

THE IMPERIAL COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

(The Cabinet of Tsar Nicholas II)

A Crisis Committee

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Agenda

Addressing the mounting revolutionary unrest of February 1917, with special emphasis on strengthening the Tsar's government and implementing reforms to suppress sedition in all parts of the country.

Chair: Mr. Waleed Ahmar

Vice Chair: Mr. Garv Kapoor

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Esteemed Delegates,

It is with great pride and no small measure of anticipation that we, the Executive Board, welcome you to the Imperial Council of Ministers, the Cabinet of His Imperial Majesty Tsar Nicholas II. You have been entrusted with one of the most difficult and consequential portfolios in the history of diplomacy: to stand at the side of the Tsar in the final, fragile weeks before the storm of February 1917, and to decide, through your words and your actions, whether the House of Romanov endures or falls.

This committee will not be an easy one. You will be asked to inhabit the mind of a minister, a general, or a court official who does not know, as you do, how history eventually unfolded. You will have to weigh loyalty to the Crown against the survival of the Empire, the temptation of reform against the fear of appearing weak, and the noise of the streets of Petrograd against the silence of a Tsar who is, more often than not, far away at military headquarters in Mogilev. Every decision you take, and every decision you fail to take, will move the needle of history.

As your Executive Board, we have worked to build a background guide that is thorough, balanced, and faithful to the historical record, while leaving enough open ground for you to argue, negotiate, and act as the crisis unfolds. We urge you not to treat this document as the final word on the subject, but as a foundation upon which you must build through your own independent research.

We expect nothing less than complete dedication from each of you: read deeply into your characters, understand the ideological currents of your time, and come

prepared to defend, question, or reform the autocracy as your portfolio demands. We also expect civility, maturity, and respect for the historical gravity of this agenda, which concerns real people, real suffering, and a real collapse of an empire that affected millions of lives.

Should you have any questions regarding the agenda, procedure, or your portfolio, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. We look forward to a session marked by sharp debate, bold directives, and a genuine spirit of inquiry into one of the most pivotal moments of the twentieth century.

We wish you the very best of preparation, and we shall see you in committee.

Yours sincerely,

Mr. Waleed Ahmar

Chairperson

Mr. Garv Kapoor

Vice Chairperson

WHAT IS MODEL UNITED NATIONS?

Model United Nations, commonly abbreviated as MUN, is an academic simulation in which students take on the roles of delegates representing countries, organisations, or, in specialised formats, individual historical or fictional figures. Delegates research their assigned position, understand the policies and interests attached to it, and then debate a designated agenda within the framework of a simulated committee, following an agreed set of procedural rules.

The exercise traces its intellectual roots to the Model League of Nations simulations held in universities in the early twentieth century, and it grew, after the founding of the United Nations in 1945, into the global educational movement it is today. Conferences are now held at school, university, and international levels, ranging from small single day conferences to large gatherings that draw thousands of delegates from across the world.

The purpose of MUN extends well beyond the simple recreation of diplomatic meetings. It is designed to build public speaking ability, research discipline, negotiation skill, and an understanding of international relations, history, and governance. Delegates learn to argue positions that may not be their own personal views, to build coalitions with those who share their interests, and to draft written outcomes that reflect a collective, negotiated position rather than a single voice.

A typical MUN committee is guided by an Executive Board, usually consisting of a Chairperson, a Vice Chairperson, and sometimes additional Rapporteurs or Directors, who moderate debate, enforce the rules of procedure, and evaluate the performance of delegates. Debate usually proceeds through formal speeches,

moderated and unmoderated caucuses, and culminates in a written document, most commonly a resolution, though in crisis committees the outcome is far more fluid, as this guide will explain below.

WHAT IS A CRISIS COMMITTEE?

A Crisis Committee is a distinct and faster paced format of Model United Nations, designed to simulate a specific, high stakes moment in time rather than an ongoing, slow moving policy debate. Where a General Assembly style committee might discuss a broad theme over the course of many years, a crisis committee is almost always anchored to a narrow window of days or weeks, and it treats that window as a living, breathing situation that can change from session to session, sometimes even minute to minute.

Delegates in a crisis committee typically represent individuals rather than states, each with a specific portfolio, a specific set of powers, and a specific set of personal interests that may or may not align with the stated goals of the body they belong to. This committee, the Imperial Council of Ministers, is a clear example: you are not representing a country in the abstract, you are representing a named minister, general, or courtier of the Russian Empire in the winter of 1917, complete with that person's own ambitions, fears, and access to resources.

How a Crisis Committee Differs from a Regular Committee

- Individual portfolios: each delegate holds a unique position of power, such as a ministry, a military command, or access to the Tsar himself, rather than a single vote among equals.
- Crisis updates: the Executive Board and the Crisis Backroom will periodically introduce new developments, sometimes as a direct

consequence of the committee's own actions, sometimes as independent events, that the committee must respond to in real time.

- Directives instead of resolutions: rather than negotiating a single long resolution, delegates draft shorter, faster, and more action oriented directives, which may be personal, joint, or committee wide.
- Portfolio powers: delegates may use the specific authority of their character, such as command over troops, control of the secret police, or influence over the press, to act independently of the committee floor.
- Front room and back room: the 'front room' is the formal committee session where speeches and directives happen in the open, while the 'back room' is the Crisis team that privately receives notes, decides the outcome of covert actions, and issues updates that shape the story.
- Pace and unpredictability: crisis committees move quickly, reward initiative and creativity, and rarely follow the exact script of real history once delegates begin to alter events through their choices.

It is important for delegates to understand that although this committee is set against a real historical backdrop, it is not a scripted play. The Council of Ministers, as history records it, ultimately failed to prevent the collapse of the monarchy. Whether that outcome repeats itself in this committee room depends entirely on the choices you make, the alliances you build, and the speed and creativity with which you respond to the crisis updates placed before you.

UNDERSTANDING DIRECTIVES

A directive is the primary written tool through which a crisis committee takes action. Unlike a resolution in a conventional committee, which tends to be a long, carefully worded document adopted at the very end of a debate, a directive can be short, urgent, and adopted at almost any point once the Executive Board calls for a vote. It is best understood as the mechanism by which the words spoken on the floor are converted into concrete action within the simulated world.

Types of Directives

- Personal directives: written and enacted by a single delegate using the specific powers of their portfolio, without needing the approval of the whole committee, though the Executive Board reserves the right to determine whether such an action is realistic given the character's authority.
- Joint personal directives: similar to personal directives, but co-signed and jointly enacted by two or more delegates who wish to combine their individual powers toward a shared covert or overt goal.
- Committee directives: broader actions that require the support and, usually, the formal vote of the committee as a whole, representing a collective decision of the Cabinet, such as an official proclamation, a change in policy, or the mobilisation of state resources.

Directives are typically supported by a mix of public reasoning, delivered through speeches on the floor, and private notes sent to the Crisis Backroom, explaining precisely how the character intends to use their portfolio powers and

what resources they intend to draw upon. The Executive Board and Backroom then determine the realistic outcome of that action and communicate it back to the committee through a crisis update, which may be read aloud, distributed as a note, or announced as breaking news within the simulation.

While this guide will not prescribe a rigid format for directives, since that will be explained separately in your rules of procedure, delegates should understand that the strength of a directive lies in its plausibility, its clarity of intent, and its grounding in the actual powers available to the character proposing it. A directive that ignores the realistic limits of a minister's authority, or the practical constraints of 1917 Russia, such as the state of the railways or the loyalty of the garrison, is unlikely to be treated as successful by the Backroom.

MAKING A SPEECH IN A CRISIS COMMITTEE

Speechmaking in a crisis committee shares its foundations with speechmaking in any Model United Nations committee, but it carries a sharper, more theatrical edge, since delegates are expected to speak in character at nearly all times. A speech in this committee should sound less like a policy briefing and more like the private counsel of a nervous, ambitious, or fiercely loyal servant of the Crown addressing his fellow ministers in a locked room, aware that the fate of the dynasty may hinge on the next few minutes.

Before the Speech

- Research your portfolio thoroughly: their political leanings, their personal history, their relationship with the Tsar and Tsarina, and their known public statements or actions during this period.

- Understand your portfolio powers in concrete terms, so that any proposal you make on the floor is backed by an ability you genuinely possess.
- Anticipate the crisis update: think through how the arguments you plan to make will hold up if the situation changes suddenly, since crisis committees rarely stand still.

During the Speech

- Speak with conviction and in character. A reactionary minister should sound suspicious of reform, while a moderate should sound genuinely alarmed at the cost of inaction.
- Respond directly to the latest crisis update or to the arguments of the minister who spoke before you, rather than delivering a speech that could have been written before committee began.
- Use rhetorical tools such as historical precedent, appeals to loyalty or patriotism, and reasoned warnings of consequence, all of which were common in the political language of Imperial Russia.
- Avoid reading directly from a prepared script word for word. Notes are useful, but a speech that sounds alive and responsive will always outperform one that sounds rehearsed.
- Keep track of time and structure: an opening position, a central argument supported by fact or precedent, and a closing call to action or a clear request of the committee.

General Practice for Crisis Debate

- Use moderated caucuses to focus the committee's attention on a single, narrow question, such as whether to declare martial law in Petrograd or whether to grant the Duma a genuinely responsible ministry.
- Use unmoderated caucuses to physically move around the room, form alliances, co-sign joint directives, and negotiate compromises that cannot easily happen through formal speeches alone.
- Maintain your character consistently across speeches, directives, and private notes, since a sudden and unexplained change in position will weaken your credibility both in character and in the eyes of the Executive Board.
- Treat the sensitive historical content of this agenda, including violence, death, and the eventual fate of the Romanov family, with the seriousness it deserves.

THE AGENDA IN DETAIL: PETROGRAD ON THE BRINK

Setting the Scene

The committee opens in the final days of January and the early weeks of February 1917, in the closing months of a war that has already cost Russia millions of casualties and shattered the illusion of imperial invincibility. The Tsar spends much of his time away from the capital, at the military headquarters, known as the Stavka, in Mogilev, having personally assumed supreme command of the Russian army in 1915. In his absence, the day to day burden of governing

the Empire falls upon the Council of Ministers and upon the Tsarina Alexandra, whose influence over appointments has become a source of deep resentment among the political class.

In the capital, Petrograd, the situation is deteriorating by the week. Bread and fuel are scarce, the railway network is buckling under the demands of the war effort and a brutally cold winter, and long queues of exhausted, frightened civilians form outside bakeries each morning. Strikes have become common in the factories, more than a hundred thousand workers have already walked out over the preceding weeks, and the Fourth State Duma, the elected legislative assembly created after the 1905 revolution, grows louder in its criticism of the government's failure to manage the crisis.

How the Empire Arrived at This Moment

Russia in 1917 remained, on paper, an autocracy, with the Tsar holding formal authority over the government, the church, and the armed forces. The 1905 Revolution had forced the creation of the Duma, but the concessions of that year had never fully satisfied the appetite for constitutional government among liberals, nor had they addressed the deeper poverty and land hunger felt by peasants and industrial workers.

The outbreak of the First World War in 1914 was initially met with a surge of patriotic loyalty to the Crown, but by 1917 that enthusiasm had curdled into exhaustion and anger. Russian industry, heavily dependent on foreign imports, struggled to arm and supply its soldiers, while the blockade of Russia's western ports by Germany and its allies crippled the flow of goods. The railway system,

never built to handle wartime logistics at this scale, began to fail, and with it the supply of grain and fuel to the great cities.

Nicholas II's decision in 1915 to take personal command of the army tied his own reputation directly to every subsequent military setback, while removing him from close supervision of domestic administration in Petrograd. Into this vacuum stepped the Tsarina Alexandra, whose closeness to the mystic Grigori Rasputin had already scandalised the court and the public before Rasputin's assassination by a group of aristocratic conspirators in December 1916. In the years before his death, ministers were appointed and dismissed with startling frequency, a pattern critics of the court mockingly called ministerial leapfrog, undermining any sense of stability or continuity in government.

It was in this atmosphere that Prince Nikolai Golitsyn, a cautious and reportedly reluctant aristocrat with a long career as a provincial governor, was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers in late December 1916, largely at the insistence of the Tsarina. Golitsyn himself is recorded as having doubted his own suitability for the post and as having urged the Tsar to dismiss the deeply unpopular Minister of the Interior, Alexander Protopopov, whose erratic behaviour and closeness to the reactionary court faction had made him a lightning rod for criticism from the Duma and the press alike.

The Cabinet You Are About to Join

As delegates, you form the Council of Ministers under Prince Golitsyn's chairmanship, together with the senior military and administrative figures whose cooperation the Cabinet requires. Your committee is likely to include portfolios

such as the following, though your own conference's dais chart will confirm the precise list and any additional characters included for the purposes of this simulation.

- Prince Nikolai Golitsyn, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, a hesitant administrator caught between loyalty to the throne and a growing awareness of the government's fragility.
- Alexander Protopopov, Minister of the Interior, deeply distrusted by the Duma and much of educated society, a firm believer in the use of police power and repression to preserve order, and closely tied to the conservative court faction.
- Ministers responsible for finance, agriculture, transport, and war, each grappling with the practical collapse of supply chains, army logistics, and state revenue in the middle of a world war.
- Senior military figures with authority over the Petrograd garrison and wider home front security, whose troops are increasingly unreliable, poorly trained reservists rather than hardened front line soldiers.
- Court officials and advisors close to the Tsar and Tsarina, who carry influence disproportionate to their formal office, and whose private counsel may matter as much as any minister's public policy.

Standing outside your Cabinet, but ever present in the background of your deliberations, is Mikhail Rodzianko, the President of the Duma, whose repeated warnings to the Tsar about the danger of the situation have so far gone unheeded, and the wider currents of the Petrograd Soviet movement, socialist agitators, and a war weary population who no longer trust the promises of the court.

The Immediate Questions Before the Cabinet

The agenda calls upon you to strengthen the Tsar's government and to suppress sedition throughout the country, but what that actually means in practice is precisely what this committee must decide. Among the concrete questions likely to dominate your early sessions are the following.

- Should the government respond to strikes and street demonstrations with force, including the deployment of troops and police against civilians, or would such a response risk provoking the very mutiny and defection it seeks to prevent?
- Should the Fourth State Duma be prorogued or dissolved outright to silence its criticism, or would such a move remove the last channel through which moderate discontent can be absorbed peacefully?
- Is it wiser to offer limited concessions, such as a government that answers to the Duma rather than solely to the Tsar, or would any such concession be read as weakness and encourage further demands?
- How should the Cabinet address the collapsing food and fuel supply to Petrograd and Moscow, given the strained state of the railway network and the competing demands of the army at the front?
- Can the loyalty of the Petrograd garrison, made up largely of raw recruits and wounded veterans rather than seasoned soldiers, be relied upon if ordered to fire on crowds of civilians, including women and striking workers?
- What should be done about the press, about censorship, and about the political parties and unions that the Ministry of the Interior suspects of fomenting revolutionary agitation?

- Should the Cabinet urge the Tsar to return to the capital from Mogilev, or would his continued presence at the front reassure the army even as it leaves the government exposed at home?

Perspectives Within the Cabinet

This agenda is deliberately built to contain sharp internal disagreement, since the historical Council of Ministers itself was far from unified. Delegates should understand and be ready to argue several competing perspectives that existed within the real government of the time.

The Hardline or Reactionary Perspective

This view, closely associated with figures such as Protopopov, holds that any sign of weakness will be read by revolutionaries and liberal agitators alike as an invitation to escalate their demands. Its proponents argue that firm police action, censorship of the radical press, and a visible show of military force are the only reliable ways to restore order, and that the autocracy's authority depends on its willingness to act decisively rather than to negotiate with what they see as an unrepresentative and disloyal Duma.

The Moderate or Reformist Perspective

A second view, shared by some ministers and much of the Duma leadership, argues that repression alone will only deepen resentment and cannot solve the underlying economic causes of unrest, chiefly the shortage of bread and fuel and the exhaustion of a population worn down by nearly three years of war. This perspective favours limited constitutional concessions, greater cooperation with the Duma, and administrative competence over further repression, in the hope of preserving both the monarchy and social peace.

The Military and Logistical Perspective

A third, more technical perspective centres on the practical capacity of the state to enforce its will at all. Ministers concerned with transport, supply, and the reliability of the Petrograd garrison must grapple with the fact that Russia's railways are overstretched, that food is physically failing to reach the cities regardless of political will, and that the garrison itself may not obey an order to fire on the very families of the soldiers serving at the front.

The Court and Dynastic Perspective

Finally, a perspective rooted in the immediate circle of the Tsar and Tsarina focuses less on policy detail and more on the preservation of the dynasty and the personal authority of Nicholas II. This view is often suspicious of the Duma as an institution in principle, protective of the prerogatives of the Crown, and inclined to see the unrest as a temporary disturbance rather than a symptom of a deeper crisis of legitimacy.

Delegates are encouraged to recognise that these perspectives are not neat or mutually exclusive categories, and that individual historical figures held more complicated, sometimes contradictory, views. The purpose of this framework is to give you a starting point for argument, not a final answer to memorise.

FURTHER RESEARCH

The following sources are recommended starting points for your independent research. Delegates are strongly encouraged to go beyond this list, cross reference multiple sources, and pay particular attention to primary material such as diaries, telegrams, and Duma reports from the period wherever it is accessible.

~ In a crisis committee - sources are very limited - what you can do is to read a lot of papers / website - then create a rational nexus with respect to your portfolio & keep that as your standing for the whole committee.!

- Alpha History, The February Revolution:
<https://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/february-revolution/>
- Alpha History, Russian Revolution Timeline 1917:
<https://alphahistory.com/russianrevolution/russian-revolution-timeline-1917/>
- Imperial War Museums, What was the February Revolution:
<https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/what-was-the-february-revolution>
- History.com, Russian Revolution, Causes, Timeline and Bolsheviks:
<https://www.history.com/articles/russian-revolution>
- History Cooperative, Downfall of a Dynasty, The February Revolution:
<https://historycooperative.org/downfall-of-a-dynasty-the-february-revolution/>

POINTS TO PONDER

As you prepare for the committee, consider the following questions. They are intended to sharpen your thinking about your character's position and about the choices the Cabinet as a whole will face, not to be answered in a single sitting.

- Could timely and genuine concessions to the Duma have preserved the monarchy, or had trust already broken down beyond repair by early 1917?
- How much real power does your character hold once the Tsar is absent from the capital, and how far are you willing to act without his direct approval?

- What does loyalty to the Crown actually require of you if you believe the Crown's own policies are accelerating its downfall?
- How should the Cabinet weigh the immediate demands of the war effort against the domestic need for bread, fuel, and order in the capital?
- Can the government rely on the army to enforce its will against its own people, and what happens to the state's authority if that reliance proves misplaced?
- What role should censorship, propaganda, and control of information play in a government trying to project strength while privately aware of its own fragility?
- How do personal rivalries and the fear of losing office among ministers shape the Cabinet's ability to act with any unity at all?

DOS AND DON'TS

Do

- Research your character's real historical background, ideology, and known relationships in depth before the committee begins.
- Stay in character consistently, in your speeches, your directives, and your private notes to the Backroom.
- Respond actively to crisis updates, since this committee is designed to evolve based on your collective decisions.
- Use portfolio powers realistically, grounding every directive in an authority your character actually possesses.
- Collaborate, negotiate, and build alliances with fellow ministers, even those whose views differ sharply from your own.

- Treat the historical violence and human suffering underlying this agenda with maturity and seriousness.
- Ask the Executive Board for clarification whenever you are uncertain about procedure, your portfolio, or the plausibility of an action.

Don't

- Do not break character without genuine cause, or use out of character remarks to undermine the seriousness of debate.
- Do not propose actions that ignore the basic realities of 1917 Russia, such as instant modern technology, unlimited troops, or resources your character does not control.
- Do not plagiarise directly from sources without understanding and rephrasing the material in your own words.
- Do not personally attack fellow delegates outside of the historical, in character rivalries the agenda itself invites.
- Do not treat the eventual fate of the Romanov family or the victims of the unrest as a subject for humour or carelessness.
- Do not assume the real historical outcome is fixed. This is a crisis committee, and your decisions may lead history down an entirely different path.

CLOSING NOTE

The Executive Board looks forward to watching this Cabinet navigate one of the most consequential winters in modern history. Petrograd is cold, the bread queues grow longer by the day, and the loyalty of the garrison is far from certain. Whether the House of Romanov survives this crisis, whether reform comes in

time, or whether the streets of the capital overwhelm the government altogether, now rests in your hands.

We look forward to seeing you in committee.

Happy Researching!!