

GRODNO OBLAST STATE ARCHIVES

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 47-04-92

The Grodno Oblast State Archives was established in 1944. It stores over 2,000 fonds and about 400,000 stored units. Until 1992, the archives was located in the building of the German church. In 1993, it was moved to a new, seven-story building. Five floors of the building are occupied with archives storage. The first and second floors are used for offices, reading hall and laboratories.

The documents stored in the archives date from 1919–1995. The earliest documents date back to the period of the first Soviet authorities in Grodno Oblast: military-revolutionary committees (1920).

The archives preserve the fonds (1919–1939) of institutions of the Polish Republic that existed on the territory of Novogrudok Region (excluding Baranovichi and Volozhin districts), Volkovysk and Grodno districts of Bialystok Region. The economical situation of the area, implementation of agricultural reform and tax policy are reflected in the fonds of Novogrudok authority institutions. The reports, dispatches, court cases of police and legal institutions of the fonds of Grodno prison contain information about social and political movement and speeches of the people of Grodno.

Documents dating from 1939–1941 reflect the history of the merger of Western Belarus with the Soviet Social Republic of Belarus.

The period of World War II during 1941–1944 is reflected in the captured German documents of institutions, organizations and enterprises that operated during the period of German occupation on the territory of Grodno oblast. The documents reflect the "new order" as well as the policy of German authorities in regard to the local population. Almost all documents are in German.

The largest portion of documents are found in the fonds of the post-war period. At present, the archives receives an additional 7,000–10,000 units each year.

Many fonds of the archives contain information on the Jewish history of Grodno oblast dating from 1919. The "Grodno Jewish religious community" fond contains only 164 cases dated 1915–1939, but they hold information about the activities of social institutions: schools, slaughterhouse, steam house (sauna), hospital, synagogues, cemetery, lists of taxpayers with their addresses and occupations. The fond contains the documents of the following Jewish social organizations of the town of Grodno: Grodno secretariat of the club of counsel to

Parliament and senators of Jewish People Rada, Grodno committee of the Union of Jewish Youth "Akiba" and the Grodno facility of Union of Jewish schools teachers in Poland.

With reference to Jewish history, the fonds of regional election committees for election to the Parliament of the Poland Republic (1922, 1935) contain lists of voters from the following villages of Lida district: Belitsa, Benyakoni, Heraneny, Dokudow, Zhyrmuny, Zabolotye, Ivye, Kolesniki, Lida, Lipniski, Radun, Subbotniki, Trokeli, Eishishki (now Eisiskes in Lithuania); and information about the Jewish democrat election bloc and General Jewish Workers Union.

The police fonds of the Polish period contain information about the activities of Jewish social and political organizations, about the mood of the Jewish population, correspondence regarding the supervision of the "Hehaluts-Pioneer" and "Makabi."

Documentary fonds of private Jewish gymnasiums (schools) in Volkovysk and Lida contain lists of teachers and students, metric records, student record books, examination papers, certificates of education and other documents.

Fonds of Nesvizh and Schuchin local authorities of Novogrudok region contain information about the population regarding nationality and religion, metric records (Nesvizh local authority), lists of members of the Union of Jewish craftsmen, students of the Ace-Haim school in Kletsk and documents about elections to the Committee of Jewish communities of Kletsk and Nesvizh.



Larisa Yunina, director of the Grodno Oblast State Archives, in her office
 (photo credit: Miriam Weiner, 2001)

The largest archival fond of the Polish period (No. 551) "Novogrudok Voivoda administration" -- documentary information on Jewish history including two inventories: correspondence regarding the activities of Jewish organizations and societies, their status and reports; lists of taxpayers of the villages of Ivenets and Eishishki, police reports and dispatches about professional, social-political and national movement on the territory of the region.

Documents regarding the tragedy of Jewish people during World War II are kept in the captured German fonds: fond 1 "Grodno regional commissar," fond 2 "Grodno burgomaster," fond 3 "Grodno labor exchange," fond 8 "Field commandant's headquarters of Defense Division 815," fond 12 "Grodno regional police department," fond 641 "Korelichi region police department" and others. There are also instructions and reports about police and Gestapo regarding anti-Jewish propaganda, arrests, shootings, ghettos on the territory of Grodno region and deportations to the death camps; lists of Jewish population sorted by occupations, lists of people shot, deportation lists,

reports on the liquidation of ghettos in Bialystok and Grodno. Documents of State archives establish that more than 43,000 Jews went through the Grodno ghetto and almost 41,000 of them were sent to the death camps at Auschwitz and Treblinka. Archival documents are used as memorials to Holocaust victims and for writing historical-documentary chronicles "Memory" of the town of Grodno and regional centers.

Larisa Yunina graduated from the Moscow Historical-Archival Institute in 1987. In the Archives, she worked as a specialist in educational methods and later as a Department Head. She then served as Deputy Director of the Archives until 1998 when she was appointed director of the Grodno Oblast State Archives.



Old synagogue in Grodno, pre-1939 (source: Polska Akademia Nauk Instytut Sztuki)