**January 14, 1940**

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

Last year, at the end of September, I was sitting at my desk and looking through Polish and English newspapers. I was reading about the perfidious attack of bandits on the Polish nation. How, without declaring war, in spite of agreements and treaties, first the unscrupulous descendants of the barbaric Huns and the two-faced Teutons organized an instant invasion of the weakly defended borders of the Polish country, which only twenty years before had reborn, after a hundred and twenty years of oppression and slavery. Eight divisions, so around two million Prussian soldiers moved in the direction of the border posts; in front of this mob, equipped with the most modern tools of murder, moved four thousand steel tanks, to prepare the way for the uniformed bandits. In the air flickered wings and muttered the engines of two thousand bomber planes, which were to sow disability, death and destruction, not only on heroic soldiers, but on peaceful civilians, including defenseless women, and innocent children! I read further how hordes of despicable Asians, on the basis of a secret treaty between the modern Judases of the world and mankind and civilization invaded Poland, cutting off the escape route for desperate people, and extending their criminal paws, already stained with the blood of innocents, to grab their agreed-upon part of Polish land! Seeing this, probably all of hell laughed happily, because it saw in this temporary destruction of Poland the temporary disappearance of the cross and Christian civilization! When I was reading about these events, Mr. Manduk, the first Polish consul in Buffalo, came to visit me. A professional engineer, he had been sent to America by the Polish government to collect information about road-building. The war stopped him from returning to his Fatherland and family. What a noble person, this former consul of ours, Mr. Manduk. Quiet, nice and kind, you only need to meet him once to take a liking to him! He came to me worried and saddened! Poor man, I wasn’t surprised. Depressed by the news and telegrams from Poland, he sat down at the table and started complaining! He was worried about his wife and family. His estate and property did not interest him at all. He spoke only about his family. He became sentimental and started to cry. I myself had tears in my eyes, even though until then I had never seen close up the effects of war! Yet I wouldn’t have been human, had I not sympathized with people’s poverty, destitution and suffering. So what can I say today?

Today, after having met with the victims of a bandit’s attack on a quiet, calm, harmless people? Today, after having touched the wounds of Polish soldiers and pilots? Today, after having listened to the complaints of widows and cries of Polish orphans? Today, after having listened to the descriptions of inhumane bombings of cities and villages, hospitals, orphanages and churches? Today, after news about the daily shootings of key leaders? Today, after visiting close to sixty thousand Polish wanderers in Romania, people who have no roof over their heads, no clothing, no bread? Today, after looking into the eyes of a soldier dying from typhoid fever and dysentery? And so not only today, but tomorrow and the day after tomorrow and always and everywhere I will try to be - the missionary of Polish affairs, the champion of innocent Polish victims, the almsgiver of poor Polish people. I will pay no heed to suspicions, nor to criticism, nor to accusations, because I have seen too much poverty and destitution, heard too many complaints and grievances, seen too much suffering, pain and death, to have someone or something stop me from shaking the souls, hearts and consciences, to have human justice done to the poor, violated and torn Polish nation, which had been the first guard of world and Christian civilization! And now to my talk, entitled:

**The Tragedy of the Migrants**

I was sent to Poland by the Polish clergy from the Scranton diocese. Some of the Philadelphia priests helped as well. The Polish clergy paid for my visit. I went with the knowledge of the main civilian and spiritual leaders of our emigrants! I received letters from the Polish embassy in Washington and from Mr. Maurice Pate, who is the vice-president and secretary of the “Commission for Polish Relief” with headquarters in New York City. I left in the company of Mr. Walcott, Mr. Rhoads and Mr. Gamble, representatives of this American relief committee. The three of them went to Berlin, while I went to Bucharest, from where I planned to go to Budapest, and finally to get to Lithuania! Already before leaving America, I knew that I could not legally reach the territory occupied by the Russians, since in the Russian embassy they had said, “We do not want a Catholic priest, he has no business going there!” However, I was convinced that I would be able to cross the border undetected! That is why I prepared a collar and tie. In the German embassy I was told that temporarily it was not possible to reach the grounds occupied by the Germans; the word ‘temporarily’ was very much emphasized! They advised us diplomatically to ‘wait’! But the official did not want to say how long we would have to ‘wait’, whether it would be until the end of the war? Or until the day of the Final Judgement? Or maybe three years after the Final Judgement? Before leaving Rome for Romania, I visited and spoke long with the Polish primate, His Eminence Cardinal Hlond, and with the Polish ambassadors General Wieniawa-Długoszewski and Papee and with the Minister, Mr. Loret. I was also in the state secretariat by the Vatican where I described the goal of my trip to Cardinal Secretary Maglione, Deputy Secretary Monsignor Tardini and undersecretary Montini! I must admit that everywhere I met with warm interest for my mission, sympathy for poor Poland and suffering Poles! From the lips of the Cardinal Secretary I learned that the Holy Father Pius XII sends, regularly every month, significant amounts of money to the nuncios in Romania, Hungary, Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia, in order to save Polish refugees; that the Holy See is making diplomatic efforts in Berlin to be permitted to start relief action on the territory occupied by German armies, until now with little result! The Polish Primate I found to be as always kind and warmly disposed, but aged in body and depressed in spirit! He was both happy and saddened when I told him how in America we worry about Poland, how we bemoan the sad lot which had befallen her, how we want to bring help to the Polish people in any way we can! I asked him directly and honestly, if it was true that the German government chief had given him an ‘iron letter’, allowing him to return to Poland? That was what I had read in American newspapers! The primate looked at me with pain and sadness in his eyes. It seemed at that moment as if he had grown twenty five years older. Suddenly he lifted his head, looked me directly in the eye and said in a serious and solemn voice, “This statement is not based on facts. In spite of my most ardent desires and the constant efforts of the Holy See, I did not even have the promise of permission to return to the Fatherland!” At my insistence, he promised to write special appeals to our clergy and to the Polish Catholics in the United States! The reasons for my request are: First of all, explaining certain accusations and deflecting the attacks insolently made by certain people who wish to purposely profit from the defeat of Poland and the Poles. Secondly, in order to awaken among the emigrants the spirit of unity and cooperation with the suffering nation! – The primate promised both of these!

Amidst thunder, lightning and rain, I left Rome, in the company of our Father Marian Wójcik, who for many years was editor of the “Maly Dziennik” newspaper from Niepokalanów, near Warsaw. We traveled through Venice, Trieste, Zagreb and Timisoara, to Bucharest. In Venice, I spoke with six Polish officers and two nurses who were going to France. In Triest, in a restaurant at the station, I met six soldiers who were escaping to the French border. From their lips, I heard firsthand and reliable accounts of the bestial cruelties and abuse of innocent Polish people by soldiers from the Gestapo! And this on the part of those ‘archcultural’ Huns, as well as on the part of barbarian Communists!

The trip by rail took fifty two hours. Two times longer than usual. The reason: general mobilization of troops in every Balkan country. Everywhere you turned, there were soldiers, or at least conscripts, from eighteen-year-old boys to sixty-five year old men! The specter of war hung over all of Europe. In the fields you saw women instead of men; young people who should have been sitting in school benches with pens in their hands, sitting in barracks or practicing in muddy fields with guns in their hands. Everywhere, at every railway station, groups of weeping women. These are the mothers, wives, fiancées, and sisters of soldiers and conscripts! On their faces sadness, anxiety and fear. These are not the preparations for yearly maneuvers, but for a bloody, relentless, deathly war! At any moment we will see the beginning of a game, a death match which will surpass anything the world has ever seen and imagined. The music of the god Mars will play in the air, on the ground, on the sea and underwater. To this music, nations will dance with death. The only thing left of Europe will be ashes and ruins, where crazy men, cripples, widows and orphans will run around in circles. Up to the heavenly firmaments will echo complaints and protests, moans and cries directed at those two international arsonists, who with full deliberation set a lighted torch to the fundaments of the world; to those two global tyrants who desired to change smaller and weaker nations into slaves; to those two brutal assassins who intended to root out God from human hearts, to erase the signs of Christian faith and completely abolish civilization; to those two bloodthirsty tyrants who on the mast of the human globe planned to put the banners of the broken cross, the hammer and sickle!

At the borders we meet with various difficulties! The customs officers, military authorities, police and guards conduct detailed searches; they look at every handkerchief, book, and even scrap of paper! How much and what kind of money one has; if it is in gold, silver, papers or money orders? Woe to him or her who does not possess a passport, visa or police permit! He must pay a fine, and then he goes to prison or to a concentration camp! At every border, the public and secret police write out two documents – they show not only the nationality, the age and the profession of the traveler, and the aim of his journey, but also how many and which languages he speaks, if he has any relatives in the towns or even the country he is going to, how much money he will spend there, what he will spend it on, etc. On these two copies they put the photo of the traveler and ask for signature! At railway stations it is not allowed to leave the railway car. Soldiers make sure of this; they never take their eyes of the travelers, as if they were a group of prisoners being taken to penitentiaries!

Finally, after all these stops, obstacles and sometimes even amusing fusses, I reached Bucharest, the capital of Romania! Bucharest, a modern city, which has almost a million inhabitants; among these a substantial percentage of Germans, who number over a million in Romania. You must know this in order to understand the behavior of the Romanian government and the Romanian people. Because the Germans are ever vigilant there. They do their own politics and sow their own propaganda. In Bucharest, I visited the Archbishop Cortes, the papal nuncio by the Polish government. Nuncio Cortes is temporarily caring for Polish refugees in Romania. Supported by the Vatican, he heads a rescue operation. In him, the Polish wanderers have a true father! I introduced myself to Ambassador Mr. Raczynski and Minister Mr. Arciszewski. I had a long discussion with them. Both the ambassador and minister work indefatigably from morning to late night! The buildings of the ambassador and minister overflow with Polish refugees. They come here not only for passports and advice, but for help and financial aid! Soldiers and civilians; old and young; women and children. The ambassador’s wife is for everyone a mother and angel of mercy! After that, I went to see Mr. Super, who leads the relief action as a representative of the American Aid Committee from New York! Mr. Super is a true American who lived in Poland for the last seventeen years. There he buried his son! He speaks Polish fluently. He loves Poland dearly and he would let himself be cut into pieces for the Poles. He created Polish committees in over twenty places, helping refugees in Romania. He built kitchens; he created so-called clubrooms where refugees gather to read reports, newspapers and books; where they organize lectures, plays and debates; they even have schools going in a few settlements! Where they can also play cards, chess or checkers!

The American Committee deserves great praise for putting Mr. Super at the head of this work of mercy and rescue. Mr. Super promises me that he will now ask for Romanian military authorities to give me permission to enter settlements of civilians as well as the camps of Polish soldiers and officers! You should know that access to the camps of soldiers and officers is strictly forbidden. As far as I understand, this ban was issued at the request of German authorities.

Right the next day I started my visits of refugee settlements in and around Bucharest. There are eight of them. Ambassador Raczynski provided the car for us. The refugees are not allowed to leave the designated areas, unless they are under the supervision of and accompanied by Romanian soldiers. They walk in groups. By them are guards with guns in their hands! Here we cannot blame the Romanian government nor the Romanian soldiers. We should blame the German spies and informers! The official number of Polish refugees in Romania, confirmed by Romanian authorities, is about 60 thousand; twenty thousand civilians and about forty thousand military personnel, officers, soldiers and pilots! – The number of refugees does not lessen, as we are erroneously informed by the American press, because new and fresh wanderers come constantly from the lands occupied by the Bolshevik hordes! I will also add, that in spite of journalists’ claims, the number of Jewish refugees in Romania is minimal, as it is only two thousand. Most of them are in the Ploesti and Buzau settlements. They are taken good care of by committees of Romanian Jews! – I went with Mr. Super, Father Marian, and a director. In addition, because of certain personal difficulties and unpleasant experiences, I had a Romanian officer with me! Apart from those near Bucharest, we visited fourteen refugee camps; out of these, three soldiers’ camps in Targovite, Braila, and Bagagag! I saw with my own eyes those thousands of poor, ragged, and sick men, women and children. I did not meet a single person who had two shirts of two pairs of shoes. They had only the clothing on their backs. Here again you must remember that the transmigration of Poles had taken place in the summer months. And so the refugees had escaped in the summer months! What will these poor people do in January, February and March, when snow and frost come to Romania? I spoke in person to a few thousand people; in every town I spoke to those gathered. I comforted them and promised that when I return to America, always and everywhere and everyone I will beg for help and rescue for those whom fortune has temporarily stripped of everything and thrown to a foreign land! I said that the Poles in the United States wouldn’t forget them, because American Poles have a warm heart for every poor and unhappy person, regardless of race or religion - all the more will they remember their own. The poor people listened to me and wept. I also swallowed my own tears! I will give you details in future programs. Today, I speak only in general. However, the worst were the conditions in the soldiers’ camps! In one of the camps, the soldiers were placed in old, decrepit stables. They had been built bunk beds with three beds in each bunk. Bare boards onto which had been thrown sacks with wet straw. In a few days, bugs and vermin appeared and this was the start of illnesses. In the second camp, there wasn’t even any water to drink. In the third camp, soldiers had to sleep on the clay floor in coats, without blankets! It is not then surprising that they get sick and die from malaria, typhoid fever and dysentery! I looked at the dying, those dying a slow death! There was no medicine. They died in a foreign country, far from their own. Over the dying stood a few Polish doctors, wringing their hands since they could not save them! There was no way! – To be precise, I must add that the great majority of refugees looked for shelter in south Romania, by the borders with Yugoslavia and Bulgaria. From Constance by the Black Sea to Timosoara. Swampy regions. Great spaces covered by marshes, crisscrossed by reeds and weeds. These places are the best for different sicknesses, like the ones I just mentioned, to breed! – After nine days of wandering day and night, I returned to Bucharest. From there again north until I reached the Polish border. I wanted to get to the occupied territory. And I was only a few dozen miles from my goal, when I received an official announcement that Romania had closed its borders and was urgently mobilizing its forces, because the Bolsheviks increasingly insisting on certain of their demands. I returned and sped back to Bucharest! To tell the honest truth, I was also running away! I breathed a bit more freely only when I got back to Bucharest!

Here again I gave a full report to the Papal Nuncio, Ambassador and Polish Minister; from here I sent a report to Mr. Maurice Pate and a cablegram to the WBNY radio station in Buffalo! When I went to the Polish Embassy to say goodbye, the Ambassador’s wife Mrs. Raczynska came up to me and with tears in her eyes asked me to help her organize even the most modest Christmas for soldiers in the camps. I promised to do what I could! In spite of the borders being officially closed, with the support of certain influential people, after wandering through many offices and government building, we escaped from Romania. At the borders, once again scenes which seem to be from the realm of fiction took place!

After three weeks’ absence, I returned to Rome. Here again reports and discussions with two ambassadors and the Minister Mr. Lorent! After this, simply and honestly I told the Cardinal Primate and the General of the Jesuit Order, Fr. Ledochowski, about the sad situation of Polish refugees. They were both worried by the sad picture I had painted for them. Finally, both the Secretary of State Cardinal Maglione as well as the Holy Father received from me oral and written reports. In addition, I talked about the refugees with Monsignors Tardini, Montini and Wejnerof. These are all officials of the secretariat of state. The Holy Father told me to thank both the clergy and the faithful for the donations for Polish people. He said. “The Pope does not know what Providence has in store for Poles and Poland. But it has to be something great, since they have been so painfully touched!”

From Rome, I sent a cablegram to the Most Reverend Fr. Prelate Kowalewski in Wilkes-Barre with the request to send two thousand dollars, in Romanian lei, to Ambassador Raczynski in Bucharest. Do you know what this money was for? To organize a Christmas for Polish soldiers. The money was wired immediately. Thanks to this, every Polish soldier had a modest Christmas, namely an opłatek[[1]](#footnote-1), a few buns, some coffee, some tea, sugar, soap etc. I imagine these soldiers crying with joy and praying on Christmas Eve for their benefactors from the American coal basin!

At the farewell on December 14, the Polish Primate Cardinal Hlond gave me two letters, one to the Polish clergy; the other to Poles in America! Copies of this letter had already been sent to every Polish Catholic priest in the United States; the Polish press will receive a copy of the letter to the Poles and the appeal to his compatriots from Ambassador Wieniawa Długoszewski! – In Rome I met over a hundred refugees from different parts of Poland; some of them had escaped from Poland no earlier than November 19. Those people told terrible stories and described the bloody sufferings undergone by unhappy Poles under both German and Russian occupation! Evidently these international gangsters have set themselves one common goal, namely, to exterminate the Polish nation! That is why they do not stop at anything. They use such barbaric methods, much more evil and savage than anything recorded in world history so far! I will give you not one, not five nor ten of such examples. I have about three hundred of them! These are the testimonies of those who were the witnesses of cruelty and atrocities; words fail to adequately describe all of this! In my descriptions there will be no exaggerations, far from it! It will be the truth, the honest, simple yet terrible truth!

In Rome I met with Mr. Frederic Walcott, the treasurer of the „Commission for Polish Relief” who flew by plane from Berlin, where he had conferred with German authorities on the matter of bringing aid to Poles on the territory occupied by the Germans! The government in Berlin agreed to send a certain aid, both in material goods and in American dollars, but until now it has not agreed to let in American representatives who would personally check and lead this charitable action! They have important reasons not to allow any commission onto the occupied Polish lands! Along with Mr. Walcott, to whom I also gave a written report from the camps in Romania, I returned to America. The sea trip was somewhat stormy.

Upon entering the New York City port, I became sentimental as never before. I thought, “If only Americans would want to understand what a blessing and grace from God it is to live in America and be an American citizen! Do they understand this and value it enough? There, beyond the sea, true hell! Here peace and liberty and happiness!!

1. A traditional Polish Christmas wafer. (Comment UAC). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)