

**Fletcher MUNC II  
Historical Crisis Council  
Weimar Germany  
May 1924-1934  
Background Guide**



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## Letter from the Chair

Delegates,

My name is Jak Rowan and I will be your chair for the Historical Crisis Council at Fletcher MUNC 2020. I am a Senior at Fletcher and a four-year member of the Fletcher Model UN Club. I served as President in my Sophomore year and I am the current President of Fletcher MUN. Last year, I served as the Secretary-General to Fletcher's inaugural conference in which I was extremely proud to have such a successful first year. I am extremely involved in local politics and I've had several opinion columns featured in regional newspapers. Over the past four years, Model UN has held a special place for me as an arena where delegates can spend three hours yelling at each other but, in the end, can create incredible solutions to the issues of the world. I look forward to seeing the solutions, or more likely the plots, that you all will put together during this conference.

For those new to crisis councils, I would highly suggest looking at our HCC Prep Guide on the crisis section of our website. This is a good overview of crisis procedure and will be of great help. In addition, the Director and I will spend a few minutes at the beginning of Session 1 answering any questions relating to the procedure of crisis.

By 1924, the Weimar Republic had begun to find its balance. The breathtaking hyperinflation was calming and fringe parties were losing their power with the electorate. The old Entente members finally agreed to alleviate the harsh conditions on Germany through the Dawes Plan and France had withdrawn from the Rhineland after a costly policy of occupation. However, there was always an undercurrent of uncertainty in the Republic that kept the world on alert. Threats to the Republic remain and delegates can either confront these threats or co-opt them to their benefit.

In this Crisis, a delegate doesn't win by being the Chancellor at the end of the conference. Nor do they win by being the largest party. Instead, delegates should seek to get the best ending that they can for their party, themselves, and their nation. Delegates will have to deal with the implications of the Treaty of Versailles, the extremely contentious relationship between Germany and its neighbors, the looming risk of economic catastrophe, the competing interests of each party, and the inter party fights for power. Delegates should keep in mind a quote from historian Helmut Heiber: "Each of these [parties] in turn divided into a right-wing (which provided the leadership) and a left wing, so that the neighboring wings of the Social Democrats and the Independent Social Democrats on one hand, and the Independent Social Democrats and the Communists on the other were closer together than the opposing wings within their own parties."

Best of luck to all,

*Jak Rowan*

## **Disclaimer**

While this topic and the characters that are in it does raise important points on issues of nationalism, imperialism, anti-semitism, racism, etc., the Chair will not tolerate members explicitly espousing anti-semitic and racist views, especially if they are directed to another member, even if they are in line with your character's position.

## **Crumbling to Ashes**

In the final days of World War One, the German army was being pushed back by the Entente and were about to be pushed back into Germany. Seeing no other way to achieve peace and prevent destruction to the homeland, plans were being drawn up to agree to a ceasefire. As the High Command of the German Army began to work towards peace, a mutiny began in the port city of Kiel, in which sailors began to resist their officers. Inspired by these acts, townspeople began to come out in support of the sailors and in opposition to the war. After taking control of Kiel, the sailors began to spread out to foment similar actions. This led to the capture of several cities by the revolutionaries and would eventually move to the interior of the country.

As revolution began to grip the country, Freidrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democrats (SDP), which was the largest party in the Imperial Reichstag, began to work for a peaceful transition of power. He advised the Kaiser (Emperor) of Germany that he had to abdicate if they wanted to hold off a violent revolution. To this, the Kaiser relented, unofficially abdicated November 9, and would officially abdicate November 28 from his vacation home in Belgium, where he would live in exile for years. Germany would agree to an armistice on November

11 and World War I would in the first defeat for Germany in its 47 year history as a unified country. The country would be engulfed in chaos as armed groups inside of Germany vied for power and territory. Order had broken down and Germany had crumbled into the ashes of its former self.

### From the Ashes

A provisional government would try to reinstate order in Germany for two months as negotiations to create a republic were held between the major political parties. On January 19, 1919, the first elections would be held for the new Weimar Republic. This would be the first of many.

The results of the election showed a pattern that would repeat itself at every election during the Weimar Republic: no party had a majority. This was caused by the Reichstag being elected by a proportional vote, which allowed for many parties to win seats. While the SPD was the largest party, they were still a far stretch from controlling a majority. As with every other government that would be formed in the Weimar period, a coalition of parties had to be created in order to hold a majority. In 1919, this was between the SPD, Centre, and the DDP (known as the **Weimar Coalition**). The right-wing parties saw a low share of the vote as they were associated with the Kaiser and the failures of the War. Freidrich Ebert, the leader of the SPD during the monarchy, would be elected as the President of the Republic and would become the rock that the Republic would be able to cling onto throughout his six years in office.

The fortunes of the Republic would only worsen as the Entente Powers finished the Treaty of Versailles and demanded that Germany sign it. This treaty stripped Germany of its air force, got rid of a large percentage of its army and

navy, forced Germany to keep troops out of the Rhineland, stripped Germany of territory, and set up the structure for Germany to pay severe reparations. Further treaties would place the value of these reparations at \$33 billion. This treaty was widely seen in Germany as a humiliation and many saw the establishment as the group that was to blame for this humiliation. Disgruntled soldiers would join armed groups on the extreme left and right when they were discharged in order for Germany to comply with the treaty.

After having to sign the Treaty of Versailles, the government tried to establish itself. In its way was a series of revolts that gripped Germany in 1919 and 1920. These revolts would come from all sides of the political spectrum. In 1919, the Spartacist Uprising began in Bavaria as communists attempted to create a Communist Germany. This would fail as the right-wing paramilitary groups, known as the *freikorps*, crushed the uprising on the orders of the government. Moving into 1920, the *freikorps* took advantage of their strong position and overthrew the government in an event known as the Kapp Putsch. This coup would only be stopped when the SPD calling for a general strike which grounded the country to a halt and prevented the coup from extending its control beyond Berlin. These two uprisings, and the smaller ones in between, led to a constant upheaval in the Reichstag and the public's confidence in the government was shattered. In the face of all of this, the coalition fell apart. This would be the first of many coalitions falling to pieces.

As the coalition fell apart, a fresh election had to be called in 1920. This led to a rise of the USDP and a sharp fall in the vote for the SDP. In addition, there was a sizable return in the conservative vote through the DVP and the more radical DNVP as monarchists were motivated to vote by the rise in communist activities.

Following their large defeat, the SPD went into opposition but supported many government policies to allow for the government (made up of the DDP, Centre, and DVP) to continue. After 1920, the SPD would spend most of its time in opposition and its votes would become the lifeline for most governments that came after.

### Tumult Becomes Tranquility

The revolving door of governments would continue for several more years. From June 1920 to 1922, there were three different Chancellors, two from the Centre party and one non-partisan. The currency at the time, the paper Mark, was spiraling in a bout of hyperinflation that was brought by a desperate attempt to pay reparations. The government became so desperate to catch up to hyper inflation that they, at one point, printed a 50 trillion Mark note. After Germany faltered on its reparation payments, France and Belgium occupied the Ruhr Valley, an industrial heartland in West Germany that held large coal deposits. The government would call for the population to engage in passive resistance to repel the French and the Belgians. Passive resistance entailed a general strike and a general refusal to cooperate with French and Belgian soldiers. This policy would be costly for the government as they would be forced to pay the salaries of the workers that were on strike. This sent the inflation rate even higher and Germany looked like it would spiral into self-destruction. It would take a miracle for Germany to get itself out of the turmoil they were in.

In 1923, President Freidrich Ebert granted the Chancellorship to Gustav Stresseman of the DVP who led a coalition consisting of the SPD, DDP, Centre, and the DVP (known as the **Grand Coalition**). A respected statesman, Stresseman

moved to quickly solve the reparations issue by entering into negotiations with the Allies. He would be successful in getting more breathing room for Germany, which allowed it to be able to pay its commitments. He would also introduce a new currency to help curb inflation and stabilize the economy. On the issue of the Ruhr, Stresseman ending the policy of passive resistance that paralyzed the Ruhr and led to the French becoming oppressive. The combination of the three events would lead to the French and Belgians leaving the Ruhr and the slow stabilization of the German economy. While inflation still continued, it would become much more subdued by 1924.

As the end of 1923 arrived, Stresseman's government would be shaken to its core. In Munich, Adolf Hitler and his co-conspirators launched an attempted coup at a beer hall in the city. While slightly successful at its start, the coup quickly fell apart and Hitler would be arrested, tried, and found guilty of trying to overthrow the government. During his prison sentence, he would write his most infamous text, *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle), which laid out his beliefs and contained many of the first signs of his rabid antisemitism. This book would help to make him famous and allowed his party to become more popular and more national. This attempted coup, mixed with the right's concern about Stresseman's liberal foreign policy, led to him being thrown out of office after only 109 days in office. He would go on to be the Foreign Minister from 1923 until 1929. While his term as Chancellor was short, many historians see him as the most important figure in the stabilization of Germany in the early '20s.

After the term of Stresseman, Germany entered a "golden age" in which the economy was stable and growing, the arts were flourishing, and the popularity of extremist groups began to wane. This was also a time where there was a sharp

decrease in the number of attempted coups against the government. While the economy was becoming stable, the Reichstag would still be a place of shifting alliances that would result in the revolving door of governments continuing. As the term of the Reichstag ran out, the stage was set for the first of two elections in 1924.

The election of 1924 (May) saw the first seats in the Reichstag going to the NSFP, who was the predecessor of the NSDAP (Nazi Party). Wilhelm Marx of the Centre party would be returned to power under the coalition of the center and the right with the tacit support of the SPD. This government, however, would quickly fall and fresh elections were held in December 1924. This election would actually see a resurgence of mainstream parties and a loss of seats for the NSFP and the Communists.

### **Delegate Expectations**

Delegates in this council should be prepared to deal with both domestic and foreign issues. Members, in addition to their work through their crisis notes, are expected to work with other members to craft and pass legislation that will help in areas such as the economy, defense, the arts, education, etc. While members should seek to win power and take the reins of the government, they will come under more scrutiny from their colleagues and will be faced with even more challenges. Those who get too close to the sun risk the same fate as Icarus and must do whatever it takes to keep their wings from melting. While not inherently a wartime committee, the actions taken by members and the council may see Germany move into conflict. Members should beware the allure of combat. Germany's military was a



shadow of what it was in the days of World War I and most of its neighbors had the ability to easily sweep the Germans away if not handled correctly.

### **Mechanics of the Crisis**

In this Crisis Council, there are some special rules to reflect that this crisis takes place in the Reichstag during the Weimar Republic.

1. Characters will be real people from the time, but they will also be representing a bloc of like minded members of the Reichstag. To reflect this, every character has a percentage of seats that will be used for substantive votes (action plans, amendments, votes on government). These seat percentages are subject to change during the crisis in response to actions taken by the council and by individual members. Staff has full discretion to change seat totals at any time.
2. All substantive votes will be counted by percentages of seats, and not just by number of delegates. If a substantive vote requires a majority, 50.01% of *seats* must be in favor for the vote to pass.
3. In order for the council to pass any action plans, there must be a government. A government is a group of delegates who hold different roles of power and are supported by a majority of the Reichstag. These roles come with extra powers that are consistent with their position. The roles are: Chancellor, Foreign Minister, Minister of Economic Affairs, and the Minister of Defense and of the Interior.
  - a. In order to form a government, a delegate will move “to form a government under the Chancellorship of \_\_\_\_\_.” If passed, the

Chair will recognize the new Chancellor to announce the new ministers.

- b. The Chancellor is entitled to change minister without the approval of the council at any time through a note to the Chair and an announcement to the council.
  - c. While a delegate can hold two roles at one, the Minister of Defense/Interior may not be held by someone with another role in the government.
  - d. An example of a power is that the Chancellor may write to the President asking for an Article 48 emergency decree, which hold the weight of a passed action plan.
4. If someone wishes to bring down a government, they may motion “that this House has no confidence in the Government.” If a majority approves this, the Chancellor and their ministers will be removed and new “elections” will be held where seat percentages may or may not change.
  5. Elections are either called under rule 4 or by decree of the President. When an election is called, the campaign will last for 30 minutes. The actions of delegates will have a heightened effect on the seats that delegates will receive. In this period, members may use notes to do active campaigning.
  6. The President of the Weimar Republic will be represented by the Staff.
  7. The Chancellor may resign in two ways:
    - a. By passing a note to the Chair resigning their position. This maintains the Government as a whole and the ministers will decide on a new Chancellor.

- b. By passing a note to the Chair resigning on behalf of the government.  
This removes all ministers, but does not automatically trigger new elections.

**Note:** Due to the obscurity of some members, we will provide a brief position of each character to the delegate who is assigned that character. Delegates are encouraged to extrapolate that position to whatever issue is being discussed.

### **Parties and Characters**

(Starting vote percentage of character in parenthesis)

SPD - Big-tent party that was the largest left-wing party in Weimar Germany. Believed in liberal social policies and a larger government, however the level of radicalization was different in different factions of the party. Major party in Weimar politics.

Ottos Wells (14%) - Party Leader at Start

Rudolf Breitscheid (8.5%)

Atrur Crispin (5%)

Centre - A moderate, party that was held both right and left-wing views. While they were a Catholic party, it was not a heavily emphasised aspect of the party.

Wilhelm Marx (8%) - Party Leader at Start

Ludwig Kaas (6.4%)

DDP (German State Party)- A progressive party that tended to favor republicanism and the rights of minorities. Similar to SPD with the exception that they did not support the Treaty of Versailles.

Erich Koch-Weser (4%) - Party Leader at Start

Ernst Lemmer (2.6%)

USPD (United Social Democratic Party) - Splinter group from SPD that held more left-wing views and held views that were borderline-communistic. While explicitly social democrats, they considered joining the Communist Internationale.

DNVP (German National People's Party)- Preeminent conservative party in Weimar Germany. Monarchists and anti-treaty with a nationalistic wing that would host some future Nazis. Usually rejected any offer to take part in governments as they did not want to lend legitimacy to the Weimar Republic.

Kuno von Westarp (11.8%) - Party Leader at Start

Alfred Hugenberg (5%)

Kurt Ways (4.9%)

DVP (German People's Party) - Liberal nationalist party that was pro-business, traditionalist, yet secularist. Formerly anti-republic, but came to accept the constitution and would go from opposition to occasionally being in government.

Gustav Stresemann (7.9%) - Party Leader at Start

Eduard Dingeldey (2.8%)

NSFP (NSDAP): A far-right party that embraced heavy nationalism and blamed democracy and the Jews for the ails of society. The party would not take part in governments as they wanted to prepare for a Mussolini-like seizure of power that would not succeed if they were already in government.

Adolf Hitler (2%) - Party Leader at Start

Gottfried Feder (1.1%)

BVP (Bavarian People's Party): Right-wing Bavarian independence party.

Heinrich Held (3.9%) - Party Leader at Start

WP (Reich Party of the German Middle Class): Pro-business, conservative party that focused on the middle class in cities and focused on the bourgeoisie.

Victor Bredt (2.6%)

### **Article 48, Weimar Constitution**

If a state fails to carry out the duties imposed upon it by the national constitution or national laws, the President of the Reich may compel performance with the aid of armed force. If public safety and order be seriously disturbed or threatened within the German Reich, the President of the Reich may take the necessary measures to restore public safety and order; if necessary, with the aid of armed force. For this purpose he may temporarily suspend in whole or in part the fundamental rights enumerated in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153. The President of the Reich must immediately communicate to the Reichstag all measures taken by virtue of Paragraph 1 or Paragraph 2 of this Article. On demand of the Reichstag these measures must be abrogated. If there be danger in delay, the state ministry may, for its own territory, take such temporary measures as are indicated in Paragraph 2. On demand by the President of the Reich or by the Reichstag such measures shall be abrogated. Detailed regulations shall be prescribed by a national law.

### **Further Research**

- <https://www.reichstag-abgeordnetendatenbank.de> (Database of Reichstag MPs which includes speeches given by members. Site is in German)
- [https://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/en\\_index.html](https://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/en_index.html) (Database of items concerning the Reichstag. Site is in German)

- [http://www.mrbuddhistory.com/uploads/1/4/9/6/14967012/election\\_results.pdf](http://www.mrbuddhistory.com/uploads/1/4/9/6/14967012/election_results.pdf) (pdf with the list of Weimar governments, their supporters, and election results from all Weimar elections.)
- <http://www.gonschior.de/weimar/Deutschland/RT3.html> (Database of all elections in the Weimar Republic. Site is in German.)

Note: the Weimar Republic is a period which has been passed over by many contemporary historians. As a result, most research that can be done will come from German sources and reading books about the period. Book recommendations below. All of these books were able to be checked out through the Florida Interlibrary Loan system.

- <https://jacksonvillepl8970.on.worldcat.org/oclc/27813534> (The Weimar Republic by Helmut Heiber. The Chair **HIGHLY RECOMMENDS** this book as it does an in depth look at the Weimar Republic and is very well written.)
- **The Weimar Republic, 1919-1933**, Author: Henig, Ruth B. (Ruth Beatrice), ISBN: 9780415132848