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From That Place And Time: A Memoir, 1938-1947



Synopsis

From that Place and Time is the memoir of Lucy S. Dawidowicz, an American-Jewish historian who set out to study Yiddish language and Jewish history at YIVO, the Jewish Scientific Institute in Vilna, Poland, in 1938. Escaping Poland only days before the Nazi onslaught, she worked in the New York YIVO during the war, and returned to Europe from 1946 to 1947 to aid Jewish displaced persons in Munich and Belsen with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Dawidowicz's memoir not only describes her pre-war year in Jewish Eastern Europe, but also treats the ghostly post-war period, and her role in salvaging what remained of Vilna's scorched Jewish archives and libraries. Nancy Sinkoff's new introduction explores the historical forces, particularly the dynamic world of secular Yiddish culture, which shaped Dawidowicz's decision to journey to Poland and her reassessment of those forces in the last years of her life.

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Customer Reviews

In this deeply moving personal reminiscence, eminent historian Dawidowicz (*The War Against the Jews*) recounts the year she spent in Vilna, Poland, shortly before barbaric German troops swept in and murdered nearly all of that city's 60,000 Jews. Vilna no longer exists--Vilnius, the present-day capital of Soviet Lithuania, contains hardly a trace of the former city, which makes this poignant memoir all the more valuable. In 1938, Dawidowicz, a disillusioned 23-year-old radical and ex-communist of Polish-Jewish ancestry, embarked from New York for YIVO, Vilna's famed Yiddish Scientific Institute, to study Jewish history. Beggars filled the streets as the Poles' vicious anti-Semitic policies and actions accelerated pauperization of the Jews. Back in New York, working

for YIVO's American branch, the author watched with rage and anguish as Europe's Jews were massacred and most of her Vilna friends murdered. She returned to occupied Germany in 1946, to work with Holocaust survivors in displaced-person camps. Her piercingly eloquent narrative gives us a sharp first-hand impression of a world in ruins and of the irreparable losses suffered by European Jewry. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A leading historian of the Holocaust, Dawidowicz transports the reader from 1938, when she studied in Vilna, Poland, through 1946, when she returned to Europe to assist Jewish survivors. This is a powerful and absorbing memoir; her description of Vilna, an ancient center of Jewish culture and tradition, is so clear and authentic that one almost realizes what it was like to have been an East European Jew on the eve of the Holocaust. The most poignant section is that in which Dawidowicz--safely back in the United States--recounts her profound sorrow and outrage as she gradually learns the extent of the horrors simultaneously occurring in Germany and Poland. For most academic and public libraries.- Mark R. Yerburch, Trinity Coll. Lib., Burlington, Vt. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have read this book twice, written by noted historian Lucy Dawidowicz, and I found it to be a fascinating history and diary of a time when she traveled from New York to pre-war Vilnius, Lithuania (at that time in Poland) to study Yiddish. It gives a portrait and view of the city, then known as The Jerusalem of the North, and its Jewish inhabitants and the lives they lived just before total annihilation by the invading Nazis. Readers are introduced to families, to inhabitants, to social circles that existed at a time when life was somewhat "normal". Lucy escaped just before World War II broke out and returned to New York to anxiously await the fates of all those wonderful people to whom we had been introduced in her book. The reality of "after the war" is total destruction, lost families, horrific suffering, murder on an industrial scale and the wiping out of a Jewish community that had existed in Vilnius for centuries. She writes in an engaging and educated style, and you can't help but grieve with her when she returns to Europe after the war to help with classifying stolen libraries and other items and realizes that much of what she finds was looted from Vilnius.

This is one of Judaism's hidden treasures. The story of a young New York Jewish woman who went to Vilna, Lithuania in 1939 as an exchange student and returned home two weeks before the Nazi's

invaded and subsequently destroyed every last vestige of Judaism from Eastern Europe. Beautifully written as an exercise in the powers of memory by an extraordinary woman remembering events that took place decades in the past, it is a book that will reward your efforts to track it down.

Utterly Unusual and Unbelievable! A young American college student, having a fun year in Poland, is asked to return to, literally, pick up the pieces of life from merely a few years before. Highly readable. Highly recommended.

One of the most telling memoirs to come out of World War 11

How is it possible that only 3 people have reviewed this book? You'd think it would be on the required reading list of every history of eastern Europe, or every person who wants to prevent the worst moments of history from repeating themselves. This book tells the story of a young girl spending a year in Europe. Only thing is, this happened to be eastern Europe on the brink of World War II. Seen through the discerning eyes of an attractive 20-something year old, history becomes story. I bought this book when it first appeared and eagerly raced through the reading. Now, several years older and wiser, I am re-reading it, mentally collecting the information and savoring the personal insights. It is worth a slow and careful re-read.

As a counterpoint to her more comprehensive scholarly work on the holocaust, this book provides several personal vignettes of that period in history. Beginning in New York City the account covers making arrangements for the trip, the author's stay in Vilna, a center of Jewish culture in Poland including elements of daily life, cultural, and political events, her narrow escape from Poland as the Nazi invasion progresses, and the finally agonizing wait in New York as news of the insuing catastrophe arrives in bits and pieces. This book provides insight into what it was like to live through that period in history, and may help those close to them to understand people who actually lived through it.

I got this book because of the good review. I found it to be a weak effort.

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