



SMARTER?





OTPOR CAMPAIGNS - Meaning and concept

After the NATO bombing, Otpor somewhat changed its goals and focused on campaigns which often provoked the regime in humorous and ironic ways, thus drawing citizens' attention and raising their motivation. Numerous campaigns mobilized the whole Serbia. The most important ones took place in the period 1999–2000; the campaigns were the core of the non-violent people's movement.



Some of the first activities included "A dinar for a change", within which Otpor activists raised money in front of the National Theatre, offering the passers-by a chance to punch president Milosevic's picture painted on a barrel after paying one dinar, as well as "It's rotten, it's going to fall" from the same period, pointing to Mr Milosevic as the main problem in the country.

In July 1999, the campaign "Declaration for the Future of Serbia" was launched by collecting signatures for the Declaration. The Declaration became Otpor's strategic document defining the main problems, objectives of the movement and the methods to be used.

The Declaration was signed and supported by all the important student organizations in Serbia. Prominent people from various spheres of

life gathered around Otpor; an advisory body was set up and its members became the main promoters of the Declaration and Otpor's main idea.

In August 1999, Otpor activists in Nis organised a "birthday party" for President Slobodan Milosevic. More than two thousand citizens had a chance to write down what they wished Mr Milosevic for his birthday on a joint birthday card; along with the card, gifts, including a one-way ticket to the Hague, prison uniform, books by Mira Markovic, handcuffs and a birthday cake in the shape of a five-pointed star served to everybody present at the end of the action, were received on behalf of president Milosevic.

In November/December 1999, prominent public figures in Serbia took part in the campaign "The fist is the salute".



Images of famous actors and other public figures were printed on posters and more than 50,000 copies showed their raised fists as the symbol of resistance. The campaign was concluded shortly before New Year with posters depicting Santa Claus with fist raised in salute.

The campaign "Resistance, because I love Serbia" was launched in response to the regime campaign accusing Otpor and its members of undertaking actions that were against the national interest. The most memorable regime slogan from that period was "I sell because I love to betray". That was a campaign with a record number of posters and fliers (150,000).

The celebration of Orthodox New Year on January 13, 2000 at Republic Square in Belgrade was an opportunity for Otpor's campaign "This is THE year". New Year celebration for 3,000 people gathered in the center of Belgrade was interrupted with the message "It's not time for celebration". After midnight, dramatic scenes, photos and the names of the soldiers, policemen and citizens who had been killed during the NATO bombing were shown on a projection screen. Fifteen minutes after midnight, Otpor representatives asked the citizens to go home peacefully, explaining that Serbia had nothing to celebrate. The message was reinforced by the words of Mr Boris Tadic, Member of Parliament at the time: "This year, life finally must win in Serbia – this is THE year". During the two-hour celebration, Otpor representatives awarded prizes to the "heroes of resistance".





At the first Otpor congress held on February 17, 2000, the student movement became a “people’s movement” in order to attract wider population and mobilize more activists. After the New Year celebration supported by the democratic public, Otpor printed 15,000 posters with the slogan “2000 – this is THE year”, thus launching its one-year winning campaign.

In April 2000, the campaign “It’s spreading“ was carried out – when Otpor became a people’s movement, the idea was to push the boundaries and spread the movement to smaller communities and non-academic population as well.

From May to August 2000, more than 1,000 activists and members of Otpor were arrested. The campaign “This is the face of Serbia“ was launched in May. The regime closed down a majority of free media; arrests became daily routine; rights and freedoms of citizens were violated. The first task of Otpor was to disperse citizens’ fear. To that end, during protests, young women with flowers and raised fists stood in the first lines facing the cordons of police. During the campaign, there was a constant pressure on democratic opposition to unite and undertake concrete actions.

There was a series of rallies and protests throughout Serbia (April–June). On June 3, eight Otpor activists wearing black T-shirts with clenched fist print, travelled by bicycles from Krusevac to Nis in order to support the opposition in Nis where the performance “Mother Country, We Love You; Mother Country, We Won’t Give You Away” was organized.

In the framework of the campaign “Opening High-Speed Railroads of Serbia”, several hundreds of Otpor activists from 124 Serbian towns went to Kragujevac to celebrate May 1. The activity had started in Lapovo, where one of the Otpor activists introduced himself as engineer Mrkonjic and cut the ribbon tied across the railroad. Otpor activists travelled by train to Kragujevac, the place of the main celebration, where they gave speeches in front of the invited workers of Namenska.

In July, Mr Milosevic announced that presidential election would be held on September 24, 2000 which resulted in two different, yet coordinated and compatible pre-election campaigns.

The campaign “It’s time” was the first “get out and vote“ campaign in Serbia. It was very simple and positive, aiming to attract younger population aged 18–25, particularly the first-time voters (“Take Up the Challenge!”). Rock concerts were organised in more than 60 towns in Serbia; the main promoters of Otpor were public figures – “Caravan of Celebrities” toured Serbia, spreading the message nationwide. The symbol of the campaign was a clock showing five minutes to twelve, thus emphasizing the importance and signifi-

cance of the forthcoming election. The campaign was aimed at various target groups, regardless of their level of education and political affiliation.



The campaign “He’s finished“ had a simple message – the dictator is finished, he will realize it after the election. Over 20,000 volunteers were recruited, which was the regional record in an election campaign. More than 1,500,000 “He’s finished” stickers were printed and stuck over the existing posters of Mr Milosevic. One of the objectives of the campaign was to set up foundations for the united opposition campaign, which started after the action of Otpor.



Opposition parties and their presidential candidate toured the entire territory of Serbia in the framework of the “Democratic Caravan” campaign.





RESISTANCE!

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In the period of post-election crisis September 24 – October 5, the spread of a general strike at the national level was supported with stickers intended for objects in Serbia closed due to strike. Almost every such object, as well as hundreds of others, was marked with sticker “Closed due to theft”.

Otpor continued campaigning after the elections, thus reminding the public that Otpor was still there and ready to react in case of corruption or illegal dealings in the transition period. Such was the campaign “We are watching you”, whose symbol was the bulldozer that broke through the police cordon on October 5, a reminder that people could take their destiny in their own hands and overthrow the government, if necessary.



The campaigns “Stamp It!” and “Use It” referred to the state elections due in December 2000. The message behind the campaign “Stamp it!” was that the opposition must not leave their “job” unfinished, i.e. that Mr Milosevic must be defeated in the Parliament as well.



The campaign “Use it” was another “get out to vote” campaign; however, this time it targeted the wider population, rather than just the young voters.

