?

Johannes replied calmly, Certainly if the Ottoman government is not willing to accept this deal, we will not force it. However, with the emergence of two governments in the Ottoman Empire, the Sultanate lost the support of the people. Whether they can represent the will of the Ottoman people is still uncertain.

Responsibly, we believe it's necessary to engage with the Caliphate government, understand their position, and then proceed with formal negotiations.

It was a threat, a blatant one. If the deal fell through, the Austrian government would not recognize the legitimacy of the Sultanate and would instead support the Caliphate government.

This hurt Fuad greatly, as they had barely managed to suppress the rebels and were on the verge of victory. If the rebels received support from Austria, who knew how long the civil war would last.

Fuad, lacking confidence, rebuked, Count Johannes, this is the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire and you have no right to interfere!

Johannes patiently explained, Mr. Fuad, please be assured that we will not arbitrarily interfere in the internal affairs of your country. However, the actions of your government are deeply troubling.

We came in good faith to negotiate an agreement, but you refuse to even discuss it, completely disregarding the friendship between our two nations, which deeply saddens us.

Fuad replied sternly, Count, negotiations are based on the voluntary participation of both parties. It's not that we have any intention of refusing to negotiate with your country, but at the moment we have no plans to sell any land.

Johannes' expression changed and he said coldly, Of course we won't force you to make a deal. Now, please repay your debt of 28 million gold guilders immediately. We will only accept payment in gold and guilders.

Fuad looked puzzled. Since when did the Ottoman Empire owe Austria so much money?

Count, I would like to know when this debt was incurred. As far as I know, our debt to your country does not exceed two million gold guilders.

Johannes calmly took a document out of his briefcase and handed it to Fuad, saying, This is the detailed debt statement. You can have someone verify it.

After looking at it, Fuad's face turned bitter. He finally understood how this debt had accumulated. There's another kind of debt in the world: debt transfer.

Due to financial difficulties in the Ottoman Empire, the Sultanate government recently declared bankruptcy and defaulted on many debts.

These uncollectable debts naturally became worthless. The Austrian government tried to buy these debts, and the creditors naturally did not refuse.

Getting something at a discount is better than getting nothing at all. Creditors who were unable to collect their debts from the Ottoman government had no choice but to cut their losses.

The Austrian government had the capacity and had already taken practical steps.

It was only fair to pay what you owe.

On this issue, even Britain and France cannot intervene; they are the worlds largest creditors, and if the debtors were allowed to default, they would suffer significant losses.

Although the Sultanate government did not default on its debts to them, they still had to acknowledge the legitimacy of Austrias debt collection.

From that moment on, the conflict between the two sides ceased to be a military one and became a matter of debt collection.

British representative Nigel suggested, Count, lets adjourn for now! This debt still needs to be verified, so lets wait until Mr. Fuad clarifies the matter.

Its purpose was simply to buy time. As for resolving the problem? Sorry, the Austrians had been planning for so long and relying on Nigels eloquence alone to make them give up would be too optimistic. Nigel didnt have that kind of confidence.

Johannes thought for a moment before he said, Well, lets reconvene in a week, by then Mr. Fuad should have had enough time to verify the authenticity of these debts.

However, Mr. Fuad, it would be best if you expedite the verification process. Each day of delinquency will result in significant late fees, and the longer this goes on, the more detrimental it will be to you.

Fuad wiped the sweat from his forehead and replied with a trembling voice, Count, rest assured, we will verify these debts as soon as possible.

He didnt think these debts were false. Since the Austrians had brought them to the table, there must be no issues. Johannes wouldnt joke about Austrias international reputation.

Chapter 283: Everyone Has Their Own Schemes

The sudden debt crisis caught the Sultanate off guard. Since the debt has been transferred to the Austrians, default is no longer a simple matter.

Repayment requires having money in the first place, and clearly, the Ottoman governments finances are in shambles after the loss of the Balkan Peninsula.

The debt of 28 million guilders, equivalent to 14 million pounds sterling or 102.48 tons of gold, would increase with various overdue fines.

There is no doubt that even if they sell everything they have, the Ottoman government will not be able to raise such a large sum.

If the Austrian government is unwilling to accept paper money, its unlikely that even the British and French would lend them enough gold to fill the gap.

Abdulmejid I frowned and said, The Austrians are blackmailing us. We must not let their scheme succeed!

People kept their heads down and tried to minimize their presence so as not to get caught in the crossfire. There were precedents for this; in the previous government, for example, half the ministers lost their heads.

Despite the positive assessment of Abdulmejid I's reforms in later years, he remained essentially a feudal monarch. The responsibility for the failure of the Near East War and the loss of Constantinople fell on the unfortunate predecessors, who were then exterminated.

This was also one of the triggers for the outbreak of the civil war. With such a monarch, it wasn't enough to be vigilant. This was a fine tradition of the Ottoman Empire, handed down from their ancestors, a tradition of barbarism.

Abdulmejid I complained, Why is everyone silent? Did you not hear what I said? Fuad, you are the foreign minister. Tell me, what is the Foreign Ministry planning to do next?

When he was called by name, Fuad knew he couldn't avoid it. He steeled himself and replied: Your Majesty, the Austrians came prepared. We have just received word that a large-scale rebellion has broken out in India. The British are preoccupied and temporarily unable to intervene.

It seems that the French have come to an understanding with the Austrian government. Austria has abandoned its ambitions in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in exchange for French tacit approval of its actions.

In fact, they had just received this news from the British. Intelligence gathering was too remote a concept for the Sultanate government.

Abdulmejid I was so angry that he couldn't speak for a while. He had thought that with the support of Britain and France, he could put up a tough front, but reality cruelly reminded him that being too firm would only make him look foolish.

Seemingly realizing his mistake, Fuad quickly tried to remedy the situation: Your Majesty, don't worry. The native rebellion in India is just a mob, and it won't be long before the British quell the uprising.

The government in London will not sit idly by while Austria continues to expand its influence. If we can just buy some time, wait for them to crush the rebellion

Before he could finish his sentence, Abdulmejid I interrupted him: Stop dreaming. As long as the Austrian government makes a compromise with the British, we will be sold out.

The importance of India to Great Britain goes without saying. What's wrong with sacrificing our interests to prevent Austria from causing trouble?

Open your eyes and look at the map of the world. Is Russia far from India? Whether through Persia or Afghanistan, the Russians can support the rebels in India.

Given the relationship between Britain and Russia, what do you think the Russian government will do? It's obvious to anybody with half a brain.

If Austria and Russia stand together, even if the British can suppress the rebellion, they will suffer heavy losses.

On the question of India, the British have no allies, the French would already be friendly enough if they do not undermine them, can they still count on the support of the French government in that case?

It was obvious to everyone what the issue was, but as intelligent people, they could not show off in front of the Sultan. Such an opportunity had to be left for Abdulmejid I to perform.

After harshly criticizing his subordinates, Abdulmejid I was in a much better mood and began to seriously consider what to do next.

For the Sultanate, the goals of the Austrian government had become unimportant. Whether it was those islands or Libya, they could not bring any value to the Sultanate.

Economically, running these regions would basically break even. Even in a bountiful year with good weather, profits would be marginal at best.

Strategically these islands are still important, but unfortunately, the Ottoman government cant afford a navy anymore. Without a strong navy, the so-called strategic value is just a joke.

Faced with uncertainty, Fuad asked, Your Majesty, shall we continue negotiating with the Austrians?

Abdulmejid I pondered for a moment before answering, Of course, we must continue. Well delay as much as possible, dragging it out as long as we can.

If we cant delay any longer, well strive to preserve our interests as much as possible. Even if we have to sell, well aim for a good price.

At least it shouldnt be less than what we got for the Balkans. We will not recognize these debts at all; the Austrians must pay in cash!

Fuad replied nervously, Yes, Your Majesty!

This contradictory decision is clearly not easy to implement, and may even be impossible. No matter how well its ultimately done, its unlikely to satisfy the Sultan.

The reluctance to lose territory was a matter of saving face. Abdulmejid I did not want to be branded as a traitor who had sold out his nation. It was not as if he cared that much about these lands.

At the same time, he wants to sell off some of the land to raise money and alleviate the financial crisis of the government in order to suppress the rebellions in the country.

After all, Austria is just a minor irritant; theyre only after the interests of the Ottoman Empire. Theyre not a threat to their existence; its the domestic rebels who really want to see the empire fall.

St. Petersburg

Upon receiving news of the Indian rebellion, the first reaction of the Russian government was that an opportunity had arisen.

There wasnt a single ambitious country in the world that did not covet the British monopoly over India, especially the greedy Russian Bear.

Learning from the setbacks of the recent Near East War, the Russian government has become more cautious. Lack of money was a fatal weakness.

Their finances are not in good shape, and their newly acquired territories in the Balkans have not yet recovered from the war. Their hopes of using the wealth of Constantinople to make up for their financial shortcomings have now faded.

Post-war reconstruction is still underway, and it will take a dozen or more years to return to pre-war levels.

Due to the war, the Russian government has once again accumulated a considerable amount of debt. Nicholas I still cared about face; he can't afford to default on debts again.

This was the price of fighting for hegemony. Their international reputation is already not great, and if they default again, decades of hard work will be ruined in an instant.

Without credibility, no one will want to ally with them. In the beginning, the Russian government had few allies, and if they made trouble again, they wouldn't even be able to find countries to cheer them on.

Nicholas I asked, The opportunity has come. What do you all think we should do now?

Finance Minister Peter Brock replied, Your Majesty, if we are to conquer India, we must first control the region of Afghanistan, or we risk being cut off.

The British are formidable; relying on the Indian natives alone won't hold them off for long. By the time we have raised enough funds and conquered Afghanistan, the British will probably have crushed the rebellion.

Instead, we could directly support the Indian rebellion by providing weapons, equipment, and military advisors to the rebels, allowing them to wear down British strength.

With India's population of 300 million, even if just 1% of the population rises up, the British can only flee with their tails between their legs.

This is the most cost-effective approach. The Russian government isn't really short of weapons and equipment; they bought a lot during the Near East War, and now they're concentrating on downsizing and recuperation. Their warehouses are nearly overflowing.

Shipping all that junk from the warehouses to India to cause trouble for the British is in their best interest, and they might even make quite some profit.

Foreign Minister Karl Nesselrode objected: Mr. Brock, now is the best opportunity to seize India. We have already courted the Persians, and if we can win over the Afghans, we can form a coalition to attack India. The British won't be able to stop us. If we miss this chance, it won't be so easy to take India from the British in the future.

Finance Minister Brock replied, Count Nesselrode, it's not that simple. Even if your Foreign Ministry is able to persuade the Afghans to stand with us, what about the war funds?

The British will certainly fight tooth and nail to take India. It will escalate into a full-scale war between our two nations. The military expenditure required would only be more, not less, than the Near East War.

Having just won the Near East War, our Treasury coffers are empty enough for rats to scurry through. Where are we going to get so much money for war?

Foreign Minister Nesselrode refused to back down: That's your finance ministry's problem. Whether through taxation, issuing war bonds, or seeking international loans, there are many ways to raise funds.

The conquest of India will establish the world hegemony of the Russian Empire. At this critical juncture, I believe Lord Brock will surely find a solution.

Brock's face turned ashen as he looked at Nesselrode and said coldly, Impossible. Even if we exhaust all means, we cannot possibly raise such a large sum of money in such a short time!

Nicholas I angrily rebuked, Enough, you two idiots, shut up!

How could this obvious act of subtle dissuasion escape his sharp eyes?

Finance Minister Brock saying there's no money, and Foreign Minister Nesselrode suggesting ways to raise money, ultimately mean the same thing: the country has no money now, and there's no way to raise it. Thinking about going to war is one thing, but solving the financial problem comes first.

Nicholas I's thoughts of sending troops were snuffed out as quickly as they had been sparked. Mounting an expedition to India wasn't so easy; aside from the lack of funds, logistics were also a major issue.

Chapter 284: Economic Crisis Erupts

The four-party negotiations were still going on when a crisis crept up quietly. Overcapacity in the capitalist world had already hit the markets. To clear out inventories, British capitalists intensified their dumping of products around the world.

The Americans suffered first. Even though Franz's butterfly effect diverted some international capital to Austria, it could not solve America's crisis.

From 1848 to 1858, Americans built 25,000 km of railroads, 8,000 km less than in the past. So the railway bubble was not as severe as before.

Unfortunately, despite the rapid development of the railway industry in the United States, the surrounding industries were not stimulated. The metallurgical industry shrank under the competition from British goods, and the cotton textile industry also developed slowly.

Rails, pig iron, locomotives, cotton cloth, hardware, machinery... were flooded with British products, crushing local industries struggling to keep up.

With the increased dumping by the British, these industries couldn't withstand the pressure. The cotton textile industry in particular was hit hard and a wave of bankruptcies began.

This soon spread to the stock market, where share prices plummeted uncontrollably, dragging more companies into the fire.

Many factories went bankrupt and, of course, banks and financial companies couldn't escape unscathed. With a plethora of bad debts, a crisis of bank runs erupted, leading to bank failures.

The economic crisis in the United States quickly spread to Britain. The contraction of markets and the impact on British industrial and commercial exports led to numerous business failures, resulting in substantial losses for British capitalists as investors.

The reaction of the capitalists was swift and sharp. In order to minimize losses and deal with the potential economic crisis back home, British capitalists began withdrawing funds from the American market.

Against this backdrop, in the fall of 1857, the American financial markets experienced a money shortage, paralyzing the entire banking system. Of the 63 banks in New York, 62 ceased payments, and the discount rate exceeded 60%.

The economic crisis erupted across the United States. Without protection, the American market was vulnerable, and this economic crisis directly triggered the American Civil War.

Northern capitalists needed cheaper labor to increase profits and sought tariff barriers to protect their interests. Conversely, Southern plantation owners needed lower tariffs to export cotton and buy cheap manufactured goods.

Spurred by the economic crisis, northern industrialists decided to take drastic action. They began advocating abolitionism and trade barriers, preparing to cut off the financial resources of Southern plantation owners at the source.

This was clearly unacceptable to Southern plantation owners. While the abolition of slavery might be tolerable, the issue of tariffs was non-negotiable.

Why should they use shoddy, inefficient, expensive industrial goods from the North?

Moreover, with increased tariffs, exports of grain, cotton, and tobacco will suffer a fatal blow. For every dollar of additional tax, they will lose a dollar of profit. Its outright robbery of their money.

The conflicting interests of the two sides were too great to be reconciled. Eventually, the disadvantaged southern plantation owners began agitating for independence.

The economic crisis in the United States has little to do with Austria. The volume of trade between the two countries is very small, and both are agricultural exporters. Competition outweighs cooperation between the two sides.

However, when the economic crisis spread to Great Britain, European countries found it difficult to deal with the situation on their own, and Austria was no exception.

Vienna Palace

Prime Minister Felix solemnly said, Your Majesty, the economic crisis that has broken out in the United States has already begun to affect Britain, and it won't be long before it reaches us.

Once the British start withdrawing funds, many domestic enterprises will face capital shortages, leading to an economic crisis.

Nonchalantly, Franz replied, This is an inevitable outcome. Fortunately, we're prepared for it. We won't face a liquidity crisis domestically as long as we ensure the normal exchange operations of the banking sector. The crisis will remain controllable.

Everyone nodded in agreement. The Austrian government had made extensive preparations to deal with the economic crisis. First, they had immobilized some of the capital to prevent it from flowing out, and second, they had issued substantial bonds to accumulate funds.

Even if some British and French capital were to withdraw, the Austrian government held a substantial amount of pounds and francs, allowing for direct conversion payments without a drain on gold and silver reserves.

Finance Minister Karl suggested, Your Majesty, since the crisis is still within manageable limits, perhaps we could postpone the implementation of the system for approving massive capital flows.

After all, such a move could damage our reputation, and unless absolutely necessary, there's no need to take such a step.

In this era, capital flowed freely between nations without restriction. As the first to venture into uncharted territory, there was the possibility of becoming a hero, but more likely a martyr.

If the capitalists were displeased, it would put Austria at a great disadvantage in future international trade.

Franz thought for a moment before he said, Permission is still required. We can issue a notice that any capital flow over 100,000 guilders must be reported one to three months in advance.

We will ensure that all legitimate capital flows remain unrestricted, but funds of uncertain origin must be thoroughly explained and confirmed as legitimate before they can leave the country.

There are various excuses the government can use, such as certain criminal syndicates transferring funds or certain corrupt officials trying to move financial assets

Implementing this before the economic crisis affects Austria will prevent the perception that we are restricting economic freedom of movement.

Thoroughly verifying the legality of funds will increase the governments workload, but its acceptable to incur some additional costs to combat crime.

As for the restriction of capital flows with the possibility of advance declaration, this point barely warranted mention. At most, it was an additional safeguard for the financial markets, giving the government time to prepare.

Americas currency crisis served as a warning for the others. Foreign capital could suddenly withdraw en masse before the government even had time to react, forcing it to swallow the bitter pill.

Yes, Your Majesty!

Apart from adding an extra financial firewall, the Austrian government hasnt done anything else. Its still the era of the capitalist free-market economy, and excessive government intervention in the economy would cause resentment among many people.

Whats more, Franz didnt know how to intervene. In any case, overcapacity is an undeniable fact, and its a fundamentally unsolvable problem.

In 1857, Austrias industrial capacity was more than four times that of 1847, well above the world average. The result, of course, was overcapacity.

This is an inevitable result of industrialization; the efficiency of mechanical production far exceeds that of manual production, and the growth of the market obviously cannot keep pace with the growth of industrial capacity.

Therefore, after the first industrial revolution, the capitalist world would experience an economic crisis from time to time.

Looking for new markets at this time is actually very unrealistic. With economic crises erupting in countries around the world, there are hardly any markets left.

This is not the modern era, where theres a market wherever there are people. Right now, productive capacity is limited, and so is the creation of social wealth. The vast majority of people simply dont have the purchasing power.

Take, for example, the Russian Empire, which ranks first in Europe with a population of 70 million. On the surface, it appears to be a large market.

In reality, apart from the 10 million nobles and free citizens, the rest are serfs who have no personal freedom. What kind of purchasing power are we talking about?

This limited market has long been carved up. To further increase exports, they'll have to wait for the Russian government to complete serfdom reform!

Relying on colonial markets is also unrealistic. Except for a few colonies such as India, Cuba, the Philippines, and some in the South Pacific, most overseas colonies are undeveloped.

With a small immigrant population and locals lacking purchasing power, there are no buyers for industrial exports.

In such a situation, when overcapacity arises, an economic crisis becomes inevitable. The best option isn't to cover it up but to let the crisis unfold.

Survival of the fittest: The strong survive, the weak perish. This is also the driving force behind scientific and technological progress. Enterprises that don't want to be overtaken by their competitors must upgrade their equipment and eliminate obsolete capacity.

Even copycat companies struggled. Without fast enough response, strong reverse engineering capabilities, and low costs, they too would collapse.

By the end of 1857, the economic crisis had spread from Britain to France. By the beginning of 1858, the crisis had spread to Belgium, Austria, and Germany.

Across the European continent, apart from Russia which was still undergoing reforms, no country got away. Under the impact of the economic crisis, every country suffered heavy losses.

Chapter 285: Diverting the Crisis

After the economic crisis struck, the landmines Franz had buried exploded one after another, with unfinished projects popping up everywhere and the Austrian government scrambling to clean up the mess.

There was no choice; the destructive power of the economic crisis was too great. As the first global economic crisis, it was much more severe than previous ones.

In 1857 alone, bankruptcies in the United States exceeded 5,000, the stock market was halved, and in some industries with severe overcapacity, stock prices fell by as much as 90%.

European countries didn't fare much better, although the economic crisis hit them a little later, giving their governments some time to react.

Unfortunately, government economic intervention was unheard of in that era. Everyone waited for the eruption, guaranteeing inevitable losses.

Affected by the economic crisis, many capitalists saw their capital chains broken. With their pockets empty, they had to sell off their assets reluctantly, even if they did not want to.

The initial investments were regarded as acts of charity, as performance guarantees went down the drain.

The unfinished government projects were a minor problem. After all, these projects were not urgent, and delays of several years would not cost lives.

Moreover, the more capable capitalists persisted. The more they invested, the less willing they were to give up. In essence, these projects were still high-quality ventures.

This perseverance was crucial for Austria's fragile economy. It allowed many companies along the supply chain to survive and prevented the economy from deteriorating further.

Prime Minister Felix solemnly said, Your Majesty, to date there have been 1,800 domestic bankruptcies, with another 2,000 companies on the verge of bankruptcy, including the five major railway companies.

The overall stock market has plummeted 42%, with railway stocks experiencing the steepest decline. Due to the effects of the American railway bubble, many investors lost confidence in the railways, resulting in a 72% drop in market value.

The textile, manufacturing, financial, and steel industries have all suffered heavy losses. Even agricultural exports have shrunk by a quarter due to the economic crisis.

Industrial production has fallen by almost 30% compared to the same period last year and is currently in a continuous downward trend.

The unemployed has reached over 980,000 and will soon exceed one million. If the economic situation does not improve, this situation will only get worse.

The impact of the economic crisis on various industries and the large-scale bankruptcies of companies do not concern Franz; all this was expected.

A laissez-faire model of economic development is bound to have consequences. If it weren't for the Near East War, which allowed Austria to seize the market in the Russian Empire from Britain and France, the economic crisis would have occurred much sooner.

The Austrian crisis began during the postwar economic transition.

If it weren't for measures such as the opening of overseas colonies, the reform of the gold standard system, the influx of gold from colonial territories, and government investment in infrastructure, this economic crisis would not have started in the United States, but in Austria.

Other problems can be dealt with gradually, but the problem of unemployment is immediate and must be dealt with immediately or it will lead to very serious social problems.

Franz thought for a moment and said: According to the original plan, the government will take over the unfinished construction projects and let the workers resume work first.

At the same time, the government will negotiate with the railway companies that have suspended operations. They must either find solutions to their financial problems and resume construction immediately, or accept government investment for equity. In either case, construction must resume as soon as possible.

The Colonial Ministry must also act quickly. The economic crisis offers the best opportunity to organize migration, not only for Austria but for the entire German region.

Encourage bankrupt individuals to emigrate to the colonies. At this time, the Americans are also facing an economic crisis, so there is no competition for migrants.

Instruct the colonial government to accelerate the pace of expansion into Nigeria and the Congo. I authorize the mobilization of civilian militias to participate in the fighting to rapidly expand the areas under our control.

Once these projects resume normal construction, the related upstream and downstream enterprises will also survive, solving most of the domestic unemployment problem.

Industrial diversity remains low at present, with related industries from these projects already covering most of the country.

Franz took over the unfinished infrastructure projects because there were no buyers and only the government could take over and continue construction.

The decision not to acquire the railway companies directly was made not only because of their high market value and significant acquisition costs but also because the railway companies were unprofitable ventures.

After the Austrian government licensed all the lines as a package to the railway companies, their financial prospects dimmed.

The shrewd financial conglomerates retreated from the scene at the first sign of the U.S. economic crisis, leaving behind only those speculators who reacted too slowly and got trapped.

Of course, Franz couldnt help them out of their predicament, knowing full well that the railway companies wouldnt make a profit for the next decade. With no one willing to back such long-term projects, relying solely on the Austrian governments investment would create enormous financial pressures.

If possible, hed rather have private capital complete all of the railroads in the New Holy Roman Empire than settle for the compromise of public-private partnerships.

Thanks to a series of capital operations, Austria added more than 14,800 kilometers of railways in less than a decade, bringing the total railway mileage in the New Holy Roman Empire to more than 20,000 kilometers.

If it were up to government investment alone, Austria would probably struggle to complete even half of these projects. This is the power of money; the impoverished Austrian government cannot afford such large-scale projects.

Even now, the Austrian government is not in a position to make such enormous investments. Ongoing infrastructure construction is done through debt financing.

This has made Austria the fourth largest debtor nation in the world, following in the footsteps of Great Britain, France, and the United States. For the next several decades, the Austrian government will have to work hard to repay this debt.

War might be the best way to divert the crisis, but unfortunately, Africa is a little too far away. Otherwise, Franz wouldnt mind conquering a few native kingdoms to get through this economic crisis.

However, expansion into the region is still necessary. Not to mention the plundering of wealth, at least the land to resettle the immigrants must be seized first.

Germany has been facing overpopulation for some time. Austria is relatively better off after they've already sent hundreds of thousands of immigrants to the Balkans and persuaded tens of thousands to move to the colonies, relieving some of the pressure.

It's different in other parts of Germany. Whenever there's an economic crisis, there's always a wave of emigration.

This time, with the United States also experiencing an economic crisis, people will probably want to emigrate, but they won't be welcome there.

Josip Jelai replied: Your Majesty, the Colonial Ministry has already formulated an immigration plan. To attract immigrants from Germany, we propose two immigration options:

First, by accepting government employment, immigrants will go to the colonies to develop farms, with specific locations arranged by the government. All immigration expenses will be paid by the government, and they will not have to worry about employment issues.

Of course, this requires signing a five-year work contract, with wages 20% higher than on the mainland, and the government provides one free family visit during this period.

Second, free migration: Anyone who chooses to settle in one of our colonial outposts will receive a government subsidy that will cover half the cost of the ship ticket.

Franz nodded. These are the best conditions the Austrian government can offer. The main purpose of developing these farms and plantations is to reward meritorious individuals.

After all, land in the homeland is limited. Even when someone is ennobled, it is usually a nominal title. Much of the land already has owners and cannot be given away as rewards.

So the use of colonial land as an estate is inevitable. Not everyone has a noble lineage. Simply giving them land does not give them the ability to develop it.

Commoners, or heroes of fallen noble descent, have limited wealth. They lack the ability to develop land estates as they did in the past. Therefore, using developed farms or plantations as estates is also a good choice.

By developing it themselves, they can gain hundreds or even thousands of square kilometers of land, while inheriting existing farms may give them only tens or hundreds of hectares of land.

There's no concept of being taken advantage of or getting unfair benefits here; developing new land necessitated investment. Franz wouldn't force anyone in this matter.

The plantations first established in the colony of Guinea are now beginning to pay off. Crops such as cereals, cotton, and peanuts have a quick cycle, after all.

With the profits in hand, the Austrian government heavily publicized them, claiming to open up a second home for the New Holy Roman Empire and emphasizing the fertility of the African land.

Many people's perceptions of the African colonies have changed, and the concept of the Dark Continent has faded, replaced by notions of abundance.

That's not a lie; Africa really has a lot of fertile land. The colonies opened by Austria were relatively prosperous, with climatic conditions suitable for human habitation.

Mobilizing people to immigrate not only allows the development of overseas colonies and solves domestic unemployment problems, but also helps to divert the economic crisis. Its truly a win-win situation.

Chapter 286: Another Deal

The sudden economic crisis further aggravated the difficulties of the precarious Ottoman government.

Although the Ottoman Empire was primarily an agrarian nation, the withdrawal of British and French capital dealt it a severe blow.

Faced with no other choice, the Ottoman government was forced to compromise, with the only issue being money.

Fuad negotiated hard: Count, your price is far too low! Nowhere else in the world is there such cheap land!

Johannes replied calmly, Relax, Mr. Fuad. Our offer is based on the international market price for large-scale land transactions.

Not long ago, we were negotiating with the Russians. They were considering selling Alaska, a land mass of 1.5 million square kilometers, and the Russian government was only asking for 4 million guilders. Our offer is already very sincere.

Indeed, the sale of Alaska had been proposed by the Russian foreign minister. However, the land wouldnt bring in much revenue, and there were concerns about possible British invasion.

But Nicholas I opposed the idea. The esteemed Tsar felt that selling land would tarnish his glorious image, so the matter was shelved.

This incident caused quite a stir internationally, and as a diplomat interested in international affairs, Fuad was naturally familiar with it.

Count, Alaska is just a big block of ice, hardly worth anything!

Johannes shook his head and said, Alaska still produces leather, the Bering Strait has abundant fishing resources, the southeastern and central-southern parts have a temperate climate and are rich in timber.

Moreover, theres also an inland basin. Weve sent people to survey it, and the Matanuska Valley area has fertile soil, perfect for agriculture.

Taking the Nordic region as a reference, this land can easily support tens of millions of people. In comparison, Libya is just sand.

Of the lands we seek to purchase, only a few islands have real value. If there are cost concerns, we can exclude Libya and calculate the price separately.

So were offering 20 million guilders for a total area of over 20,000 square kilometers of islands. This already breaks the world record for large land transactions.

Fuad couldnt believe it. To him, Alaska was just a block of ice, and in this era, there might not even be a population of more than ten thousand people living there.

But Johannes had found something of value. It wasn't just fabricated; it was information provided by the Russians themselves.

Even melon peddlers know how to boast about their wares, and the Russians were no exception. To get a good price, it's natural to exaggerate a bit.

If there was nothing there, why would anyone pay? Even with so many resources, the Russians asked for only 4 million guilders, showing how worthless land was in that era.

Simply put, everyone wasn't lacking in resources now; only developed land was valuable. No matter how many resources there were, they were worthless until they were developed.

Who in their right mind would go to Alaska to fish, log, and farm? Besides the freezing temperatures, the cost of development there is also high.

The lands of God's chosen nation were too fertile. After developing the American Great Plains, there's more food than can be eaten, and every year there are worries about a food surplus.

In this context, the land in Alaska naturally loses its value for agricultural development. Only idiots would invest in agriculture there.

In this era, not to mention the undeveloped coastal plains, the high cost of developing the inland basins means that only fools would go there to develop.

Otherwise, the Russians would have already organized immigration instead of fearing a British invasion!

Anyway, negotiations are all about bragging. Johannes, of course, doesn't mind putting Alaska in a better light, omitting the cost of land development, and downplaying the value of Libya, all to bring the price down.

Fuad argued, Count, no matter how you look at it, Libya has such a vast area. Even if the interior is all desert, there are still tens of thousands of square kilometers of fertile land along the coast.

There are still 500,000 to 600,000 people in the area, providing readily available labor. Your country can develop it directly, and its value is much higher than the barren and uninhabited Alaska. 8 million guilders is not much.

And then there are these islands. Their most important aspect is not their economic value, but their strategic value.

Cyprus is located at the junction of Asia, Europe, and Africa, with an extremely prominent strategic position. Crete is located in the heart of the Mediterranean Sea and extends to the Aegean Sea.

These islands are definitely not only about economic value. Factoring their strategic value, they are worth at least 35 million guilders.

Johannes replied with a smile, Mr. Fuad, that price is too high. We don't need the so-called human resources at all. How about this: we'll trade you all the people on those lands to you.

Since you consider strategic value important, we'll only take Crete and Cyprus, and we don't want the other islands.

With this arrangement, everyone can accept it. I'll raise the price again. How about 30 million guilders? That price is definitely not low!

The price of 30 million guilders is not low. If the Austrian government didn't use the so-called debt offset, Fuad would have agreed directly.

Johannes never intended to spend much money from the beginning. He was going to use the bonds he bought at a bargain price to pay for the land, so a slightly higher price was acceptable.

Fuad revealed his bottom line directly: Count, we can make another concession. We can clear the bilateral debts, and your country can pay an additional 10 million guilders as payment for the land purchase. How about that?

If payment were to be made in gold or silver, the Austrian government would never agree. But if it could be settled in goods, there wouldn't be much of a problem.

With the onset of the economic crisis, Austria had a large surplus of products, making this a good choice for disposing of them.

After pondering for a moment, Johannes replied, If your country can repatriate the people on these lands, then we have a deal. We can use the goods your country desperately needs as payment, and cash can be used to make up for any shortfall.

After a moment of silence, Fuad gave his answer: The cost of immigration, all paid for by your country!

There was no way around it. First, the Balkan Peninsula was lost, then civil war broke out. The Ottoman Empire's population was at its lowest point in the last century, with less than 13 million people.

Once the civil war ended, the labor shortage would become an urgent reality. Although the number of people in the countries to be traded was not large, it was still a supplement for them.

Johannes replied, Agreed!

An agreement between the two parties didn't mean the matter was over. Britain and France couldn't stand idly by while Austria occupied many islands in the Aegean. Next, Johannes would have to continue to negotiate with British and French representatives.

Especially with the British, Johannes still has to take the island of Corfu from them. Without taking this gateway, the Austrian government would have trouble sleeping at night.

By comparison, the French are relatively easy to deal with, as there was a prior agreement between the two sides. Selling them a few islands to serve as military bases and sharing the benefits of the Aegean Sea would settle the matter.

After all, while the Aegean didn't have much else, it did have a lot of islands, numbering between 5,000 and 6,000, hundreds of which were suitable for human habitation. The Austrian government did not intend to occupy the entire region from the start anyway.

The British representative Nigel said with dissatisfaction: Count, isn't it going too far for your country to trade territory belonging to the Ottoman Empire with us!

No, we've already made a deal with the Ottoman Empire. We've paid 45 million guilders to buy their many islands in the Aegean Sea and the region of Libya.

Now well swap Austrias islands in the Aegean for the Ionian Islands. Heres a map of the Aegean. As you can see, the red dots represent Austrias islands, while the rest belong to Greece and the Ottoman Empire.

Johannes deliberately omitted mention of Cyprus. By this time, the British had already begun colonizing Cyprus, albeit through private organizations not directly affiliated with the British government.

Nigel didnt pay attention to this little detail. During this period, Cyprus had no significant strategic value. Before the advent of the airplane, the strategic value of this island was minimal.

By comparison, the dozens of islands in the Aegean were of greater strategic value. Once the Russians broke out of the Dardanelles, this chain of islands would become a blockade line.

So as not to provoke the Ottoman Empire too much and risk driving the Sultanate government into desperation, their nearby islands are not included in the transaction.

Now, in negotiations with the British, the Austrian government doesnt have many valuable islands to offer. Instead, they focused more on the issue of India.

From 1857 to the present, the Indian rebellion has not only not been suppressed, but has become worse. The British government has no intention of delaying any longer.

Of course, the Russians are to be blamed for this. Without the selfless help of the Russian government, the Indians wouldnt have been able to make such a big wave.

Its hard to say what role the Austrian government played. On the surface, Austria didnt do anything. At most, they provided a relatively small loan to the Russians.

This was a symbol of friendship between the two allied nations, definitely not financial support for the Indian rebellion. Whatever the Russians did with the money had nothing to do with the Austrian government.

Nigel had no time to drag things out any longer. Now that Austria was supporting the Indian rebels with a million guilders worth of arms and ammunition, even ten million pounds might not be enough to suppress them.

There were just too many Indians. Just stirring up a batch with the help of Russian advisors was enough to cause them tremendous trouble.

For this agreement to be implemented, your country must immediately cease support for the Indian rebels, including financial support to the Russian government.

Johannes innocently replied, Youre overthinking this. The Austrian government is an advocate of peace, how could we possibly support Indian rebels?

As for helping the Russians, thats even more absurd. The Austrian governments finances are not exactly overflowing; we dont have the capacity for such generosity.

Underhand dealings do occur, but openly admitting them is out of the question. All nations are involved in such activities. Isnt it true that the British are smuggling arms into Nigeria to support native kingdoms and cause trouble for Austria?

Anyway, without evidence, everyone can just obstruct each other without consequences. That's how high the moral standards are among the great powers. As long as they don't openly stab each other in the back, anything goes.

After hearing Johannes' hidden message, Nigel realized that if the deal went through, everything would be fine. But if not, the other side stirring up trouble might be inevitable.

That would be ideal. As long as your country promises to help us suppress the Indian rebellion, this land deal can be easily negotiated.

Johannes assured him cooperatively, Rest assured, colonies are also part of a nation's sovereignty. The Austrian government strongly supports your government's efforts to uphold national sovereignty and opposes any outside interference.

This is international politics; everything revolves around interests. In West Africa and the Mediterranean, the British and Austrian nations came to an understanding. The British tacitly accepted Austria's expansion, so naturally, the Austrian government had to give up its activities in the Indian region.

On March 12, 1858, the New Holy Roman Empire signed the Mediterranean Land Transaction Treaty with the Ottoman Empire. The Austrian government contributed 45.868 million guilders to purchase over 300 islands, including Libya, Crete, and Cyprus.

Of the total, 35.868 million guilders were offset by debts and late fees, and the remaining 10 million was paid in goods. Cash payments were out of the question, but gathering 10 million guilders worth of goods was relatively easy.

The next day, Johannes signed separate treaties with Britain and France, namely the Aegean Islands Transaction Treaty and the Territorial Exchange Treaty.

The long-awaited Mediterranean conflict was resolved, with the three nations Britain, France, and Austria defining their respective spheres of influence in the Mediterranean. North Africa was formally incorporated into French territory.

Clearly, John Bull had made significant concessions this time, giving up a significant portion of Britain's interests in the Mediterranean in exchange for the support of France and Austria in the Indian question.

Chapter 287: Great Immigration

Franz was credible. After signing the treaty with the Ottoman Empire, he immediately paid in supplies worth 10 million guilders.

This time, the Austrian government did not reduce the amount at all. With the lingering effects of overproduction, there were too many stockpiles that could not be sold. Franz was not so wasteful as to destroy them directly.

Selling these surplus goods to the Ottoman government was an ideal solution. If possible, he even hoped to make a similar deal with the Russians. Anything was better than letting these goods rot in warehouses.

These processed goods, especially perishable agricultural products, had a short shelf life. At the time, preservatives were crappy, and using too much could be deadly.

Even if food safety wasn't a priority, poisoning people was out of the question. How could they do such things that could destroy their reputation?

When it came to reputation, the Austrian government maintained very strict controls. Not poisoning people was the bottom line for food safety, even for exported products.

Of course, this is only the basic standard. Higher standards belong to high-end foods, such as those labeled exclusively for the nobility. The quality of these products is not much lower than later generations.

The price difference between the two tiers of goods was usually many times, even dozens of times, proving that cheap goods are not good stuff.

In the Vienna Palace, after listening to the Minister of Agriculture's report, Franz pondered and said, "Since agricultural exports are declining, let's create an artificial market. Didn't we just make an agreement with the Ottoman Empire to take the population out of these lands?"

"Well, let's organize ship transport immediately. At worst, we can offer them a year's supply of provisions as compensation for their early resettlement. I believe the Ottoman government won't refuse such a good deal."

"Once the Ottomans are gone, we can organize immigrants to fill the void and completely control these areas."

"In this way, shipping companies will have a new business, and we can also reduce the pressure of food surplus and help stabilize domestic food prices."

"The Mediterranean was different from other overseas colonies. The Austrian government could control it directly. Even without the transoceanic telegraph, the delivery of messages was only a matter of a week."

"As long as the local Ottomans have all been evacuated and replaced by domestic immigrants, there will be no concern about governance."

Minister of Agriculture Christian replied, "Yes, Your Majesty."

After a pause, Franz added, "Remember to ship out the population of the Ionian Islands and the Sinai Peninsula along with the Ottomans. If there are any problems, bribe the officials of the Ottoman government."

"After all, the Ottoman Empire did not keep detailed records of its population, so it should be relatively easy to manipulate the numbers."

"The immigration issue must be resolved as soon as possible. During an economic crisis, this is the most cost-effective task. It can even alleviate the crisis, killing two birds with one stone."

"This was not speculation. At that time, the Ottoman Empire was known as the most corrupt empire in the world. As long as you paid, there was nothing these bureaucrats would not dare to do."

When Colonial Minister Josip Jelai heard about the need to speed up the immigration process, he felt a headache coming on. The demand for immigrants this time is considerable. To maintain control over these newly acquired territories indefinitely, a significant influx of people is necessary.

Crete needed at least 30,000-40,000 immigrants, Cyprus 30,000-40,000, the Ionian Islands 20,000-30,000, Libya over 100,000, and the Sinai Peninsula just 5,000. In total, that was another 200,000 people.

These regions needed people, and the African colonies still needed people. The Congo and the Gulf of Guinea could be put on hold for now, their populations were already substantial.

But the newly acquired Nigeria and the currently being infiltrated Cameroon and Benin were in dire need of immigrants.

Otherwise, as soon as John Bull had caught his breath, they would make trouble again. The best example was what is now the Gulf of Guinea. Although the British coveted it, they lost interest after seeing the masses of German immigrants moving in.

In this era, no one who immigrated to the colonies for profit was easy to bully. Especially the nobles who opened farms and plantations were all gentlemen who could ride a horse with a rifle.

On land, the British simply could not compete with them. If a colony had only tens of thousands of people, if relations with Britain and France soured one day, the colony would change hands immediately.

The Austrian government was thinking not only about establishing colonies but also about how to retain them. Without 100,000 to 200,000 immigrants, it was really not possible.

In addition to these regions, the Balkan Peninsula had to be considered. To control Wallachia, Moldavia, Serbia and Bosnia, the Austrian government had also formulated a plan for 1 million immigrants.

This immigration can only come from the German region to ensure the smooth progress of ethnic integration, which is also an urgent task.

To avoid contradictory policies competing for immigrants, all immigration work was entrusted to the Colonial Ministry for unified administration.

Josip Jelai explained: Your Majesty, as the domestic economy improves, the number of people willing to immigrate overseas is decreasing. We won't be able to attract enough immigrants in the short term.

As you know, to facilitate assimilation, whenever we organize immigration, we have to scatter and disperse them, not allowing minority groups to gather in one region.

Including refugees resettled from the Balkans, they are all distributed in fixed proportions to ensure that they cannot form a dominant advantage locally.

This has created difficulties for the immigration work. At present, the number of people who are willing to apply for immigration is less than 200,000, and together with the total number of applicants from all over Germany, it does not exceed 550,000.

Most people prefer to emigrate to the Balkans. Civilians willing to go overseas make up less than half.

Franz nodded. That was quite normal. How could ordinary people be willing to leave their hometowns unless it was absolutely necessary?

Immigrating to the Balkan Peninsula might be tolerable because its still within the country and you can travel back and forth along the Danube River in just a month. However, its different overseas.

Even though the Austrian government offers favorable conditions, such as opening farms and plantations in overseas colonies, direct recognition of land ownership, and even policy loans, many people still have concerns.

The economic impact has only recently reached the German region and will continue for some time. The number of bankrupt citizens will increase in the future, and thats our opportunity.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has already contacted the governments of several countries, and they wont interfere with your actions. Before the economic crisis ends, its the peak period for immigration.

You must now race against time and send the immigrants away as quickly as possible. Those who cannot go overseas are to be sent to the Balkans. When the economic crisis ends and people find employment again, the situation will be different.

Reality is that cruel. In an economic crisis, the unemployed are seen not as an asset but as a social liability. Governments of various countries are eager to see them go.

In this context, the Austrian Foreign Ministry has also coordinated its efforts with countries in the German cultural circle, such as Switzerland and Belgium. The governments of these countries have welcomed Austrias recruitment of immigrants.

Of course, this is only possible during economic crises. Once the economy returns to normal, even if other governments dont oppose it, local capitalists wont agree to it.

Only when labor was abundant would it be cheap. This was also the reason why European governments found it difficult to organize large-scale immigration.

If the Austrian government was not powerful enough, and unable to coerce domestic capitalists, Franz could not have organized immigration with such fanfare.

Chapter 288: Making Shady Moves

Vienna Palace

Chief of Intelligence Tyron reported: Your Majesty, negotiations between Britain and France over the Suez Canal have failed. The French government has decided to disregard the British and proceed with excavating the canal on its own.

This was to be expected. The Suez Canal was of enormous importance not only to Austria but also to France. Having invested so much in the initial stages, it was obviously impossible for them to give up because of British opposition.

The current power gap between Britain and France was not as vast as it would be at the end of the century. France still harbored ambitions for world hegemony. Moreover, they possess the strength to match their ambitions.

The French army boasts a standing force of up to 400,000, second only to Russia and Austria on the European continent. Also, the total tonnage of the French Navy exceeded 60% of that of the Royal Navy and was nearly 70%.

Possessing a world-class navy and army at the same time, the French are the most balanced among the great powers, with a comprehensive national strength that is not inferior to any other major power. With such formidable strength, it would be difficult for them to remain docile.

The only unfortunate aspect is that this is already the peak for the French. Their national power is no longer sufficient to support further advancement.

To compete with the Russians for hegemony over the European continent, Frances population was too small. In this era where the human wave tactic reigned supreme, slow population growth had directly eliminated France from contention.

To compete with the British for maritime supremacy, the building of continental forces diverted resources and prevented them from exerting their full power. Of course, they could not compete with John Bull.

France, caught in the middle of all this, saw only its own strength and did not realize that it had already been left in the dust by its competitors in terms of development potential. Still, they dreamed of being the worlds hegemon.

From a strategic perspective, the predicaments of France and Austria are somewhat similar; both must develop their navy and army simultaneously and cannot concentrate their strength on one aspect.

Austrias advantage is that it has a larger population, a larger territory, and more abundant resources. However, its disadvantages are also quite obvious. As a multi-ethnic state, if it cannot achieve national integration, problems will arise as soon as nationalism awakens.

Having clarified the cards in his hand, Franz considers himself somewhat luckier than Napoleon III. Despite Austrias numerous ethnic groups, they are still more likely to stay in line than the French population!

Learning from history, Napoleon III's reign had not been bad, but only one defeat and his hot-headed citizens had driven him from the throne. In contrast, the original Franz in history had successive defeats in the Austro-French and Austro-Prussian wars, yet he still held on to the imperial throne, showing the difference.

Since coming to power, Franz has promoted both linguistic and marital unity across ethnic groups.

At present, language unification seems to have been the most successful endeavor. German is widely spoken in urban areas, but in rural areas, except for children in compulsory education, the older generation, if they could speak some German, were already considered active supporters.

TN: Ive previously misunderstood that they created a new language based on the German language which was why I translated it as the Austrian language but in actuality, it was German all this time. Please forgive me for this oversight.

Nevertheless, nearly 70% of the population nationwide uses German. In minority regions and newly occupied Balkan territories, the prevalence of German was in fact highest amongst civilians.

With regard to literacy, although official statistics claim a literacy rate of over 67%, the prevailing social reality of widespread illiteracy remains largely unchanged.

Franz did not think that being able to write a few words made someone an intellectual. This 67% could be understood as 67% of the population can write their own name.

A true unification of language and writing would have to wait until the current generation receiving compulsory education grew up. This was not something that could be rushed.

In contrast, the increase in the number of mixed-race children was much greater. As industrialization encouraged more interaction between ethnicities, intermarriage naturally became more common.

Theoretically, as long as there are three million couples in inter-ethnic marriages, all the races in the entire New Holy Roman Empire are bound together.

Everyone would become related, and ethnic consciousness would fade. Frankly speaking, except for extreme nationalists, who would discriminate against their own relatives and friends?

Franz instructed, Keep an eye on the French. Digging the Suez Canal not only requires massive investment, it also involves unknown risks. The French government will inevitably have to raise funds on the capital market.

Investing in the Suez Canal was a very profitable business. Once this golden waterway was opened, wealth would flow in. Naturally, Franz would not pass up the opportunity.

Theoretically, the French will seek Austrian cooperation after British opposition in order to minimize risks. However, the French will never give up control of the canal, and Franz doesn't expect to get a controlling stake.

In this situation, the Austrian government's share would be 30-40% at most, which seemed substantial, but with more sharing the cake, Emperor Franz must be mindful of appearances.

Instead of investing directly with the government, it's better to secretly buy some shares on the capital market. After all, this investment is only for dividends, and the more discreet the better.

Yes, Your Majesty! Tyron replied.

After a moment's pause, Franz asked, What's the latest news from the Kingdom of Prussia?

Tyron replied, The Kingdom of Prussia is still undergoing reforms, and the reign of Frederick William IV is somewhat unstable, with internal tensions rising. His own health is also poor, as he hasn't appeared in public in a long time.

The specifics are uncertain as Prussians have blocked the news. However, judging from the frequent activities of William Frederick Louis in the political arena, we can infer that Frederick William IV's health is deteriorating.

Upon hearing this news, Franz realized that the famous William the Great was about to make his mark on history.

But to be one step behind meant to be forever behind. The Kingdom of Prussia had already missed its window of opportunity.

The three-way split of Germany was created by Franz himself, and how could it be easily broken under the restoration of the Vienna System?

Now Britain, France, Russia, and Austria are all hoping for stability in continental Europe, and this is not something that can be influenced by individual efforts. Unless he can work miracles and make them all collectively lose their minds, there's no chance.

In history, the unification of the German territories by the Kingdom of Prussia took place against the background of the mistakes made by the government of Napoleon III. It wasn't just one mistake, but rather three consecutive lapses in judgment that created opportunities for them.

The current international situation is even more severe. If France and Austria couldn't be provoked into conflict in Italy and Britain and Russia in India, they have no room for maneuver.

After pondering for a moment, Franz ordered, Tyron, find a way to get rid of the Prussian envoy to Russia, Bismarck. Make it seem natural, without revealing our involvement.

If there isn't a suitable opportunity, then ruin his reputation first, which will prevent him from advancing further.

He who is their hero is my enemy.

Although Franz has always followed the rules of political struggle and rarely played such conspiracies, that doesn't mean he's incapable of doing so.

To be on the safe side, he decided to deal with the Iron Chancellor first. Without him at the helm, the Prussians wouldn't be able to cause much trouble even if other radical members came to power.

The Kingdom of Prussia has limited national strength and cannot afford to lose in the struggle for supremacy. Any misstep could spell disaster.

William Frederick Louis is not an easy man. Without a chance to win, he won't take any chances with the radicals. Not all prime ministers are like Bismarck, able to force the king to yield.

Yes, Your Majesty! Tyron replied.

Chapter 289: Bismarck

Franz had long harbored the idea of taking action against Bismarck, but unfortunately, there were too many people with the same name in Europe. Before they rose to prominence, who could tell who was who?

Without knowing which was which, he could do nothing.

By the time Bismarck's identity was verified, he had just been transferred from being Prussia's representative in Frankfurt to envoy to the New Holy Roman Empire.

Taking action against an envoy on one's own territory would have serious repercussions. The political risk was too great, and Franz was not one to take risks.

Now that Bismarck had been reassigned as envoy to Russia, the situation was different. With a little caution, his removal would not be so serious, and even if trouble arose, it would be the Russian government's headache.

If possible, he wouldn't mind taking out all three of Prussia's top figures. Unfortunately, the other two were in the military, and it was difficult to track their movements. They couldn't just storm into a military camp and eliminate them, could they?

Franz did not believe that his assassination team was capable of such a feat. Trying to assassinate military officers in Prussia would be risky. If they were caught, it would be a disaster.

The greatest threat was Bismarck. As skilled as the generals were in warfare, they could not escape the constraints of national power in the age of modern weaponry. In this respect, Franz was not intimidated.

By comparison, politicians and diplomats were the ones who decided the fate of nations. With Metternich around, and Bismarck's position being not that high currently, Franz wasn't worried about him causing trouble.

But this Prime Minister of Europe was already old, and it was only a matter of time before he stepped down. Meanwhile, the young Bismarck was rising rapidly under William's regency.

Unfortunately, the candidates for the Foreign Ministry of the New Holy Roman Empire are only of average ability. Franz himself was no expert in diplomacy. If he were to make a mistake and allow Bismarck to form an anti-Austrian alliance, it would be a big problem.

At present, the strength of the New Holy Roman Empire poses no threat to anyone. The comprehensive power of the four nations of Britain, Russia, France, and Austria is relatively balanced, although there are differences among them.

In the coming decades, however, France may fall behind because of its population, and the situation in the Russian Empire is still unclear. Nevertheless, Franz does not believe that the reform-delayed Russia will become stronger.

In this context, sooner or later all countries will realize the threat of the New Holy Roman Empire. Once the balance of power shifts, the international order will change again.

Under normal circumstances, as long as France and Russia do not become close friends, Austria has nothing to worry about. But if the Kingdom of Prussia were to get involved, the situation would change.

The appointment of Bismarck as diplomatic envoy to the Russian Empire marks a shift in Prussia's foreign policy as it seeks to improve relations with the Russians.

Before this, Bismarck had already repaired diplomatic relations between Prussia and Austria. Even if William Frederick Louis despises Bismarck, he still relies on him, and there's a reason for that.

In Franz's view, this was a dangerous sign. The fact that Prussian-Russian relations had not improved was due to the fact that he had constantly sabotaged things from the middle and provoked trouble between them. Basically, the Prussian-Russian contradictions were not irreconcilable.

In St. Petersburg, Bismarck, who had just been appointed diplomatic envoy to the Russian Empire, was still pondering how to reforge an alliance with Russia.

If it weren't for the purpose of once again facilitating the alliance between the three Northern European courts, Bismarck would not have accepted the position of envoy to Russia. After all, it is only a lateral move, not a true promotion.

Bismarck ordered, Prepare the carriage, I'm going to visit Crown Prince Alexander.

Officials of the Russian Empire generally don't have much fondness for the Kingdom of Prussia, but relations between the two royal families have always been amicable.

For whatever reason, pro-Prussian tsars often appeared in Russia, even the mad Peter III. Even the current Crown Prince Alexander, the future Alexander II, was also pro-Prussian.

Relying on this alone is obviously not enough; given the interests at stake, mere affinity is not enough to make the Russian government change its attitude.

As history took a different course, Russia did not lose its hegemony over Europe. The Russian government could not possibly abandon the Kingdom of Denmark. As a hegemon, it cannot afford to be without vassals; this has escalated into a matter of dignity for the hegemonic state.

As long as the Kingdom of Prussia harbors ambitions towards the two German principalities occupied by Denmark, relations between the two sides cannot be improved.

With the restoration of the Vienna System, the Kingdom of Prussia lacked the strength to break the status quo. Regent William Frederick Louis believed that the best opportunity had already been lost, and advocated domestic development first, temporarily abandoning external expansion.

The development of the domestic economy and the restoration of diplomatic relations with other countries became necessary. It was under these circumstances that Bismarck visited St. Petersburg.

Stepping out of the embassy, Bismarck felt a sense of foreboding, as if something was about to happen. However, once a diplomatic meeting was arranged, he couldnt back out.

As time passed, Bismarck smoothly entered the palace, seemingly without anything out of the ordinary happening.

A friendly-looking elderly man solemnly said, Alexei, weve just received word from our insider that the target has left. You can prepare now.

We have only one chance to strike, and regardless of the outcome, we must leave St. Petersburg tonight. If the Russian government gets wind of this, you know the consequences.

Alexei replied nonchalantly, I get it, Andrei. Youre just as long-winded as ever. Dont worry, we have it under control. To ensure success, well ambush him at the gate. Once hes in the carriage, theres no escaping death.

Andrei, the elderly man, glared and said, If you want to survive longer in this business, Alexei, keep your arrogance in check. Its not just the person in the carriage; the coachman and the guards are our targets as well. You should know the quirks of the nobility.

This target is no ordinary target, and Ive prepared a scapegoat already. As long as you lot dont get caught red-handed, there will be no problem.

Seeing the seriousness in the old mans demeanor, Alexeis relaxed expression vanished. They were no strangers to being assassins, but this was the first time they had seen the old man so serious.

Alexei asked confusedly, I dont understand. Isnt he just a Prussian diplomat? Who did he offend to warrant such a hefty price on his head?

The old man spoke solemnly, I warn you again, in our line of work, the more curious you are, the faster youll meet your end. It has not been easy to train the lot of you, and I dont want to see you all meet an untimely demise. When we finish this big job, well be even, and youll all be free men.

The names they used were obviously aliases. The old man looked old, but it was just makeup. His real age was not that advanced.

As a member of Franz's intelligence organization, specializing in assassinations no less, Andrei naturally could not reveal his true identity.

Alexei and his comrades were assassins trained by Andrei and had previously taken on contract killings. Since this mission was extremely important, these outside contacts could only be discarded.

Bismarck was a diplomat of a nation, and if he were assassinated in St. Petersburg, the Russian government would not let it go so easily. They couldn't afford to leave the perpetrators at large. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to explain it to the international community.

This matter couldn't be tied to Austria, so it had to be carried out by these outside agents who were not yet officially part of the intelligence organization. Even if they failed, these assassins wouldn't know anything.

When it came to contract killings, people would naturally think of Bismarck's enemies. Who would suspect the unrelated Franz of orchestrating this assassination?

Even if an assassination were to be carried out, it would have to target someone of higher importance. Bismarck, even if he was a nuisance, clearly wasn't important enough to warrant Franz's special attention.

In the palace, Bismarck and Crown Prince Alexander had a friendly conversation. The Prussian government's willingness to compromise made it much easier to resolve the conflicts between the two countries.

The Russian government also sought to change its isolated position on the European continent. A Russo-Austrian alliance alone was clearly insufficient; if Prussia could be brought into the fold, it would be almost perfect.

Once the alliance of the three nations was established, the Russian government's hegemony over continental Europe would be stabilized. It would no longer barely maintain its reputation as an overlord, as it does now, with its actual influence limited to northeastern Europe.

Having won the support of Crown Prince Alexander, Bismarck returned satisfied. The first step in improving relations between the two countries had been taken.

The carriage creaked on the snowy ground as it moved slowly forward. Bismarck's good mood faded; the weather in the Russian Empire was awful. It was already April, but there was still snow on the ground, which made him very uncomfortable.

As time passed by, traversing street after street, he finally arrived home. Bismarck had just stepped out of the carriage when:

Bang! Bang! Bang

Gunshots rang out, and bullets were already flying toward him. Before he could dodge, he was shot.

Upon hearing the shots, the embassy guards rushed out, but by then the assailants had vanished without a trace.

Chapter 290: Bureaucratic Handling

Winter Palace

Upon receiving the news of Bismarck's assassination, Nicholas I was immediately enraged. To have an envoy assassinated in St. Petersburg was a slap in his face.

Investigate, conduct a thorough investigation. We must find the culprit! he commanded.

Yes, Your Majesty! the Minister of Police replied promptly.

After a momentary pause, Nicholas I asked, Is Bismarck dead?

Due to the frosty relations between the two countries, Nicholas I had never even met Bismarck, so he normally would not have been concerned about his life and death.

But now the situation is different. If Bismarck is not dead, there is still room for maneuver. As long as the culprit is caught, things can be resolved.

If he is dead, the Russians will once again become an international laughingstock. If even a foreign envoy can't be protected, the British might not miss the chance to kick them when they're down.

Minister of Police Dumanov replied, Bismarck was hit by three bullets and is currently undergoing surgery. However, due to the delay, the chances of survival are slim.

Clearly, he was preparing to shift the blame. Dumanov was also extremely angry about Bismarck's assassination attempt. For him, it was a bolt from the blue.

Had the incident occurred elsewhere, it could have been attributed to security issues, which he would reluctantly accept. However, in front of the Prussian Embassy, the situation is different; the Russian government police do not usually loiter around foreign embassies.

With the instinct of a bureaucrat, he also wanted to shift the responsibility to others. The excuses were already prepared; the security of the Prussian embassy was their own responsibility. When such an incident occurred and the guards failed to react, it reflected their incompetence.

Cynically, it could also be internal power struggles within the Kingdom of Prussia, or orchestrated by Bismarck's enemies. If there's collusion both internally and externally, it becomes much more plausible.

In this way, his own responsibility was greatly reduced. Everyone's attention would be drawn to the internal strife in Prussia, and international pressure on the Russian government would be lessened.

Aside from reporting to the Imperial Palace, Marquis Dumanov began looking for evidence to support his excuses.

Just as he returned to his office, he received word that Bismarck had succumbed to his injuries. Shortly thereafter, he received good news: the suspects had been apprehended.

Marquis Dumanov inquired, Has the identity of the suspects been confirmed?

His assistant solemnly replied, The preliminary assessment indicates that the suspects are members of the Polish Independence Organization. The bullet casings found at the scene match the ones seized from the arrested suspects.

These weapons and ammunition are all handmade, not mechanically produced, which is typical of the equipment used by the Polish Independence Organization.

Based on initial interrogations, they confessed that their infiltration into St. Petersburg was aimed at creating chaos by assassinating high-ranking officials of our country and creating opportunities for Polish independence.

It is said that there is more than one such group. Considering that the Kingdom of Prussia also occupies Polish territory, it is not surprising that Bismarck became a target for assassination.

After thinking for a while, Marquis Dumanov said solemnly: Public opinion is now very unfavorable to us. Immediately release the information we have, and be sure to pin the Polish Independence Organization as the perpetrators.

Also, tell the reporters that there may be traitors within the Prussian Embassy. It was under their internal and external collusion that the diplomat Bismarck was assassinated.

Because of the traitors involvement, Bismarcks wound was not treated promptly at the hospital, leading to his death.

As for the specific details, let the journalists fabricate them themselves. After all, we have no right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Prussian Embassy. Notify the Foreign Ministry to send them a letter urging the Prussians to conduct their own investigation.

Whether its true or not doesnt matter anymore; Marquis Dumanov no longer wants to bear this responsibility, and the current investigation results are already sufficient.

The Polish Independence Organization has been causing trouble in the Russian Empire for quite some time. They usually operate in the Polish region, so its no surprise that theyve expanded their activities to St. Petersburg.

In this era, there arent many detective tools available, making it very difficult to uncover the details of such incidents. By firmly blaming the Poles and suggesting internal collusion, they effectively implicate the Prussian government.

If they continue to insist on this narrative, it will be difficult for the Prussian government to avoid getting involved themselves, so they wouldnt dare escalate the issue any further.

This relates to domestic ethnic issues, especially considering that there is a significant Polish population within the Kingdom of Prussia, making up nearly a quarter of the total population.

After all the efforts to assimilate them, stirring up more trouble on this issue could easily exacerbate ethnic tensions.

Marquis Dumanov thought he had considered this from all angles. Youre happy, Im happy, everybodys happy, and the matter could now be put to rest.

Berlin

When Regent Frederick William Louis received the news of Bismarcks assassination, he didnt feel much. After all, their relations were bad to begin with, so grief was out of the question.

In fact, he felt a tinge of satisfaction, seeing this as an opportunity to bleed Russia. After all, as the victim, they needed to be appeased, and without their cooperation, resolving the matter wouldnt be so easy.

Foreign Minister Manteuffel reported with a grim expression: Your Highness, weve just received a briefing on the case from the Russians. They believe the culprit to be the Polish Independence

Organization, linking the incident to domestic political struggles, and they're asking us to conduct our own investigation at the embassy. Here are the detailed reports for your review.

The same words held different meanings when interpreted by people of different positions.

With internal currents stirring within the Kingdom of Prussia, and with Frederick William IV falling ill, the government was undergoing a reshuffle.

If it could be proven that there was collusion between someone in the Prussian embassy and the assassins, it would cause a political earthquake that would be highly detrimental to the newly appointed regent, William Frederick Louis.

The principle of political struggle is to fight but not to destroy, and incidents of heinous acts such as hiring assassins are rare within the governments of European countries. When such incidents occur, they are condemned by all.

Now, the Russians attempt to shift the blame is clearly unacceptable to William Frederick Louis, as it indicates that the political struggle in the Kingdom of Prussia has crossed the line.

The more he thought about it, the angrier he became. Just speculating and arbitrarily concluding that there is a traitor in the Prussian embassy clearly shows that the Russians are just trying to sweep things under the rug.

The claim that Bismarck's assassins came from the Polish Independence Organization could still be reluctantly accepted, since at least a few suspects have been arrested, and the discovery of custom-made weapons and ammunition could count as evidence.

These were the scapegoats carefully chosen by Franz's intelligence organization, which of course left some clues. To close the case quickly, the bureaucrats of the Russian government will certainly not overlook these pieces of evidence.

The so-called delay in the rescue and the existence of a traitor were pure nonsense.

With such a major incident of a diplomat being murdered, there would undoubtedly be chaos at the scene. By the time everyone reacted and sent him to the hospital for treatment, some delay was inevitable.

In reality, there was only a delay of about ten minutes, including time for simple bandaging of the wounds. How could this be considered an intentional delay in treatment?

The speculation about the existence of a traitor in the Prussian Embassy is also nonsense. In his opinion, this is Russia's deliberate attempt to sow discord within the Kingdom of Prussia.

The issue of the assassination of Bismarck by the Polish Independence Organization is not a big problem in itself. However, when assimilated Poles are involved, especially government officials, the problem becomes significant.

This means that assimilated Poles have not given up their quest for independence and are cooperating with the Polish Independence Organization. If the issue is escalated, it will inevitably lead to disunity between the Polish people and the government.

William Frederick Louis furiously said: Tell the Russians that we need an explanation. We will not accept such vague and speculative reasons. Prussia will not tolerate such nonsense excuses.

Foreign Minister Manteuffel objected: Your Highness, let's have an internal investigation first! We are not sure if the Russian allegations are true, and they still have members of the Polish Independence Organization in custody.

If there is indeed someone colluding with the Polish Independence Organization, and evidence falls into the hands of the Russians, then we will have to handle it delicately.

The Kingdom of Prussia has already assimilated its Polish population, and Manteuffel doesn't believe they would mix with the Polish Independence Organization. Even if they did, they would be the minority and could not represent everyone.

In contrast, the possibility that someone within the government was involved in this operation, using it as an opportunity to eliminate Bismarck, seems more plausible.

Political struggles are ruthless, and it is not uncommon to use someone else's hand to commit the act.

It's important to note that there had always been a connection between the Prussian government and the Polish Independence Organization. During the time of the revolutions, anti-Russian factions advocated supporting Polish independence to restrain the Russians and concentrate forces to unify German territories.

Although ultimately unsuccessful, this link was never severed. Now it makes sense for the anti-Russian factions within the country to collude with the Polish Independence Organization to eliminate Bismarck and prevent a reconciliation between the two countries.

Because of the ethnic conflicts involved, the government is destined to tread lightly. If an investigation is to be conducted, it must be done in secret to reduce the risk of exposing everyone.

Moreover, there are still enemies of Bismarck within Prussia who may have used this opportunity to eliminate him. These enemies are not only political opponents but also his personal enemies, which adds to the complexity of the situation.

To Prince William Frederick Louis, the Russian claims seemed absurd, but to Manteuffel, they seemed like the truth.

With so many possible places to carry out the attack, why choose the embassy's doorstep? And how could the perpetrators quickly leave the scene without any assistance?