

## From the Diary of Stanislaw Adler on Beggar-Children of the Warsaw Ghetto

There was a specific root cause of the begging children problem; they “worked” mainly on behalf of adults since it was easier for a child to plead for alms than for a man in his prime. Adults, therefore, exploited not only their own children for this task, but in many cases other people’s children who were specially loaned out for the job. Beggarhood may be a passing occupation for an adult or it may sometimes be practiced by a person who cannot work normally anymore, but children who beg have usually fallen into a trap, creating a contingent of future professional beggars, if not criminals.

Spending the whole day in the street, the child has the opportunity to observe everything that society usually hides in shame, and bad examples find very fertile ground in the mind of a child for all kinds of influences. Hence, it seems only natural to attempt to eradicate the basis of begging habits in children, placing them in special boarding houses to be educated and vocationally trained. However, the abnormal conditions which prevailed in the ghetto provided arguments against any rigorous eradication of juvenile beggars. I myself became involved in this problem although it did not come directly into the scope of my service duties, and I was frequently filled with doubt as to whether it was proper to deprive a poor and sickly family of its only provider which the begging children had sometimes become, since a child could induce the most hardened opponent of beggarhood to provide alms.

**Source: Stanislaw Adler, *In the Warsaw Ghetto 1940-1943. An Account of a Witness*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 118-119.**