Historical Committee:
French Revolution
Chair: John Vernaglia ’18
Rapporteur: Peter Connolly ’19
Dear Delegates,

Welcome to CAMUN 2017! We are so honored to have you with us today, diving into one of the bloodiest events in world history. My name is John Vernaglia and I’ll be chairing the committee; your rapporteur will be Peter Connolly. We have both passionately pursued Model UN since our freshman years and are so excited to bring you this committee today.

After spending so much time in school working on American history we thought taking a trip to France would make spring more enjoyable. You will be starting your committee in what is commonly considered “the second part phase” or “republic phase” of the French revolution. Some of our goals for this committee are to depict the chaos of the revolution and the scramble for power that ensued. That being said, reenacting the French Revolution can be done in a research paper, so we encourage you to use your abilities to further the position of your respective characters and alter the course of history. In the words of French Revolutionary Georges Jacques Danton, “we must dare, and dare again, and go on daring.” Keep this quote in mind as you begin the research process. If you have any questions or would like to submit a position paper, you can contact us at: john.vernaglia@concordacademy.org or peter.connolly@concordacademy.org

Sincerely,

John Vernaglia ‘18, Chair
Peter Connolly ‘19, Rapporteur
French Revolution
1 January, 1793

In the Ancient Regime, France had an absolutist monarchy in which most individuals had no rights. France was split into a very hierarchical system of three-classes called estates: the clergy, the nobles, and the largest estate, the Third Estate. In the absolutist monarchy, only the nobles and clergy had rights, while the majority of the population had no voice in the government. The nobles enjoyed many privileges, such as hunting where they pleased, while also paying fewer taxes. All the while, many members of the Third Estate fought on the streets for food within an impoverished France. This created an environment in which all rights rested on the individual’s status at birth.

In the midst of all of this inequality, the Enlightenment began to thrive; thinkers such as John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau rose to prominence. In the famous second *Treatise of Government*, Locke stated that, “government has no other end but the preservation of property.”¹ By demonstrating how it was the job of government to protect the people, Locke fought against the common government structure of absolutism. He also began to show people that government should work for them, rather than people simply serving the state. Then Rousseau came to prominence as a philosopher, and published his most famous work, *The Social Contract*, in which he advocated for the rule of the majority. As Rousseau stated, “law is an expression of the general will.”² This strong opposition to monarchy, coming from a French citizen, showed the people of France that not only could they oppose the monarchy without fear, but that they deserved more rights than they had been given. The writing of the Enlightenment forced the people of France to begin to question the monarchy and Estate system.

Combined with this internal source of free thinking, in the aftermath of the American revolution, ideals of freedom and liberty swept through Europe and especially through France. After helping to free the colonies from a king, why couldn’t the French do the same in their own country? France had played a large part in securing victory for the colonies, yet they were now plunged into debt. That led to the second major problem facing the King: not only were the people of France troubled intellectually, but fiscally as well. King Louis XVI decided to raise taxes in order to pay off the debt, only enraging the members of the Third Estate more. Then at the worst possible moment a brutal winter hit France. The price of food skyrocketed, and many members of the Third Estate were starved on the streets. It was becoming clearer that the King did not have a good understanding of the majority of the people in his country and the economic problems facing France.

Troubled by the financial crisis in his country, King Louis XVI called the Estates General to meet for the first time in over 150 years. The Estates General was comprised of members from

each of the three Estates, however it was almost never called to meet and was essentially the
rouse of equality presented by the First and Second Estates in order to please their people.
However, by gathering the Estates General to meet, the king reaffirmed many people’s belief that
the king no longer had control of the country. Following weeks of tough debate, the Third Estate
found themselves locked out of the meeting room, and members of the Estates General from
each of the Estates confirmed the king’s loss of control by declaring themselves the National
Assembly on a small tennis court in June, 1789.

In response to this treason, the king fired Jacques Necker, the only member of the king’s
advisors who was seen as representing the Third Estate. Then on July 14th, 1789, hundreds of
furious Parisians attacked the Bastille, a fortress in Paris stocked with weapons and ammunition,
which began the bloody revolution. Blasting through the guards, they killed the overseer of the
fortress, and paraded his head through the streets of Paris. This violence occurred while the
National Assembly stood by, showing the angry people of France that violence was a legitimate
method of getting their voices heard. After of the success of the storming of the Bastille, many
nobles renounced their feudal rights, creating true equality within France.

Within a month, the absolutist monarchy was replaced by the National Assembly. Using
Enlightenment ideals, the National Assembly created The Declaration of the Rights of Man and
Citizens meant to grant equality and liberty to the people of France. The first clause of the
declarations showed commitment towards this goal: “Men are born and remain free and equal in
rights.” This clause shot down the hierarchical and inherently unequal system of government,
monarchy, by granting each French citizen inalienable rights from birth. It seemed as though a
new age of equality would mark the beginning of a new France.

The revolution continued to gather steam through 1791. In October of 1789, the
revolutionaries secured a crucial victory when they stormed the king’s palace at Versailles, and
forced him to move to Paris. The palace which had stood for years as a symbol of inequality
within France was now as symbolic as their king, as now all the power rested with the assembly.
Then in 1790, the National Assembly targeted the Clergy with the Civil Constitution of the
Clergy, which required the Clergy to swear an oath to the revolution. This was the first point
where people began to question the revolution as many Clergy opposed this new order. Then in
July of 1791, the King was caught fleeing France for Austria, which was an absolutist monarchy
and one of France’s most powerful rivals. France quickly declared war on both Prussia and
Austria. To the rest of the European monarchies, the events unfolding in France were a sign of
the risks inherent in majority rule, and they worked hard to defeat this differing ideology. The act
of cowardice by the French king showed them that he could no longer be trusted, nor did he have
the country's best interests at heart.

Despite the National Assembly’s effort to create equality and liberty for the people, when
the French people finally got their election two years later, the revolutionaries, of which there

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3 Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789).
were many, elected the radical National Convention. The shift of power from the Girondins, the more moderate party, to the Jacobin party, the extremely radical party, allowed the revolution to flourish. The National convention, under the command of the Jacobin party, quickly formed the Committee of Public Safety under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre. The Committee took power, killing their political rivals in order to maintain control. This began the time period known as the Terror where over 40,000 people were sentenced to death and many more died in battle. Political alliances were tenuous and no one was safe from the Committee. Realizing the king was too powerful to be left alive, they tried him and sentenced him to death. We pick up today when the National Convention and the Committee of Public Safety is beginning to take power.

Committee Structure:
The country is in uproar and it is up to you, the National Convention, and other important leaders of French society, to help fix your chaotic country and fend off the many enemies on your borders. The Convention is under the control of the Jacobin party and their radical liberal policies are being implemented across the country. However, this legislature is only held up by one document, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, and this document has many legal loopholes for ambitious delegates like yourselves to exploit. With a country bordering on anarchy, the government is vulnerable to a forceful takeover. As mentioned in the history above, the Committee of Public Safety took complete control due to “threats to national security” and were able to circumvent the legal loopholes presented by the Declaration of the Rights of Man. Throughout committee, look for these exploits and find ways to utilize military powers.

Parliamentary Roles and Powers
Most delegates will be legislators in the National Convention or the ruling body of the French federal government. The National Convention will be made up of 12 legislative members that are each equipped with their own portfolio powers. All legislation produced by the National Convention has to adhere to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and will not be allowed to pass if it violates a clause within that document. The National Convention will be faced with a variety of issues, and the Convention has the power to spend money, raise taxes and run the federal government. The Convention can produce bills and each bill only needs a simple majority from the legislators to pass.

Although the day-to-day commands of the French Revolutionary Army are carried out by the generals, the National Convention has the power to command the military to respond to national crises. Therefore, Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, a general in the French Revolutionary Army, has appointed a Military Representative to the National Convention so that it does not become too radical. He has given this Military Representative several parliamentary powers as well as a small regiment to back up those powers. Military orders issued to the French Revolutionary Army from the National Convention only need a simple majority of legislators to pass, however
if the military representative disapproves, the Convention will need a three-fourths majority to overrule the military representative’s decision. Furthermore, if the military representative feels the Convention is under threat from Parisian militants, he/she can bar the doors to protect a crucial vote or decision.

Journalists have a unique power over the Parisian militants because their critical and scathing writing can lead to a takeover of the National Convention. Any legislators who want to stage a forceful takeover of the National Convention will need two fellow legislators and a journalist to do so. A forceful takeover entails a Parisian militant takeover and implementing radical Jacobin policies. Journalists can release a press release at any time, scathing the Convention if they disagree and supporting it if they do agree. These press releases will help determine the Conventions popularity with the people of France.

The king has a unique power that has granted him a seat on the National Convention. He holds a lot of power when it comes to negotiating with foreign governments, since many other European countries are absolutist monarchies. Therefore, many countries will only negotiate with him since they find the new revolutionary and democratic government dangerous. Furthermore, the Catholic Church also does not approve of this new radical government but has a lot of faith in the king and the old monarchy. Although he is hated by many of his people, King Louis XVI has a lot of power with foreign entities.

Questions to Consider:

1. Depending on your role in this committee, how would you respond to turmoil both outside and inside of France? Do you believe peaceful or forceful solutions will benefit France more?
2. How invested are you in the success of the new French government? Does you want power for yourself to try to single-handedly control France, or do you want to ensure the long term success of France through collective rule and amending the current political system?
3. As you consider using the military, how equipped are the French armies to handle international and internal threats?
4. How will you work to keep public morale high? Does you care more about your own image or the success of the French government?
5. How do you feel about the National Convention? Do you see it as a step forward for France, or would you rather restore the monarchy?
6. As a power hungry delegate, could you construct and implement a dictatorship or panel that supports your ideals while not violating the Declaration of the Rights of Man and maintains national security?
Legislators:

Maximilien Robespierre
Right now you are one of the most powerful people in France. Rising up from humble beginnings, you have gained a loyal group of followers who are angry and hungry for change. Your portfolio powers include power over the Parisian militants, giving you control over the city of Paris and the Convention. You only need yourself and one other legislator as well as the journalist to instigate a hostile takeover.

Emmanuel Sieyès
A fierce advocate for reform, you helped to begin the revolution with your scathing review of the Estate system. Although you were a member of the clergy, and thus enjoy all the rights of being in the First Estate, you still were critical of the political system. Now with the coming execution of the king you have become more apprehensive about politics, yet a position of power in the new government would be a tantalizing goal. Your portfolio powers include contact with the Catholic church, allowing you to hold one-on-one negotiations with Catholic nations without any consent from the Convention.

Marquis De Lafayette
A national hero from your time in the American revolution, your opinion is vital to the people of France. When the revolution broke out you tried to protect the king, yet your efforts were in vain, and when he was captured you fled to Austria. You come here today hoping to restore the monarchy and dislodge Robespierre's power. Your portfolio powers include contact with the Catholic church, allowing you to hold one-on-one negotiations with Catholic nations without any consent from the Convention.

Georges Danton
Founder of the Cordeliers club, you started the revolution as an advocate for change. You are past the height of your power after you played a major role in the destruction of the monarchy. Now with Robespierre seizing power for himself, your views on the Terror are becoming more nuanced, as justifying the killing becomes harder as the death toll rises. Your portfolio powers include the ability to veto a press release if you feel it will instigate too much unrest in the city. The journalist will need the support of three legislators to overrule you.

Louis Antoine de Saint-Just
You’re a member of the National Convention and Robespierre’s right hand man. You have used the revolution to grab power for yourself as the rising death toll fuels your ambition. Now you are in one of the most enviable positions in France, however as is the case with anyone in power
during the revolution, you must always keep an eye over your shoulder. You have the same powers as the rest of the committee, yet should something happen to Robespierre, you would be the next in command.

**Edmund Burke**
Although you lived in England, you are one of the most prominent writers of the time. After the outbreak of the revolution you criticized the people of France, not trusting in their ability to self-rule. A father of conservatism, and an advocate for slow organic change and returning to an earlier time period, you will be successful if you work with the king to try to return to the Monarchy. As a scholar, you portfolio powers include the ability to delay any execution of the royal family and demand a panel of three judges to determine guilt and implement a punishment. You can appoint one of the judges as well.

**Thomas Paine**
Like Lafayette, you played a big role in the American revolution, and now have your sights set on catalyzing change in France. Your main rival is Burke who argues to go back to the monarchy while you remain in favor of the revolution. Because of the success in America you are regarded as a hero, and you aim to mold the republic into a democracy like its counterpart across the Atlantic.

**Jacques Necker**
The finance minister for the king, you were appointed as a champion of the Third Estate. Your firing was a critical mistake by the king in pushing the people to revolt. With the people behind you, your voice will be seen as one of authority and power as you advocate for the rights of the commoners of France. Your portfolio powers allow you to raise and lower taxes. The Convention will need a three-fourths majority to veto your tax reforms and/or propose new ones.

**Jacques-Pierre Brissot**
A member of the moderate Girondin political party, you believe in the king and the constitutional monarchy rather than the republic. You are eager to advance France’s place as a world power in Europe, and your seat on the National Convention allows you to have a say in many political decisions in France. Like your colleagues on the Convention, the line between trader and hero is blurred and you want to ensure that the people of France continue to see you as the latter.

**Charles De Calonne**
A chief Financial advisor for the king, you contributed to the debt which crippled the Kingdom before the beginning of the revolution and you were eventually fired in place of Necker. An advocate of counter-revolutionary measures, you want to restore the monarchy to its original glory as you despise the Republic.
Charlotte Corday
A believer in the revolution and advocate for a democracy, you were pleased with the results of the beginning of the revolution; however as time waned on, you began to see yourself as more of a moderate and member of the Girondin party. In July of 1793 you would kill Marret for his part in the terror but it is six months before that, and you will look for a more diplomatic solution to prevent the bloodshed.

Lazare Carnot
As the son of a lawyer you have grown up surrounded by the law. In 1787 you stood out enough to be elected as a member of the Arras Academy, which was headed up by Robespierre. As a French soldier and revolutionary, you have seen your power grow as the revolution progressed. Then after some battlefield heroics you were appointed to the Committee of Public safety, a spot you hold today.

Military Representative:

Napoleon
Someday you will become one of the most powerful men in European history, however today is not that time. Following your graduation from the top military school in France, and a string of successful victories, you are now a high ranking captain in the French Army. Jean-Baptiste Jourdan, one of the lead Generals of the French Revolutionary Army, has appointed you as a military representative to the National Convention in order to educate the National Convention on the tough battles France faces, economically and militarily. Make sure to press your goals of a less radical government to the Convention in hopes of appeasing angry foreign governments.

Journalist:

Jean Paul Marret
A journalist whose ambition was satisfied with blood, your newspaper is quickly becoming one of the most influential publications in all of France. A hardcore Jacobin, your thirst for execution of royalists and stirring the pot of the Terror are daily occurences for you. Success is measured in death tolls and the power of the revolution. If you feel your radical views aren’t being represented in the Convention, you can issue a press release summarizing your support and disapproval of the Convention’s actions, and it will be released as an article read by a large population of Paris. Furthermore, you can work in conjunction with other legislators to incite violent reactions to the Convention.

The Monarchy:
King Louis XVI
Your power was severely damaged in the beginning of the Revolution. Since being forced to move from Versailles to Paris you have seen your kingdom turn into a constitutional monarchy, and now a republic. You have been sentenced to death after evidence revealed that you communicated with other countries in order to stop the revolution, and now you stand in prison awaiting your death by guillotine. You should spend your time working with more conservative legislators in order to save your life and keep your power. Your portfolio powers include the ability to negotiate with any European nation in a one-on-one negotiation, and you can bring any legislator of your choice if you want.

Resources


Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen. 1789.


