

## Cold War Cities: History, Culture and Memory

Katia Pizzi /

Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory, University of London

Cultural historians aim to reinvigorate Cold War historiography through the original rubric of the city, addressing amnesia and memorialisation, the ruin and monument, conflict and retribution, commemoration and public identity, trauma and reconciliation.

City living and urban culture are relatively novel and particularly advantageous stances from which to critically explore the Cold War and its legacy. The aim of most recent research is to integrate memory and history in order to shed light on a broad field encompassing the histories, memories, daily lives and multiple forms of cultural exchange, consumption and production across and within cities during and after the Cold War. In particular, the [volume](#) focuses on cultural production including magazines, films, photography, commercial fairs, choral societies as well as memorial sites such as monuments, artefacts, cemeteries, ruined industrial sites and museums.

Several chapters address collective memory as a social framework through which individuals organize their history. Jan Assmann, for example, elaborates on the relationship between social and public memory, based on the notion of 'communicative memory' to indicate



memories orally mediated between living generations and ‘cultural memory’. Assmann’s conclusion that cultural memory transcends human generations and is accessible across time is particularly pertinent to the aims and scope of this collection. Mindful of this approach, as well as of the caveats recently advanced towards the notion of ‘collective memory’, the book examines a large body of work, both public and private, material and immaterial, including commercial memorialization of the past, tourism, commemoration and leisure time activities.

The cities list was inevitably narrowed down to twelve case studies: Belgrade, Berlin, Bologna, Cairo, Helsinki, Izmir, Pripyat, Richland, Tampere, Trieste, Vienna and Vilnius. Many more from within a broader regional pool could have been included. Those selected sit at the epicentre of the ideological binaries that typified the Cold War, frequently contended in Second World War and post-Second World War geo-political negotiations (Vienna, Bologna, Berlin and Trieste). These cities are misaligned somewhat within their particular local and regional contexts, re-configured to suit a new state identity or subsequently pushed to the margins of history. As a result, their Cold War credentials were and, in many cases still are, skewed and ambiguous, yet absolutely key.

Less overtly caught in these tectonic shifts, other cities included bear a complex and dynamic relation with Cold War history and memory, whether as a result of their technocratic stakes (Richland and Pripyat), shifting peripherality (Cairo, Izmir and Belgrade) and interfacing between East and West, whether from within the Eastern bloc (Vilnius) or outside



(Helsinki, Tampere). A number of these cities are explored through the lens of the Cold War for the first time here. Without presuming to exhaust what remains a vast and complex field, *Cold War Cities: History, Culture and Memory* aims to reinvigorate Cold War historiography through the original rubric of the city, addressing amnesia and memorialisation, the ruin and monument, conflict and retribution, commemoration and public identity, trauma and reconciliation, the museum and ritualization of the everyday.

Katia Pizzi is Director of the Centre for the Study of Cultural Memory, Institute of Modern Languages Research, School of Advanced Study, University of London.

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