Many words have been written on Yugoslavia since the founding of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918. Yugoslavia has provided a rich vein of scholarly enterprise for a number of reasons, few of which, especially in its later years are consequent upon its success. Indeed, if we look at the nature of politics in Yugoslavia and the continual conflict between its politically active citizens, the uninitiated observer would wonder how it held together for as long as it did. With regard to the version of the state that was created in 1945, that question is quite easy to answer: it was held together by means of the charisma and authoritarianism of Tito, and little else. Following his death, there was no one who possessed his authority, and no individual or group with either the means or the ability to hold the state together in a manner which would have succeeded in curbing the sub-state nationalist movements that came to the fore in the late 1980s.

The scholars who contribute to this volume, as well as most other observers of the field, correctly attempt to locate the causes of the fall of Yugoslavia within the terms of theoretical frameworks and through the identification of critical junctures. Some hold the constitution of 1974 to be the decisive turning point, as it strengthened the periphery at the expense of the centre. Others point to the tremendous economic problems that the country faced from the early 1970s onwards. Still others look to the death of Tito. There are also those who view the rise of Slobodan Milošević as being the decisive factor in Yugoslavia’s demise. Some point to the deep currents of both Slovene and Croat nationalism and seek to apportion the main share of blame to those...
who, from the late 1980s onward, exploited these sentiments. Further explanations are reliant upon attempting to locate decline and fall within the context of the wider collapse of communism, while others point to the hidden hand of the West, or even the machinations of the Vatican and Berlin, intent on re-enforcing Catholic and German hegemony respectively.

Of course, the reader is entitled to conclude that even such an unpromising set of circumstances should not lead people toward estrangement, violence, and indeed warfare. Of course, in the best of all possible worlds, they would be correct. However, in the 1980s Yugoslavia was not the best of all possible worlds. On the contrary, it was a one-party dictatorship suffering from economic decline. This downturn was coupled with a wider pattern of uneven economic development, differentiated and uneven levels of education, a general lack of Yugoslav national consciousness, and the lingering effects of the 1941-1945 civil war. The historical memory of the competing visions of Yugoslavia that arose during the nineteenth century and the failure to solve those tensions, as opposed merely to suppressing them, can also be added to the mix.

There does seem to be a general consensus among serious commentators, however, that the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ argument is rubbish, and that warfare was the result of elite manipulation. I intend to present a heretical stance. Whilst I do not believe that bloodshed was inevitable, I believe it was always likely to be integral to the process, and whereas I do not subscribe to the ‘ancient hatreds’ argument, I do take the view that significant sections of Yugoslav society had for decades been deeply estranged from each other prior to the initial outbreak of violence in Knin in November 1990. Fundamentally, I do not subscribe to arguments that suggest or claim that Yugoslavia was a multicultural society, in broadly the same sense that countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom are, or aspire to be.

Space does not permit me to investigate Yugoslav inter-ethnic relationships on a case by case basis. However, having claimed that Yugoslavia was not a multicultural society, I am aware of the need to attempt to substantiate the claim. Let us first of all examine the wider context of Muslim-Christian relationships. A Christian identity, albeit not necessarily a liberal one, is integral to the majority of South Slav national movements and to the adherents of those movements and the nations they have spawned. It does not matter that self-proclaimed Christians may not rigorously adhere to the tenets of their faith or take a particularly ‘Christian’ view of their Muslim neighbours or, indeed, other Christians. The fact of the matter is that they identify themselves as Christians and either Croats, Slovenes, Montenegrins, Serbs and