Country Name: **BELARUS**

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<th>Looted Judaica and Judaica with Provenance Gaps in Country</th>
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**Sources:**

1. *Jewish Documentary Sources in Russia, Ukraine and Belarus: A Preliminary List* (in English), edited by Dorit Sallis and Marek Web (JTS), 164 pp. 1996.

In the autumn of 1945, an estimated 1,200,000 books were shipped to Minsk. As Grimsted notes “Half a million of those books had first been confiscated from ‘enemies’ of the Nazi regime in France, the Benelux countries, and former Yugoslavia, along with another half million plundered from libraries in Belarus and other Soviet republics. Found by Red Army trophy brigades in the spring of 1945 in warehouses in a Katowitz (now Polish Katowice) suburb, 54 freight cars were shipped to Minsk. However, the full documentation about their retrieval and that shipment in the fall of 1945 is still classified in the Russian Ministry of Defense Central Archive (TsAMO) in Podolsk.”

(Grimsted, Documenting the Plunder.)

Research on these books is still missing, with evidence of only one shipment which dates back to November 1945.

According to librarians working at the National Library of Belarus (NBB), many of the trophy books, but in particular Hebrew and Yiddish books that reached the Library after the war, have not been identified or otherwise been catalogued. Grimsted notes that “Many more books still await identification in a NBB Reserve depository across the city from the main library, among them a still unknown quantity of Judaica from many sources that survived the Holocaust, reportedly including some from Jewish communities in Yugoslavia. Some of the still-uncatalogued Judaica reserves were deposited for several decades in an abandoned church in a village outside of Minsk, but when the building was restored to the Church after Belarus independence, the books were moved into a reserve section of the main library; many have still...
Some other books, according to Grimsted, might have been transferred to the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow or Leningrad, while others were transferred to incineration facilities outside of Minsk. Additional rumors indicate that some of these books might have ended up in Israel, after a Jewish librarian managed to remove a number of the books in the 1970s and 1980s before he emigrated to Israel.

Specific library collections held by NBB include the Library of Jewish Societies of France (Bibliothèque “Efim Pernikof”) and books that belonged to prominent French Jewish families, such as those of the Rothschild family (which are located in the NBB rare book department catalogue). Moreover, some books stemming from Yugoslav Jewish communities have also ended up in Belarus, as well as “a few books from the Jewish Sephardic Community in Salonica, a prime ERR target in Greece.” (Grimsted, p.369) Furthermore, it is assumed that a large part of the Julius Genss book collection is in Belarus. (For more information on the Genss collection, please see section on Estonia.)

It is important to note that it is not clear how many books are still to be found in the libraries of Belarus, or how many were brought to other archives and libraries in the years following the end of World War II.

_Looted French Libraries:

Source:

The rare book department at the National Library holds books with identifying ex libris’ or other markings from over 100 libraries that were seized by the ERR from France. (p.10) This includes 90 individual personal French libraries with ex libris’ or other markings and 10 institutional libraries, all of which coincide with listings on ERR seizure lists.

In 2011 the Belarus National Library published a CD ROM edition entitled *French Autographs in the Holdings of the National Library of Belarus*, displaying the title pages of 65 books from Paris with autographed dedications by and/or to famous French politicians, writers, and other cultural leaders, with images of those individuals included. (p24)

(p.25) According to Grimsted, “clearly the Belarus library is proud to have such a valuable collection of autographed volumes by such famous French writers and statesmen such as Marcel Proust, Louise Weiss, Georges Clemenceau, and Léon Blum, among many others, including numerous members of the Rothschild clan. Librarians in Minsk today consider them “compensation” for their wartime losses, with no possible thought of return to their homeland.”

_Dutch objects held in Belarus

Source:
(1) Ketelaar, Eric. “The Return of Dutch Archives from Moscow.” *Returned from Russia: Nazi Archival Plunder in Western Europe*
This catalogue represents the results of the current best efforts research of the Claims Conference and is based upon information obtained by the Claims Conference to date. The Claims Conference makes no representation as to its accuracy or completeness and the catalogue should not be relied upon or used as proof, legal or equitable, as to current or past ownership of the items described within.

| Information from Other Sources | Source:
(1) Yuri Dorn, Coordinator of Jewish Heritage (Research Group in Belarus) |
There are several Jewish religious artifacts in various archives and museums in Belarus. Among others, objects can be found in the State Museum of History and Culture of Belarus in Minsk.

Mr. Dorn visited the museum’s storage in 1996 and discovered at least four Torah scrolls, including some silver adornments for these Torah scrolls, as well as several sets of Shabbat candlesticks, Chanukiot, Tefilin and Humashim which are kept in the archive. At the time, the preservation of these Torah scrolls was less than satisfactory, resulting in the loss of several chapters or making some letters not viewable.

Moreover, there are two Torah scrolls in the State Historical Archive of Belarus; one Torah scroll is located in the Historical Museum of Mogilev, and one is located in the Historical Museum of Vitebsk. (There is no information as to whether these scrolls are kept properly.) |

| Historical Commission | No. |
Source:


| Selected Bibliography | → Please note that the general literature may also contain information on the specific country. |

| Notes |