

**THE CAUSE OF POLAND IN  
REFERENCES  
TO THE INTERNAT.  
PEACE CONFERENCE**

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The Cause of Poland in references to the Internat. Peace Conference by Various

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The  
**Cause of Poland**

and its relation to the

**International Peace Conference,**

to be held at The Hague, Europe.

An Address of the Polish Citizens of the United States of America to  
the People of North America and all other  
Civilized Nations.



1899

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## I.

### **We have the right and duty to promote the cause of Poland on the Eve of this Conference.**

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A so-called international conference has been called by the Czar of Russia Nicholas II. for the noble purpose, as Count Muraviev, his minister of foreign affairs, claims, of checking the growth of militarism, lessening the burden of excessive taxation which the people are forced to bear, in order to support useless enormous armies; and also to devise means for avoiding wars in the future which menace civilized communities.

Aside from the question of who the man may be or what motives may animate him, great honor is due undoubtedly to him whose object is to secure to the civilized world the blessings of enduring peace. His project no doubt would find recognition in the official spheres of the certain governments, if they had the right to speak at the coming "international" conference in the name of the governed, and if the interests of the rulers did not frequently conflict with the interests of those ruled.

This conflict of interests, induced the initiator of this "peace conference" to make certain reservations, by which the right to participate in the conference is restricted solely to representatives of governments. Those nations which are dissatisfied with the present state of

their internal affairs, and are striving to effect a change are to have no voice in the deliberation of this conference. Such a reservation can contribute little to the solution of the question of international peace. If the governments accept this proposed reservation, and reject all discussions of current international politics from the program of this conference, the bone of contention remains, and will always be an obstacle to general disarmament, as long as the controversies between the governors and the governed are not adjusted. These controversies must be adjusted according to the will of the peoples rather than the will of the rulers.

One of the rocks on which the project of preventing further increase of armament of the various great powers, and the desire to secure for Europe the fruits of lasting peace, must inevitably be wrecked, will be the question of redressing the great wrongs perpetrated by the criminal partition of Poland a century ago by three of the first class powers of Europe, who hold until this day the spoils of their unjust possessions. The Polish people under the governments of Russia, Austria and Prussia cannot openly demand that this wrong be righted, because they would lay themselves open to the charge of treason, under the laws of the governments of which they are unwilling subjects. Nevertheless, we the Poles of America as free citizens of the free American Republic, citizens of the United States, which does not maintain a strong standing army, but which is powerful enough to win liberty for an oppressed people, as the late His-

pano-American war, fought in the interest of the Cubans, demonstrates, do hereby raise our voice in behalf of Poland and appeal to the American people and all other civilized nations of the world. We believe that it is not only our *right*, but our bounden *duty* to raise our voice and demand the restoration of Poland's laws, and political rights for the following reasons:

We belong by our descent to a nation which in spite of its one hundred years of enslavement, has never renounced her inherent and inalienable rights. These rights form a distinct entirety not only in our opinion but even in the opinion of our persecutors, as can be seen by the constant persecutions directed against us, and the whole code of legal enactments tending to limit and paralyze our national development. Moreover this nation has its own distinct characteristics, its own illustrious past history, and its own ideals, and has never renounced its mission of forming a powerful link in the great chain of nations. She has always aimed at reaching the highest round of moral and intellectual perfection. This nation points with pride to her former political importance, to her past and present rich literature, and to her host of men of learning and art. This nation then should not be missing at the peace conference which is so important to all nations, and at which the history, literature and erudition of the various races, should be recognized.

Such a representation it is difficult to secure in view of the fact that Poland, partitioned by three usurp-



ing powers contrary to all international law, and in violation of the ordinary precepts of honesty, has no visible government. This, however, by no means should constitute a perpetual obstacle to the national fraternization of component parts. It likewise should not deprive a part of this nation from speaking out for the whole, whenever the occasion occurs. Such a voice will always be re-echoed throughout the whole Polish nation, and in the hearts of communities in whose eyes all treaties extorted under the duress of brute force, have no moral worth.

If we concede that what we have adduced above, gives us a *right* to take part in the peace conference we likewise consider it our bounden *duty* to uplift our voice in this cause. There is not a branch of learning, art, nor science, in which the Poles have not contributed their share to the great storehouse of human knowledge. Hence in so vital an affair, as is this peace conference the Polish voice should not be wanting. Unable to express our views before the delegates of the various governments, we have the right, and it is our duty to appeal to the people of the civilized world who are as much interested in the maintenance of "universal peace" as the diplomats in the service of the crowned heads.

It is therefore our opinion, that to root out an evil it is first necessary to ascertain its cause. If we want to put an end to the present unbearable state of armed peace, and the lamentable results of war, with the present perfected implements of warfare, we must consider the fact that the cause of this armed peace is not

only the fear of an invasion of armed neighbors, into the boundaries of the respective governments, but also, to a great extent, the imperative necessity of enforcing order with an iron hand, or rather of enforcing the existing disorder which enrages upright humanity, though inclined to be most loyal to its own government. The first condition to a partial disarmament and guarantee of universal peace, in our opinion would be the redressing of wrongs perpetrated by certain governments as far as possible, and just. As long as these wrongs exist in their present irritating state, so long will there be a danger of interference from neighboring powers, or else the oppressed at the first opportunity will throw off the yoke which has been forced upon them.

## II.

### **The historic past of Poland.**

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The political downfall of Poland cannot be viewed in the same light as the downfall of other nations of this earth, as Babylon, Persia, Egypt, the powerful Empire of Rome, or modern Spain, on whose dominions at one time, the sun never set. During the era of her greatest political power the fate of Poland did not depend on the arms of rulers in pursuit of fame and material profit on the field of battle waged in the interests of a dynasty. The mission of Poland was one of peace and true civilization. In the cradle of the nation between the Vistula and the Warta in the ninth century after the birth of

Christ, there looms from a shroud of myth, the figure of Piast the founder of the first dynasty of our nation. He came from the people, and not the Knight-hood. In his person he represents the tendency of the Polish people to husbandry and mechanical industry, not the martial spirit of blood, conflagration and violence. The title of "Great" was won by only one of the Polish Kings, Casimir, (1333—1370), a descendant of Piast, because this monarch studiously avoided wars, and preferred to merit in the eyes of the people the reputation of the King of Peasants, rather than to win laurels as a great warrior. During his reign the sources of national wealth increased, and internal order was regulated by the famous statutes of Wislica (1347). Poland had an opportunity of showing the inborn feeling of tolerance of her people, by receiving with great hospitality within her boundaries Jews who suffered persecution in other countries, and by uniting to herself the neighboring nation of Ruthenia without imposing upon her her religion, language or customs, (1340—1365).

Through the marriage of Jagiello, the prince of the neighboring nation of Lithuania, with a daughter of the house of Piast, Jadwiga, the dynasty of Jagiello assumed the control of government. The kings of this family were powerful enough to crush the might of the Teutonic Knight who threatened the existence of the Slavonic races. They were brave enough to sacrifice their lives in unfortunate battles or to wage successful wars against the Turks who overran Christian lands in East-