

**A PLEA**  
**FOR**  
**THE RIGHT TO LIVE**  
**IN BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE**  
**OF EAST GALICIA**



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# Self-Determination and the Case of East Galicia.

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One of the principal reasons for America's entry into the World War was to win for oppressed and submerged peoples the right of self-determination, and for this noble cause America sent its best sons to Europe to fight the advocates of imperialism and militarism. Some of these sons never returned, but they died happy, believing that they were making the supreme sacrifice for the good of humanity—for the liberation of millions of people groaning under the yoke of foreign tyrants.

The sacrifice of tens of thousands of our American brothers was not entirely in vain, for the defenders of civilization, justice, and the principle of self-determination won the World War and extended to the downtrodden peoples of Europe the fruits of their precious victory. As a result the Czechs, Poles, Slovaks, Finns, Letts, Lithuanians, Esthonians, and other subject peoples proclaimed their independence, organized their republics, and joined the fraternity of nations as equals among equals.

The largest enslaved race in Europe, the Ukrainians, also exercised the right of self-determination. They too proclaimed their independence and organized their own state. But, strange and inconsistent as it may seem, the Allied Powers denied them this right and decreed that the Ukrainian people must remain in subjection.

## **Pre-War Status of the Ukrainian People**

This unfair discrimination against the Ukrainians is a difficult matter to explain, and it is not the purpose of the present article

to attempt this explanation in any detail. Before the war the Ukrainian people were divided between two Empires: thirty-two million Ukrainians were subjects of Russia, and five million were subjects of Austria. It was quite obvious that if the right of self-determination were granted to the peoples of Russia, an almost explosive dismemberment of the Russian Empire would ensue, and since Russia was one of the Allied Powers, the Entente perhaps did not wish to see the disintegration of their friend and ally; hence they refused the right of self-determination to the Ukrainians and other peoples of Russia.

With regard to the peoples of Austria-Hungary, however, the principle of self-determination was very easy of application; for although also in this case self-determination of peoples spelled inevitable dissolution of the state, the state to be dismembered was an enemy. Just as soon as it was certain that the Central Powers must lose the war, the national units composing the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy proclaimed their independence and established their separate states, and the Entente made no attempt to prevent or even check the disruption of this enemy state. Instead of insisting, however, that the right of self-determination be not abused, the Entente permitted the peoples of Austria-Hungary to build their separate states as they could and not as they should. The result was a general scramble for territory, and in this scramble the Ukrainians suffered because they were unlucky enough to inhabit territory which, because of its wealth, was desired by all the other peoples of Austria-Hungary.

As if by natural consent, Ukrainian territory was invaded and gobbled up by Czecho-Slovakia, Roumania, Hungary, and Poland, and in this shameful partition of a liberated people by other newly liberated peoples, Poland took the lion's share. The Ukrainian territory of former Austria-Hungary which Poland thus seized by force of arms and which she wishes to annex is East Galicia, and it is in the cause of this Ukrainian country that the present article is written.

East Galicia is in the northeastern part of what formerly was the Austrian Empire. Roughly speaking, the country is bounded

on the east by the River Zbruch and on the west by the River San. It has an area of about 25,000 square miles and a population of five million. Of this population 74 per cent. or 3,700,000, are Ukrainians (Before the World War the Ukrainians of Austria-Hungary were more widely known as Ruthenians); 14 per cent. or about 700,000, are Poles; and about 11 per cent. or 550,000, are Jews. This stretch of country has an abundance of mineral resources, chief of which are petroleum, salt, kainite, and ozocerite. The soil of the country is very fertile, wherefore East Galicia has developed extensive tobacco and alcohol industries. Thus, in size and population, East Galicia is greater than Switzerland and The Netherlands combined, and in natural wealth it is more than rich enough to be economically self-sufficient.

Before the collapse of the Central Powers, East Galicia was a part of the Austrian Empire. The Hapsburgs obtained this territory through the first partition of Poland in 1772, basing their claim to this country on the legal right of inheritance which the kings of Hungary, as blood relations of the Ukrainian dynasty of the old Kingdom of Halich-Volodomeria (present East Galicia) had to East Galicia. While apparently under the rule of Austria, East Galicia was in fact under the complete control of the Polish landed aristocracy; for, as is well known, the possessions of the Hapsburgs were divided into three spheres of influence: the Magyars or Hungarians were given control of the Roumanians of Transylvania, the Slovaks, the Serbs, the Croats, and the Ukrainians in Hungary; the Germans were given control of the Czechs, the Slovenes, and the Italians; and the Poles were given control of the Ukrainians or Ruthenians in Galicia. Thus, by the way, arose the Hapsburg method of rule as condensed in the apt maxim, "Divide et impera". The Hapsburgs permitted the Polish landed aristocracy to rule the Ukrainian population of East Galicia as it pleased, and the fact that the Poles controlled East Galicia under the protection of Austria for the past century or more is the only basis of the present Polish claims to this country.

## Exercise of Right of Self-Determination by People of East Galicia

Following the disintegration of Austria-Hungary in October, 1918, the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs of the southern provinces of the Monarchy proclaimed their union with Serbia and Montenegro in the composite state of Jugo-Slavia; the Roumanians of Transylvania, Banat, and Southern Bukovina joined Roumania; the Italians of Tyrol declared their union with Italy; the Poles of so-called West Galicia united with Poland; and the Czechs and Slovaks proclaimed their independence and set up the Czecho-Slovak Republic. In a manner identical with that of the declaration of Czecho-Slovak independence, the Ukrainians of East Galicia and Northern Bukovina proclaimed their independence and set up the West Ukrainian Republic.

All these peoples acted in perfect accord with the principle of self-determination. They had been subject to Austria-Hungary, but Austria-Hungary was no more. Their sovereigns now were the victorious Allies, and since the Allies had fought for the principle of self-determination, they, in accordance with this principle, decided to be free and independent. It was Woodrow Wilson, the spokesman of the Allies, who said that "the peoples of Austria-Hungary, whose place among the nations we wish to see safeguarded and assured, should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development", and that one of the chief ends for which the Allies were fighting was "the settlement of every question, whether of territory, of sovereignty, of economic arrangement, or of political relationship, upon the basis of the free acceptance of that settlement by the people immediately concerned, and not upon the basis of the material interest or advantage of any other nation or people who desire a different settlement for the sake of its own exterior influence or mastery." These words were proclaimed throughout the world, and the Ukrainian people of Austria-Hungary, hearing them and believing that they were uttered in earnest, hailed Woodrow Wilson as their liberator. Ukrainians all over the world rejoiced in the belief that the hour of Ukrainian liberty had finally arrived.

On the territories of former Austria-Hungary the Ukrainians began, with great enthusiasm, to organize an independent state comprising all the Ukrainian territories of the former Monarchy. A convention was held in Lemberg on October 18, 1918, consisting of Ukrainian members of the Austrian Parliament and of the Galician and Bukovinian Diets and of three representatives of every Ukrainian party in Austria-Hungary. This convention constituted itself the National Assembly of West Ukraine (East Galicia and Northern Bukovina) and, in accordance with the principle of self-determination, proclaimed the establishment of an independent state on the Ukrainian territories of former Austria-Hungary. Following this proclamation, the Ukrainian National Assembly began to organize an army and to take over the civil administration of the country.

During the night of October 31, 1918, the Ukrainian forces in Lemberg, the capital of East Galicia, occupied all the public buildings and disarmed all the Austrian forces in the city, and within a few days after the seizure of Lemberg, all of East Galicia was under the control of the Ukrainian National Assembly. Peace, order, and contentment prevailed, and the government functioned quite normally.

### **Galician Independence an Obstacle to Predatory Designs of Polish Imperialists**

The existence of an independent East Galician Republic, however, was an obstacle to the predatory designs of Polish imperialists in Warsaw, who were not content with indubitably Polish territories but endeavored, and still endeavor, to incorporate within the Polish Republic Ukrainian, White Ruthenian, and Lithuanian territories lying to the east of ethnographic Poland. They lost no time in taking steps to remove this newly arisen obstacle to their imperialistic aspirations. Already on the afternoon of November 1, 1918, Polish troops began to prepare for an armed attack upon the Ukrainians in Lemberg, and in a short time a bitter war was

raging between the Ukrainians and the Poles for the possession of East Galicia.

Unable to cope with the superior forces of Poland, the Ukrainians abandoned Lemberg on November 22, 1918. The struggle for supremacy in East Galicia, however, lasted until July 16, 1919, on which day the Polish invaders forced the Ukrainian Government and Army across the River Zbruch, the eastern boundary of East Galicia.

### **Allied Intervention in Polish-Ukrainian War**

The reasons for the Ukrainian defeat were lack of supplies, Polish treachery, and French support of the Poles. Many times when the Polish forces in East Galicia found themselves in a precarious position, the Supreme Council intervened and ordered a cessation of hostilities and negotiations for an armistice. The Ukrainians always respected orders and suggestions coming from the Allies, because firmly believing that they were fighting in the cause of right, and having implicit faith in the justice of the Entente, they had no reason to be averse to a peaceful settlement of the Galician question by the Supreme Council. The Poles, on the other hand, realized that an amicable settlement of the Galician question must turn out to their disadvantage; therefore whenever they consented to a short interruption of arms, it was not with a desire to submit their dispute with the Ukrainians to the Supreme Council, but in order to obtain time to strengthen their positions and reinforce their armies. The Ukrainians were aware of this lack of sincerity among the Poles; nevertheless they invariably accepted Allied offers of mediation and never rejected reasonable proposals for an armistice. Whenever the Ukrainians were hard pressed, however, and the Supreme Council made attempts to conclude a truce between the belligerents, the Poles simply ignored the efforts of the Supreme Council. Thus when on March 19, 1919, the Supreme Council sent a wireless communication to the Ukrainian and Polish military staffs, requesting the immediate cessation of hostilities and the commencement of negotiations for

an armistice, the Polish staff paid no attention whatever to this request. Again on May 12, 1919, when the Interallied Commission for the Conclusion of an Armistice between the Poles and the Ukrainians presented its proposals for the terms of a truce, the Ukrainians accepted and the Poles flatly rejected these proposals.

Briefly, the Supreme Council desired to arrange a suspension of hostilities between the Ukrainians and the Poles until it could get a chance to settle the Galician dispute at its sessions in Paris; but the Poles knew that it was not in their interest to place the Polish-Ukrainian dispute before the Supreme Council, they saw clearly that if the Galician question was to be settled favorably to Poland, it must be settled not at the Peace Conference but on the battlefield. For this reason they always opposed an armistice, though they pretended otherwise, and continued their annexationist war in East Galicia until its successful outcome.

### **French Support of "Birds from Distant Lands"**

The principal cause of the Ukrainian defeat was the moral and material assistance which France gave to Poland. The army of General Haller, a former Austrian officer, recruited in the United States and trained and equipped in France, was sent by the Allies ostensibly to aid the Poles in their struggle against the Russian Bolsheviki and against marauding bands that endangered life and property in Poland. However, when General Haller made his triumphal entry into Lemberg on April 30, 1919, he delivered an eloquent address, in which he announced the purpose of his army's coming in the following lofty terms:

"We have flown to you like birds from distant lands. We shall build our nest in this city and from here we shall fly farther east in order to mark out the boundaries of our country, which boundaries must be recognized."

Thus outwardly, it would seem that the Allies sent General Haller to fight for one object, but that General Haller preferred to fight for another; for he himself admits that his well-equipped

army came to conquer East Galicia for Poland and not to help the Poles fight the Bolsheviki.

When the occupation of East Galicia by General Haller's Army was already an accomplished fact, the Supreme Council, by its decision of June 25, 1919, authorized the Poles to occupy East Galicia and even gave them permission to use Haller's Army in effecting this occupation. The Supreme Council knew that seventy-four per cent. of the population of East Galicia was Ukrainian, that the people of this country had proclaimed the establishment of an independent republic and had thus clearly indicated their wishes, and that the Ukrainian people dreaded nothing so much as they dreaded subjection to Poland, their cruel, hated, historical enemy and oppressor. Nevertheless, in spite of the wishes of the Ukrainian people and in open violation of the principle of self-determination, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference authorized the ruthless armies of Poland to invade and occupy the Ukrainian territory of East Galicia. What a mockery of justice!

The occupation of East Galicia by the military forces of Poland remains in force to the present day, but this occupation is provisional and will cease just as soon as the Supreme Council determines the political relationship of this country. In other words, the ultimate international status of East Galicia remains, as yet, to be defined, and the duty of determining this status devolves upon the Allied and Associated Powers or their representative body, the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference, because by Article 91 of the Treaty of Saint Germain, the Allied and Associated Powers are the sovereigns of East Galicia.

It is impossible to understand why the Supreme Council has postponed the final settlement of the Galician question for such a long time. The Allies are fully aware of the frightful conditions which have been obtaining in East Galicia ever since the Polish military occupation, and they must know that by permitting this occupation to continue, they are assuming responsibility for the crimes and outrages which the Poles are committing in this country.

### Summary of Polish Abuses in East Galicia

The Polish abuses against the Ukrainian population of East Galicia may be summarized as follows: the wholesale imprisonment or internment of Ukrainian intellectuals, to the number of 250,000; the maltreatment and starvation of prisoners and internees with the object of spreading typhus and other severe maladies, resulting in the death of nearly 100,000 Ukrainians; the colonization of East Galicia with Poles imported from the Cracow and Warsaw districts, hoping in this way to create an artificial Polish majority in East Galicia, which might be useful in the event of a plebiscite; the persecution and suppression of the independent Ukrainian press, and the imprisonment of its editors; the expulsion of Ukrainian professors and students from the University of Lemberg; the dissolution of purely humanitarian Ukrainian organizations like the Ukrainian Citizens' Committee of Lemberg, which distributed American charity to thousands of starving orphans and widows; the persecution of the Ukrainian Church and clergy—briefly, the gradual, systematic extermination of the Ukrainian majority in East Galicia.

This sad state of affairs will cease to exist just as soon as the Supreme Council redeems its solemn pledge to settle the question of East Galicia in conformity with the principle of self-determination. On the other hand, by leaving the question of East Galicia in suspense, the Supreme Council literally surrenders thousands of Ukrainians to the inexorable cruelty of the Polish Executioner in East Galicia.

The people of the civilized world should not permit the deliberate extermination of the Ukrainian race in East Galicia. They should demand an immediate and just solution of the East Galician controversy, and such a solution would be to restore to the people immediately concerned the political status which they themselves elected by virtue of their right to self-determination; that is, complete independence, in the indisputably Ukrainian territories of former Austria-Hungary, under the rule of the Ukrainian National Assembly of West Ukraine.

## Facts of International Importance Substantiating Claim of Ukrainians to Independence

There is no longer any doubt among the Allied and Associated Powers about the ethnographic relationship of East Galicia. The country does not belong to Poland, and on this point everyone is certain. That East Galicia is regarded as a separate country, a political entity from the viewpoint of international law, is borne out conclusively by the facts following.

On July 10, 1920, at Spa, a protocol was signed by the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grabski, in which Poland promises:

“To send plenipotentiaries to the conference which is to be held in London in the nearest possible future for the negotiation of a just peace between Poland and her European neighbors. Delegates from Poland, Soviet Russia, Finland, Lithuania, and Latvia are to participate at this conference, and also *representatives of East Galicia* will be admitted in order that they may present their case.

“To accept the decision of the Supreme Council with reference to the Lithuanian Union, the *future of East Galicia*, the Teschen dispute, and the agreement to be concluded between Danzig and Poland.” (Italics ours).

At Sevres, on August 10, 1920, a treaty was concluded between the Entente Powers and Czecho-Slovakia, Jugo-Slavia, Roumania, and Poland, defining the boundaries of the states which arose in Central and Eastern Europe in consequence of the World War. Count Zamojski signed the treaty for Poland.

This treaty is significant in that it regards East Galicia as a separate country. It states clearly that frontiers must be defined between Czecho-Slovakia and East Galicia, and not between Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, and it discusses the eastern boundary of Poland; that is, the so-called Curzon Line, which lies to the west of East Galicia and hence excludes this territory from Poland.

At the conference in Riga in September, 1920, for the con-

clusion of peace between Poland and Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine, the Russian and Ukrainian delegations on September 24, 1920. gave as their most important condition of peace, "the immediate solemn confirmation of the independence and sovereignty of Poland and Russia, and the recognition of the independence of Ukraine, Lithuania, White Ruthenia, and *East Galicia*." (Italics ours). The Polish delegation objected to the inclusion of East Galicia in this term of peace on the ground that East Galicia had not been a part of former Russia. Her objection was accepted as valid and the Soviet Ukrainian and Soviet Russian delegates no longer insisted on the recognition of the independence of East Galicia.

On February 23, 1921, the Council of the League of Nations, in session at Paris, took up the case of East Galicia and arrived at the following decisions, which were announced in the form of a resolution:

"1. The terms of the Peace Treaty confirming the rights of national minorities in Poland cannot be applied to Galicia because *Galicia lies outside the boundaries of Poland*.

"2. The terms concerning the execution of mandates and the control of the League of Nations over the mandatories cannot be applied to Galicia because *Poland was not given a mandate for the administration of this country*.

"3. The regulations of the Hague Convention cannot be applied to this case because at the time of this Convention Poland did not exist as a state.

"4. *Poland is merely the de facto military occupant of Galicia*; the sovereign of this country is the Entente (Article 91, Treaty of Saint Germain). Therefore the Council of the League of Nations resolves to refer the demands presented to it by the West Ukrainian Government, with reference to the legal status of Galicia and the conditions in this country, to the Council of Ambassadors." (Italics ours).

Again on September 27, 1921, the League of Nations recommended and urged that the Allied and Associated Powers immediately define the international status of East Galicia.

In the British House of Commons, on July 6, 1921, "Lord R. Cecil asked the Prime Minister what is the present position with regard to East Galicia; which international body is now concerned with the question; whether any attempt has been made to ascertain the wishes of the inhabitants as to the future settlement of this country in accordance with the policy declared on 25th June, 1919; and whether there is any truth in the report that the Poles are settling colonies there?"\*

To this question, Mr. Harmsworth, Under-Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, replied as follows:

*"Eastern Galicia is at present in the military occupation of the Poles by virtue of a decision of the Peace Conference in June, 1919. Its ultimate allocation has not yet been decided upon, but by Article 91 of the Treaty of St. Germain the rights of Austria have been transferred to the Allied and Associated Powers for disposal. The Supreme Council is the body competent to effect such disposal. The answer to the third part of the question is in the negative and to the fourth part in the affirmative."\*\** (Italics ours).

Article 91 of the Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Austria signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, September 10, 1919, reads as follows:

"Austria renounces so far as she is concerned in favor of the Principal Allied and Associated Powers all rights and title over the territories which previously belonged to the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and which, being situated outside the new frontiers of Austria as described in Article 27, Part II (Frontiers of Austria), have not at present been assigned to any State."

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\* and \*\* From **Parliamentary Debates (Commons)**, N. S. Vol. 144, p.394.

### **Danger of Polish Annexation of East Galicia**

In the event that East Galicia remains under Polish domination, it will be a constant source of international disturbance and war; for regardless of what state will exist to the east of East Galicia, be it Ukraine or a reunited Russia, it will seek to liberate East Galicia from Polish rule and will always find 85 per cent. of the population in full sympathy with such an undertaking. It is impossible that Ukraine, with her thirty-two millions of pure Ukrainian population, will ever acquiesce in the Polish annexation of East Galicia, which is as dear to every Ukrainian as Alsace-Lorraine is to every Frenchman.

From the preceding paragraphs, it is clear that East Galicia does not belong to Poland and should not belong to Poland, and that on these two points, the Allied and Associated Powers, the legal sovereigns of East Galicia, are in full agreement. There is no reason, therefore, why the Supreme Council, in its future disposal of the rights and title to East Galicia, should not proceed in accordance with the principle of self-determination. Nothing hinders and nothing should hinder the granting of justice to the people of East Galicia. If they desire to be free and independent, their wishes should be granted, for they are asking only what is their just due.







