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# MY BELGRADE

■ Laguna ■  

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#### BELGRADE – REACHING FOR THE STARS

Sailing out of the distant past, Belgrade rises up towards the stars. Much has been written about the White City – epic poems, histories, and chronicles. All of these writings see Belgrade as a starting-point towards the light, a hill on which to reflect, a gateway between East and West. The winds meet above it and the roads of the world below. It has seen many civilisations – Mesolithic, Neolithic, Iron Age and the constant migrations of different peoples. Its ancient shields are Kalemegdan, the Danube, Sava and blue Avala rivers. Centuries ago, this rocky headland and the area around the confluence of the Sava and Danube were mentioned by Classical writers Hesiod, Herodotus, Theophilus, and Apollonius. The saga of the Argonauts contains the words: “On their return from Colchis, sailing up the Ister (Danube), Jason and his friends pass by Mount Anguron (Avala, perhaps?) and the Kaulijak cliff (the Belgrade headland?) beneath which the Ister “forks” (the Danube and Sava). ... The Argonauts continued their journey along the West Ister, probably the river Sava... From Neanderthal man to the present day, Belgrade has been the cradle, home and grave of many tribes and nations – the Illyrians, Thracians, Dacians, Celts, Romans, Byzantines, Huns, Avars and Slavs... In 101 AD, Emperor Trajan reviews his legions in Singidunum.” “Septimius Severus, the African emperor, chosen by the Danubian army, visits the city in 202.” Emperor Claudius II passes through Singidunum in 268 on his way to Niš... The Goths invade the Balkans in 378 and ravage Singidunum.” “The Avar khagan Bajan conquers the city in 584.” In 878, the Slav name *Beograd* mentioned for the first time. “The first pilgrims pass through Belgrade on their way to the Holy Land in 1036, while in 1189 Frederick Barbarossa also comes through.” The first mention of Belgrade in Serbian literature can be traced to 1315

when Byzantine princess Simonida, wife of Milutin, visits the city. Bishop Danilo II refers to this in his *Lives of Kings and Serbian Archbishops*: “And thus travelling in imperial splendour through all his lands, he comes to the famous city of Belgrade on the banks of the Danube and Sava. And there, in the great cathedral, he pays reverence to the miraculous icon of the Holy Mother.” (This icon with supposedly healing powers was certainly the icon of the Holy Mother of God – the patron saint of Belgrade, which Luke the apostle and evangelist is believed to have described). “And he met with the blessed King Stefan and his wife Katelina and there was much happiness and rejoicing at this coming filled with honourable and unexpressed love.” In 1391, the first Turkish siege of Belgrade took place under Bajazit I.” “Despot Stefan Lazarević undertook reconstruction of the city in 1403, as described in the Belgrade Charter:

“When I arrived, I found the most beautiful place existing for many years, the city of Belgrade, which had been destroyed and laid to waste. I built it up again and dedicated it to the Holy Mother of God... In 1521, Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent conquered Belgrade. One hundred and thirty years after the first siege. The fall of this bastion of Christianity had swift consequences, for five years later Hungary suffered a resounding defeat at Mohaç and the Turks started their first siege of Vienna eight years after that. As for Belgrade, the Turks had long since referred to it in their writings as *darol-djihad* (the house of holy war.) As time passed, Belgrade saw wars, blockades, and political upheavals in connection with such figures as Maximilian Emmanuel, Eugene of Savoy and Austrian fieldmarshal Laudon, then the edict of Sultan Mahmud II, the establishment of Serbian independence as a state, Serbian princes and kings, and finally, two world wars out of whose ashes, like the phoenix, Belgrade rose again. ... All these events were recorded by the pens of learned men, painted by artists and thereby rendered

















*Pages 2-3: Here are all the colours of the rainbow: blue, green, red, pink and orange. The QP Lounge designer made this canopy in Kralja Petra Street from 250 sunshades.*

*Pages 6-7: Inspired writers have said that the source of all light is located above Belgrade. The sky is unbelievable. As in the biblical Genesis, on the first day the Almighty separated light from darkness and saw that it was good... There are no secrets: this panoramic shot of the city was taken from the top of the towering East Gates of Belgrade.*

*Pages 8-9: Here in the palm of your hand you can see the walls of Kalemegdan, the Victory statue, the building housing the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments, the Military Museum, the Old Cathedral, the Beogradjanka skyscraper, the Clinical Centre, Saint Sava's Cathedral and other recognisable Belgrade landmarks – all photographed from an air balloon.*

*Pages 10-11: A night scene in Belgrade with Voznesenska Church in the foreground and palaces nearby. We can see the river Sava and its six bridges linking Old and New Belgrade. Bathed in light, Belgrade by night looks like a shining jewel.*

*Pages 14-15: The gray clouds over the city threaten a storm. In a second a flash of lighting, like a snake, breaks through the sky between the Saborna Crkva and the Beogradjanka skyscraper. The photographer was diligent and was a fraction of a second faster. Belgrade is also beautiful in a storm.*

*Here is one of the main junctions in Belgrade, where Kralja Milana and Kneza Miloša streets cross. This is an evening view of Belgrade showing the city centre, Dorćol, part of Palilula and the Danube, with the Banat plain discernible through the mist.*









*The Victory statue by sculptor Ivan Meštrović in Kalemegdan. It was raised in October 1928 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the penetration of the Thessaloniki Front. Executed in bronze, the Victory statue was intended to stand on Terazije. This naked male figure was set on a tall pillar in Kalemegdan instead, "for reasons of morality". Symbolically, this is only a shadow of "The Victor".*

timeless. Many have sought to uncover Belgrade and discover the secrets of its invincible spirit - historians, writers, sociologists, analysts, military strategists, journalists, artists and poets. They have tried to illuminate its whiteness, drink in the morning breath of the rivers and winds, experience the bustle on its hot asphalt and the pulsing of the stars in its nights and early dawns. One such explorer was Miloš Crnjanski. Here is an extract from his poem *Lament for Belgrade*: "But you grow in the clearness of dawn/With blue Avala in the distance, like a hill/You tremble, and when the stars go out/ And you melt like the Sun, and the ice of tears and yesteryear's snow/ There is no absurdity in you, no death? You gleam like an excavated old sword/ In You everything is reborn and plays and twirls/ And is repeated, like day and a baby's crying/ And when my voice, and eyes, and breath die/ I know you will take me under your wing.../But you shine now, through my dark sleep,/ Through our many tears, eternal tears, in darkness and dust./ Your blood fell like dew on the plain./ As once before, to cool the breath of those lying near death/ I embrace one last time your steep cliffs,/ You and the Sava and your sleepy Danube./ The sun is born in my dream. Take me! Flash your light! Roar! / Your name is like thunder from a clear sky/And when your ancient tower tolls the hour/ That name will be the last whisper on my lips"...

Belgrade has always had its planners, dreamers, and visionaries. Two "dreams" from its past are especially moving. On the day the Turks finally left the city on 6 April 1867 and the keys to Belgrade were presented to Prince Mihailo, a celebration ball was organised at which someone said that they would like to rise from the grave in a hundred years' time just for an hour to see what had become of Belgrade. The ball's hostess, Anka Konstantinović-Obrenović, a cousin of the prince, "liked to dabble in reading the future" and her prophecy was recorded: "I imagine our white city in a hundred years from now as a European metropolis, with large decorated houses, pretty streets, and educated people, not only the young, but women as well. Women will be as beautiful as they are today, but they will be elegant and educated in the European way like real writers. Everything in the city will absolutely lovely. And those future men and women will laugh at us for our poor education. The women a hundred years from now will be well mannered and their mothers literate. But we were born and lived under the Turks and had to fight for the freedom of our homeland. They will live in a free, white and beautiful city and their fight will be for a good education"...

In 1911, the versatile Stojan Novaković (1842-1915), politician, Serbian prime minister, diplomat, philologist, art historian and president of the Serbian Royal Academy, wrote down his vision of "what Belgrade would look like in a hundred years." He set his view of Belgrade in the year 2011: "That May morning, 2011 years after the birth of Christ, spreads sunlight over peaceful Belgrade. The hills surrounding the enormous city are covered with villas and houses in gardens full of colourful flowers. Overhead, aeroplanes flit, like butterflies, carrying post to Ljubljana, Zagreb, Zadar, Sarajevo, Skadar on the Bojana, Ohrid, Prizren, Skopje, and Niš. The former small settlements of Zemun and Pančevo have grown into large towns themselves, connected to Belgrade by electric trams. There are several bridges over the Sava and Danube and many steamboats, crisscrossing over the rivers. Trains leave the central station at short intervals, heading in all directions, the most popular being the Adriatic coast..."

Inspired by the huge wave of excitement on the eve of the Third Millennium on Belgrade's Republic Square, I penned an article "Reaching for the Stars" in which I touched on these "visionary themes." Among other things, I wrote: "On no other square in the world in recent years have there been bigger gatherings or greater hopes for a better life than on Republic Square – now Freedom Square – in Belgrade. Nowhere has there been more positive energy that in that space bounded by the Ruski Car palace, the



Belgrade Cultural Centre, the National Theatre, and the National Museum... Especially on the eve of a new millennium when this relatively small area turned into a human anthill! Maybe more than half a million people, hunderous music, and endless waiting... The hands of the clock were to meet but not before the final countdown... Seven! Six! Five! Four! Three! Two! ... Then everything exploded into a big bang praising life, peace, religion, love and hope... All over the world the same scene was repeated... in New Zealand, in Sydney... In Hong Kong, the Chinese beat a great bell, cast especially for the new millennium, with a wooden hammer Laser beams flashed over the rooftops of the Kremlin and the cross of Basil the Blessed on Red Square. Vienna illuminated the huge wheel of the Prater, made famous by the film *The Third Man*. The French lit up the Eiffel Tower. Rome, the Eternal City celebrated, as did Madrid “capital of Spain and the beautiful Laura” from the celebrated poem. The English sounded Big Ben. There were crowds on the beach of Copacabana in Rio. New York shone its crystal ball to a mass of people, among them Muhammad Ali, the most celebrated boxer of all time, a rebel who refused to pick up a rifle and go to Vietnam... The new millennium reached the natives of Polynesia, Lapland with its reindeer, sailors on all the world’s oceans, Bushmen in the Kalahari, the land of Simon Bolivar in the Andes, and the lamas of Tibet from the verses of Ogden Nash... Later the wave of rejoicing, this worldwide ‘Ode to Joy’, died down... “I did not write of this as a “vision”, but I did ask myself “Will these fleeting images be preserved in ‘silicon genes’, tiny chips (genes, small molecules, that can make you look like Hercules) until the next, fourth millennium? Until future generations, in some city somewhere... Maybe in our “city of the stars? ...

“We travel on far journeys, Santa Maria della Salute”...

What will Belgrade look like in a thousand years? No one knows. As so often before, time and people will determine its future. The photographs in this book deal with Belgrade as it is today. The texts are linked to its recent and older history. We will start with the different parts of Belgrade. Just as the world’s cities have specific quarters, Belgrade has different quarters, developed through time, with unusual names: Kalemegdan, Dorćol, Terazije, Vračar, Palilula, Voždovac, Bulbulder, Senjak, Marinkova Bara, Englezovac, Djumurkana, Tošin Bunar... How did they get these names?

#### THE FORTRESS AND KALEMEGDAN PARK

The oldest part of the city, where we find the city’s fortress and most famous park - Kalemegdan, was settled in prehistory, in the Neolithic Age, according to archaeological findings. The Celts followed, making their home at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers and leaving behind the city’s first known name – Singidunum. Next on the historical scene were the Slavs and with them, a new name for the fortified town - Belgrade, which was mentioned in a letter sent by Pope John III to the Bulgarian prince Boris in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. The fortifications, as we know them today, were formed over a period of two thousand years and offer a vivid picture of the city’s repeated rise and fall, and the role it played in the past. Belgrade is situated on the border between the Pannonian Plain and the Balkan Peninsula, where the roads between Europe and the Orient meet, on their way to Thessaloniki (*Via Egnatia*) and Constantinople (*Via Militaris*), but also on the most important river routes along the Sava and Danube. Due to its unique position, the Belgrade fortress was for centuries a bastion of defence and a departure point for conquests. The central nucleus, the Upper Town, was formed in Roman times, at the end of the old world and beginning of the new. It was a typical fortified Roman camp – *castrum*. In the Middle Ages, after the Romans had left, it evolved into a mediaeval fort. It was under the rule of Byzantium, then



*Above: With its slim white octagonal Baroque tower, Sahat Kula and Kapija (the Clock Tower and Gate) are well known landmarks at Kalemegdan. The tower was so named because of its clock. The tower and gate were erected in the 18th century. Between the fortified walls beneath the clock tower and constituting part of the Military Museum, tanks and artillery weapons from the First and Second World Wars are on display.*

*Below: A memorable event in the cultural life of Belgrade was an open-air exhibition of photographs by the author of this book Dragoljub Zamurović at Kalemegdan. Behind the panels we can see the imposing white palace housing the French Embassy in Pariska Street, which was erected in 1927-1928 and designed by Roger-Henri Expert in the Modernist style.*

Bulgaria, Hungary, and finally, Serbia during the reign of Despot Stefan Lazarević (1404-1427) when it became a fortified mediaeval town, with an Inner Town (site of the Despot’s court) and a Lower Town with additional construction to the west and east. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, during the period of Turkish rule, it was called *Fićir-bair* - a hill for reflection and *Dorćol-djihad* – the house of holy war. The Belgrade fortress started to expand beyond its walls. From 1717, when it passed into the hands of the Austrians, a rapid modernisation process began which included the construction of powder magazines and barracks and the demolition of the Turkish elements. Once in Serbian possession, following the handing over of the keys to the city in 1867, the fortress retained its military role right up to the First World War. Today, the Belgrade fortress is an integral part of Kalemegdan Park, which started to be laid out in the 1880s.

The passing centuries saw the erection of many *kule* or towers, most of which have been preserved – Kula Nebojša, Jakšićeva Kula, Mlinarica, Sahat Kula, Kula Sibirjanina Janka, Kula Žrnov, Despotova Kula ... Of the Turkish structures, all that have remained are Damad Ali Paša’s *turbe* (burial dome) and the *česma* (fountain) of Mehmed Paša Sokolović. The fortress also had a number of *kapije* or gates: the Stambol Kapija, Karadjordje, Sahat Kapija, Zidan Kapija, and the Despotova or Dizdareva Kapija, Defterdareva, Kralj Kapija, Vidin Kapija, Mračna, Eugen Savojska Kapija, and Kornarova or Zazidana Kapija. The Military Museum also forms an integral part of the fortress, as do the Belgrade Institute for the Protection of Monuments, the Church of the Birth of the Holy Mother of God - better known as the Rose Church, the Cannon Foundry, the Natural History Museum, the Chapel of Saint Petka, the Zoo, the Cvijeta Zuzorić art pavilion, the *Victory* Statue, and many statues dedicated to leading figures from Serbian history and culture. One striking feature of this space is the Roman Well, 60.15 metres deep, its upper diameter measures 3.40 metres to 52 metres in depth, after which it widens to 2 metres. There is a staircase leading down to the bottom of the well, numbering no fewer than 212 steps. Underground air currents can be felt in the Roman Well, known as “the underground winds of Belgrade».

The Belgrade Fortress is a cultural monument of exceptional importance for the Republic of Serbia.

#### DORĆOL

Together with the Fortress, Dorćol is the oldest part of the city. Literally translated, it means the place where four roads meet (leading to Constantinople, Vidin, Sever and probably Dubrovnik), that is, where today’s streets – Dunavska, Kralja Petra and Dubrovačka - converge. This unusual crossroads set at right angles, unlike the rest of the city’s winding Oriental streets, was probably cut in Roman times. This junction marks the real Dorćol, although in time the term has come to indicate a far wider area – stretching from Studentski Trg (Students’ Square) to Kalemegdan, and from Skadarlija down to the Danube.

This quarter – Danube town – experienced accelerated growth in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and was Belgrade’s trading centre at the time, with extensive accommodation for caravans and the Mehmed Paša Sokolović covered market, where travelling merchants could rest and do business.

During the long Turkish occupation, the city took on a very Oriental appearance, thanks to its religious schools, basket-weavers, inns, cafes and countless mosques, in the East town. When the Austrians arrived in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was soon transformed into an urban agglomeration, with 333 German families moving in, and assumed a different, baroque look. Seven identical buildings were erected along Cara Dušana Street, of which only one survives today, completely changed and almost unrecognisable. This is the

oldest building in Belgrade, constructed by Elias Fleischmann in 1724, and located at number 10 Cara Dušana Street. The famous palace of Prince Eugene of Savoy dates from the same period, the so-called Pirinčana (rice factory), the most beautiful building of its time in the city. The Turks re-conquered Belgrade and after 1740, the city regained its Eastern character. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the city had become neglected and half-demolished.

It was not until the handing over of the keys and the passing into Serbian hands that Dorćol experienced a resurgence of its trade boom. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dorćol was divided into two – Jališa (the area along the Danube) and Zerek (the slope) the length of Kralja Petra Street. It was the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural quarter of Belgrade. Its mixed population included Serbs, Turks, Jews, Sefardis, Vlachs, Armenians, Germans, and Roma. Most were traders and craftsmen, as witnessed by the buildings preserved in good condition from various periods and serving various purposes – the Dositelj Obradović lyceum, the Bajrakli mosque, the burial chamber of Sheikh Mustafa, the house of Elias Fleischmann, Dorćol’s primary school, the centre of the Jewish religious and school community, the house of Dr. Lazar Paču, and the homes of a number of rich merchants.

#### THE DJUMURKANA

The Djumurkana was erected around 1835 beside the Sava during the reign of Prince Miloš. This was a time when the pier on the Sava became more important than that on the Danube, which was less accessible to boats. Serbia took over the transport of charcoal and Customs procedures from the Turks, so it became imperative to put up a building to meet these new requirements. It is possible that there had been a building with a similar purpose at the same location. The Djumurkana was a two-storey building and the first structure in Belgrade to be built of stone and brick. It got its name from the Turkish word *gumruk*, meaning “Customs”. It was damaged during the bombing of Belgrade in 1944 and was completely demolished after the Second World War. The Djumurkana also saw the first theatrical performances in the city.

#### TERAZIJE

Belgrade’s most famous square – Terazije – began to take shape in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thanks to its lofty position, it was ideal for the laying of two pipe systems supplying the city with water. The first pumping station (a water tower) was erected on this plateau. As *terazije* was the Turkish word for “water tower” the name extended to the entire surrounding area. Prince Miloš moved Serbian craftsmen here and gave them plots of land.

To mark the second period of rule of Prince Miloš, the pumping station was replaced with a fountain, designed by Italian Franz Lorano in 1860. During the reconstruction of Terazije in 1911, the fountain was moved to Topčider, but returned in 1976, albeit in a different location that fitted Terazija’s new look. The first major reconstruction of Terazije began in 1911. This ambitious project was spearheaded by architect Eduard Léger, in collaboration with architect Jelisaveta Načić and a French horticultural engineer Charles Leroux. It envisaged modernisation of the area, with two lateral roads and tramlines, the laying of cobblestones, a centrally located fountain with oval lawns and flowerbeds girdled by low wrought iron railings. Sculptor Ivan Meštrović was entrusted with the design of the fountain, which celebrated victory in the First Balkan War. However, only the central section of the fountain, the *Herald of Victory* or *The Victor*, was cast. Work was interrupted by the Second Balkan War and later the First World War. After the Great War, the general shortage of funds led to a decision to







construct a simpler and more modest version of this grandiose and expensive fountain. This resulted in two concentric pools built in 1927. Around the smaller of the pools eight bronze lions were placed, while eight large brass turtles were laid inside the pool itself. The water jets varied in intensity. The floor of the pool was a mosaic made of Murano glass. The fountain survived up to the second reconstruction of Terazije, led by architect Nikola Dobrović in 1947. The flowerbeds were also removed and the two roads joined into one.

Terazije was, and still is, the hub of Belgrade social life. Many hotels, restaurants and craft shops grew up, some of which have survived, as have written records of the others, but it all goes to show the importance of this square. Where Bezistan now stands was the Hotel Pariz and next to it a café called Kod Zlatnog Krsta - venue of the very first picture show in Belgrade and used in 1918 for meetings of the National Assembly. It is now the Hotel Casina. Terazije also boasts the hotel Moskva, the hotel Balkan, the Anker palace, the Atina palace, the photographic studio of Milan Jovanović, Igumanova Palata (the Prior's Palace), and the Theatre on Terazije.

#### REPUBLIC SQUARE AND THE STATUE OF PRINCE MIHAILO

The plan regulating the "town in the trench" of 1867, drawn up by engineer Emilijan Josimović, shaped the development of what is now Republic Square. This was also called Theatre Square because its reputation was enhanced by the construction of the National Theatre in 1869, as designed by architect Aleksandar Bugarski. A little earlier, in the 1820s, the Wirttembergova Kapija had been erected here, called the Stambol Kapija by the Turks. In front of the gate there were untilled fields. It was not until the 1860s that work began on erecting buildings, following the demolition of the gate in 1866 on orders from Prince Mihailo.

In 1882, this space had already begun to look like a square and a statue of Prince Mihailo on a horse, the work of Florentine sculptor Enrico Pazzi, was erected on the square. The square was given the final architectural touch with the building of a house on the corner of Čika Ljubina Street and Obilićev Venac and also the Riunion palace in the 1930s. During the period between the two world wars, it housed a turntable for the number 3 tram and tramlines and for a period after the Second World War there was a small enclosure and monument to the fighters of the Red Army who lost their lives in the liberation of Belgrade in 1944. The tramlines were pulled up after the war and the monument moved to Novo Groblje (New Cemetery) in 1957. With the further addition of the Foreign Trade Chamber building and the Press Centre, the Square became a rounded whole.

However, the focal point of interest is still the bronze statue of Prince Mihailo on horseback from 1882. It is also the first public monument depicting a figure, and the only mounted statue in Belgrade. It is dedicated to Serbia's liberator from the Turkish yoke and its unveiling was a major event at the time. Songs were sung and lithographs printed describing it. The mounted figure of Prince Mihailo stands on a pedestal decorated with images in relief depicting the most important events during his reign and especially the liberation of Serbian towns. It is the work of architect Konstantin A. Jovanović. The stone base has three steps all around it and the Serbian crest with a dedication to Mihailo M. Obrenović: "To Prince Mihailo M. Obrenović III from a Grateful Serbia". It is decorated with bronze garlands and plaques bearing the names of the towns Šabac, Kladovo, Užica, and Soko. During work on the monument between 1928 and 1931 there was some alteration to the pedestal, the surrounding area was arranged and the original Classical design replaced by one that is more baroque. This was



*Young trumpeter in Knez Mihailova Street. Musicologists believe that the trumpet, a symbol of jazz for the young people of Belgrade in the fifties, became popular here thanks to the films.*

*Pages 20-21: One of Kalemegdan's chief tourist attractions is this unusual structure – the Roman Well. Visitors can go 30 metres down into the well by a spiral staircase. You can always hear wind blowing through the corridors beside the well – "the underground echo of Belgrade".*

*Right: Knez Mihailova is Belgrade's most fashionable street. A pedestrian zone extending from Terazija to Kalemegdan, it is a paradise for strollers. It is the "City" of Belgrade. It is full of people walking up and down, especially in the evening hours.*

