February 25, 1945

Dear fellow countrymen and countrywomen, I greet you with the words: Praised be Jesus Christ!

In the month of November 1944, the daily newspapers published the news that 250 girls in elementary and middle schools in the city of Portland, Oregon, had left school and undertook steeling from Department Stores. The girls were not ashamed of what they were doing but formed clubs which had theft as an objective, stealing such things as gloves, handkerchiefs, jewelry, perfumes and other articles in the stores and then compared the successes among each other in this unsavory practice. What is curious, and frightening is that from these 250 girls, almost all of them came from wealthy families and so the thefts of the articles was not a matter of something that was useful to them but something they got pleasure from. How do you explain this mass thievery? In our town you may find one of two such activities in schools, but one could see their theft as something they needed because they were poor. Because they did it for pleasure is quite alarming. Where do you look for motives for such transgressions by so many girls? I could understand that wartimes contribute to this senseless activity. So say those who do not know youth, and even more do not know human characteristics in this life. They blame this kind of activity on the youth and are at times giving example themselves for this kind of activity. In September of 1944 in a suburb of Boston four young boys, bragged about the way they obtained money to have a “good time”. – One of these young bandits knew an ex-marine, who just came back from the service in the armed forces. He knew that the marine always had a lot of money on himself. The boys took the victim to the park and murdered him. They found 128 dollars on him and after they killed him, they divided the money and went out for a “good time”. At the same time two 15 year old girls with two boyfriends of the same age, attacked a veteran so that they had to send him to the hospital, and they were sent to reform school.

WHO SOWS THE WIND – INHERITS THE GALE

“What is happening with our youth today?” asked a certain editor of one of our papers. He asked the question since one of the English papers covered the story of a group of girls who made for themselves the vocation of robbing department stores. There were 250 girls in the group. They left school and planned their escapades of thievery. One girl said, “It was really thrilling to lift things from under the noses of those dumb clerks!”

Here’s another scenario: At nine o’clock in the evening, a mother and her daughter walk. The mother was 65 years old. They are returning from the hospital where they visited someone they knew. They walk leisurely. Suddenly they are attacked by two masked men. Both have revolvers. They stop the couple and one shouts: “Hands up in the air. We want your money. Don’t make a sound or we’ll shoot you. The elder of the two women, frightened by the confrontation shouted, “Help!” At that moment two shots were fired. The woman fell down. The young hoodlums ran into the darkness. An ambulance came and took the two to the hospital. The mother died shortly; the daughter recovered. The bandits escaped and the police search is on.

The Detroit papers relate the following story which happened in Jackson, Mich. The city police as well at the State Police tracked down five miscreants. Heading a secret gang called, “The State” were boys 13 to 17 year old. They were sent to a correctional institution. It was known that they came from good families. Their fathers worked and received good wages. Despite that, they wanted to be independent and free from all responsibility. At an early age they took themselves to robbing. They managed to pile up ammunitions and revolvers, and other police weapons. They even stole a small printing press on which they printed various rebellious things, pamphlets rousing prejudicial statements against Jews and Muslims, and against all religion stirring up people to rebel against the government. They had their own ritual according to which they established certain rituals part of which was penetrating bibles with daggers and stepping on an American flag which lay tattered before a small altar. The police found maps indicating certain places where government ammunitions were stored which in a future were to be sabotaged. They had their own library with several thousand comic books. - For what? To carry out plans of supermen.

I doubt whether any correctional institution would rehabilitate the outrageous minds of these kids. A prison is not really a place where the intellect, heart and soul of man can be corrected in any way. A moral poison cannot be rehabilitated in the environment of a prison.

Everyone, parents as well as teachers, have to admit that criminality among American adolescents is increasing. It does not forebode good for society and for the nation as a whole. One must look upon evil with a business-like and cold eye. One does not need to go into hysterics, take it lightly or close your eyes to it. The FBI, the investigative agency, gives us statistics on the issue. Listen: the FBI maintains that in the last first six month of the year of 1944, crime among the young rose 37 percent in comparison with the previous year, 1943. A lot of darkness surrounds the activity of the youth. A lot of 17 year olds were arrested and the 18 year old girls. About 15 % of youth had perpetrated crimes of theft. Going back a bit in the statistics we find that from December 1941 to December 1942 criminality among underage girls rose 55 percent; and from December 1942 until December 1943 it rose by 78 percent. Generally I report that I was dismayed to learn that drunkenness jumped 40 percent; bad behavior by 70 percent and sex offenses by 104 percent. The sad fact is that40 percent of the girls were just about 15 years old or younger.

I understand that statistics are cold measurements. Despite that fact, I do not wish to be judged or overstating the facts, I add this: The FBI as far as the very young children, maintain that 550 appeared in court and they constitute only 40 percent of our population. In 1941, there were 200,000 children offenses; in 1942 around 310.00; in 1943 over 400,000. Do not these figures give us material for grave concern? You need to take precautionary measures to stave wave of criminality which floods increasing number of ranks of the young.

In the last couple months, I have gathered quite a bit of material in this regard. For example, as regard girls whom the police have named” “Victory Girls!” – A matron, policewoman, stands to the left of the girl who is about 16 years old. Her name is Dorothy. She speaks to the Policeman who arrested her for lingering on the streets during night hours: We all have to do something for the boys!” She is a teacher in a high school. She has good credentials; plays the piano creatively. She comes from a good family. Her mother belongs to various organizations. Her father is the director of a bank. Her parents are present in court. Both cry. A reporter takes notes. The mother haltingly speaks: “We strived to give our daughter all the comforts we could. We did not spare our finances for her as she was growing up. The daughter listened with contempt to the words of the parents. When we reprimanded her in front of her friends, she was adamant, “I have a mind of my own and I don’t want you to butt into my affairs. It isn’t your business to interfere with whom I want to hang out with.” The mother could speak no longer. The father stood a looked sadly at he daughter, and said: “Your Honor, bad companions contributed to my daughte’s failures. She had friends who all had parents who gave them all the things that they taught would help them along. It wasn’t enough. They sought new experiences. The got worse as the time went on. After school, instead of coming home, they took a bus to a park which was close to the school of military cadets. There they met with boys with whom they went drinking. Then they went dancing. The ended up in “rooming houses”. The father said, “I can’t understand the change in my daughter” as he wiped away his tears. We did not ban her from bringing her friends to the house, but she refused to do that. She stubbornly did what she wanted. She drinks at night, and comes home in the early morning hours. When I go out and bring her home, she waits till we go to sleep and she goes out again. She sneaks out the window of the kitchen.” The judge listens attentively to the father, looking at the parents and then at the daughter who paid no mind to the words of her parents. She stood as cold as ice. You would think she was a statue without any life in her. Finally, the judge asked the girl, “Dorothy, what do you have to say in defense of yourself. Would you like to return home? “No.” Then what do you want? “I want to live my own life!” she relied angrily. The judge explained the a 16 year old girl must shape up as he parents advise. Then when she reaches 21, she may do as she wishes. Either you stay with your parents and obey them or you go to a “Good Shepherd” home. She chose the “Good Shepherd” home. Going out of the courthouse she looked sneeringly at her parents and laughed. On that day twelve girls stood before the judge. What were their ages? Two were sixteen years old; three were 17; two were 18 and one 19 and on 20.

Ann was 15 years old. She came from a well off family. Her father was a foreman in a large chemical factory. The family lived in an imposing home. But let the mother talk. The mother’s words: We gave Ann to the Police in order to save her from herself because we were unable to help her. We cannot explain her sudden change. In the last few months she exhausted our patience. She spent entire nights outside of the home. She met with friends from the neighborhood whose parents did not care where their daughters were and who they were with or what they were doing. It was not sufficient for their daughter to be out on weekends and as long as they told their parent where they were and had come in at 11 o’clock in the evening, it seemed to be ok. Our daughter went out every evening coming back at three or four in the morning. Upon asking her who she went out with, her only remark was: “Oh, some man in the service!” One evening a marine came looking for her. He had a hard time standing on his two feet. Her parents didn’t permit him to come inside. That same night Anna fled home. The police conducted a search. In two months they located her in a nearby state. She was working in a restaurant with another girl who fled home. They were earning 30 dollars for a week’s work. They both lived in a small room and were out most of the time with soldiers from a nearby camp. Anna fell in love with the whiskey glass. This amatory occupation was practiced with verve and enthusiasm. One morning, the military police found her in a bar in the company of two soldiers; the trio was intoxicated and she was very drunk, so they directed her to the police station. They kept her until she was sober against her protests; they put the two soldiers in the brig at the base. She was arrested and shouted her way through the night. When the police matron admonished her, she was offended and shouted at her with profanities at which she was an expert. When summoned before the judge, after hearing her complaint, asked deliberately, “My child, is it true what they say about you?” - “I am not a child,” she replied, stamping her feet, “but an experienced girl and I know very well what I am doing.” “I left home because I got tired of my parents telling me what kind of friends I should go out with and at what time I should be home. How can my parents know young people? I have the right to live my life as I wish.” – The judge, sensing that there is no way to talk to her or give her advice, sent the girl home warning her of being locked up in a reform home if she continued to be disobedient. What was her retort? This child, barely out of her mother’s womb said: “If my parents will not let me out for good times, I will run away again!” – I repeat again: this child had a good home, and was given everything under the circumstances. She never denied that; nevertheless she couldn’t and didn’t want to listen to the admonitions of her parents. She had pretense and misconception of certain laws. She didn’t admit any obligations she had in connection with her state of life. In her understanding there was nothing she couldn’t do if she so desired. This poor girl played with dynamite. He games are not safe and threatening. I go no further.

Sometimes I told you about the devastation I say in the British Isles. There isn’t a city or a town that did not suffer the bombardments of German planes. The bombers flew over England, Scotland and Wales. The bombardiers blindly dropped bombs on millions of family homes and either destroyed them or left them in ruins. Wherever one looked, one saw piles of brick, stone, and broken walls. The streets were strewed with debris. Some homes were burnt to the ground with walls standing. Some were without roofs; others without doors or windows. The result of blitzkriegs were the actions of “arch-people”, enemies, whose only purpose was to destroy and annihilate. All of this damage was still reparable, capable of being restored. Surely it will take great effort and money and will take decades to accomplish; however wounds can heal. We, here in America, do not need to look upon such devastation in our country. We ought to be very thankful that we have been preserved from it. The war also had taken its toll morally and spiritually in so many families who have given up so many fathers, sons, and daughters on the battlefields. I have in mind the fathers and mothers in relationship to the children and vice versa. Although a German bomb has not fallen on any homes here, there is no doubt about how war has taken its toll with the death of family members on foreign soil. Someone in millions of families was left demoralized or disorganized. - These words pertain to families whose fathers and mothers who were taken up in the winds of war and the protection of our freedoms and the liberation of those who were the prey of the Axis powers. Children had to prepare their own food, breakfast at home and lunch for school etc. It is not rare that a child had a key for his own home and came home when he wished. It occurred when mothers had to work because fathers were at war. Children roamed the streets or sat in theaters, with no one in charge of them. The hang out with elders and adopt their ways. In Seattle, Washington, about 90 percent of teachers in higher education, instead of returning home after school, they hurry to work in restaurants, theaters and hotels. After hours at work, they spend their evenings in the company of men in uniform. The police maintains that “parents of these children have lost control over their daughters who are free to do what they wish.” What is worse, in some schools which are in the outskirts, schools are closed a noontime. Authorities claim that they do so in order to give youth an opportunity to help out in patriotic work. Youth, therefore, has money and time. The earn money a waste time in sporting endeavors.

The above facts and statistics of crime among youth bring to mind among people who mean well and the moral stature of young people. Some attribute the problems to the war; others blame the parents; others, blame the youth. Uncounted numbers claim that the lack of religion and the knowledge of Christian principles in the catechetical process in school and at home contribute. Without doubt, every war repeats itself in its effects of criminality. Every war has certain produces a lowering of esteem. War also builds courage and virtues of dedication and sacrifice. So you can’t assign all the problems created through war. And you can’t just blankly attribute the actions of children to their parents. That’s clear. And only a cynic will attribute the criminality to youth. It would be faulting all children instead of those who are problems all the time. Generally our youth is healthy. So, certain parents are at fault, just as certain children are guilty. Judge “Albert L. Doyle, of South Bend, Ind., in response to a criminal matter in the city, said that “the obligation of all human beings is to defeat evil.” “All of us must be concerned about our homes. “There are mothers who have to go to work, in order to survive and neglect their children who remain alone and do what they want and they ought to remember that their most holy obligation is rearing their children. Character, health and their future should have a great deal more worth than making money.” A judge is wise to say: “Take care of children as your parents brought you up, and your children will survive.” – Now let us admit to ourselves the truth. The home as well as the school for many years sinned not only in a cold relationship to God and the lack of knowledge about God’s law, but outwardly snubbed God and belief in God and only from that reason that in such homes that attitude resulted in problems. In such homes and such schools children result without religious mentality which are the underpinnings of morality and a rainbow of deterrents in crime. And we have to remember that the entire Christian civilization rests on the first two commandments of God. Now you see that putting all these factors together where the finger of blame rests. Parents without faith, a home without religion and a school without God fail. Several months ago, James Bullock, a Presbyterian Pastor said to his congregation: “Chaos in the world will last until religion finds a proper place in the school. Rearing and other phases of life failed because they became materialistic and schools to which children attended, taught nothing about religion. We need to strive to bring God to schools and homes; then, the number of youth transgressions will diminish and disappear in war and peace.