MARCH 14, 1943

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

In these days, the love of the fatherland is on the lips of all. All invoke the name of their country: service men, civilians; the learned and the unlearned; diplomats and politicos. Children in school are taught the love of country; they sing it in theaters and the radio. Poets and journalists write about it. Today, as we speak of this patriotism I have in mind the United States, which is the real motherland for me, because I was born and raised here. I live here and work here. I am a citizen and partake of the citizen privileges. And it is here, God willing, that my remains will remain here. But to avoid a misunderstanding, I profess publically and honestly that I am not ashamed of my Polish heritage. I have never was ashamed to admit that I had a Pole for a father as a Pole for my mother, but boasted of that fact, and today I take pride in it. I love the homeland of my parents and I always will. My American citizenship does not preclude the love of my parents’ country of birth. A husband loves his wife, loves his mother, and loves his grandma. Does any one of these loves exclude the other? No. One fulfills the other. A good son is going to be a good nephew and a good husband. And vice versa. And so it is that I love Poland like I love my Grandmother. And perhaps this is the reason that God does not condemn be with suspension and I will not be put into a concentration because of it, and in the end, no honest man with good judgment will take me as evil for it. No. With this understanding, there is an improvement in my soul and heart and conscience.

Here in America there are different classes of patriots as in any other country. It is true that the greater portion of citizens and truly patriotic and love their country. There are those, however, whose love dwells deeply. Others are only good weather Patriots. They are patriotic when it concerns their honor or personal advantage. They are tinkling cymbals. There are also those who do not concur with the phrase, “In God We Trust.” There are those who are not concerned about what is happening in their country. They shelter themselves within their families.

There are those who have a gypsy soul and maintain that their Homeland is where it is good for them. And so they gad about from one country to another. They are international citizens. Their banner is a dollar. Finally there are those who came to this country or even were born here and credit America for what they are and what they possess, but are in touch with the German Authorities, are communists and choose other government styles. And so to our talk entitled,

OUR AMERICAN FLAG

When a Spartan king went to battle with an enemy he had with him at all times a young Spartan who had excelled in the Olympic Games. He had on his brow a crown of laurel to indicate that he had achieved this honor through his participation in the Olympics at discus or javelin. There exists a legend that a young Spartan was bribed with a great sum of money not to participate in the Olympics. The young Spartan rejected all such efforts to bribe him and was victorious in many of his events in the Olympics and in his battles. One of the judges asked him this question: “What did these victories give you?” The youth replied: What did it give me? It gave me the privilege of fighting by the side of my king.”

The patriotism of this young Spartan was truly great! He was deserving of his fame and a model to be imitated. This kind of patriotism does not outrank the American way. I have in mind certain Americans who outdo this kind of lust for war. These Americans are for America, from America, and are America itself.

One of the members of a bygone American cabinet, tells a story about the times of the Boxer rebellion in 1900, when the nationalist Chinese declared war on the encroaching immigrants. It took place in Tientsin. The allied forces met here. Among the soldiers were Japanese, Germans, Italians, British, and Americans. General Waldersce was in charge of the army. At the helm was a Japanese contingent with the flag of the rising sun. One of the Japanese touched the arm of his neighbor and said: “this is the flag of the Mikada, our Caesar.” The next contingent was from Russia. They had the Russian flag flying over them. An attending officer said: “Here comes our dear flag”. Then on a steed an officer shouted: “This is the flag of the Kaiser” Then the regiment of the British grenadiers. The leader said with coolness: “The lag of England.” Then the Americans in their kakis. An American shouted twice with glee: “This is my flag.”

The flag of our country is a symbol of these God given gifts: freedom, equality, and brotherhood, the nature of which was born in heaven itself. I remember when I left the country in September of 1942 in a bomber from Canady to Great Britain. We flew by night, in a bomber, darkened because of the war. In the morning we flew through a storm for the second time. The Bomber groaned as we rose higher and higher. Underneath were white clouds. We flew at 10,000 feet with a view of the stars. The sun was rising in the east. It was then that I saw the rays of the sun filtering through the clouds to the earth, the heavenly flag of human freedom, the gigantic flag of God, the star-filled flag of red white and blue.

“Francja ma swą lilię I Anglia ma swą rożę,

I każdy wie gdzie szamrek rośnie,

Szkocja ma swój oset, nisko i wysoko kwitnący

Lecz amerykański emblem narodowy, to chorągiew niebios!”

Our flag should be something of worth – the heritage of a free nation. At times it has served as an inspiration for heroic deeds and the willingness to dedicate oneself to sacrifice. In 1863 – the sixteenth regiment of the Connecticut Volunteer army found itself in a trap, surrounded on all four sides by the enemy. Either death or imprisonment awaited the fighters. The lieutenant was heading the regiment. They wanted to fight to the end. The lieutenant convinces them that it would be a shame to shed blood and die. Further, such a loss of life would discourage the rest of the army from fighting. He called for the cutting of their flag into pieces and had each volunteer take a piece of the flag to keep on his person. There were about four hundred men in the regiment. The men were captured input inside a fortress. If one of the men died in prison, their part of the flag was given to one of his comrades. It was in this way that not even one piece of the regimental flag was lost. After the war the prisoners regained their freedom. Before each left for their homes, they gave the flag bearer the hidden pieces of the flag. It is currently in the State house of Hartford, Connecticut. In order to appreciate the meaning of the American flag, it is necessary to live outside the American Country and live in some foreign country. Then, at the sight of our flag a person stands alert and takes of his hat, in honor, because this flag reminds one of his fatherland where a person can breathe the air of freedom equality and brotherhood. There are no words to describe the feelings of one who in our times, after spending a couple of weeks in a country across the ocean, comes back and sees on our buildings the flag of our fatherland, the red, white and blue banner with its glistening stars.

A few years ago in one of the foreign hotels a meeting took place. It was more of a conference which was the current way to discuss in large groups. Often, probably more often, it was a way that representatives of various congregations and organizations would meet. They debated, banqueted and travelled. At one of the banquets, A woman from one of the organization came to the point of being critical of the flags which were being hung in the banquet hall. She didn’t like the colors. And the level of sound did not jive with her tastes. She spoke in English. When she glanced at the American flag, she sarcastically said, “It looks like a checker-berry candy!” An American youth heard her cynical remark and said, “Yes, the kind of candy hat has made everybody sick whoever tried to lick it!”

President Lincoln in his Gettysburg speech said, “Eighty seven years ago our forefathers created a new nation on this continent, begun in freedom and dedicated to the fact that all people are created equal.” He had in mind those who sacrificed and in their dedication broke with the foreign countries across the sea; he spoke of the newly formed republic which is America.

Truly this land became a new nation because of certain ideals which fleshified their existence in this new nation. Our forefathers left their far-away lands and came here because they wanted certain rights which were denied to them. The wanted to think their own thoughts, and lead their lives and have the ability to praise God according to their own conscience. They landed on the shores of this new land and their first thought was to thank God that he permitted them to land on these shores far away from the religious persecutions and political hardships to hack out a life for their children other than what they could experience in their foreign lands. In a short time they found out that the steely tyranny reached even to the new land. Their free speech was curtailed and authoritarian laws were imposed on them. And those who spoke of brotherly love and asked for certain considerations were thrown into jail. But men arose in the midst of their difficulties to work to save those ideals which were being constructed in the new land…such men as Washington and Franklin, Adams and Jefferson, Otis and Henry, Revere and Lee, Hancock and Lafayette, Pulaski and Kosciuszko, Marshal and Morris, Warren, Wayne and Sherman. From their dedicated efforts, their pain, tears and blood, was born a new nation, characterized by two ideals – freedom and equality.

With the establishment and promulgation of the New Republic of the United States came the necessity of a national flag. In June of 1776, Congress established a committee to find a fit flag to represent the nation. The committee included George Washington, George Ross and Robert Morris. These three chose Betsy Ross, who lost her husband in the war to sew the flag. A red color was to designate challenge and courage; the white: purity of motive and purpose. The stars were chosen from the banner of a certain Scottish party called “Govenanter” and symbolized a league. On the first flag the stars were arranged in a circle symbolizing eternity or something unending. The stars were to remind the nation of its unity and celestial light.

The American flag does not picture any particular ethnicity not national victories. It has everlasting standards. From a revolution grew a country not for individual benefits but to be worthy of the Creator and for the good of man. Our fighting men wherever they are, went there and found the American flag a symbol of returning freedom and the defending of our freedoms. The enemies of the American flag are those who hate justice. Her friends are those who love the people.

The colors of our flag are a symbol of the unity of which it consists. Truly and really – the trinity. Three colors and three elements, one nation indivisible with justice for all. Our government is much more than a collection of states. It is one nation, indivisible with freedom and justice for all. The union has certain duties attached to it. The rights of others must be recognized and protected. Freedom itself has certain boundaries: A democracy cannot exist among demons nor freedom amidst miscreants neither peace between lunatics. A popular government has to operate on the will of the people. A government that disregards the will of the people and disregards its rules does not merit having the flag flown over its head.

If at any time, it is at this time that it is important to honor our flag and the ideas which it represents. Today when the enemies of our flag rage we must protect our way of life.

Freedom which we see written on our flag does not mean license. My rights border on the rights of others. I cannot under any circumstance negate the rights of others in the name of freedom. Freedom is guaranteed us through the flag contains within itself: freedom of thought, of speech, of work, of education, of religion and freedom of voting for whom I wish. These are the foundations of our country. Remove one of them and the whole building falls into ruins. Equality guaranteed us is not a certificate of our ability or equal health, or any equality of achievement. It is however a solemn guarantee of equality in the ability to achieve the treasures. Doors to life, freedom and the search for success we should not be closed to anyone unless the person closes them for himself. Wherever our star spangled banner flies, right and justice even for the poorest have to be honored and protected.

The worth of the flag does not come from the cloth it is made with but on its moral principles which protect the humble, the unprotected and the abused. The greatest enemy of our flag is not the fanatic that steps on it but the one who destroys its ideals which the flag represents. And God save us if the government, our courts prefer the rich and the mighty. Evil will occur when our citizens becomes aware of a fact that the one who has money can win out over justice. Then the flag must fly at half-mast. Years ago a certain Bishop wrote: “Our flag should be on an even par with our nation. Not only in material things but in spiritual matters. Not only in learning, in research, and invention but in moral standards and ideals. Not only in the insistence upon rights and traditions but with vigilance in our responsibilities as citizens. Not it pride but in sympathy, love, and understanding. Not on a road splashed with human blood which always ends up in chaos and bad fortune, but on a new path on which other nations will follow our flag which will be bereft of war, pain and poverty.

Love of flag and fatherland in an order of reason, heart and faith. Love of the fatherland is the greatest treasure and the mightiest moral position of a nation where culture is formed. Only in a land and right government of the fatherland can a nation exist in peace and fulfill its spiritual, moral, and social needs and reach the highest degree of Good. Where love of country dims, there come thieves and crazies,” wrote Henry Sienkiewicz.

In closing, I would like to read the following verses to our listeners

“The one flag – the great flag – the flag for me and you-

Glorified all else besides – the red, the white, the blue.”

“Home land and far land and half the world around,

Old Glory hears our glad salute and ripples to the sound!”

“Your Flag and my Flag!

And oh, how much it holds –

Your land, and my land,

Secure within its folds!

Your heart and my heart

Beat quicker at the sight;

Sun kissed and wind tossed,

Red, and blue and white!