January 4, 1942

Welcome noble countrymen and countrywomen with the words: “Praised be Jesus Christ!

I recall a family house on a Pennsylvania farm. It stood at the foot of a hill, far away from other houses and away from the road. It stood in a field. Just a few steps from the house were farm buildings. Two barns, a pigsty, a coach house and chicken coops. During the summer it was very quiet and peaceful. The house was hidden behind the corn that grew ten and eleven feet tall. The entrance to the house was obscured by a gazebo on which hung bunches of grapes. The air smelled of potatoes, cabbage, beets, cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce. When I was in school, I could not wait for the moment when from a distance I could see the family cottage. And once I said hello to my parents, I ran to the barn to talk to the horse and the cow. I let the dog off the chain. When he saw me, he started to jump and squeal with joy, asking with almost a human voice to draw attention to himself. Then I went to the pigsty to see the little pigs that barely held up on their feet. The little filthy pigs grunted with joy when scratched behind the ears and lied down with pleasure, stretching out their legs. They raised their heads and looked at me gratefully, asking for more. Those were pleasant hours spent in the family cottage and on the farm which was built by the late father many years ago and carefully kept by my late mother. Close between the barn and the pigsty was a big, brick oven. Some professional mason built it under the watchful eye of my dad. This brick oven was impressive. It spoke to me, with looks and smell, because, from the interior, every Saturday, used to come out six large loaves of bread. These were real loaves – Goliaths, approximately 18 inches long and 8 wide. We awaited the moment, when my mother began the remove the baked loaves from the oven abyss, which blazed with heat as if it wanted to scare and chase us away. Each one of us took one of the loaves from my mother’s hands, and hugging it to the chest, ran to the room where we placed the loaves slowly and gently on the big wooden table covered with oilcloth. It had to cool down because the hot bread would damage the stomach. The room was filled with the smell of dough, milk, honey and wheat. We were delighted with this heavenly fragrance. The more courageous drew closer to the table, stroked the loaf, accidently broke a bit and put it into the mouth. No one squealed on the other. We held to our motto, “One for all and all for one.” Each one guarded his bread until, after half an hour, which seemed an eternity, my mom picked up a large, sharp knife, marked the flat part of the loaf with a holy cross, and holding a loaf at the breast, began to cut it. Every child was crying for a piece of bread and put out a hand for it. In order not to be preferential to anyone, everyone got a slice of bread. Mom had an excellent memory. On the table were four jars, one with lard and bacon, the second with fresh butter, the third one was plume butter, and the fourth one with thick yellow cream... Everyone had the privilege to smear his b read with one of the above. Often, however, we managed to have two items on our bread. I’ll never forget those days when mom baked these weekly breads. That day we had a home feast. The brick oven was very dear to us and well respected. After the harvest we walked to the neighboring farmer and collected leftover rye spikes. Rye grains were hulled by hand. Manually, we also round rye grain. My mother was a master in baking rye bread. We munched on black bread, like squirrels munch on nuts. We were carrying crumbs for chickens. We were poor, but we always had plenty of bread. The loaf has always been respected. And for that we were grateful.

DO NOT WASTE YOUR BREAD

Two years ago, I learned like never before, what bread means! Traveling in Polish refugee camps in Romania, I saw a lack of bread. I often sat down to tables built with untreated wood, arranged along the crumbling walls of old buildings, and observing the respect of these poor people who were taking up a slice of old and hard bread, I was surprised and deeply moved, seeing the refugees drop big, warm tears dropping on slices of cold hard bread. These poor people swallo0wed Romanian bread sprinkled with Polish tears. I remember how we arrived at the Lacu Sarat camp in the early morning hours where youngsters from the cadets’ school found shelter. The boys sat down to breakfast. There were about 350 of them. When we entered the room, the youngsters stood at attention. After a few words of introduction they occupied their places. Prior to each lay a piece of dry bread, and hot and bitter cup of tea! Do you know what each of them did? First, he crossed himself, then picked up his piece of bread and kissed it. Then he began to eat. The room was filled with strangely touching calmness, interrupted only with crunching and slurping. The boys ate hard bread and drank the bitter tea! Today, when I read about the lack of flour and bread in the overseas countries, I see before me not thousands but millions of people imploringly stretching their hands for – a piece of bread. Among them are the elderly, women and children. In response I hear the words of a merciful Creator, bitterly complaining: “Tongue got stuck to the palate from thirst, children asked for bread, but there was none, who would give them… Blackened their faces and they are not recognized on the streets: heir skin stuck to their bones, dried out and had as wood. Better be wounded by the sword, then die of starvation.

Our American land, was always called by the whole wide world as “the land of milk and honey!” The belief that American land is the Promised Land, which is not only a nourisher and provider for its inhabitants, but also here, on this earth, everyone has the opportunity to secure a peaceful and carefree and old age. And without a doubt, without exaggeration, that our country was and a real mother for all children. Are these children feeling this kindness? Do they appreciate the thoughtfulness due to this state of being? Do they pay off their national gratitude for all the benefits which people call national patriotism? I’m afraid I have to say here – they do not. The average American cares little about this country and responsibilities to the American land. Indeed, he even has some resentment, not only unreasonable and excessive, but also even audacious. Besides he lives from day to day and as bird in the air. Tomorrow does not exist and there is no concern about the future. He is not concerned about his old age for he promises himself that he will spend those years freely in some retirement home. He claims that he is a citizen and pays his taxes to he ought to get something in return at least in his old age. And his life, in his view, is his business. Such a life gives something to think about! This life’s “business” is very unlike business in the first sense. Smug and proud, he disregards others and he himself is wasteful. This was the view of the American by Europeans before the World War when they were tourists travelling through Europe. But, I am straying from my topic. In America among the blessings, we have: freedom, work, and bread. Before the term freedom we place the adjective “my”. As far as work goes, we look upon it as a burden and so in the best of times we have more than 4 million who do not wish to work. Four million drones that live with the help of city, state and federal governments and are too lazy to honestly earn their daily bread. What, then, is our perception of our daily bread? That bread which is in reality, one of the greatest gifts of God, which we have in such abundance, and which we call “staff of life” is here trampled and unappreciated. There isn’t a home on whose table we will not find bread in all sorts of forms: black or white, wheat and rye; sour dough and plain, with honey and without and with milk. Why? In order to satisfy all the different members of a household; the daughter likes this kind, the son another; the father, his favorite; the mother hers. And it has to be recently baked and fresh. Otherwise, the family leaves the table unsatisfied. The baked foods stay on the table untouched. And between morning and evening, it is too old. And so in the evening mother picks up everything in her apron and takes it to the refuse barrel or quietly goes to the boiler room and throws it into the fire. Take a tour of local streets and see if you can go several blocks without finding pieces of bread thrown away. And workmen waste it too. Not to mention in restaurants and hotels. Often on seeing wasted bread my imagination brings back to my memory of people in the midst of starvation where hunger reigns in all of its brutality. How much they would give for a crumb of dry bread in their hunger where the invader had ravaged the fields of grain. What would mothers give for a loaf of white bread when looking upon the skeletons of their impoverished children? Here because bread’s abundance, it is sometimes trampled underfoot or thrown out in the garbage. Will all this waste one day turn against us? Perhaps we will come to suffer hungry years? Perhaps through our streets will walk emaciated hungry people looking for a scrap of bread to soothe their empty stomachs?

Not too long ago I read an article by Zygmunt Nowakowski entitled: “Our Daily Bread.” - The author after a lengthy sojourn and hunger wrote this moving piece about our daily bread: “It was daily but after two years became not so ordinary, far away…far away. How beautiful it was. And the smell …like nothing else on earth. An old adage says, “They bake bread everywhere” but for us who now eat so many different kinds of bread, I is not true for there is no bread like our bread. Only ours smells so great. Three hundred years ago, Piotr Skarga, a great speaker said: “Bread from threshed seed, cleaned from the husk, and gone through water and fire, thus became beautiful.” What a wonderful thing to say about bread. You can’t place a loaf upside down. It needs a level bottom; otherwise it may become scarce. If it falls accidentally on the floor – even just a piece of it – one must pick it up at once. It happens more than once that a child throws a piece of bread – it is then that the mother says “Pick it up right away and kiss it. One doesn’t throw bread on the ground.” Someone might say facetiously – “who throws away bread just picks it up after he dies” or “who spurns bread will eventually be spurned by God.” Then those by the table are silent and the child looks upon the bread differently…with respect and seriousness. It changes his attitude; he even looks upon his younger brother and sister with more respect. In Poland we regard bread more of a symbolic thing. In a dialect, in Cracow, bread is described as “divine”. They say for example: “give me a slice of “divine” and they know what it means without a doubt. It is always brought to the table with a special reverence. It is the most important part of the meal and in a sense, special. Without bread, there is no dinner. There may be a lot of different kinds of food on the table but the attention is given most to the bread. It is in the middle of all the other foods. No one begins to eat until mother makes a sign of the cross on the loaf with a cutting knife after which she cuts through the hard crust according to the phrase “every loaf is cut toward self” even when she cuts not for herself but for her children. In the cutting she releases the aroma of the baked bread. The bread is black on the crust but toward the center is becomes lighter keeping its earthy quality. What a beautiful aroma with the bread a dark rye. And what does it smell like? Like the earth the earth in which the grain grows. The wind which turns the wings of a windmill? Perhaps the water that turns the grist mill? Or the wood, the wood of the pine which bakes the bread? It’s a mystery. Perhaps the smell of the bag in which the grain is stored by the householder and in which the farmer carries to storage. Maybe the smell of the clay dish on which the bread will rest in its formation. When I smell the aroma of the bread my memories reaches out see the house, the house on the farm, on the day it is baked. It begins in the early morning, in some anxiety, which signals all. In its warmth it goes to the kitchen and bursts through the door and no one is allowed to enter. “Bread is baking today” – silences everyone. The heat rises in the kitchen and at the same time the aroma increases, even though sour, and bland but cleaner, more powerful, and penetrating the entire house! How will this bread turn out? Will it work or not? Will it come out beautifully rounded and evenly baked or cracked in crust and irregular? Some expert may say: “It is bread in which mice crawl…. But that happens rarely. Generally it comes out beautifully rounded without the smallest defect and all look upon it with delight and it smiles back. And its aroma is amazing. It smells wonderful!

Certainly it is a complex scent, not giving up its secret; it seems to me, however, that our bread smells especially of all things – work…of human work, and the work of the seed itself, which, thrown on the ground, germinates, bursts open, grows, and blossoms. It is a great labor. Later spring forth heavy blooms. Then warmth wraps around her, and the earth itself, and grain and man and horse. This is indeed heavy work, but at the same time, joyous. And so we recognize that it truly smells of heavy work. But when we who eat a foreign bread, its aroma is different, it speaks of a yearning for Poland because its bread would be everything to us.

If this bread smells of hard labor, then, thinking about it, we must think of the common man. A king, an exile like we, Stanley Leszczyski, yearning for Poland, thought of his native country; and wrote: “Ordinary common men, our benefactors because they harrow the earth for our bread.” As an exile, he thought back to his Poland, and brought back and pointed out various sins, speaking of common men, that “they carry heavy burdens, forming an army, in the end take up all tasks from afar so that if we did not have them, we would have to be the farmers. And when exiling someone we say: “the gentleman from men”. So wrote the king, “the common people are something else, only feet or a pedestal on which stands and builds the Republic. We need to think of these wise words today, when we wish that the Republic would stand on its two feet on “pedestal”, today in order that our “Free speech and protected freedom” would be world-wide, today, when we dearly yearn for our daily, Polish…..”

What’s your take on this? You who have bread in hand as you wish? You, whose bread you have learned to respect? Do you waste it? Do you discard it? Outside? On the street? Step on it? Oh!, you do not know the role in which bread plays in the life of nations! And you do not value it because hunger has not touched your life to see its great value! But I plead with you up until now, thank God we’ve had bread to spare but will it be so in the future. Respect your daily bread!

In Boston, on short wave radio WURL, Anastasia Stańczykowska spoke to Polish women in Europe and among other things she said, „Wherever I me with an American woman, I told her the truth about Poland, about the Polish woman and her daily battle. I told her about you that from the time the war began, your children in Poland started to starve, that for the past two years, the cry of your children was: “Mom, give me something to eat!” That you are in constant doubt, whether you will be able to get a loaf of bread for your children. You American woman imagine yourself in a similar situation. Teach your children to respect the daily bread.

The Romans have a beautiful tradition: When they take to hand a piece of b red they press it to their lips and kiss it. Then they eat. Take them as an example. Then the bread will be always there for the taking.