

Steel 88

Chapter 88: Military Reforms

A few days had passed since Berengar had begun plotting against Count Lothar and his backers, which was long enough for his father's vassals to gather within the Castle of Kufstein. Realizing that he would have to completely reform the military structure now that he was incorporating the professional army with the town militia into a single cohesive force, he had called all of his father's vassals to Kufstein so that he could directly inform them that he would be removing their feudal rights to raise their own armies. This was a decision which he knew he had to make eventually to modernize the military fully, but as of right now, he knew this would be a bitter pill to swallow for the men who served his father; after all, he was essentially revoking their right to defend their own land with their own armies.

With the men gathered in the Great Hall, Berengar sat upon the seat of power as Viscount in every way but name. The young Regent made his shocking declaration to the men who swore allegiance to his family.

"As of today, I am hereby abolishing the rights of my family's vassals to raise their own armies and will instead be incorporating them into a single cohesive military under the control of the Viscount of Kufstein where one's ranking is based entirely upon merit and not birth."

With this said, the room resounded with the protests of dozens of minor lords and knights. The knights were especially outraged with this decree as by doing away with the feudal traditions of the military, Berengar was essentially depriving them of their purpose in life. Despite the fury of the noblemen, they kept themselves well behaved due to the fact that Berengar was flanked by his elite guard, who had been formed from the ranks of his greatest grenadiers. They were prepared for any act of rebellion against their Lord and Commander, and as such, viciously stared down the unruly mob of gentlemen.

Eventually, Berengar slammed his fist upon his armrest, which instantly quieted the room before he began to speak further.

"I have invited every one of you here personally to inform you of this decision and to address any concerns you may have. As such, you are free to voice them one at a time in a civil manner!"

An old knight was the first to approach Berengar and voice his concerns

"I am a knight, like my father before me, and his father before him. What am I supposed to do now that I can no longer fight for my Lord?"

Berengar smiled gently at the man, as he knew his concerns all too well and had already prepared a response for such a question.

"I am sure your expertise in warfare is needed among the ranks of my army, and as such, I will offer you a place among its ranks. So long as you complete the necessary training, you will receive a position as a Commissioned officer. From there, you may progress in the ranks based upon your ability."

Though the man wanted to protest further, yet he could tell Berengar would not budge, and as such, he responded to Berengar's words.

"I will take it under consideration."

Afterward, the man returned to the crowd, where a minor Lord rose and voiced his opinion on the matter.

"If the Army is entirely under your command, then who will protect my borders?"

Berengar once more smiled gently at the man as he expressed how the military would function going forward.

"Forts will be constructed in each region to ensure proper defense. These forts will be manned by a garrison of soldiers who fall under the command of the Army. These Garrisons will also be in charge of Law Enforcement until a time where a self-sufficient and dedicated police force is established in the region."

Many of these Lords were familiar with how Berengar had chosen to rule, over the last month or so since he ascended to Regency, Berengar had forced his

reforms on his vassals one at a time; it was getting to the point where many of them were thinking of rebelling. Yet right when they were considering such an option, Berengar not only planned to undermine their ability to effectively do so but establish garrisons in their territory, which were manned by soldiers loyal only to him. This was considered absolutely unacceptable to many of the Lords shackled by vassalage to the von Kufstein family.

Nevertheless, the Lords had no choice but to accept these terms; after all, they were all aware of how quickly Berengar had put down the Baron of Kitzbühel's army, which was far larger than anything they could muster. Many of these knights and Lords were present to witness such a shocking display of power; it was something they would never forget in their lifetime.

One by one, the Lords and Knights of Kufstein voiced their concerns, and Berengar addressed each and every one of them with a carefully planned answer. By the time the convention was over, Berengar had received all of their signatures while signing the Military Reforms into Law, thus dealing a mortal blow to the old Feudal System in which he was inching ever closer to completely replacing. For now, what settled the noblemen's minds was that they still had access to their land and would thus be able to live a lavish lifestyle without having to worry about dying in war. They could leave that to the common people and those foolish enough to glorify such a thing.

If they knew that Berengar was currently designing Land Reforms that would completely strip them of their ownership over such vast swaths of land and redistribute it to the Public and Private sectors, they would have tried to skin him alive then and there, even with his elite guard present. Fortunately for Berengar, these old and bitter men had no knowledge that their feudal authority would soon come completely crashing down upon them. Their roles as nobles would soon become little more than a ceremonial title passed down throughout their family.

Of course, to ensure there was not an outright rebellion, Berengar was thinking of ways to appease the nobles and maintain some degree of their wealth. However, that was a discussion for another time. For now, Berengar had successfully enacted his military reforms and would be incorporating all Knights, Men-at-arms, and other professional soldiers into the ranks of what would one day become known as the Imperial Army.

