

## Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century (Pitt Russian East European)

By Cynthia Paces

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### Prague Panoramas: National Memory and Sacred Space in the Twentieth Century (Pitt Russian East European) By Cynthia Paces

*Prague Panoramas* examines the creation of Czech nationalism through monuments, buildings, festivals, and protests in the public spaces of the city during the twentieth century. These “sites of memory” were attempts by civic, religious, cultural, and political forces to create a cohesive sense of self for a country and a people torn by war, foreign occupation, and internal strife.

The Czechs struggled to define their national identity throughout the modern era. Prague, the capital of a diverse area comprising Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, Poles, Ruthenians, and Romany as well as various religious groups including Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, became central to the Czech domination of the region and its identity. These struggles have often played out in violent acts, such as the destruction of religious monuments, or the forced segregation and near extermination of Jews.

During the twentieth century, Prague grew increasingly secular, yet leaders continued to look to religious figures such as Jan Hus and Saint Wenceslas as symbols of Czech heritage. Hus, in particular, became a paladin in the struggle for Czech independence from the Habsburg Empire and Austrian Catholicism.

Through her extensive archival research and personal fieldwork, Cynthia Paces offers a panoramic view of Prague as the cradle of Czech national identity, seen through a vast array of memory sites and objects. From the Gothic Saint Vitus Cathedral, to the Communist Party's reconstruction of Jan Hus's Bethlehem Chapel, to the 1969 self-immolation of student Jan Palach in protest of Soviet occupation, to the Hosková plaque commemorating the deportation of Jews from Josefov during the Holocaust, Paces reveals the iconography intrinsic to forming a collective memory and the meaning of being a Czech. As her study discerns, that meaning has yet to be clearly defined, and the search for identity continues today.

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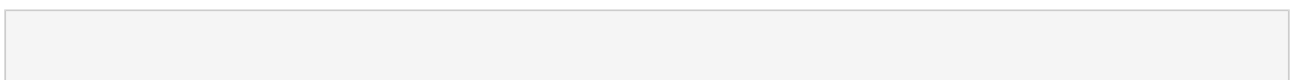
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**Editorial Review**

Review

“Cynthia Paces takes us on a fascinating tour of Prague's twentieth century, showing how battles over the meaning of Czech national identity were embedded in the city's streets and illuminating the oft-neglected and contentious relationship between religion and nation in the Bohemian lands. Beautifully written and rich in evocative detail, this book is a significant contribution to the history of nationalism in Eastern Europe.”

—Melissa Feinberg, Rutgers University

“Anyone interested in appreciating how stones speak should accompany Paces through her cleverly conceived cultural history. She deftly guides us around Prague's squares, streets, buildings, and bridges. She shows how twentieth-century Czechs repeatedly remembered and reinterpreted the symbols located in the public spaces of their beautiful capital city.”

—Cate Giustino, Auburn University

“A well-researched scholarly book in memory studies written in a clear style, providing a deep analysis.”

—*Nations and Nationalism*

“An insightful study. . . . The prose is clear and easy to follow. . . . Pace's obvious affection for Prague, finally, helps make her book good recreational reading for scholars and academics who have a chance to explore the city.”

—*The Journal of Modern History*

“Paces has written a beautiful book. . . . an important book. The greatest value of ‘Prague Panoramas’ is its fresh approach to entrenched historical paradigms in Czech, as well as European, history.”

—*SEER*

About the Author

Cynthia Paces is associate professor of history at The College of New Jersey. Her articles have appeared in the journals *Radical History Review* and *Nationalities Papers*, and she has contributed chapters to several books, including: *Memory and Impact of Political Transformation in Public Space; Staging the Past; and Constructing Identity in East Central Europe*.

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