

Fourth Universal of the Ukrainian Central Rada

On January 22, 1918 (January 9 on the Julian Calendar), the “Fourth Universal” (Proclamation of Free Ukrainian People’s Republic) was announced in Kiev. Those of our community who are older remember how we used to go to Brampton City Hall every year to raise the Ukrainian flag... Below, the original proclamation translated into English.

Tomorrow, as we observe the 100th Anniversary of this heroic document, do honour to the Ukrainians who tried. Had they succeeded, Communism would have failed and the Soviet Union with all its horrors would not have taken place. For further reading and the 3 proclamations preceding this one please Google “Fourth Universal – Ukrainian”. Lord, remember the heroes who tried.....

People of the Ukraine!

By your efforts, your will, and your word, a Free Ukrainian People's Republic has been created on Ukrainian soil. The ancient dreams of your ancestors -- fighters for the freedom and rights of the workers -- has been fulfilled. But, the Ukraine's freedom has been reborn in a difficult hour. Four years of a ferocious war have weakened our Country and population, factories do not produce goods, industry has slowed down, railroads are in disarray, money continues to fall in value; there is less bread, famine looms [before us]. Mobs of robbers and thieves have multiplied throughout the countryside, especially during the times when the army has swarmed from the front, causing slaughter, disorder and ruin on our land. Due to all this, the elections to the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly could not be held on the date set by our previous Universal, and this assembly, which had been scheduled to convene today, could not meet to accept from our hands the temporary, supreme revolutionary authority in the Ukraine, institute order in our People's Republic, and form a new Government. Meanwhile, the Petrograd Government of the People's Commissars, in an attempt to bring back the Free Ukrainian Republic under its rule, has declared war against the Ukraine and is sending into our lands its armies of Red Guards and Bolsheviks, who rob the bread of our peasants, not even sparing the grain set aside for seed, and without any compensation carry it off to Russia; they kill innocent people and spread anarchy, thievery and apathy everywhere.

We, the Ukrainian Central Rada, have done everything to prevent the outbreak of this fratricidal war of two neighboring peoples, but the Petrograd Government has not chosen to meet our efforts, and continues to wage a bloody struggle with our People and [our] Republic; moreover, this same Petrograd Government of People's Commissars has begun delaying the peace and is calling for a new war, which it characterizes as holy [war]. Again, blood will flow, again the ill-fated working people shall be forced to lay down their lives.

We, the Ukrainian Central Rada, elected by the congresses of peasants, workers, and soldiers of the Ukraine, cannot agree to this at all, we will not support any wars, for the Ukrainian People want peace; and a democratic peace must come about promptly. Moreover, in order to ensure that neither the Russian nor any other government shall obstruct the Ukraine's efforts to institute this desired peace, to be able to lead our country to order, to creative work, to the strengthening of the

revolution and of our freedom, we, the Ukrainian Central Rada, proclaim to all citizens of the Ukraine:

From this day forth, the Ukrainian People's Republic becomes independent, subject to no one, a Free, Sovereign State of the Ukrainian People.

We want to live in harmony and friendship with all neighboring states: Russia, Poland, Austria, Rumania, Turkey, and others, but none of these may interfere in the life of the Independent Ukrainian Republic -- power in it shall belong only to the People of the Ukraine, in whose name, we, the Ukrainian Central Rada, the representatives of the toiling people of peasants, workers, and soldiers and our executive arm, henceforth called "the Council of People's Ministers," shall govern until the convocation of the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly.

First of all, we direct the government of our Republic, the Council of People's Ministers, to continue on an independent basis the peace negotiations already begun with the Central Powers, to carry them through to conclusion without regard for the interference by any other part of the former Russian Empire, and to establish peace, so that our Country may begin its economic life in tranquility and harmony.

As to the so-called bolsheviks and other aggressors who destroy and ruin our Country, we direct the Government of the Ukrainian People's Republic to take up a firm and determined struggle against them, and we call upon all citizens of our Republic to defend their welfare and liberty without sparing their lives. Our Ukrainian People's State must be cleared of the violent intruders sent from Petrograd, who trample the rights of the Ukrainian Republic.

The inestimably difficult war, begun by the bourgeois government, has greatly wearied our People; it has already destroyed our Country, ruined the economy. An end must come to this now. While the army is being demobilized, we order that some [members of the armed forces] be released; after the ratification of the peace, the army is to be disbanded completely. Later, instead of a standing army, a people's militia is to be formed, so that our fighting forces may serve as defenders of the working people, and not at the pleasure of the ruling strata.

Localities destroyed by war and demobilization are to be rebuilt with the aid and through the initiative of our State Treasury. When our soldiers return home, new elections to the people's councils, district, county and city dumas will be called at a time which will be prescribed, so that our soldiers may have a voice in them: meanwhile, such local administration should be established which can be trusted and which will be based on all revolutionary-democratic strata of the people. The government should encourage the cooperation of the councils of peasants', workers' and soldiers' deputies elected from among the local population.

On the matter of land [reform], the commission elected at our last session has already worked out legislation concerning the transfer of the land without compensation to the working people, taking as its base our resolution on the abolition of property and the socialization of the land which was passed at the eighth session. In a few days the whole Central Rada will study this legislation.

The Council of People's Ministers will use all means to ensure that the transfer of land from the land committees to the working people take place without fail before the beginning of spring tilling.

Forests, waters and all mineral resources -- the wealth of the Ukrainian working people -- are transferred to the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian People's Republic.

The war has also taken all the manpower resources of our country. Most of the factories, enterprises and shops have been producing only that which was necessary for the war, and the nation has been left completely without goods. Now the war has ended. We direct the Council of People's Ministers to begin immediately the change over of all factories and enterprises to peacetime production of goods most needed first and foremost by the toiling masses.

This same war has proliferated hundreds of thousands of unemployed and invalids. In the Independent People's Republic of the Ukraine no working man should suffer. The government should increase the industry of the State, it should begin creative work in all areas in which the unemployed may find work and to which they may apply their strength and -- [the government] should use all means to ensure [the welfare of] the maimed and of those who have suffered from the war.

During the old order, merchants and all sorts of middlemen gained huge capital from the poor oppressed classes. Henceforth, the Ukrainian People's Republic takes into its hands the most important branches of commerce, and all profit derived from them shall be used for the benefit of the people. Our State itself will supervise goods imported and exported so as to prevent the high prices [set] by speculators which are [such a] hardship to the poorest classes. To achieve this aim, we direct the Government of the Republic to prepare and present for approval legislation on this [matter], as well as on the establishment of monopolies in iron, leather, tobacco and other products and merchandise on which the greatest profit has been drawn from the working classes for the benefit of the non-toilers.

Likewise, we order the establishment of state-people's control over all banks whose credits and loans to the non-working masses aided in the exploitation of the toiling classes. Henceforth, bank loans are to be granted primarily to support the working population and the economic development of the Ukrainian People's Republic, and not for speculation and various exploitations by the banks or for profiteering.

Because of anarchy, anxiety in life, and shortage of goods, discontent is growing in a certain segment of the population. Various dark forces are using this discontent and trying to attract unenlightened people to the old system. These dark forces want to put back all free peoples under the unified tsarist yoke of Russia. The Council of People's Ministers should struggle firmly against all counterrevolutionary forces. Anyone who calls for an uprising against the independent Ukrainian Republic, for a return to the old order, must be punished for treason of the state.

All democratic freedoms proclaimed by the Third Universal are reaffirmed by the Ukrainian People's Republic, which particularly proclaims: in the Independent Ukrainian People's Republic

all nations enjoy the right of national-personal autonomy, granted to them by the law of January 9.⁴

Whatever matters enumerated in this Universal which we, the Central Rada, will not have time to accomplish will be completed, rectified, and brought to a final order by the Ukrainian Constituent Assembly. We order all our citizens to conduct the elections most assiduously, to use all means to ensure the fastest tabulation of votes possible, in order that our Constituent Assembly -- the highest ruler and administrator in our Land -- may convene within a few weeks to establish freedom, harmony, and welfare by a constitution of the Independent Ukrainian People's Republic for the benefit of the whole toiling people, now and in the future.

This our Highest body will decide on the federative ties with the people's republics of the former Russian state.

Until that time we call upon all citizens of the Independent Ukrainian People's Republic to stand relentlessly on guard of the freedom and rights won by our People and to defend their fate with all their might from all enemies of the peasants'-workers' Independent Ukrainian Republic.

Kiev, 9th January, 1918.

Ukrainian Central Rada