
Overview of the Alfred Michal Bilyk papers, 1899-2002

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Collection Summary

Title: Alfred Michal Bilyk papers,

Dates: 1899-2002

Collection Number: 2011C51

Creator: Bilyk, Alfred Michal, 1889-1939

Collection Size: 1 oversize box (0.4 linear feet)

Repository: Hoover Institution Archives

Stanford, California 94305-6010

Abstract: Biographical data, personal documents, certificates, correspondence, and photographs, relating to Polish history between World Wars I and II. Includes some later Bilyk family papers.

Physical Location: Hoover Institution Archives

Languages: Polish

Access

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Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], Alfred Michal Bilyk papers, 1899-2002, [Box number], Hoover Institution Archives.

Acquisition Information

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Biographical Note

Alfred Bilyk was the last Polish provincial governor (wojewoda) of Lwów (now Lviv) voivodeship, from 1937 to 1939. A prominent member of the professional and political elite of interwar Poland, Bilyk committed suicide in September 1939, in the final days of Poland's struggle against the Nazi and Soviet invaders in September 1939.

Bilyk was born and educated in Lwów, second only to Cracow as the cultural center of Austrian Poland. When World War I broke out, Bilyk, along with thousands of young Poles, joined the Polish Legions and fought against Russia on the side of Austria-Hungary. When that war ended, Bilyk participated in the national effort to restore the Polish state and fought against the Russian Bolsheviks in the Polish-Soviet war of 1920. After the war, he left military service and completed a law degree at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lwów. After a dozen years in private law practice, he returned to public service,

appointed by the president of Poland, Ignacy Moscicki, first as the governor of Tarnopol province and less than a year later, in 1937, as the provincial governor of his native Lwów.

In the tragic days of September 1939 Bilyk gave a fiery speech on Lwów radio, vowing that he would never leave his post and that the city of Lwów, which had Semper Fidelis inscribed in its coat of arms, would never capitulate. Because of confusing directives from the central government, however Bilyk found himself cut off from his administrative headquarters by the advancing units of the Wehrmacht and the Red Army. After crossing the border into Hungary, and realizing that his beloved city had been lost to the Soviets, he wrote a farewell note: "I could not fight in Lwów and be in compliance with directives of the Prime Minister. Thus, I left the city in circumstances that might have contradicted my previous words. My life appears to be of no value to Poland. I do not want to be interned till the end of the war. I want to save my honor." Alfred Bilyk left money for the hotel charges and tips for the staff and then shot himself in room no. 5 of the Csillag Hotel in the town of Munkacs (now Mukachevo) on September 19, 1939, a week short of his fiftieth birthday.

Scope and Content of Collection

Biographical data, personal documents, certificates, correspondence, and photographs, relating to Polish history between World Wars I and II. Includes some later Bilyk family papers.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Poland--History--1918-1945.

Lwów (Poland : Voivodeship)
