



History and its Effect on Today's Youth

DOCUMENTA – Center for Dealing with the Past

House of Human Rights, Zagreb, 3rd December 2019

DOCUMENTA – Center for Dealing with the past

- **Established in 2004 by several Croatian NGOs**

- **Initial mission:**
 - **critical dealing with the Yugoslav secession wars and their impact on the contemporary Croatian and other post-yugoslav societies**
 - **strong cooperation with partner-organisations from post-yugoslav countries**

- **Recent development:**
 - **stronger focus on political violence throughout 20th century**
 - **strengthening of cooperation in the frame of European Union**
 - **dealing with the legacy of violence in other regions**
 - **dealing with contemporary challenges (hate-speech in internet, new populism, etc.)**

3 programs of DOCUMENTA

- **Documenting**
 - Documenting Human Losses (in Croatia)
 - Collecting Personal Memories on War (online video platform)
 - Documenting Work on the Human Rights Organisations (Archive)

- **Improvement of court practices and standards**
 - Monitoring war crimes trials
 - Monitoring compensation and reparation procedures
 - Reports

- **Public dialogue and public policies**
 - Dealing with the Past
 - Reparations
 - Coalition for Regional Commission (REKOM)
 - **Culture of Remembrance (civic-education / youth-work)**
 - **Teaching of History (teachers / pupils / curriculum)**

Program for today

- 09:30 – Arrival of the participants
- 09:40 – 09:45 – Welcoming and short presentation of *Documenta* and the team
- 09:45 – 09:55 – "Get to know each other"
- 09:55 – 10:00 – Presentation of today's program
- 10:00 – 10:15 – "Croatian War for Independence" - introductory remarks by Dr. Boris Stamenić
- 10:15 – 10:25 – Questions and comments about the lecture
- 10:25 – 10:40 – (Group discussion "Learning about the war in the 1990s in European classrooms")
- 10:40 – 10:55 – (Presentation of the results of the group discussion)
- 10:55 – 11:10 – Coffee Break
- 11:15 – 12:00 – Workshop "Conflict Textiles" by Tena Banjeglav und Alice Straniero
- 12:00 – 12:15 – (Evaluation)
- 12:15 – 12:25 – Short Break
- 12:25 – 12:45 – Presentation of the former project conducted by SS BJJ.
- – Farewell



6 basic questions about Croatian war for independence

Introductory remarks by Dr. Boris Stamenić, Documenta
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Key problems of understanding:

1) Complexity of the matter

Check the BBC documentary „Death of Yugoslavia” for the introduction!

2) Ambiguities, disputes and discursive struggles about the interpretation

The question „what happened” as well as other questions related to the Croatian war for independence still causes disputes and emotional reactions by many people in Croatia.

3) Emotionally loaded content

The thing is, that even in case of seemingly simple questions (like where the war took a place?) the provided answers do suggest certain narrative and thereby certain normative reference behind...

Question 1: Where the conflict took place?

along administrative borders or rather along ethnic borders...



Question 2: Why the conflict took a place?

Because of the previously existing ethnic tensions, additionally boosted by the economic crisis in the 1980s and followed by the dissolution of the communist order in Yugoslavia and elsewhere...



Question 2: Why did conflict took a place?

... or rather because of the populist rhetorics and decissions made by political leaders, first of all by Slobodan Milošević?



Question 3: Who took a place in the conflict?

Basically, there were two sides in the conflict:

-> Croatian side striving for national independence of Croatia

-> Serbian side opposing the independence of Croatia



Question 3: Who took a place in the conflict?

However, beyond the members of dominant ethnic group from specific country, many individuals with more complicated personal background also took a part in the conflict. In the Croatian army, for instance, many ethnic Croats from Bosnia-Herzegovina, but also many Croatian citizens of non-Croatian ethnic origin fought side by side in the same units.



Question 4: When the war started?

This is a hard question. The first road barricades of Serb insurgents in Croatia have been erected in August 1990, however the unequivocal war broke out first in July 1991. The period in between can be described as an escalating political crisis but also as an ongoing hybrid war characterised by propagandistic attacks and secret-service operations.



Question 4: When the war started?

One further disputed question in the Croatian culture of remembrance is if the Croatian war for independence should be contextualised within the dissolution of socialist Yugoslavia or rather as a final chapter of the long-term nationalist struggle for independence of Croatia?



Question 5: How the war started?

It started with the seizure of power in Serbia and Yugoslavia by Slobodan Milošević in the late 1980s...



Question 6: What happend?

Brutal war happend with around 20.000 casulties only in Croatia.

Since the 1990s the Croatian war for independence turned into the central symbolic element of the Croatian statehood and Croatian culture of remembrance.

