Hello and welcome history friends patrons all to episode 41 of the VAP. Last time, we examined HN’s experience of the PPC while the big three were absent from proceedings, and we learned that the man faced an exhausting, seemingly endless trial of meetings, weighted meals and mountains of work, piled high on his creaking desk. There was little Nicolson could do but tough it out as best as he could, as he was merely following orders sent from above. But what of those individuals that were pulling the strings, and were supposedly in control of the conference now that their superiors were absent or otherwise indisposed? Arthur Balfour, Stephan Pichon and Robert Lansing were the quintessential second tier leaders of their respective countries, and had been dominated by their superiors in the previous weeks.

In this interim period though, together they had an opportunity to make real progress, to speed through deals and establish agreements which would require only the tacit approval of their superiors once they returned sometime in March. It was a great opportunity to cut through some red tape and take advantage of the lack of bloated egos, but could they properly make use of it? In this episode we’re going to find out, as the final two weeks of Feb come under our microscope. It is clearly a massive one, so I have taken the liberty of inserting a break at the halfway point, so that you don’t need to worry about losing your place! Without any further ado then, I will now take you there…

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

The absence of the American President provided GC with the opportunity to capitalise upon the lack of moral opposition which Wilson might have presented. His first port of call was to focus upon an issue which was sensitive to the British too – the French control, or mandate, over Syria and Lebanon. The CX opened with a presentation in favour of the French position at 3PM on 15th Feb, by pulling in native figures from that area and having them present their impassioned arguments which expressed the vital need of the region for French friendship and aid. In an immensely convenient performance, Abdel Hajim Hajjar, representing Syria, announced his country’s need to unite with Lebanon under French influence, saying:

…it is necessary for our country to be helped by a friendly power in order to achieve its full development. On the other hand, we are convinced that such a help would only completely satisfy our aspirations, if it made itself felt within recognition of our independence and in the direction of a democratic Government, free from any religious and theocratic form. The spirit of liberalism and religious tolerance in France prompts us to trust this power and beg for its help. We are moreover convinced that France’s collaboration must extend to the whole extent of the Syrian territory. We are of opinion that the unity of collaboration is necessary to the evolution of the various groups of which it is constituted towards the national unity of the country.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Attention was then given to the question of Dutch compliance with allied requests to permit troops to cross their territory and reinforce the Rhine. If this was not done, it was believed, then the allies would be in a weak position to coerce the Germans and restart the war if it proved necessary. The Dutch had agreed to allow foodstuffs to pass through their lands, but not soldiers or war materials. Clemenceau pointed out that the Dutch had permitted 300k Germans to withdraw through a slice of their territory, and that the Dutch government greatly feared the allied reprisals, but there could of course be no reprisals, unless, as the Italian FM pointed out, the allies wished to violate the very principles for which they had fought. The statement to be sent to the Dutch was still quite terse, and placed the responsibility for any unfortunate events that followed upon the shoulders of The Hague.[[2]](#footnote-2) As an episode in allied attempts to deal with stubborn neutrals, the memo is worth recording here, it read:

The four Allied and Associated Powers consider it of vital importance in the interests of the general peace which they are earnestly striving to conclude at the earliest possible moment, that the preliminary arrangements already entered into with the enemy to this end, shall be effectually carried out. Those arrangements provide, among other things, for the occupation of the German territories left of the Rhine by Allied and Associated troops, and necessarily cover all measures which are essential for the purpose of effecting and maintaining such occupation, including the actual transport of the troops and supplies to their destination. Owing to the extreme congestion of the railways in Belgium and Northern France the most serious difficulties are being encountered in carrying out the arrangements which have been agreed upon by both parties and which cannot be allowed to fail except at the risk of gravely imperilling the early establishment of a satisfactory peace. A ready means exists to meet this difficulty; and that is the utilisation of the communications by rail and by water across Holland. The German Government having assented to the arrival of the troops on German territory cannot be, and in fact are not, interested in the routes to be followed in journeying to the Rhine, and no question of an infringement of any rule of neutrality therefore arises out of the transit of the troops across Dutch territory. In those circumstances the four Powers, sensible of the solemn duty which lies upon them to see that their efforts directed to the speedy conclusion of a durable peace for the benefit of the whole community of nations, earnestly request the Netherlands Government to co-operate with them to this end by facilitating in every way the movements of troops and supplies across Dutch territory strictly for the purposes agreed upon with the German Government under the terms of the Armistice. The matter is so grave and so urgent that the four Powers must express the earnest hope that the Netherlands Government will see the necessity of giving their immediate consent; failing which the responsibility for the state of things which may ensue and which may endanger both the general peace and the flow of food and supplies into the countries of Western Europe, will fall upon the Netherlands Government.[[3]](#footnote-3)

After that exercise in throwing their weight around, the allies then looked at the Russian situation. Their debate centred upon the so-called Prinkipo proposal, or rather, the failure of it as a scheme. We haven’t met the PP before, but we have dealt with some of its elements. If you remember back several episodes ago, when Russia’s fate was again up for discussion, a kind of compromise was suggested whereby Russian delegates from different walks of life would be invited to the Prince’s Islands in the Sea of Marmara. The largest of these islands, Prinkipo, was what gave the proposal which followed its name. It would be far too easy to get lost in these Russian weeds, but because the Russian issue was so important to the PPC we cannot ignore it, so like those present in 1919, I’m going to suggest a compromise where covering Russia is concerned, and commit to assessing the Russian situation in March when we are confronted with some new developments in that theatre that require our attention. For now though, keep the Prinkipo proposal and Winston Churchill in your mind, because both elements are very important pillars in the Russian problem.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The meeting of the CX then adjourned until Monday 17th February, a day which was consumed by discussions of one issue above all – the conclusion of an armistice with Germany.[[5]](#footnote-5) You may recall that, in the past few days, disagreement had reigned over the terms of this armistice, which had to be renewed every month, as per the conditions of 11th Nov 1918. When it came time to renew, some wanted to impose new conditions on the Germans, others wanted to renew the same agreement as before, and others still imagined a brand new concept, one which was imposed indefinitely upon Germany, and which could be broken with three days’ notice. After signing it, the Germans sent to Marshal Ferdinand Foch a list of their reservations, which are worth noting so that we can see the other side of the picture. Marshall Foch had closed out the session of the 15th Feb with the warning from the Polish leader Paderewski to the effect that:

German troops have commenced offensive on a large scale in German Poland…Their initiative will place them in an advantageous military situation before anticipated cessation of hostilities. Germans are making considerable use of asphyxiating gas. The Polish forces, numbering 25,000, only 10,000 being engaged, are insufficient to stop this offensive. The situation is grave. It is urgent that situation be placed immediately before Allied competent authorities.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Perhaps in response to this, and the general sympathy which Foch in particular seemed to have with the Polish situation, the CX maintained a pro-Polish stance which leaked into the armistice terms, to the marked despair of the Germans, who insisted, through their new Chancellor Philip Scheidemann, that matters were far more desperate for the Germans than for the Poles. The letter read:

The agreement imposes on the Germans, in the form of orders and prohibitions marked by harshness and favouring the rebelling Poles, the necessity of evacuating a number of important places…These places are in German hands, their population is mostly German, and they are particularly important in regard to the intercourse with Eastern Germany. In addition to this, the Allied and Associated Powers do not even guarantee that the Poles, on their side, will abstain from preparing or undertaking further attacks, or that they will treat the German population with humanity – a population, the protection of which we are forced to give up: or that they will release the German hostages, the retention of whom has now no object; or that they will keep up the supply of food from the west in the same way as has been done up to the present. Although we are ready to cease all military offensive action in Poznan and in other regions, and to accept the present military situation in these countries as a basis of negotiation, we really must be able to expect the Poles in revolt also to respect the line of demarcation. If they do not, we ought to be permitted to defend ourselves by force of arms.

Scheidemann added an additional point about the nature of the armistice affecting nerves and stability within the fledgling German Republic, which had just recently elected a constituent assembly, saying:

The fact that Germany is granted only a short undefined renewal terminable at the will of one party only at three days’ notice instead of an Armistice containing a fixed time limit enabling her to take the necessary dispositions to execute the clauses, is the very thing to jeopardise quietness and order in Germany and constitutes an unjustifiable aggravation of our constitution. We cannot give up the hope that the Allied and Associated Governments will consider it possible to open negotiations on the German counter-proposals and to renew the Armistice until the Preliminaries of Peace.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Of course, the allies had no intention of allowing Germany to enter into negotiations regarding the armistice terms – negotiation, if it happened at all, would take place during the final peace Congress, which don’t forget, most still imagined would be held soon. The armistice terms laid the foundations, the preliminary conference – which all believed they currently sat in – was tasked with establishing the broad principles, and then the specifics would be arranged at that final congress, where the Germans would be permitted some leeway on the precise figures and terms. The French were understandably not in the mood to play nice, and with WW absent, Clemenceau had a perfect opportunity to avenge himself upon the Germans. Wilson had been told by his close friend and confidant Edward House that he intended to sort out the German armistice issue while he was in the US, and House was surely confident that he could channel the President in reaching a fair agreement.[[8]](#footnote-8) However, when observing the debates taking place on 17th February, House wrote that:

It excites one's sympathy to listen to the brusque way in which he [Foch] puts the demands of the Allies, and the humiliating manner in which the Germans accepted them. Foch told Clemenceau that in his opinion the Germans "were completely flattened out" and Clemenceau thought it was a good time to press final peace terms.[[9]](#footnote-9)

An Admiral Browning then detailed some of the naval terms which would have made the Germans wince, and the British rejoice, specifically with regards to submarines. The Germans were required to hand over all submarines, but these terms had been updated so that even the German submarine docks and lifting vessels would be sent to Britain, any damaged submarines would be replaced by several engines or similar finished goods, and any submarines currently under production would be destroyed. This effort to nerf the German submarine industry is understandable on Britain’s part, considering the damage her subs inflicted upon Britain’s war effort. Browning made the point once more that if Germany was so concerned about the lack of foodstuffs getting into her country, then why did she not release some of her merchant marine rather than keep them jealously guarded in harbour.

Were the Germans so concerned at handing these ships over to the allies that it prevented them from feeding their own people? As per the terms of the armistice, all such shipping would fall into allied hands, but it had been noted before that it made sense to allow Germans ships to feed the Germans people, and with the reported food crisis the allies had signalled their willingness to permit the Germans to harness these ships for that purpose. It was, therefore, the fault of the Germans rather than the allies, if the German people remained without food. This was an argument which Clemenceau approved of, but he did not approve of the emerging crisis between Italy and Serbia, which loomed into view a few minutes later when Clemenceau announced that he had been petitioned by the Serbian or Yugoslav premier to lodge a formal protest against Italian behaviour with the American president. Sonnino, the Italian FM, retorted with palpable irritation that:

The Italian Government regretted that it could not accept any proposal for arbitration on any question for the solution of which Italy had engaged in war, and waged it for three and a half years in full agreement with her Allies, and the examination of which by the Peace Conference was pending.

When Clemenceau asked whether the issue could be brought up the next day, according to the minutes, Sonnino responded that:

…the position of the Italian Government in relation to the Serbs was a delicate one. The Italian Government did not wish to enter into a polemic at the Conference. He, therefore, suggested that the Serbs should be heard in the absence of the Italian Delegates, or that if heard in their presence, no discussion should ensue.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The afternoon of Tuesday 18th Feb was dominated above all by the Yugoslav representations to the CX. In the last episode, we spent our time with HN, but I made a point of excluding one observation he made on this particular day, when sitting in on the CX. Although he was preoccupied with the Greek and Czech committees, Nicolson was interested enough in the Yugoslav position to sit in and record his impressions. They serve as a far more human portrayal of what occurred than the minutes give us. Harold Nicolson wrote in his diary:

In the afternoon the Yugoslavs come before the CX. The idiots claim Trieste. There is a row at the end as to whether the Yugoslav claims should also be referred to a committee similar to the other committees. The Italians refuse to submit the question of ‘frontiers directly and indirectly affecting Italian interests’ to any committee at all. Nor will they allow such questions to be treated by WW in the role of mediator. In the end it is decided that a Yugoslav committee shall be constituted but that they shall be empowered only to deal with those portions of the Yugoslav frontier in which Italy has no interest.[[11]](#footnote-11)

Indeed, this summary tells us much of what we need to know of the day’s Yugoslav representations. The Italians emphatically refused to even consider the idea of putting their territorial disputes with the Serbs up for arbitration or mediation with Wilson presiding, on the basis that so much of what was being debated had already been covered in the 1915 treaty of London that had brought them into the war, and furthermore, that the regions in question, such as Albania or Trieste, were recognised Italian spheres of influence, at least by the Italians themselves. Nicolson’s record of the Italians as akin to children throwing a tantrum isn’t exactly flattering, but we must remember that, first and foremost, the Italian experience of the war had been justified by the expectation that she would gain rewards from the peace table, as the secret Treaty of London had promised. A minor point, but still important, was that Baron Sonnino, the Italian FM, was in fact on his own since 14th Feb when VO had left for Italy. Without his superior to back him up, Sonnino’s back was against the wall, and he felt even less able to compromise so long as he stood to take all the blame for anything that went wrong.

The minutes for the 18th Feb do provide extensive detail on the depth of the Yugoslav arguments. Launching into a long historical survey, the Serbian delegates focused thereafter on the current or more recent injustices, which might have framed people’s understanding of the Serbian situation in an unequal way, such as the classification of German speaking Serbs as Germans, to fluff up the Habsburg census at the turn of the century. Yet, because of recent Balkan events, these Serbs were not here to speak for themselves, they were also present to speak for their fellow countrymen, who were now represented as Slovenes, Bosnians, Croats and others. Thanks to the muddying of the waters, it was relatively easy for these delegates to present their version of history in support of Yugoslav claims – nationalist historians of some shade or another had made this task their own for centuries after all, with the task then being of building up a common sense of nationality or shared history, but there had never been so much at stake with these arguments as there was now. With the blessing of the allies, Serbia’s new super Slav state could expand in all directions, but without this blessing, such expansion was likely to be much more painful.

Where Nicolson had noted that the Serbs were idiots for claiming Trieste, a hotbed of disagreement and contention, that was far from all that the Serbs claimed. They laid claim to the entirety of the old coast of Austria-Hungary which had linked that Empire to the Adriatic, on the basis that the people living there were predominantly Yugoslav, and that those peoples that were not, such as that smattering of Italians living in some scattered villages, were not connected to the Italian mainland as the Yugoslavs were, so it only made sense to hand it over to Belgrade. They were, so it was claimed, Italian ‘enclaves or oases in Slav surroundings’, and it was impractical to connect them to Italy when they were surrounded by non-Italian land. This was of course the crux of what made the Serb-Italian antagonism so intense – both sides knew that the other had solid points. Trieste and other Italian towns like Istria, Fiume and Zara were ethnically Italian and saw themselves as Italian, yet through accidents of history and demographic tradition these pockets of Italian feeling had remained somewhat isolated from the larger Italian body.

It thus did not make practical sense for Italy to hold them, since how would they supply or defend them if not through Yugoslav territory? Yet, at the same time, the Yugoslavs could not ignore the Italian ethnicity of these regions, or the fact that portions of northern Croatia were closer in style and feeling to Italy than to Belgrade, thanks to the recent position of the Croats in the A-H Empire. Both sides had reasonable points, but both sides refused to compromise or in the Italian case, even debate the issue. So what was the solution? Create a committee, the allies said. HN would surely have rolled his eyes, and prayed that he would not be nominated as a technical advisor. Yet even this committee was nerfed in its effectiveness from the beginning, as it was not permitted to deal with issues that the Italians found sensitive, which essentially removed its entire reason for being in the first place. The official statement read by Balfour went:

That the questions raised in the statements…of the Serbian Delegation on the Serbian territorial interests in the peace settlement (*excepting only the question in which Italy is directly concerned*) shall be referred for examination in the first instance to an expert Committee similar to that which is considering the question of the Banat. It shall be the duty of this Committee to reduce the questions for decision within the narrowest possible limits and to make recommendations for a just settlement. The Committee is authorised to consult representatives of the peoples concerned.[[12]](#footnote-12)

The afternoon of 21st Feb opened with an analysis of the current situation of Transylvania, a hotly contested region between the Hungarian and Romanian governments. At this point, it was determined that the best course of action would be to create lines of demarcation which would be free of effective troops, essentially a demilitarised zone, where allied soldiers would be shipped in to keep the peace. Ion Bratianu objected to this, but within a few weeks, he would have an ideal opportunity to avail of the Hungarian difficulties, when that country collapsed into a civil war and Bolshevik revolution. When the red flag was raised over Budapest, the Hungarians lost what little sympathy they did have at Paris, and it was considered safer and easier simply to hand the region over the Romanians. Until the eruption of that revolt though, Bratianu had to hold back, a task which proved difficult considering the immensely contentious nature of the Transylvanian region.[[13]](#footnote-13)

With Romania dealt with, or at least postponed, attentions turned to Poland, where it was learned the allies had been informed by Paderewski of the necessity in recognising the Polish National Committee as the official government of the country. Welcoming Poland into the concert of independent, sovereign nations was a critical first step in the right direction towards protecting Poland’s future; Paderewski insisted that so long as this step was not taken, Poland’s German neighbours would never leave it in peace. Varied responses followed – the Japanese had evidently barely given a single thought to Poland, as Baron Matsui politely expressed, and he would thus have to return to his government for comment before making any move. The positions of the others were more straightforward; Balfour and Lansing accepted Poland’s government as it stood with Paderewski at the helm, and Dmowski and General Pilsudski supporting. Stephen Pichon approved of the current government as well. A fairly painless debate, all in all. Matters that followed for the rest of the meeting took a similar path.

There was some confusion over the Supreme Economic Council – where only the five great powers would have representation – and the Economic Committee, which would contain 18 delegates. These bodies were tasked with deciding on contentious issues like reparations, and would thus have to be stocked with reasonable men, but problems emerged almost immediately on the issue of representation, because as before, Balfour urged those present to consider the perspectives of the dominions, and as before, Balfour’s colleagues in the room refused to promise the British second in command what he wanted – namely, that each of the dominions would have two delegates each on the EC. The EC was supposed to inform the SEC, but Clemenceau suggested that sub-committees be established where the dominions would be able to discuss matters, as was the case for the more political committees which then delivered their reports to the SC, aka the CX.

I know, it’s confusing, but even looking through these minutes reminds me exactly how all over the place the PPC was – did they want committees, or councils, or commissions, and how much power or how many delegates could sit on each? Everyone had different answers, and this wrangling over such unimportant detail forms a large part of the reason why examining this stuff can be so mind-numbingly frustrating for historians – before they had even got to the meaty, juicy stuff, the CX had tied itself in knots, and they were meant to be working through these issues quickly! After everyone was satisfied, a Danish representative arrived and talked about the prospect of returning S-H to Denmark, which had been taken in 1864. That the region was still Danish in sympathy, the Danish delegate claimed, was a truth, and any malcontents could be persuaded by the fact that no German debt would follow these citizens to their new Danish home. The question was sent to the Belgian committee to digest, because Lansing believed it was not worth setting up a new Danish committee over. With that, the 21st Feb meeting of the CX came to an end.[[14]](#footnote-14)

The next day on 22nd Feb, following a short appeal from Portugal to sit on the Reparations Commission, the meat of the mission was addressed – that of arriving at the preliminary terms of peace with Germany. Balfour opened the proceedings by setting the current discussions in the context of the people of the world, who continued to watch their representatives negotiate in Paris as the clock ticked by. Balfour said:

A general feeling of impatience was now becoming manifest in all countries on account of the apparent slow progress the Conference was making in the direction of Final Peace. It would be folly to ignore altogether the danger that feeling might produce. It would be realised that abstract questions, (such as the Financial Arrangements and Economic Relations), did not touch the hearts and interests of families; but the question of demobilisation did touch them very nearly. Now, the progress of demobilisation depended very largely on the final Military Terms to be imposed on Germany. A short time ago the Conference had agreed that it could not continue to add month by month new terms and conditions to the Armistice. It had been agreed that the Military Terms to be imposed on Germany should be drawn up in the form of a final scheme, which would definitely regulate her future armament. That problem had been occupying the attention of the Military Advisers of the Supreme War Council who were now almost prepared to present their final report. He realised that it would probably take some time for the Conference and for the Governments of the Great Powers to consider the military report. Nevertheless the Naval and Military Terms of Peace appeared to be in advance of all other questions, such as frontiers, future economic relations, and attempts to bring to justice criminals, who had abused the Laws of War. That being the case, if the final Military Proposals were shortly to be ready for consideration by the Conference, should not advantage be taken of that fact to obtain an important instalment of the Preliminary Peace? If that instalment were carried, it would be possible for the Allies subsequently to impose on Germany all the other terms that might be considered just and fitting.[[15]](#footnote-15)

This point was reasonable – until the allies knew where they stood with respect to Germany, and until it was known how the military terms of the preliminary peace would affect that country, the allies were forced to maintain high numbers of troops, and to refrain from getting into much detail on extraneous issues or questions. With the Germany army potentially in the background, there was a sense that any decisions which were made would require the use of allied force to make official. To reverse the dependency of both sides on military power, and to reduce the chance that the war would be reignited, it made sense to delineate the accepted military provisions of the preliminary treaty before anything else was done. As the delegates talked around the different issues, the Italian FM Sonnino spoke up for Italy, insisting that while Germany and a German peace were important issues, so too was the other matter of a peace with Austria, the settling of Eastern borders and the conclusion of some kind of arrangement with Russia. The minutes noted that ‘in his opinion…

…the conditions of peace to be imposed on all enemy countries should be drawn up as quickly as possible and presented for acceptance. Otherwise, a separate peace having been made with Germany, the Allies might a few days later find themselves at war with half of Austria and perhaps also with Russia. What forces would the Allies then possess with which to defend themselves and what would be the final consequences?[[16]](#footnote-16)

The Italians were somewhat alone on this hill, because they found their counterparts eager simply to push through with the German peace, rather than untangle the A-H one. The Italian point was fair though, because it followed that Austria would not be solved until long after the German problem, and this meant that Italy would be forced to maintain armaments for the sake of pressure until she acceded to the allied demands. That Italy and Italy alone would shoulder this burden was something Sonnino expected, since no power more than Italy would face the consequences if a rebellious Austria determined to upset the peace. Balfour tried to get around Sonnino with some effective word soup – the issue of Austria was ‘without doubt, fully as important’ as Germany, but the German peace negotiations were ‘more ripe for decision.’ Sonnino wasn’t fooled though; he refused to back down, and almost certainly began to irk his colleagues, if he hadn't already.[[17]](#footnote-17)

A four paragraph statement, ending with the phrasing ‘The Conference are of opinion that the question relating to the preliminary peace with Germany shall not be held up till the questions relating to other enemy countries are determined’ was unacceptable to Sonnino, who correctly viewed it as a sign that Germany would be solved before everything else, which meant that everything else, including a peace with Austria, would be put on the longfinger. Balfour was perhaps too polite to tell Sonnino that Italy was not big enough to overcome the decisions made by the other four parties; instead he tried to argue around the problem, insisting that his proposal didn’t mean what it clearly did. When Lansing attempted to reword the fourth paragraph, so that it read instead ‘The Conference agree that it is desirable to proceed without delay to the consideration of Preliminary Peace Terms and to press on the necessary investigations with all possible speed’, Sonnino was delighted, and added what he cheerfully seemed to think was a simple request – that every reference to Germany in the other three paragraphs be changed simple to ‘enemy powers’, oh and that all the CPs would be dealt with simultaneously, with Germany not hotshotted to the front of the queue.

Balfour may well have been close to tearing his moustache out, but he kept his cool, at least according to the minutes. Amidst their bickering, Lansing said, probably with a deep sigh and a rubbing of temples, that ‘the Conference had lost sight of his proposals to have separate identic resolutions in respect of each enemy country.’ It became a matter of wearing the Italian down; Pichon butted in with logic that argued, in fact, making peace with Germany now made sense because the time was right and that this didn’t mean the peace with Germany and Austria were separate. Balfour asked that if Sonnino wanted each of the CPs to be dealt with at the same time, then a commission would have to be created to determine that enemy combatant’s reparations, military, economic, territorial terms etc. – did Sonnino know of any country that would be in a position to staff all of these commissions at the same time? House then unhelpfully piped up that the US delegation was large enough for this task.

Sonnino certainly felt the pressure, but he felt unable to give way, because he believed Italy would then be left utterly alone to face the full brunt of its military commitments against Austria, which he believed was unfair. According to the minutes, Sonnino said that:

He quite understood the necessity for pushing on the settlement of the final terms to be imposed on Germany; but if the German question were detached from the rest of the questions which called for settlement, that would be like constituting a second front, and he could never accept a proposal of that kind. Such a procedure would have most deplorable and most disastrous results in Italy, for it would be impossible to keep such decisions from the ears of the public. If the Conference persisted in its intention, he (M. Sonnino) could not prevent it: each member must vote as he thought best; but he could not approve a decision which would constitute a positive menace to his own country.[[18]](#footnote-18)

In a bid to achieve some measure of agreement before the day escaped them, House then made a stab at reaching a solution by proposing that a similarly worded document with the four steps as in the German case, should be drawn up for Austria, Bulgaria and Turkey – would that satisfy Sonnino? Balfour interjected and, with palpable irritation, said that he ‘did not wish to insist’, but that:

In any case, it was a relatively small matter. The question of real importance was whether the Conference should decide to press on all questions leading to peace with Germany without getting entangled with all other questions relating to Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria. He felt very strongly on that point and urged his colleagues to accept the proposals contained in the fourth paragraph of his revised note.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Balfour, essentially, wanted everyone to hurry up and deal with Germany while the time was ripe, and the French were certainly with him. The Japanese, as ever, were silent unless Asia was discussed, and the Americans were here floating between different extremes. Balfour had probably never anticipated the Italian FM would put up such a struggle against prioritising Germany in the peace preliminaries, and his efforts to fob him off with a trick of words demonstrated that he didn’t take Sonnino’s objections very seriously either. Incredibly enough, Sonnino got his way, asking Balfour bravely if he would agree to the earlier idea suggested by House, which had imagined four similarly worded documents that all urged haste in the negotiation process, with reference to each of the four vanquished powers in turn. Balfour confirmed that he would agree to this ‘as an act of conciliation’, just so that Sonnino knew he was doing him a favour. The temperature of the room then was reduced somewhat, and matters were focused on Albania, before turning to the agenda for Monday.

After having Sunday off, it was surely hoped that the meeting of Monday 22nd Feb would be a bit calmer, and it was, largely because the Polish situation dominated, and this was not of as much concern to the Italians as the previous meeting. There was palpable tension in the air whenever preliminary peace terms with a particular country were mentioned though. Marshall Foch wished to solve the problem of the German peace by presenting a twofold set of demands; those dealing with the military limitations to be placed on Germany, and those delineating the new borders of the German state. This would help Poland preserve its integrity, particularly in the Danzig region, where on-off skirmishes between Polish and German citizens continued. Lord Milner, a British military representative, was of the opinion that allied contingents accompanying the Poles in Danzig would make it plain to the Germans the danger they would be in if they thought of attacking.

Yet, Foch answered this with the sensible reply that the Germans would not be capable of attacking in the first place if they were stripped of their army and knew which land was theirs. Because matters were still unclear, and the exact lands of the Polish state in particular were not completely confirmed, it could not be safely said that Poland and Germany would remain at peace. Thus, the allies would have to be ready to intervene in this potential conflict, and they would have to maintain their forces at a high level, notwithstanding the burning desire to demobilise. As Sonnino had been told, this issue would be solved if all surged ahead with a preliminary peace deal for Germany, but at the same time, Sonnino was well within his rights to not want to be left alone to defend against the Austrians. In any case, it wasn’t Sonnino’s fault that the 24th Feb’s meeting essentially went nowhere.

By the end Stephen Pichon declared that Lord Milner and Marshal Foch had virtually similar views on the situation in Germany, and that only slight technicalities between each man’s approaches to Germany’s peace need not detain the CX any longer. The development of the military terms, Pichon insisted, would be very quickly followed by the political, territorial, economic terms which Germany would have to agree to, since the deadline for the committee’s conclusions was the 8th March after all.[[20]](#footnote-20) Following this logic, little over a week would have elapsed between the two sets of conditions, so there was no need for either man to worry that the effect of allied military supremacy would be blunted. Of course, by this point it could not have been known that the only committee to return its conclusions was the Greek committee of which HN was a technical advisor. Nor could it have been known that it wasn’t until late April that the final terms aside from the military would be decided for Germany and then, contrary to Sonnino’s wishes, the other enemy combatants would be ignored until Germany was dealt with. Austria would not get its own peace treaty until September 1919; Bulgaria that November, Hungary the following June in 1920, while Turkey would take the longest of all, in the final treaty of Sevres in 1923.

Paris had been without any of the big three for just shy of a week, but that had not stopped discussions taking place, some progress being made or, of course, some resentment setting in. The negative feelings towards the Italians, the idea that they were to blame for the numerous hold ups, and the lack of understanding about exactly what it was they were so concerned about, all contributed towards the increasingly tense atmosphere which culminated in VO’s exit from Paris in late April. Before that occurred though, and before Orlando returned from Rome, Sonnino still had to hold the fort, and there was still much to talk about in the last few days of February 1919.

The afternoon of Tuesday 25th February opened with a remark on the looming financial danger faced in Austria.[[21]](#footnote-21) Thanks to commitments made during the war which were now proving impossible to fulfil, Vienna was discovering that its debt coupons, a version of the war bonds sold in the allied countries, were bound to facilitate a collapse in the country’s currency and bankruptcy within a few days. Large loans would need to be arranged to forestall this disaster, and after noting that these loans would not inhibit Austria’s commitments to pay reparations in the future, all moved on to a more apparently pressing issue – the situation in Poland, more specifically, the Polish divisions which were supposed to be sent into Danzig. Under the previous allied plan, ethnic Polish divisions which had served in French, British or Italian armies were being collected and shipped into Danzig. The idea being that this returning of Poles to their newly incepted homeland would help defend it, and especially its more contentious possessions, against German attack. Now though, it was announced that this act of shipping so many Poles to Danzig was fraught with logistical problems – did the Poles on the ground possess the means to accommodate these incoming Poles, and did they have any horses on hand so that the allies would not have to donate their own?

The Polish situation quickly presented additional issues. Yes, Marshal Foch announced, it was critically important to ensure that the Poles were able to defend their lands themselves. However, would this task not be made easier if the Germans actually knew where they stood? If Germany’s eastern borders could be finalised, Foch said, then there would be no danger of Polish soldiers coming under attack as they travelled along the railway stations from Danzig to the Polish interior – there would also be no need for allied soldiers to occupy these railway stations, an idea which had been suggested in the past. Alright then, perhaps Foch was correct, perhaps there was a need to let the Germans know where they stood in the east. After all, Foch insisted:

The present difficult situation of the German Government was well known; internal troubles were daily increasing…At the present moment Germany would therefore accept any terms that the Allies might demand. The German Government only asked for a Peace. That was the only thing that would satisfy the people and enable the Government to master the situation.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Yet, Foch accompanied this logic with another demand – it would be impossible and imprudent, the Marshal said, to fix the borders in the east without first addressing and fixing Germany’s borders in the West. Furthermore, Foch said, the western borders could not themselves be fixed without noting the reparations policy which the allied would present to the Germans. This train of logic, which began at Danzig and chugged its way right to the western border of Germany, was an odd and in many respects outlandish way for Foch to get what he wanted – the finalisation of French borders with Germany, the solution to the Rhineland question, and the conclusion of the reparations issue in France’s favour. Foch seemed to indicate that all these issues had been connected to Poland’s security problem, but was he right? Robert Lansing was sceptical, and asked whether Foch meant that it was time for a final peace treaty to be signed with Germany. Foch said he was not looking for a final peace, but for the conclusion of preliminary peace treaty – the goal of this preliminary conference after all – which would demonstrate to the Germans broadly where they stood and what was expected of them before the final Congress began and the minutiae of detail were discussed. The minutes record Foch justifying this stance, and outline how the distinguished French Marshal interpreted the different theatres bleeding into one another. Foch said:

What [I] had meant had been that the Preliminaries of Peace must be signed, and that could be done with Germany alone in a fortnight’s time: and the same thing could be done as soon as possible with the other enemy countries. In other words, [my] plan would be to settle all the important outstanding questions on the Western side in order to enable the Allies to use the resources thus made available for the solution of the Eastern questions. The difficulties which the Allies had to face in Russia were due, not only to the enormous distances, to which [I] had already referred, but also to the nature of the enemy that had to be dealt with. The enemy might be badly organised, but he was scattered over an enormous territory, acting like a violent virus. Now to fight against such an enemy, troops of a particular composition were required; and in great numbers in order to cover the whole territory involved. But those troops need not be strongly organised or of superior quality. The necessary conditions would be fulfilled by the employment of such armies as might be raised locally in the countries of Eastern Europe. For instance, the Polish troops would be quite able to face the Russians, provided the former were strengthened by the supply of modern appliances and engines of war. But great numbers were required, which could be obtained by mobilising the Finns, Poles, Czechs, Romanians and Greeks, as well as the Russian pro-Ally elements still available. These young troops, in themselves not well organised, (though better organised than the Bolsheviks), would, if placed under a unique command, yield a total force sufficient to subdue the Bolshevik forces and to occupy their territory. If this were done, 1919 would see the end of Bolshevism, just as 1918 had seen the end of Prussianism. But in order to attain that object, just as the Allies had a base on the Western front, the Rhine, which enabled them to impose their will on Germany, so would it be necessary to constitute a similar base on the Eastern side, consisting of a chain of independent states – the Finns, the Esthonians, the Poles, the Czechs and the Greeks. The constitution of such a base would enable the Allies to impose their demands on the Bolsheviks. Finally, to enable the Allies to transfer their resources from the Western base to the Eastern base, an end would have to be put to all further discussions on the West by imposing on Germany the Preliminaries of Peace, which she would be bound at the present moment to accept.[[23]](#footnote-23)

In response to this, House was quite receptive, in that he appreciated where Foch was coming from, but Balfour was still sceptical. His response is worth quoting in edited form, in that, the stenographic record is in third person, but we will be hearing Balfour speech as he would have given it, in the first person. Balfour said:

Everybody must admit that Marshal Foch had made a speech covering a wide field and of far reaching importance. On the other hand, the proposition which [I] had moved yesterday was that the Polish division now in France should be sent to Poland: a small and modest suggestion involving no particular question of principle at all. On that narrow foundation Marshal Foch had started out to build a great plan stretching from the Rhine to Vladivostock, which involved the immediate conclusion of the preliminary terms of peace with Germany. [I have been] most anxious to hasten the conclusion of the preliminary terms of peace. [I have, myself], moved a proposition with that object in view. [I] could not, therefore, be accused of hampering the attainment of that object. But when Marshal Foch asked the Conference to defer the sending of a Polish division to Poland until the preliminaries of peace had been concluded with Germany, he evidently underrated the difficulties of the latter task. A discussion with a view to bringing about a preliminary peace could hardly be brought to a satisfactory conclusion unless three or four such questions as the following were first settled, that is to say: financial questions, the question relating to the left bank of the Rhine, the question of Danzig, etc., questions which could hardly be settled before President Wilson’s return to Paris. No doubt other questions connected with the future frontiers of Germany could practically be settled in President Wilson’s absence. For instance, the frontiers between France and Germany, the frontiers between Denmark and Germany and the frontiers between Poland and Germany excluding Danzig. On the other hand, the Conference could not move a step until the reports of the Allied Commissions, which were now at work on these problems, had been received. Those reports could not, however, be expected before the 8th March next. The Conference would then have a week to consider those reports before the return of President Wilson, and during that time no doubt some spade work could be done. It was evident, however, that, if the dates suggested by him were correct, it would be impossible to have the preliminary terms of peace ready, covering finance, disarmament, future maritime conditions, the question of the left bank of the Rhine, territories adjoining Alsace-Lorraine, Danzig, etc., regarding which well-informed people held very divergent views. It would be impossible to draft a peace, involving all these questions, at the earliest before the end of March, and even that would be a very sanguine estimate…It would be impossible to wait five or six weeks, which appeared to be the shortest time within which the preliminaries of peace could be drawn up, before sending to Poland the Polish troops which were so urgently required.[[24]](#footnote-24)

What Balfour was doing here was revealing some of his inner realism which had been apparently absent when the original plan for the preliminary conference had been drawn up. There was no way to simply solve all of the issues which Foch’s hurried plan presented in the fortnight before WW returned to Paris; not only was it impossible, but it would also have greatly offended the American President. More than that though, it was totally impossible, thanks to the sheer depth of issues up for discussion, which had yet to receive a decision. We imagine that while speaking in this manner, gloomily anticipating how long everything would drag on for, Balfour may have come closer to the reality of the conference than many before him had. Those optimistic predictions about presenting Germany with the allied terms by the end of March were, by Balfour’s own estimation, ‘a very sanguine estimate.’ This suggested that the whole affair would drag on for some time, and further underlines something of the anxiety which everyone had talked with in previous days, when they had urged speed and ease of negotiation with Germany to serve as underlying principles. That had been complicated by the Italian insistence that Germany was merely one problem among a sea of others, but the anxiety remained acute: they were entering the sixth week of the preliminary conference, and the key issues regarding Germany remained to be properly discussed, let alone solved.

Foch responded to Balfour’s appeal by insisting that he didn’t object to simply sending in the Franco-Polish troops as suggested the previous day, but he was concerned that Danzig’s gates were closed to incoming soldiery. It would hardly be proper to disembark these ethnic Poles in what was still, according to the status quo, a predominantly German town. The German city fathers could not be expected simply to roll over, especially considering the tensions in the region in recent weeks. At least with a treaty, Foch said, these Germans would know where they stood, and allied landings in a Polish Danzig would be supported by the letter of the law. A compromise of sorts was then reached; the allies would send to the inter-allied commission in Warsaw a telegram inquiring about several issues, including the present suitability of Danzig as a place for the disembarkation of ethnic Polish soldiers, and the extent of German control over the emerging Polish Corridor. The actual facts on the ground; that Germans were in a majority in the city of Danzig, but that Poles were mostly in a majority in the surrounding countryside, loomed into view in time, but with this Polish issue papered over for the moment, the CX moved on. Their next port of call was Morocco, where the French wished to restore their pre-war influence and do away with the treaties Germany had made there, and to enshrine these new facts in the eventual peace treaty with the Germans. The French delegate charged with making these appeals found everyone mostly in agreement to this, and the meeting of 25th Feb closed with largely calm heads.

By this point, the delegates sitting in the CX had gotten better at planning the agenda for the next day, and before breaking up, would often list the items up for discussion when they resumed on the morrow. However, the problem with this is that those assembled rarely followed their own list, not because they forgot what was on the list, but because they would often get lost in the weeds when debating issues and the time would run out, or because a supposedly urgent deputation or appeal would be made to them which would take up their time. Wednesday 26th Feb 1919 was one of those days, because it included three major threads which had only become urgent in the previous few days; these were the need to solve the Polish-German border, the problems faced by the Belgian Commission and the current state of Transylvania.

Thus, Stephen Pichon opened the meeting of 26th Feb with an urgent note; he had assumed that a committee had been appointed to deal with the contentious Polish-German border, only to discover that no such committee had been created. Should a committee now be appointed, with its findings to be requested in a week’s time, by 8th March? Lansing said he thought there was a committee for these things already; Sonnino made a point of listing all of the states which had borders with Germany, emphasising Austria; Balfour, perhaps still a bit sore at the Italian FM, asked whether Sonnino wanted there to be a commission especially for the Austro-German border. Sonnino said no, but added that in Bulgaria and Turkey for instance, additional borders had been left unattended. Pichon said that the Greek committee would handle any questions relating to Turkey’s borders – a pronouncement which would have made HN, who sat on that Greek committee, both wince and explode with rage, had he heard it. Balfour tempered this suggestion though, insisting that the Greek committee had enough on its plate already. Lansing said that he was not sure these matters needed to be discussed now, but urged that the Polish border issue be dealt with in the Polish committee. The matter of other nations and their borders would be postponed for now. Everyone agreed, having already wasted close to half an hour talking in a circle, before getting to the original point.[[25]](#footnote-25)

Thanks to a recent appeal made by the Belgian commission to the CX, it was now necessary to devote attention to that tired question of Belgian frontiers. Earlier in the month, Belgian FM Paul Hymans had stood before the CX and requested certain pieces of territory, some of which were in Dutch hands. Hymans claimed that the Dutch would part with this land in exchange for some German land which was Dutch in sympathy, but since making these claims, the Dutch had gotten wind of them, and the Dutch government had declared it would not surrender one inch of its territory. What was more, the Dutch ambassadors in London and Paris had approached those governments with similar pronouncements, amidst appeals that the allies had no intention of taking anything from the Dutch. It had, in Ron Burgundy’s words, all escalated very quickly, and the Dutch were both anxious and insulted that Belgium had proceeded in this manner. It had effectively put their backs up against the wall, and it meant that the Belgian commission had hit something of a roadblock which it now hoped the CX would be able to clear.

Yet, the CX was here expressing the various problems involved in this task of clarification, with the typically long-winded pronouncements to match. Balfour and Pichon seemed mostly in sympathy with the presentation given by Andre Tardieu, the French official who was the chairman of the Belgian committee, yet both Balfour and Pichon argued that it was immensely difficult to solve the territorial question. The best which could be done was to ascertain the sympathies of those regions of the Netherlands and of Germany which were to be transferred, and even then, the CX did not have the authority to compel any neutral countries not involved in the war to give evidence. They could not, of course, force the Dutch to do anything, so the best they were able to do was to ask the Belgian commission to conclude on exactly what it wanted, and then the CX would politely ask first the assembled Conference and then representatives of the three countries – Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, to attend and make their cases. With that issue not really solved at all, the CX moved onto Transylvania, determining that a neutral zone should be established in Transylvania guarded by the allies to facilitate a peaceful solution to that contentious question. After talking for some time around that, the strained delegates then turned their attention to what was actually the intended purpose of the day’s meeting – the solution of the Armenian question.

Armenia deserves a podcast all on its own, so we’re not going to spend much time on it since it is largely outside our focus, and would take too much time to trace. However, it is interesting to note that after everything the Armenians had been through, it was only now on the second last day of February that their nation was receiving any attention. Considering the absolute hell which their people had endured during the war, it was unfortunate that the allies did not send a clear message to the world by meeting first with the people that the war had inflicted the most wrongs upon. Of course, political and strategic questions often trumped the moral ones, but one thing which was expressed was the Armenian desire to welcome as a protector or mandatory power someone from the West, on the understanding that this status would still enable the Armenians to fully determine their own affairs. It was the facts of history that motivated the Armenians to request this status; caught between Bolshevik Russia in the north, a hostile Turkey in the south, and a whole load of Caucasian republics which were breaking away in between, it only made sense to appeal to the allied sense of justice and guardianship.

As a hint to how the CX felt, we can denote that the Armenians spoke uninterrupted for at least an hour, a fact which tells us either that the allies were so captivated, they did not feel able to intervene, or that they were so bored, they couldn’t care less and didn’t bother intervening. Considering previous CX performances, my gut tells me it was the latter. Once the Armenian was finished, Pichon thanked them, and that was it. Assent to a limited degree had been given for Armenian demands, but by and large, it was said, these questions would be settled when frontiers were being established in further meetings down the line. Pichon noted that tomorrow, they would work on the question of Zionism. For perhaps the first time, the planned agenda was adhered to, but as that weighted question suggested, it was nonetheless destined to be a long day.

Thursday 27th February 1919 was opened with a brief note on establishing a boundary commission to determine the contentious frontiers of different states, before launching into its major item on the agenda – the question of Zionism and the fate of the Jews. Speaking for the Jewish question was Nahum Sokolow, a Polish Jew who had spent much of his career writing, translating and working with Hebrew under his official career as a journalist. Sokolow cut to the chase, saying:

The Delegates had come to claim their historic rights to Palestine, the land of Israel, where, in ancient times, the Jewish people had created a civilisation which had since exercised an enormous influence on humanity. There they had lived happily until the country had been lost; since when a long continued martyrdom had been suffered. Now this people possessed no land and no national power. Undoubtedly, happy groups of Jews lived in the countries of Western Europe and in the United States of America; but those where, comparatively speaking, only small groups. The great majority of the Jewish people did not live in those countries and the problem of the masses remained to be solved. The Jews would never forget that France had been the first to recognise the rights of man and personal liberty, and it was under that influence that the Jews had obtained rights of citizenship in other countries. It was in Great Britain that the ancient traditions of Zionism first took root. It was in Great Britain, and especially in the British Colonies, that the Jews had been able to establish prosperous settlements. In Italy, the Jews had taken an important part in the wars of liberation: the Jewish people there were happy, well organised and able to take a part in the government of the country. In the United States of America, 3,000,000 Jews enjoyed the rights of citizenship. Mere rights of citizenship, however, were not sufficient to satisfy the ideals of the Jews, who craved for a national existence. Consequently, for the great suffering majority of the Jews, living in Eastern Europe, a place would have to be prepared where they would be at home and among their own kind. During the late terrible war the Allies had promised to help the Jews to found a Jewish national centre, where the real home of the Jewish people had always been. This was the only possible solution of the Jewish problem. Sustained by that promise, the Jews had been able to organise and to support the Great Powers loyally by creating an entente of all the Jewish parties within the Entente of the Great Powers. Now, a victory of great ideals and of justice having been gained, the hour of deliverance of his unhappy people had struck: and the old Jewish traditions could again be introduced in the land of their ancestors, combined with the ideals of New Europe, thus leading to a re-constitution of a people and the transformation of a country.[[26]](#footnote-26)

It was quite an opening, and it represented the fulfilment of an idea expressed first in the Balfour Declaration of 18th months before. There, the British had recognised the right of the Jewish people to have a homeland in Palestine, and although that pronouncement was made in a very different time in Nov 1917, when Russia was collapsing into communism and the US had yet to suffer a single battle causality, the core message within it reverberated throughout Jewish communities across the world. The declaration led to Mandatory Palestine, a precursor state of Israel that existed from 1920-23, before coming under direct British administration. From the mid-1930s, unrest and hostility between the two major groups, Arabs and Jews, only increased, to the point that the British effectively abandoned the region to the UN in 1948. There was thus a long road ahead for the Jews, not to mention the apocalyptic horrors which the Holocaust represented, and which added additional gusto to the Jewish claims. In 1919, of course, the future could not possibly be anticipated; all that was apparent was that commitments had been made by the British to fulfil the Jewish ambition, and these commitments were now being waved in front of the CX.

After Sokolow’s presentation, another Zionist delegate got up to speak – the Belorussian native and Jew heavily involved in the biochemical industry, Chaim Weizmann. Weizmann is in fact represented in our delegation game, so check him out there as well, but on this day in 1919, Weizmann was seeking to echo his colleague’s speech by presenting some first-hand evidence to the CX about the nature of affairs in Palestine at the time. As someone who had travelled there himself, under the title President of the Enquiry Committee, to investigate the suitability of Palestine for settlement, Weizmann had several points which he wished to present. Weizmann emphasised the awful experiences of Jews in Russia over the years, and noted how productive and useful Jews would be in the event that they had somewhere to settle and prosper without fear of reprisal or pogrom. It was noted that Palestine was sparsely populated, and that as a place for settlement it had great potential. Weizmann wanted the allies to make it their policy to promote Jewish settlement in Palestine, and to help him in the herculean task of persuading his co-religionists to move there and work the land. The Zionist organisation, Weizmann said, would be responsible for organising the successful immigration and integration of Jews to Palestine, but Weizmann hastened to add that he spoke for a million Jews who were all ready and prepared ‘staff in hand’, to make the journey to the region. They merely awaited the approval of the allies.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Subsequent Jewish delegates echoed and added to the presentations of Weizmann and Sokolow. French Zionist delegates underlined the difficulties involved; the land was in desperate need of some solid improvements, which would require heavy investment. The Jewish people, scattered across the world, would require persuasion to move to this new Promised Land. The logistical problems of creating a state containing so many disparate languages and nationalities was not lost on these Zionists – they accepted that the question posed many difficulties, they simply believed that these problems were worth overcoming, and that the Zionist organisation would help smooth over these cracks within a generation or so. Had the problem been an easy one to solve, one said, then it would not have been brought before the powers in the first place. As it stood, matters were to delicate not to consult with the allies, or to request protection and support in this new mandate.

If everything went according to plan, then the Zionists envisioned a Jewish administration supported by the allies which would absorb up to 80,000 Jews per year.[[28]](#footnote-28) Difficult as these challenges were, it was said, these were nothing compared to the daily threats and penalties faced by the majority of Jews in Eastern Europe. The delegates noted that they spoke for 96% of all Jews in the world – that is to say, that an overwhelming majority of Jews supported the quest for a national homeland, and could therefore be expected to support through financial and moral means this brave new mission of the Jewish people.[[29]](#footnote-29)

With that, the Zionist delegates withdrew, and the CX adjourned until Saturday 1st March 1919. It had been a tiring past few days, containing long and detailed appeals and a large amount of information to absorb. This CX had evidently been pegged as the last great hope for many people once suffering from oppression, be they Armenian, or Jewish or Polish. It was a lot of pressure, but the real pressure which was mounting by the day was that which loomed in the unsettled German question. Repeated appeals to find some means of settling this continued to be frustrated – there were so many moving parts, so many committees, so many individuals, so many things to do in the meantime, that solving Germany had proved maddeningly difficult. The hearing of the Jewish question represented the final act of the CX in February – the 28th of that month was taken up with other matters.

It was a weighted end to a month which felt like every single one of its 28 days, and which had seen a vast array of events and incidents take place, from the pained excitement wrought by assassination attempts on the one hand, to the most dreary and cynical of appeals on the other. Much had been learned, but little was still known, and a great amount of work still had to be done. March, they said, was to be the month where the preliminary peace treaty would be presented to Germany, and the allies could move forward with the final congress. March, just like February and January before it, seemed to have other ideas. 1919 was, paradoxically, a year where the months seemed to pass by at an excruciatingly slow pace, and yet somehow, everything still felt like it was all moving too quickly. Six weeks into the PPC, and the paralysing power of the unknown remained just as ominous as it had been when all had first assembled, so flushed with high hopes and dreams, on 12th January. Still, those leaders had not returned to Paris, but as this second fortnight of February had shown, just because the cats were away, it did not mean the mice would play. On the contrary, the mice were collectively begging the cats to return, and yet the Conference rolled on.

1. Council of Ten minutes, *The Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, Vol. IV, p. 5. Referred to thereafter as ‘CX-IV; 15th Feb’. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d1 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Unfortunately, we don’t have time to examine the Dutch experience of the war here, but a great book on this subject can be found by Hubert P. Van Tuyll Van Serooskerken, *The Netherlands and World War I: Espionage, Diplomacy and Survival* (Boston: Brill, 2001). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. CX-IV; 15th Feb, pp. 9-10. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Look at this document for the text of the statement on Russia: https://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/HIS242/Documents/Prinkipo.pdf and look at this Google Book pp. 69-74; D. Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference 1919 (Routledge Revivals)*. The minutes dealing with this on 15th Feb can be found at https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV. Referred to thereafter as ‘CX-IV; 17th Feb’. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d2 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. CX-IV; 15th Feb, p. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. CX-IV; 17th Feb, p. 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. See House, *Papers*, p. 47. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. House, *Papers*, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. CX-IV; 17th Feb, pp. 26-28. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919*, p. 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, 18th Feb, pp. 45-55.
Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d3 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, 21st Feb, pp. 59-62. Henceforth referred to as ‘CX-IV; 22nd Feb’. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d4 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. *Ibid*, pp. 62-67. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, pp. 85-86. Henceforth referred to as ‘CX-IV; 22nd Feb’. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d5 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. CX-IV, 22nd Feb, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. *Ibid*, pp. 89-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. *Ibid*, pp. 94-95. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. *Ibid*, p. 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Council of Ten, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, 24th Feb.
Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d6 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Council of Ten, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, 25th Feb. Referred to hereafter as ‘CX-IV; 25th Feb’.
Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d7 [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. *Ibid*, p. 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. *Ibid*, pp. 122-123. Extract is edited, with [edits in brackets], to indicate first person where third person from original document was used. This edit was made merely for effect and to mimic a speech as the stenographic record reveals, but the original text has not been changed. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. *Ibid*, pp. 123-124. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, 26th Feb. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d8 [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Council of Ten minutes, *Paris Peace Conference 1919*, vol. IV, 27th Feb. Hereafter referred to as ‘CX-IV; 27th Feb’. Available: https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1919Parisv04/d9 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. *Ibid*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. *Ibid*, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. *Ibid*, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)