

The Grand Republic of Phinea (Phinea)

Phinea is the world's pre-eminent commercial power with wealth and resources scarcely less than those of the Holy Kingdom of Sefora even though it is a much smaller (and in terms of land quality inferior) country. Their economic dominance has been spreading for a long while and their military dominance may not be far behind. The majority of its citizens are currently fairly content.

Emblem: Three small, silver sunbursts on a blue field.

Capital: Carteract, the flying city. Carteract is a planned city still only partially built, a grand national project that began about 40 years ago to replace the older capital with an ultra-modern or even futuristic commercial center that would symbolize Phinea's prosperity and wealth and technological prowess. There are to be no buildings without electrical light or under 10 stories in height and as many as possible are joined as often as possible with great glass and steel bridges far above the streets below. For these and the general height of the buildings is Carteract nicknamed.

Largest City: Demiforth, a city of about half a million despite its mountainous location. Until 20 years ago it was the capital. It was built on textiles, prospering because of its substantial access to water power from the region's swift-flowing mountain streams (some of which have recently been dammed to begin producing hydroelectric power) and ideal grazing grounds for mountain llamas.

Other Large Cities: Few very populous, but quite a few famous and prosperous ones including the technology and estrite mining center of Delberay in the north and the now somewhat declining timber and fishing city of Sufserflus which was once the country's largest.

Demonym: Phinean.

Currency: Silver tags. These, despite their coloration, are actually not silver at all. They are rectangular, very thin (occasionally even known to cut the careless), stiff pieces of some alchemically created material. This compound is a closely guarded state secret and it is periodically altered and made more sophisticated. Each tag is worth quite a bit and their supply is closely monitored to further prevent counterfeiting. They are fairly easy to store and in recent years have been made with a small hole in one corner such that they can be strung on a necklace or other such accessory. Where people in other countries can get them, they are rather highly valued.

Government: A rather powerful senate and its underlying bureaucracy runs the country, presided over by a prime minister annually chosen from within their ranks. Their power is fairly unlimited in theory, but they must deal with popular military leaders, wealthy business magnates, and even the occasional celebrity who can stir up popular sentiment against them since elections are held every year and are fairly closely fought. Additionally, new taxes (or increases for old ones) can only be done by plebiscite and so they are somewhat limited in budget, particularly because the people are rarely willing to vote for a tax that doesn't specify rather precisely what it will be used for.

The result has been a government rather divided against itself since every senator wants a say in how the very limited funds they can be spent in any way are used and one in which almost no one is willing

to take unpopular action since they could be thrown out long before anyone forgets about it. Corruption historically remains low, in part because again there is rather stiff competition among the senators to use their revenue for the projects they like (and that will get them re-elected) and therefore anyone caught stealing funds might well be shot by his colleagues.

There is universal suffrage for men over the age of 14 (old enough to legally work any kind of job and to be conscripted), which was acquired after an extremely harsh political battle in the last century. Women cannot vote, but are technically allowed to hold political office because Governor Galafor forgot to deny that when he wrote the constitution on his deathbed. Recently a handful of women have become senators and many more have long since been performing various bureaucratic jobs. There is a very powerful movement advocating voting rights for women which will almost certainly be successful- after decades of trying- in the near future unless the war distracts the public from the issue.

The government as it currently stands (save the details of its bureaucracy and exactly what is taxed and how much) are much as Galafor established them just before his death 300 years ago.

Population: Roughly 30,000,000, in the world's top 10 highest populations but perhaps a fifth of Seforad's and probably an even smaller fraction of what Seforad ruled 200 years ago.

Slavery was abolished nearly at the country's founding by Galafor in order to crush certain slave-owning political rivals as well as make the general point that he was going to what whatever legal changes he wished. Except that women cannot vote and that there is a significant foreign refugee population that is in many places a more or less permanent underclass, all are equal citizens.

Area: Roughly 2,500,000 square miles in theory are claimed (even more than Seforad's empire!) but in fact much of this consists of entirely uninhabited and unexplored arctic mountains or even barren ice sheets. Approximately 800,000 square miles of land they have a real, practical claim to call their own and really only about 30,000 square miles are densely populated (but those are VERY dense).

Geographical Features: Nearly all of Phinea consists of the large near-island it was founded upon.

Phinea the island has a very cold, rocky, and mountainous interior laced with many raging rivers. To this day, most people live along the coasts even though great mineral wealth was found in the mountains.

Phinea also lays claim to the ice sheets that encroach on the north of the isle and even to enormous stretches of them beyond it. It has also acquired quite a few uninhabited or nearly uninhabited islands around the world along its trade routes to serve as mid-oceanic bases. Further, it has spread somewhat to the mainland over the isthmus that nearly separates Phinea from the rest of the continent, although not yet very far.

Military: Quite small most of the time, at least in terms of men. They can conscript most of the population if need be, but almost certainly would prefer to avoid this.

Their land army is a token force of mercenaries, frontiersmen, and- most importantly- dragonslayers that serves almost exclusively in the still rugged interior of the island. They are equipped for arctic climates and for fighting dragons more than men and know more about setting up new settlements than

burning old ones down. These, the Mountaineers, number about 2000 at most, but are generally well-armed and disciplined and trained and paid.

The Maritime Traffic Defense League is, unofficially, Phinea's navy and probably the largest in the world. Officially they are just ships on loan from various captains and businessmen for whose upkeep the latter are responsible. This amounts to a historically rooted scheme to keep naval expenditures off the limited books. In the old days of Phinea, there was essentially a naval militia of everyone who could spare a ship or two by this same name and the current incarnation claims to be much the same thing. However, many of the ships in question are on rather permanent loan- maybe even theoretically owned by dead men and maintained by their estate. Gifting a few ships to this flotilla is a common way for a wealthy man to begin a transition toward a political career. Thus, much like Seforad's navy but for entirely different reasons, Phinea's navy has fewer new ships than it would like and has an inordinate number of very old craft which have been successively retrofitted with more and more modern armaments and propulsion. The navy's true strength is in its sailors and officers who are widely regarded as the best in the world by a significant margin, though its sheer size is also valuable. Many of these crewmen have recently been quietly trained to be part of amphibious invasions as well.

Not nearly as large or well-funded as Seforad's, Phinea's Ships of the Upper Sea are still an air force to be reckoned with. They have the most advanced and well-armed aircraft in the world and at 212 at last count, nearly as many actual airplanes as Seforad. Their blimp scouting force is also comparable in size to Seforad's at a few hundred such small craft, though it is usually tied up assisting the navy. Some of these are now being equipped with the world's first radar devices. It is in bomber zeppelins that they most fall short of Seforad, having only a handful neither of which is particularly airworthy. Blowing people up in large numbers or terrifying them into submission is often seen as counter-productive if one's goal is to make a profit by trade, so Phinean's generally prefer less destructive ways to dominate others. They have perhaps 15 carrier zeppelins, all of a sophisticated variety and with a full complement of planes. These carriers indeed are their air-supremacy fighters as well, heavily armed and armored with the latest and greatest in airborne artillery and the lightest and stronger alloys available. They have a few non-carrier fighting zeppelins as well, but not a very large number and they do not rely heavily upon them. This fleet's greatest weakness besides that its small size limits its ability to fight in multiple places at once is a notable lack of its own airstrips and mooring towers and hangars around the world. If damaged or in need of resupply far from home, they have a much tougher time than do Seforad's dirigibles. Generally they spend their time supporting the navy and so are not likely to be endangered alone like that though. Further making up for this weakness, some of their craft have been sheeted with the recently synthesized iatheerium metal which can use sunlight to power an engine. This technology is still fairly undeveloped and cannot fully power even a smaller blimp, but does greatly cut down on their need to expend other fuel.

History: Roughly 500 years ago, Seforadian explorers found Phinea- which was then better connected to the mainland- a grim and icy land inhabited only sparsely by natives. They would have passed it by for a

more promising landing elsewhere, but their ships were damaged and so they took what they could. Due to sheer political luck, the colony ended up favored above some of the other early ones because their governors were deemed less than orthodox in their Sefordam and so got the supplies and men it needed to begin growing. It became Seforad's first serious colony, though it was not very prosperous at first since its rocky lands could grow little at all.

Gradually though the governor's backers among the patriarchs back home realized that he was right that timber and textiles were worth having to import food and the colony's luck began to turn as it exported these en masse. Phinea has a sizable population of llamas and similar animals which had been bred by the natives to produce wool in significant quantities. Wool was unheard of at home in Seforad and soon became very popular as more comfortable AND practical than most of their earlier cloths. Timber too was very rare in Seforad but much in demand for making ships and other such things. As long as Phinea could produce these in quantity, Seforad proved willing to guard them well against any interlopers and send them all the food they could use and more. The colonists generally lived quite healthily because of this and because they had escaped the crowded and disease-ridden cities back home, so Phinea became a popular place to go for men of means as well as people desperate for a new life.

However, over time it came to be able to grow enough food to sustain itself as mountain terracing techniques and the potato crop were imported from other colonies and its rich fishing possibilities began to be exploited. The colony was no longer as dependent on the mother country and, furthermore, were tired of being dubbed inferior because they had interbred with and absorbed the natives and of being given less than market value for their exports.

About 350 years ago, 150 years after the colony was founded, Governor Galafor saw a chance to betray his patrons and break free. He was a young, charming, and charismatic man with tremendous political skill- as he had to have to get a governorship at his age and with his dubious religious credentials. Seforad became distracted by a pair of uprisings in some of its more profitable colonies (some say Galafor somehow may have precipitated these) at about the same time they made the unpopular move to cut wages in the armed forces in order to afford more troops. Galafor seized the opportunity, inducing the Seforadian troops in Phinea to defect en masse. It seemed less a revolution than a nearly bloodless palace intrigue, in large part because Galafor remained in charge as a virtual dictator- but now without anyone above him to interfere with his plans.

Although he allowed Seforadian loyalists to leave peacefully, relations with the mother country soured terribly and Phinea suffered badly for it. They had lost their main market for their products as well as some important imports. Undeterred, Galafor proceeded with major reforms and governmental purges. He abolished slavery, ousted all religious authorities, refined and improved his bureaucracy, and sent most of his troops out to build roads, farming terraces, or new settlements in the mountainous frontier in hopes of finding gold as had happened in many other colonies. No gold was ever found and Galafor's often revolutionary reforms several times nearly toppled him, but he clung to power fiercely and bested

all political rivals one by one. The man ruled for more than 50 years without interruption and managed to make Phinea fully economically independent and fairly modern in many respects as well as setting up a fairly honest and effective government. The only man he allowed to be corrupt was himself, and he grew very rich from his position.

In his later years, Galafor was often pestered by popular demands for a representative government, which he dismissed with sneers. On his deathbed however he either repented or decided to spite the people by giving them what they thought they wanted and wrote out a constitution for a new Phinean republic, imposing democracy by iron-fisted fiat. Since he had allowed no rivals to himself who might have succeeded him or opposed this move, a republic was indeed instituted. For similar reasons, it was fairly free from the corrupt and the power-hungry and so became quite successful in its early years. For this move (and for some of his other reforms) Galafor is typically celebrated as the father of his country rather than denigrated as a purely self-interested and often capricious dictator. A few people have even started a religion claiming he was Sefora come again. They are small and mocked more because most people in Phinea care nothing for Sefora than because they would deny the claim if they did. With his death, surprisingly little really changed. The country continued as it had since the revolution, expanding steadily and surviving comfortably but not really prospering and certainly not playing a dramatic role on the world stage. Indeed, many in Seforad could simply ignore them and pretend they had never lost a colony.

No gold was ever discovered, but Phinea did prove to have some of the world's best iron ore and a lot of other useful mineral resources. Selling metalwork and timber and wool in their ever growing fleet of cheaply built ships brought in most of the revenue that kept them alive during this long period as they steadily developed into the world's leading commercial power.

Their great stroke of luck came with The Change 164 years ago, which ultimately left nothing the same. In their extensive mines, Phineans now began to find strange new materials- including the world's best and most accessible deposits of Estrite. With this and plentiful steel as well as lumber for fuel, they were suddenly set to industrialize even faster than Seforad and to create a new generation of ships. Suddenly they began to run enormous budget surpluses and to have the funds for great building projects and to grow faster than before. It was a long run to begin catching up to Seforad, but that is just what they have quietly done for the last 150 years. With its less stifling intellectual atmosphere, Phinea has become the world's leader in magical- though not alchemical- research as well as in some other sciences. They pioneer many new technologies military and otherwise that no one else can both create and afford and have spent a great deal of money building ever more impressive national symbols and monuments and modern looking cities. In recent decades, they have begun to realize their true international power and clout as well and have begun to move subtly to undermine Seforad in their colonies and quietly back rebels of various sorts as well as to make economic alliances with the new kingdoms to the north of the Seforadian heartland.