



**Weimar
Republic**

Letters from the Dais

Hey everyone,

My name is Chloe Hanson, and I'm a senior at Stuyvesant High School. I've done Model UN since freshman year and it is one of my favorite activities. I tend to be more of a crisis delegate, so I will do my best to incorporate crisis elements during committee session. I'm a history nerd and I think that the interwar years are really fascinating. Running a committee on the Weimar Republic is like a dream come true! I'm very excited to see you all soon, and don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions via email.

Best,

Chloe Hanson

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Hi everyone!

I'm Claire Tempelman, I'm a junior at Stuyvesant, and I'll be your director for the Weimar Republic! I've been involved with Model UN since middle school and I've done MUN at Stuyvesant since my freshman year. I love history, so I'm excited to see what happens during this committee. Apart from MUN, I write for our newspaper, the *Stuyvesant Spectator*, and volunteer for ARISTA, Stuyvesant's honor society. Happy researching!

Best,

Claire Tempelman

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Procedural Protocol

This committee will run on constant moderated and unmoderated caucuses. There will be no speakers' list. The Weimar National Assembly served as both a constitutional convention and a de facto parliament that governed the country. Because this is a specialized committee, we will spend more time focusing on the creation of a constitution. You will form blocs and try to create a constitution in the same way you'd write a working paper. This is a contentious time in German history, so we may throw a couple of crisis updates at you, which you may respond to with directives.

History

World War 1 and the Treaty of Versailles

After the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Europe fell into war. Germany, allied with Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire, fought against the major powers of France, Britain, and Russia. Within Germany, Kaiser Wilhelm II hoped that the war would unite Germany and decrease the influence of the left-wing Social Democratic Party. Germany's government became dominated by generals Paul von Hindenburg and Erich Ludendorff. However, despite having one of the largest and best trained armies in the world, Germany was outnumbered by their opponents. Germany didn't expect for the war to last as long as it did, and was eventually defeated. The Armistice of Compiègne, an armistice ending the fighting, was signed on November 11, 1918.

Meanwhile, as Germany was losing the war, unrest was sparking within Germany. The German populace was upset as defeat was inevitable, and military leaders urged for Kaiser Wilhelm II to abdicate. Wilhelm II was at first resistant, but after a naval mutiny and uprising in Berlin, he abdicated on November 9, 1918. A provisional government was then set up by the Social Democratic Party.

Germany was in a state of chaos after World War I. Germany had suffered the most in terms of lives lost, with over 2 million Germans dying in battle. Even after the

Armistice of Compiègne was signed, Allied powers maintained a naval blockade until the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. Thousands died of starvation because of the naval blockade after the armistice was signed.

The war was finally over with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919. The Treaty of Versailles was most notable for Article 231, or the “War Guilt Clause,” essentially placing all the blame of the war on Germany. As a result, Germany would then be responsible for paying enormous reparations to the Allied powers of 132 billion marks (\$33 billion). 50 billion marks (\$12.5 billion) would be paid unconditionally, with the remainder to be determined later. The Treaty of Versailles was received extremely poorly in Germany, many surprised by the amount of reparations needed to be paid.

Current Political Situation

The provisional government that existed between November 1918 and January 1919 was called the “Council of People’s Deputies,” and was largely run by the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) and the Independent Social Democratic Party of Germany (USPD). At the same time, the communist Spartacist league, headed by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, established a “Free Socialist Republic.” While the Spartacist league opposed the new government, the Council passed many reforms that were popular with leftists, like protection of workers’ rights and increases in civil liberties.

The USPD/SPD coalition broke down after Friedrich Ebert, party leader of the SPD called upon the OHL, the highest echelon of the German Empire’s military, to crush a leftist revolt. The USPD accused Ebert and the SPD of allying with the military to suppress the revolution. The USPD left the provisional government and splintered into the more radical communist party (KPD). To ensure the stability of the fledgling government, Ebert agreed to work with General Wilhelm Groener, the leader of the OHL, to suppress future uprisings. This alliance was known as the “Ebert-Groener” pact and was derided by leftists.

Ebert's split with the far left continued after the Spartacist uprising on January 15th, 1919. The communist Spartacist league attempted to establish communism, but were put down by the *Freikorps*, a paramilitary group consisting largely of right wing WW1 veterans. The communist suppression was notoriously violent and both Spartacist leaders (Liebknecht and Luxemburg) were assassinated. While Ebert did not technically sanction the actions of the *Freikorps*, he was able to reduce their sentences. This made him extremely unpopular with the radical left and foreshadowed the SPD's shaky alliance with the far right to maintain the legitimacy of the new government.

Ebert called a National Assembly, which would be responsible for creating a new constitution and acting as the current government. The election for the National Assembly occurred on January 19th, only four days after the failed Spartacist uprising. The far left parties (the USPD and KPD) were unable to get themselves organized, so they lost votes to more moderate democratic parties, like the SPD or the German Democratic Party (DDP). While the Assembly goes through important deliberations, violence between the far left and the far right is commonplace throughout Germany.

Goals of the Committee

The National Assembly is tasked with writing an adequately democratic constitution. This means that delegates must consider the responsibilities of the government, the balance of power between different branches of government (if such branches exist), and the extent of civil liberties. At the same time, delegates will have to react to crises caused in Germany due to the occupation of the Rhineland, reparations, hyperinflation, and political turmoil. Let these events also have bearing on the nature of the constitution.

Spot Descriptions

Spots are divided up into different parties. The majority coalition generally vote together because they tend to have similar platforms. The majority coalition parties are the SPD, Zentrum, and the DDP. The opposition parties are the USPD and the DNVP. The USPD is the socialist party, and is further to the left than the majority coalition. The DNVP is much further to the right than the majority coalition. We will outline the platforms of each party for you, though we expect you to do further research on your own.

MAJORITY COALITION

SPD

Members

Friedrich Ebert
Phillipp Scheidemann
Hermann Muller
Gustav Bauer
Otto Braun
Gustav Noske
Rudolf Wissell

Position

The SPD is the party of the social democrats. They are center-left, and are considered more moderate compared to radicals on the left. While founded as a revolutionary socialist party, they are more moderate and compromising. They believe in social justice, high levels of government intervention in the economy, and parliamentary democracy. The party splintered when it voted in favor of war in 1914, and the Spartacus league and the USPD are both off-shoots of the party.

Zentrum

Members

Matthias Erzberger
Franz von Papen
Joseph Wirth
Constantin Fehrenbach

Wilhelm Marx

Position

The Zentrum party (literally meaning the “central” party in English), is a pragmatic Catholic party. The party is very diverse in ideology, hosting members who were far right monarchists and leftists. The pragmatism of the party helps it stay in power, but makes it very difficult to have a unified message. Most members agree on the importance of Catholicism, though.

DDP

Members

Eugen Schiffer
Friedrich Naumann
Hugo Preuss
Otto Gessler
Friedrich von Payer

Position

The DDP (German Democratic Party) is socially liberal. They believe in a democratic, republican form of government. While a more nationalistic party than the other coalition members, they still believe in the protection of ethnic minorities.

THE OPPOSITION

USPD

Members

Hugo Haase
Arthur Crispien
Emil Barth
Wilhelm Dittman
Georg Lebedor

Position

The USPD is a more blatant socialist party. They oppose the revisionism and centrism of the SPD while also opposing the more extreme Bolshevism. Instead of parliamentary democracy, they favor a system of ruling councils (called a *Räterepublik*) and a planned economy. The USPD did poorly in the most recent election because of its poor ability to organize.

DNVP

Members

Karl Heffelfrich

Clemens von Delbrück

Oskar Hergt

Arthur von Posadowsky-Wehner

Position

The DNVP is the first party that has been able to unite the conservative factions in Germany in the post-war years. The party is very conservative, traditional, and anti-semitic. The party base is mainly composed of wealthy nationalists, who support either a monarchy or an authoritarian government. While religious, the party's base is much more protestant than Zentrum's catholic base.

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