



COMMUN IX
HISTORICAL CRISIS COMMITTEE

REVOLUTIONS OF 1848

Background Guide

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Edited by Will N. '24

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to COMMUN IX! It is an honor to have you all in our committee this year. We are Peter Dowd and Will Washko, two Commonwealth Juniors with a combined 10 years of Model UN experience. We will be your crisis heads, reacting to your decisions from behind the scenes and planning spontaneous, debate-inciting events over the course of the day. Given both of our past experiences with Model UN, we appreciate how it can greatly improve delegates' public speaking skills, writing, and help them to understand differing perspectives. We have also learned that being well prepared for their committee helps delegates get the most out of their time at COMMUN. Thus, **we require each delegate to write a position paper for their role**, in order to be eligible for an award.

Our committee is a Historical Crisis Committee (HCC), where you will all be working both proactively and reactively with (and perhaps against) each other in real time. This lively debate will be interspersed with updates from us (Crisis Heads) on how your actions have affected the outside world. There will also be occasional events planned by us to change the state of debate and see how delegates react.

This Committee Begins on **May 20, 1848**. Any and all events prior to this time are considered canon and did occur. Any and all events after are solely a matter of your actions in committee. You are encouraged to read about historical events after the aforementioned point, but you may not refer to them in position papers or in debate. Finally, we hope you pass many crisis notes, and, more importantly, enjoy this committee. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, we entreat you to contact us.

Sincerely,

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INTRODUCTION TO THE CRISIS

Delegates, May 1848 is upon you all. The thousand-year old monarchy of France has been ousted. In Frankfurt, a revolutionary group has declared themselves a Parliament for Germany. There are routine firefights between "Italian" nationalists in Milan and Austrian soldiers. In the wake of these changes, how will you act? The old institutions of Europe stand at the precipice of destruction. Your goals will be to try and mold this new continent for your benefit and to your ideals. Your actions will decide who will prevail in the end, and the paths that

will lead them there. Will the rising boogeymen of nationalism and socialism prevail over monarchy? And what of the liberals' want for constitutional democracy and the working classes' calls for reform? Only one thing is for certain, the "Springtime of Nations" is upon you—Will it also be your fall?

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS

Though quite simplified, these definitions should provide a basic understanding of key terms you may encounter throughout this background guide and in your research.

- **Absolutism**: *A monarchy with complete control over all aspects of the state.*
- **Liberalism**: *An often elite political movement, which viewed people as inherently free and equal. This meant that liberals supported constitutions and checks on monarchs' powers (though they did not always support full democracy). They argued for an unregulated capitalist economy.*
- **Monarchism/Conservatism**: *A movement seeking to preserve the old political order in Europe, with countries governed by absolute rulers, who obtain their right to rule not from their subjects (as in liberalism) but from God.*
- **Nationalism**: *A political movement that sees the nation as the chief identity of the individual (above class or allegiance to a monarch, for example). Nation here does not refer to a country, but to a group of people, united by a shared history, culture, and language. The Hungarian Empire was a country, but contained multiple nations. Conversely, the German Confederation contained many countries, but most of the population was arguably a single nationality: German. Nationalists believe that national and country borders should align. So each country should be a nation-state, containing people of only a specific nationality.*
- **Republic**: *A system of government, in which the head of state is appointed by a constitution instead of inheriting the title.*
- **Socialism**: *A popular (as opposed to elite) political movement, advocating for worker control of industry and the economy. Socialism was supposed to be an international movement, transcending political and ethnic borders.*

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This committee takes place during the Revolutions of 1848, a series of rebellions which rocked Europe in the Mid-19th century. However, it is important to note that delegates are not forced to follow real life events, so long as their individual actions make sense in the context of their assigned roles and the circumstances of the committee.

In the half-century following the French Revolution, Europe had never felt more different. With the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the poor were working longer hours in worse conditions than ever before, and were getting paid even less. Combine that

with the crop failures and famines that swept Europe in the early 1840s, and the seeds of revolution were sown. This committee will focus on four regions: France, Italy, the German Confederation, and the Austrian Empire.



(Map of Europe in 1848-49 with Borders and sites of revolt marked: from Alexander Altenhof, *Wikimedia Commons* under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license)

SITUATION IN FRANCE

By this point, the French are no strangers to revolution. In 1789, the original revolution that led to the removal of the Ancien Régime—the absolute monarchy that had led France for nearly a millennium—and the institution of a series of dictatorships and corrupt republics. Inspired by years of famine, overtaxation, poverty, and increasingly lavish livings of the monarchy, Parisians stormed the Bastille on July 14, 1789, irreparably changing Europe. Fearing the same fate may happen across the continent, most major European powers invaded France, leading to close to 25 years of constant war with the new France. By 1799, a Corsican General, Napoleon Bonaparte had ascended to become First Consul of France (read: dictator), and after further success he had himself crowned Emperor. This conquest was eventually stopped, and, in 1815, he was defeated, and the brother of the late French king was restored to the throne. Recognizing the fall of the old order of Europe, the powers that were established in the current

(as of 1848) “Concert of Europe,” the balance of powers that worked to ensure no Napoleon ever rose again.

The revolutions began in France, where due to numerous poor decisions on the part of the monarchy, the country was dealing with food scarcity and an economic crisis. Although political gatherings were restricted under the monarchy, revolutionaries found loopholes: hosting feasts and banquets to fundraise for political action. The French Government, upon discovering the banquets, attempted twice to ban these political banquets, first on January 14, 1848, which proved ineffective. The second attempt, put into law on February 21, 1848, had a bit more weight behind it, and was specifically targeted towards a banquet planned for the next day. Furious mobs took to the streets on February 22, protesting the two main figures they held responsible for the bans: King Louis Phillippe, and François Guizot, the Prime Minister of France. When the National Guard was sent by the Crown the next day, they joined the protestors, and Guizot resigned on the 23rd of February.

For many Republicans (that is, people who wanted France to become a Republic), this was not the end, but only the beginning. That very same evening, a mob formed outside the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, when a stray shot rang out, the soldiers opened fire, resulting in the deaths of fifty people. Under increasing pressure from revolutionaries, on February 24th, 1848, King Louis Philippe abdicated, declaring his nine year old grandson to be his successor. The revolutionaries, dissatisfied with the continued existence of the monarchy, captured the would-be king and his family. On February 24th, the leadership of the provisional government was announced, and on the 25th, the 2nd French Republic was formed.

SITUATION IN ITALY

In 1815, the great powers of Europe met at the Congress of Vienna to restore peace and decorum to Europe in the wake of the Napoleonic Wars. At the conference, northern Italy was placed under the Austrian yoke. Ruling directly in Lombardia (the region containing Milan) and Venice, Austria had more direct control over the Italian peninsula than ever. In the Grand Duchies of Tuscany and the Duchy of Modena, members of the Habsburg dynasty ruled, while a Habsburg ruled through his wife, the queen, in Parma. Much like in France and Germany, there was a growing sense of nationalism or “Italianism” in Italy, which called for the unification of Italy and a freedom from the foreign rule that had plagued the region for centuries.

The only place in Italy free from foreign influence and rule was the Kingdom of Sardinia-Piedmont, an absolute monarchy bordering Austria to the East and France to the West. The current King, Charles Albert di Savoie, is seen as an expansionist and anti-Austrian, and has worked to incite a revolt in Lombardia, while also dealing with the anti-absolutist sentiment of the times in Europe. In Naples and Milan, the insurrectionary general Giuseppe Garibaldi has taken command of a number of troops. After an exile from Italy, he took his legion back to unify Italy and push out the Austrians.

SITUATION IN THE GERMAN CONFEDERATION

Germany was, for most of its history, not a single state, but made up of many smaller states, each with distinct cultural identities. The Congress of Vienna, in 1815, continued this tradition, creating a loose collection of states with no centralized power called the German Confederation. As a result, each state was almost an independent country. However, the Revolutions of 1848 in Germany emphasized the nationalist ideal of pan-Germanism, where all of Germany would be united as a single nation with a centralized government. Revolutions began in individual states, like Baden and Bavaria, and individual rulers quickly bowed to the pressure, and began to institute reforms on a local level. In spring 1848, several German states demanded the creation of a bill of rights, which would guarantee suffrage and the freedom of press—standard demands across Germany and Europe as a whole. The rulers of the other states which had not experienced revolutions were initially unwilling to consider the demand. However, after the removal of Klemens von Metternich, the conservative head of government in Austria, they agreed to consider the demands. A German National Assembly was formed in May 1848 in Frankfurt to help give rights to the people. Now like the question of suffrage, there is a further question of whether or not to unify. To the north, the ethnically German region of Schleswig-Holstein is under the control of the Danes, and to the South, the question of if Austria should join into a theoretical Germany is ever present (the so-called German question). In the coffeehouses that have led to this Parliament, many liberals agree that there should be a Germany, but with whom should power rest, as Friedrich Wilhelm IV of Prussia has been thus far opposed to a unified Republican Germany?

SITUATION IN THE AUSTRIAN EMPIRE

The Hapsburg Empire of Austria is crumbling. The multinational state ruled by Germans is threatened by the rise of nationalism. Austria is left at a crossroads: integrate with the German Confederation more or stay on its own. Tensions continued to rise between ethnic and religious groups as German liberals, desperate to reform Germany's draconic laws about the freedom of speech and press, began to voice their concerns. The rise of Republicanism in France continued to embolden the revolutionaries, and when news of the Republican victory in Paris reached them, they began their plan. Violence erupted in Vienna as rioters destroyed shops, roads, and homes, demanding the removal of Prince Metternich, the conservative State Chancellor. The parliament, desperate to avoid an uprising, forced Metternich to resign. Several weak liberal governments followed, but none succeeded. Building on the success of previous uprisings, several nationalist groups in modern day Italy, Poland, Hungary threatened to secede from the Empire, a very real threat which the weak Austrian army could not handle. Chaos followed.

ROLES

Klemens von Metternich – Chancellor and Foreign Minister of Austria

Born in 1773 to a minor noble family, Metternich was well educated as a youth at elite universities in Strasbourg and Mainz. He rose to prominence through his work as a diplomat, and is regarded as one of the primary architects of Post-Napoleonic Europe. A traditional and conservative politician, he strongly opposed any and all attempts to shift the balance of power, and reacted extremely aggressively to any opposition. These reactions involved him crushing revolts through military involvement and employing a vast network of spies to seek out any dissenters. His primary goal was to keep Austria together, and when revolts came, he sought to reunite Austria under a strong central government, and ensure it returned to center stage as an international power.

Portfolio Powers:

- Unilateral control over official domestic and foreign policies of the Austrian Empire
- A personal guard of 200 soldiers
- Access to extensive espionage network

Giuseppe Garibaldi – Italian Revolutionary

Born in Nice to an Italian family, Garibaldi was strongly influenced in his youth by Italian nationalism. As a result, he became an early supporter of the idea of Italian unification, and held that stance for the rest of his life. After aligning himself with a failed uprising in the mid 1830s in Piedmont, he was exiled to South America for 14 years, coming back as a hardened military veteran with extensive knowledge of guerilla warfare. As a result of previous campaigns, Garibaldi made numerous enemies in the Italian peninsula, the foremost being Pope Pius IX, who was vehemently opposed to a unified Italy. He, being an Italian nationalist, also made enemies with several other nations, including the Kingdom of Austria.

Portfolio Powers:

- 3,000 Italian nationalist Revolutionaries in Sardinia
- Guerrilla Warfare: Ability to Sabotage Industry
- Increased ability to recruit Italian nationalist soldiers

François Guizot – Ex-Prime Minister of France

Born in France in 1787, Guizot began his long political career as a government official preventing Charles X from seizing absolute power, and worked to establish a constitutional monarchy. After the July Revolution in 1830, where Charles X was overthrown and the “citizen king” Louis-Phillipe was put on the throne, he filled several other positions in Louis-Phillipe’s government. He became Ambassador to England, the minister of education, and the Foreign minister before finally becoming Prime Minister in September 1847. He quickly grew unpopular due to his bans on political meetings, and was overthrown along with the king in the Revolutions

of 1848. Guizot believed that individual liberty had to be earned, not given, only land-owning men could vote in France, and a Revolution to gain rights for peasants was preposterous. Rights could be earned individually through hard work, not through an uprising, and Guizot strongly opposed the Revolution until the day he died.

Portfolio Powers:

- Exiled Statesman: Much of rural France still loyal to Guizot
 - Can easily recruit a militia in South of France

Jacques-Charles Dupont de l'Eure – President of the Provisional Government of France

Born in Normandy in 1767 de l'Eure began his rise to power within the judicial system of France, first as a lawyer, and then as a bureaucrat during the French Revolution. He became a member of the chamber of deputies in 1817, and served as leader of the Liberal opposition until the Revolutions of 1848. Since he was the oldest member of the provisional government, at the age of 81, he was nominated to be France's de facto head of state for a few months, until a more concrete power could be set up. He proved to be a competent and devoted administrator, who has been diligently to set up the more permanent government of France. While certainly not a monarchist, he was not quite as radical as some of his revolutionary allies; his end goal was the creation of a constitution which would function as the base of a fair and effective legal system.

Portfolio Powers:

- 150,000 National Guards
- Decentralized Leadership: Crisis Notes have a slightly lower chance of being effective
- Executive Control over the North of France
- Control of all Domestic Policy of France

Louis Napoleon Bonaparte – French National Assembly Member

Born in Paris to the ruling Bonaparte family, Napoleon Bonaparte was the nephew of the Emperor Napoleon, but wasn't likely to receive the title of Emperor of the French due to being so far down in the line of succession. However, after his uncle and cousin were overthrown and died in short succession, He found himself the head of the House of Bonaparte, though he himself had been exiled to Switzerland. After several failed attempts to take control of France by force landed him in prison, he rethought his strategy. After King Louis Phillipe was overthrown in 1848, he returned to France and ran for a position in the national assembly. He won in a later election, and after a successful campaign, was elected to the Presidency by a landslide.

Portfolio Powers:

- Head of House of Bonaparte:
 - Holds sizable political influence in French National Assembly (Can attempt to block actions of the state)
 - Popular with military and left-wing alike

King Charles Albert di Savoie – King of Sardinia-Piedmont

Born in Italy to a noble family, di Savoie was sent off to France to study, receiving a Liberal education. He initially followed the ideals of this education, but gradually became more conservative as he aged. He ascended to the throne of Sardinia in 1831 at the age of 33, and became convinced that Italy should be free of control of the Habsburgs, and should be one kingdom ruled by the Pope. To achieve this end, during the Revolutions of 1848, he was in favor of a revolution to free Italy from the Habsburgs

Portfolio Powers:

- Executive control over Sardinia-Piedmont
- 65,000 Soldiers

Franz-Josef von Hapsburg – Austrian Noble and Heir to Austrian Throne

Born in Austria to the ruling family in 1830, Franz-Josef was educated extensively for a leadership role from an early age. He learned languages, law, political science, and military tactics, and worked over 50 hours a week at a very young age to master these topics. This diligence would stay with him for the rest of his long life, and would prove useful when in 1848, at the tender age of 18, his uncle was forced to abdicate from the kingship, and he assumed power

Portfolio Powers:

- Heir to Austria
- 60,000 Professional soldiers

Joseph Radetzky – Austrian Military Commander in Italy

Born into a noble family in the modern day Czech Republic, which was at the time under the control of the Holy Roman Empire (HRE), Radetzky began his military career in the Austrian Army. He served well in the Napoleonic Wars, and won several major battles, gaining a reputation as a fair, effective, and loyal military leader. Fiercely loyal to the Habsburgs, and hated by many in Italy, Radetzky was not a politician, and remained a general until his death.

Portfolio Powers:

- Control over all Austrian soldiers stationed in Italy
 - 40,000 Professional soldiers, 40,000 Volunteers
- Increased military discipline among troops

Friedrich Wilhelm IV von Hohenzollern – King of Prussia

Born in the Kingdom of Prussia, Friedrich IV was raised in a deeply religious, Christian environment, believing everything to be the will of God. A firm believer in the idea that he had a Divine Right to rule as king, it was his belief that the country should be controlled by the Christian elite of Prussia. Despite this, he proved to be a moderate king initially, relaxing restrictions on freedom of speech and press, and released several political prisoners. Even when the Revolutions came in 1848, Friederich IV was willing to negotiate with the rebels, at least

until they became too radical for his liking. He dissolved the provisional government, but to avoid war, he agreed for a parliament to be added to the country, though with a strong monarch still in charge. Any further dissent or rebellion was met with military force.

Portfolio Powers:

- Complete control over all matters of Prussia outside of the Rhineland
- Over 200,000 Professional Soldiers

Friedrich August II von Wettin – King of Saxony

As the King of Saxony, Friedrich August II was relatively liberal. Succeeding his uncle in 1836, he ruled one of few constitutional monarchies in Germany and was far from absolutist. While he historically opposed the Frankfurt Assembly, Friedrich August II was in favor of a unification of Germany, and he was a diplomatic ally of Austria throughout his reign. In spite of his reformist tendencies, he begins the committee on the precipice of a socialist revolution in Saxony.

Portfolio Powers:

- 32,000 Professional Soldiers
- Executive control over Saxony

Pius IX – Pope

Born into a minor noble family in Eastern Italy under the name Giovanni Maria Mastai Ferretti, the future pope began his religious studies early on in life. Under his tenure, the longest in papal history, he lost control of the Papal States, which were formerly independent and led by the pope, and adopted the doctrine of papal infallibility. Papal infallibility made the Pope the ultimate authority in the Catholic Church, and on matters of faith, it was impossible for him to be wrong. He strongly opposed the unification of Italy, which would weaken his own power, and wanted the Papal State to remain independent.

Portfolio Powers:

- 6,000 Swiss Guards
- Leader of Catholicism

Heinrich von Gagern – Chairman of Frankfurt National Assembly

Born in Germany to an aristocratic family and educated in Berlin, Von Gagern began his career as a military officer in service to Germany, and fought at the Battle of Waterloo, where Napoleon was defeated. Afterwards, he tried and failed to achieve a career in politics, and went into seclusion until the Revolution of 1848. During the Revolution, he went to the provisional government and advocated for a unified kingdom of Germany.

Portfolio Powers:

- Legislative leader of the Frankfurt National Assembly (Provisional Revolutionary German Government)
- 3,000 Liberal guards

Robert Blum - Member of the Frankfurt National Assembly, Revolutionary

Born in poverty in Cologne and frustrated at his lack of opportunities, Blum began writing political texts in 1830 at the age of 23. He became a noted leader in the liberal and revolutionary circles of Germany, and was especially respected for his oratory ability. He fully embraced the Revolutions when they occurred, and declared his support for the expansion of civil rights in Germany. He criticized antisemitism, and advocated for universal suffrage in Germany. He also believed in ethnocentrism, that no one person should rule other people. His revolutionary and radical social ideals make him a very credible threat to the leadership at the start of the committee.

Portfolio Powers:

- 3,500 Revolting civilians in Austria

Carlo Cattaneo – President of the Provisional Government of Milan

Born in Milan, Cattaneo studied law in his youth, and grew into a supporter of Republicanism, as well as an Italian patriot. He became a supporter of the Revolutions, and in 1848, he and three other young leaders began an uprising against the Austrian Empire. They were met with initial success, but only he refused an armistice or peace, wanting Austria to be fully defeated, and the Revolution to continue. He also hated the Kingdom of Sardinia nearly as much as the Austrian Empire, and frequently criticized and fought with its leaders.

Portfolio Powers:

- Potential Italian Leader
- 2,900 Italian nationalists
- Executive Control over Italian Held portions of Lombardy

Alexis de Tocqueville – Member of the Chamber of Deputies of France

Born in 1805, famed sociologist and politician Alexis de Tocqueville would publish many reports over the first half of the 19th century on American and French politics. Despite his initial place as a classical liberal, Tocqueville became increasingly pro-order and safety after the revolution in 1830 in France. Serving in the National Assembly since 1839, he had ascended to prominent positions in the French government by the time of 1848 and was an authoritative figure on foreign policy, having written extensively in favor of the French conquest of Algeria.

Portfolio Powers:

- Control over French Foreign Policy

FURTHER RESOURCES

These sources may be used as a starting point for research, though delegates are encouraged to do their own research, finding information from and citing reputable sources. If

delegates have any questions about the research process, they should feel free to contact the crisis heads with their questions.

Duncan, Mike. *Revolutions Podcast*, Seasons 6 and 7.

German Bundestag, "Revolution and the National Assembly in Frankfurt."

Heimler's History, *The Revolutions of 1848, Explained.*

Jelks, Stephanie. "The Revolutions of 1848: A Wave of Anti-Monarchism Sweeps Europe."
TheCollector.

Ohio University's Encyclopedia of 1848 Revolution.