

## **Research Team 11: Living Together or Hating Each Other?**

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- This Report explores ways of gaining an objective or at least more neutral understanding of the 1990s and before. We challenge the inevitability of Yugoslavia's demise by focusing on the "positive" experiences of life in a multiethnic society pre-1987.
- Forms of "positive history" narratives of cooperation and tolerance that cuts across ethnic and religious divisions, stress the commonalities of people and their shared experiences of hardship, powerlessness, and victimization during the succession wars of the 1990s. Positive history also highlights the numerous initiatives, actions, and organizations which tried to promote peace: autonomous women's groups, peace and anti-war organizations, organizations for the protection of human rights, and outstanding intellectuals.
- We interrogate institutional failure in Yugoslav society, from the failure of the media to report the wars objectively, to the role of the mainline churches, and the educational system. In Serbia and Croatia, the media became an active participant in the escalation of nationalist violence. After the wars, neither country has fully engaged with the history of atrocities in the 1990s. Few media institutions feel inclined or empowered to explore national guilt too far.
- The role of religious communities remains problematic. Issues of truth and reconciliation do not often make the agenda. Religious communities, in the main, deny their responsibility for wrongdoing during the recent wars, or have only accused each other for contributing to war efforts.
- Education is crucial to the development of a more tolerant and cooperative society. However, it can also be used to perpetuate stereotypes, intolerance, and even violent ethnic chauvinism. There are positive and negative examples from the Yugoslav region and there is considerable work to be done in revising textbooks and educational curricula to bridge ethnic and cultural divides which were exacerbated by the wars.
- Truth and reconciliation may be helped by public commissions, bringing together government, churches, NGOs, etc, to come to terms with the crimes of the 1990s, promoting memory, justice, and healing. In Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, no long-term viable TRC was established to address the serious breaches of human rights that accompanied the dissolution of Yugoslavia.
- Mourning is a necessary reaction to loss and change. If mourning can occur, the next generation creates a new version of the event, strengthening the group's self-esteem and moving into the future without having to carry the burden of the past. Beyond talking about the past, societies can mourn their past by building monuments or museums, creating days of remembrance, or using music, art, theater, literature or film creatively and collectively to remember.
- We conclude with recommendations abstracted from the themes of this Report, while acknowledging that positive change after such violent ethnic conflicts may take considerable time to come about.