UTMUN

German Civil War

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Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to an unprecedented iteration of the University of Toronto Model United Nations, and to our Joint Crisis Committee— the German Civil War.

My name is Aadithya Thulasingam, but you can call me Aadi [add-e]. I am in my third year, majoring in international relations and history, and minoring in political science. I will be your JCC Director for UTMUN 2021, having previously been both Moderator and Chair.

I am excited to be working with my team to bring this joint crisis experience for all of our delegates, keeping in mind both the pressure as well as potential of our virtual setting. I am sure you have heard this countless, borderline excruciating, number of times already, but we are indeed all in this together. The UTMUN and JCC teams will be navigating, and helping you navigate, the logistics of conducting committee matters on the Zoom platform.

And with the formalities out of the way, *jetzt fängt das Krieg an*. Now the war begins.

The German Civil War was a fascinating period of German history in the interwar years. The nascent provisional government, formed after the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II, faced several existential or near-existential challenges to its legitimacy. This committee will be thrust into the post-WWI realities of German politics and society, tasked with the responsibility of formulating and bringing to reality competing visions for the future of Germany. This background guide is meant to outline the sociopolitical and socioeconomic concerns that need to be addressed. It will also occasionally provide brief snippets of the actual historical developments, for you to follow or forsake, as you traverse these challenges.

The crisis team and I look forward to seeing the directions in which you take your respective subcommittees in, as well as seeing where we can interfere, minimally, with the crisis arc we will have planned.

Best wishes and *viel Glück*.

Sincerely,

Aadi Thulasingam
JCC Director, UTMUN 2021
aadi.thulasingam@mail.utoronto.ca

Introduction to Committee

Historical Context and Committee Purview

In November 1918, Imperial Germany had lost the Great War, leading to the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The war had profoundly changed the political and economic systems of many European states, perhaps most notably in Germany. As a matter of fact, as early as late 1916, it seemed that the prevailing circumstances made a democratic transition inevitable. But this did not mean that democratization would occur uncontestedly in the early years.

Unlike its Imperial counterpart, the Weimar government simulated political competition, primarily by opening up the presidency and chancellorship.[1] While the Weimar Republic did not limit access to political and economic organization, the coordination and legitimacy of the government were limited. For a brief episode during this turbulent period in German political history, a revolutionary movement of workers and soldiers' councils; the Social Democratic Party and the Independent Social Democratic Party took over. This period also witnessed the emergence of a democratic compromise— the "Stinnes-Legien" agreement— which was struck between leading trade union chairmen and leading employers.[2]

Elections in January 1919 resulted in a majority for the parliamentary democracy camp of the so-called Weimar coalition; the primary political parties within this interesting coalition were the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the Liberal Democratic Party (DDP), and the Catholic *Zentrum*. Leftist organizations, with the demands of a worker democracy and socializing the means of production, contested parliamentary democracy. So did right-wing paramilitary groups (*Freikorps*), who instigated considerable militant violence and organized murder.[3]

But as far as this committee is concerned, a sustainable democatic compromise is not guaranteed. To reiterate again: the purpose of this background guide is to give you some brief insight into some of the actual historical developments and themes of post-WWI Germany. The two subcommittees will have to work towards advancing their interests to the greatest extent possible, to ascertain that each will have the most leverage in the event of a resolution to the conflict. The timeline for this committee will essentially start on the date November 9, 1918, right at the onset of the civil war between the provisional government and the Spartacists.

Let me take this moment to remind you once again that a compromise and its success is not a concomitant guarantee: it is up to you, the delegates and your respective subcommittees, to work towards realizing your vision of reconstructing Germany.

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1 Alfred Reckendrees, "Weimar Germany: The First Open Access Order That Failed?," *Constitutional Political Economy* 26, no. 1 (March 1, 2015): 38–60, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10602-014-9184-9.
2 Reckendrees, "Weimar Germany."
3 Ibid.

Subcommittees

The Provisional Government Bloc— *Martin Concaugh* (Chair)

The Council of the People's Deputies of the new German Republic, formed in the aftermath of the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm faces a great deal of challenges. The economy is collapsing, the Great War has been lost and revolutionary extremists are on the rise, fighting for further revolution. A coalition has been formed between the Social Democrats and the much more radical Independent Social Democrats, but they must rely on the existing bureaucracy of the Kaiser's Germany to govern. Further alliances must be made with Germany's reactionary armed forces, who have far different politics and aims than the more radical members of the new government. These holdovers from the Imperial regime will be most concerned with protecting the integrity and power of the German Reich and suppressing socialist revolution.

The new government has wide-ranging goals and demands. It must negotiate a treaty with the victorious Allies who will demand great costs for peace. It must push through wide-ranging reforms to liberalise society and rebuild the economy upon more progressive principles to assuage the fervour for revolution. It must assert its legitimacy at home and abroad to avoid further revolutions and attacks from the left and the right. It must create a new constitution. And it must do all those things in a manner that is acceptable to both most Germans and most of the political establishment, to avoid further revolution that would see the new German Republic before it can even properly begin.

The Spartacists— *Qaasim Karim* (Chair)

The Revolution has come to Germany! Starting with the mutiny at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven starting on the night of the 29th October, popular uprisings against the Kaiserreich have begun across the land. All major coastal cities have fallen, along with Hanover, Brunswick, Frankfurt on Main, and Munich. Organizing themselves in Councils Workers' and Soldiers', the monarchs of Germany have been forced to abdicate – first Bavaria, transformed into a Volksstaat – the People's State!— under Kurt Eisner, all the way to the Kaiser, who on this day, November 9th, 1918, renounced the throne of Germany and fled the country. However, the revolution has already become disunited. Two republics have been declared – a parliamentary democracy, under Friedrich Ebert, and the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and a revolutionary communist council republic, under Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, leading the Spartacist League and the Independent Social Democrats, (the USPD). Both groups exist in an uneasy truce – having seized the Reichstag, a Council of the People's Deputies has been formed, with members of the SPD and USPD united in a coalition government – but the marginalization of the Spartacists has not been taken well. Bavaria remains under a revolutionary socialist republic, though without significant military forces, and uprisings and strikes continue along the coasts, led by sailors, and in the interior as far as Saxony. Further complicating the situation is the near-famine conditions Germany is under due to British blockade, the continued disaster of the First World War, and the beginnings of right-wing counter-revolutionary uprisings. Will Germany, birthplace of Marx and Engels, establish a socialist republic through successful revolution, or will the people's dream be crushed in the face of a democratic reaction? "*'Tis the final conflict; let each stand in his place. The international working class shall be the human race!*"

Section A: Imperial Germany

Unification and Bismarckian Politics

After a decisive Prussian victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, the German Empire was formally proclaimed on January 18, 1871 at Versailles.[4] Chancellor Otto von Bismarck strategically manoeuvred to balance several domestic and external challenges. The invention of the title "German Emperor" for King William was meant to assuage Bavaria, as the southern state refused to be subordinate in the North German Confederation where Prussia was hegemonic. This move, along with the notion that the Chancellorship could be filled from any state within the Empire, was part of the Imperial incorporation of federal features from an 1867 constitution. But the new German empire was undoubtedly Prussian-led in terms of population, military capacity, and industrial development.

Bismarck sought to defend any threats to the conservative status quo— controlled by Prussian, Protestant Junkers— that he strived to establish, particularly from international-minded Social Democrats and Liberals. These two groups sought to reconfigure the German *Reichstag* as a powerful force of the country's political life, while rejecting the existing constitutional monarchy which provided glorification for the Prussian monarchy and nearly unchecked power for the Chancellor. The hereditary position of German Emperor which was vested in the King of Prussia came with a wide swath of exclusive powers: appointing and dismissing the head of government, i.e. the chancellor; conducting foreign relations; commanding the armed forces in wartime; as well as control over the bicameral parliament and legislation through the chancellor.[5] The lower house of the imperial legislature, the Reichstag, despite being an elective body based on universal male suffrage, was overpowered by the Prussian dominance of the upper house or Bundesrat.

Political Parties in the Reichstag

The Reichstag thus could not exercise the same legislative authority as was afforded to its contemporary parliaments in Britain and France. There were several political forces within the Reichstag, with competing constituencies, interests and ideologies. The Social Democratic Party (SPD in German), which served as the spearhead of social revolution on the behalf of the industrial working class, opposed militarism and constituted a potential-violent form of opposition to the Prussian-led state. The Centre Party (Zentrum in German) defended the rights of the Catholic minority, engaging in power politics with an apparatus that favoured northern Protestants. Yet another entity was the National Liberal Party, which represented the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, and was committed to economic modernization and political liberalism; this was antithetical to the reactionary and agrarian Junker ideology.

The Zentrum and the National Liberals became compliant to the Imperial political structure and compromised on the ideal of principled opposition to guarantee their interests.[6] For the former, it was the assurance of the non-revival of the Bismarckian anticlerical campaign of the 1870s, as well as religious freedom for the southern Catholics. For the latter, class interests came before democratic principles. Even the SPD, which became a party of the loyal opposition, chose to not take class conflict rhetoric seriously, arguably due to

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4 Kenneth Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "The German Empire, 1871–1914," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany.
5 Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "The German Empire, 1871–1914."
6 Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "The German Empire, 1871–1914."

the unprecedented social welfare policies established by Bismarck.[7] German workers became loyal imperial subjects thanks to Bismarck's introduction of a progressive social insurance system in the 1880s. After medical insurance and old age pensions, the 1890s witnessed health and safety regulations in factories, which ensured economic benefits and working conditions for the German proletariat; this was better than what could be said of its counterparts in other industrial nations. Thus the three major political parties accepted the advances in their fundamental objectives, and more importantly, provided their tacit acceptance of the undemocratic, authoritarian system of Imperial Germany.

Following the death of Kaiser Wilhelm I in 1888 and the resignation of Bismarck in 1890, there was an intense period of parliamentary bargaining over the constitution, which led to the adoption of numerous progressive reforms.[8] The power of the chancellorship became increasingly dependent on cooperation within parliament. Not even the SPD could be excluded from the negotiating process; it is worth noting that the very existence of the SPD was illegal from 1879 to 1890 by anti-Socialists laws (Sozialistengesetze). When the anti-Socialists laws lapsed in 1890, the German Reichstag had arguably become the most representative parliament in continental Europe. While severely limited in power, legislation could not be passed without its approval. The Reichstag also had significant decision-making authority over the annual federal budget as well as over initiating inquiries and interpellations.[9] But it could not form a government itself, as the authority to appoint the chancellor and ministers rested with the Kaiser. The Kaiser executed laws with the chancellor's signature and the chancellor in return only answered to the monarch.

Political Characteristics of the Post-Bismarck Era

Chancellor Bismarck's political structure from 1867 would essentially remain in place with scant change. until the Empire was on its deathbed in 1918.[10] Bismarck's successor— Leo, Graf von Caprivi— had a relatively short-lived administration with mixed results. Facing immense opposition from the Junker elite due to Caprivi's actions on grain tariffs that threatened their agrarian interests, Caprivi sought the support of the parties of the centre and left.[11] Caprivi's policies resulted in the decrease of food prices and in the flourishing of industry. He was also successful on the foreign policy front: long-term trade treaties were negotiated with Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy, and Romania. But ultimately Caprivi was forced out of the chancellorship in 1894 due to the Junkers' Prussian political capital as well as their access to the Emperor.

When Germany entered the twentieth century, despite growing economic strength, its system of politics experienced a sense of paralysis. As the electorate underwent increasing urbanization, the Social Democrats kept growing in their Reichstag representation. They were already the party with the most votes by 1890, and the following year, they moved further leftward with the adoption of a Marxist revolutionary program at their Erfurt Congress. The SPD had more votes than the combined support for the next two largest parties by 1912. It was not just the SPD that had a massive base of support, so did Zentrum. Meanwhile, the more traditional Conservatives, National Liberals and Progressives struggled in a political environment that was becoming increasingly populist. The latter three steadily declined until 1912 when they failed to crack the fifteen percent threshold. Contemporary

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7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid.

10 Kenneth Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "The German Empire, 1871–1914," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany.

11 Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "The German Empire, 1871–1914."

observations have suggested that the German population's desire of political emancipation, as was the case in Britain and France, set up a conflict with the recalcitrance of the ruling elites.[12]

The earliest roots of labour organization and social democracy can be traced back even further, to the Chartists of Britain in 1838, who focused on the demand to extend suffrage to all male adults.[13] There were also calls for equity in income distribution and improving living conditions for workers. The fight for those demands led to the emergence of the first trade unions and consumer cooperative societies. Having emerged gradually in Northern Europe, the social democratic movement involved the frequent cross-border exchange of ideas in the nineteenth century's latter half.[14] The German Social Democrats formed the vanguard of the ideological inspiration for the nascent labour movement. This was due to the relatively late development of social democratic parties and trade unions in Scandinavia, which in turn was due to the postponed industrialization in the region's countries. But nonetheless, social democracy went from the political fringes to become mass movements in Scandinavia in the span of two generations, in addition to their status as the largest national party in Germany.[15] Both reformist social democrats and revolutionary Marxists initially coalesced around the same trade unions and political parties, but the two factions would come to have incredibly fraught relations at the onset of World War One; there would be a rampant sense of disorientation in not just the SPD but the entire Social Democratic movement itself.

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12 Ibid.
13 Nik Brandal, Øivind Bratberg, and Dag Einar Thorsen, "The Birth of the Social Democratic Movement (1848–1916)," in *The Nordic Model of Social Democracy*, ed. Nik Brandal, Øivind Bratberg, and Dag Einar Thorsen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013), 19–35, https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137013279_2.
14 Brandal, Bratberg, and Thorsen, "The Birth of the Social Democratic Movement (1848–1916)."
15 Brandal, Bratberg, and Thorsen, "The Birth of the Social Democratic Movement (1848–1916)."

Section B: Wartime Germany

Outbreak of World War One

The assassination of Austria's Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Gavrilo Princip— a Serbian nationalist from Bosnia— led to a dramatic domino effect reverberating through Central Europe and beyond. What was a diplomatic and geopolitical crisis outside German territory came to be a cause that ordinary citizens rallied around.[16] The prospect of war electrified the sociopolitics of Germany and amplified an already raucous sense of nationalism and patriotism. The streets of Berlin were filled by jubilant crowds, which only increased in size and became more boisterous when Serbia rejected the ultimatum posed by Austria. The actions of the Balkan rivals and Germany's eagerness for continental war stunningly unified German society. In the aftermath of the German declaration of war against Russia and France, the Kaiser made this sweeping proclamation: "I no longer recognize parties. I recognize only Germans!"[17] He asked the chairmen of the parties in the Reichstag to pledge their support to him, along with a suspension of economic and political conflicts on the domestic front. This civic truce was accepted by all sides and was known as the "Burgfrieden" or literally "fortress peace."[18]

The Social Democrats, who had previously proselytized international brotherhood, voted to approve war finance in order to prove their patriotism. Even the "reddest of Reds" supported and volunteered for the war, and those that refused to enlist were derided by the public.[19] The seeming disappearance of societal divisions and widespread euphoria effectively masked the precariousness of the German situation. The powers of the Triple Entente— Britain, France and Russia— had twice as large a population than Germany and Austria-Hungary, had imperial access to natural resources as well as close contact with the United States.[20] After being immediately blockaded, Germany had to rely on domestic resources and those in Austria-Hungary and neighbouring non-belligerents including Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland. One factor that was advantageous for the Central Powers was the presence of interior transit lines, which was crucial in a two-front war.[21] Their unified command also contrasted from the Triple Entente's rivalries which led to three simultaneous yet uncoordinated war efforts.

Germany's war strategy arguably focused on remedying its vulnerability to a two-front war, and the solution was presented by former chief of the German staff Alfred von Schlieffen. The 'Schlieffen Plan' was to quickly decapitate France with an overwhelming attack that ran through neutral Belgium, and then later reposition those Western forces to drive out the Russian occupation on the East. While the Germans were able to get past the Belgians, the plan went awry at the Battle of the Marne in northern France in September 1914.[22] 67 year old General Paul von Hindenburg, a key player in interwar German history, was reactivated and along with General Erich Ludendorff sent to stop the Russians from advancing further into East Prussia. The Battle of Tannenberg in August 1914 was an unexpected early win for the German against two large Russian armies. On the Western front, a war of attrition emerged as the belligerent camps built opposing trenches from the English

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16 Jay Howard Geller, "Chapter 3 | Things Fall Apart: The First World War," in *The Scholems* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 47.
17 Ibid.
18 Geller, "Chapter 3 | Things Fall Apart: The First World War," 48.
19 Geller, "Chapter 3 | Things Fall Apart: The First World War," 49.
20 Kenneth Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "Germany- World War I," in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, n.d., https://www.britannica.com/place/Germany.
21 Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "Germany— World War I."
22 Ibid.

Channel to the Swiss border.[23]

Neither side would move more than thirty miles for the next three and a half years of the war, despite battles of titanic proportions at the Somme, Verdun, and Ypres. The outnumbered German forces on the east, along with Austrian support, would knock Russia out of the war in 1917; this would not happen until Vladimir Lenin's October Revolution, as well as due to the string of costly military defeats inflicted by the Central Powers. The Western front had come to be recognized as the deciding theatre of war by Ludendorff and Hindenburg. The duo had assumed authority as joint heads of all the land forces of Germany, becoming de facto rulers of the country as they sought to engineer a "whole of nation" mobilization. Around 18 percent of the population— more than eleven million men— were in uniform, of whom the war would claim almost two million casualties. But perhaps the most brutal causes of death were malnutrition and starvation, after the severe food shortages during the 1916-1917 winter.

On the international diplomatic front, Ludendorff and Hindenburg adopted an all-or-nothing victory policy. An independent state of Poland was created in 1916, preventing serious negotiations with Russian for a separate peace. Submarine warfare was adopted in 1917, despite knowing that it would lead to the entrance of the United States. Ignoring US President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points peace proposal, Ludendorff mounted a major offensive in April 1918. He was cognizant of the dire consequences should the offensive fail, replying when asked on that very matter, "Then, Germany will be destroyed."[24] The Reichstag passed a peace resolution following the lead of the Centre Party in 1917, which called for Germany to refrain from any annexations. While Social Democrats and Progressives rallied around it, the military and civilian establishment figures ignored it and enforced a draconian peace on Russia and Romania in the following year. As the major battle was brewing on the western front in April 1918, more than a million soldiers were in the east to enforce the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Russia.[25]

End of the War and Concomitant Political Vacuum

The military, agrarian, and industrial elites within Germany's ruling circles fought two simultaneous wars— one against the Triple Entente, the other against the aspirations of the German people who sought full political emancipation.[26] The latter dictated an unequivocally victorious outcome for the former, as defeat or peace compromise would lead to democratization and a loss of legitimacy for the elite; too many sacrifices were demanded from many millions of workers, farmers, and artisans who were denied effective political power. Even the Kaiser felt compelled to promise the end of the restrictive Prussian franchise in his 1917 Easter Message. But ultimately, the military reality of four years of attrition was too much to overcome, even as Ludendorff's Spring Offensive produced great breakthroughs on the Western Front. These initial gains simply could not be taken advantage of by the German military, as the Americans entered the war and introduced a million fresh troops in France. Thus began the counterattack that gave the opposing camp the momentum which led to German forces to begin retreating. After a severe defeat in northern France on August 8, the Kaiser installed a more liberal government in Berlin under the helm of Chancellor Max von Baden.[27]

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23 Ibid.
24 Barkin and James J. Sheehan, "Germany- World War I."
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
27 Ibid.

Just as the ministers realized the war was practically lost and sought an immediate armistice, a revolution broke out in the German navy on November 3, 1918. The Kiel Mutiny was the first of a chain of revolts across Germany that fatally disrupted the German Empire.[28] While it was generally unpolitical in nature, many dissidents in the armed forces hoisted the Red Flag because it was the only banner under which they could be sure of evading punishment for their action. Strikers or demonstrators hoped for reform while mutineers had to opt for revolution. The German war effort was essentially untenable by the morning of November 9, 1918, as soldiers and sailors within Germany were engaging in mutinies against their commanders and spreading revolution.[29] Rear soldiers on the Western Front simply refused to take up forward positions and passively rebelled against the Kaiser. Chancellor von Baden came to the realization that should there be a civil war, the army would not support the Kaiser.

The Kaiser soon abdicated the imperial throne, but left it up to the chancellor to announce the abdication, along with his own resignation. Chancellor von Baden designated Friedrich Ebert, co-leader of the Social Democrats, as his successor. Ebert sought to establish an elected assembly tasked with writing a constitution in order to decide whether Germany would become a monarchy or a republic.[30] But within a matter of hours, events would spin out of control, when the radical socialist leader Karl Liebknecht showed intent to proclaim a socialist council (soviet) republic and to bring enormous change to the political and economic systems. Seeking to preempt the proclamation, Ebert's Social Democratic co-leader Philipp Scheidemann declared to a crowd from the Reichstag that Germany was to become a democratic republic. Not to be outmanoeuvred, Liebknecht announced his own socialist republic from the royal palace balcony in Berlin. Germany was faced with the crossroads of two left-wing republican governments, as the looming civil war pitted the Center Left against the Far Left.[31]

28 A. J. Nicholls, "The German Revolution," SpringerLink, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-1-349-16146-1_2.
29 Jay Howard Geller, "Chapter 4 | Life in the Time of Revolutions: The Early Weimar Republic," in *The Scholems* (Cornell University Press, 2019), 73.
30 Ibid.
31 Geller, "Chapter 4 | Life in the Time of Revolutions: The Early Weimar Republic, " 74.

Section C: Sociopolitical Situation

SPD and Imperialism

The SPD underwent a sense of revisionism that led it to abandon a number of more radical Marxist stances.[32] The Revisionists were not convinced that the proletariat would deteriorate and that the capitalist economy would implode, which meant not believing in the need for a revolutionary seizure of power by the working class. However, there did exist a faction of Orthodox Marxists within the SPD that was vociferously against any attempt to change party doctrines. But the Orthodox Marxists did subscribe to the SPD's declarations against any form of colonialist expansion. The line of reasoning behind the SPD's strong anti-colonialism stand was that the financial burdens of German expansion overseas would disproportionately hurt the proletariat, due to the existing system of indirect taxation. Colonial labour would also inadvertently result in the lowering of wages or increasing unemployment in Germany, the argument extended. Other aspects of the anti-colonization policy plank of the SPD included the compelling moral case against the brutalization of nation populations, as well as imperialist brinkmanship and war.[33]

But by 1912, a group of Orthodox Marxists began postulating an alternative view, one of *indifference,* to imperialism.[34] This determinist deduction was predicated on the belief that while imperialism cannot be accepted as a positive good, it reflected a necessary stage of capitalism before the establishment of socialism. In addition to the Orthodox Marxists, there were also a number of Revisionists on the political right who had begun to oppose the SPD's anti-imperialism position earlier in 1907. They focused, along with bourgeoisie imperialists, on nationalistic economic objectives and an ethnocentric sense of superiority with which they viewed Western states. But perhaps most importantly, the Orthodox Marxists shifted from ideological indifference to fully supporting imperialism. Differences did emerge amongst the Orthodox Marxists themselves over the issue of imperialism, notably during the Party Congress of 1912. One leader of the radicals, Hugo Haase, called for the international arms-reduction agreements and denounced imperialist expansion soundly. Two other figures, Anton Pannekoek and Paul Lensch formed the vanguard for the criticism of Hasse's anti-militarism stance. They postulated that it was "un-Marxian" to suggest that capitalist states could abandon the armaments race, and were convinced in the necessity of militarism, which formed the basis for their new perspective on imperialism.[35]

The intra-party divides on imperialism were a perilous symptom of being overly reliant on a philosophical school of thought to provide palatable solutions to real-world political struggles. This was made most evident through the question of imperialism. After the outbreak of World War I, one notable Orthodox Marxist and radical theorist— Heinrich Wilhelm Carl Cunow— presented a leading argument in favour of German imperialism.[36] Paul Lensch went further and proclaimed, in 1916, that the war was a world revolution that pitted revolutionary Germany against counter-revolutionary England.[37] This ideological branch also concluded that colonial expansion was simply an unavoidable step needed to be taken by capitalism, and that Germany had a duty to bring the world towards a socialist realization. Imperialism thus became even more doctrinally

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32 Abraham Ascher, "'Radical' Imperialists within German Social Democracy, 1912-1918," *Political Science Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (1961): 555–75, https://doi.org/10.2307/2146541.
33 Ascher, "'Radical' Imperialists within German Social Democracy, 1912-1918."
34 Ibid.
35 Ascher, "'Radical' Imperialists within German Social Democracy, 1912-1918."
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid.

compatible, no longer being viewed as a necessary but rather a progressive force for international socialism.[38]

Christian Trade Unions

Christian trade unions were formed as a response to Marxism's own prescription of proletarianization. The first Christian trade union emerged in the Ruhr basin in 1894, when several Catholic as well as some Protestant coal miners defected from their Free union, citing what was in their view the SPD's anti-clerical and materialistic dogma.[39] Christian trade unions would eventually come to be represented by 12-15 percent of all unionized workers in Germany. They posed serious competition to the Free unions in the western and southwestern regions of the country. One prominent scholarly view challenged the Leninist argument that Christian unions were "organs of bourgeois reaction," postulating that they were worker-led and a reflection of anti-Marxist sentiment among some segments of the working class.[40] While they were challenged on the basis of their cooperation with clerical and "bourgeois" interest groups, their moderate model of unionism did resonate within certain segments of German society. For the purposes of this committee, the most prominent Christian trade unions could become important political forces in the battle for rebuilding Germany.

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38 Ibid.
39 William L. Patch, "German Social History and Labor History: A Troubled Partnership," *The Journal of Modern History* 56, no. 3 (1984): 494.
40 Patch, "German Social History and Labor History," 495.

Section D: Socioeconomic Challenges

The government had a wartime economic policy that gave major concessions to organized labour, and the newly established employee councils foreshadowed co-determination.[41] Financing the war and war settlements put immense pressure on the German economy, and the path to a more market-driven economic order was made more difficult in the near term. Persistent economic obstacles such as famine and high unemployment also bolstered political radicalization and often served as a force of recruitment for violent organizations. The two subcommittees will have to tackle, to varying extents, three broad socioeconomic challenges: famine, unemployment, and strikes.

Famine

During the war, Britain placed a naval blockade from the north of England to southern Norway, a military tool designed to cut off food and other resource supplies to Germany.[42] The blockade which started in 1914, produced extremely dire consequences for the populations of German cities— 750,000 deaths from starvation over the span of four years; as a matter of fact, starvation took a toll of about two million in all of central Europe just in the year 1918.[43] The *Steckrüberwinter*, or the "winter of the turnips," was a starkly literal dubbing for the worst winter of the century, between 1916 and 1917.[44] What limited food that was available was rationed and the very dietary behaviour of the citizens was subject to inspection by state inspectors. After the 1916-1917 food crisis, many Germans simply lost faith in the government's abilities to ensure the quality and equal distribution of food.[45] This led to the creation of collective and individual aid networks, even as expectations that the fighting and suffering for the state will bear rewards in the form of post-war reforms.

Famine-related propaganda, not unlike that which elicited visceral hatred against the British for being perpetrators of the blockade, was widespread in the German press. As far as the context for this committee is considered, the famine is still an ongoing crisis (Britain would not lift its blockade until the summer of 1919). The famine constitutes one of the most deeply-entrenched problems in the German psyche— both subcommittees will have to deal with this very depressing reality. The provisional government risks being entirely defined by the destructive symbolism of the famine and is vulnerable to mass public disillusionment. The Spartacists must attempt to provide a policy vision for alleviating the problems stemming from Imperial leadership, in order to challenge the provisional government.

Employment and Strikes

The most urgent question for the provisional government is how to best integrate the recently demobilized soldiers returning from the war front into society. Unemployment among soldiers is a massive risk vector for radicalization.[46] They were mostly located in cities and they could potentially be instigated to mobilize in mass

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41 Reckendrees, "Weimar Germany."

42 Tania Rusca, "Chapter 12: The Memory of Food Problems at the End of the First World War in Subsequent Propaganda Posters in Germany," in *Food in Zones of Conflict, Anthropology of Food and Nutrition*, vol. 8 (New York, NY: Berghahn Books, 2014).

43 Rusca, "Chapter 12: The Memory of Food Problems."

44 Ibid.

45 Klaus Weinhauer, "Labour Movements and Strikes, Social Conflict and Control, Protest and Repression (Germany)," International Encyclopedia of the First World War, https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/labour_movements_and_strikes_social_conflict_and_control_protest_and_repression_germany.

46 Rusca, "Chapter 12: The Memory of Food Problems."

against the government. Industry also had to convert from war production to civilian needs, and the concomitant social deprivation resulted in street politics as well as political radicalization on the right and the left. Tension also grew between employees and employers in most war-industrial sectors, as wage rises were only granted as temporary cost-of-living bonuses.[47] Revolutionary fighters seized on strikes— by collectively withholding their labour— as a tool to oppose the government and hinder its democratization efforts. As the war had blocked established channels of communication between workers and their organizations, locally-rooted shop floors and consumption-based collective aid movements filled this representational gap.

These urban social movements became overtly political and translocally interconnected as of 1916-1917, and also competed with established workers' organizations. They sought to re-unify the working class while reclaiming the urban space. With the establishment of local orders of government, the state's monopoly on physical force was contested, and this led to violent altercations with the representatives of a nation-state based sociopolitical order. The simultaneity of the government's war mobilization and increasingly localized collective action rippled through German society. As the state's responsibilities and regulatory involvement grew, the German people came to realize its widespread failures, particularly vis-à-vis deficiencies in the supplies of food and other essential goods; this shortage economy— *Mangelökonomie*— was shaped by the black market[48].

Industrial relations had changed dramatically over the course of the war. Trade unions, who had declared that they would not strike during wartime, found themselves trapped between the expectations of the government and those of rank-and-file union members. Both social democratic and Christian unions underwent multiple crises, ranging from losing workers' trust to massive declines in membership. Membership in the former plummeted from 1.5 million in 1914 to 900,000 in 1916.[49] While trade unions were officially recognized as bargaining partners after the 1916 Auxiliary Service Law, worker mobility to higher-paying companies was curtailed. The numbers of strikes and strikers increased exponentially— from 14,000 strikers participating in 137 strikes in 1915, to 670,000 strikers in 561 strikes in 1917.[50] Both subcommittees will have to factor in the sheer magnitude of civic and social unrest as they vie for a national mandate for their respective political visions.

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47 Weinhauer, "Labour Movements and Strikes, Social Conflict and Control, Protest and Repression (Germany)."
48 Weinhauer, "Labour Movements and Strikes, Social Conflict and Control, Protest and Repression (Germany)."
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.

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