

Hersh Wasser on Hardship in the Warsaw Ghetto (2)

Hersh Wasser (1912- 1980) was born in Poland. He was an active member of Left Po'alei Zion. In December 1939 he arrived in Warsaw, as a refugee, together with his wife, and became a prominent member of the Warsaw leadership. He was involved in public affairs of the ghetto and in social work. He was a participant in the *Oneg Shabbat* archives, an illegal project of the ghetto connected with self help and welfare organizations. Wasser survived the war and immigrated to Israel in 1950.

Thursday, December 12, 1940

Frost is coming. Dipped to 5° centigrade today. There are so many poor people in rags and tatters. More and more families are falling away from their wretched potato-ration state of well-being, and going over to begging. They lose all modesty, all restraint, and try to cling to life's surface at all costs. Outdoors, they sing, they act, they shout, they weep, they throw fits, they lie spread out on the hard concrete. The stream of humanity passes by. Hardly sparing a glance. Everyone is so full of his own troubles. One can veritably see the impoverishment of the Jewish population striding in seven-league boots. The economic support of the handful of Jews is steadily waning. I don't doubt that there are wealthy Jews, but it is not they who stamp today's Jewish existence with tragedy. The craftsman, the businessman, the jobber, the clerk, is – in as far as his livelihood resources are concerned – totally undermined.

A problem with garbage. There is no sewage question in the quarter, but a garbage question – definitely... It seems that the commissariat-stewards are meanwhile unable to administer the buildings properly. And garbage collects. For the time being, the house committees are dealing with it. There are notices everywhere informing the residents that all garbage must be burnt. The only thing to be thrown away is ashes and fire-resistant articles. Such as tin, brick, etc.

Mlawa is no simple matter: last Thursday, as Mlawa delegates told me, many trucks arrived. There had been talk of transports previously, but no-one knew whether the Poles or the Jews were to be shipped out. In any case, when the

trucks arrived, there was a run on the Town Hall to obtain certificates of residence permitting the holder to remain in town. The expulsion resulted from the ghetto having been instituted. About 4,000 people were removed. Their location is unknown.

Source: “Daily Entries of Hersh Wasser (with introduction by Joseph Kermish)”, *Yad Vashem Studies* Vol. XV, Jerusalem 1983, p. 221- 222.