March 18, 1945

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

We, here in America, look upon war, solely and only as the criminal thing, terrible and shameful! The first news read in the Press or heard on the radio, makes us unsettled, we lose peace; we get into a fearful state and despondency. This happens when unexpected news comes our way that a loved one has been wounded or is lost. What can we say when someone finds out that their husband, son, or intended loses his or her life in defense of the country, our defense or our way of life; then we feel that all is lost that there is no use to live further. Some, in a moment like this, blaspheme or become despondent. That death on the field of battle, whether in the air, on land or on the sea, saddens the heart of the loved ones, is natural and human. I am not surprised at that. I can empathize and sympathize with them. However, there are always boundaries. Within the boundaries of faith and reason for even the pagans had the saying: It is pleasant and noble to die for your fatherland.” The mothers of Spartans, blessed their sons, with the reminder, “Son, come back home with a shield or on the shield” meaning “come home victorious or die honorably. Our Polish mothers used to make the sign of the cross on their brows saying: “If you come back here, I will meet you. If you fall in war, I will meet you in heaven. One has to keep in mind that the mortal enemy of civilization, the enemy of humanity, trod and the most holy laws and spit on their enemy. The enemy even spit on women and children. Our people in chains struggle with the monsters there; and we pray that similar crimes be not repeated here. They definitely know what it is to undergo the struggle but it doesn’t dishearten them, and it doesn’t keep them from their soldiery duties from wounds to death. They know that their sacrifice will not be without fruit. They wish not our praises, or our tears. In the month of November a man came to me whom I did not know. He spoke to me with an even and peaceful voice: “Father, I came to offer a Mass for my son who died in the war in Italy. I still have two sons in the service.” I began to cheer him up. He looked at me gratefully and said, “Naturally I am saddened; after all, he is my son and died that we might live. – He said so much in those words, this simple straight forward man; so much faith in so few words. To further explain, I read an article from *Warring Poland* entitled,

A CONVERSATION WITH AN UNFAMILIAR WOMAN

“Always, after dinner, I went to them for a chat. Between the beds of Stach and George was a shabby but comfortable armchair, the beds were fixed in a corner away from the window and a radiator that worked for a change, freezing, or melting from the heat, by some strange hospital rules. They were separated from the window and the radiator in order to free up space, and spared the criticism that “we separated ourselves from other patients. I usually contributed the topic of conversation, and they were propped up high with their pillows with cast on their hands. Today when I came in the conversation was in full swing. What’s more mysterious, my place was taken. Facing the conversationalists an unfamiliar lady was sitting in the armchair. I nodded and sat on Stachu’s bed. The unfamiliar lady said, “I would definitely not agree with the men. What you are talking about is plainly against the emotions, the heart and everything that relates to human nature. War may be given a variety of expressions but never described as you would have it. War is terrible. War brings forth the most feral instincts. It is cataclysmic and the lowest of human activities. War, for me is an apocalyptic beast, which appears from nowhere and claws at everything in sight the most populated cities to the smallest towns, the busiest factories, and the most impressive schools. It is impossible to hide from it. All large governments and small nations, and most of all people….are a broken voice. She looked for a moment to the side, in the side of the window and saw an ugly scene. – Sir, you said that war is beautiful. What is so beautiful about millions of people losing their lives, thousands are crippled, and millions are displaced dug up like weeds of the field. Some hurt some, weaker and poorer, fattening up thugs or thugs like state, sated and fattened for space. What can be beautiful about young and brave gentlemen lying now in graves, young and brave gentlemen, are lying now in a grave, instead of going to the sports field, and others - her voice broke again – others like you, losing their lives early, going away, never to return again. It does not properly refer to the three of us except George, as I later learned. The unfamiliar woman came for a while, for the first time, from the arms of some group of ladies knowing our needs. She was of a different ilk. She had within her something straightforward, close, and maternal. Her black fur, was worn is some places. On her beautiful hands she wore a bracelet and some kind of ring, as if it was made over from a man’s ring with an air force symbol or perhaps a marine’s. She had a face painted with experience and suffering – once beautiful. Amidst the dark hair, fell a gray lock, tucked carelessly under the black hat. George took every conversation seriously. Young and enthusiastic he always tried to bring forth in the discussion the best possible arguments. He believed in everything he said. – He began with a bit bitingly, “Madam, I wouldn’t say that everyone on this island, consider war as something terrible for himself and in reality wait so impatiently for its end. In addition, besides, small Corrigendum: and let me remind myself that I used the phrase "and the war is beautiful.” That one word “and”, after all, fundamentally changes the meaning. My observations were too general. In reality war in that general sense, with all its implications is terrible. And please do not deem that I don’t feel that sort of aversion to it. I, dear lady, do have loved ones in Warsaw. Perhaps, I had loved ones in Warsaw. In addition – he broke his words for a while, pointed to the window that the lady was looking through – I thought about the battle. I did see beauty in the battle. The lady leaned in his direction – he said “It is not the way you think: that I, in my youthful generation of the Army that, like the Germans – saw the terribleness of the war. No, I repeat with you that war is terrible. I feel exactly like you. But despite it all, I cannot rid of the thought of the beauty which speaks like a storm with lightning and thunder. If you saw the nightly fire of the artillery; for a second - it seems long - you can see just fires and then comes a bang, merging into one monstrous rumble as if from above, like you see at the horizon, which went to hell on the giant tanks. The flash of a single shot being fired again and again, blooms above the valley, and glows in the night in the cemetery light. Bullets fly dragging streaks after themselves. Everywhere one sees these glows and hears the thunder spilling across the horizon. Smoke fills the valley. And all this, one cannot term beautiful. A light show. But I do not wish to talk about this kind of beauty. Were you ever in a factory? It is worth seeing. A multitude of sophisticated machine produce armaments on an assembly line. War, indeed, is terrible. And we wage it here by supplying the destructive machines of war without the sign of blood, and we do it without a liking of murder, although we are vengeful but to obtain freedom as the highest form of justice – the Good and the beautiful. And that in defense so that some alien take away our rights and our freedoms. And so our organization of battle touching us today is like this factory using a rhythm of collective effort is something beautiful. Just think about it. Before the victory the work entails a multitude of minds, hands and machinery which on the way seem unrelated. Yet although seemingly unrelated it all works through to a victory. And the way the effort is put forth to prepare soldiery for battle and the coordination of all by the leadership is a magnificent thing.

I wish to return to one other thing, dear Lady, which you said before. You said that the war brings out the lowest instincts of man. Agreed. Only have you realized that it is curious after the blasting go if not the best and most capable soldiers than the most idealized and disinterested and the rest are behind.

Did you mean: Skład oddziałów liniowych ***nie oparty*** na żadnej specjalnej warstwie społecznej, bez przewagi jednego elementu, to jakby ogromna delegacja cał

The front battle line, not based on any special social stratum, not advantaged as one element, is like a huge delegation of the whole country, this string, irresistible and headed in one direction: "to the battle!". This offset everything else, the great purity and selflessness of the soldier, this resort from the relative comfort, in the mud, in danger, within the danger of the bullet: this again to me is beautiful. This is not a group of adventurers seeking self-interest. Because it is not actually an army from conscript, as was once called "the last roundup," but the military in the fullest sense - volunteers. Your ladyship knows that there is no person here who would give consideration solely to himself, and would not be able on the road to the Polish border, to be accused of something he is not. Here in the outposts, there is no one who would not have to trade that road with troublesome times. In a word, he needs to travel over many territories and waters. And it seems to me that never sooner or later was nor will be an army of this caliber. And the Army of Cracow? It is another great volunteer army and even greater because the worth of compromise with the work of the invaders, able to secure his own life and freedoms. Millions would rather fight that suffer shame, death rather than imprisonment. Here and there we were able to convince the world that the ashes of remembrance will not let us forget that the armaments of technology brings back our horse ridden army of yesteryear. And in this is again my conceptualization of the beauty of our battle. You maintain that the war awakens our instincts and feelings. Agreed. But there are good instincts and bad. You, my lady, only see the bad. Have you noticed how curiously it happens that after the noise of battle, the bravest and best are at the front and the rest behind. They are as if a great delegation of the entire country, focused on the goal, “onward to battle”. Concentrating on their sole objective that great clear and dedicated soldiery despite the mud, danger, ammunition advances. This too is beautiful. They are not a group of adventurers seeking their own ends but a volunteer army in the best sense of the word – they are volunteers. There is not one soldier here that is dedicated to self and can be accused of moral pretentiousness. They have suffered in these outposts with deprivation and paid for their volunteerism with difficulties, injuries, and a host of discomforts. And it seems to me, that there never was and never will be an army with such character. And the Cracow army? It is another great volunteer army. Millions rather fight than be shamed and would rather death than shame in their volunteerism. Here and there, we have managed to convince the world that in the ashes of forgetfulness we shall not be assigned. We are in the same position as those who fought in the past on the horse. Technical warfare is not our bag. And therein is another kind of beauty. You must believe me when I say that I have never seen such virtues in a human being as I have seen in battle. It seems to me that warring people here and in our country wanted do give away everything the best, their brotherhood and friendships and tractability. It all sheds rays on their selflessness. It seems that at the first military march, all evil disappeared. It seems that from the oldest to the youngest, they are equally close to each other with synchronized hearts and beautiful. And so they march together, fight and die. If I see the beauty of war, then I cannot help but look the same way at those who fight in the war. You, my lady say that war awakens wildness and the most curious emotions. I agree that they are curious. What is it that asks the pilot to agree with the mission to shoot or bombard from a higher or lower position? What causes a marine to confront the fire of a more powerful opponent? Fire artillery before the caterpillar threads of a tank squash him or the strafing fire from a plane hits him? What is it that tells the officer to defend the body of a fallen soldier or a mortally wounded gunner? Do you think they are hoping for and advance in rank or a medal? There are not enough medals or promotions on this earth to pay for blood or a life. You have read that the men of the Second Corps fight for long times in rain, snow, in mud without a change of uniform on narrow paths. Have you read about the battles of the First Corps? How about Warsaw? It was filled with corpses and mortally wounded in a relentless struggle.

 Do you think that it provides order? For the soldier Orders are the framework of a portrait which fulfills the way of the soldiers soul and the dedication which is locked within the breast of the soldier. And that is the beauty of the soldier’s soul which understands the theme of the battle. George stopped his narration and the hall became dim and the rain began to pelt the windows. As the darkness grew the woman stranger asked: Sir, do you think that the soldiers are not frightened and do not suffer? That in the midst of the battle they too see this beauty? That they do not feel hungry, or cold, or the wetness of their uniforms and mud-filled boots as well as the snow, the rain, as now outside, do they not feel the great discomfort? Do they not feel the lack of sleep? Does that beauty of which you speak, Sir, warm them? Do I believe that you saw them before their wounds where you were. I’m sure you did. What you say is as it is, George admitted and much more. There were circumstances on Monte Cassino when a soldier lay for days among corpses of former attacks and what is worse he was not permitted to fight fire with fire. Is the soldier afraid? Oh! Please, my lady. There is no soldier that would not fear. There comes a time of unbelievable fear, when all of the soldiers’ nerves are on edge. Fear translates itself into pain and the soldier would want to cry out and to run away from the fear. But then comes a moment when there is an apathy and a feeling of abandonment but logically turns to the soldierly duties and has control of his nervousness. It is a victory of strong will, a wish for life, and a wish for battle and victory. And does this kind of victory, equal to the victory over the temptations of the devil, is it not beautiful. True there is hunger and fear, thirst, choking the throat, cold, always the same, devoid of warmth on many days. Freezing cold chilling the bones, shivering and deminishing strength. Rain soaking the uniform, wet footwear, clothes clinging form the wetness, anger at the great discomfort. There are foxholes, digging in, hard walking through mud. And you ask, my Lady, is there any beauty in this dirt, bloody sweat of a soldiers life and smelly feet: is there any beauty in that? I repeat, “There is!” I say again that there is beauty. And the reason? Ask those who were at Monte Cassino, ask him who carried the ammunition, him who urged on the mules, him from the artillery, or who was cut off from communication, or was a paratrooper. You will hear the answer, not via a false shame but sincerely full of self-satisfaction and with feelings of triumph and other then you, my lady, would expect. If these feelings were in a concentration camp, it would be sheer hell. But when understood in the goal and victory of the ultimate attainment of the objective, it would be a different situation. There is another consideration. Once the officers walked behind those at the front with swords and protective helmets. Today officers walk at the side with the soldiers. Today, shunning that kind of arrangement would be ignominious. So you have a sensible approach to the terrible and the beautiful. It is true that the soldier’s life is one of great difficulty. There are situations which cannot be beautiful. The gendarmes were once responsible for arresting deserters. Now they conduct military procedures and have the respect of the soldiery. Once the perpetrated was stripped of uniform; now for bandits it’s a bullet in the head and for the soldier the greatest embarrassment was dismissal from the service. But you are right, lady: these conditions and problems in the military exist and no one nor anything would manage to lessen the problems of men in battle. But the goal remains the same. And if the problems of Cassino or Warsaw are a known fact and found worthy by history, and the soldier speaks about it with pride and sees in it a valiant effort. Beauty existed but was hidden. George paused to light a cigarette.. The lady remained quiet and later looking out the window said to George: But don’t you men make anything of the fact that that seemingly beautiful war on which I look with askance is in reality the murder of people. George’s hands having lain on the bed took to pressing against his chest. My lady, for centuries, the dogma of “good mixed with evil” endures. Truth with lies. Light with darkness. And we will fight that battle and wage the war. We did not begin the war but we will end it. We hate it but we received the right to fight it because they gave the right to us. We do not kill but we destroy and stamp out evil, lies and darkness. But we measure out justice. We fight for the Good, for the Truth, for Light.

There is no other way out. This or that. We or They. Just as the Good must win out, so to it is our duty to win. We fight and we attack, because we need to defend ourselves by attacking. We will fight the evil regardless of its name or its color. It is preservation of the species through fear

But can’t you see, Sir, that in that battle to preserve the species, we are destroying it, destroying the beauty, spoke the lady in some foreign voice, leaning toward George. - There was no response. A pall came upon the situation. George had a friend. They were in the same company. His friend died on a certain day. George, wounded, later found out about it in a hospital. Neither in the moment of receiving the information of his death neither later did he speak about it to anyone; not even a word. The Lady leaned again toward George and asked further. – So tell me. When they killed your friend, that dear friend, and when you met his mother what did you tell her and how did you manage to tell her about the death of her only son. George was silent. Then George took her hand and kissed it - Do not cry, Mom. Poland has a greater right to your son. He fought and died as a soldier. He gained the highest beauty. – The foreign lady kissed his forehead and left the room. I followed her. I met a nun outside. When we stopped, the nun said, “Poor Lady!” Three weeks ago she lost her son who battled at the front.”

Why did I annex this article of Thaddeus Bulsiewicz? So that you would understand what our boys are fighting for and so that you would be able to tell these mother, who cry for their sons, “Do not cry, Mom. America has a greater right. Our boys fought and were lost. They gained the Greatest beauty!”