

## ІСТОРИЯ ТА АРХЕОЛОГІЯ

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### THE ARCHIVE OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND – THE ASPECT OF ACCESSIBILITY OF THE ARCHIVAL MATERIALS

In Polish archival law, the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland has the status of a separated archive, i.e. not subject to the supervision of state archives. This is a key archive for researchers dealing with diplomatic and consular activities of the Polish state over the last several decades. Its activities are regulated by a number of legal acts. First of all, these are *The Act on National Archival Resource and Archives of 14 July 1983* and *Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the manner and mode of making available the archival materials contained in separated archives of 22 June 2011*. The most important internal norms are: *Organizational Regulations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, *Instruction on the organization and scope of operation of archive* and *Regulations of the Reading Room of the MFA Archive*. No publication has been published on the history and organization of this archive. There is also no publication describing its entire resource. Currently, this archive contains documentation created after World War II. This is approximately 6.5 thousand linear meters of archival materials. A lot of information about archival materials from the first twenty years after the end of World War II can be found on its website. Getting access to archival materials is an extremely important issue. The Archive makes its archival materials available to the visitors in the traditional way in its reading room, after obtaining the permission of the director by them. Although according to the *Regulations of the Reading Room of the MFA Archive* it should be open to visitors for up to four days a week, the MFA Archive Reading Room has been open only one day a week for a long time, which makes it more difficult for researchers to use the documentation stored in the archive. However, a large part of the documentation from 1945–1965 has been digitized and is available online in free access to all interested parties. Currently, scans of 10,895 archival items from 16 archival funds are available. The website has a search engine that makes it easier to find specific documents.

**Key words:** separated archive, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Poland, accessibility of the archival materials.

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### АРХІВ МІНІСТЕРСТВА ЗАКОРДОННИХ СПРАВ РЕСПУБЛІКИ ПОЛЬША – АСПЕКТ ДОСТУПНОСТІ АРХІВНИХ МАТЕРІАЛІВ

Згідно з польським архівним законодавством, Архів Міністерства закордонних справ Республіки Польща має статус окремого архіву, тобто не підлягає контролю від державних архівів. Це ключовий архів для дослідників, які займаються дипломатичною та консульською діяльністю польської держави протягом останніх кількох десятиліть. Його діяльність регулюється численними правовими актами. По-перше, це Закон про Національний архівний резерв та архіви від 14 липня 1983 року та Постанова Ради Міністрів про порядок та спосіб доступу до архівних матеріалів, збережених в окремих архівах від 22 червня 2011 року. Найваж-

ливіші внутрішні норми – це Організаційний регламент Міністерства закордонних справ, Інструкція з організації та обсягу роботи архіву та Правила Читального залу Архіву МЗС. Не існує публікацій щодо історії та організації цього архіву. Також немає публікацій, які б описували його повний ресурс. На даний момент архів містить документацію, створену після Другої світової війни. Це приблизно 6,5 тисяч погонних метрів архівних матеріалів. Багато інформації про архівні матеріали з перших двадцяти років після закінчення Другої світової війни можна знайти на його веб-сайті. Отримання доступу до архівних матеріалів є надзвичайно важливою проблемою. Архів надає свої архівні матеріали відвідувачам традиційним способом у своєму читальному залі, після отримання дозволу від директора. Хоча згідно з Правилами Читального залу Архіву МЗС він має бути відкритий для відвідувачів до чотирьох днів на тиждень, Читальний зал Архіву МЗС був відкритий лише один день на тиждень довгий час, що ускладнює використання документації, збереженої в архіві. Однак значна частина документації з 1945–1965 років була оцифрована і доступна в Інтернеті безкоштовно для всіх зацікавлених. Наразі доступні скани 10895 архівних одиниць з 16 архівних фондів. На веб-сайті є пошуковий двигун, який полегшує пошук конкретних документів.

**Ключові слова:** окремий архів, Міністерство закордонних справ, Республіка Польща, доступність архівних матеріалів.

The Archive of the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland (further: AMFA) is a place where documentation related to Polish diplomatic and consular activity after World War II is stored. Although it is the key archive for conducting research related to international relations between Poland and other states in the period of the last few decades, neither thorough publications regarding its history nor guides describing the entire documentation (all archival funds) held there have been published so far. The fullest source of information about this archive, apart from a personal visit and getting familiar with card inventories as well as delivery and receipt protocols, is its website (*Ministerstwo*, 2021). General information about AMFA is also available at the official webpage of the Republic of Poland (*Serwis*, 2023).

AMFA, according to *The Act on National Archival Resource and Archives of 14 July 1983* has the status of a „separated archive” (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 29 para. 1 point 6 letter b). It belongs to the state archival network (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 22 para. 1 point 2). However, it is not supervised by state archives (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 28 para. 1 point 3). Archival materials held by this archive have the status of state archival resource (*Ustawa*, 2020, chapter 3). The organization of this archive, including its scope of operation, is defined by the minister responsible for foreign affairs in agreement with the minister responsible for culture and the protection of national heritage (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 29 para. 3). The archival materials stored in the archive include documents produced as a result of the activity of the office serving the minister responsible for foreign affairs (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 31 para. 1 point 3) as well as documents sent or submitted by foreign subjects of international law (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 31 para. 2). AMFA is obliged to transfer archival materials

which should no longer be kept in the archive to the central state archives. The transfer should be conducted not later than 50 years after the material was produced, unless it is against the legal interest of the State and its citizens (*Ustawa*, 2020, art. 32 para. 1). Although chapter 10 of the *Instruction on the organization and scope of operation of archive* entitled ‘Transfer of archival materials to the state archive’ [*Przekazywanie materiałów archiwalnych do archiwum państwowego*] regulates these issues, the regulations are laconic and very general (*Instrukcja*, 2015, § 39–40). A very large amount of documentation from the period 1918–1945 was transferred to the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw [*Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie*] (Dąbrowski, 2020, pp. 144–145). For documentation produced after 1945, the information included on the *Search the Archives* website does not indicate that the regulation is realized in practice. Only a small part of the archival materials created after World War II was transferred by AMFA to the Central Archives of Modern Records. This concerns documentation regarding the repatriation of the Polish population from the USSR (Szukaj, 2023; Dąbrowski, 2020, p. 144). AMFA processes its archival funds, it performs scanning and makes documents available, according to the information on its website.

AMFA is located in Warsaw, at Taneczna 67A, postcode: 02-829 Warszawa. The archive belongs to an organizational unit named Archive and Information Management Office [*Biuro Archiwum i Zarządzania Informacją*] within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (*Regulamin Organizacyjny*, 2020, § 52 point 6). This unit is responsible for i.a. collecting, inventorying, storing, and making archival materials available both in the traditional and digital form as well as monitoring archival documentation in posts abroad.

AMFA has its own website <https://archiwum.msz.gov.pl> where potential users can find general information necessary to obtain access to the desired documents stored in this archive. One can also find a link to a film lasting over 4 minutes that briefly presents the content of the website as well as the search engine it contains. The website has 6 tabs: 'MFA Archive' [Archiwum MSZ], 'Search Engine' [Wyszukiwarka], 'Contact' [Kontakt], 'For Download' [Do pobrania], 'Current Information' [Komunikaty] and 'History' [Historia]. The first tab contains information in Polish and English languages related to archival materials stored in AMFA and the rules according to which they are made available, documents available online as well as the institutions storing the documentation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the years 1918–1945. The second tab contains the search engine, which allows the user to find documentation made available online. The third tab contains contact info (addresses, e-mail, telephone numbers, fax). The fourth tab contains documents for downloading, including legal acts regulating the activity of AMFA as well as forms for users who wish to order documents. The fifth tab contains current information related to making documentation available. The sixth tab contains information related to the ministers of foreign affairs, publications and films, documents and related information.

A vital issue from the point of view of users (researchers in particular) are opening hours of AMFA's Reading Room. Although the Regulations of AMFA's Reading Room sets out that it is open four days a week (from Monday to Thursday) from 9.00 to 15.00 (*Regulamin Czytelni, 2020, § 1 para. 2*), the information on the website says that the Reading Room is open only one day a week, each Wednesday from 9.00–15.00. The reason for a limited number of days on which the Reading Room is open to public, according to the information available on the website, is the realization of additional statutory duties. Visitors are requested to contact the Reading Room and make an appointment prior to their visit.

It is possible to contact AMFA in one of the following ways. One may contact the Secretariat by e-mail [bazi.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl](mailto:bazi.sekretariat@msz.gov.pl), phone +48 22 523 9380 and fax +48 22 523 9109. The Reading Room may be contacted by e-mail [bazi.czytelnia.archiwum@msz.gov.pl](mailto:bazi.czytelnia.archiwum@msz.gov.pl) or phone +48 22 523 96 14.

In practice, especially for visitors living far away from the archive, prior to their personal visit to AMFA's Reading Room, visitors must make

themselves familiar with the information on AMFA's website, send a completed form by mail, and contact by phone if they have any doubts or questions. Personal visits to AMFA's Reading Room may be paid only after obtaining the permission to use the archival materials and one may also visit AMFA in person, complete a form and leave it there. When the permission to use the documents is granted, one may come to the archive again on the specified day.

It ought to be noted that archival materials held by AMFA are made available according to the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers on the manner and mode of making available the archival materials contained in separated archives of 22 June 2011 (Rozporządzenie, 2011)* and *Regulations of the Reading Room of the MFA Archive approved on 17 July 2020 (Regulamin Czytelni, 2020)*.

The tab 'For Download' [Do pobrania] contains two forms that constitute the appendices to the above mentioned *Regulations of the Reading Room*, namely *Request for access to archival materials stored in the MFA Archive (Zgłoszenie, 2020)* and *Request for access to archival materials stored in the MFA Archive, created less than 30 years ago (Wniosek, 2020)*. The content of both appendices is identical, with the exception of the title. Both forms require the user to fill in their name and surname, correspondence address and contact information (phone number, e-mail). As for the archival materials the user wishes to work with, it is necessary to give the dates of creation and what they are related to (event, organization, state, region, etc.), the aim and the method of using the archival materials, and decide whether the user wishes to apply for the permission to take photos. Moreover, the forms contain statements related to compliance with the Regulations of the Reading Room and personal data protection. The difference between these appendices is that Appendix 1 applies to materials created 30 or more years ago while Appendix 2 applies to materials created less than 30 year ago. The fact that there are two appendices for documentation created at different periods of time results from the *Regulation of the Council of Ministers mentioned above (Rozporządzenie, 2011, § 4 para. 1 – zgłoszenie and § 6 para. 2 – wniosek; Regulamin Czytelni, § 2 – zgłoszenie and § 3 – wniosek)*. Moreover, the tab contains the information that the clause related to personal data processing results from *General Data Protection Regulation (Rozporządzenie, 2016)*.

Based on the received requests (appendix 1 or appendix 2), the director responsible for the MFA

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Archive decides to grant or refuse permission to use archival materials (*Regulamin Czytelni*, 2020, § 5 para. 2). The reasons for refusing access to the documentation indicated in the request may include, among others: legal provisions, ongoing digitization process, poor state of preservation and archival conservation, lack of recording and information resources, and several interested parties seeking access to the same materials at the same time (*Regulamin Czytelni*, 2020, § 5 para. 3).

AMFA's archival materials amount to approx. 6.5 thousand running metres. The archive mainly holds documentation created after World War II. The exceptions are, i.a. documents that belong to archival fund no. 27, entitled Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow, which contains documents from 1944. Documentation related to the period of 1945–1965/1970 is being processed, and according to the information on the website amounts to 28 archival funds. However, the included list of processed archival funds available for download contains only 25 archival funds. The funds bearing numbers 5, 13 and 25 are not included in the list (*Wykaz*, 2021). There is no information, e.g. the number and titles, related to non-processed archival funds. Users wishing to see the documentation can order selected units from the fund based on card inventories (for processed units) and delivery and receipt protocols (for non-processed units).

Documentation created in the earlier period, i.e. the period of the Second Polish Republic and World War II is held by other institutions: The Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw, The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, The Józef Piłsudski Institute of America in New York and The Hoover Institution in California. There are archival guidebooks that include information concerning the above mentioned documentation, which is not stored in AMFA (Ceranaka, Szczepanik, 2020; Ceranaka, Szczepanik, Zdanowski, 2022).

Before one decides to visit AMFA, it is worth getting familiar with the digitized records made available online, which currently comprises 10895 archival units from 16 archival funds. The list of archival funds is also available on the website. The whole documentation made available in this way is not classified, and using this form of documentation does not require filling the forms mentioned above to obtain the official permission to use the documentation. The search engine facilitates finding the documents required. We may

search for digital copies according to the following six criteria: department name (selection from the list), the title of the archival unit (requires typing), the number of the archival unit (requires typing), dates from ... to ... in the format (yyyy-mm-dd), the name of state (selection from the list) and the region of the world (selection from the list). The list obtained may be sorted in the ascending or descending order according to the selected criterion. When we select one of the documents listed, a window 'Document preview' [Podgląd dokumentów] appears, which allows the user to download the scan of the document, enlarge it or make it smaller and rotate it left or right. Although the search engine is not complicated and is quite intuitive, there is a document on AMFA's website for users that need help, entitled *A guide how to use the MFA Archive's search engine* (*Poradnik*, 2021).

Making such a number of scans available is very positive from potential user's point of view. More people have direct and instant access to the required materials. Although digitization is time-consuming, making scans available online results in fewer visits to AMFA's Reading Room in the long run, as a large number of users will not have to appear in the archives in person to study original documents. For many researchers it undoubtedly facilitates getting access to historical sources. The materials may be used for didactic purposes, e.g. during history lessons in secondary schools or at universities. Therefore, let us hope that there will be more financial means assigned to enlarge the number of documents made available online. It would certainly be beneficial for science and didactics of history.

To sum up, it needs emphasizing that from the point of view of researchers interested in archival materials held by AMFA, the assessment of the process of making the documents available is complex. It is possible to find aspects that both facilitate and hinder access to the archival materials stored in AMFA.

The obvious disadvantage is the fact that the Reading Room is open only one day a week. It seems to be a temporary problem. However, it has impact on the assessment of availability of the documentation held by the Archives. On the other hand, the fact that AMFA has its own website where basic information concerning the archival materials and rules and regulations applying to access to the documentation is presented not only in Polish but also in English, is a very positive aspect. Moreover, the possibility to download the form necessary to obtain the permission

Table 1

## Processed archival funds held by AMFA

Number of archival fund	The title of the archival fund in Polish	Translation of the title of the archival fund into English	Dates: from ... to ...	Online access to scanned documents
1	Polska Komisja Delimitacyjna. Granica: Polska-ZSRR	The Polish Delimitation Commission. Border: Poland-USSR	1945–1958	No
2	Polska Komisja Delimitacyjna. Granica: Polska-CSRS	The Polish Delimitation Commission. Border: Poland-Czechoslovak Socialist Republic	1945–1951	No
3	Polska Komisja Delimitacyjna. Granica: Polska-NRD	The Polish Delimitation Commission. Border: Poland-GDR	1947–1952	No
4	Departament Prawno-Traktatowy. Umowy międzynarodowe	Department of Legal and Treaty. International agreements	1944–1964	Yes
5	*		*	No
6	Departament Polityczny	Political Department	1945–1948	Yes
7	Departament I	Department I (socialist countries)	1949–1960	Yes
8	Departament II	Department II (Western European countries)	1949–1960	Yes
9	Departament III	Department III (countries of the Americas)	1949–1960	Yes
10	Departament IV	Department IV (German-speaking countries)	1949–1960	Yes
11	Samodzielny Wydział Wschodni	Autonomous Eastern Department	1949–1954	Yes
12	Departament V	Department V (countries of Asia, Africa and the Middle East)	1955–1960	Yes
13	*		*	
14	Biuro Prawne	Legal Office	1945–1951	Yes
15	Gabinet Ministra	Minister's Office	1945–1951	No
16	Protokół Dyplomatyczny	Diplomatic Protocol	1945–1963	Yes
17	Departament IV	Department IV (Western European countries)	1961–1969	Yes
18	Biuro Prac Kongresowych	Office of Congress Work	1945–1948	Yes
19	Poselstwo RP w Bernie	Legation of the Republic of Poland in Bern	1945–1956	Yes
20	Biuro Konsularne	Consular Office	1945–1963	No
21	Departament Prasy i Informacji	Department of Press and Information	1946–1963	No
22	Biuro do Spraw Repatriacji	Repatriation Office	1945–1947	Yes
23	Gabinet Ministra	Minister's Office	1952–1960	No
24	Departament Międzynarodowych Organizacji	Department of International Organizations	1945–1963	No
25	*		*	No
26	Gabinet Ministra	Minister's Office	1961–60s, in some cases until 1977	No
27	Ambasada RP w Moskwie	Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Moscow	1944–1947	Yes
28	Departament Ekonomiczny	Economics Department	1945–1951	Yes

Source: Own compilation based on the information available from AMFA's website, <https://archiwum.ms.gov.pl> (directly or in files for downloading).

\*information not provided

to visit and use the documentation and send it by e-mail. An achievement worth mentioning is the fact that a large number of digitized documents can be accessed online and downloaded. Similarly, the search engine on AMFA's website which allows

users to find documents according to six search criteria is extremely helpful in searching through the documents and sorting them in ascending or descending order according to the selected criterion. Undoubtedly, a guide describing the archival

resources more thoroughly would be a further aid to users due to the fact that the list of processed archival funds includes only short notes related to their content and does not fully characterize the resources.

In order to further improve and facilitate the use of resources held by AMFA, it would be necessary to open AMFA's Reading Room four days a week (according to the Regulations of the Reading Room), enlarge the number of processed archival funds made available online as well as publish a guide on AMFA's archival funds. On the other

hand, AMFA's website and its search engine are highly valuable both from the point of view of conducting research as well as popularizing the content of documentation stored in the archive.

The table below shows a list of processed archival funds held by AMFA, 16 of which were scanned and made available online (see Table). The English equivalents of titles of the archival funds are based on the information included on AMFA's website, with the exception of the funds not available online, which were translated by the author of this paper.

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