

BOOK REVIEW

DOCUMENTS OF THE SEVERIN MUNICIPALITY 1916-1920

(AUTHORS: TUDOR RATOI and NICOLAE CHIPURICI)

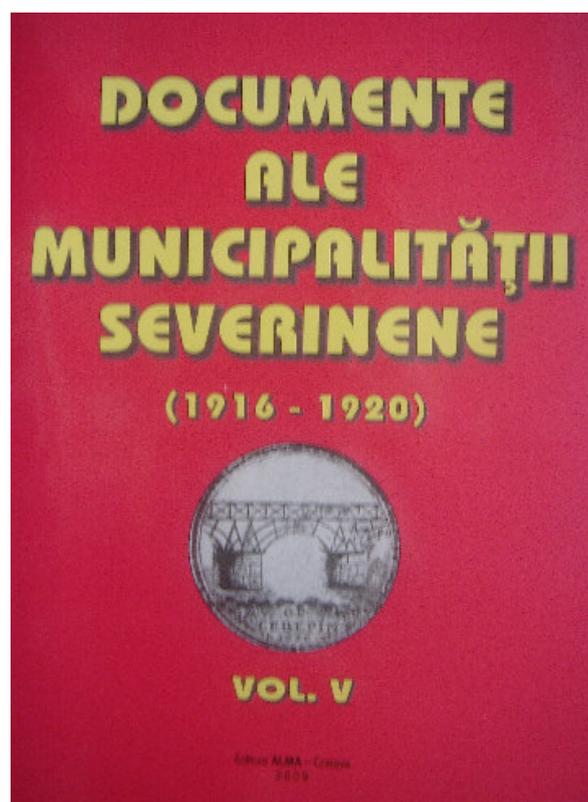
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The "Alma" Publishing House has recently issued a new edition of documents: the fifth volume of records belonging to the municipality of Turnu Severin, put together by Nicolae Chipurici and Tudor Ratoi, who have been working on this bountiful compendium since 2005. The collection brings forward 402 documents, written between 1916 and 1920, i.e. the time of the First World War and of the Romanian struggle to shape into a whole country.

Being of a great variety (requests, reports, minutes, price lists, budgets, notifications, declarations, contracts, letters, telegrams, invitations, etc.), the records have a unique historical importance. Not only is the information new, but the sources have been wisely chosen as they present the old town in bright colours.

The documents show us the way in which, in spite of the difficulties and the cumulated debts, the town administration struggled so that the public institutions functioned properly; they show us the first signs that pointed out towards Romania's joining the war, the beginning of the military proceedings, the first



requests to go to war, the disruption of the railroad traffic and that of town supplies, the damages caused by the enemy bombing and the fights that took place in the plain areas. We can find information about the interruption of the school year, the organization and equipping of field hospitals and about all kinds of requisitions. We discover the names of the soldiers who died in battle and were buried in the town cemeteries or the hospital yards or in Cerneti, about the town-dwellers' donations to the army and the strict regime during the two years of military occupancy. One can't help being moved by the memoirs regarding the sufferings during this period: houses were requisitioned by occupants, devastated and ruined, objects were stolen, people were condemned, abused, insulted, threatened, left to starve. After the retreat of the occupant authorities (in November 1918), things went back to normal and the town administration resumed their duties: ensuring order and public safety, evaluating the damages and taking measures to compensate the prejudiced, supplying food and fuel to the population, rebuilding the institutions, the schools and the damaged parks and gardens, restarting the construction of the theatre, the establishment of the "I. Gh. Bibicescu" Library, honouring the heroes by changing the names of some streets and building some monuments.

One needs to emphasise the true value of this work, which is useful to all researchers but also to anyone who is interested in reading about the town history, and through which Tudor Ratoi and Nicolae Chipurici have introduced important fragments of the Severin archives into the scientific circuit.