



Faculty of Orthodox Theology

Workshadowing: May 28 to June 1st, 2018

1) About Belgrade

Belgrade (Beograd) is the capital of Serbia, and has a population of around 1.6 million. It is situated in South-Eastern Europe, on the Balkan Peninsula, at the confluence of the Sava and Danube rivers. It is one of the oldest cities in Europe and has since ancient times been an important focal point for traffic, an intersection of the roads of Eastern and Western Europe.

Belgrade is the capital of Serbian culture, education, science and economy. As a result of its tumultuous history, Belgrade has for centuries been home to many nationalities, with Serbs of the Orthodox Christian religion making up the majority of the population (90%). The official language is Serbian, while visitors from abroad can use English to communicate.

In the inner area of the City of Belgrade there are over 5,500 streets, 16 plazas and 32 squares. Knez Mihailova Street is a pedestrian zone and shopping center - with a large number of representative buildings and urban houses built at the end of 1870s.

High above the Sava and Danube confluence, on the rocky ridge which opens the view of Novi Beograd, Zemun and wide plains of Pannonia, there is the Belgrade Fortress with Kalemegdan, the former historical and urban center of Belgrade

There are hotels of any price available and also an Erasmus student can find suitable lodging. The most important thing is to be close to public transport – which consists of tram, trolley buses and a sort of bus system. Most people use it daily however they also use taxis a lot because they are quick and available everywhere, have a fixed rate system and to our standards are quite cheap.

2) About the Faculty in general

Today there are more than 1.800 young men and women who are studying at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology preparing themselves for priesthood, a teaching career, or scientific research in the field of theology. The Faculty has 40 teachers and associates of which 22 are doctors and 13 masters of theology or philosophy. The teaching staff includes several highly regarded bishops of the Orthodox Church, as well as some presbyters and monks. Programs of study and curriculums are fully harmonized both with the existing state law governing higher education and the Bologna process. Instruction is organized to last 8 or 6 semesters, depending on the program of study chosen by the candidates. Master studies last 2 or 4 semesters again depending on the program of study. Faculty of Orthodox Theology enrolls candidates who have completed studies at an Orthodox seminary, as well as those who have graduated at a gymnasium or completed some other secondary school education. The former may choose general theology or practical theology as their program of study, and the latter are generally encouraged to take up general theology.

Apart from the general core of studies, students may, depending on their affinities, select a number of elective subjects (courses) – biblical, patrological, systematic, ecclesial-historical, philosophical, or practical by discipline. The program of basic studies represents a combination of theoretical and

applied learning which can satisfy both the needs of those that intend to take up scientific scholarship and the needs of those who select pastoral work or teaching as their future profession. Candidates of both sexes may enroll at the Faculty upon obtaining the recommendation of their diocesan bishop and passing an entrance examination consisting of two parts – theology and general culture. Members of other Christian confessions may also study here with the blessing of the hierarchy of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

The Faculty of Orthodox Theology nurtures extensive cooperation with some of the most respected world theological institutions such as the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, the theological academies of Moscow and Sankt Petersburg, the Pontifical Lateran University in Vatican, theological faculties in Germany, Switzerland, France, USA, and countries belonging to the region of South-East Europe. Faculty library consists of over 100.000 books and its services are also offered to the general public and numerous scholars belonging to other faculties and scientific institutions.

(text is partly taken from homepage of Faculty)

3) About my workshadowing programme

My visiting programme was made up beforehand by the International Office at Belgrade University, Ms Kostrica, and consisted of daily talks with professors and students.

The 1st day: I was shown around at the faculty by the Professor of ecumenical studies, Rade Kisic, in spite the fact that he was on a holiday (!). We had talks about the organization of the faculty, the single programs and general aspects of studying Theology and the situation of Serbian woman in church. Women become teachers in all levels of school, as they are not allowed to become priests in Orthodox Church. In general men become priests or lecturers as there still demand for them with the church organization. During the afternoon one of the students, who knows Erlangen quite well, as he is the captain of the students soccer team, insisted to be my guide all through the old town of Belgrade, It was a wonderful sightseeing programme.

The 2nd day: I met up with all responsables of the International office in Belgrade University downtown. I even had a look into the special bookkeeping department for Erasmus funds and other 3rd party financed programmes for students. It is a wonderful historic building like our residence in Erlangen displaying more or less the same advantages and disadvantages of an old building such as high ceilings, historic interior and rooms too small for all the files and people who work there.

According to my preferences mentioned beforehand, Ms Kostrica accompanied me to the Faculty of Political Sciences. The Erasmus coordinator of the Faculty welcomed us and invited us for lunch. In the small cafeteria, that exclusively opens for guests and teaching staff, we got into first contact with famous professors of the faculty. Thereafter, we gathered in one of the meeting rooms where a professor of political sciences and some students discussed with me my unlimited questions regarding Serbia's latest history and attempt to join the European Community.

My 3rd day began with a meeting at the Faculty of Theology. As before, I took a taxi as the building is a bit far from the city center and you never know whether you will arrive there in time by public transport. The secretary of the Faculty, the Vice Dean and the Prof. of Classical Archeology were my contact persons this day. Everybody was very polite and tried to show me their fields of work. I was invited to watch the refurbishment of the chapel that is built into the building of the Faculty of Theology, a house in the house so to say. I was very impressed by the "new al fresco" technique they applied and by the beauty of this orthodox chapel where students learn how to carry through an orthodox mass. I also visited the library with many works in foreign languages. Even the master audience room and smaller rooms for lectures were shown to me. I had a long talk with the staff there and some of them agreed to meet me downtown the next day for introducing me into Serbian Icon painting.

On my 4th day in Belgrade, I met 2 very helpful and friendly students who showed me the main Orthodox Churches in Belgrade and explained to me the different Icons and their meanings for Orthodox believers. St. Savas church is the main church in Belgrade and the fountain of spiritual enlightenment for Serbian people. The inside part of the church is still under construction as nearly all “paintings” on the walls are made of gold-plated mosaics.

My 5th day led me to Novi Sad a nearby baroque style town of about 200.000 inhabitants. On invitation of the Faculty of Orthodox Studies, especially thanks to the student that looked after me, Mr. Stephan Maric, I attended the European Congress of Churches CEC; their motto was “you shall be my witnesses”. There I also met colleagues from Belgrade and from Erlangen.

5) Summary:

I had a very interesting time at Belgrade University, in a country that is determined by its difficult situation of economic and political post-war struggles. I saw a lot of different people and how they manage to work and live. I visited great churches and museums.

Thanks to Ms Köndgen in Erlangen, Ms Kostrica in Belgrade for all the organizational work, all those very kind colleagues in Belgrade who let me have a glimpse into their lives and not to forget my always encouraging boss here in Erlangen, Prof. Dr. Martin Nicol.

