

ABSTRACT

The situation of church properties in Romania

CSENDES, László: On the margin of a conference: Changes in church property ownership in Romania 3

In Romania, in an ever-changing socio-political milieu, the issue of church property ownership remains a pending issue in spite of repeated attempts to deal with it. The discussion of the legal, social and ethical aspects of the topic, as well as the inter-confessional and interdisciplinary presentation of approaches, lent this event, initiated by the Balassi Institute in Bucharest, the character of a dialogue. Participants – historians and lawyers, as well as a number of interested people – deemed it worthwhile to rework, based on the idea of confronting the past *sine ira et studio*, this part of our traumatic past.

Numerous reports prove that the dictatorship did not come to a halt once church property had been nationalised. In fact, on the basis of accusations made at that time, and on the basis of incriminating evidence from the records of the Romanian secret services from an earlier era, conceptual lawsuits were launched that ruined the lives of many an ecclesiastical leader.

Interfaith dialogue on the subject of restitution is the duty of all responsible moral believers, regardless of the legal framework and law enforcement used by the state and the judiciary to resolve the situation. Thinking together always takes us forward in dealing with the historical traumas of denominations. We become much stronger if we bear each other's burdens together, if we get to know each other's strategies in detail in a historical context. This is the way to deal with the temptation of denominational triumphalism. In this manner, our cooperation can become more effective and inspiring for the challenges of the future.

PETCU, Adrian Nicolae: The assets of the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Communist era 8

In the course of the processes of nationalization, the 'socialization of agriculture,' and changes in the legal framework in the years 1948-1949, the system of churches and religious denominations in Romania was radically transformed. The measures taken by the new people's democratic regime were

intended to introduce institutional mechanisms that allowed for excessive control, including the nationalization of church assets. The new legislation was applied on a denominational basis and affected both movable and immovable property. Relying on contemporary sources and the legislation of the era, the study presents the fate and situation of ecclesiastical property under Communism.

MEDIAN, Valeriu: The assets of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church from the perspective of the events of 1948

19

The Romanian Church, United with Rome, Greek-Catholic, is one of the two traditional Romanian churches that played an important role in the development of modern Romanian culture. The church was formed as a result of the unification of a significant part of the Orthodox archdiocesan clergy in the Principality of Transylvania with the Roman Catholic Church. While some believers did not accept the union, most remained faithful to the united bishops. Thus, the data of the 1930 census – the last that can be described as impartial and objectively reflecting reality – show with the help of an unprejudiced statistical toolkit that the majority of Romanians living in Transylvania (31.1% of the population) were Greek Catholics, while Orthodox believers (27.8% of the population) took second place.

After 250 years of serving the faithful and promoting the rise of the Romanian nation, the Greek Catholic Church suffered the same tragic fate as other Greek Catholic churches under Soviet influence did in those days. At Stalin's express instruction, with the generous consent of the leaders of the Romanian Communist Party, the Romanian Greek Catholic Church united with Rome was banned for the duration of the atheist-materialist communist system, from 1948 (Decree No. 358 of 1 December 1949) until the end of December 1989. Church property was transferred for use by the state or the Romanian Orthodox Church. During this period, and especially during the years of Stalinism, Greek Catholic high priests (12 bishops, including a cardinal in pectore), priests, monks, and believers were subjected to severe persecution. These measures were aimed at reducing the influence of the Catholic Church, severing ties with the West, and promoting the Sovietization of Romania.

MARCHUT, Réka: The situation of the Roman Catholic Church in Romania after the First World War.

The Hungarian Catholics in Bucharest

51

As a result of territorial changes following the First World War, a large number of Catholic – mostly Hungarian – believers came under Romanian juris-

diction; until then, Romania had an almost entirely Orthodox population. From the end of the 19th century, the Archdiocese of Bucharest and the Diocese of Iasi had already existed in the Old Kingdom, mainly with Hungarian and German Catholic faithful. However, the position of the Roman Catholic Church was significantly weakened, mainly in connection with the Transylvanian Land Reform Act of 1921, as a result of which church property fell into the hands of the Romanian state. Not only did this mean a loss of economic position, but it also became impossible or much more difficult to maintain church schools.

Until the end of the First World War, Hungarians living in Bucharest (both Catholics and Protestants) were foreign, Austro-Hungarian citizens; their ecclesiastical properties were the property of the Budapest-based St. Ladislaus Society. While for the Hungarians in Bucharest, the end of the First World War did not imply a change of jurisdiction, the property of foreign associations was confiscated by the Romanian state and the interwar period saw a constant struggle to reclaim properties. However, in the absence of an independent ecclesiastical legal status, the Hungarian Catholics in Bucharest did not succeed. Pastoral service in Hungarian was provided to them but they had no ecclesiastical autonomy.

With regard to ecclesiastical real estate, the greatest losses were inflicted in the period between the two world wars because of the above. Virtually by the time the Communist regime was established after World War II, much of the property of the Roman Catholic Church had already been lost. Once the economic position of the church had been weakened, Communists waged an ideological war, attacking the practice of religion by dissolving monastic orders as well as imprisoning and even executing clergy.

**VERESS, Emőd: Remarks on the handling of church real estate
in Romania with special regard to the case of
Székely Mikó High School of Sepsiszentgyörgy**

76

The restitution of real estate owned by religious denominations in Romania was the subject of Government Emergency Ordinance No. 94/2000. Can the property be returned under this legislation and, if so, under what circumstances? Application of the legislation has interpreted the wording of the law restrictively, precisely by imposing restrictive conditions on the text of the law relating to the restitution of immovable property. This application, however, proved to be contradictory in interpreting the notion of 'former owner entitled to restitution'. Although in many cases the issue could be, or has already been, clarified by means of objective historical research, there are courts that

promote anti-restitution attitudes based on forced interpretations. Legislation has not changed, but subjective attitudes have, so the last ten years have been a decade of uncertainty about the delayed application of legislation on the restitution of property owned by churches.

MOLDOVENAU, Camelia: The system of Jewish property in Romania after the Second World War 95

With the Romanization of the Jewish population, a series of legislation was enacted in 1940 that led to the confiscation of movable and immovable property between 1940 and 1944. After the communist regime came to power, the confiscation and nationalization of real estate continued until 1989.

After the 1989 revolution governments took various measures to restitute or compensate for the property of those affected by the aforementioned legislation, but failed to resolve this complicated issue correctly and definitely.

Revisionist 'superstar'

HAJNÁ CZKY, Tamás: Gypsy violinist Károly Bura (1881-1934): From a café in Nagyvárád to the vision of the Gypsy Museum in Budapest 104

He began his musical career as a gypsy primate in Nagyvárád (Oradea), where he soon won the esteem of the audience and was awarded several prizes. When the Great War broke out, he volunteered as a soldier, and founded an Imperial and Royal Gypsy band in the army. He fought heroically on the front lines, and was honourably discharged as a sergeant with several medals on his chest. As a result of the Treaty of Trianon, his hometown was annexed to Romania and he was persecuted and imprisoned by the Romanian authorities for standing up for Hungarians. He was eventually released from prison upon payment of a significant sum, but he was only allowed to relocate to Hungary on condition that he left his estate and house behind. In Budapest, he became the president of the National Association of Gypsy Musicians in Hungary, did a lot for the self-organization of gypsy musicians and founded the first school of gypsy musicians. He made the Association join the Hungarian Revisionist League and sought to establish close relations with other irredentist organizations. In order to protect the interests of gypsy musicians, he organized a strike for Hungarian Radio to offer more favorable conditions to musicians. In his will, he left his estate to a Gypsy Museum to be founded in the future.

Review**FEDINEC, Csilla: Minority rights? Come on! 141**

Csernicskó István – Tóth Mihály: Az anyanyelvi oktatás joga. Közép-európai hagyományok és Kárpátalja példája, Autdor-Shark, Ungvár, 2018

OROSZ, László: New aspects for a bottom-up study of Germans in Hungary 124

A magyarországi németek elmúlt 100 éve. Nemzetiségpolitika és helyi közösségek, szerk.: Eiler Ferenc – Tóth Ágnes, Társadalomtudományi Kutatóközpont – Argumentum Kiadó, Budapest, 2020

Editorial: HU 1055 Budapest, Falk Miksa u. 6.

Phone: +36-1-445-0473, *fax:* +36-1-445-0479

Internet: www.prominoritate.hu

E-mail: redactio@prominoritate.hu