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# **“Stop the War in the Name of Children”: Children and Nation Building Through Croatian Patriotic Music (1991-1992)**

Research Article

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# “Stop the War in the Name of Children”: Children and Nation Building Through Croatian Patriotic Music (1991-1992)

Ivana Polić<sup>1</sup>

While histories of ethnic conflicts and nationalism focus mainly on adult actors, this study seeks to shed light on the importance of children and their centrality to post-socialist nation-building through popular culture. Looking at what in Croatia is known as the War of Independence (or Homeland War), the project focuses on a particular, so far almost completely unexplored, aspect of Croatian nation-building: the role of children in the production, dissemination, and impact of Croatian patriotic music. During the war in Croatia, musicians of all genres joined the effort of “defending the homeland through music,” and their songs and videos were incessantly broadcasted on national television and radio stations. Existing studies analysing Croatian patriotic music in this period consider it mostly from the perspective of a cultural and regional identity marker, while the interest to explore music as a political tool has become a nascent field only in the past two decades. Although a few works have attempted to explore depictions of male and female gender within this discourse, no studies have so far researched the role of children as an impact factor via this type of art. Through a media analysis of music production materials, this article shows that numerous patriotic songs and videos included children, whether as singers or background participants, who became actively involved in promoting the Croatian cause at home and abroad, and were therefore one of the essential agents of creating a distinctively Croatian national identity.

**Keywords:** Croatia, war, children, patriotic music, national identity

## Introduction

The turbulent 1990s in Croatia, marked by the country’s secession from Yugoslavia accompanied by warfare, state- and nation-building, and the difficult process of economic recovery, have so far yielded a wide spectrum of literature from various scholarly branches. The majority of works focus on political, demographic, and social history, analysing domestic and foreign political actors and the consequences of the war in terms of demographic losses and different kinds of trauma suffered by the population exposed to warfare. This study, however, turns to two much less explored but equally important domains: that

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of popular culture in the form of patriotic music, and the role a specific generational group – children – played in the nation-building process via popular music.

The idea of music as a political tool of modern nation-building has been gaining more and more attention by scholars over the past two decades. With the emergence of modern national(ist) movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, music became one of the defining, distinct elements of the new nations. A wide variety of musical forms could serve this purpose, and the repertoire became considerably richer with the flourishing of mass media in the second half of the twentieth century. While most studies focus on modern Europe, more recent ones also analyse music in national movements in the Middle East and Latin America, where its creation stems from both state and non-state actors.<sup>2</sup> Some of the more recent works also point to the importance of musical expressions of stateless nations, where it functions as an indicator of both group cohesiveness and spatial looseness.<sup>3</sup> One of the observations that most meticulously disentangles the interplay between music and national and cultural identity is that which Philip Bohlman, a distinguished ethnomusicologist, made in his pioneering work *The Music of European Nationalism*, where he explores the historical trajectory of music as a nation-building pillar in modern Western and Central Europe. Specifically, he clearly differentiates between music for “national” and “nationalist” purposes. While the former portrays “the nation itself” through its historic images and cultural traditions, the latter emphasises the “state” in the “nation-state” formulation, and appears at times of instability or confrontation with another nation. As the nation struggles to establish itself as a legitimate actor in a given geopolitical order, music becomes an instrument of such legitimacy, and the state initiates and supports musical activities vital to this project.<sup>4</sup> What is more, the entrance and establishment of music as a player in the national arena comes not only “from above.” On the contrary, both the creators and the recipients (audience) participate in the process of its affirmation of the national imagery.<sup>5</sup>

This article will rely on Bohlman’s notion of “nationalist” music, given its direct connection to the case of Croatia in the early 1990s, where conflict broke out after the country’s declaration of independence was rejected by the leadership of the insurgent Croatian Serbs supported by the Yugoslav People’s Army. By the end of 1991, almost a third of Croatia’s territory had become a part of the self-proclaimed Republic of Serbian Krajina. Besides military mobilisation, massive

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<sup>2</sup> See Beezley, William. (ed.). 2018. *Cultural Nationalism and Ethnic Music in Latin America*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press; Bohlman, Philip V. 2011. *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*. New York: Routledge; Frolova-Walker, Marina. 2007. *Russian Music and Nationalism: From Glinka to Stalin*. New Haven / London: Yale University Press; Herder, Johann Gotfried and Philip V. Bohlman. 2017. *Song Loves the Masses: Herder on Music and Nationalism*. Oakland: University of California Press; McDonald, David A. 2013. *My Voice is My Weapon: Music, Nationalism, and the Poetics of Palestinian Resistance*. Durham: Duke University Press; Morra, Irene. 2014. *Britishness, Popular Music, and National Identity: The Making of Modern Britain*. New York: Routledge; Vuletić, Dean. 2018. *Postwar Europe and the Eurovision Song Contest*. London / New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>3</sup> See Bohlman, *Focus: Music, Nationalism, and the Making of the New Europe*.

<sup>4</sup> See Bohlman, Philip V. 2004. *The Music of European Nationalism: Cultural Identity and Modern History*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 119-20.

<sup>5</sup> Bohlman, *The Music of European Nationalism*.

support for the Croatian war cause spread within a variety of social and cultural spheres, and one that gained enormous public attention and mass following was the ‘patriotic’ music. Nearly all musicians of all genres engaged in creating a series of patriotic songs in order to contribute to the “defence of the homeland.” Incessantly broadcast on national television and radio stations throughout the country, their song verses were instantly memorised by the predominantly receptive audience that spent days and nights following the news from the war zones.

While the majority of studies center on regional musical traditions and their role as cultural identity preservers throughout the war, until now only a few scholars have looked at the importance of Croatian popular patriotic music for the larger process of nation-building in the 1990s.<sup>6</sup> The most comprehensive study to date is certainly that of British historian Catherine Baker, who analysed the Croatian patriotic music repertoire throughout the whole of the 1990s and presented changes in music as responses to different stages during the war, its aftermath, and the difficult process of the country’s economic and social recovery.<sup>7</sup> In terms of gender studies, Croatian musicologist Naila Ceribašić has looked at the typical representations of male and female gender in Croatian and Serbian popular music.<sup>8</sup> However, none of the studies have delved into the importance of the youngest, generation-specific participants within this realm, a deficit which this study aims to address.

While the scholarship on armed conflicts, political transitions, or even popular mass culture during those unstable times revolves mainly around adult actors, this study also highlights the immense importance of children as both agents and subjects in the process of nation-building. The place of children in nation-building has so far been acknowledged by scholars working almost exclusively on nineteenth- and twentieth-century Western Europe, the United States, or the Soviet Union. Nation-building processes in these places, at least compared to Southeastern Europe, seem much more completed.<sup>9</sup> In the Croatian case, however, the role of children in this process is limited to a few studies of the Croatian Pioneers in Yugoslavia, and analysis of school (although mostly history) textbooks after independence, considering the changed national narratives.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> See Baker, Catherine. 2013. *Music as a Weapon of Ethnopolitical Violence and Conflict: Processes of Ethnic Separation During and After the Break-up of Yugoslavia*. *Patterns of Prejudice* 47(4-5), 409-29 (accessed: 2. May 2019); Mavra, Miroslav and Lori McNeil. 2007. *Identity Formation and Music: A Case Study of Croatian Experience*. *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge* 5(2), 1-20 (accessed: 20 April 2019); Pettan, Svanibor. (ed.). 1998. *Music, Politics, and War: Views from Croatia*. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research; Senjković, Reana. 2002. *Lica društva, likovi države*. Zagreb: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research.

<sup>7</sup> Baker, Catherine. 2010. *Sounds of the Borderland: Popular Music, War and Nationalism in Croatia Since 1991*. Surrey / Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

<sup>8</sup> Ceribašić, Naila. 2000. *Defining Women and Men in the Context of War: Images in Croatian Popular Music in the 1990s*, in *Music and Gender*, edited by Moisala, Pirko and Beverly Diamond. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 219-38.

<sup>9</sup> See Fruhstuck, Sabine. 2017. *Playing War: Children and the Paradoxes of Modern Militarism in Japan*. Oakland: University of California Press; Kelly, Katriona. 2007. *Children’s World: Growing Up in Russia, 1890-1991*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press; Saunders, Anna. 2007. *Honecker’s Children: Youth and Patriotism in Eastern Germany, 1979-2002*. New York: Manchester University Press; Zahra, Tara. 2008. *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948*. London: Cornell University Press.

<sup>10</sup> See Agičić, Damir. 2011. *Prikaz postanka suvremene Republike Hrvatske u hrvatskim udžbenicima povijesti za osnovnu školu*, in *Kultura sjećanja: 1991: povijesni lomovi i svladavanje prošlosti*, edited

Whereas the great majority of the scholarly literature pertaining to children in 1990s Croatia has analysed the consequences of trauma, loss, and exile on children who suffered throughout the war,<sup>11</sup> this study turns to a different question: how did children partake in Croatian nation-building through, in this case, popular culture in the form of patriotic music?

I argue that, by participating in the production and advertisement of patriotic music through their appearance in the verses, music videos, or public performances of the songs, the generational and symbolic role of children was used to contribute to the impact of these songs on both the domestic and international stage. The argumentation relies on an analysis of lyrics and music videos, as well as newspaper and television reports, and other kinds of materials (cultural event pamphlets, catalogues of museum exhibitions, etc.) pertaining to the presence of children in patriotic music. Through case studies of particular thematic clusters in musical production, the article shows that children’s role was two-dimensional. The first section shows how their victimhood served as a symbol of a nascent state that was suffering under the “Great Serbian aggression”. This aspect made children active ambassadors of Croatia on an international stage. The second section looks at the domestic arena; the fact that children symbolised family values made them extremely close to the fighters on the domestic front, and this bond was intended to contribute to the mobilisation statistics. Children’s appearance in the domestic arena also had a third dimension, that of characterising ‘the enemy’ as a savage and uncivilised attacker, which also intensified interethnic animosity in this period of fear and uncertainty. The article mainly focuses on the period between 1991 and 1992, the most fruitful period for the production of patriotic songs, marked by the declaration of independence, the onset of the actual warfare, the displacement of a large part of population, and international recognition. After the recognition and the ceasefire between the Republic of Croatia and the Yugoslav People’s Army [Jugoslavenska narodna armija, JNA] in 1992 which ended the first phase of the conflict, patriotic music production and circulation decreased considerably, and did not regain equal rigour even after the official victory following ‘Operation Storm’ in 1995. Hence, the initial phase of the conflict remains the crucial one for studying the mechanisms of creation and thematic and semantic selection of this genre’s products.

### **The birth of popular patriotic music**

Up until the late socialist period in the 1980s, music also served to strengthen the principle of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ [*bratstvo i jedinstvo*] among the

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by Cipek, Tihomir. Zagreb: Disput, 359-77; Duda, Igor. 2015. *Danas kada postajem pionir: djetinjstvo i ideologija jugoslavenskoga socijalizma*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa; Erdei, Idliko. 2006. *Odrastanje u poznom socijalizmu – od “pionira malenih” do vojske potrošača*, in *Devijacije i promašaji: etnografija domaćeg socijalizma*, edited by Čale Feldman, Lada and Ines Prica. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 205-40.

<sup>11</sup> See Haberle, Ivana / Uskok, Gordana and Vera Jurčević (eds.). 2015. *Krhotine djetinjstva: koracima nade u istinu*. Zadar: Udruga “Žene u Domovinskom ratu”; Šaravanja, Vjekoslav. 2002. *10.000 djece bez roditelja u Domovinskom ratu*. Gradina: Rimokatolički župni ured; Šikić, Neven / Žužul, Miomir and Ivan Fattorini. (eds.). 1994. *Stradanja djece u Domovinskom ratu*. Zagreb: Naklada Slap and Klinika za dječje bolesti Zagreb; Terzić, Janoš / Meštrović, Julije, Đogaš, Zoran, Furlan, Dubravko and Mihovil Biočić. 2001. Children War Casualties During the 1991-1995 Wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Croatian Medical Journal* 42(2), 156-60.

Yugoslav peoples, and its production and distribution was state-controlled. Children in schools learned about the different musical traditions of all the Yugoslav republics, and concerts and other important public political events with music performances often included folklore groups from various parts of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, public reproduction of songs with particular national or religious connotations was forbidden, as it posed the danger of unearthing ethnic tensions and revoking painful memories of the Ustashe and Partisan crimes during the Second World War. After the last changes to the constitution in 1974, followed by Josip Broz Tito's death and growing dissatisfaction exacerbated by economic crisis, nationalist aspirations also brought changes in cultural and artistic spheres, including musical expression. In the Croatian case, the revival of old, previously forbidden patriotic songs symbolising the Croatian struggle for national recognition and sovereignty was happening in parallel with political changes, only to be intensified after the multiparty elections and the Croatian Democratic Union's [*Hrvatska demokratska zajednica*, HDZ] ascendance to power.<sup>12</sup>

Euphoria over the fulfillment of a "thousand-year-old dream of statehood" accompanied the subsequent declaration of independence from Yugoslavia, and some of the most powerful expressions of national pride came in the form of publishing cassettes and CDs with remakes of old Croatian patriotic songs. Traditional Croatian musical instruments, such as the *tamburica*, which HDZ also used in performances during their public rallies, represented the return to Croatian ethnic roots and the distinctiveness from other, especially Serbian, folk music and instruments.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, music events held to traditionally host musicians from all over Yugoslavia, such as Zagrebfest, suddenly refused to invite Serbian artists, justifying their actions with the democratic changes in Croatia and new standards that excluded music that carried associations of the "east" and "the Balkans".<sup>14</sup> Separating Croatian television stations from the Yugoslav network and establishing the national Croatian Radio Television network (Hrvatska radiotelevizija, HRT) as a separate institution was an important transitional moment for the music industry as well.<sup>15</sup> Just like almost all main press and radio headquarters, HRT was controlled by the party in power, which means that the broadcasting of mainstream music also became heavily censored.

With the beginnings of armed conflict in Croatia, however, music gained an unprecedented dimension not only in affirming Croatianness, but also as an instrument of propaganda and an omnipresent source of moral support for citizens and those fighting on the front lines. When looking at the topic of music in the context of media, the influence of mass media in the Yugoslav Succession Wars was enormous, and households without television or radio were extremely rare, meaning that the great majority of people could actually follow the news

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<sup>12</sup> One of the songs that probably best represents this shift was *Ustani, bane* ["Rise, Viceroy"], which celebrates and invokes viceroy Josip Jelačić who, despite being loyal to the Austrian army in crushing 1848 revolution, is represented as a Croatian national leader.

<sup>13</sup> Pettan, Svanibor, 1998. *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s: An Introduction*, in *Music, Politic, and War: Views from Croatia*, edited by Pettan, Svanibor. Zagreb: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research, 12-16.

<sup>14</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 21.

<sup>15</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 18.

from the war zones on a daily, even hourly basis.<sup>16</sup> As for music production, Croatia Records was established as the lead Croatian record label (after its predecessor, Jugoton, ceased to exist), and it recorded songs with strictly patriotic themes that went hand in hand with the ideologically imbued programmes broadcast by HRT; the war that broke out in Croatia was depicted as a sacred, almost mythical struggle for freedom and independence, Croatian victims were labeled as martyrs and a symbol of the collective victimhood of the state suffering from “Greater-Serbian aggression”, and there was no mention of the victims of other nationalities.<sup>17</sup> Musicians from all genres of music, from both younger and older generations, were involved in this production, as they themselves felt the need to contribute to the war cause through their own professional skills. HRT financed large-scale productions of music videos with band aids (groups of mixed-genre singers with the purpose of contributing to charity funds) and humanitarian concerts, and even introduced special music TV shows where viewers could request songs and leave messages to their loved ones on the fronts.<sup>18</sup> The popularity of patriotic music was also reflected in the scarcity at the time of any other type of music that did not refer to contemporary circumstances or the war for independence.<sup>19</sup>

It is important to point out that we can distinguish between two types of patriotic music. The first is, as Croatian musicologist Svanibor Pettan called it, the ‘official’ patriotic music repertoire, which was produced by state-controlled record houses, possessed a certain level of musical and technical quality, and was easily purchasable in stores.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, patriotic music also had its ‘alternative’ category, with songs and cassettes produced by private individuals or groups (such as members of army units, local amateur musicians, etc.) sold on the ‘street’ markets. Its often profane language and overall musical quality, which was on a much lower level than the former category in terms of professional music making, were the reason why those were not sponsored or broadcast by the state media.<sup>21</sup> Since this study explores the top-down perspective of state-sponsored productions, its main focus will be on the former category.

### “Stop the War in the Name of Children”

The song that marked the symbolic birth of Croatian wartime patriotic music was without a doubt Tomislav Ivčić’s *Stop the War in Croatia*, one of the first large-scale musical projects initiated by the HRT. At the time of the song’s release, Ivčić himself was not an unknown artist. Dalmatian by birth, he became popular after performing at music festivals in the 1970s, and earned his audience with songs celebrating the southern coast lifestyle and *ikavian* dialect. His career reached another, politically charged level in the early 1990s when he became a member of the HDZ and even sang the official party hymn following

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<sup>16</sup> For instance, some statistics show that in 1990 94.4 percent of households in Croatia possessed television, while only 31.4 percent did so in 1968. Duda, Igor. 2010. *Pronađeno blagostanje: svakodnevi život i potrošačka kultura u Hrvatskoj 1970-ih i 1980-ih*. Zagreb: Srednja Europa.

<sup>17</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 27; Pettan, *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s*, 17.

<sup>19</sup> Pettan, *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> Pettan, *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Pettan, *Music, Politics, and War in Croatia in the 1990s*, 19.

their victory in 1990.<sup>22</sup> The idea behind *Stop the War in Croatia* was quite straightforward: written and performed in English through short and catchy verses, its aim was to appeal to an international audience by attracting attention to the suffering of Croatia and Croats. More specifically, it calls out the European Community as responsible for and capable of ending that suffering through intervention. The music video consists of two main and simultaneous thematic parts. One follows Ivčić and backup vocals as they sing while playing the piano, and the other consists of different kinds of images, contrasting what were believed to be sources of Croatian national pride (natural heritage, cities and towns, cultural monuments, etc.) with scenes of war and devastation. There is a set of another, equally important images, showing the leaders of the European Community at session, the European Community flag, some street views from Brussels, etc. Such scenes were to show who the target audience actually was.<sup>23</sup>

*Stop the War in Croatia* was first broadcast at the end of the evening news (Dnevnik) on 12 August 1991.<sup>24</sup> CNN, BBC and 31 other channels in different parts of the world broadcast the song on the very next day, and it even ended up as one of the 100 most popular songs on Billboard's chart at the time.<sup>25</sup> By 1993, the album with the song had sold 64,000 copies, a record setter in then only two-year-old country.<sup>26</sup> The response of the public was tremendous: the song not only became an instant hit, but also generated numerous initiatives for humanitarian events supporting Croatia's independence, both at home and abroad. However, what is often overlooked when remembering the song's impact is the fact that Ivčić himself was hardly the only 'factor' contributing to the song's popularity. It was the participation of children that elicited international sympathies, and transformed the song into an actual political advocate for the crucial international stage. The case of this particular popular culture product demonstrates that children were essential 'tools' not only for building Croatian identity, but also for provoking international reaction through their status as universal war victims on the brink of twenty-first-century Europe.

While Ivčić did write the lyrics and composed the song, he himself was in fact not the only performer. Namely, even though they were not listed separately as performers, a children's choir from Zagreb called *Zagrebački mališani* accompanied Ivčić with backup vocals. Starting from the second half of the song, the choir joins in each of the subsequent choruses.<sup>27</sup> This is not surprising, since they personify one of the most striking messages of the song, contained in the second-to-last verse of the chorus:

*Stop the war in the name of love*  
*Stop the war in the name of God*  
*Stop the war in the name of children*

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<sup>22</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 27-28.

<sup>23</sup> Ivčić, Tomislav. 1991. *Stop the War in Croatia* (accessed: 22. April 2019).

<sup>24</sup> Sikavica, Miroslav. 2017. Glasnije od oružja (accessed: 30. October 2017), 28:33.

<sup>25</sup> Brstilo Rešetar, Matea / Neveščanin, Ivica and Andreja Smetko. 2013. *Katalog izložbe "Domovinski rat."* Zagreb: Hrvatski povijesni muzej, 281. The number of international stations that broadcasted the song on the day after its release in Croatia is still disputed, since different sources offer different number, but the range varies between 31 and 44.

<sup>26</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 1:24.



*Stop the war in Croatia*<sup>28</sup>

While the meaning of “love” and “God” could be classified as more or less abstract, the concreteness of the noun “children” made immediate connections not only to the gravity and the geographical vicinity of the warfare in the heart of Europe, but also the pain and agony of Croatian children, whose young age symbolised their equally young and nascent state. This was accentuated by the music video scenes, such as those of children forced to spend their childhoods in basement shelters or crying during funerals for their fathers, who were fallen soldiers.<sup>29</sup> The scene of the children’s choir singing in front of the renowned Mimara museum in Zagreb was meant to provoke intense emotional reactions. The camera shows children as they sang gathered at the entrance to the museum, behind a blossoming garden full of flowers, and the subsequent close-up depicts their vigorousness and engagement as they followed the lyrics.<sup>30</sup> This juxtaposition of children’s innocence and joy as they took part in singing, and then seeing them trapped in the midst of chaos and fire, served as yet another cry for help and was supposed to leave the viewer, especially the international one, in a state of anxiety and disquiet. In one of the interviews for a Croatian TV channel, Ivčić himself stated that the world must be blind if it did not react to the “slaughtered children, brutal, unseen aggression in recent history, and demolition of towns and sacral monuments [...]”<sup>31</sup>

The prominence of children as both physical and symbolic pillars of nation-building is very transparent here. On the one hand, they clearly represent the collective body of the Croatian nation. Their frightened faces reflect the state’s harrowing present, but they also stand for the nation’s past, history, and tradition: the viewers can see this in a scene where small children, dressed in regional folk costumes, hold hands and walk together during what appears to be Croatian folklore festival.<sup>32</sup> While the use of children to incite instinctive emotional responses (and, hence, actions) from the viewers is hardly a novelty in the history of propaganda and political campaigning, the time period of the late twentieth century and, at least from the Western point of view, the unexpectedly violent collapse of Yugoslavia and the Croatian War of Independence make this study especially significant for exploring the process of modern nation-building. The extent of popular culture’s presence and mass media development resulted in many Europeans being able to see daily footage of warfare for the first time. While the rest of Europe celebrated the fall of the Berlin wall and looked forward to a peaceful future, the simple and straightforward verses of this song denounced precisely that carelessness and apathy of Europeans as they watched the war in Croatia from their TV screens. Ivčić and the children sang wholeheartedly about the Croats’ genuine desire “to share the European dream,” and to become “one of Europe’s stars,” which would grant them the security their viewers enjoyed as they listened to the song.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the verse “Europe, you can stop the war” stood as a direct call-out to the European Community, whose principles of providing peace and security were being questioned with the

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<sup>28</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*.

<sup>29</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 0:58 and 2:05.

<sup>30</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 1:23, 1:34 and 1:45.

<sup>31</sup> Ivčić, Tomislav. 1991. [Interview](#) (accessed: 2 May 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 2:31.

<sup>33</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 1:01 and 1:12.

underlying message of the song, and the very images displayed in the music video.<sup>34</sup>

The reactions which followed confirmed that *Stop the War in Croatia* indirectly provided Croatian children with a platform much larger than simply that of symbolising the nation's suffering. Namely, it was indeed for the sake of children that numerous actions abroad were initiated after the release of Ivčić's song, mostly by the Croatian diaspora, in order to send help to Croatia and expedite its international recognition. Throughout 1991 and 1992, countless humanitarian events took place from Australia to the United States in order to help Croatian children, and some were directly inspired by Ivčić's song. For instance, the Croatian diaspora in Australia, where the song became extremely popular, organised a "Croatian picnic" every week, where customers could buy "cakes for Croatian children." According to one of the correspondence letters sent by the organisers in Australia to friends in Croatia, the picnics were extremely well attended, and people were eager to help.<sup>35</sup> Encouraged by the initial reactions, Ivčić went on a tour that included countries with significant Croatian diaspora, such as Germany and Australia, where funds were collected to improve living conditions for Croats, especially children, affected by the war. After the song was released abroad, some famous music stars, like Phil Collins, actively advocated the need to help Croatian children.<sup>36</sup> They were followed by others, like Meryl Streep, Audrey Hepburn, Pete Sampras, and many more.<sup>37</sup> Croatian celebrities in the diaspora also joined the effort: for instance, the famous singer Tatjana Matejaš Tajči was often seen wearing "Stop the War in Croatia" shirts, while tennis player Goran Ivanišević used the opportunity to assert his support for the Croats' fight for freedom.<sup>38</sup> A delegation of children from Croatia visited the then-president of Austria, Kurt Waldheim, while another was received by Pope John Paul II in the Vatican, affirming the spiritual bond between the Roman Catholic Church and the Croatia nation.<sup>39</sup>

Furthermore, the cultural sphere was another one that took part in promoting the idea of Croatian victimhood through the children's perspective. Many international cultural institutions hosted exhibitions of Croatian children's drawings, messages, or other forms of expression implicitly or explicitly depicting their trauma and suffering. For example, in November of 1991 children's drawings were displayed in the opera house of Graz, Austria, while another collection was exhibited in galleries in New York and New Mexico.<sup>40</sup> In the summer of 1992, an exhibition of drawings by children from Slavonia who had lost one or both parents was hosted in Basel, Switzerland.<sup>41</sup> In the same year, the Croatian School Museum gathered a collection of drawings showing

<sup>34</sup> Ivčić, *Stop the War in Croatia*, 1:18.

<sup>35</sup> Brstilo Rešetar, Neveščanin and Smetko, *Katalog izložbe "Domovinski rat,"* 267.

<sup>36</sup> HRT. 2016. [TV Kalendar](#). 12. August 2016 (accessed: 21. March 2019).

<sup>37</sup> See Pitaf-Mrzljak, Greta. (ed.). 1992. *Nobel Laureates for Peace in Croatia*. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada, 230; Fagač, Branimir. 1993. *Spasite naše duše: Djeca u domovinskom ratu 1991.-1994*. Zagreb: BIROTISAK d.o.o., 69; HRT, *TV Kalendar*.

<sup>38</sup> Križan, Josip. 1992. Tajči osvaja Broadway. *Večernji list*, 8. March 1992, as cited in Baker, *Sounds of the Boderland*, 29; HRT, *TV Kalendar*.

<sup>39</sup> Fagač, *Spasite naše duše*, 52-53.

<sup>40</sup> Fagač, *Spasite naše duše*, 53.

<sup>41</sup> *Večernji list*. 1992. No title. 25. June 1992, 14, as cited in Senjković, *Lica društva, likovi države*, 34-35.

Croatian children’s understanding of the war surrounding them, and the best works participated in the international exhibition of children’s art in Lidice, Czech Republic.<sup>42</sup> UNICEF sponsored and assisted in organising another exhibition, “I dream of peace” [“Sanjam o miru”], organised by the Croatian School Museum, which also took place in 1992. Exhibits included drawings by and photographs of children living in refugee camps and other locations where living quarters for displaced persons were provided.<sup>43</sup> Although this particular exhibition was hosted in Croatia, it was the UNICEF support that ensured an international platform and advertisement network for the cause. In nearly all of these exhibitions one can find drawings accompanied by the omnipresent “Stop the War in Croatia” labels, placed over the ruins of houses, the frightened faces of children and adults, or flowers and toys symbolising hope and a peaceful outcome. While the song itself, of course, was not a direct initiator of these exhibitions, it aided immensely in directing international focus towards child victims of war in Croatia, and one of many results was the initiatives of this type. These exhibitions always attracted a lot of attention, and were followed by humanitarian aid or individuals’ private engagement in providing financial or other forms of assistance.

Figure 1: Drawing from an exhibition hosted by the French Cultural Information Centre in Zagreb, 1992.



Source: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research, Photo archive, item no. 32461 (“Visual aspects of political propaganda – exhibition of children's drawings of war in the French Cultural Information Centre,” author Reana Senjković).

The song’s slogan, together with its specific reference to the dangers children faced, was also used for creating war posters designed for a European audience. For instance, one of the most famous war posters showed a reproduction of a drawing made by an eleven-year-old Croatian pupil who drew a house and a church in flames, while the message “Stop the War in Croatia” dominates the drawing with its size and position at the top of the poster. This was one of several posters with reproductions of children’s drawings in a series of war posters printed throughout 1992, each of which was framed with the Croatian

<sup>42</sup> *Papir, boje, kist i rat: izložba likovnih iskaza hrvatske djece o domovinskom ratu*. 1992. Zagreb: Hrvatski školski muzej.

<sup>43</sup> *Sanjam o miru / I Dream of Peace* [exhibition catalogue]. 1992-1993. Zagreb: UNICEF Zagreb and Croatian School Museum.

checkerboard pattern and titled “Help Croatia Now.”<sup>44</sup> Many museums and other cultural venues in countries around the world hosted these war poster exhibitions.

In addition to this, the message of the song inspired an entire spectrum of pre-virtual means of communication aimed at accessing an audience abroad. For example, the Croatian ethnologist Reana Senjković wrote about an interesting aspect of public mobilisation through mass media. Namely, Croatian Post and Telecommunication Services issued a series of postcards and holiday cards with “Stop the War in Croatia,” “SOS for Croatian Children,” etc. printed on the covers.<sup>45</sup> More tellingly, many of them contained messages and drawings made by children, or reproductions of war posters with children’s drawings. A special set of postcards showed illustrations of animated child characters carrying components of old Croatian regional coats of arms, together making the official one. In another version, the carried objects were balloons decorated with red stars symbolising the European Community, with messages such as “Peace to the Children of Croatia.”<sup>46</sup> Some postcards were replicas of war photographs, many of them depicting children affected by fear and the loss of loved ones.<sup>47</sup> The song’s effect was felt as strongly on the ‘home front’ as it was abroad: “Stop the War” drawings, messages, posters (such as that depicted in Figure 2), and postcards decorated shop windows in Zagreb streets and squares.<sup>48</sup> Customers could find clothes and other accessories with the song logo, and saw it in newspapers on a daily basis, while various versions of the song opened music festivals or fundraising events within Croatia.<sup>49</sup>

Figure 2: Stop the War in Croatia window poster on Zagreb streets, 1992



Source: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research, Photo archive, item no. 32392 (Visual aspects of political propaganda, author: Reana Senjković)

Besides *Stop the War in Croatia*, a few other songs were also written entirely or partly in English. For example, another song that achieved almost cult status in Croatia, but also had an English version, was *Moja Domovina* [“My Homeland”], released in September of 1991. Performed by Croatian Band Aid, composed of

<sup>44</sup> Brstilo Rešetar, Neveščanin and Smetko, *Katalog izložbe “Domovinski rat,”* 283.

<sup>45</sup> Senjković, *Lica društva, likovi države,* 35.

<sup>46</sup> Senjković, *Lica društva, likovi države,* 35.

<sup>47</sup> Senjković, *Lica društva, likovi države,* 35.

<sup>48</sup> Senjković, *Lica društva, likovi države,* 33.

<sup>49</sup> Baker, *Sounds of the Borderland,* 29.

every singer considered reputable in Croatia at the time, it glorified the country’s natural beauties but also advocated the righteousness of the ongoing battle for independence through famous verses such as “there is only one truth.”<sup>50</sup> The purpose of the band aid was also to raise money through performances at humanitarian concerts. The song was also recorded in an English language version. Interestingly, even though some verses were altered in the translation to successfully convey the meaning, other verses were replaced with an entirely different meaning. The most conspicuous change is the part before the last chorus series, where the composers replaced the original Croatian version with a completely new part that emphasised children and offspring, as the following translations in Table 1 show:

Table 1: Verse modifications in the English version of *Moja Domovina*:

Original Croatian version	English translation of original Croatian version	Official English version of the song
<i>Vratit' ću se moram doći, tu je moj dom, Moje sunce, moje nebo. Novi dan se budi kao sreća osvaja Ti si tu sa nama... Sa nama!</i>	I will return, I have to come, here is my home, My sunshine, my sky. A new day awakens, conquers like happiness You are here, with us...with us!	<i>As the child of generations this is my land Where I was born, where I'll die For the children of my children this is my land Where I was born, where I will die... I will die!</i> <sup>51</sup>

Inserting lines that explicitly refer to the relationship of (even unborn) children to the Croatian homeland in the English version indicates the intention of the composers to utilise children as a component aimed at emotionally shaking the viewers. Additionally, this part is sung in high tones, and these are therefore the most emotionally charged verses of the song.

When it comes to its success abroad, the English version of *Moja domovina* never achieved the status of *Stop the War in Croatia*. However, it still remains one of the first associations of the War for Independence for Croats in Croatia, a symbol of unity and solidarity in those times, and it is also frequently performed today on occasions of national importance. Several other patriotic songs, such as *Don't ever cry* by the band *Put*, who represented Croatia in a Eurovision song contest for the first time, or Josipa Lisac and Guido Mineo's *Sloboda i mir* [“Freedom and Peace”], contained parts of choruses sung in English.<sup>52</sup> While they were frequently broadcast on the national radio and television channels, the records of their impact beyond Croatian borders remain scarce. It is also interesting to notice that these songs, including Ivčić’s, do not name the ‘aggressor’ in any way, and dedicate all space to building a unique image of Croatia’s martyrdom to freedom. Such was, however, not the case in songs composed for domestic distribution, and this will be addressed in the next section.

What is indisputable is that Ivčić's song was among the very first media products that brought international attention to what Croatian leadership and the

<sup>50</sup> Hrvatski Band Aid. 1991. *Moja domovina* (accessed: 10. March 2019), 0:58, 3:03.

<sup>51</sup> Hrvatski Band Aid, *Moja domovina*, 4:00.

<sup>52</sup> Put. 1993. *Eurovision 1993 Croatia* (accessed: 11. April 2019); Lisac, Josipa and Guido Mineo. 1991. *Sloboda i mir* (accessed: 12. April 2019).

majority of its citizens believed was a legitimate right to independence and sovereignty. Such messages would contribute to the change of diplomatic attitude towards Croatia and its recognition. The following section will provide examples showing that the presence of children in domestic patriotic music production was just as significant for wartime nation-building and mobilisation at home as it was for seeking material and diplomatic help abroad.

### **“I Will Be a Croatian Soldier, Too”**

For the party that came to power in 1990 and led Croatia to independence, HDZ, inclusion of children in their political campaigns represented a secure way for gaining voters' sympathies. Children appeared in all kinds of campaign materials, from posters with Franjo Tuđman holding small girls wearing traditional dresses in his arms to video ads broadcast on national television, in which children implicitly invited voters to acknowledge HDZ as a party that cared about the young country's future generations.<sup>53</sup> Children's choirs were regular participants in the annual General Assemblies of HDZ, where they took part in performing various popular patriotic songs with other singers.<sup>54</sup> While the audience of politicians watched them and frequently accompanied them on stage, children personified HDZ's commitment to preserving their childhood and well-being, which was an emotionally charged aspect that resonated positively with the general public, especially families. The party also had (and still has) its official hymn, a song by Đani Maršan called *Bože Čuvaj Hrvatsku* ["God Save Croatia"], which also became one of the most memorable wartime patriotic songs.<sup>55</sup> Carrying very conspicuous religious connotations symbolised by the abundance of sacral architectural monuments and other related elements, the song glorifies the individual's vow to sacrifice their life for the Croatian homeland. While neither the song nor the music video mention or directly include children, it was children that often participated in the public performances of this and other songs suitable for campaign agenda. In fact, an HDZ campaign video from 1995 shows children using the verses of *Bože čuvaj Hrvatsku* as their bedtime prayer, while the song is played in the background.<sup>56</sup> This points to not only intentionally placing children in connection with the already extremely politicised patriotic song, but also equalising Catholicism and religious doctrine with Croatanness, and treating it as a normal and in fact desirable presence in the lives of the youngest.

This symbolisation of children as the essence of the nation, once entrenched in the political discourse, became an extremely popular poetic motive as well. While existing studies of gender in popular music take men and women as the main points of analysis, they tend not to give palpable space to children, treating them primarily within the concept of motherhood. However, it is precisely they who, due to their position as the centre of family life and its most affirming 'element', also embody the collective national being. The nuclear and ideally religious family became the source of much needed cohesion during these times of instability, and was celebrated through political and religious rhetoric, popular

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<sup>53</sup> See, for instance, HDZ. 1990. "Sigurna budućnost Hrvatske" – promidžbeni poster. Zagreb: Institute for Ethnology and Folklore Research, unsorted funds.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, Sikavica, *Glasnije od oružja*, 36:50.

<sup>55</sup> Maršan, Đani. 1991. *Bože čuvaj Hrvatsku* (accessed: 13. March 2019).

<sup>56</sup> HDZ. 1995. Promidžbeni spot (accessed: 2. May 2019).

culture, and art. A whole spectrum of patriotic songs positioned the child as a central reference of relationship to the homeland. For example, a famous song by Doris Dragović, *Dajem ti srce, zemljo moja* [“Homeland, I Give You My Heart”] revolves around the notion of the birth of a son as the most sacred gift a woman could give to her homeland, given that “mothers have done so since ancient times [*k'o što od davnina rađale su majke za tebe*].”<sup>57</sup> In the music video, viewers could see scenes of Dragović’s family as she and her husband play with their small son during what seems to be an idyllic family day. While women, more specifically mothers, personified the Homeland, it was children of this particular generation that were raised in the independent Croatia their ancestors, according to the narrative, had dreamt of for so many centuries. Hence, their nurturing was among the most momentous of tasks, as they needed to learn specific ideological patterns of the Croatian national narrative that had long been suppressed in their parents’ generation. This was a prominent theme in another omnipresent song at the time, *Od stoljeća sedmog* [“From Seventh Century A.D.”] by Dražen Žanko.<sup>58</sup> He begins the song by accusingly referring to those who planned to drive out Croats from their ancient homeland and move them to foreign lands, so that their children would not know their peoples’ history [*djeca roda povist neće znati*] and therefore not even consider themselves Croats [*svoj na svome neće bit' Hrvati*].<sup>59</sup> As Žanko sings these verses in the music video, a girl appears by his side, adding to the emotional undertone. Hence, children also acted as carriers of the national narrative, and it was necessary for them as future leaders to understand and know the ‘right’ kind of history so as to further ingrain and maintain such national imagery. The issue of historical narrative, particularly that in history textbooks, has certainly become one of the most urgent topics of revision in the 1990s educational curricula, and has in fact remained a point of fierce debate until this day.

Popular music also played on the notion of children as a huge influencing factor of mobilisation and morale boosters. This is where the relationship between children and fathers occupied the central stage, turning into one of the most recognisable trademarks of popular culture in early 1990s Croatia. In her studies on representations of gender in Croatian and Serbian patriotic music, Croatian musicologist Naila Ceribašić argues that the depiction of men in Croatian music resembled that of a loving, warmhearted warrior defending his family from the enemy (unlike in Serbia, where characters of soldiers in popular culture were more focused on protecting and defending Serbian symbols and territory).<sup>60</sup> Within the concept of family, it was children who demanded most protection, and this went hand in hand with naturalising the bond between father and child throughout the military context. One of the songs that very effectively represented such a pattern was Jasmin Stavros’ *Za djecu djece naše djece* [“For the Children of Our Children’s Children”].<sup>61</sup> Sung from the perspective of a father and soldier, the song idolises the relationship between a father who vows to protect not only his children, but also his future great-grandchildren, with his life. Similarly, the song *Halo Tata* [“Hello, Dad”] by Mirko Cetinski consists of

<sup>57</sup> Dragović, Doris. 1992. *Dajem ti srce, zemljo moja* (accessed: 18 February 2019), 0:32.

<sup>58</sup> Žanko, Dražen. 1991. *Od stoljeća sedmog* (accessed: 6. April 2019).

<sup>59</sup> Žanko, *Od stoljeća sedmog*, 0:50.

<sup>60</sup> Ceribašić, Naila. 1995. Gender Roles During the War: Representations in Croatian and Serbian Popular Music 1991-1992. *Collegium Antropologicum* 19(1), 91-101.

<sup>61</sup> Stavros, Jasmin. *Za djecu djece naše djece* (accessed: 7. April 2019).

conversations between a loving father and his small daughter (verses sung by an actual child), who receives his calls from the front.<sup>62</sup> As the daughter asks him to come home soon, she also asks if it is true that “some fathers do not come back [*jel' istina kažu da neke se tate i ne vrate*]”, which underlined the magnitude of all Croatian fathers’ sacrifice for their children’s future in a free country.<sup>63</sup>

Having a father in the Croatian army units became reality for many children, and this inevitably translated into popular culture. Various music shows on HRT invited viewers to send messages to their loved ones in the army, and frequently it was children who ordered, dedicated, or even themselves sang songs to their fathers or Croatian soldiers in general.<sup>64</sup> The children’s choir *Zagrebački mališani* [Zagreb kids] even produced an album titled *I ja ću biti hrvatski vojnik* [“I Will Be a Croatian Soldier, Too”], which also included a version of the aforementioned *Bože Čuvaj Hrvatsku* [“God Save Croatia”] by Đani Maršan.<sup>65</sup> The Schooling Institute within the Croatian Ministry of Culture and Education approved the request for the group’s cross-country music tour, and recommended the purchase of this radio cassette by schools and kindergartens.<sup>66</sup> The publisher, Festival Records, even suggested its inclusion in the official curricula of elementary school music education, and also specifically requested distribution to the Croatian Army sector.<sup>67</sup> This was endorsed by then-deputy of the Croatian Ministry of Defense Slobodan Praljak, with the explanation that the project affirms the traditional values of long-repressed “Croatian patriotism, family, Christianity, humanity, and readiness to defend one’s home.”<sup>68</sup>

An important attribute of the father-soldier theme is also that of characterising ‘the enemy’. While songs such as *Stop the War in Croatia* did not explicitly name those who were defined in domestic discourse as “aggressors,” some patriotic songs aimed at domestic distribution referred to “the enemy,” especially in conjunction with vivid descriptions and reports of Croatian peoples’ suffering and pain. For that reason, inclusion of children as the incarnation of that misery always implied the undeniable blame of ‘the other side’. For instance, the music video of *Hrvatine* [Croats], by Đuka Čaić, originally written as a march, shows a scene where a mother with a child lies hidden in a shelter, followed by a soldier carrying a baby in his arms.<sup>69</sup> The scene follows the lines *čuvaj oče majčicu, ognjište i sestricu* [“Father, Protect Mother, Hearth, and Little Sister”]. Those responsible for the dichotomy of a newborn in the midst of warfare and destruction are indeed labelled; in the second verse of the song Čaić tells the “evil beasts” [*zvijeri zle*] to run away, and also directly warns the JNA (by name) that Croatia (and its forces) will defeat them [*jugo vojska mora znat', Hrvatska će dobit' rat*].<sup>70</sup> Such an animalistic, savage characterisation (“evil beasts”) enlarged the dimension of “the enemy’s” crimes and reinforced the difference between a civilised, defense-oriented ‘us’ and a demonic, barbaric ‘them’, which

<sup>62</sup> Cetinski, Mirko and Nataša Čaić. Halo, tata (accessed: 28. April 2019).

<sup>63</sup> Cetinski and Čaić, *Halo, tata*, 0:46.

<sup>64</sup> Sikavica, *Glasnije od oružja*, 29:37.

<sup>65</sup> Zagrebački mališani. 1992. *I ja ću biti hrvatski vojnik* (accessed: 14. April 2019).

<sup>66</sup> Republika Hrvatska, Ministarstvo kulture i prosvjete, Zavod za školstvo. 1993. *Predmet: Kasete “I ja ću biti hrvatski vojnik” – stručno mišljenje* (accessed: 7. July 2018).

<sup>67</sup> RH, Zavod za školstvo, *Predmet: Kasete*.

<sup>68</sup> RH, Zavod za školstvo, *Predmet: Kasete*.

<sup>69</sup> Čaić, Đuka. 1991. *Hrvatine* (accessed: 2. April 2019), 1:37.

<sup>70</sup> Čaić, *Hrvatine*, 0:39 and 1:04.



fits into the political rhetoric of Croatian leadership that insisted on separating Croatia from the rest of the Balkans, or at least the Eastern Balkans (where Serbia was). Another song, *Gospodine Generale* [“Hey, Mister General”] by Vladimir Kočiš Zec, directly addresses a JNA general as responsible for inflicting pain and anguish upon the (Croatian) nation, and acts as a warning of strength and persistence of the Croatian community which will ultimately prevail.<sup>71</sup> Zec attempts to evoke the human side in the general by singing, among other things, about a boy who has to leave his wedding to go fight the war imposed by the general (and his army) [*Gospodine generale, dječak pred crkvom ostavlja svatove, mora se krenut’ u vaše ratove*].<sup>72</sup> The “boy” is clearly a grown man, but this poetic attribution of childlike feature serves the purpose of intensifying the audience’s emotional response. In the last verse before the final chorus, Zec reaffirms his faith in collective endurance of the people by acquainting the general about his plans to once again take his son fishing once the war is over, as well as continuing to tell children endless stories [*kad prođe tuga i vjetra jecanje, vodit’ ću sina opet na pecanje, djeci ću pričat’ beskrajne priče*].<sup>73</sup> Even more emotionally infused was the song by the enormously popular Mišo Kovač, *Grobovi im nikad oprostiti neće* [“The Graves Will Never Forgive Them”], in which he describes his home region as filled with “children’s cries and howlings everywhere” [*sada jauk djece i plač sa svih strana životna je slika moga zavičaja*].<sup>74</sup> This was, of course, caused by “them,” who would have to face their prophetic destiny of not being forgiven by either the living or the dead.

Finally, the last type of repertoire that included children was that of songs promoting the universal message that children themselves embodied: that of peace and unity among all people. A song that could represent such a direction was, for instance *Mir do neba* [“Peace Up to the Sky”] by the band *Magazin*.<sup>75</sup> As the verses are interchangeably sung by the band singer and children, they express their fears, anxieties about their grim reality, and plead for the war to end. However, although the lyrics convey a global message of solidarity, obvious national symbols in the music video (like the word “Croatia” framed with a heart on the school building in front of which children sing, or a Croatian flag hanging by the piano) do leave an impression of certain exclusivity, and the understanding that the term “my people” in the song refers to Croatian people only.<sup>76</sup> One song which entered the lives of many generations growing up at the time was *Kad bi svi* [“If All [people] in the World”], produced by the crew of popular children’s show *Malavizija* [Little [Tele]vision] as a remake of the original version by renowned Croatian composer Arsen Dedić from 1967.<sup>77</sup> Sung by both children and various Croatian musicians, actors, TV personas and other artists, this song assumed the role of children’s band aid, promoting ideas of peace and solidarity among children and adults, and encouraging acts of helping those in need. However, since the target audience was primarily that of children and not the general public, the song does not completely fall into the category of patriotic repertoire as pertinent to this research.

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<sup>71</sup> Kočiš Zec, Vladimir. 1991. *Gospodine generale* (accessed: 1. May 2019).

<sup>72</sup> Kočiš Zec, *Gospodine Generale*, 1:18.

<sup>73</sup> Kočiš Zec, *Gospodine Generale*, 2:46.

<sup>74</sup> Kovač, Mišo. 1991. *Grobovi im nikad oprostiti neće* (accessed: 4. March 2019), 0:32.

<sup>75</sup> Magazin. 1991. *Mir do neba* (accessed: 31. April 2019).

<sup>76</sup> Magazin, *Mir do neba*, 1:16 and 2:16.

<sup>77</sup> Malavizija. 1991. *Kad bi svi* (accessed: 7. April 2019).

## Conclusion

This study has pointed to the so far underexplored representation of children in Croatian patriotic music in the 1991-1992 period, crucial for the country's international status and positioning on the European political map after the declaration of independence. I have argued that children's presence was persistent in musical production aimed at both domestic and international markets, and that it effectively took part in shaping the victim-centered image of Croatia. The immense impact of *Stop the War in Croatia*, as one of the first 'messengers' that acquainted the international audience with Croatia's indispensable need for aid, could not have been accomplished without children who sensitised the European and global public by representing the country that finally wanted to take part in the "European dream," but was enduring a brutal military attack. Their childhood also symbolised the concept of Croatia's birth as an independent state and its political 'youth'.

Within Croatia, children's participation in musical production or as imaginary characters in the lyrics had a mobilisation-oriented aim, as it perpetuated the absolute responsibility of the other side for the suffering of the Croatian national body, and the ability of the older generation to ensure a future for their children in which they would not have to hide their ethnic and national loyalty or, worse, be ignorant of their own people's history. While the concept of 'the enemy' was, perhaps intentionally, not clearly defined in Ivčić's or other songs for the international market, those for the domestic market were more likely to denounce the JNA or use other derogatory terms to depict the other side in the worst possible light. In any case, both categories of patriotic music analysed in this article reiterate the official elements of ethnonationalist discourse in the country's ruling party and president Tudjman, without acknowledging the civilian victimhood of the other ethnic side(s).

Finally, the study aims to open up avenues for further research on the importance of children for nation-building even after the era of mass children's organisations like the Yugoslav and Soviet Pioneers, and the relationship between popular culture and nationalism in post-Yugoslav spaces.

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