



The Weimar Republic

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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the Weimar Republic! You make up the prestigious and distinguished committee of representatives that will decide the course of this newly formed nation. For years, Germany has waged Europe's costliest war. Now its citizens are emerging from the ruin, battered and weary. You must navigate the stormy waters of a nation in its rebirth and help Germany through its coming trials.

Will the Republic collapse under the pressure of financial strain and political discontent, or will it thrive in the face of these challenges?

This committee will be focusing on 1923 and the years onwards. The more well-versed you are, the more interesting and fun the committee will be. Come prepared with knowledge of the period, both within Germany and outside of it. The more the better!

Before I introduce myself, I want to introduce our wonderful team. Thanish Wajibu has been in Model UN for a total of two years, and is known locally for his crazy crisis plans. He will be heading the crisis department as the crisis director. Monica G, who has always been an avid participant in Model UN, will act as moderator. Last, but definitely not least is Bhavya. She's loved MUN since her very first conference, and will also be moderating the committee.

I anticipate a thrilling and meaningful experience for all delegates. This is my second year doing Model UN -- and what an experience it has been! From attending a number of different conferences at the international and local level, I have seen just how far creativity can take a committee. It is my sincere hope that this committee will do the same for you. We are incredibly excited to challenge and push all delegates to their imaginative and diplomatic limits.

The *Weimar Republic* committee is aimed to be multi-faceted and story intensive, combining elements of a traditional crisis committee with elements of a general assembly; officially an Specialised Agency, or SA - with a crisis slant. I am looking for people with creative minds to push the story in new and exciting directions. Before you proceed, I feel obligated to give you a final warning: the Republic of Weimar was not for the faint of heart in 1925. Neither will it be now.

Best of luck,

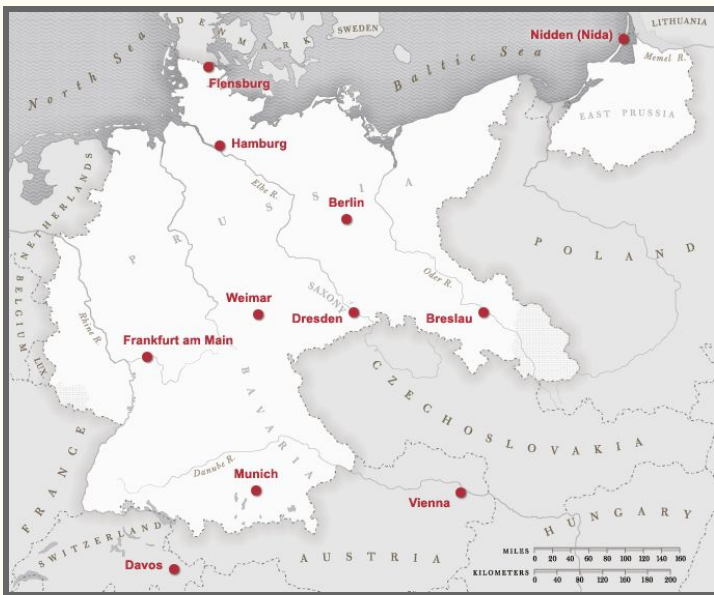
Cole Schankula
Chair

If there are any questions regarding the committee, feel free to email us at schankulac@gmail.com

The Beginning of the Weimar Republic

The Weimar Republic was established as the new German government following the disastrous end of the Great War. It was seated in the small, rural town of Weimar because Berlin was too dangerous and turbulent. The Republic differed radically from the previous government. First, primary executive power no longer rested in the Kaiser, Germany's ex-sovereign. Instead, all power went to elected individuals. What more, the Republic relied on an electoral system of proportional representation, with a legislative body of over 500 representatives. This was very democratic, even compared to longer-standing democracies like the United States.

The Great War did not, however, change only the German government. Prior to 1914, the German Empire was a collection of various German states and other annexed states. They were held together by the German Confederation, an alliance of the various German monarchs united largely under the Prussian monarchy and previously the Austrian monarchy, which has since left the Confederation. However after the Great War, German colonies in Africa and the Pacific were divided between the victorious



The Weimar Republic in 1919



The German Confederation and its associated European territories in 1871

nations, Prussia was bisected by the Polish corridor, and the previous imperial territory of Alsace-Lorraine was ceded back to France. The victorious nations established economic spheres of influence over crucial industrial centers in Germany, effectively stifling the economic growth of Germany. On top of all this, Germany was forbidden from ever forming government with its former crucial and also ethnically German ally, Austria.

Internationally, Germany was banned from the League of Nations -- the new world order for peacefully resolving conflicts, envisioned by American President Woodrow Wilson. It had lost its negotiating power, and in addition to that, many of its pre-war territories. It is under these turbulent circumstances that the Weimar Republic was born.

Parties

Left/Extreme left

SPD - Socialiste Partei Deutsch (The Socialists)

By nature a socialist party, the SPD was in favour of Marxist policies; however, under the rule of Hermann Müller, they became much more moderate around the time of the committee. Many of the party members strongly disagreed with the KPD's tenants of revolution. They were one of the largest and most influential parties in Germany, winning the most seats of any group since the election of 1912 (ending in 1932, with the rise of Hitler).

KPD - Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands

The KPD was a radical, revolutionary communist party in Weimar. Their leaders, primarily Rosa Luxemburg, advocated strongly against war and anti-intervention. The KPD began as a splinter group of the larger SPD; many dissatisfied SPD radicals formed the Spartacist league, the same group responsible for the Spartacist uprising, eventually uniting with International Communists of Germany (another SPD offshoot) to form the KPD. They were a relatively small party in the parliamentary sense, winning only 4 seats in the 1920 election, with most of their support being extra-parliamentary.

Centre/Right

DVP - Democratic Volkspartei

Lead by Gustav Stresemann, the DVP was a reformation of the National Liberal Party. Its platform was that of centre-right, classical, continental liberalism. Stresemann was widely regarded throughout Weimar as a competent politician; however, he was not well-liked within his own party, many of whom still did not embrace the new republic. Importantly, the DVP was strongly opposed to all Marxists, ranging from hardline communists to social democrats (such as the SPD).

Zentrum - Central

As their name implies, Zentrum was a centre, centre-right party. Their main platform was that of Catholicism; with the rest of their policies taking a mainly pragmatic approach to government. Still, the Zentrum party was disliked by many extreme-right politicians, as they were complicit in the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. While they were able to compromise with other large parties, like the SPD, on many issues, there was often disagreements stemming from religious issues (e.g. catholic schooling and Weimar's relation with the Holy See).

DDP- Deutsche Demokratische Partei

The DDP was a centre, centre-left liberal party. It found itself aligning with the SPD on many issues, including strongly opposing the Treaty of Versailles. The DDP was a bastion for equal rights of ethnic minorities, including Jews; this led to them being labeled as a "Jew party", due to the DDP also being the most popular party in Jewish communities.

Extreme Right

DNVP - Democratic Nationaliste Volkspartei (Nazis)

A highly anti-semitic, far-right party, the DNVP spoke mainly on very populist issues (known in German as völkisch). The party was quite unstable, being a hodgepodge of different right-wingers - from monarchists to agrarian conservatives. During the period of the committee, the DNVP seemed to be in a time of moderate reform, compromising on certain issues with other, more centre-right, parties; however, the monarchist and anti-semitic part of the party remained until their dissolution in favour of the NSDAP in 1933.

Characters

Left/Extreme Left

Clara Zetkin (KPD Reichstag Representative)

Clara Zetkin was a representative of the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) at the time of the committee. Zetkin was a radical communist and women's rights activist.

Ernst Thälmann (KPD Uprising Leader)

Ernst Thälmann was a communist radical and potential KPD uprising leader at the time of the committee. During WWI, Thälmann served as an artilleryman, earning multiple military distinctions. There, he came into contact with the USPD, eventually becoming a member, circa 1917.

Friedrich Ebert (President SPD)

Friedrich Ebert was the President of the Weimar Republic at the time of the committee. While left-leaning, Ebert was not Marxist; he was more interested in the furthering of the German people than his personal ideology. Ebert is renowned for being an extremely popular and effective leader, having a high approval rating and deterring many attacks on the stability of the government.

Rosa Luxemburg (Leader of Spartacist Uprising)

For the purpose of this committee, Luxemburg was not executed after the Spartacist Uprising, however, she went into hiding after evading capture in 1919, only now resurfacing. Rosa Luxemburg was a major communist political thinker and revolutionary who founded the Spartakusbund (later becoming the KPD).

Arthur Rosenberg (KPD member and Revolutionary)

Arthur Rosenberg was a revolutionary member of the KPD and writer at the time of the committee. Rosenberg actually held a PhD in ancient history and archeology, but devoted most of his time to leading the remaining members of the KPD who still saw revolution as preferable to democracy.

Hermann Müller (SPD Reichstag Representative)

Hermann Müller was a representative of the Socialiste Partei Deutsch (SPD) at the time of the committee. Despite being left-leaning, Müller was opposed to the Soviet Union's form of government, as well as the radical left which was forming in Weimar at the time.

Extreme Right

Oskar Hergt (DNVP)

Oskar Hergt was a Reichstag representative and chairman of the DNVP at the time of this committee. In comparison to the rest of the DNVP, Hergt was a moderate. However, he was still a monarchist with strong values.

Wolfgang Kapp (Co-leader of the failed Kapp-Putsch)

For the purpose of this committee, Kapp did not die in 1922, but won his battle with cancer and continues to live a free man; cleared of his charges in the Reichsgericht. Wolfgang Kapp was the co-leader of the infamous Kapp Putsch as well as a prominent member of the DNVP, with ties to the Freikorps.

Walther Von Lüttwitz (Co-leader of the failed Kapp-Putsch)

Walther Von Lüttwitz was a German general who is credited with providing much of the military support in the Kapp Putsch (alternatively, Kapp-Lüttwitz Putsch). He was greatly opposed to the Treaty of Versailles and was in command of many Freikorps troops as a Gruppenkommando I.

Hermann Ehrhardt (Freikorps General)

Hermann Ehrhardt was a German Freikorps commander at the time of the committee. He was instrumental in securing troops for the failed Kapp Putsch and was a strong opponent to the Treaty of Versailles and a hardline monarchist.

Hans von Seeckt (Leader of the Reichswehr, Monarchist Conservative)

Hans von Seeckt was the Chief Army Commander in the Weimar Republic at the time of the committee. Seeckt was sympathetic to monarchist revolutionaries, himself a conservative monarchist; disregarding orders to defend the republic during the Kapp Putsch.

Centre/Right

Gustav Stresemann (Foreign Minister DVP)

Gustav Stresemann was the Foreign Minister of the Weimar Republic at the time of the committee. Stresemann is widely regarded as one of the most effective Foreign Ministers in German history, negotiating the Locarno Treaties with France, Britain, Italy and Belgium among numerous others.

Wilhelm Marx (Chancellor Zentrum)

Wilhelm Marx was the Chancellor of the Weimar Republic at the time of the committee. In his early life, Marx served as a civil lawyer in Prussia and various other parts of Germany (~1888-1921).

Hugo Stinnes (Founding Father of the DVP - Super Rich Guy)

Hugo Stinnes was successful industrialist as well as a conservative politician. He was a founding member of the DVP and was a Reichstag representative of the DVP at the time of the committee.

Carl Wilhelm Petersen (DDP Leader and Representative)

Carl Wilhelm Petersen was a Reichstag representative for and president of the DDP. Petersen was quite a wealthy individual who managed to balance being a Reichstag representative, with also being a senator in the Hamburg Parliament.

Heinrich Brauns (Reichsministerium für Arbeit, Zentrum)

Heinrich Brauns was the Reichsministerium für Arbeit (minister of labour) at the time of the committee. Brauns was a member of the centrist Zentrum party and had a great influence of Weimar politics through his many years a minister of labour.

Sofia Hebsburg -- Journalist from the Millheim Journal

Sofia Hebsburg works for the Millheim Journal. She has been invited as the key media figure, and thus is unable to vote in nonprocedural matters, with the exception of directives concerning media releases.

Religious Figures

Lion Feuchtwanger (Jewish-German Novelist, Outspoken Nazi Critic)

Lion Feuchtwanger was a Jewish-German novelist/playwright and outspoken critic of anti-semitism. A proud Jew, Feuchtwanger also held many leftist beliefs, which permeated throughout his writings.

Cardinal Adolf Bertram

Cardinal Adolf Bertram was a catholic cardinal at the time of the committee. He frequently fought with the Polish section of the Catholic church. Bertram was a proud German, however, he was virulently opposed to Nazi-style politics.

Pastor Konrad von Preysing

Pastory Konrad von Preysing was a prelate of the Roman Catholic church in Germany at the time of the committee. He was mainly in charge of pastoral work in Archdiocese of Munich and Freising. Preysing was a strong opponent of far-right philosophy, despised by the NSDAP and many of their allies.

Zwi Perez Chajes (Chief Austrian Rabbi and Zionist Leader)

Zwi Perez Chajes was the Chief Austrian Rabbi and the chairman of the Zionist General Council at the time of the committee. He was called to this committee to voice his strong opinions and add a new perspective, in hopes of solving Weimar's growing problems.

Key Issues

Issue #1: Efficient, Stable Government

The Weimar Republic, formerly known as the German Reich, is a grim reminder that democracies too can fail. The fall of the Republic is credited to many factors: from the Great Depression, to the overly democratic policies. However, one thing is certain, the structure of the Weimar Republic was far from ideal.

In 1919, a new constitution was drafted in the town of Weimar. This new constitution would replace the defeated monarchy in the aftermath of WWI. It begins with this,

*“The German people, united in its tribes and inspired with the will to renew and strengthen its realm (Reich) in liberty and justice, to serve internal and external peace, and to promote social progress, has adopted this Constitution.”*¹

The first part of the constitution, *The Reich and its States and The Reichstag and the Reich Government*, covers nation-building principals. This includes defining the government as having jurisdiction over defense, foreign affairs, immigration, trade, etc. As well as defining the exact rules for parliament. Some examples of these rules are, members of the Reichstag served for four years and were representative of all of Germany, the President ruled for a seven year term and could be re-elected only once and that the President could be removed from office upon a two-thirds majority in the Reichstag.²

The third section is where the constitution causes the most doubt (*The President of the Reich and the National Ministry*). This section, as you may gather from the titles, covers the duties of the President. Within this part of the constitution is an infamous article - Article 48. This article allowed the President to call “emergency decrees”, which includes the usage of military force in the case that there is significant dissent in the state. It also allows the President to suspend certain fundamental rights and institute new laws or policies *without* the consent of the Reichstag. However, there is a safeguard in place, the President is required to immediately report any actions taken by means of “emergency decree” to the Reichstag; the Reichstag may then choose to block any and all measures by a majority vote.³ Near the end of the Weimar Republic, Article 48 was systematically abused by the NSDAP to secure a dictatorial rule.⁴

¹ German Reich, Constituent Assembly, *The Reich Constitution of August 11th 1919*, August 11 1919, Weimar: Constituent Assembly of the German Reich, August 11 1919.

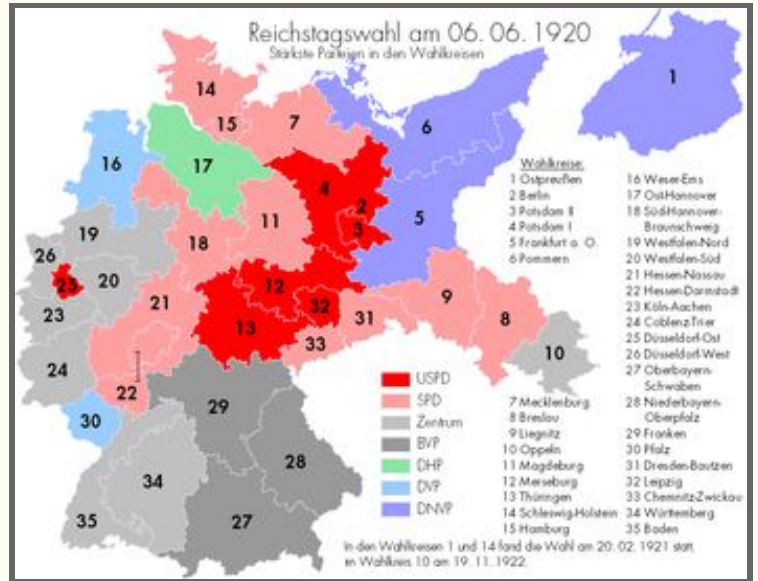
²Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10008220>.

As to not ramble on the intricuses of this long document, the rest of the constitution will be summarized, simply, as such: definitions and guarantees of fundamental rights, justice, economics, religion and other such facets of daily life.

The term “Reichstag” was used multiple times in the text above. To fully understand the constitution, and the structure of politics in Germany as a whole, one must first define this important term. All of Weimar was governed by two main legislative bodies: the Reichstag and the Reichsrat. The Reichsrat was similar to an “Upper House” (see Britain’s “The House of Lords”) and members were nominated by provinces (or *Länder*), it should, for sake of simplicity, be mostly disregarded throughout this committee (however, this is not to say that it will be completely ignored, it is very much a part of committee canon). The Reichstag, on the other hand, was an elected diet which was similar to that of a “Lower House”. This parliamentary body will be central to the committee, with most of the delegates acting as elected members.



The Reichstag was elected on the basis of proportional representation.⁵ A long list of parties was presented to each voter. Under the new constitution, no party could be justly excluded from the elections.

However, the new election policy also allowed for any party able to accrue more than 0.4% of the total national vote to be represented in the Reichstag. This was implemented with the hopes of preventing “wasted votes” but had a pernicious side effect -- extreme diversity in party representation flourished throughout the Reichstag. This hyper-democratic state, counter-intuitively, is cited as a major downfall of the republic. Instead of a classic “tug of war” scenario, between two or three powerful parties, it was a constant swamp of uncoordinated voices. Many of the parties were quite specialised, leading to the inability to compromise. Catholics wanted the government to focus on nurturing the soul, while socialists tended toward denying the existence of a soul altogether. Still then, other parties were concerned with race. Scholar Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn captures the spirit of the Republic in his writings, saying:

“When the speaker of one party indulged in his oratory, the others walked out. It was not worth while to listen to somebody's opinion when you knew that his premises were all wrong.”⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Erik von Kuehnelt-Leddihn, *The Menace of the Herd: Or Procrustes at Large* (Auburn, Alabama: Ludvig von Mises Institute, 1943), 193.

The struggle to make their promised, and well-needed, political reforms has led to increasing frustration with the system. In response, citizens have become increasingly radical, attempting to overthrow the government by *push* instead of *policy*. To even a layman, it is apparent that the current structure of the Weimar Republic is not viable for the future of Germany. This committee must weigh the following questions and determine what course of action will help salvage the Republic before the people of Germany decide they've had enough.

Questions to Consider:

1. How should the Weimar Republic balance government efficiency with proportional representation?
2. Should the President be afforded so much power?
3. How can the constitution be redefined to be more specific and binding?

Case Study:

What makes a successful democracy? An unsuccessful democracy? The following is a case study which examines the failed Spanish Republic, which underwent trials and tribulations comparable to that of Weimar.

The case study:

<http://www.markedbyteachers.com/international-baccalaureate/history/why-did-the-second-spanish-republic-fail.html>

Issue #2: Rise of the Extreme

Kaiser Wilhelm II's sudden abdication in 1918 left a black hole of power in the Reichstag. On the day of the abdication, SPD leader Philipp Scheidemann announced:

*“Everything for the people. Everything by the people. Nothing may happen to the dishonor of the Labor Movement. Be united, faithful, and conscientious. The old and rotten monarchy has collapsed. The new may live. Long live the German Republic!”*⁷

But this announcement underlay a different threat: Germany lacked the fundamental institutions to facilitate the transition into a democracy. Prior to the Great War and the Kaiser's abdication, Germany's government appeared to be following the same pattern as Great Britain's gradual transition from absolute, monarchical power to a constitutional monarchy -- albeit later on the European political timeline. The German Empire had adopted a constitution prior to Weimar that, among many other things, put the power of budget and legislation into the hands of the Reichstag and guaranteed political freedom.⁸ The Weimar Republic revamped and built upon these rules. However, the end of the Great War saw the release of much of the country's military, many of which went to form their own mercenary brigades referred to as “Freikorps”. These large paramilitary groups functioned on a monetary basis, and to make matters worse, most remaining soldiers refused to fight against any of their once fellow soldiers. As is with anything, without the ability to enforce these new rules, the constitution became flexible -- a commodity for gross interpretation.

Scheidemann, along with the SPD, feared that in the absence of such institutions, the power struggle between competing parties -- many of which were becoming more and more extreme -- would result in yet another autocratic government. In particular, the message from



Scheidemann attempted to guarantee a new, reformed German republic in the hopes of pacifying the people so as to prevent a repeat of the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, which occurred in Russia.

However, Scheidemann's message only delayed the revolution. In 1919, the Spartacists staged an

“public” (speech, Weimar, Germany, November 8 1918), PSM-Data,

⁸ Roger B. Myerson, “Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster,” *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160, no. 2 (2004).

uprising in Berlin led by Leibknecht and Rosa Luxemburg. Their goal was to seize the central government, mimicking the Bolsheviks' strategy.⁹ With a scattered and broken military, the Weimar government decided to hire Freikorps -- an organized militia of ex-military soldiers -- to help suppress the revolution. Although the Spartacists mustered over 50,000 revolutionaries, the Freikorps brutally put an end to the insurgence. Liebkecht was hanged, and Rosa Luxemburg was taken into custody.¹⁰ This left the radical communists without leaders. However, the Weimar government's reliance on the Freikorps allowed the group certain credibility and exposure among the population. As what was essentially a mercenary group, the Freikorps could not be counted to be loyal. What more, their numbers were composed largely of supporters of the monarchy, untrusting of the new democratic government.

After the absolute failure of the Spartacist Uprising, the radical KPD struggled to remain in Germany's leftist spotlight; resulting in a major shift away from immediate, violent revolution, headed by then KPD leader, Paul Levi. Their efforts were successful, with a large portion of the weakening USPD's support shifting to the KPD. Though, Levi's relatively moderate stance was stricken from the party when he was expelled from the KPD by the Comintern (Communist International), along with any other members opposed to the Stalin regime.

In this turbulent political environment, another uprising was staged just a year later, in March of 1920. This time, it was an attempt by the Erhardt Brigade -- a Freikorps unit that had fought in the Baltic during the war -- to establish a right-aligned government. In Berlin, the effort was corroborated by General Luttwitz and Dr. Wolfgang Kapp, culminating in what is now known as the Kapp Putsch. The Ehrhardt Brigade overran Berlin with overwhelming military force, the government was forced to flee. Nonetheless, the coup failed spectacularly. A massive pushback from nearly every sector of the German workforce was mounted by the government-in-exile, which called for a general strike. The strike led to the stagnation of the Berlin economy and thereby the collapse of the new military government.¹¹

Simultaneously, there was an uprising in the Ruhr. Over 50,000 members of the Red Ruhr Army attempted to overthrow the Ruhr government in favour of a "dictatorship by the people". The uprising was diverse in its communist support, with members coming from the popular, yet often adversarial, SPD, KPD, USPD and FAUD (an anarcho-syndicalist group). However, after the fall of the Kapp government, the legitimate government attempted to hold talks with the communists; the majority of the talks failed. In the end, the Reichswehr made their way to Ruhr and suppressed the uprising, leading to over 1,000 rebel deaths; the Reichswehr

⁹ FacingHistory, *The Weimar Republic Timeline*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/weimar-republic-timeline>.

¹⁰ This committee disregards Rosa Luxemburg's hanging in 1919. Instead, it will follow an alternate history where Luxemburg was kept a political prisoner until she was eventually freed and went underground.

¹¹ FacingHistory, *The Weimar Republic Timeline*, <https://www.facinghistory.org/weimar-republic-fragility-democracy/weimar-republic-timeline>.

troops even included battalions who had just been pushed out in the Kapp Putsch, most notably the Ehrhardt Brigade. While the attempt to institute a reigning socialist or communist government was unsuccessful, the Ruhr Uprising did succeed in some respects, including some socio-economic policies.¹²

The extreme power struggles make it difficult for a coherent national policy to be developed. Never before has the German nation been so ideologically divided. It is no longer a struggle of monarchy against democracy -- it is a struggle about economic and social systems that expand beyond the scope of governance. With completely new, extremely radical ideologies springing up around every corner, from völkish alliances to anarcho-communist associations. What more, the policies and work of the Weimar Republic is largely lost to the German public. The committee's duty and burden is to navigate past the dangers posed by such political extremism and facilitate Germany's transition into a democracy.

Questions to Consider:

1. How far should ideology be compromised for the sake of cooperation?
2. How can the Weimar Republic avoid another large-scale revolution?
3. How can the Weimar Republic develop the institutions required to remain a democracy?

¹² Sabine Hake, *The Proletarian Dream: Socialism, Culture, and Emotion in Germany, 1863–1933* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2017)

Issue #3: Financial Strain

The Great War had ended. The Treaty of Versailles has been negotiated and Germany is the undeniable scapegoat of blame for the atrocities hitherto committed. A reparation commission was created in 1921, in accordance with Articles 231-235 of the treaty. The reparations demanded from Germany totaled to 132 billion gold marks¹³ -- the equivalent of approximately USD\$14 trillion.¹⁴ With hindsight, this would serve to be one of the most disastrous decisions to come out of the Treaty of Versailles. A crippled and angry German people were made even more furious by this outlandish sum. To pay off their debts, the original London Schedule of Payments foresaw Germany paying around 3 billion gold marks annually, for about 44 years.¹⁵

Notwithstanding the above payment plan, it seems there were hidden intentions behind the way in which these reparations are collected. The payments were supposed to be collected by means of 3 different bonds; as in, three separate payments which comprise the 132 billion gold marks. These bonds were known, simply, as A, B and C bonds. While the A and B bonds, which comprised 50 billion gold marks, were mandatory, static debts; the C bonds were to be collected based on Germany's ability to pay.¹⁶ This was done because the London Schedule of Payments had found that Germany would only be able to pay around 50 billion gold marks; however, seeking to keep their various political promises and to pacify their populous, certain nations (namely the United Kingdom and France) opted to add the C bonds as a sort of facade. From the surface, it seemed as though the Allies were extracting the full 132 billion gold marks, when, in reality, they had settled on a number lower than the original offer from the German government. In fact, American historian Sally Marks alleges, "...the London Schedule of Payments of May 1921 constituted a tremendous Germany victory."¹⁷ This strategy functioned well at first,

To repay their debts to the Allies, the Germans were allowed to send raw materials and goods directly to the Allies (e.g. lumber, coal). Other instances, such as the German government's aiding in the rebuilding of the Leuven university library, were also taken as

¹³ Roger B. Myerson, "Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁴ "Reparation Commission." *Dictionary of American History*. Encyclopedia.com.
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/reparation-commission>.

¹⁵ Roger B. Myerson, "Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁶ Sally Marks, "Reparations Reconsidered: A Reminder", *Central European History* 2, no. 4 (1969): 356-365

¹⁷ Ibid.

payments and deducted from the overall reparations total. Of course, this was a double-edged sword, giving way to future situations where Germany's resources would be forcefully appropriated as reparations (discussed in a later paragraph).¹⁸

Germany had just paid off 2 billion gold marks the previous year. Most of this 2 billion was paid in coal, iron and wood from Weimar. The following year, the burden of the compensation had weighed down on Weimar and they were simply unable to pay another installment. This enraged Entente nations, particularly France and Belgium, which suffered the most territorial damage during the war. The French and Belgian governments accused Germany of trying to get out of paying the price for the war.

¹⁹ Following a default on timber payments in December of 1922, the French and Belgium troops invaded Ruhr -- Germany's industrial goldmine. The French and Belgium troops took over the iron and steel factories, coal mines and railways. Those who lived in Ruhr had their food taken away and they were imprisoned. The government of Weimar retaliated by ordering workers in Ruhr to go on strike and to not provoke and help the soldiers by any means; over 130 Germans were murdered by occupiers due to protests. The Occupation of the Ruhr was a turning point for Weimar in a few regards. Most importantly, it garnered much sympathy from the international community, including the United States; the U.S.A subsequently



implementing the Dawes Plan, greatly helping the German economy in the short-term.



A woman uses worthless marks to fuel the stove

The worker's strike took a toll Germany's economy since no goods were being produced. The workers still needed to be paid and the people who were cleared from their homes needed support. To help the cause, the German government made a careless decision and started printing money to cover the costs. This action leaked Germany's financial conditions to the world and all foreign investors removed their investments.

All of this culminated to an overwhelming hyperinflation in 1922. Basic necessities became almost unaffordable, with a loaf of bread costing 163 marks. By September 1923, this figure had reached 1,500,000 marks and at the peak, November 1923, a loaf of bread cost

¹⁸ Roger B. Myerson, "Political Economics and the Weimar Disaster," *Journal of Institutional and Theoretical Economics* 160, no. 2 (2004).

¹⁹ "Reparation Commission." *Dictionary of American History*. Encyclopedia.com.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/history/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/reparation-commission>.

200,000,000,000 marks.²⁰ The impact of the inflation was catastrophic; people were paid by the hour and and tried to spent it before its value became worthless. Pensioners on fixed incomes suffered as pensions became worthless. The poor became even poorer and the winter of 1923 meant that many lived in freezing conditions burning furniture to get some heat. The very rich were landowners and could produce food in their own estates. The group that suffered a great deal was the middle class. Their hard earned savings disappeared overnight. Many middle class families had to sell family heirlooms to survive. The occupation of Germany's primary industrial area precipitated an economical crash not unlike the Wall Street disaster of 1929.²¹

But unlike the rest of the world, Germany's reckoning with financial ruin arrived six years earlier. This committee is now tasked with an unimaginable responsibility: the prevention of the complete disintegration of the German economy and the restoration of the lifestyle to which people are accustomed.

Questions to Consider:

1. What kind of precautions should have Germany taken to mitigate the effect of inflation?
2. How can Germany leverage their position in the international community?
3. What other alternatives could have Germany chose rather than printing money to pay for the workers and those who need support?

²⁰ C N Trueman, "Weimar Republic and the Great Depression." *The History Learning Site*. May 22 2015, <https://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/modern-world-history-1918-to-1980/weimar-germany/weimar-republic-and-the-great-depression/>.

²¹ Ibid.

Timeline of Events

Pre-Committee:

The End of the Great War | November 1918

Four years of war come to an end, with Germany on the losing side. The armistice agreement in November ends all hostilities.

The Treaty of Versailles | January - December 1919

The Triple Entente struggle to agree on what the post-war world should look like. After a year of deliberations, the winning nations finally sign the Treaty of Versailles, effectively stripping Germany of its status as an Empire.

Spartacist Uprising | January 1919

An attempt to emulate the 1917 Bolshevik revolution by the KPD, the German communist party.

Kapp Putsch | March 1920

A collective effort between the Reichswehr and the Freikorps to overthrow Weimar and replace it with an autocratic right-wing government.

Ruhr Uprising | March 1920

An uprising of diverse communist groups amalgamated into the “Red Ruhr Army”. Suppressed by Reichswehr troops after negotiations with the legitimate government failed.

Committee:

French-Belgian Occupation of the Ruhr Valley | 1923

- French and Belgian troops occupied the Ruhr Valley in an attempt to make German industry compensate them for the missed reparations payments
- In response, the Weimar government urged workers to close down factories and businesses, paying idle workers with German marks
- The value of German marks skyrocketed, until 4.5 trillion German marks were needed to exchange for just one American dollar
- Heavily affected the middle class, whose savings became valueless overnight

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