

BOOK REVIEW ON

DOCUMENTS OF THE SEVERIN MUNICIPALITY (1911-1915)

AUTHORS: NICOLAE CHIPURICI AND TUDOR RĂȚOI

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A new edition of documentary sources, entitled “Documents of Severin municipality (1911-1915)” has recently been published at Alma Publishing House of Craiova, Romania. This is the fourth volume of a vast collection of documents about the administration of the Drobeta Turnu Severin city, which began to be published since 2005. The authors, Nicolae Chipurici and Tudor Ratoiu, are two Romanian historians well known for their efforts to present important subjects concerning the heritage of the Romanian national archives to the scientific community.



This volume resembles the previous ones as it has an outstanding historical value: it reveals new data and facts, which are important for all researchers and teachers, but also for the simple reader who is interested in the history of these places. The volume comprises 381 documents, presented in chronological order, dating from January 1911 to December 1915, a milestone in the city history, when Constantin Gruescu was the mayor of Turnu Severin. The selected documents reveal the most important achievements concerning the development of the city: the efforts undertaken in order to finance and implement the drinking water supply system from the Danube, the purchase of the land on which the cultural palace „Teodor Costescu” was built, the construction of the crematory in which the city trash was burnt (for the first time in Romania), that of the Small Market House, the new water factory and Tudor Vladimirescu's monument at Cerneți, the modernization of the public halls, the

extension of green spaces in the public garden and all city markets, the paving of the roads, the modernization of the sewerage system, the financial support granted to schools, teachers, students and churches.

When one ruffles through this collection, even through the first volume, which was published three years ago, one feels as if in front of a film on the city history. Every detail comes to life: the signing of the city foundation decree, the rise of the houses, the inns, the little shops, the fairs and the festivals... The fourth volume conveys the same impression to the reader. The first volume presents in 400 pages the first four decades of city life, while the last one depicts only five years, but this period was so intense that the book is just as interesting and spirited. One can see the city metamorphosis: the sewerage and water supply projects, the pavement of the town centre, the squares turning into parks, the conversion – based on Lepri's project - of the area between the main boulevard and the Harbour Road into an English park full of pines, roses, bilberries and ornamental waterfalls; one can see the adornment of the quay each time King Charles the First was expected to arrive... the birth of a market place or a pavilion in the public garden, the city factories springing one by one, the acquirement of the land on which the cultural palace was built; one can see what was sold at the Flowers Festival or on St. Mary's Day; the songs and the plays put on stage each year on the 24th of January; the public garden and the opera performance of a student who will use the tickets money to pay for his education. There's also a Venetian festivity held by The First Regiment Mehedinți: one can see the city-dwellers preparing to celebrate. For instance, the circus came to town every Easter. And then, there's the cinema open for three weeks. Karl Dosenberger restores his ale-house, using ivy gratings, the way he's seen abroad. Vetez Girurdi asks for permission to walk the streets with a two-wheeled piano and a parrot. One can feel the joy and at the same time the sorrow of the people, the problems that they've had to deal with: the ditches on the outskirts, the stray dogs, the typhoid and cholera epidemics, the soldiers perished during the 1913 campaign and the outbreak of the First World War..

Although the volume is a collection of documents – addresses, tables, lists, orders, requests, official reports, notices, appeals, reviews, programs, invitations, letters, telegrams, complaints, notifications, memoirs... - the materials have been selected in such an interesting and innovative way that one has the impression of reading a novel depicting the life of the city.