Hello and welcome delegates all to the 6th episode of the DG. We have hopefully enjoyed our well-deserved break from all things delegate – I for one really valued my time off, but I am ready today to get back into things. Matters did not sit still while WW and all of us returned home, and in this packed episode, we catch up on several matters which our little holiday had kicked down the road. Judging by everyone’s willingness to drop off the radar over the last week, I’m going to take that as approval for the policy of doing this in the future. However, rather than take a break every X amount of weeks, I’m going to tell you now about the three occasions where I’ll be taking that Saturday off. The 30th March, the 4th May and 1st June will be holidays for us delegates, but otherwise, we’ll be taking our narrative onwards and upwards with increasing velocity, as we get closer and closer to that deadline.

If you’re keeping up with the regular VAP, then you’ll know that the last two weeks of Feb 1919 were eventful indeed, but here, we’re going to try something a bit different, by covering some of the events that happened over the previous fortnight in our alternative history tale, and bringing the narrative back up to speed in the process. Some actual events, like the assassination attempt on GC, still took place, and Wilson still returned to the US to present the League. This time around though, as we now know thanks to the results of our poll, you delegates have voted to support Wilson and commend his efforts – this gesture of moral support will be invaluable to the beleaguered president, and he will certainly be relieved to note that TR was not gunning after his role as leader of the American delegation in Paris. Roosevelt remained head of his own delegation, but in this episode, as we’ll see, matters take another interesting turn where the American representatives are concerned.

We have no new delegates to cover during this week, but don’t forget that if you’re listening right now and you’d like to play this game, then you can, simply by heading to \_\_\_. Don’t think that just because we’re in episode 6 or week 7 that it’s too late to join us. Please feel free to begin your journey to Paris, and if you are feeling bold enough, plan your grand entrance accordingly by noting what you’re up against here, and connecting with me about the kind of entrance you’d like to make. As you’ve surely learned by now, each episode sees the spotlight shine on a certain delegate as we tell our story, and if you play your cards right, that certain delegate could well be you! I think that’s going to do it for our introduction then – without any further ado I will now take you all to a very different final fortnight of Feb, 1919 than you may have been used to…

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‘The Tiger has been shot, the Tiger has been shot!’ bellowed a greasy looking Frenchman as he burst through the door. At once Rene Massigli and Albert Claveille stood up from their chairs, which had the effect of creating a loud scraping sound that only served to add an exclamation point to the stunning news. Both men’s faces were ashen. ‘Is he dead?’ asked the puffing cigarette machine who was still seated. Karhoo Rosnack had been waiting days for his morning meeting with the two Frenchman, and it was just his luck that when he had finally gotten around to revealing the extent of Nicola Pasic’s devious designs, such an interruption would take place. He immediately suspected that the Serbian premier was involved – he had already assassinated one national figure after all, perhaps he had gotten a taste for it? In his impatience, Rosnack realised he had been a touch too blunt – the two Frenchmen were staring daggers at him. ‘You better hope Monsieur Clemenceau lives’, Claveille spat, ‘or insignificant minnows like yours will be devoured without mourning.’ The words had been practically launched at Rosnack without hesitation, and they then hung in the air.

It was as though the two Frenchmen had felt this way all along – his insignificant minnow of a nation still contained 1.5 million Slovenians, and this was supposed to be the place to represent them. It had been a mistake coming to these Frenchmen; perhaps establishing a connection with the newly empowered German delegates would be a good idea after all. As the two Frenchmen rushed out of the room, barely fifteen minutes into their morning meeting, Rosnack already found himself plotting revenge. It seemed that being around Nicola Pasic long enough had turned him into precisely the kind of schemer that he had once despised. Rosnack felt excited and ashamed all at once. He checked his watch – 9.15AM on the 19th February. There was still time to intercept the Germans, who were on their way to the CXII. If he was lucky, perhaps this day would not be a total loss after all.

It took so long for Rosnack to exit the Hotel Zachary that he found himself walking briskly and then attempting a light jog. Security had arrived en masse at the HZ – perhaps under the impression that once again, these delegates had been somehow responsible for events involved a firearm. Rosnack was sure he would learn more details of the incident soon enough; if the old man was dead or alive, it made little difference to him, all that really mattered was making something of this day while he still had the chance. It was far from easy to smoke and jog, especially while his blasted lungs were giving him such trouble. Rosnack found himself checking his hand whenever he coughed into it – could this be the dreaded TB? Still there was no blood, which was a relief, but this cough was getting no better. A visit to the doctor would be advisable soon enough.

As it happened, the heightened security cost Rosnack his opportunity. Either that, or the German delegates were exceptionally early, and had arrived at Stephen Pichon’s room fifteen minutes before schedule. Rosnack couldn’t help but marvel at the large oak door, which led to the great room where the French FM had held the last month’s meetings of the CX. Now of course, the gathering had been recast as the CXII, to mark the arrival of the German delegates, PVLV and HVH. Every intelligent man, it was said, feared VLV, but it was rumoured that the veteran Junker commander of the African campaigns merely put up his gruff exterior as a front, so that HVH’s more conciliatory act would complement his style. Rosnack had heard one of the American delegates refer to it as ‘good cop, bad cop’, but he did not quite understand what a cop was, or how it could be both good and bad to be one.

Rosnack found that his heart was still pounding – the ten minutes jog to the Quai d’Orsay should not have been so taxing – perhaps he needed to engage in those daily bouts of exercise, as the physician had recommended. Still, now that he was present, he could potentially wait to ambush the Germans before they entered. It was then that he detected voices, coming from inside the room. The language used was German, and it sounded like three men – had these rapscallions arrived early to take advantage of Clemenceau’s plight? Had they invited their dastardly Austrian friend, whom Rosnack found himself instinctively unable to trust. Karl Renner was a politician through and through, and he had offered Rosnack a cigarette, but that did not change the past.

He had hoped to meet the Germans without their Austrian appendage present, but ever since their recent accreditation as full delegates on the SC, the Austrians had been joining their wartime allies more and more. Rosnack worried that the Germans intended to carve up East and Central Europe together with the Austrians. Yet, there was also a chance that the very threat of this scheme might grant Slovenia some advantageous leverage. He wouldn’t achieve much standing outside the door, either way. The door was plainly not locked – all it would take was a stern push, and he would be in a position to harness the German power. Rosnack took a deep breathe, took a long, greedy drag from his cigarette, and pushed the door firmly open.

Horton von Hotzendorff could not remember the last time he had seen PVLV so relaxed – it seemed almost…inappropriate considering the circumstances. They had thought it unusual that the French premier was late, but lately these meetings had descended into something of a farce. Clemenceau seemed to be doing all possible, all that he could, to avoid attending, to avoid legitimising the decision to accredit these Germans and grant them seats on the SC. It had taken the French premier several days to recover from the blow that decision represented, and as he had cried out for a scapegoat, for something, for anything, to explain the catastrophe, the leaders of Italy, the US and the UK all left within a few days of each other. Ostensibly to attend to domestic matters, this left the fort in the hands of Clemenceau.

There were far worse fortress commanders on hand, but the prospect of facing the renewed diplomatic attack of the Germans alone made Clemenceau weary. It wasn’t merely the challenges which lay ahead though, but the affront to France which the empowering of the Germans represented, that truly made Clemenceau’s blood boil. Were he to leave the scene, then perhaps only Edward House stood in the way of the Germans dominating the CXII through sheer force of personality alone. *The CXII* – Clemenceau had never actually used this term, referring to now only as the council at all times. He didn’t want to give Germany the satisfaction, HVH knew this for sure.

Another thing he knew was that he and VLV would, by necessity, have to work overtime in these meetings, if their homeland was to stand any chance of survival. Revolutions from the left, paramilitary violence on the right, and hostile neighbours all around – Germany was in a dire state, and while President Friedrich Ebert had stabilised the government, and relocated to Weimar, there was still much to be done. A great way to buoy up the embattled regime was to solidify some favourable treaties with foreign powers. So far, it had been difficult to leverage the CXII, but the happy coincidence of so many allied leaders making a simultaneous exit granted Germany a unique opportunity in Paris. Now, with Clemenceau’s reported assassination, whether the Tiger was alive or dead, it was certain that things wouldn’t be the same again.

It was difficult indeed to feel sorry for Clemenceau, after all the work he done obstructing German interests in the previous few days. At news of the terrible incident, the other allied leaders had evacuated the room to inform their delegations. Horton thought it best to stay here and talk now that they had the room to themselves – paradoxically, there was more privacy here than back at the HZ anyway. Once the allies had left, Horton had sent for Karl Renner, so that the Austrian Chancellor would see that Germany continued to fight for that country’s interests. The big six’s leaders had gathered early that morning for the express purpose of making a productive start, and to avoid any potentially eager delegates from the minor powers nabbing them on their way to the Quai d’Orsay. It had become a favourite tactic of some of the smaller powers to use the opportunity of a walking delegate to make their case. Just the day before Bonifacio Fidel, accompanied by the Zionist Chaim Weizmann, had ambushed he and VLV as they walked to take their seats at the CXII. The fifteen minute walk from the HZ, twinned with the fact that these Germans could be seen leaving the Hotel each morning, meant that it was relatively easy for the other delegates to ambush them as they walked.

Horton had requested that they take a cab several times to avoid this show, but VLV had turned down the idea – with the day of sitting they had ahead of them, it did the nerves and constitution good to get in a walk early. With remarkable brevity and emotion, Weizmann and Fidel had expressed their main points to the Germans as they walked. VLV’s attempt to increase his speed had only compelled Fidel and Weizmann to puff and pant as they followed suit, undeterred. Eventually, the two Germans had simply stopped, and Horton informed Fidel and Weizmann that tactics such as these were unbecoming of delegates of their stature. If they wanted to make an appeal, they ought to make it in person to the CXII. Very well, the two men had said, Zionism would have its case heard the next morning. Today was thus meant to be the day that Fidel and Weizmann made this case, but somehow Horton suspected that this case would not be made. As he marvelled at his privileged position in this historic conference, Horton glanced over to Karl Renner, who was deep in conversation with PVLV.

‘My point, General, is that we can only push the French so far. If Clemenceau is indeed to succumb to such a terrible fate, then it will be immensely difficult to proceed without the weight of suspicion hanging over us. Imagine, the crowds would whisper that Germany needed only to rid themselves of the Tiger to have their way, and how convenient it was now that he was gone. I fear that the consequences will be grave indeed if the Tiger is dead. Do not forget that we are currently in an enemy capital, there will be little protection afforded us here.’

VLV nodded in agreement, but he did wish the Austrian Chancellor would not be so dramatic. God had granted Prussia profoundly useful opportunities in the last few weeks, as Germany’s negotiating position had effectively been turned completely around. If Clemenceau was to be absent now, then he would not look such a gift in the mouth. This meant opportunity and reward if France was weakened. Imagine, Prussia had returned now to menace France in her own capital, just as Prussia had herself been menaced by a French statesman in Vienna a century ago. He wished Karl Renner would see the irony, but the Austrian Chancellor was sweating. He was surely worried that his chances for being appointed alongside Germany as an accredited delegate on the CXII would decrease if the allies felt their position continued to be threatened. Germany was tolerated now because the allies more than outnumbered her, though some back channel work, Horton had told him, had successfully been undertaken with the Japanese.

While Clemenceau had refused to recognise their position as accredited German plenipotentiaries, other delegates had not followed suit. In the meantime, Germany’s delegation had increased, as more civil servants were drafted to cope with the increased paperwork that this new opportunity presented. Almost immediately, without much hesitation, VLV had turned to Poland. More specifically, he had demanded a renegotiation of the previous Polish Border Settlement which had granted Poland portions of Prussia. Now that Germany’s empowered position was confirmed, VLV was not about to settle for that state of affairs. In one of his first acts, VLV threw his weight firmly behind a renegotiation, which essentially turned into something of a shouting match. The Poles were persuaded to absorb Lithuania and avoid seizing any portion of Prussia at all. No Germans would be separated, no Poles would impress themselves upon the superior Prussians, and nature would take its logical course.

VLV had worked hard to craft a steely public image in the last few days. Now that he was in this senior diplomatic position, it was essential that he be seen to keep his cool, and VLV made use of this change in station by strategically losing this cool when he needed to make a point. The Polish delegation which had met VLV had been somewhat shrunken in any case, as both Paderewski and Bogna Kudzal had gone with WW to the US, in support of his League. With the Polish reduced to two delegates, a pro-German in Pawel Lebowa, and a dreamer of Commonwealth dreams in Josef Pilsudski, VLV found that after some initial resistance, the two men assented to the changes, which still cemented the Polish-German relationship into an alliance.

It also helped Germany’s case that Alexander Kerensky had seemingly vanished since first approaching the Poles. VLV had fanned rumours which whispered that the Russian had been abducted by German intelligence officers masquerading as Parisian tourists, but in reality he had no idea where the Russian leader had gone to. What he did know was that Kerensky’s absence served to sap Polish morale at a time when solidarity between Eastern powers was earnestly desired. In the absence of a solid Russian deal, the Poles had turned quickly to German friendship. This, at least, would help keep Bolshevism at bay.

Of course, Clemenceau had been reluctant indeed to approve of this new settlement, believing that it granted Germany too much power, and snatched Poland out from under the nose of Paris. Today, indeed, was meant to be the day where the Germans said conciliatory things and made firm promises of friendship to France, in return for official French recognition of the German delegation’s status, and ratification of the German deal with Poland in the CXII. It was an ill-omen indeed that just at the moment where the French premier seemed on the verge of caving into German olive branches, he should be struck down. VLV was just about to communicate this observation to Karl Renner, when the door burst open, and a steaming Slovenian emerged from a cloud of smoke, as if by magic.

Karhoo Rosnack regretted bursting into the room almost instantly. The eyes of the Germanics were upon him, and he could feel his voice failing, before HVH spoke up. ‘Herr Rosnack, Sir, are you quite alright?’ ‘Sirs’, Rosnack gasped, before coughing three times, and taking another long drag. VLV rolled his eyes. ‘I come representing the interests of Slovenia, and I wish to recommend my case to the CXII.’ ‘I am sorry you have come all this way, Herr Roseback’, the Austrian Chancellor piped up, ‘but the Council is not in session.’ Had that imp deliberately fudged his name? Rosnack let it slide. ‘M. Clemenceau is in mortal danger, felled by an assassin’s bullet, so I am told.’ ‘Yes’, VLV confirmed, ‘we learned as much thirty minutes ago. Terrible business.’ Rosnack believed he saw a flash of satisfaction pass VLV’s face, but perhaps that was just the rumours doing the work for him. ‘Since you are all present, Sirs, could I trouble you to hear my case? It will take but a few minutes.’ ‘M. Rosnack’, HVH sighed, ‘Germany wishes to do justice to small nations like Slovenia, especially with the rampant and flagrant disregard for international law demonstrated by the neighbouring Serbians.’

It was almost as though the mere mention of Serbia got Renner’s back against the wall. ‘I will never speak ill of my peers in the Serbian delegation’, Karl Renner began, ‘but I make no secret of my contempt for that nation of assassins and scoundrels, who wrecked the peace of the world and destroyed the natural order of man.’ This was interesting – perhaps Renner’s forthright condemnation of Serbia represented something of an olive branch. ‘I am eager to hear what Herr Roseback has to say’, Renner added. ‘I believe Austria could use a friend in Slovenia in such troubled times.’ Roseback…really? Still, the Austrian was at least offering him the floor. Rosnack lit a cigarette, and offered one to each of the seated delegates. It was a strange scene indeed – a room with ten empty chairs, two seated Germans, and one standing Austrian, but this was where history was made. Rosnack unfurled his notes, and he saw VLV’s eyes widen – so much for taking but a few minutes. Before had even had a chance to begin though, the large oak door from where Rosnack had just burst through opened much more gently, and a tall, slender, well-kept Japanese man walked into the room.

Baron Makino Nabuaki, flanked by Prince Charoon of Siam, apologised in perfect French for the interruption. He had heard that Clemenceau had been assassinated, and as he was present in the Quai d’Orsay for a meeting with the Siamese Prince, he thought it best to hear the latest news from those assembled in the CXII. Nabuaki had the same puzzled face, which Horton answered by saying quickly, ‘the other delegations have left to form their own picture of events. We stayed because secrets are kept better in here. The chairs are also much more comfortable.’ Baron Nabuaki did not need to be told – he had sat here several times, as Japan’s FM. That morning he had elected not to turn up, for the successive meetings and Franco-German stonewalling had led nowhere, and he was weary of the process. Once Japanese interests were raised, he would be present.

Nabuaki found that, in any case, it was more useful to prowl around the HZ, meeting with his fellow delegates, rather than confine himself to this stuffy room. In the past few weeks he had built up several useful contacts, but the friendship with the Siamese Prince had proved the most enduring. ‘Gentlemen’, Karl Renner began, ‘it would seem wise to vacate this room before some foul rumour of a conspiracy among us takes root.’ ‘I have no time for rumours, or rumour mongers, Herr Renner’, VLV began. ‘M. Nabuaki, would you care to dine with me later tonight. I believe Germany and Japan hold several interests in common, and I do not believe that these interests should be ignored for the sake of soothing allied sensibilities.’

Nabuaki nodded cautiously, before adding ‘Japan has come to expect that Germany will be receptive to relinquishing her Asian possessions, in favour of a Japanese administration. I am afraid I must base any prior German-Japanese relationship on the ceding of these territories.’ ‘How do they say in America?’ VLV asked sarcastically, ‘I believe the phrase is “you got it”. Whatever you want in Asia is yours – Prussia has no need for such frivolous possessions. What we want are good deals and firm allies.’ HVH then interjected. ‘M. Nabuaki, perhaps you would be interested in joining a coalition of sorts? Poland and Austria have already signalled their interests.’ ‘Slovenia will join that league as well’, Rosnack piped up, as he took another long pull. ‘There you are then’, Horton exclaimed, ‘this is quite an arrangement we have here.’ ‘What is the purpose of this coalition’, Nabuaki asked. ‘An American league has already been established.’ ‘Yes, the LON does hold great potential, and Germany would happily acquiesce to join its ranks. However, in uncertain times like these, with danger lurking so nearby, it is necessary for us nations, nearer the frontline, to take matters into our own hands. A coalition of eastern states against Bolshevism is in the process of being formed, but with Japan’s presence, we could choke the Bolsheviks in the Far East as well as in Europe. We could also counter the imperialist designs of the Western allies upon Asia, specifically in Japan’s rightful sphere of influence. Would you be receptive to this proposal?’ Nabuaki paused before answering. ‘Give me a fortnight to make a decision. I must confer with Tokyo.’ Nabuaki then left the room, with Prince Charoon walking closely behind him.

‘Herr VH, was that wise?’ Renner asked. ‘It may be a bit early to show our hand, don’t you think?’ ‘Perhaps’, Horton replied, ‘but the more open we are about this arrangement, the less suspicion we will incur. I have found that in this city, in my experience, nothing stays secret for very long.’ ‘Have you tried to recruit any British or Italian members to the scheme?’ VLV asked. ‘My friend’, Horton chuckled, ‘this is hardly a scheme – we operate here in the open, with the interests of all parties clearly expressed.’ ‘Even so’, VLV said, ‘it may be useful to approach the Italians at least, I hear they have become very disenchanted as IFTA continues to come under criticism. Could we pool our resources with IFTA? An anti-Bolshevik coalition and a free trade agreement stretching across the guts of Europe – it sounds like a natural fit to me.’ ‘Let me work on the diplomatic sphere, General. There is much work to do still in the military theatre. Have you managed to confirm Germany’s military terms just yet?’ ‘Not yet, Herr VH, today was meant to be the day for such discussions.’

Just then, HVH had a thought. ‘Herr Rosnack?’ he said, with a hint of a question in his voice. ‘Yes…’ replied the Slovenian nervously. ‘As a member of the IFTA, would you be willing to serve as something of a go between, and represent the interests of the anti-Bolshevik coalition to its other members?’ ‘I believe it is the closet Zionist, Herr Fidel, who speaks for the IFTA’, Renner added. ‘Talk to him first, and sell this partnership with, what is it they say in Italy…gusto?’ ‘I will give it my best attempt, sirs.’ Rosnack said. ‘Excellent’, Horton replied, ‘such a combination would be considerable indeed. We must protect all of Germany’s flanks now while we still can.’ ‘Why?’ VLV asked, ‘are we working on a particular deadline? Do you plan on leaving us or something?’ ‘It’s not about who is leaving my friend, it is about who will soon be returning. The Americans will not stay away forever, and I cannot imagine that President Wilson will be particularly pleased that we have effectively usurped his league and his SC.’ ‘Is it true that Wilson has plans to reconcile with his arch foe, the radical Roosevelt?’ Renner asked. ‘Indeed’, VLV scoffed, ‘Americans and their politics. What do you imagine caused those two men to bury the hatchet? Money? Power? Opportunism?’ ‘According to a friend in the American delegation’, Horton began, ‘the major motivating factor was an undercurrent of fear.’ ‘Fear?’ Chancellor Renner exclaimed, ‘fear of what, exactly?’ ‘Is it not obvious, Herr Renner?’, VLV interjected, with a certain unmistakable gleam in his eye. ‘It is a fear…of us.’

Edward House was having trouble sleeping. It was 2AM on 26th February 1919. If the rumours he was hearing were true, then he did not imagine he would get sleep for some time. The vanquished and the newly created – working together in Paris? He rolled over to this side and that, before giving up and staring at the ceiling. He knew it had been a mistake to legitimise the German delegation, and grant them plenipotentiary powers to sit on the CX…oh wait, make that CXII. Since the middle of Feb, matters had only gotten worse. He needed Wilson to return, yet the extended trip across the US continued to occupy the President’s attention. He had heard glowing praise from a number of promotional tours, as the famed Paderewski had lit up the room with his impassioned playing. Did Paderewski know that his compatriots had signed a deal with Germany?

An anti-Bolshevik coalition, and the IFTA – two large blocks, existing in distant, troubled theatres, and now they were reportedly combining. When his informant had delivered this news, House did not hesitate, and he communicated the development immediately to the other American delegates. Those four Americans, Walter Cameron, Oliver Flanagan, WR Hearst and Bruce Pug had all impressed him greatly in the last few weeks. They had really stepped up their game, and had continued to urge compromise and cooperation between the current and former President. House would believe it when he saw it, but he confessed that it warmed his heart to read the letters which this four man team had passed to their de facto chief. Roosevelt had represented the de facto fifth column in Paris ever since his arrival, but the communications of these Americans made it plain that they wished merely to serve America’s interests. Could Roosevelt, now accompanying Wilson around on his American tour, be trusted to follow suit? House decided to read this communique again – he couldn’t sleep anyway – he may as well remind himself of this latest positive development in American politics. His tired eyes scanned the document, for what was probably the 5th time that day. The document was addressed to TR, but had been forwarded to House and to Wilson’s staff in Washington as well. It read:

Mr. President, We wish to offer you our heartfelt respect for you as the de facto head of the American Delegation in these opening weeks. Your steady voice and imagination for the future of peace in Europe has led to a foundation of new, permanent, lasting peace across the continent without entangling the United States into restrictive covenants. We feel we all serve, ultimately, at the pleasure of your dear friend Senator Lodge, who was instrumental in his role as head of the Foreign Relations committee to appoint us with three goals: peace in Europe, the power of the United States to interact with other nations without unconstitutional restrictions placed upon it, and placing Germany in such a position that it will be physically impossible for her to break out again upon other nations with a war for world conquest. We feel we have served well in incorporating Sen. Lodge’s concerns in the formulation of the League of Nations treaty. You are a dear friend to all of us and believe that Senator Lodge trust in you has proven to be well-founded. Now with the League of Nations treaty drafted and the prospect of the German delegation joining the Conference we find ourselves at a critical impasse. At this moment events are highly in our favour but things could fall apart quickly. We fear Germany’s incorporation into the Peace Process could lead to chaos. Senator Lodge also fears that passage of this highly-favourable League treaty may not be possible without Democratic votes in favour. Remember: the GOP only holds a 49-47 majority in the Senate and we shall need a two-thirds majority to pass this treaty. It would be easy for President Wilson and the Democrats to disavow the treaty were they ousted from the delegation. We cannot be viewed as the party that sinks peace in Europe. We feel that you shall be a sound voice for the League and against German aggression, but the ultimate role of Chief Diplomat falls on the sitting President of the United States of America. Let us work together as voices shouting out, rather than voices shouting from the cold. We humbly ask in the interests of peace and security that you withdraw your name from considerations as head of the American Delegation. You remain our President, our Commander, our Leader, and our friend. Signed Walter Cameron, Bruce Pug, William Randolph Hearst, Oliver Flanagan.

He had only just finished reading the document when he heard a knock on his door. Who could be calling at a time like this? Unless it is urgent? Sure enough, a man stood outside his door bearing a large envelope. ‘Mr House’, the man said, ‘this comes straight from the desk of President Roosevelt. He wanted you to read it.’ House felt his stomach lurch. Was there a chance that the cantankerous old man had listened to reason, and accepted something of what his delegates had written? The fact that he was writing directly to him now, and all the way from the US, suggested as much. House closed the door and plopped the letter on the bed. It was weighted with importance, and bore Roosevelt’s hand on the front. The man had signed the front of the telegram, so as to confirm its authenticity. It was almost as though Roosevelt did not expect House to believe that WW’s nemesis had written the letter, and as he began to read it, he was not surprised. Through this memo, Roosevelt communicated his assent with his delegates, but reasoned at the same time that WW would be in need of help, especially considering the developments in the CXII which had seen the Germans become rather big for their boots, amidst the subsequent weakening of the French position as Clemenceau had recuperated and left a power vacuum in place. The memo was addressed first and foremost as a reply to the American delegates still in Paris, but Roosevelt had taken the opportunity to personally address a copy to House. This was significant indeed. Roosevelt’s memo read as follows:

My dear colleagues, Thank you for the honour of your interest in my assuming leadership of the United States delegation to this peace conference. In examination of the United States Constitution and in consultation with my delegation, I conclude that it is best for the success of this conference if I decline to participate in a change in top leadership of the US delegation. The US Constitution specifies that diplomacy is the authority of the president. There is no provision for the president to be denied this authority by vote of an extra-national conference. Thus, I would have no authority within the US to preside over our delegation, and any treaty that resulted would be unfavourably viewed by the ratifying authority, the US Senate. I have received many requests to replace Mr. Wilson at this conference by various delegates. After the euphoric enthusiasm in December, there is increasing dissatisfaction with him. We do need to invigorate the conference. I propose that the conference communicate with Mr. Wilson (1) our enthusiasm for the League of Nations as described in the draft treaty, (2) our recognition of his superhuman, exhaustive efforts, (3) our suggestion that he could be more effective and focused if he created an assistant delegation chairman, and (4) he could accomplish greater Republican support from the Senate if he would appoint a former Republican president as his assistant. In such a position, I could free him to continue developing broad, idealistic goals while I could focus on the specifics of negotiating peace. Your support is greatly appreciated. Let us continue to work together for peace. Theodore Roosevelt, Former President of the United States of America

The message was here clearly expressed – Roosevelt, the arch nemesis of WW, was willing to compromise with him if the President took him onto the five man American delegation. He would refrain from undermining him, he would commend his work, and he would petition his Republican allies to support this version of Wilson’s vision. This would mean that Roosevelt would be more visible, and would likely sit on the CXII several times, but it also meant additional support for the covenant of the LON, and a strong, experienced voice in favour of Wilson’s official policy line. House could hardly believe what he was reading; it seemed that the pressure exerted by the Germans had been too much, and it had pushed even the two arch enemies together. All that remained was for WW to approve. House set to work. It was now 3.15AM, and another full day awaited him in a few hours, but if he could persuade his good friend and President to receive this olive branch gracefully, and accept Roosevelt’s offer, then it was entirely possible that the allied cause would be guaranteed to succeed, regardless of who sat on the CXII. So, House set to work penning this appeal. If anyone could convince his friend of the need to bury the hatchet, it was Edward Mandel House.

Around the same time as House scrambled to confirm the reapproachment between Roosevelt and Wilson, the British were up to their old tricks again. The last week of February had seen the British delegates, Sir Alistair Tancred and Arthur Fitzwilliam, turn their attentions towards Turkey and the partition of its lands. In cooperation with the French, who offered their limited support as the German threat loomed, Tancred and Fitzwilliam discovered that they were largely free to partition Turkey, particularly in the east. With the German threat in mind, sorting out Turkey before Germany’s delegates threw their weight around much more became a priority. The ME could be partitioned between Britain and France, the new states of Kurdistan and Armenia would be confirmed on Turkey’s eastern borders, and in the West, the Greeks would be allowed to gain portions of Asia Minor where ethnic Greeks were allowed to live. The arrangement, which was confirmed in the Sevres Treaty in the final days of February, represented an early solution to the Ottoman problem, but not everyone was satisfied.

Prince Nawwar Sharif of Arabia was deeply vexed at the increased British presence in the ME. It seemed that his family had merely swapped its Ottoman overlords for those of the British and French. If he was to give his blessing to this arrangement, Sharif signalled that he would require guarantees and recognition of the Sharif dynasty’s possession of the Arabian peninsula, with a corridor to the Mediterranean. These demands were steep, but Sharif promised that if he were given these concessions, he would serve the British and French as a loyal friend in the region. For Albert Claveille and Rene Massigli, it was difficult to focus on far flung theatres like the ME when France’s immediate security was in peril. Yet, French possession of Syria had long been an important feather in the French cap, and in league with the British, these possessions would help guarantee Anglo-French cooperation into the future. Whatever happened, it was vital that the two allies did not fall out over the ME.

The Western Border settlement had granted France several concessions at the expense of Germany, and it was almost certain that once she was able, Germany’s empowered delegates would come knocking for the reworking of this settlement. This fear, combined with the evidence that the IFTA might be combining with the ABC, led the Anglo-French to partition up the Ottoman Empire with considerable haste, with little actual consideration for the knock on effects. Premier Venizelos of Greece, to take one example, viewed the partition of Turkey and the fatal weakening of Asia Minor as an ideal opportunity. While a military action against Turkey had always been in the pipeline, Venizelos was now informed by the Greek General Staff that the opportunity for exploiting to Turkish weakness had never been greater. A Great Greek Empire, incorporating Constantinople, vast swathes of Asia Minor and complete jurisdiction over the vital sea lanes, was the end goal, and with the Western allies utterly distracted with the resurgent German problem in Europe, there was great cause for optimism that the creation of this Greek dream would finally be possible.

As the Anglo-French parcelled up the lands of the Ottoman Empire, as the Germans made waves on the CXII, and as House worked to bring the two Presidents closer together for the common good, another meeting was taking place in a dark back room of the HZ. This was a gathering of dominions; Arthur McColville of NFD, David McKay of OZ, Louis Botha of SA and Sir Robert Borden of CA had assembled on 28th February 1919 for the express purpose, it was said, of containing this resurgent German threat, and defending the Empire. The absence of so many important allied leaders in the last two weeks of Feb had played havoc with the organisation and nerves of the dominions. Suddenly, the Germans were entitled to sit and vote at the CX, which they had recast as the CXII. Did this not mean that Germany would attempt to undo all the good that had been done, or that Germany would look for her rights to be returned in the Pacific and in Africa? Not so, PVLV had claimed, so long as certain concessions in other areas were granted.

German participation in the ABC, and the agreement of that institution with the IFTA, represented something of a colossus if its powers could be properly harnessed. Ostensibly, of course, the Germans vowed to use their membership in these groupings to reduce the powers of Bolshevism, but rumour had it that they intended to leverage their newly acquired powers to stand up to the allied demands too. The impossible borders of Poland had been settled, with both sides apparently satisfied – this had taken a major advantage out of allied hands. With Poland pacified, at least for now, the Western allies would not be able to use Poland against Germany. PVLV and HVH had proved adept at leveraging their membership of these bodies, but they had also demonstrated their willingness to negotiate on the size of Germany’s army. Stephan Pichon, who was holding the fort as France’s leading statesman so long as Clemenceau was convalescing, had proved susceptible to negotiating on the size of the German army – a very sensitive point in France – in return for certain promises to the Germans if they saw things the French way.

This created several dangers, but there was at least hope that when Clemenceau returned to the CXII, he would be able to restore some steel to the French position. These dominions could not wait for such an eventuality to take place though. They determined to release a joint statement, without British prompting, which would confirm the military solidarity of the Empire’s contingent parts. As Tancred and Fitzwilliam were occupied with expansion into the ME, these dominions were determined to support the British civilising effort across the world, by committing to pool military, naval and economic forces around Western Europe, specifically on the Western Front. A commitment to undertake a defence of the WF and a public declaration of military solidarity would send a clear message to Germany – these dominions were neither content to allow France to be overcome in some diplomatic offensive, nor were they willing to allow Germany to claw back its position in the different theatres, be that in the Pacific or Africa.

Thus, while the declaration served as a message of strength, it also guaranteed that Germany would be permanently excluded from those spheres where she had once menaced the SA and Australian security in particular. Again, it was accepted that the value of this meeting and its rhetoric was largely symbolic – the dominions would be with Britain no matter the conflict or the cause. Yet, to declare so publicly, without British prompting, testified to the fact that the world was not willing to let Germany away with anything. If necessary, Louis Botha boomed, SA would renew the war and would even send her forces into Germany. After liaising with the Belgian FM Paul Hymans, General David McKay knew that Australian troops would be welcome there as well. NFD could not offer much, and Canadian interests had never been affected by the Germans, but in the spirit of dominion cooperation, all declared their intentions to offer troops if needs be. A memorandum confirming this was passed to Sir Alistair Tancred, and it read:

Gentlemen of the Empire and the wider world: it has come to the attention of the dominions of the British Empire that Germany has managed to gain a strong foothold in the Council at Paris. Due to the profound implications of this turn of events, and the potential damage it could inflict on the security interests of the dominion powers, the leaders of the Union of SA, Canada, NFD and OZ resolve to defend jointly and in tandem that sensitive region of the Western Front, and to act independent of British finance and cost, but still beholden to British advice and considerations. We declare our joint determination to defend the interests of His Majesty across the world, and are determined to uphold Anglo-Saxon civilisation wherever it resides. Further, we declare our intention to defend, by military means if necessary, the recently won peace, and to frustrate at all costs any efforts by the vanquished to avenge themselves upon the victorious powers during this sensitive time. No power, and no coalition of interests, shall be permitted to violate the freedoms of the world. Signed Sir Robert Bordern, CA, General Louis Botha, SA, Arthur McColville, NFD and General David McKay, OZ.

The implications of this declaration of solidarity were obvious – the dominions were returning home to Europe to defend democracy and freedom against the German threat. Whether overblown or not, this German ‘threat’ had become a source of great anxiety for much of Europe, and now, so it seemed, the wider world. While so much remained up in the air, and while the Germans in the CXII were still in a position to capitalise upon the resulting power vacuum left by GC, the danger appeared potent indeed. Yet, it said, within the week, everything was liable to change. GC would be returning to the CXII, the dominions would be arriving in force, the Italian and British premiers would also be returning to Paris, and the American President, perhaps with TR by his side, would be en route from the US as well. Then the true test would come – could the German delegates maintain their gains, would they lose them all, or could a balance between the two sides be found, which would preserve peace for all time, and rid the world once and for all of the plague of war? Time, indeed, would tell the tale…

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So that, dear delegates, is the end of the episode. Here we have seen several things take shape which you’ve set in motion before, and other things develop which I imagined according to the consequences of your actions. The Germans were seated at the CXII, and had plans to merge the IFTA and ABC; the western allies would soon be buoyed by the return of their leaders, and even the dominions had made it plain that they would resist aggression with forces of their own. Turkey was effectively no more, and would exist as a rump state in Asia Minor, with Constantinople opened to the world. This opened doors for Greece, which could avenge itself by launching an invasion of Western Anatolia two months earlier than what historically took place, to take advantage of the death of Turkish morale in the face of these partitions. How would Britain and France cooperate in the ME, and could the French hold back the Germans from taking in peacetime what they had lost in war? Would the return of the allies leaders occasion of a swing in the balance of power back in favour of the allies, and if that happened, would the deals which the Germans had made in the last two weeks of Feb be sufficient to guard their position against attack?

Time would tell, but you also must have your say. This week we have a very important vote for you to consider – this concerns fate of GC. Clemenceau returned, in real life, on 1st march to the CX. In our timeline though, he took a little longer to ensure that he was fully rested to confront the German presence in CXII. While he recuperated, he was still vulnerable, so my first and most stark set of voting options looks like this – do you leave GC to recover, or do you attempt to finish the job and remove him from the CXII permanently? Obviously, this vote will have profound implications for how the PPC develops, so choose carefully… With all that done then, I will take my leave. Happy voting and scheming over the next week dear delegates, and I’ll see you next time at the HZ…