

# Frank, Ludwig

By [Sarah Panter](#)

Frank, *Ludwig*

German politician

Born 23 May 1874 in Nonnenweier, Germany

Died 03 September 1914 in Nossoncourt, France

## Summary

Ludwig Frank was a member of the Reichstag for the Social Democratic Party. When Germany entered the war, he strongly supported voting for war loans and volunteered for war service at the age of forty. He was killed in combat shortly afterwards in France.

## Table of contents

[1 A Social Democrat from Southern Germany](#)

[2 Reformer and Pre-War Pacifist](#)

[3 War Volunteer and Fallen Soldier](#)

[Selected Bibliography](#)

[Citation](#)

## A Social Democrat from Southern Germany

Ludwig Frank (1874-1914) was born to Jewish parents in Nonnenweier (Baden), a small village in the Upper Rhine region of southern [Germany](#). Though he identified culturally as a Jew, religion did not play a major role in his education. Frank came into contact with socialist ideas shortly before graduating from the Scheffel-Gymnasium in Lahr in 1893. In his valedictorian speech on “Nathan the Wise” he interpreted [Gotthold Ephraim Lessing \(1729-1781\)](#) work along socialist lines of class struggle, which triggered a minor scandal in the local press. Soon afterward he began to study law, first in Freiburg and later in Berlin. In 1899 he received a PhD. His years of study as well as his first years as a lawyer in Mannheim were decisive stages of his political socialization and alignment with the [Social Democrats](#). After being elected to the lower chamber of Baden’s diet in 1905, Frank became a member of the *Reichstag* in 1907. At this national platform his political agenda focused mainly on three issues: his opposition to Prussia’s three-class franchise system, his fight to stop increases in military spending, and his support for drafting a constitution for [Alsace-Lorraine](#).

## Reformer and Pre-War Pacifist

Despite his local rootedness, Ludwig Frank's political attitude was also influenced by events, ideas and persons reaching beyond regional and national borders. In the early years of his political career, he became very much inspired by the radical platform of the Belgian youth labor movement. Furthermore, Frank himself became a leading figure in Germany's social democratic youth movement. As his political career progressed, he would gradually align himself, however, with more moderate positions among German socialists. This change of course was due, among other factors, to his personal encounters with [Jean Jaurès \(1859-1914\)](#), the leader of the French socialists, who practiced strategic alliances with the bourgeois left. Frank's adaptation of such practices to the political context of Baden was, however, not shared by all members of the SPD and led to inner-party frictions. Furthermore, in order to fight the Prussian suffrage, he also supported the idea of mass [strikes](#) as a legitimate political means. Besides his reformist stance, Frank publicly expressed his [pacifism](#) and was at the forefront of organizing two interparliamentary peace conferences in Bern (1913) and Basel (1914) that aimed to find a way to prevent a war between Germany and [France](#).

## War Volunteer and Fallen Soldier

Ludwig Frank, who had never married, volunteered for war service on 5 August 1914 with the 110<sup>th</sup> (2<sup>nd</sup> Baden) Grenadiers "Emperor William I". His motives for volunteering were deeply entangled with his willingness to demonstrate his political loyalty towards his fatherland, thereby at least partly reverting his outspoken [pre-war pacifism](#). Like activists of other marginalized groups within German society, he hoped, however, that participation in the war would lead to a democratization of society and politics. Frank's change of action was already preceded by his campaign in the *Reichstag* among Social Democrats to vote for war credits after Germany had entered the war on 1 August 1914. Though his Jewish heritage had become more important for him in his adult years, Frank's decision to volunteer was, in contrast to other Jewish intellectuals, not primarily motivated by aspirations to further Jewish integration into German society. Rather, he considered his loyalties as a German, a Social Democrat and a Jew from Baden to be mutually inclusive. On 3 September 1914, almost two decades after he had completed his one-year voluntary service in the armed forces at Freiburg in 1894-95, Frank was killed in combat in Nossoncourt near Baccarat (Lorraine) at the age of forty. For the Social Democrats his death became a symbol of their patriotic engagement for the German "nation" during and in the aftermath of the First World War.

Sarah Panter, Leibniz Institute of European History Mainz

## Selected Bibliography

- [Frank, Ludwig / Wachenheim, Hedwig \(eds.\): \*\*Ludwig Frank. Aufsätze, Reden und Briefe\*\*, Berlin, 1924: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft.](#)
- [Haebler, Rolf Gustav: \*\*In memoriam Ludwig Frank, Stadtverordneter in Mannheim, Abgeordneter des Badischen Landtages, Mitglied des Deutschen Reichstages. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der badischen und der deutschen Sozialdemokratie und des internationalen demokratischen Sozialismus\*\*, Mannheim, 1954: Druckerei und Verlags-Gesellschaft Mannheim, Allgemeine Zeitung.](#)
- [Panter, Sarah: \*\*Jüdische Erfahrungen und Loyalitätskonflikte im Ersten Weltkrieg\*\*, Göttingen, 2014: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.](#)
- [Watzinger, Karl Otto: \*\*Ludwig Frank. Ein deutscher Politiker jüdischer Herkunft\*\*, Sigmaringen, 1995: J. Thorbecke.](#)

## Citation

Sarah Panter: Frank, Ludwig, in: 1914-1918-online. International Encyclopedia of the First World War, ed. by Ute Daniel, Peter Gatrell, Oliver Janz, Heather Jones, Jennifer Keene, Alan Kramer, and Bill Nasson, issued by Freie Universität Berlin, Berlin 2016-07-07. DOI: [10.15463/ie1418.10932](https://doi.org/10.15463/ie1418.10932)

## Metadata

### Regional Section(s)

[Central Europe](#) > [Germany](#)

### Thematic Section(s)

[Power](#)

### Subjects

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Parliaments](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Institutions](#) > [Parties, socialist](#)

[Politics, law](#) > [Political ideologies](#) > [Pacifism](#)

[Warfare and the military](#) > [Battles, battlefields and campaigns](#) > [Battles, battlefields and](#)

[campaigns, Western Front](#)

**Author Keywords**

Pre-war Pacifism; Social Democrats; Jewish Soldier; Germany

**GND Subject Headings**

[Frank, Ludwig](#)

**LC Subject Headings**

[Frank, Ludwig, 1874-1914](#)

**Key Person(s)**

[Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim](#); [Jaurès, Jean](#)

**Key Location(s)**

[Basel](#); [Berlin](#); [Berne](#); [Freiburg](#); [Lahr](#); [Mannheim](#); [Nonnenweier](#); [Nossoncourt](#)

**Title**

Frank, Ludwig

**Author(s)**

[Sarah Panter](#)

**Article Type**

Encyclopedic Entry

**Classification Group**

Persons