

**Gutman, Yisrael. *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943*. Ina Friedman, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Pp. xviii, 487. Black and white plates. \$24.95 (U.S.)**

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Volume 15, numéro 1, juin 1986

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1018923ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018923ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Brown, M. (1986). Compte rendu de [Gutman, Yisrael. *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943*. Ina Friedman, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Pp. xviii, 487. Black and white plates. \$24.95 (U.S.)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 15(1), 120–122. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1018923ar>

Senkewicz, Robert N., S. J. *Vigilantes in Gold Rush San Francisco*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985. Pp. xvi, 272. Map, illustrations. \$24.95.

Beginning with a brief narrative recapitulation of four moments of vigilantism in 1850s San Francisco, Robert Senkewicz provides a balanced and wide-ranging discussion of the development of the Gold Rush city and the outbreaks of vigilance committee action in 1851 and 1856. Comparing these two years of vigilante activity, Senkewicz shows how a number of economic, political and religious factors encouraged the growth of the movement until, by 1856, the San Francisco Vigilance Committee could claim more than 6,000 members, was responsible for four deaths and numerous deportations, and was able to take control of most city offices.

Like other commentators before him, Senkewicz argues that the vigilance committees were what one contemporary newspaper called a "mercantile junta," a response to both economic and political frustration on the part of a group of businessmen. His two chapters on the actions of the vigilance committee frame a full and careful exposition of the economic and social forces that were dominant in 1850s San Francisco: the ups and downs of trade that made the merchants imagine conspiratorial forces working against their interests, the Australian and Irish immigrants who became the focus for discontent, the election campaigns with their claims of fraud and corruption, the religious controversies between Catholics and Protestants that erupted over school funding and curriculum. He sees San Francisco's history as more representative, and less unique, than many historians, and argues persuasively that the city developed along lines similar to other urban and western environments in the United States at that time; thus he undermines many of the traditional interpretations of San Francisco as peculiarly wild, corrupt, or violent. He neither condemns nor praises the vigilante actions. By tracing the Committees back to their economic and religious-political roots, and detailing their consequences through a vivid series of brief biographical sketches of the careers of the city's civic leaders, Senkewicz provides a clear, even-handed assessment of the movement's history.

*Vigilantes* breaks little new ground. In a useful historiographic essay at the end of his study, Senkewicz reviews previous interpretations of vigilantism and claims his own middle position between what he calls the "imitative" and "analytic" approaches to the problem and Gold Rush era: more sympathetic than many present historians to language and arguments presented at the time, yet still helpfully skeptical of such rationales. His analysis is almost entirely public. He relies heavily on contemporary newspaper accounts of events and stresses economic and civic history. (The biographies of the vigilante leaders, for example, enumerate their offices and define success in terms of their finances). Senkewicz downplays the importance of nonwhite influences on the events, and says little of domestic arrange-

ments (or lack of them) and their possible effects. His emphasis on continuities and gradual development and his efforts to revise earlier versions of San Francisco's unsteady character blind him at times to his own evidence of sudden alterations of a person's fortune; an unknown figure who becomes a journalistic powerhouse within six months of initial publication, for example.

Each chapter begins with contemporary commentaries and epigrams from the Bible and de Tocqueville, providing an effective if revealing framework for Senkewicz' assumptions as an historian. He takes a traditional approach to ideas of national character and the pattern of cultural life: in oft-repeated allusions to the American Adam, for example. But his study provides a fine overall synthesis of the factors involved in 1850s San Francisco civic life. One appreciates especially his emphases on exaggeration (in expectations of rapid wealth, in later charges of crime and corruption), and on the religious and economic aspects of the vigilante movement, in his reading of this troubling phenomenon.

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Gutman, Yisrael. *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943*. Ina Friedman, trans. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982. Pp. xviii, 487. Black and white plates. \$24.95 (U.S.).

In August, 1939, the number of Jews in Warsaw was about equal to the combined populations of Ottawa and Winnipeg; and almost one of every three Varsovians was a Jew. After New York, Warsaw was the largest Jewish metropolis in the world; and its Jewish community had a history stretching back more than half a millennium. Less than four years later, Warsaw was *judenrein*. Its Jewish community, which had been the religious and cultural centre of Yiddish-speaking Jewry the world over, was destroyed. Almost all of her Jews had been murdered; the handful of survivors had become hunted fugitives holed up in underground bunkers or in the apartments of gentile friends or hired protectors, who risked their own safety by sheltering Jews and sometimes betrayed them. In *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939-1943* Yisrael Gutman, a historian at the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry, chronicles the overnight transformation of the once vibrant community in which he grew up into a terrorized and traumatized agglomeration of people marked for death. He does so dispassionately, without reference to personal experiences.

The events detailed will be familiar in their broad outline to many readers. "Genocide" and "Holocaust" are by now household terms; novelists and playwrights, historians and

memorialists have been writing about the destruction of the Jews of Warsaw and elsewhere in German-dominated Europe for more than four decades. And yet, those events remain incomprehensible, none the less so, when presented, as here, in microcosm: the deliberate destruction of one Jewish community against a backdrop of German and Polish national policy and social attitudes. Who among us, after all, even in this post-Holocaust era, could imagine the calculated isolation, starvation, and then murder, within the city limits, over the next four years, of every third resident of Vancouver, a city the size of pre-war Warsaw, while the remaining two-thirds, as well as most other Canadians, went about their daily business? (Then again, one wonders how many would have actively protested had Japanese-Canadians been murdered and not “just” incarcerated in concentration camps in the same years that the Jews of Warsaw were killed!) And how many of the victims, even today, would react effectively?

Although many Warsaw Jews did not comprehend what was happening to them, some understood how extraordinary were the times in which they lived and knew early on what the future held in store for them. The Ghetto, established in the first days of the occupation, numbered among its residents a group of chronicler-historians, who determined to provide posterity with a first-hand account of events, which they sensed would seem unbelievable to those who had not lived through them and even to many who had. Gutman uses as his raw material those accounts, together with a wealth of hitherto unexamined or under-used Polish, German, and Jewish documents. He adds considerably to our knowledge of those dark years and at the same time sets out clearly the limits of knowledge defined by the lack of additional sources and the conflicting nature of some of the existing sources.

*The Jews of Warsaw* is subtitled, “Ghetto, Underground, Revolt,” suggesting that the period divides into three equal parts. In fact, however, Gutman does not see things that way. For him the significant aspect of the period was the armed revolts which took place between January and May, 1943, the last months of the Ghetto, and the events which led directly to them. He is less concerned with the economic, social, cultural, and religious affairs of the Ghetto, that is, with “passive resistance.” He devotes relatively little space to its “normal times,” the almost-three-year period before the mass deportations to the death camp at Treblinka, which began in the summer of 1942, a period when armed rebellion was a remote, perhaps a fantastic, possibility. For Gutman the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of a small number of all but untrained, all but unequipped, young Jews with no hope of defeating their enemy was “a remarkable event . . . in the history of mankind.” It was so, not simply because the rebels refused to succumb to their fate and held the Germans at bay for several weeks against all odds, but because the Jews’ struggle affected German and Polish policies and their attitudes towards Jews and, more importantly, because it marked a turning-point in Jewish self-consciousness.

Gutman’s broad and careful scholarship undercuts the self-serving accounts dished up by earlier scholarly and popular writers eager to mitigate the enormity of the events in order to assuage their personal or national consciences or simply in order to denigrate Jews. He makes clear, for example, that there existed among the Germans conflicting ideas about what to do with the Jews, even after the fateful Wannsee Conference, and some latitude for policy-making at the local level. Although there is little evidence of Nazi humanitarianism in Warsaw, at least, there is much evidence of the realism of administrators who sought to exploit Jewish manpower for the war effort, to use the economic potential of Jews as a personal power base, or just to make money out of Jewish misery. Had the Americans, the British, and the Canadians shown strong and clear support for the Jews of Europe by opening their doors to them, or even promising to do so after the war, just possibly the hand of those realists who wished to spare Jews’ lives might have been strengthened. On the other hand, Gutman details the participation of all levels of the German administration, civilian, military, and Gestapo, in the murder of Warsaw’s Jews, once it got under way.

Gutman gives the lie to the notion that Jews were the authors of their own destruction. His convincing portrait of Adam Czerniakow, the long-time head of the Warsaw *Judenrat*, the Jewish puppet regime in the Ghetto, is that of a well-meaning, somewhat deluded man caught in a no-win situation, who took the honourable course of suicide, when the folly of his dreams became apparent. To the last moment the Germans with whom he worked every day hid the truth about the coming deportation and murder from Czerniakow, permitting the opening of new schools and other long-sought improvements in the Ghetto in the weeks just before the deportations began. If, moreover, he was deluded and ineffective, there seems to be no evidence that he made life worse for Ghetto residents than it would have been without him. The Jewish police, generally reviled by the Ghetto population and by later writers, are shown here to have been a diverse group of people with mixed motives, many of them drawn gradually into a situation they could not have foreseen at the start and from which they could not extricate themselves. Even the profiteers and criminals emerge as complex characters who sometimes, at least, tried to aid their fellow Jews. There are no cardboard characters in *The Jews of Warsaw*. All are seen to be enmeshed in circumstances which will not allow them to be one-dimensional.

The fatuousness of thinking Jews ought to have rebelled sooner than they did in Warsaw becomes evident as Gutman’s narrative unfolds. (Warsaw’s rather well-equipped gentile resistance, it will be remembered, attempted armed revolt only in the summer of 1944, more than a year after the city’s Jews had been cut down, when the German army, much weakened, was retreating towards the Fatherland, when the Russians were almost at the city gates, and when the example the Jews had set was before them.) Without

arms and untrained, rebellion was not a sensible option. As long as hope for survival through submission could be maintained, then submission was more reasonable than suicidal revolt. Military action became an option only after the mass deportations of 1942, when there were left in the Ghetto very few women, almost no old people or children, few of the weak and sick, against whom reprisals would have been directed earlier. It occurred when no other policy made sense. Moreover, it could only have come about when the ground for it had been prepared. Claiming otherwise, as Gutman shows, is to misunderstand the political, military, and psychological developments that precede the declaration of war. In this respect as in so many others, Warsaw's Jews were human.

Yet another fiction laid to rest by Gutman is that the Ghetto inmates received substantial aid and encouragement from friendly Polish gentiles. There was wide knowledge in Warsaw and elsewhere in Poland of the extraordinary suffering of the Jews; and there was much that could have been done to help. Only a few bothered to try. Many Poles actually abetted the Germans' efforts. In the early days of the occupation the Polish Welfare Council supplied a list of Jews converted to Catholicism to the authorities sealing their fate. Once the deportations began, it was not uncommon for Poles to deliver letters allegedly from the deportees to their relatives in the Ghetto, and to receive money and supplies which they promised to deliver to the deportees, whom they knew to be dead. During the preparations for the Ghetto uprising, the Polish underground movements were not forthcoming with arms or very helpful in training the Jewish recruits. (The Communists were an exception, but they were still weak and ill supplied themselves and had little to share. Moreover, they were seeking to relieve the German pressure on Russia; and the Ghetto was a potential "second front.") Once the revolt began and the needs of the rebels became clear, the Home Army, the largest and best equipped of the underground groups, relented. Out of its arsenal of some 25,000 rifles, 6,000 revolvers, 30,000 grenades, and an unspecified number of heavy weapons, the Army turned over to the Jewish Fighting Organization 59 revolvers and a quantity of grenades and explosive materials. Gutman was able to find no proof that the Polish groups ever gave serious thought to the task of defending the Ghetto or of rescuing its survivors. Even during the revolt popular opinion in "Aryan" Warsaw remained largely unsympathetic — even antipathetic — towards the Jews. In point of fact, the Germans appeared to be fulfilling the aims of the pre-war Polish government, which had sought the exclusion of Jews from the country's economic, social, and political life. Not a few Poles were doubly pleased by the uprising in the Ghetto. The hated Germans got a comeuppance; and, at the same time, the Jewish presence in Warsaw was eliminated.

*The Jews of Warsaw* is well written and smoothly translated, the occasional, inevitable lapse notwithstanding. It is surprisingly easy to keep the many unfamiliar names of

people and organizations straight, although an explanation in English of the various groups listed in the abbreviations table would be welcome. The sober prose and the cold analysis of events and documents evokes surprising passion and anger in the reader, leaving one more knowledgeable but no more comprehending. One is left, too, with nostalgic longing for an era when people could believe, as did so many of Warsaw's Jews, even in 1942, that mass murder was unimaginable, especially in the midst of a major metropolitan centre in the heartland of western "civilization."

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Sewell, William. *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille 1820-1870*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Pp. xvi, 377. \$44.50 (U.S.).

The origins of *Structure and Mobility: The Men and Women of Marseille 1820-1870* lie in a brilliant insight by William Sewell nearly twenty years ago. While doing research in Marseille concerning workers' involvement in the Revolution of 1848, he recognized that one source he consulted, *the actes de mariage* opened the possibility of a whole other project — a quantitative analysis of the social structure of Marseille during a period of rapid economic, demographic, and social change. *The actes de mariage*, which many other historians had cited but not exploited, list the names, ages, addresses, and birthplaces of the bride and groom, as well as the names, occupations, and addresses of their fathers and of the four witnesses. Moreover, the spouses and witnesses signed the document, if they were capable of signing — the basic test of literacy. Sewell supplemented these unique documents with census records and a wide range of secondary materials, but the original insight was crucial. The result is an exquisite social portrait of an urban society over a half-century. The approach is unabashedly historical but one informed by the latest social scientific models, quantitative methods, urban history, and Sewell's own related publications concerning workers' organisations and *mentalités*. The footnotes and bibliography attest to the wide learning the author brings to bear.

The book is divided into two parts. The first, which is the more general, may be of greater interest to those urban historians who have only a passing interest in France. That section discusses demographic, economic, occupational, and neighbourhood patterns of Marseille; it concentrates on the period 1820-1870 but puts that period into the historical setting of the evolution of the city and also compares the development of Marseille to that of other European cities of the time. The second part analyses in great detail migration