

The Smuggling of Food Into the Warsaw Ghetto

Smuggling began at the very moment that the Jewish area of residence was established; its inhabitants were forced to live on 180 grams [6½ oz.] of bread a day, 220 grams of sugar a month, 1 kg. [2.2 lbs.] jam and ½ kg. of honey, etc. It was calculated that the officially supplied rations did not cover even 10 percent of normal requirements. If one had wanted really to restrict oneself to the official rations then the entire population of the ghetto would have had to die of hunger in a very short time....

The German authorities did everything to seal off the ghetto hermetically and not allow in a single gram of food. A wall was put up around the ghetto on all sides that did not leave a single millimeter of open space....

They fixed barbed wire and broken glass to the top of the wall. When that failed to help, the Judenrat was ordered to make the wall higher, at the expense of the Jews, of course....

Several kinds of guards were appointed for the walls and the passages through them; the categories [of guards] were constantly being changed and their numbers increased. The walls were guarded by the gendarmerie together with the Polish police; at the ghetto wall there were gendarmerie posts, Polish police and Jewish police... The victims of the smuggling were mainly Jews, but they were not lacking either among the Aryans [Poles]. Auerswald, too, employed sharply repressive measures to stop the smuggling. Several times smugglers were shot at the central lock-up on Gesiowka* Street. Once there was a veritable slaughter (100 persons were shot near Warsaw). Among the Jewish victims of the smuggling there were tens of Jewish children between 5 and 6 years old, whom the German killers shot in great numbers near the passages and at the walls....

And despite that, without paying attention to the victims, the smuggling never stopped for a moment. When the street was still slippery with the blood that had been spilled,

other [smugglers] already set out, as soon as the "candles"*** had signaled that the way was clear, to carry on with the work....

The smuggling took place – a) through the walls, b) through the gates, c) through underground tunnels, d) through sewers, and e) through houses on the borders....

Ringelblum, II, pp. 274-277.

*The reference is to the Jewish prison in the Warsaw ghetto which was called "Gesiowka".

**Smugglers' look-outs.

Source: *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*, Y. Arad, Y. Gutman, A. Margaliot (editors), Yad Vashem, 1981, pp. 228-229.