



## Time Travel to 1460 at Belgrade Fortress

### Facts, Belgrade in the 15<sup>th</sup> century

Belgrade lies in the junction of routes, a contact zone between different regions and groups of people. On the hills by the confluence of the rivers Sava and Danube was a perfect place to build a settlement and fortifications. It had easy access, connected distant regions and it was easy to control the waterways. There have been settlements here for thousands of years: Romans, Gothics, Huns, Bulgarians, Byzantine Empire, Slavs, Hungarians, Serbs, Ottomans etc. It has often been the borderline and a meeting place between different groups, both trade and wars.

In the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century Despot Stefan made Belgrade his capital. On the hilltop he constructed his fortified residence, Upper Town with a castle, strong walls and ramparts. At the time many people moved into the city and settled in Lower Town, below the castle by the water. Lower Town was laid out with houses, streets and a surrounding wall.

When Stefan died the Hungarians took over the city and held it for almost a century. The garrison was commanded by a captain.

The Ottoman Empire expanded in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and conquered Anatolia, Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Greece and Serbia. Belgrade became an outpost in the Hungarian kingdom. Two times Belgrade was sieged by the Ottomans, 1440 and 1456. It was heavily attacked by cannons and artillery. But at the end the Turks had to withdraw. After 1440 and 1456 the defense systems were restored, new towers and ramparts were built and the gates were made stronger. The Hungarian general Janos Hunyadi expected new attacks.

In 1453 Sultan Mehmet and his troops conquered Constantinople, the center of the eastern Christianity. This put extra stress on other powers in the surrounding regions. The Venetian Republic decided to negotiate and a peace treaty between them and the Ottomans was signed in 1454.

In 1460 Belgrade was a big and important town, with lots of a trade and businesses, in the outskirts of the Hungarian kingdom. And very close to the mighty Ottoman Empire.

### Scenario, Belgrade 1460

This morning several servants from Lower Town of Belgrade walk up to the Upper Town to work, as every morning. But today is a special day. More persons have been called to do extra work and there are rumors that there will be another attack. People are worried, will we have new information?

People have very much in mind the wars and attacks on the city. The sieges of 1440 and 1456 have given terrible memories. Will there be another attack? Or couldn't we go on with our lives and trade as before?

Some say that we can never beat the Ottomans with their strong cannons and heavy artillery. Isn't it better to negotiate? Maybe we can establish a peace treaty, like the Venetians have done? Others say that it is impossible to trust these pagans. They are not like us, talk, dress and act differently. And they seem to have another god. The only way to go is to build even stronger ramparts and fight to the last man.

The servants will go on with their duties as usual today. But they are worried and nobody want the war back. What does the future hold? What is our way in Belgrade? Can we influence the future? Will we have any new information today?

### Key Questions, War or Peace

- Fight or negotiate, Trust or distrust,
- Living together with differences, is it possible?

## **Roles**

Citizens in Belgrade, servants from Lower town, working in upper town, Hungarians, Serbs, Germans.

1-2 noble men/women from the castle

Person in charge of the servants' work in Upper Town

## **Activities**

- Make medicine
- Play cards
- Cast bullets
- Make food, drinks
- Saw a cap/ clothes

## **Time plan**

14.00 Short presentation of the history of Belgrade Fortress

14.15 Dress up, characters, scenario

Initiation

14.45 Activities, discussions, someone coming?

15.30 Light meal, ending ceremony

16.00 Reflection

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## **Role cards**

### **Tradesperson**

You are tradesmen/ women and you have met tradesmen from the Ottoman Empire. One of you is quite fond of one of the Ottoman tradesmen; and you don't think they are that dangerous. They are civilized, clean and healthy. And do they really believe in another god?

### **Upper class women, two cousins**

You are upper class women from the castle. You lead and check the work of the servants. You are determined and arrogant.

### **Servant**

You have very bad memories from the siege four years ago. You lost one of your children and you don't want to lose the other ones in a new war.

### **Servants, anti-Ottoman**

You say that the Ottomans are evil and you can't trust them. You have heard so many rumors about them and their behavior. And they conquer and conquer in the name of Allah.

### **Servants, pro-Ottoman**

You realize that you are never going to beat the Ottomans. Next time they will be ten times as many as four years ago. The Venetians were clever. Negotiate and make a good and sustainable peace. That will improve the trade and businesses. A win-win situation.

### **Servants, pro-Ottoman**

You have had quite a lot of contact with the Ottomans. One of you even lived in the Ottoman Empire as a child. They are not that dangerous as people say, it's mostly false rumors. They are actually more civilized than the Hungarians, Serbs and Germans. Good hospitals, nice houses and good manners.

### **Nurse-wise woman**

You have a lot of knowledge on herb medicines. You helped a lot of wounded soldiers in the previous war.

### **Ill/ injured**

You have an injury in your arm and need a bandage. Go and see the nurse.

### **Ill/ Injured**

You have a bad throat. Visit the nurse

### **Servant, pro-military**

There is only one way, you say. Fight and fight. Your relatives have been heroes in the wars. We need more rifles and more bullets!

### **Ottoman tradesman**

You are an Ottoman tradesman that secretly has succeeded to enter Belgrade, even come up at the castle. You have news from the Sultan, there might be a chance to negotiate. You talk quietly to some persons, and then to some more. Maybe someone will listen.