Hist/Spec

French Republic

CHAIR: TBD

GWCIA 30

December 6th

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Letter From the Chair

(to be added soon)

Introduction to Committee

Instead of the traditional resolutions found in GA-style committees, this committee will enact all actions via directives. These directives are only a few pages long (at the discretion of the chair) and include brief actionable points on what the committee intends to do. These directives will be sent to the backroom and will influence the committee's events through the discretion of the Crisis Director. This committee will NOT feature full crisis elements, delegates will not write notes, and will not have personal backrooms.

The French Revolution and the Reign of Terror

In 1792, after decades of absolute monarchism in France, the French people rose up to overthrow the Ancien Régime of King Louis XVI. Before this revolution, France floundered under its massive debt from its Wars with Britain. To resolve this, King Louis XVI raised taxes on the already struggling peasant and middle classes that made up the “Third Estate” of France. Meanwhile, the Nobility (First Estate) and Clergy (Second Estate) remained untaxed and free to continue their lives of luxury and wealth. As the price of bread skyrocketed and peasants starved, the people of France, inspired by Enlightenment ideals of the rights of life, liberty,

and freedom, adopted by the earlier American Revolution, rose up in the French Revolution.

In 1789, a mass of French peasants stormed the infamous Bastille prison, which had long been seen as a symbol of the Monarch's power. The mob violently defeated the defenders, parading the head of the Prison's governor on a pike through Paris. This event would mark the beginning of the French Revolution. Before this, members of the third estate had convened to form the National Assembly to form a constitution for the French state. Despite many in this Assembly being moderates only wishing to see a reform of the system, rather than the deposition of the King, the Assembly would choose to applaud this violence at the Bastille, paving the way for further violence. Later that year, a mob of women violently stormed the King's palace in Versailles, forcing him to relocate to Paris. The King, fearing his life and continued power would attempt (and fail) to flee to Austria to have their army invade France and put down the revolution. After this incident, he would be made a constitutional monarch, limited in his powers. However, as an Austrian army threatened to march on Paris and reimpose the King, the radical elements of the National Assembly won out and elected to execute the King by one vote. Preceding and following his execution, the moderates (known as the Girondins) and the radicals (known as the Jacobins) competed for influence in

the government. By 1793, the Jacobins, led by Maxmillian Robespeirre, would become the dominant force in the government, and begin the Reign of Terror.

Under Robespierre, a radical fervor came over the Revolution, as he began to radically transform French society. Robespierre would centralize authority in the Committee of Public Safety. As part of this transformation, all faces of opposition had to be disposed of, often through public execution via the Guillotine. Royalists, conservatives, and the clergy were the first to be targeted. Nobles and priests were executed, while their estates and Churches were plundered. However, this violent radicalism soon began to target all forms of opposition, including the voices of moderates and some Jacobins who were branded as counterrevolutionaries. Leader of the Girondins, Brissot de Warville, would be executed for "treason," while fellow Jacobin, Georges Danton, who had advocated for the execution of the King, was executed for resisting the Terror. The Terror would dismantle the court system to expedite the trials of the accused, removing juries, witnesses, attorneys, and all penalties except the death penalty. The Terror would see deaths of upwards of 45,000 people.

The Reign of Terror would only end when the Assembly, after being threatened by Robespierre in 1894, elected to have him arrested and later executed

for “counterrevolutionary” activity. The more moderate government would quickly form the Directory as the new executive body for the government; however, it was fraught with instability.

Committee Topic

The Formation of a New Order in France

The Directory is now faced with the challenge of building up France in this post-revolutionary world. Robespierre’s terror taught everyone of the dangers of radical revolutionary thought; however, few in the government wished to see the return of the Ancien Régime and its authoritarian abuse of the lower classes. The Directory must determine how to balance the ideals of the revolution while ensuring the nation never again falls into mass violence.

The Directory faces numerous constitutional questions in its government, principally, how to ensure that no single man gains the amount of power that Robespierre had. Furthermore, the government must determine whether to fulfill the 1783 Constitution promise of suffrage, including who gets to vote. Furthermore, the government must contend with the remaining royalist elements of France. While Paris was a hotbed of revolutionary fervor, the rest of the nation was more conservative and had sympathized with the King when he was executed,

while being shocked by the violence of the revolution. With many of France's most experienced military commanders and officials being of the ancient regime, the crippled government must contend with seeing their return to bring stability back to a weary France.

Threats from Foreign Powers

As the nation fell under radical revolutionary violence, the nation simultaneously faced numerous threats from the other great powers of Europe. France's traditional enemy, Britain, had declared War on France at the outset of the Revolution. While Britain's comparatively weak Army did not threaten the French homeland, the Royal Navy left France's coasts under threat and its trade routes in jeopardy. More pressingly, Austria had launched several excursions in France, but was repelled by the Republican Guard. However, the weak state of the French military, combined with the possible threats from the famed Prussian Army, presents major land-based threats to France. All these powers had promised to depose the revolutionary government and bring the monarchy back to France, whether that be Louis XVI or not. France stands alone, with only a minor ally in the Netherlands, which France had defeated and established the Batavian Republic. The survival of the revolution and the wider idea of Republics and

enlightenment thought now depends on the survival of the French Republic. The directory must address the threats from the great powers while managing its own internal stability.

Guiding Questions

Please consider the following questions as you prepare for this committee, allow the following to guide your research:

1) Who in France should have the right to vote?

2) How should France best balance revolutionary ideals and conservative stability?

3) How can France hope to survive against the many enemies it has?

4) Was the execution of King Louis XVI just? Should France remain a Republic that moderates itself into a Constitutional Republic?

5) How should France approach its new role in Europe?

Character List:

1. Napoleon Bonaparte – Commander of the Army of the Interior

A rising star in the French Army, General Bonaparte is a popular hero in the Republic after his defeat of a Royalist rebellion that threatened to overthrow the Republican government. This feat has given him command of the Army of the Interior, stationed in and around Paris. Bonaparte has established himself as a follower of the Enlightenment values of the Revolution; however, his ambition may lead him towards a more autocratic path.

2. Pauline Léon – Feminist Leader

A pioneering advocate for women's rights and equality, Léon is a champion of the early feminist movement during the revolution. She has been inspired by the work of Olympe de Gouges, and her work, the Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen, is a bold challenge to the male-dominated ideals of the Revolution. After being released from prison after the fall of Robespierre, Léon remains one of the last living voices of the feminist cause in France.

3. Jean-François Rewbell – Minister of Foreign Affairs

A steady hand in the turbulent world of revolutionary diplomacy, Rewbell now serves as a Director and oversees France's foreign affairs. With Europe still wary of the Republic, he seeks to secure France's borders through negotiation and strength. A committed republican, Rewbell prefers measured strategy over reckless ambition, but the pressures of war and diplomacy are mounting.

4. Lazare Carnot – Minister of War

Tasked with maintaining France's vast military apparatus, Carnot continues to earn respect for his organizational brilliance and tireless work ethic. A leading figure in the Revolutionary armies, he has overseen key victories and reforms that have kept France

afloat amidst foreign invasion and internal unrest during the early revolution. While he manages the grand strategy of the French military, he must contend with the growing personal loyalty of soldiers to their commanders, rather than the nation.

5. Joseph Fouché – Minister of Internal Affairs

Cunning and deeply pragmatic, Fouché has reemerged as a vital player in managing France's internal stability. Known for his ruthless efficiency during the height of the Revolution, he now works behind the scenes to suppress royalist agitation and unrest. While his methods have been seen as ruthless by some, his actions have proven effective in maintaining a semblance of order.

6. Jean-Baptiste Treilhard – Legal Reformer

A respected jurist and moderate republican, Treilhard is at the forefront of efforts to rebuild France's legal system after years of revolutionary violence. His focus is on restoring legal order and rational governance. With the legal system dismantled after Robespierre, Treilhard must rebuild the system from the ground up that reflect Enlightenment ideals while ensuring stability.

7. François Barthélemy – Royalist Advocate

A seasoned diplomat with deep ties to the ancient régime, Barthélemy now serves as a Director with quiet royalist sympathies. He has made clear his commitment to the ideals of the revolution; however, he maintains a less radical vision for France. He remains one of the last remaining champions of the Constitutional Monarchy, and in the aftermath of the radical violence of the Terror, he has the opportunity to see this come true.

8. Boissy d'Anglas – Republican Advocate

A moderate voice in a polarized Republic, Boissy d'Anglas is a firm believer in constitutional order and the rule of law. Having stood against both Jacobin excesses and royalist reaction, he now works to preserve the Directory's legitimacy against threats

from both extremes. His calm demeanor masks a fierce commitment to republican ideals and civil liberties.

9. Philippe-Antoine Merlin de Douai, Minister of Justice

As Minister of Justice, Merlin de Douai is charged with the immense task of restoring faith in France's legal institutions. A defender of Enlightenment principles, he seeks to ensure that justice serves the Republic rather than partisan vengeance. He is left with determining the fates of the remaining Royalist elements of France alongside those guilty of crimes during the Terror to ensure the survival of a stable but liberal France.

10. Dominique-Vincent Ramel-Nogaret, Minister of Finance

Faced with a war-torn economy and spiraling inflation, Ramel-Nogaret shoulders one of the most difficult posts in the Directory. As Minister of Finance, he is responsible for stabilizing France's chaotic finances while funding both the army and the government. Pragmatic and methodical, he pushes for fiscal reforms that can sustain the Republic without provoking unrest among a weary population.

11. François-Noël Babeuf, Proto-Communist Revolutionary

An uncompromising radical, Babeuf is the voice of the disenfranchised in a Republic that he believes has betrayed its promises. Denouncing the Directory as a tool of the wealthy, he calls for the abolition of private property and the establishment of communal ownership. Operating underground, Babeuf stirs unrest among the poor and disillusioned, seeing insurrection not as a danger, but as a duty.

12. Laurent Jean François Truguet, Minister of the Navy

A career officer and reform-minded admiral, Truguet now oversees the French Navy at a time of strategic uncertainty. Committed to republican values and naval modernization. His primary task remains the defense of France's coasts from the stronger Royal Navy.

Truguet remains firm in his belief that discipline and liberty can coexist in service of the Republic.

13. Charles-Maurice de Talleyrand, Diplomat

Recently returned from political exile, Talleyrand is navigating his way back into the halls of power with characteristic charm and cunning. An eloquent speaker and skilled negotiator, he offers his services to the Directory as France rebuilds its foreign policy. He is one of the few remaining politicians in France whom the other great powers of Europe are willing to negotiate with, and he may be the last hope for France to end its foreign wars.

14. Nicolas-Louis François de Neufchâteau, Minister of the Interior

A poet, scholar, and statesman, Neufchâteau brings intellectual rigor to the post of Minister of the Interior. He is tasked with managing the Republic's internal administration—overseeing everything from public works to policing. Known for his efficiency and moderate tone, he works to restore civic life after years of upheaval, seeking to reconcile revolutionary ideals with practical governance.

15. Pieter Paulus, Chairman of the Batavian Republic

A leading figure in the Dutch Patriot movement, Pieter Paulus has emerged as a key architect of the newly established Batavian Republic, modeled closely on the French example. A staunch advocate of republicanism and popular sovereignty, he works to dismantle the old oligarchic order and promote democratic reforms. Though admired for his intellect and integrity, his vision of a virtuous republic is tested by factionalism and foreign influence.

Works Cited

(To be added)