

From Ringelblum's Diary: The Encounter Between the Gypsies and the Jews in the Ghetto

June 17, 1942

The Gypsies. We are being afflicted now with a new blight – the Gypsies. How will we put up with them nobody knows. They wear white armbands with a red “Z” printed on them, standing for “Gypsies” [in German: “Zigeuner”], or as the Poles say “Złodzieje” [Polish for “thieves”]. What is the sense of bringing Gypsies into the Ghetto [after having them] first put in gaol, where the famous “royal” family of Kwiek was until now imprisoned with a large number of other Gypsies? (The king of the Polish Gypsies, Kwiek, was crowned in Warsaw a couple of years before the war; the coronation was performed with a great ceremony at a huge stadium, with thousands of onlookers).

Perhaps the Herrenvolk does it simply for aesthetic reasons. They cannot abide the faces of dirty beggars. It may also happen that they are afraid of espionage of the “Gypsy-Jews” (as Auerswald is calling them), who are wandering about the country and may communicate various military secrets. It is also possible that they wish to toss into the Ghetto everything that is characteristically dirty, shabby, bizarre, of which one ought to be frightened and which anyway had to be destroyed. That was the reason for throwing Gypsies first into the Lodz Ghetto, and then to Chelmno and finally gassing them there.

Meanwhile 240 families were brought to 5 Pokorna Street. People are afraid of them. They will rob, steal, break window panes and pinch bread out of shop-windows.¹ They will not quietly starve to death as Jews do.

Source: Kermish, Joseph (Ed.), “Emmanuel Ringelblum's Notes, Hitherto Unpublished”, *Yad Vashem Studies VII*, Jerusalem 1968, p.177-178.

¹ The Gypsies did in fact steal from Jews, their fellow-sufferers in the Ghetto. “Today, in plain sight of thousands of passers-by, a Gypsy seized some clothes from the hands of a Jew and Karmelicka Street was all astir”. Ch. A. Kaplan, *Yoman Geto Varsha* (Diary of Warsaw Ghetto), Am Oved-Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 515.

