



SMARTER?





Chronology of Events – A Brief History of Otpor

May 26, 1998 – University Act passed.

October 20, 1998 – Media Act passed.

End of October 1998 – In response to the new University Act and Media Act, which were contrary to students' interests, the Student Movement Otpor was formed. Among Otpor's founders were Srdja Popovic, Slobodan Homen, Slobodan Djinic, Nenad Konstantinovic, Vukasin Petrovic, Ivan Andric, Jovan Ratkovic, Andreja Stamenokovic, Dejan Randjic, Ivan Marovic. The group was soon joined by Milja Jovanovic, Branko Ilic, Pedja Lecic, Sinisa Sikman, Vlada Pavlov from Novi Sad, Stanko Lazentic, Milan Gagic, Jelena Urosevic and Zoran Matovic from Kragujevac and Srdjan Milivojevic from Krusevac. In the beginning, among the core creators of Otpor were Boris Karaicic, Miodrag Gavrilovic, Miroslav Hristodulo, Rastko Sejc, Aleksa Grgurevic and Aleksandar Topalovic, but they left the organization later. During this period, Nenad Petrovic, nicknamed Duda, a Belgrade-based designer, designed the symbol of Otpor – a clenched fist.

In the night between November 2 and 3, 1998, four students were arrested for spraying the fist and slogans "Death to fascism" and "Resistance for freedom": Teodora Tabacki, Marina Glisic, Dragana Milinkovic and Nikola Vasiljevic. The arrested students were sentenced to five days of imprisonment each for "citizens' resistance to authorities". The decision was signed by Judge Zeljko Munjiza.

November 4, 1998 – The concert organized by the ANEM (Association of Independent Electronic Media) under the slogan "It's not like Serbs to be quiet" was held. Otpor activists launched a seven-day action "Resistance is the answer", within which they distributed flyers with provocative questions relating to endless resignation and suffering of all that we had been going through and slogans such as "Bite the system, live the resistance".



Graffiti

(PHOTO BY Viktor Sekularac)

November 6, 1998 – The flyer "Resistance is the answer" appeared on the front page of the daily paper Dnevni Telegraf.

November 9, 1998 – By decision of Judge Vesna Dabetic Trogrlic, the Dnevni Telegraf was fined 1,200,000 dinars for publishing an advertisement of the students' organization Otpor, as a result of the lawsuit filed by Bratislava Morina on behalf of the Yugoslav Womens' Association. The Dnevni Telegraf was banned; until the bombing, it was smuggled from Montenegro, and its street vendors were arrested and harassed. Six months later, journalist Slavko Curuvija was murdered.



Graffiti

(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)



November 9, 1998 – On the Day Against Fascism, Otpor activists and journalists wrote anti-fascist messages on the Wall of Truth in Nikola Pasic Square.



*Otpor activists in front of the Wall of Truth
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)*

November 12, 1998 – B92 television director Veran Matic appeared at the MTV Free Your Mind Award ceremony wearing an Otpor T-shirt and dedicated the award to persecuted media, oppressed faculty and imprisoned students.

November 14, 1998 – In response to the judgment against the *Telegraf*, the weekly *Vreme* published, under the title “Buba Suing”¹, a photo of Buba Morina, a fist and a story of the judicial process against the *Telegraf*. Following this, the weekly was fined for a violation of the Media Act. As a reaction to the cases of *Vreme* and the *Telegraf*, *Blic News* printed a fist across the entire cover page of its weekly issue, which was subsequently intercepted and confiscated in the printing press by the regime.



*Journalists' protest against the Media Act
(PHOTO BY Andrija Ilic)*

¹ A play on words in Serbian. “Tuzi Buba” literally means “Buba suing”, and “tuzibaba” is a derisive expression for a tattletale (translator’s note).

November 1998 – Otpor activists visited the Faculty of Economics, where a managing board, including Milovan Bojic and Vojislav Seselj, was meeting. Otpor members Branko Ilic and Ivan Andric interrupted the meeting and spread out a flag with the words “Live the resistance” on it.

December 15, 1998 – The first major gathering at the ETF (Faculty of Electrical Engineering) took place. One thousand students marched to the Faculty of Philology, where the students had been locked in, by decision of the Faculty Council, in order to be prevented from joining the protest. Otpor activist and Democratic Party member Srdja Popovic was arrested and battered, to be released after eight hours of detention following interference on the part of Amnesty International.



*Otpor activists at Plato
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)*

December 17, 1998 – The march “We are paving the way” – 70 Otpor activists from Belgrade walked the 83 km route from Belgrade to Novi Sad. In this way, Belgrade made a return visit after Novi Sad marched to Belgrade during the 1996/97 students’ protest. During the viewing of a film on students’ protests worldwide, gas smelling like rotten eggs made them leave the theater of the Novi Sad Cultural Center.

December 1998 – Protests at the Faculty of Philology, accompanied by the actions “A night at the faculty” and “Five-a-side football in the Faculty hall”. The Dean’s security guards battered the students and forced them out of the building. The Dean of the Faculty of Philology Radmilo Marojevic, affiliated with the Serbian Radical Party, was replaced. This was Otpor’s first victory.



March 1999 – Otpor suspends its activity due to the bombing.

The summer of 1999 was marked by two prominent protest rallies. One was organized by Bogoljub Arsenijevic, nicknamed Maki, a painter from Valjevo, and the other by Ivan Novkovic from Leskovac, a sound technician who spoke to all dissatisfied citizens of his town and gathered 15,000 people in the streets.



Bogoljub Arsenijevic, nicknamed Maki, in front of the Federal Assembly (PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)

August 1999 – seven students' and non-governmental organizations from Belgrade and Novi Sad signed Otpor's program document – Declaration for the Future of Serbia.

August 1999 – Solar eclipse – the action "Telescope" was the first that appeared on the cover pages of the Serbian media and also received coverage by foreign media. Otpor activists built a five-meter telescope, at the end of which was an image of Milosevic shaped like a falling comet.

September 1999 – The action "Tread on the system" – dropping flyers from the top of the building at Terazije 3. The flyers contained an image of President Milosevic and the request to the citizens to tread on it as it fell on the pavement.



The action "Tread on the system", Branko Ilic and Dejan Randjic (PHOTO BY Veljko Popovic)

October-November 1999 – The action "A dinar for a change". Otpor activists invited citizens to drop coins in a large metal barrel, which entitled them to punching the image of President Milosevic painted on the barrel. In the absence of a perpetrator to arrest, the police arrested the barrel.



November 11, 1999 – The first clash between Otpor and the police. Otpor's major protest march, aiming to walk to the Assembly of Serbia, where a session was in progress and new ministers were to be appointed. The police attacked the students with more force than ever before; activist Marta Manojlovic sustained a head injury, Pedja Lecic was struck with a baton while carrying Marta into the City Assembly, and activist Ivan Marovic suffered several strikes with a baton, even while he was negotiating with a police commander. The clash took place on General Zdanova Street, where 30 people were injured, 12 of whom were girls. That evening, the RTS (Radio and Television of Serbia – Serbian public broadcaster) Second Daily News program mentioned Otpor for the first time, referring to it as a "destructive, violent organization".



Girls marching at the front of OTPOR's protest walk on November 11, 1999, at the beginning of General Zdanova Street, immediately before the police intervention (PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)



This is THE year

November 1999 – Otpor activists held the Otporiade, a rock concert in Students' Park in Belgrade, to mark the third anniversary of the massive students' protest of 1996/97.

End of 1999 – "The fist is the salute". The fist as the salute came into being when the entire cast of the play "A Barrel of Gunpowder", led by Voja Brajovic, raised their fists at the end of the performance at the National Theater, and the audience responded with an ovation. Otpor launched a campaign with posters in which several public figures saluted with their fists.

January 13, 2000 – Celebration of the Orthodox New Year. 30,000 people were sent home from Republic Square because "Serbia has nothing to celebrate". The launch of the campaign "This is THE year".

Early February 2000 – Otpor filed a lawsuit against journalist Gordana Milosevic and editor-in-chief of the Kragujevac-based paper Lid Goran Mitrovic for publishing the text entitled "Unambiguous Association", in which Otpor was compared to Hitlerjugend. The regime had posters "Madeleine Jugend" distributed in Belgrade; the posters were anonymous and their creator unidentified.



Actor Nebojsa Glogovac wearing an OTPOR T-shirt during the filming of Flashes, December 1999 (PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)





February 17, 2000 – Otpor’s first congress was held at the Belgrade Youth Centre and messages were sent both to the parties in power and to the opposition. The congress was attended by representatives of all opposition parties, NGOs, independent media, as well as representatives of Otpor from 70 Serbian towns and cities. At the congress, a new stage of spreading the ideas was announced, as well as the name change into People’s Movement Otpor. The congress was held on the same day as the SPS (Socialist Party of Serbia, the party of S. Milosevic) congress. At the congress, the Manifesto, Otpor’s second program document, was adopted.

March 7, 2000 – Marko Milosevic (The son of S. Milosevic) threatened Otpor activist Zoran Milovanovic to cut him into pieces with a chainsaw.

March 24, 2000 – The anniversary of the bombing and the first massive arrest. In order to mark the anniversary of the NATO bombing, as well as to send a message to the regime that Otpor was against aggression directed at the media and students, Otpor organized an action of sticking posters in 20 Serbian towns and cities – the action “Resistance to aggression”. On this occasion, 64 activists in six cities were arrested.

April 14, 2000 – March from Novi Sad – about a hundred Otpor activists walked to the capital, and Belgrade members met them on Branko Bridge. Otpor activist Vlada Pavlov persuaded DOS leaders to commit to joining forces in the elections while holding the Otpor flag, before tens of thousands of people gathered at a rally.

May 2, 2000 – In Pozarevac, Marko Milosevic’s bodyguards battered Radojko Lukovic and Nebojsa Sokolovic, inflicting severe injuries and fractures, while Momcio Veljkovic sustained light injuries. These activists were arrested and remained in remand from May 2 to 8; spent a few hours free only to be arrested again and remained in remand until June 30, 2000. Veljkovic was charged with attempted murder, and Lukovic and Sokolovic with brawling with unidentified persons. Otpor’s response was the campaign “The face of Serbia”, sticking thousands of posters with the photo of Radojko Lukovic battered beyond recognition.



*The campaign “The face of Serbia”
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)*

May 9, 2000 – The DOS rally in Pozarevac under the slogan “Stop the terror – for free and democratic elections” was banned. Strong police forces halted buses from Belgrade and the truck with the sound equipment. The first serious sign of panic on the part of Milosevic’s regime.



*OTPOR activist Irina Ljubic reading out loud from the daily Danas to the police cordon that halted the convoy on its way to the Pozarevac rally on May 9
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)*



May 9, 2000 – Most opposition leaders, including Zoran Djindjic, wore Otpor T-shirts in public for the first time.

May 13, 2000 – SPS official Bosko Perosevic was murdered at the Novi Sad Expo Center by Milivoje Gutovic from Perosevic's home town, a long-time doorman at the Center, but Otpor activists Stanko Lazendic and Milos Gagic were accused. In protest, girls and mothers from Otpor visited police stations in 20 Serbian towns and cities, bringing cakes.

May 14, 2000 – At a press conference, Goran Matic declared that Otpor was a terrorist organization.

May 22, 2000 – At the Media Center, 100 prominent citizens (actors, university professors) signed Otpor's founding instrument.

May 25, 2000 – Otpor filed a formal application for registration with the Ministry of Justice; the application was refused shortly.

June 14, 2000 – Gaso Knezevic, professor at the Belgrade Faculty of Law and member of Otpor's Presidency, announced that the organization would file a lawsuit with the Federal Court to contest the decision of the Federal Ministry of Justice whereby Otpor's application for entry into the registry of citizens' associations was refused.



June 29, 2000 – The Federal Assembly failed to pass the Terrorism Act as it was not supported by SRS deputies.

June 29, 2000 – Minister of the Interior Vljako Stojiljkovic declared that “even without laws, the State is ready and able to eradicate terrorism”, and described Otpor as a “terrorist and fascist organization”.

July 27, 2000 – President Slobodan Milosevic announced extraordinary elections and his own candidature for President of the FRY. Otpor announced the campaign “He's finished”.



August 2000 – Otpor and NGOs launch the campaign “It's time”, targeting young people who should vote at the elections.



*Over one million "He's finished" stickers were printed
(PHOTO BY Viktor Sekularac)*

September 7, 2000 – A diplomatic scandal at the Greek ambassador's residence, when the police arrested four Otpor activists: Vukasin Petrovic, Slobodan Homen, Predrag Lecic and Jovan Ratkovic. They were released after an hour and a half at the police station.

September 8, 2000 – Aca Radic, Davorin Popovic, Vladica Mircic, Jugoslav Nikolic, Marko PejkoVIC, Milos Kitanovic and Ivica Nastic from Vladicin Han were arrested for placing Otpor stickers in the vicinity of the police station. The activists were tortured and beaten with open hands, fists, batons and rope.

September 9, 2000 – The police raided the premises of Otpor on Knez Mihailova Street in Belgrade and confiscated about two tons of materials. The next day, as part of Otpor's action, activists attempted to load empty boxes, which the police confiscated, to the amusement of gathered citizens and reporters, only to take away empty boxes in front of 20 cameras.

May-September 2000 – According to the records of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, until the elections of 2000, 2,400 Otpor members throughout Serbia were processed by the police.



September 24, 2000 – Milosevic lost the elections. Together with the opposition, Otpor invited the people to start a universal strike and thereby bring Belgrade and other Serbian towns and cities to a standstill. The campaign "Closed due to theft" started.



*Every business that was closed as part of the universal strike in protest against ballot rigging was labeled with a "Closed due to theft" sticker by citizens.
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)*



RESISTANCE!

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October 4, 2000 – Forty activists were arrested in Belgrade for obstructing traffic.

October 5, 2000 – Protests and the end of Milosevic's regime



October 5
(PHOTO BY Igor Jeremic)