

Steel 94

Chapter 94: Legal Reforms

Weeks had passed since Berengar assumed the title of Viscount, and all of his father's Vassals had come and gone after swearing fealty to the new regime. Berengar, of course, was quite pleased with the results; even the hardcore backers of Lambert had swallowed their pride and knelt before him and kissed his ring. The fact that he did not need to fire a shot to ensure his controversial transition to power was a victory in and of itself.

Currently, Berengar was in his study going over the codification of laws in Kufstein and overhauling practically everything. The first change he provided was the concept of equal protection under the judicial system to all citizens regardless of class and gender. This in itself would become quite a point of contention towards the nobles in his territory. Still, as Viscount, and with an overwhelming military force under his direct command, he did not fear any act of insurrection on their part.

The second major act of reform was the establishment of an innocent until proven guilty system, inspired by the legal system of the country in which he resided in his past life Berengar completely turned the judicial system on its head with the establishment of proper courts, lawyers, law enforcement, and everything else you could think of for a semi-modern judicial system. The new legal codex had gotten rid of several asinine traditions like trial by combat which had actually been a way for people to determine trials within many of the Germanic regions.

The next major legal reform in which Berengar took care of was establishing a legislative branch of government that represented both the nobility and the commoners. To put it simply, the more Berengar expanded, the more work he found himself drowning under, and he needed a dedicated branch of government to handle these affairs for him. As such, he built a system inspired once more by the American legislative branch from his previous life. Essentially his congress had two chambers, much like America; however, it was split between a House of Commons and a House of Lords, much like Britain was in his past life.

The house of commons consisted of representatives of the common people who were voted into power by those same people. The House of Lords

essentially acted as the Senate from Berengar's previous life and comprised members of the nobility who were voted into power by the nobility. Under this system, there were strict voting requirements. First and foremost, one had to be a citizen of Kufstein; second, they had to be male, thirdly they had to pass a literacy test, and finally, they had to be a full-blooded German which all of his citizens were because this was not exactly an era of globalism. Though Berengar had desired to create a Semi-Constitutional Elective Monarchy in the future which afforded representation to both the nobility and the common population, he was by no means an egalitarian.

Much like America, the territory that was currently known as the Viscounty of Kufstein would be split into more localized districts presided over by a similar form of local governance as America from his past life. With towns, town halls, mayors, etc. The districts themselves were ruled over by a Governor who was elected by the commoners, and the nobility of the region.

As far as the executive branch was concerned, the seat of power was ruled by the Viscount, who after Berengar's death would be elected by the House of Nobles from among the male members of his dynasty. If for whatever reason there were no surviving male members of his dynasty, then the next ruler would be elected from the female members, and she would be required to have a matrilineal marriage with her spouse. This would ensure the power would forever remain in his family's hands, but hopefully, the most competent member of his family would be succeeded. If the current Viscount chose to abdicate for whatever reason, he was also allowed one vote to decide who his successor would be. His position as Viscount held significant authority; like the president from America, he both signed bills into law, held power to pass executive orders, and was the commander in chief of the armed forces. The difference primarily being the fact that his position was for life, or until voluntary abdication.

Of course, Berengar did not forget to explicitly enact a separation of Church and State within these reforms, thoroughly dissolving any influence the Vatican had over secular affairs within the Viscounty of Kufstein. This action would undoubtedly incur the wrath of the Vatican, but what else was new? Berengar was definitely pleased with how stable and efficient he had made things as he glanced over the forms for review.

Obviously, these monumental changes would not go into effect immediately. To ensure everything progressed smoothly, this law was allotted a time span of five years for the complete transition of power. At the moment, these Legal Reforms were more of a declaration of his intentions on how he will proceed with the future of governance. However, these massive legal reforms would eventually become the basis of the Constitution of the German Empire.

He knew that by reforming the feudal system as early as possible, he could get the people in his territory accustomed to it. If he waited until he had an actual Kingdom or Empire under his command to implement these reforms, he would surely be fighting rebellions against the nobles for decades to come. Thus, he estimated things would go much more smoothly by starting the transition of power early on and incorporating the regions he would come to conquer into this process.

When Linde looked over these Legal Reforms, she was absolutely shocked at his changes; ultimately she began complaining about the situation. As a girl who had grown up as a pampered noble, she could not imagine giving up unlimited authority for future stability.

"So you're giving up your power just like that?"

Berengar chuckled and patted his lover's head as he tried to explain his actions.

"It is true that with these reforms, I will not hold absolute authority over the lands, but then again, when my territories expand into a mighty Empire, I will not have the time to micro-manage every facet of society. Times are changing; when the common people become educated and are given more spare time due to industrialization, they will inevitably demand representation in the government. To deny it would invoke revolution. By taking the first step to ensure the people's future, and by giving them a degree of representation which they have never seen before, they will see it as an act of divine benevolence and will come to see that my Dynasty is not a bunch of haughty noblemen presiding over them like cattle, but more like a shepherd defending his flock from the wolves."

Linde was completely shocked by his vision for the future and the fact that he was willing to give up absolute authority for the sake of creating a stable

monarchy ruled by his family for generations. However, when she read about the succession laws, she could not help but smile and cling to him with a vice grip. She interpreted these laws as a way to place her future son on the throne despite being a bastard, not realizing that although Berengar saw Monarchy as one of the most efficient forms of government, the succession laws currently in place often managed to put the least effective ruler on the throne which had often resulted in disaster in both this timeline and the one of his previous life. As such his true intentions were that he was trying to mitigate such a result as much as possible.

Nevertheless, the Viscount and his lover stayed like this for some time, as they discussed the future implications of his laws and his idea for a united German Empire. Berengar was glad that he had someone he could discuss his vision with. Until now he had never really discussed his plans for the future with anyone, but with Linde by his side, he felt as if he could say just about anything to her without her stabbing him in the back. Before long, Berengar was forced back to work. Many things required his attention, especially mass recruitment into public education. As usual, there was truly no rest for the weary.