

# BayMUN Fall 2014



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Executive Council of the League of Nations

Head Chair: Lorenzo Galdon

Crisis Director: Or-el Vaknin

## **Executive Council of the League of Nations - August 1936**

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Executive Council of the League of Nations Crisis Committee at BayMUN Fall 2014! My name is Lorenzo Galdon and I will be your committee's Head Chair. I am a third-year majoring in History with a minor in Ethnic Studies, and have worked closely with your Crisis Director, Or-el, to create a committee that allows us to travel back in time and possibly change the course of history.

World War I was supposed to be the "war to end all wars," with its end finding the international community pledging themselves to maintaining peace. Founded by the Paris Peace Treaty in 1919, the League of Nations' mission was to prevent wars through collective security and disarmament, and settling international disputes through peaceful negotiation and arbitration. From the very beginning, the league was flawed, as the US Senate failed to approve the treaty that would make the United States, one of the League's main architects and advocates, a member. But the absence of the US did not necessarily mean the League was doomed for failure. In this meeting of the Executive Council of the League of Nations, it will be up to the delegates, representing different member states, to deal with two major crises that developed in the 1930s: the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and the German invasion of the Rhineland.

Best of luck,

Lorenzo Galdon & Or-el Vaknin

Head Chair

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## **Origins of the League of Nation**

The League of Nations was created as a direct result of World War I. The Covenant of the League of Nations was included as Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, which was drafted and ratified at the Paris Peace Conference on June 28, 1919. It served as the League of Nation's Charter and stated the League's mandates and powers, as well as its procedures. It created two bodies: the General Assembly and the Executive Council, and laid the foundation in Article 14 for a Permanent Court of International Justice.

The covenant's preamble states the goals of the League of Nations, namely that the member nations:

by the acceptance of obligations not to resort to war,  
by the prescription of open, just and honourable relations between nations,  
by the firm establishment of the understandings of international law as the actual rule of conduct among Governments, and  
by the maintenance of justice and a scrupulous respect for all treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another,

Agree to this Covenant of the League of Nations.

Some other important articles in the Covenant with regards to this committee are

Articles 8, 10, 11, 12, 16 which refer to the Council's mandate to reduce the armaments of all nations around the world and to act as an arbitrator between nations, with the intent to avoid further wars in the world.

## **Structure of the Committee:**

The Executive Council of the League of Nations originally consisted of four permanent members (Great Britain, France, Japan, and Italy) and four non-permanent members (Spain, Belgium, Brazil, and Greece). For the purposes of these committees, the United States Senate ratified membership into the League of Nations in 1923, making the United States the fifth permanent member. And between, 1923 and 1935, the League of Nations has gradually increased the council's size from 8 to 22. Unlike the United Nations

Security, none of the permanent members have any veto powers nor any other powers that distinguish them from the other members except for the fact that they are permanent members.

Also, Article 5's requirement that all decisions made by League of Nations need unanimous support by all nations present has been amended to require only a simple majority (50% + 1), due to the difficulty the League of Nations' General Assembly and Executive Council had in making binding decisions. It is hoped that with this amendment, the Executive Council will have the power to take swift and important decisions with regards to conflicts occurring around the world.

### **Crisis Topics:**

#### **Spanish Civil War**

Ever since the dawn of the Second Spanish Republic in April 1931, Spain has seen itself immersed in political turmoil. In the span of just 5 years, the Spanish Republic went through three different administrations, the first lasted from 1931 to 1934 and was known for the reforms it passed, despite having to deal with periodic violence throughout the time, mostly from far-left groups like anarchists and communists.

In September 1934, the conservatives came to power and Alejandro Lerroux became prime minister. The conservative administration then went about undoing the legislation passed by the previous administration, mainly by curtailing the rights and concessions that had been made to labor. More violence ensued so by 1936, a new administration came to power, the Popular Front (*Frente Popular*) a coalition of leftist parties. This coalition also tried to undo the legislation passed by its predecessors governments, which in turn led to more political unrest and turmoil in Spain.

The situation in Spain became increasingly unstable in 1936 until July 17 of that year when a group of three Spanish generals: Sanjurjo, Mola, and Franco attempted staging a military coup to overthrow the Republican government. The coup was unsuccessful and quickly caused Spain to escalate into a Civil War in which it remains immersed in with no end in sight.

There have been rumors of Nazi Germany assisting the Nationalist forces, now led solely by General Francisco Franco, as well as Italy which has sent soldiers, weapons, and aircraft to the Nationalists, presumably at Germany's request. Great Britain and France have signed a non-intervention agreement, leaving the Loyalist government alone to defend itself.

The conflict has only lasted a month so far and it is up to the Executive Council to attempt to come to a resolution to this conflict before it escalates further, possibly to the rest of Europe.

## **Germany and the Rhineland**

The Rhineland, a region of Western Germany, has been demilitarized since the end of the Great War of 1914. Following the capitulation of Germany, the victorious Entente powers forced Germany to sign the Treaty of Versailles. This treaty, besides humiliatingly pinning all blame for the Great War on Germany, also forced Germany to pay costly war reparations (to the tune of \$31.6 billion as of 1921), and left some regions of German territory occupied or lost to the Entente powers as well.

The German government has struggled to bear the heavy load of reparations and humiliation the Treaty brought upon them, along with the loss of some resource-rich areas, and has suffered heavy economic troubles since. Hyperinflation in the early 1920s, leading

the exchange rate of a German mark to move from 4.2 marks per dollar in 1914 to 4.2 trillion marks per dollar in November 1923. Germany's economy stabilized under heavy strain once more in 1925, only to once more suffer after the start of the Depression in 1929. United States loans kept the economy afloat, but the German people began to search for radical changes to their government to attempt a drastic change in their fortunes.

It was into this vacuum of public trust in government that the NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party) emerged. The rise of this group, now known as the Nazis, entailed a rise in German intervention in the economy and increased sabre-rattling against other nations. Promising, as German leader Adolf Hitler did in 1933, to "...give our hungry masses work and bread..." and dedicating itself to the "...task of restoring loyalty, faith, and decency without regard to person," the German government has set out fascist guidelines and consolidated its power. It has also increased ties with numerous nations around the world, and once more threatened to become a world power and seize back the lands lost in the Great War; and perhaps more.

One of the most significant lands lost, and also the most sensitive, has been the Rhineland. The status of the Rhineland, occupied after the Great War by American, British, Belgian, and French forces, was demilitarized in the Treaty of Versailles' Article 180, which stated:

All fortified works, fortresses and field works situated in German territory to the west of a line drawn fifty kilometres to the east of the Rhine shall be disarmed and dismantled. Within a period of two months from the coming into force of the present Treaty such of the above fortified works, fortresses and field works as are situated in territory not occupied by Allied and Associated troops shall be disarmed, and within a further period of four months they shall be dismantled. Those which are situated in territory occupied by Allied and Associated troops shall be disarmed and dismantled within such periods as may be fixed by the Allied High Command. The construction of any new fortification, whatever its nature and importance, is forbidden in the zone referred to in the first paragraph above. The system of

fortified works of the southern and eastern frontiers of Germany shall be maintained in its existing state.

However, as mentioned, the new Nazi government has been more willing to use force and sabre-rattle, and the Rhineland case is no exception. Although the Nazi government previously “tested the waters” with an excursion into the Rhineland in March 1936, it was deterred by United States pressure through the League of Nations, coupled with that of France and Great Britain and withdrew immediately. This was not to be the end of conflict over the Rhineland, evidently, as the conflict confronting the countries of the League persists even still.

As of August 1936, the Nazis have seen the end of the Second Italo-Ethiopian war (which ended in May 1936) and boldly decided to emulate the fascist government of Mussolini and reoccupy the Rhineland. It has decided to do this despite the Treaty of Versailles, in Article 44, which states:

In case Germany violates in any manner whatever the provisions of Articles 42 and 43 [that discuss demilitarization of the Rhineland], she shall be regarded as committing a hostile act against the Powers signatory of the present Treaty and as calculated to disturb the peace of the world.

The Nazi government has decided to pursue, nevertheless, this “hostile act”. Perhaps calculating that the League of Nations will not be so quick to act this time to endanger world peace, the League of Nations faces a stark decision of how, if at all, to respond to the German contravention of the Treaty. The question remains: is this violation worth risking war? Is there a method by which the Nazi government can be deterred, or negotiated with? How should the League proceed?

The League must also keep in mind the conflicting views of some of its members as it ponders this dilemma, including those who are looking to play a wider role on the world

stage. The Locarno Treaties, signed in 1925, may have promised a permanent demilitarization of the Rhineland as far as Germany, France, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Italy were concerned, but are such treaties still valid amidst the changed world after the Depression and altered forms of government? Can the League Council take action around the globe in its first major test of potential superpower rivalry and conflict in Europe? These questions must be asked, but only the League Council and those affected by its decisions can decide the answer.

### **Members of the League of Nations Council**

**United States of America:** Long considered isolationist and wary of foreign intervention, the United States reluctantly ratified the League Covenant in 1924, in honor of Woodrow Wilson. They have since expanded their international clout to rival that of other world powers (such as Great Britain and France), and established financial and military interests in many areas. Isolationist influences still have a strong voice in the US Congress, but it is not so great as prior to the Great War of 1914.

**United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland:** In a world dominated by increasing United States clout, Great Britain has remained more timid and reluctant to engage in foreign affairs. Revolt is currently occurring in the British Mandated region of Palestine, but Great Britain still remains the foremost colonial power with a strong reach across the globe, despite continued pains from the global Depression.



**France:** The nation of France has continued to recover from the Great War of 1914, and continues to implement social reforms at home. However, a stalling economy and new leadership under the Popular Front has created unease and shifting policies in France. The recent outbreak of the Spanish Civil War divided the French government greatly, as do tensions elsewhere around the world.

**Italy:** Under the regime of fascism under Benito Mussolini, Italy has continued to agitate for an even greater role in regions of the world. Having invaded Ethiopia in 1935, Italy continues to build and flex its military might. Its fascist system has inspired the fascist leadership of Nazi Germany and the Spanish fascists, and there are rumors it has aided the Francoist fascists.

**Japan:** The Empire of Japan has remained a formidable force in the world, after the end of the Great War of 1914. A failed military coup in February 1936 has not stopped Japan from growing in strength, and it appears to be coming ever closer to an alliance with Nazi Germany. Its growing military power has led to an increased willingness to sabre-rattle against other nations of the world.

**Argentina:** Not considered a world superpower, Argentina has nevertheless secured a place on the League Council. Despite some level of unrest due to a coup in 1930, and another failed uprising in 1933, Argentina has mostly recovered the economic losses suffered during the Depression and appears to be flexing economic, if not military, power.

**Australia:** Increasingly willing to end its formal ties to Great Britain following the Statute of Westminster of 1931, Australia has developed into a burgeoning power of its own right. However, Australia was one of the hardest-hit nations in the Depression and still has not fully recovered. It remains closely tied to Great Britain, but increasingly open to world affairs involvement.

**Belgium:** Having recovered from the effects of the Great War, Belgium has been slower to recover from the economic downturn of the Depression. It joined France in 1925 in the occupation of the Ruhr to force reparations payments for the Great War of 1914, and continues to be willing to cooperate with other powers to influence European and world affairs.

**Bolivia:** A coup in May of 1936 has put in a new, and uneasy, Bolivian government. The new Bolivian government is unknown to most world powers, but Bolivia may have untapped sources of economic influence and diplomatic clout. As a military dictatorship and promoter of “military socialism”, and having nationalized the holdings of Standard Oil, Bolivia may be able to tap natural resources in far greater amounts than before.

**Brazil:** Led by dictator Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, and the government having used a threat of “Communist revolution” to seize emergency powers, Brazil has increasingly seen anti-Communist and totalitarian rule. It has seen large numbers of immigrants from Europe in recent years, and has modernized and industrialized to quickly recover from the Depression.

**Canada:** Having chosen to cut ties with Britain after the 1931 Statute of Westminster, Canada has still stayed out of many world affairs despite its closeness to its powerful southern neighbor. Canada is still recovering from the Great Depression after having instituted welfare and reform policies in 1935, and remains economically weak as it continues to recover. It still boasts strong international clout as a relatively new and unsullied-by-history nation.

**Chile:** The country hardest hit by the Depression, Chile has successfully used austerity measures to re-establish the nation's ability to economically function. It has close trade links with Germany, but still trades natural resources around the world even as its government increases intervention in the economy and maintains a democratic system at the same time.

**China:** Skirmishing constantly with Japan, China has become increasingly agitated with its neighbor since the 1931 annexation of Manchuria by Japan. Led by the nationalists, it largely avoided the economic downturn of the Depression and continues to attempt growth. Its main advantage lies in its large population and dictatorial government having freedom to act however it chooses.

**Colombia:** Having close military ties to Switzerland and Great Britain, Colombia has shown an increasing willingness to work with other powers like the United States. Output continued to expand during the Depression, and Colombia's closeness to the Panama Canal places it in a powerful strategic position, having come out of a short war with Peru in 1933

virtually unharmed. It has great faith in the League, having been able to use its bodies to resolve its dispute with Peru.

**Cuba:** Having a close strategic tie to the United States due to the Guantanamo Bay Naval base, Cuba has seen heavy political infighting and conflict over the past few years. Its economy remains one of the most successful in Latin America, but it is looking to diversify that economy and remains on the lookout for potential partners to work with.

**Czechoslovakia:** Fearful of its German neighbor, Czechoslovakia is also the only democracy left in central and Eastern Europe. Internal discontent and rumors of Slovak affinity for Nazi Germany has led the Czechoslovakian government to seek closer ties to Romania and Yugoslavia, and it also retains close ties with France as it only now begins to fully recover from the Depression.

**Denmark:** Denmark has only just begun to recover from the Depression under the charismatic leadership of Thorvald Stauning as Prime Minister, and still maintains close trade ties with Germany despite Germany's unrestricted submarine warfare hurting Denmark's economy during the Great War of 1914. It remains a masked and mysterious economic power in Europe.

**Ecuador:** Continuing fiscal difficulties have left the Ecuadorian government in dire straits, and it remains unstable insofar as government goes. However, its recovery has been helped slightly by increasing economic ties with the United States and Germany, and it maintains a significant position in Latin American regional politics.

**Finland:** Wary of the larger Soviet Union on its eastern side, Finland has traditionally had closer ties with Germany but wanted portions of the Soviet Union such as Karelia. Finland has mostly avoided the effects of the Depression and has a well-trained and precise military force, though its military technology and size is not as effective as other world powers.

**Greece:** Led by dictator Ioannis Metaxas, Greece has suffered little from the Depression and remains wary of its Italian neighbors' fascism even as it becomes accustomed to the very recent instituting of dictatorial rule in August 1936. It has attempted to avoid any commitments to Germany, Great Britain, or the United States, but instead has remained neutral. The leadership by Metaxas as dictator may change that policy.

**Guatemala:** Having developed strong trade ties with the United States, Guatemala also managed to weather the Depression relatively well by quickly investing in infrastructure projects and economic ties. Encouraged foreign investment, especially by the United Fruit Company (U.S. owned) has helped Guatemala's regional clout continue to grow.

**Iran:** Iran, playing a neutral game between the major powers of the world, has nevertheless continued to grow economically. Its position ensures supply routes through to the Soviet Union, of vital importance to powers fearing they may have to fight the Soviet Union, and has mostly evaded the Depression by modernizing its economy and entering foreign markets.