

Addendum G: Otpor's rationale for action and humor – Excerpts from *Bringing Down A Dictator*

Introduction

"What we needed the whole time was not the threat or use of force, it was the threat to his hold on power. And that was best gained through democratic forces within Serbia. And, you know, the grand lesson here is that broad based coalition of popular nonviolent protest can sweep away a dictatorship much more quickly than all the covert action on earth." — Daniel Serwer Director, Balkans Initiative U.S. Insatiate of Peace

"We have a long history of guerilla movements winning the power in this country. So when I say guerilla, I don't think about violence. I just think...about hidden leadership, some kind of mysteria about that. There is an organization where we are - the...whole story of Otpor, even the recruitment list you are filling is like you are joining the army. The army with a mission." — Srdja Popovic, Otpor

Examples from the Film

"Narration: But the inspiration for what they call 'actions' is all their own. On Milosevic's birthday, they make a cake. 'The cake signifies our country which fell apart. And like all those pieces of cake are falling apart...and they're eaten by Slobo." — Ivan Marovic, Otpor

"Narration: On the lunar eclipse, they invite downtown shoppers to view the eclipse they have in mind.'. (People look into Otpor's homemade telescope, where Milosevic's face is 'eclipsed'.)

"I am a hooligan and a punk walking at night across a country of death notices, disturbing the public by putting up posters that say, 'Resistance, because I love Serbia.' I am a drug addict. I am addicted to freedom and every day I need more of it!" — Srdjan Milivojevic

"Be smart gentlemen, because in Serbia the joke is over. Stop the violence. Stop the persecution. Stop the repression. Stop state terror." — Branko Ilic

"We assume that every non-democratic regime tries to look like this: It has a small group of people at the top of the regime. They control all sorts of government agencies, institutions, and mechanisms for repression such as the judiciary, the media, and theoretically a regime like this has to be monolithic. People think you have to chop off the top of a monolith. That's revolution. No, we say Otpor wants democracy. Not by chopping off heads. Serbians must depose their leader through elections. This will prove that Serbians are civilized." — Srdja Popovic

"We developed this chain of command. When the information of arrestment comes to the central office of or the local office, there was a system producing press release, providing the lawyers' help to the arrested guy, and producing as many activists as we can at the

proper moment to be in ten minutes in front of the police station. So, that was really important to develop such kind of solidarity." — Srdja Popovic

Marovic, in front of a prison: "I am addressing the warden of the Central Prison. You have ten minutes to inform us about the health and condition of those arrested."

Otpor member with microphone speaking on platform announcing and scrutinizing another Otpor member in an Otpor T-shirt in front of a crowd of people.: "We are here reporting from in front of the Nis Police station. And here is an example of a terrorist, on the border between Serbia and Montenegro. The terrorist is about six feet tall, and he is wearing a T-shirt of the Terrorist organization, Otpor. He is wearing eye glasses which means he reads a lot. It's dangerous to read a lot in this country, so beware."

An Otpor commercial: Woman wearing housedress and apron, holding a T-shirt, standing next to a washing machine: "I've been trying to clean this stain for ten years. Believe me I've tried everything. But now there is anew machine. It has a great program which, with confidence and security, permanently cleans this and similar stains. See? It works."

Conclusion

"Everything we did must have a dosage of humor. Because I'm joking. You're becoming angry. You're always showing only one face. And I'm always again with another joke, with another action, with another positive message to the wider audience. And that's how we collected the third party in the whole story — which is the very important — the publicity, the people on the ground." — Srdja Popovic

"I think we succeeded because we simply loved life more than them. Generally, those guys were the preachers of the death. Their hatred, their propaganda, you know, their language smelled like death. And we won because we loved life more. We decided to love life and you can't beat a life. So this is what Otpor did. We were a group of fans of life. And this is why we succeeded." — Srdja Popovic