



## **When strictly confidential becomes researchable**

**Lajos Forró – Anita Mózes:**

**Amikor a szigorúan bizalmas kutathatóvá válik**

(Classified for 67 Years, the Museum of Martonos)

Foundation for Research of the Délvidék (Southern Region),  
Szeged, 2016. 96 p.

The authors aim to fulfill a dual goal with their work, to present the Martonos Museum as well as the victims of the township of Kanizsa. The book is very reminiscent of Srđan Cvetković's<sup>1</sup> similar book both in size and in its illustrations. This is no wonder because that book was also published for the occasion of an exhibition opening and also grew to be more than an exhibition catalog. And it was also quite a success. Apart from this the mentioned book not only aimed to accompany the exhibition, but to present the reader with the historical period itself. Good books should be taken seriously and it is certainly not a problem in *Confidential for 67 Years* that the balance between illustrations and text is different from what we are used to, meaning there are more pictures and these pictures tell a story in and of themselves. Lajos Forró is an expert on the subject, whilst Anita Mózes has begun dealing with the question recently. She writes the prologue which is about the museum. The museum is thematically structured. The first space showcases the partisan movement and its local aspects. The second room is the “Hungarian Room” presenting the period between 1941 and 1944. The third room is dedicated to the Hungarian victims of 1944 and 1945. The next room is the Martonos victim's.

After the Museum Lajos Forró presents the regime change of 1941, this is a story that almost everyone who has dealt with the occurrences is familiar with, however, the author strives to provide precise facts about the losses, which in its own bluntness shows that the numbers game is still going on as the South Slav and Serbian historians speak of 3506 lives, whilst the Hungarians of 1435 (the Hungarian army's loss: 7 officers and 119 soldiers). Then he speaks of those who were expelled. Here, it is worth noting something that the author does not mention, that the population policy was at once the policy of the conquest and one that served the preservation of the regime. They sought to create such a situation in the South Slavic State that left no question regarding the identity of the Vajdaság (Vojvodina), and thus, settling 24 921 people in the region whom the Hungarian authorities wished to evict, but they also wanted to settle 3279 Bukovina Székelys in the Vajdaság. The authors do not analyze the situation in the text as if their goal was to let the simple facts speak for themselves.

We must not leave the the shameful raid<sup>2</sup> of 1942 out of the Délvidék's story. They provide us with precise facts on this as well. The next terrible act was the deportation of the Jews. They were gathered from Magyarkanizsa and Martonos and the loss suffered by the Jewish community was staggering, out of 210 Magyarkanizsa deportees only 189 returned and of the 16 Martonos deportees no-one survived the horrors of Auschwitz. Lajos Forró has published several case studies of personal histories, but in this book Sándor Fejős covers the topic of the Jewish community and takes care to mention the town's chief physician's, Dr. Miksa Dömötör's, tragedy. He was a man active in the scientific community as well as the social sphere who committed suicide in order to escape his fate at the death camp.

On October 17th of 1944 military administration was implemented. The author, presenting a few well chosen quotes, gives us a clear idea of the regime's ideology at the time. Apart from the quotation referenced by Péter Zakar at the beginning of the book, Nikola Petrović calls the Hungarians and Germans a "*horde*". The author presents the decision made about Zsablya, which declared Hungarians to be collectively guilty.

This part of the volume is also richly illustrated, but it is somewhat bothersome that some documents are illegible even though the Zenta Historical Archive has, several years ago, published a book where certain documents can be read clearly. Apart from this, on the 26th page there is clearly a mistake. On a similar note, the picture of the Magyarkanizsa victims of World War II is completely useless as the names are printed with such small letters that they cannot be read.

In the fourth chapter Lajos Forró goes into detail about the partisan documents, which is necessary. He notes which fond he was researching and determines that there is something wrong with the documents. Meaning that the verdict was reached

after the liquidation in the majority of the cases, this was how the Yugoslavian regime justified their heinous actions. The matter of reportings is also confusing, as these in most cases did not contain allegations that were serious enough to warrant the death penalty. But the higher authorities declare those executed to be war criminals. Besides this there are incongruities with the decisions and cartons as well, along with the existence of the liquidation lists. Neither the court documents, nor the execution lists are precise, it is apparent that they were drawn up in a haste.

In the next chapter the author summarizes the contents of the Zenta Historical Archive (in the previous chapters they presented the documents of the Vojvodina Archive). The Zenta Historical Archive's material is relatively well processed, due to Tibor Molnár's thorough work. In chapter 5 the author shows the list documenting the loss of lives from certain townships, these are: Magyarkanisza, Martonos, Horgos and Adorján. In the case of all four towns, the author discusses the Hungarian arrival, the implementation of the administration, the events of war and the following regime change as well as the executions. Apart from this each town has their characteristic details which author discusses, meaning the histories do not entirely follow the same template, even though we can safely say that in 1944 the events were governed by much the same intents.

The book finishes with an exemplary bibliography. This book is recommended to those who would like a brief, simple account and a clear look at the historical events that transpired after the close of World War II in Vojvodina. The book also promises to be especially interesting to those who would like know more about the histories of Martonos, Horgos and Adorján. We can say that in the past quarter century the research on the 1944 events has become a logical, cohesive picture. There may be some missing details here and there, but the quantity and quality of the information makes publishing books such as these possible.

*Zoltán Mészáros*

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Srđan Cvetković: *U ime naroda*. Beograd, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> I do not find the word "raid" to be accurate, a raid is a measure taken by police or the military that is still practiced today. However, the 1942 events were, in my opinion, a raid that escalated to mass murder.