Hello and welcome delegates to the latest episode of the DG. I hope you’re still with us after last week’s harrowing ordeal, which saw three esteemed delegates bite the dust, and usher in a new era of mourning, as well as a new era of suspicion and pain. We will still be dealing with the fallout from that horrific incident, as we will also be operating now from the Hotel Zachary rather than that shabby French hole which was the Hotel Twamley. As usual, we have to get through a small bit of housekeeping before rushing into the show, so let me begin by saying that we have no new delegates to join us this week, but that this does not at all mean that the week has been quiet. You’ve been more active than ever in those chat groups, but there has also been a great deal of partisanship, and not as much active policymaking as before. Interestingly, it would seem that the untimely deaths of three of your colleagues traumatised the cohort of delegates present in Paris, and made them more likely to attack one another over telegrams than actually propose policy.

In spite of the urgent pleas of WW, for instance, the delegates failed to submit a revised version of the LON, even though they had voted to accept the League only with conditions. Wilson will be outraged, but there is still a week to go before D-day, so make sure and get your proposals in over this week, and help to make your mark upon the LON by having your say. Another of the PPC’s more famous developments in real life was the creation of a mandates system, but you voted to reject Mandates, and some even voted to condemn LG for bringing up such an idea. This rejection means that both LG and WW will be very peeved indeed. How will the developing world now be governed? Surely it won’t be left to its own devices? Do the delegates have even more sinister plans for these lands than their real life counterparts? We shall have to see.

I’ve also received the results of your guys’ vote on time taken on this game. The answers were widely varied, with most votes by a majority of one saying that they’d like to take every fourth week off, but with the next most popular choice saying to leave things as they are. I am going to take the weekend of Friday 22nd Feb off, so in other words in two weeks’ time, because I will be on a small holiday so it suits me to have a little break. Perhaps when I come back, we may run the poll on taking a break again, but if nobody super objects, I may just work it so that we have every fourth week off anyway. Someone suggested in the additional feedback that I might write up a summary episode each week we’re not releasing a “new” episode, and while I appreciate that idea, it kind of defeats the purpose of having that week off. I am not going to lie that it’s been pretty much go-go-go since the return from Christmas, and while I do love all of this, between starting the expanded responsibilities in University I would be happy for a breather every now and then.

I was also given the idea of releasing some kind of compendium of bits of feedback from you guys, as in the delegates themselves would propose bits for me to read in the form of bulletins which gave some brief news about what their delegate was up to, and by combining all these bits together we would have an episode of sorts. Again, this sort of defeats the purpose of having a break, but as Genuris Dinglebrush would say, if you can’t join ‘em, make sure you beat ‘em…no wait that’s not right…

Make sure and stick around at the end to find out what we’re going to be voting on for next week, and make sure you do vote this time, because it seems that a whole third of you are missing out on that perk. As a final bit of clarification, these episodes will be coming out every Saturday now, and the final closing date for all proposals, schemes, poll results etc. is now moved to Friday morning at 9AM GMT. Please do not make me chase you down for these details; if it’s a scheme, please send me the details privately, and if it’s a proposal, then can I ask that someone be responsible for it send me the details as well. I will be rolling on these developments, and putting it in the hands of the odds gods, but for the sake of my own records it is really valuable to have a handy way to track everything that’s happening. Also, if you weren’t aware, you can access the excel spreadsheet containing details of who’s who in the patreon post for each episode, along with the script. So I think we’ll all be pleasantly surprised to note that we don’t have any more housekeeping to announce, so that’s great! Without any further ado, I will now take you to a rather sombre scene – the remembrance ceremony of Mr Joseph Doherty, on 7th February 1919…

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The HZ’s great hall was packed to the rafters with guests and delegates of all kinds. The funeral had just taken place of Mr Joseph Doherty, and now the remembrance ceremony followed. It was the second such ceremony in as many weeks, but since the first had been conducted in such an atmosphere of trauma and numbness, Sir Robert Borden in particular, who had missed out on the occasion, passionately pleaded with those in Paris to be given a chance to say goodbye to his good friend. How could anyone have refused? Borden was given the floor, and as he performed an emotive, rousing speech which so effectively honoured the late Doherty’s memory, it was impossible to ignore the fact that around the room, in this great hall, the different delegations had not sat still. They continued even now to scheme and whisper among themselves…

‘The nerve of those Poles to even show their faces’, snarled President Roosevelt to the well-dressed, bespectacled man seated next to him. Walter Cameron nervously fixed his glasses, and made his best effort at a whisper, ‘Mr President’, Cameron said, ‘surely we cannot blame all the Poles for the actions of one of their number?’ ‘I don’t know’, Roosevelt replied, ‘I think I can manage it.’ At that Roosevelt glared across the room at the corner where the Poles were sitting. They were notably dishevelled and evidently self-conscious, uncomfortably looking around the room. Paderewski’s PR campaign had papered over some cracks during the week, but much still remained to be done. Roosevelt’s piercing stare connected with Pawel Lebowa, who looked away quickly. Pilsudski stared resolutely forward, while Paderewski appeared to be literally rocking back and forth with nervous anxiety.

Cameron hated to see the Poles under such pressure – nothing could be done under these circumstances, and no cooperation would ever be possible so long as the Poles were persona non grata. Even though the prospect terrified him, Walter Cameron made a mental note to go over to the Poles once the ceremony was over. ‘Why do we even need to be here’, Cameron heard William Randolph Hearst whisper behind him. ‘Doherty had his memorial last week, how many more days must we drag this business out?’ ‘Have some respect Hearst’, Joseph Zahn hissed, ‘it is critically important that we show solidarity to our fellow North Americans during this terrible time.’ Hearst seemed to have been pained by the rebuke, perhaps he wasn’t used to being spoken to like that. He found that he lacked much of the personable qualities of his fellow American delegates – even Roosevelt, who could be cold at times, seemed to have a way with people.

People in general just seemed to annoy William Randolph Hearst, that was probably why he had made so much money off them by selling them what they wanted to read. He couldn’t stand them because he couldn’t stand their proclivities, but thanks to these proclivities he was a very rich man. Rich, but not so rich that he should have to buy Roosevelt a drink every night. Hearst felt once more like sulking – Teddy really seemed content to lord the whole President thing over them each and every night. Out of the whole delegation, perhaps only Bruce Pug was on a similar level, but that only made Pug slightly more tolerable than the rest. By far the most similar to Hearst was Oliver Flanagan, that rich oil baron with an enormous ego and chip on his shoulder to match. Hearst wondered if he found Flanagan the most insufferable because he was most like him. Flanagan had made his money in oil, but Hearst told himself that his fortune was the more savoury kind, because it had true utility. Really though, Hearst didn’t care much for savoury sources of income, he cared only about the size of that income, and he could outspend all of these Americans if he wanted. If not for the absurd regulations which said that all delegates had to live in the same hotel, he would have moved towards the more exotic section of Paris weeks ago.

The six man American delegation had great potential, but its delegates were poles apart in terms of outlook and personality. Walter Cameron had gravitated towards Joseph Zahn in recent days; he was the more respectful, sensible of the group, and Cameron believed he could find common ground with him on several issues, including questions of reparations and economics. Zahn was said to be somewhat pro German, but also pro-Wilson to a degree, and this recommended Zahn to Cameron, who had been brought to Paris for a purpose after all, that purpose being to help draft the financial terms of the final treaty with the Germans. Perhaps Zahn’s input was exactly what Cameron needed? He at least knew that he needed to stay away from those self-important types like Flanagan and Hearst; he found himself unable to stomach Roosevelt for all that long either. The man’s intense hatred for Wilson seemed to have been placed above all other considerations, even the peace of the world.

Bruce Pug had fallen in line with the former President, so it seemed, and the two could often be seen dining together. Pug was also an active drafter of policy – he had recently talked Cameron’s ear off about the latest proposal he had created for defending Hungary from Bolshevik revolution. Thanks to his activism, thousands of guns and crates of ammunition were on route to Hungary, escorted by that black widow, Lady Nora Csok. ‘The black widow’, Cameron sighed, it was not enough that that poor woman had been through the worst which this conference had to offer, she also had to deal with the rumour mill churning on behind her back, with some claiming that she assassinated Mihaly Karolyi herself, to facilitate a communist takeover in Budapest. Notwithstanding the circumstances of his death, Hungary’s government had requested that Lady Nora accompany Karolyi’s remains back to Hungary, and Mr Pug had taken the opportunity to arrange for a large arms shipment to accompany the man’s coffin.

It was sometimes impossible to get Pug to stop talking about his hatred for the Reds, and he believed that this act had pre-empted any Bolshevik danger which was aimed at Hungary’s throat. Cameron could not say he was convinced – how could any people on earth look at what was happening in Russia, as a result of the Bolshevik virus, and believe that it looked like a good idea? Speaking of which, Cameron scanned the room, and there he was – Alexander Kerensky, the Russian candidate and former premier. Kerensky had committed to the creation of some kind of anti-Bolshevik league in the future, and he continued to advise WW on the best course of action to take vis-à-vis Russia. There were rumblings which suggested that Kerensky planned to pull in any favours he could muster to make this anti-Bolshevik league a possibility, and Pug’s recent activism had drawn the heaped praise of the Russian democrat. Bruce Pug, it was said, now had some secret window into Eastern politics, and he was rumoured to have learned a great deal from his conversations with Kerensky about the Poles and those Italians were truly up to. Perhaps, Cameron mused, or perhaps it was just the rumour mill working overtime yet again.

A few rows back, two Italians were seated together. ‘Be patient’, VO whispered to his Sicilian peer, ‘we can talk to Paderewski later this evening, for now we must keep up appearances.’ ‘Sir’, Bonifacio Fidel whispered, ‘I am quite sure that our cover has been blown.’ ‘Whatever do you mean?’ Orlando asked. ‘It was the Serbian’, Fidel replied, ‘I had hoped that he would be able to keep a secret, but now the cat is truly out of the bag, and Italy’s role in pushing for the IFTA has been thoroughly exposed.’ ‘Just how exposed are we?’ Orlando asked, with some desperation creeping into his voice. ‘Well sir, we are certainly less exposed than the Poles, that’s for sure, but that isn’t saying much. Regrettable though this state of affairs is, I believe we should embrace this status, and work to recruit like-minded allies to our cause. The big three seems to have built up many false impressions regarding our intentions for IFTA. Perhaps a strong PR campaign would persuade them of their false impressions?’

Orlando was evidently distracted, as his eyes focused at the Canadian on stage in front of him. ‘Very well’, Orlando said, ‘if they will not give Italy guarantees, then Italy will find some for herself. Have we got Venizelos?’ ‘Monsieur Venizelos will happily talk about IFTA…’ Fidel began. ‘If?’ Orlando sighed. ‘If we support his country’s claims on Cyprus, and commit to defending Greek interests in Asia Minor.’ ‘That blasted Greek’, Orlando exclaimed, ‘he’ll be asking us for Constantinople next! Tell him I’ll talk to him tonight if you see him.’ ‘I will sir’, Fidel replied. ‘And by the way Sir I was wondering, what of Mr Weizmann?’ ‘The Zionist?’ ‘Yes sir, perhaps we would do well by working with him – he does not seem to have many likeminded friends at Paris, perhaps we could come to some arrangement?’ Orlando weighed the idea in his mind. Fidel was probably up to something, but then Orlando had learned long ago that Fidel was always up to something, so best to let him at it. His brilliant but rash underling had effectively imagined IFTA into being, propelling Italy to the forefront of the conference in the process, but such an act hadn't exactly made her popular. Still, little point in being popular when you didn’t get what you want. ‘Make a deal with Weizmann’, Orlando said, ‘and make sure we don’t get carried away this time?’

‘The PM will be furious’, Fitzwilliam remarked, ‘I think he was certain that the mandates idea would be approved of.’ ‘Indeed Arty, it is odd’, Tancred replied, in a somewhat louder voice than Arthur Fitzwilliam believed was appropriate, ‘but apparently unforeseen factors were to blame. The man was outvoted, an unusual situation indeed, but now what? Should we let these peoples, some of whom are quite barbaric, simply rule themselves? What good is the victory if the people of the world do not receive its many blessings? I have considered making a proposal for Britain to withdraw into its empire and go into business for itself, against the interests of its former allies if necessary.’ ‘Alistair you cannot be serious’, Fitzwilliam replied, ‘mad as he is now, LG would never countenance such an inflammatory scheme as conspiring against our allies.’ Suddenly Tancred’s voice was reduced to the lowest of whispers. ‘I know that Arty, but look around you, there’s spies everywhere now, and nobody is safe. I thought for sure we would work out some way to rally the west around its defensive commitments, but the fates were apparently not with us, and also’, Tancred looked briefly to his left, ‘I think that daft Belgian is taking notes on what we’re saying, so I want to lead him on a bit.’

Arthur Fitzwilliam nearly looked over his shoulder, before Tancred urged him ‘don’t turn around Arty, I want to see that dolt get another thrashing from the PM before I leave this city. Did you hear he’s being ennobled by the King of Belgium? Do you know what I had to do to become Sir Alistair? A whole lot more than that pompous fool, that’s for sure.’ Out of the corner of his eye, sure enough, he could see Dinglebrush, notebook in hand, trying to appea as innocent as ever. Fitzwilliam sighed, it was never a dull moment so long as he sat with Sir Alistair Tancred, ever since the first day when the two had pranked the Newfoundland delegate on such an epic scale, he had even seen a smile form on the face of that Japanese Baron, though Nabuaki would surely slice him if told anyone so. Speaking of Arthur McColville, where the devil had that man got to? They had called it a truce on the whole pranking exercise hadn't they? Fitzwilliam suddenly felt his stomach lurch – this would hardly be an appropriate place for such an embarrassing gaffe.

Poor old Doherty, Fitzwilliam thought, taken by Bronki that crazed Pole; Bronski the Mad they were already calling him, but Tancred had said that they should have called him ‘Bronski the Absinthe-minded’, since he had apparently downed enough of that stuff to tranquilise a horse, or so his friend Mr Lebowa had said. Oddly, Lebowa had not tried to stop him. No matter – it was good to be away from the HT and in lodgings more befitting for delegates of their stature. ‘Did you hear about Kerensky?’ Tancred whispered. ‘Of course’, Fitzwilliam replied. ‘Well…how did you hear about him?’ Tancred whispered back. ‘Same as you I suspect, through Mr Kerensky himself’, Fitzwilliam retorted. The poor isolated Russian delegate was caught between several rocks and even more hard places, and unfortunately for him, he had little in the way of leverage. ‘Maybe we ought to just welcome some kind of Bolshevik to Paris?’ Tancred whispered, ‘He and Kerensky could fight it out in a winner take all, and we could to stop pretending to care about the Russians.’ ‘Come now Alistair, you don’t mean that.’ ‘Maybe a bit harsh, I know’, Alistair Tancred replied, ‘but we can never solve the Russian problem without actually relevant Russians in front of us – Kerensky doesn’t even represent the Whites.’ Fitzwilliam had to admit that his colleague had a point, much as his heart bled for the exiled Russian, there was little Kerensky could do so long as Russia was so divided into a patchwork of different blocs, none of them supporting Kerensky all that effectively. Fitzwilliam told himself that he would still meet with Kerensky the next day, as planned.

A few seats away to the left, Dinglebrush sat, accompanied by a very impatient Belgian FM Paul Hymans, who planned to be out of Paris within a few hours to meet with his King. ‘Mr Dinglebrush, would you please stop scribbling’, Hymans sighed, as patiently as he could manage. It had been a busy past few days and he was not in a mood for his colleagues antics. ‘Mr Hymans, please allow me to explain. What you have here is a legitimate, fool-proof method for exposing those dastardly British delegates once and for all. All it requires is a healthy respect for the art of eavesdropping and…’ ‘Mr Dinglebrush’, Hymans interrupted, as politely as he could, ‘please do tell me more about your reported honours which His Majesty will soon grant?’ Dinglebrush’s face filled with pride, and he began, for the third time, to explain the wonderful news – that King Albert of Belgium would soon be awarding Dinglebrush a hereditary title in honour of his great service rendered to Belgium at Paris. ‘I don’t know what took His Majesty so long’, Dinglebrush exclaimed, ‘though I suspect it has something to do with the fear that he may lose me, and that I may retire to my estates and refrain from attending this conference any longer. His Majesty need not worry, I would never let him down at a time like this.’

Of course, this had been the plan – Paul Hymans had pulled in every favour to get this title granted to Dinglebrush, and according to the terms within the letter which Dinglebrush had already signed, it was declared to be most impolitic for a man of his newly acquired high rank to get down and dirty with the politicians of Paris, for he was above such antics. Paul Hymans was still preparing his surprised face for when Dinglebrush finally realised that this loophole existed. In the meantime, the insufferable Belgian had to be kept away from literally everyone, until they returned home. The shame – his colleagues had begun calling him ‘ink brush’ after Dinglebrush’s unfortunate penchant for repeatedly pouring inkwells onto other statesmen. Hymans thought that the stories were probably exaggerated, but he did not wish to ask Dinglebrush about it, for obvious reasons, and a part of him suspected that the stories were probably true. Dinglebrush’s face was all scrunched up – that was his intense listening face.

Where had he even managed to find such a brightly coloured waistcoat? Hymans sighed again – how had he been saddled with this dolt? And after all he had done for Belgium? The mark of a true quality statesman was to sit quietly confident in his success, Hymans mused, and he had achieved some considerable success. Siam, Newfoundland and Japan had all been courted and appeased – food shipments had already arrived in Antwerp from Siam, in return for finished goods from the Congo, and similar agreements with Japan. Rubber, indeed, was something which the Japanese wanted in abundance, and which the Congolese seemed to be all too willing to give up. He was confident that any tales of brutality by local Belgian officials were exaggerated. All of these arrangements opened up Belgium to new Asian markets, and it did not harm to link Belgian interests to a British dominion, especially one represented by such a sharp delegate as Mr McColville. While he could find solace in these achievements, babysitting this absurd man-child was becoming exhausting, and yet he could not abandon his gentlemanly patience, lest he should expose himself to ridicule. Patience was a virtue, but it was also a skill. Still though, the following day when Hymans imagined he would be returning home to Brussels and leaving Dinglebrush where he belonged could not come soon enough.

Charles Sheer did not mind standing near the back of the room, and he would not dare to complain after the week he’d had. It seemed that the French truly were determined to swallow AL whole, and they were willing to evict him from Paris altogether to achieve this. He had always been told to watch his blood pressure, but he had felt the last few days very heavily indeed. He wasn’t sleeping well, and his doctor had recommended several days’ rest back in Strasbourg. Charles admitted that he was certainly looking forward to it – he couldn’t wait to see the back of Paris, and to come back stronger than ever to fight for his people. Perhaps by the time he returned, the two belligerent Frenchmen would be taken down a peg, and part of his work would be done for him. He didn’t know how, but Charles Sheer found himself making a sort of vow to preserve through whatever means the autonomy of all Alsatians. They had taken his land, but the identity of AL would not be forgotten or subsumed.

Sheer chanced a wave at the cloud of cigarette smoke a few metres behind him. Karhoo Rosnack, delegate for Slovenia, waved a smoky hand back. Perhaps if he took up cigarettes, Sheer mused, then his heart and digestion would thank him for it. It seemed to work a treat for Rosnack, though his chest infection appeared to have returned, with regular coughing fits whenever the Slovenian became particularly animated, or simply came into close contact with Nicola Pasic. Pasic was also seated nearby Rosnack at all times; it was as if the organisers of the conference had schemed to ramp up the tension deliberately, or maybe they simply believed that because both men hailed from roughly the same region of Europe, they had to be friendly. Charles Sheer recalled the consistent instances of arrogance which some of his European delegates had displayed. Once, a Pole had asked him where in the Commonwealth Alsace was. When Charles had protested, the Pole had shrugged and claimed that Alsace sounded Polish. Thankfully, that Pole had not decided to destroy two other men’s lives in the aftermath. Bronski the Absinthe-minded, Charles Sheer scoffed – he had to admit that that was a good one, distasteful though it certainly was. Imagine the Canadian premier’s horror if he could hear their gossip, when all were meant to be present to honour his friend! The intrigue, as Charles Sheer had learned long ago, never seemed to stop.

‘Really Mr McKay, it is impolite to stare’, Prince Sharif had whispered to the Australian delegate. The Bedouin warrior’s striking appearance and smooth use of English had startled the Australian former soldier, and reminded him that not all Arabs were necessarily savages – many had in fact fought against the Turk just as Australians had done. McKay felt somewhat apprehensive; he was almost certain that he owed this prince a drink from a while back. Prince Nawwar Sharif was definitely wealthy, and definitely had some critically important contacts – that was how he had arrived here in the first place, and it explained everything from his confidence, to his fine clothes, to his skill with languages. This was an educated Arab, the kind of Arab of whom Britain was said to be most afraid. McKay found it still somewhat difficult to let the previous snub go – behind his back the British, Germans and Japanese had partitioned NG up among themselves, without so much as a thought for Australia. Still, there was much to be done, and it was entirely possible that Prince Sharif could be of use.

Suddenly he realised that he had yet to respond to the Prince’s earlier comment. ‘You are quite right sir’, McKay whispered, ‘I just cannot help myself – where does a man find such a bright waistcoat in a city such as this?’ The Arab grinned back at him, ‘My friend, deep down every man has his own style, it is just that not everyone chooses to flaunt it like Mr Dinglebrush.’ McKay was impressed – Sharif had even taken the time to learn the name of a fool like Genuris Dinglebrush. Perhaps he could be of use after all, but for what? There was time enough to figure that out. ‘Prince Sharif’, McKay began, ‘what say I return your earlier favour from the other day, and buy you that drink?’ ‘You are most generous my friend’, Nawwar smiled, ‘but it will have to be a soda water only, as us people of the faith must not touch alcohol.’ McKay was surprised again – so he was intelligent *and* devout? The two things, in his experience, did not tend to go hand in hand. McKay gestured a few seats across to his left at Edward Benes, the Czech delegate, who seemed lost in conversation once more with Alexander Kerensky. Benes held up a hand for McKay to be quiet, the rude so and so – that was the last time he ordered *him* dinner.

Looking to his right then, McKay spotted Venizelos staring into space – did he even understand what Sir Robert Borden was saying? The Canadian premier was making a good speech, but he must have known that there were few in attendance who were in the mood to hear it. Everyone felt exhausted and demoralised, like they needed a holiday before going any further. McKay gestured at Venizelos, and the Greek premier shuffled out his seat towards him. A random typist moved out of the way so he could sit down. ‘Mr David McKay’, Venizelos whispered, in such a tone that suggested he had answered a question. Perhaps the Greek premier had been thinking about Australia while staring into space? ‘Thank you sir’, McKay began, ‘I wished merely to ask if you’ve heard any news of rumours regarding the delegate Kerensky?’ McKay knew that of course Venizelos had, because Kerensky’s leakages were becoming the worst kept secrets in Paris. By probing in this way though, perhaps the Greek premier would reveal something which McKay did not already know.

Venizelos paused – had Kerensky let it slip that Russia would support Greek claims to Cyprus, or that she would furnish troops if possible? It was unlikely that the Russian would tell this random Australian, decorated though he was, so Venizelos tread carefully, preferring to take the focus off himself somewhat. ‘I heard Kerensky has been making regular visits to those two Frenchmen, Rene Massigli and Albert Claveille. He has also been seen fraternising with the Polish pariahs, and even was allowed to hold the sword of one Baron Nabuaki. God knows where Kerensky will pop up next, or what he is indeed up to, but Mr McKay, I fear we would all be wise to guard our secrets for now.’ McKay nodded politely in response – so he was right then, the crafty Greek premier *was* hiding something, and he was unlikely at this stage to find out what.

It was far from the most conventional of alliances, but Chaim Weizmann believed that the two Asian delegates might be precisely what he was looking for. It was well known that Baron Nabuaki and Prince Charoon of Siam had forged a close working relationship, embodied in their earlier joint proposal for mutual friendship and commerce. The agreement had made the British and Americans nervous, which Weizmann suspected had been at least a secondary aim of the proposal. He had been painfully rebuffed by Lord Balfour the previous week, after taking the opportunity to propose his scheme for Jewish settlement in Palestine. It was time, Weizmann said, to fulfil the promises of the Balfour Declaration, but Balfour himself had not seen it that way, and hurriedly excused himself from Weizmann’s presence. Subsequent efforts to secure meetings with the British FS had been unsuccessful, and Weizmann was beginning to wonder why Balfour had bothered to issue his declaration at all.

Some said it was simply an inopportune time, and that Balfour would reach out to Weizmann when he was able to give him his full attention, others believed that Weizmann should go his own way, around the FS, and make new contacts. Weizmann believed he had already made one valuable ally in that famed IFTA bloc, but this support was conditional of Weizmann’s declaration of support for that bloc’s goals. Weizmann was admittedly unsure of the bloc’s goals, or why the current stand-off with the Western powers had become so heated as of late. Weizmann had not investigated because he did not care, but he was concerned that now he would have to wade knee deep into these rivalries if his life’s work was to be fully realised. Choosing between the west or this vague conception of the east was an impossible one, since he had allies in both. Perhaps, as the rumours went, Alexander Kerensky would have some kind of suggestion for him when the two met the next day.

Alexander Kerensky struggled to move through the dispersing crowd. It was said that close to 500 people had packed the HT great hall for the final funeral reception for Joseph Doherty. What a mark that man had left, and what an example. Kerensky only wished he’d had it so easy. He had never had leverage to begin with, and now he was reduced to spreading rumours and gossip as he bounced from delegation to delegation, in the hope that word would get out at his importance, that paranoia would spread, and that opportunities would open up. It was tantamount to a pipe dream, but Kerensky knew that he had to try. His homeland was in ruins, and the peace conference on which he had placed his hopes had divided itself between two bizarre camps, the IFTA group and its Western rival bloc. No help would come from these squabbling factions, and as they squabbled, Russian people died in vain. Kerensky did his best to hold himself together, but that terrible incident at the HT was like reliving a nightmare.

All around him there seemed to be gunshots and death. How could he change this state of affairs? Kerensky didn’t know change was possible, but he had to try, by knocking on the door of those people who had once been his enemies. Those that had walked past him flashed dirty or disapproving looks. Did they know his cause to be already lost? While walking towards the door of the HZ, as he imagined what he would say to that German delegation and their Austrian friend, Kerensky was stopped by a figure he barely recognised. It was Paderewski, or at least, it used to be. The man’s eyes were bloodshot, and he looked exhausted. ‘Kerensky, my old friend’, the pianist sighed. ‘Have you had any luck?’ So, it was true then, news of his efforts to achieve something for Russia was indeed spreading. Kerensky could only shake his head, even despite this encouragement. ‘Your luck will turn, keep faith my friend.’ ‘How can I keep faith when my country burns?’ Kerensky asked, as the Pole led him through the door. Paderewski signalled to his colleagues to wait for him. ‘Alexander, I promise you, Russia will be saved. Those revolutionaries, those anarchists, they will not win!’

‘I can’t do it’, Kerensky felt a lump in his throat – perhaps this was what happened when one talked to Paderewski – it felt for the first time like he was talking to someone who cared. ‘I don’t have anything left, I have nothing to give.’ ‘You have your two legs, and you have your voice, yes? What more does a Russian need? Poland and Russia must be allies, and together we will destroy the Bolsheviks forever. Trust me, my friend, we just need some support from the West, then we can live in peace.’ ‘Oh Ignacy, the West doesn’t care’, Kerensky sighed, ‘if they did I wouldn’t have to beg every single resident in Paris like this – it’s humiliating.’ Paderewski’s face became more solemn and drawn. ‘These are days of great trial, Minister Chairman, and only the strongest, only the proudest, only the most patriotic will be left standing – is that you?’

Paderewski had used his official title, back when Kerensky had led the provisional Russian government in spring 1917, when the Tsar had been deposed and the republic proclaimed. God…that seemed like a lifetime ago, but it was all flooding back to him now – the pride he felt when he was confirmed in his position, and him, only a lawyer! ‘I will save Russia’, said Kerensky quietly, but defiantly. ‘Don’t tell me, Minister Chairman, I’m not the one that needs convincing, it is *them*’. Paderewski pointed to the British who were at that point crossing the street. Kerensky recognised Arthur Fitzwilliam and Sir Alistair Tancred, the two British delegates. ‘What should I do?’ Kerensky asked, almost in a whisper. ‘The answer is as powerful as it is terrifying – you simply keep on fighting, Mr Kerensky, you keep on fighting until no Bolsheviks are left alive and no power remains to stop Russians being free. Whatever it takes. When you come out the other side, Poland will be waiting, as will all the other nations of the world.’ Paderewski took Kerensky’s hand, ‘Remember, dear friend, Poland and Russia belong together.’ With that, the Polish pianist had left, walking up the road with his fellow Poles to the hotel where they had been unofficially exiled, as they waited for the Bronski episode to blow over. Kerensky watched them walk up the road, before realising he’d forgotten something – the Germans were waiting for him upstairs, and he was late – not the greatest impression one could make upon them!

Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck and Horten von Hotzendorff sat at a long table, with Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner beside them. It looked like a business meeting had been meant to take place, but that only the Germans had shown up, but in reality, von Lettow-Vorbeck chose this precise layout because he believed it made him seem more intimidating, and he was presently attempting to work his magic on the Austrian Chancellor. If the rumours were true, then Weimar Germany had just been established. What was more, rumours were circulating that the Germans were soon to be welcomed back to Paris to take part personally in the negotiations of the Conference, and to top it all off, von Lettow-Vorbeck, accompanied by his aide von Hotzendorff, were believed to be perfectly positioned to assume this important role. Friedrich Ebert had telegrammed von Lettow-Vorbeck the previous day, insisting that he and his government were too preoccupied to answer Germany’s call, since they continued to hold the fort at home.

Ebert had insisted that von LV was best qualified for this position. ‘Ludicrous’, von LV had said, to HVH’s surprise, before clarifying, ‘as if I need that stable boy’s approval – I know how qualified I am for this posting, for I’ve been preparing all my life!’ Ah, VH thought, there was the Prussian Junker he knew and loved…well, knew at least. PVLV had acted quickly since learning of this information though, because the potential arrival of a German delegation meant that it was least fathomable that the Austrians might also get representation as well. If this happened, and if the Austrian Chancellor was chosen for this position by Vienna, then VLV wanted to guarantee that Renner was on his side. The French could protest that this went against the terms of the armistice, but as the previous weeks had shown, anything could happen in Paris, and anything could happen in the future.

They were one man down though – the Russian was late, Kerensky, that hopeless Russian. VLV smiled to himself, as he knew full well that he was the dominant personality in the room. He had fought across the African bush just to be considered for such a posting, and now it had finally fallen in his lap, he intended to fight tooth and nail for his beloved Prussia. Horten could represent those other Germans as he saw fit, and Renner could stand for the southern Germans who called themselves Austrians. It was the perfect plan, and then the door burst open, and PVLV swore twice; first at the shock of the moment, and then once he looked into Alexander Kerensky’s eyes. The Russian Minister Chairman was like a man possessed. Here, indeed, was a man on a mission; a man who could be worked with, who could serve as a valuable partner in the new Eastern Europe they were making.

HVH had felt the heat of that moment too, and was pleasantly surprised to see the Russian standing at the doorway. He had always liked Kerensky, and had long hoped for some sort of useful partnership. This burst of energy seemed to indicate that Kerensky had emerged from his understandable slump – it was not easy to stay upbeat when his home country was in pieces and his potential allies were more interested in fighting over strange treaties. Horten knew that his job would be to balance the more gruff Germania of PVLV, but if he could do that, and if he could represent Germany as a reasonable, peaceable nation to the west, who was only looking for her fair share, then his name would go down in the histories as the man who saved Germany – he would be like Germany’s Talleyrand.

By finding some way to surf the momentum and power which VLV projected, HVH imagined he could be very successful indeed. It was known that a great vote was soon to be put to all the delegates – if this vote passed, then Germany could have its new constitution and representation at this eventful conference all in the space of a fortnight. There was much to be done, but, if Horten dared to dream, he felt that he could envision the recreation of a new Holy Alliance, with Austria, Germany and Russia all playing their equal part. All that mattered, as Horten understood, was the vote.

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And this, history friends and delegates, is where I leave you, and where I hand the reins back. As suggested there at the end, yes, we have a supremely important development for you to ponder over for the next week. Our vote for this week has the potential to radically change the PPC for the better, or depending on how you feel, for the worse. Note that we heard very little from our French candidates this week – that is because, depending on what takes place next week, they’ll be having an awful lot to say. Today we saw much of Alexander Kerensky’s struggles, struggles which the real life AK certainly faced, though Kerensky IRL was not fortunate enough to have a pep talk from Paderewski on the steps of the HZ. In any case, this week’s vote is as follows – the Weimar Assembly has just been convened on 6th February. How do you respond to this momentous development in German efforts to establish a genuinely democratic regime? The options include, PH, condemn the act, acclaim German actions or, most interestingly here, take this opportunity to invite Germany’s delegates – in this case PVLV and HVH – to stay at Paris as Germany’s official delegation.

We haven’t done anything as game changing as this yet, but oh boy, this is where it gets super interesting, because if this vote succeeds, then the real difference between what these two are doing now and what they will be doing, is that they will be sitting in with the Big Five, or big three as it seems to be in our case, and Germany’s influence on the shaping of the TOV will be far more significant. Perhaps you think this would be a terrible wrong, but perhaps you are of the opinion that if Germany had had some say in its construction, then her statesmen never would have rallied so passionately against the TOV in the inter-war years. In any case, predictably enough, this will greatly anger the French, but since we’ve super angered the US President and the British PM already by ruining the LON and mandates, I think it’s only fair. Of course, let me know what you think by voting in the usual manner – simply by clicking on the link for the SM questionnaire as I send it to you once this episode is released.

Any other business? Well, basically, we need to make a LON covenant, so everyone get busy in their chat groups, stop bickering like foolish delegates, and see the bigger picture. Stop creating the small potato treaties, and imagine the world which the people of the world want to see you all create. Feel your responsibility, embrace that challenge, and as GD would say, try not to put the horse before the cart…no wait, that’s not right… Anyway, get out there dear, delegates, and make sure you vote before Friday at 9AM GMT – that should give everyone plenty of time, but until next time, thanks for listening to episode 4 of the DG, and I really hope you enjoyed seeing what your avatar got up to this week. Remember if you want to see your avatar portrayed here then you can, simply go over to \_\_\_ and sign up for just $6 a month. Everyone else, see you all back at the HZ same time next week…