

# Aspects Concerning the Nationalization of Denominational and Private Schools from Bihor County (1948–1949)

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*“We are proud to have been chosen to put our modest efforts in the service of the great reform of our national education.”*

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AS WE know, during the early post-war years Romanian society experienced a series of profound and far-reaching mutations. The establishment of the communist regime, which marked the beginning of Sovietization, was followed, among other things, by a comprehensive process of nationalization, which rapidly and dramatically increased the volume of assets owned directly by the Romanian state and which, according to its initiators, was precisely meant to end the Sovietization process.

One aspect of this process that had most dire consequences was the nationalization of denominational and private schools, amid the general reorganization of the Romanian education system. The legal framework was provided by the legislation regulating education and religious affairs passed in the summer of 1948. Thus, Decree 159 of 22 July 1948 introduced a ban on all schools set up and supported either by a foreign government, or by a foreign institution,<sup>1</sup>

while Ministerial Decision No. 191653 of 2 August 1948 consecrated the government's ownership of those assets formerly belonging to various denominations, congregations, communities, and private individuals, and which had been used by general, technical, or vocational education institutions.<sup>2</sup>

Reform Decree 175 of 3 August 1948 stipulated that education was to become secular and the exclusive province of the state, and that denominational or private schools of any kind should become state property (article XXXV).<sup>3</sup> Published the same day, Decree 176 transferred to the state those assets formerly belonging to various denominations, congregations, communities, and private individuals, and which had been used for education purposes.<sup>4</sup> The provisions of said Decree applied to school buildings, with their complete inventory, including those used as residences by the teaching or administrative staff, as well as the student boarding houses, dormitories, and canteens. It also affected those trust funds reserved for the upkeep or support of educational activities, and the school agricultural farms or other units involved in the upkeep and maintenance of schools, boarding houses, dormitories, canteens, or staff residences. At the same time, Decree 177 of 4 August 1948 regulated the status of religious denominations in the Romanian Popular Republic, failing to grant recognition to the Roman and Greek-Catholic Churches.<sup>5</sup>

Bihor county was home to a large number of denominational and private schools, largely because a sizable fraction of its population belonged to other ethnic groups than the Romanian one. For instance, in 1938, 70% of Oradea's inhabitants belonged to minority groups, while 76 other towns and villages in the county had a non-Romanian majority, which accounted for more than 90% of the population in 41 of them and for practically 100% of the population in 8 cases.<sup>6</sup> In the same year, the county had 95 private denominational schools (60 of the Reformed Church, 31 of the Roman-Catholic one, 3 Mosaic, and one Lutheran), a private school (Notre-Dame de Sion Institute) and 7 kindergartens (5 private denominational and 2 private).<sup>7</sup>

On the 60 Reformed schools, one operated in Oradea and the others in various parts of the county; 50 had Hungarian as the language of instruction, while the others had both Hungarian and Romanian. Seven of the 31 Roman-Catholic schools were located in Oradea, and the others in the rest of the county; 18 had Hungarian as the language of instruction, 10 used both Hungarian and Romanian, one had Romanian, one had both Romanian and Slovak, and one German (Palota). Two of the Mosaic schools, one Neolog and one Orthodox, were found in Oradea, with a third in Beiuș. All of the seven denominational and private kindergartens were located in Oradea, 5 of them belonging to the Roman-Catholic Church (Immaculata, St. Vincent's, St. Joseph's, Ursuline, and Oradea-Velența).

Apart from these private denominational and private schools, Bihor county also had 499 state-run schools—67 kindergartens and 432 elementary schools—a large number of them belonging to the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox Churches (state-run denominational schools).

The teachers for the denominational schools were appointed by the County School Inspectorate at the proposal of the respective denomination, and their students usually belonged to the denomination that managed the school. There were, however, exceptions: of the 39 students enrolled for the 1940–1941 academic year in the Reformed denominational elementary school of Beiuș, only 27 were of the Reformed faith, 11 being Roman-Catholic and 1 a Baptist.<sup>8</sup> Denominational schools drew income from the lands they owned, from the contribution paid to the Church by community members, and from enrollment fees, which was enough to cover the payment of teachers and other necessary expenses.

Decree 176 also included a number of tables, for every county, listing the denominational and private schools of all levels that were to be taken over by the state. For Bihor county, which belonged to the Cluj School District, their number reached 109: 55 of the Reformed Church, 47 Roman-Catholic, 3 Greek-Catholic, 3 Mosaic, and 1 Orthodox—Emanuil Gojdu Theoretical High School of Oradea.<sup>9</sup> Their vast majority, 93 of them, were elementary schools, and the rest were kindergartens, secondary schools, normal schools, high schools, and boarding schools. 29 were located in Oradea: the Roman-Catholic kindergartens Immaculata, St. Vincent's, Ursuline, and Oradea–Velența, the Roman-Catholic elementary schools of Oradea–Olosig, Oradea–Orașul Nou, Oradea–Velența, St. Vincent's, Ursuline, and Immaculata, the Reformed schools 1, 2, and 3, the Evangelical School, St. Vincent's Roman-Catholic secondary school for girls and Zsuzsanna Lorántffi Reformed secondary school for girls, high schools such as Emanuil Gojdu, the Roman-Catholic boys' high school of the Premonstratensian Order, the Roman-Catholic girls' high school, St. Vincent's Roman-Catholic industrial high school for girls and the coeducational Jewish high school, the Greek-Catholic normal school for boys and the Immaculata Roman-Catholic normal school for girls, as well as the Nicolae Jiga boarding school of the homonymous foundation and the Greek-Catholic boarding school. The remaining 80 were found in 59 localities of the county, 16 of them (Aleșd, Biharea, Cetariu, Diosig, Episcopia-Bihor, Marghita, Mișca, Petreu, Sâniob, Săcuieni, Suplacu de Barcău, Târgușor, Tileagd, Tinca, Uileacu de Munte, and Salonta) being home to both Roman-Catholic and Reformed schools.

The list featured in the decree was not complete. Even if it failed to include the vast majority of Greek-Catholic and Orthodox denominational schools, many of them, especially those from Oradea and Beiuș, were nonetheless taken over when the nationalization of schools began. Among them, we find the Theological Academy and the Greek-Catholic Seminary of Oradea, the boys' and girls' Greek-

Catholic high schools of Beiuș, the Orthodox elementary schools of Gepiu and Tâmașda, as well as the Normal School of Institutrices and the Orthodox boarding school from Beiuș. It is hardly possible that their fate had not yet been decided by the time the list was published. Still, it is also true that until April 1948 two School Inspectorates operated in Bihor county, at Beiuș and Oradea, the latter needing some time to take over the whole county after the former had been closed down.

The collection of documents we investigated in the Bihor County Division of the National Archives and which includes a considerable number of volumes allowed us to draw a number of conclusions regarding the manner in which the authorities proceeded with the nationalization of the schools belonging to the Roman-Catholic, Reformed, Mosaic, Greek-Catholic, and Orthodox denominations from Bihor county.

**F**IRST OF all, we see that the takeover occurred between July 1948 and July 1949, in three major stages: 26–28 July 1948, January–February and June–July 1949. The first stage essentially saw the nationalization of Roman-Catholic, Protestant, and Mosaic denominational schools belonging to the ethnic minorities. As the nationalization decrees 175 and 176 had not yet been published, the transfer of assets took place on the basis of Decree 159/1948, of Order No. 4318 of 24 July 1948 issued by the Bihor County School Inspectorate, and as per the instructions sent by the Ministry of Education to those appointed to effect the transfer during the 25 July 1948 Conference held at the County Prefecture.<sup>10</sup> In the following stages, the nationalization took place in keeping with article 51 of Decree 266 of 25 September 1949 regarding the organization of the Ministry of Public Education,<sup>11</sup> with Order No. 1345 of 15 January 1949 issued by the Bihor County School Inspectorate,<sup>12</sup> and with the instructions communicated during the meetings between headmasters and territorial inspectors held in the regional centers on 15–17 January 1949.<sup>13</sup>

It was not by accident that the massive takeovers coincided with the school holidays. Those appointed by the Ministry or by the School Inspectorate to oversee the transfer were themselves members of the teaching staff, professors or schoolteachers. Besides, the absence from schools of students and teaching staff ensured a smooth transfer, made it easier to prepare the inventories and reduced the risk of a reaction coming from the former owners.

Some takeovers also occurred between the aforementioned main stages, according to the nature of the school or to travel arrangements, and therefore we could see the process as a continuing, uninterrupted action. The two elementary schools from Marghita—Reformed and Roman-Catholic—were taken over on 8 October 1948, the Reformed school from Cheșa on 24 November the same year, the Orthodox one from Gurbediu on 31 December 1948, and the Greek-

Catholic school from Mociar was transferred to the state on 15 May 1949. Most of the school buildings located in Oradea, largely owned by the City, were also taken over between April and May of 1949.

In late July 1948, at the request of the Ministry of Public Education, the Bihor School Inspectorate submitted a list of nationalized schools in the county,<sup>14</sup> with the exception of those located in the towns of Oradea, Beiuș, and Salonta, which were featured on separate lists. Of the 82 denominational elementary school located in rural areas, 51 were Reformed,<sup>15</sup> 26 were Roman-Catholic,<sup>16</sup> 3 were Orthodox (Cefa, Bicaciu, and Tămașda), one was Mosaic-Orthodox (Cefa), and one was Greek-Catholic (Satu Negru).

In Oradea, Beiuș, and Salonta, the first stage in the nationalization process brought with it the takeover of 29 denominational education institutions (kindergartens, elementary schools, secondary schools, high schools and boarding schools): 18 in Oradea, 9 in Beiuș,<sup>17</sup> and two elementary schools—Reformed and Roman-Catholic—in Salonta. 21 other education institutions from Oradea were taken over between March and May of 1949: elementary schools nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, and 17, Normal School No. 1 for girls, the technical school of economic administration and its boarding house, Notre-Dame Institute, the boarding house of the boys' Normal School, the Greek-Catholic Seminary, the buildings on Pavel and Karl Marx streets, as well as the "Oancea House," located on Dezső Fehér street, used by one class of elementary school no. 15.<sup>18</sup> Most of these facilities were City property.

The last stage in the transfer of such assets included, as we have already indicated, the schools belonging to the Orthodox Church and located in the rural environment. The takeover was sometimes delayed, as the dispositions sent by the School Inspectorate sometimes reached their destination with considerable difficulty. Mihai Păcală, teacher and headmaster of the elementary school from Căuașd, effected the takeover a month later than originally planned, on 1 March 1949, as the order sent on 29 January 1949 had become lost among other letters received by the mayor's office. On other occasions, such as, for instance, in the case of the Greek-Catholic school from the village of Mociar, the delay was caused by the conversion of the Greek-Catholic population to the Orthodox faith; as the former priest had left the village, there was no one to sign over the assets. There were also situations when the School Inspectorate delayed sending the relevant dispositions, and the schools were taken over in the absence of such documents. Gheorghe Mihoc, headmaster of the elementary school from Girișu Negru, received his orders on 15 May 1949, at a time when he had already taken over the school and the pieces of land belonging to the school. Upon receiving his orders, he inquired as to whether another takeover was necessary. Gheorghe Potlog, the headmaster of the Batăr village school, Ioan Panaite from Miersig, and Dumitru Turla from Oșand requested written dispositions from the School

Inspectorate after having effected the takeover, rendering the action legally null and void. In Cărasău, the land belonging to the Orthodox denominational school was transferred to the Ministry of Public Education as early as 6 June 1948, through a ruling of the Tinca Popular Court that also transferred the ownership over the school buildings.

The transfer of school buildings also included the related assets—courtyards, gardens, farms, arable land, pastures, vineyards—whose total value was quite considerable. The Roman-Catholic high school of the Premonstratensian Order, located in Oradea, had two buildings, both several stories high. One, property of the Order since 1690 and with a total surface of 5,349 square meters, was being used for didactic activities. The other property, just as old, had a surface of 1,919 square meters, and was used by the nuns of the Order of St. Vincent. The same high school owned a hayfield and a vineyard on Calea Izvorului, with a total surface of nearly 3 hectares. The elementary school and the Hebrew high school, property of the Orthodox Jewish community of Oradea, had two buildings: Ulmann Palace, on Mór Fuchs street, and the Girls' School on Cuza-Vodă street, the constructions and the surrounding plots totaling 7,075 square meters. The Immaculata Institute belonging to the homonymous order had three buildings, one on Vyshinsky street, with a surface of 11,505 square meters, and two others on Tudor Vladimirescu street, of 2,145 square meters and 3,185 square meters, respectively. The nationalized fixed assets formerly belonging to St. Joseph's Institute of the Roman-Catholic Bishopric consisted of three buildings, one located on Eminescu street and used as a boarding house, with a surface of 7,211 square meters (construction plus the adjoining plot), a residential one with a surface of 510 square meters and located on Orfelinatului street, and a last one, also used as a residence, located on Béla Breiner street and with a surface of 244 square meters, plus a vineyard that covered 1.5 hectares of land. Both the buildings and the vineyard were featured in real estate records as donations made by various bishops, from József Salamon (1773) to György Kovács (1928), who had donated to the bishopric the residential buildings and the vineyard.

The boarding house of the coeducational Greek-Catholic high school from Beiuș had a constructed area of approximately 16,000 square meters, a farm covering 3.5 cadastral jugera and 14.2 jugera of arable land, while the Orthodox boarding house from the same town had a constructed area of approximately 4,500 square meters, plus vacant plots amounting to roughly 8,000 square meters. Apart from the large constructed area, of approximately 62,000 square meters, Samuil Vulcan Greek-Catholic high school from Beiuș also owned the houses belonging to the Bishop Pavel and Bishop Radu Estates, administered by the Diocesan Chapter and rented out to the teachers of the high-school. An exception was the headmaster, Nicolae Flueraș, exempt from the payment of rent, as the bishopric had considered that “the salary paid by the state was too small.”

Even though they had been significantly damaged during the war, and some of them had only been partially repaired, most of the urban constructions used for educational purposes were suited to the task. They had wiring for electric lighting, plumbing, heating systems; they included cooperatives and school workshops, printing presses, libraries, bakeries, laundries, etc. The building of the Premonstratensian Roman-Catholic high school was “fully suitable for school activities,” according to the takeover documents, while Samuil Vulcan Uniate high school from Beiuș “had industrious teachers who expanded its assets.” The Beiuș Uniate high school for girls had a new building, erected in 1940, featuring a medical office, a gym, a festivity hall, laboratories for physics, chemistry, and natural science, music and drawing rooms. The natural science museum of Emanuil Gojdu high school from Oradea had more than 10,000 pieces, a considerable headache for those who prepared the takeover inventories.

Not all buildings were adequate for didactic purposes. According to a note sent by the Oradea Education Division to the Ministry of Public Education, the two residential buildings belonging to St. Joseph’s Institute and located on Orfelinatului and Béla Breiner street, respectively, were “old, in poor condition, unsuitable for educational activities.” In fact, they had been donated to St. Joseph’s Institute by A. Kren, and the terms of the contract indicated that the institute had to pay a pension to his widow. As this was likely to complicate the tasks of the Ministry, in the aforementioned note the Education Division requested that they be exempt from nationalization and returned to the Roman-Catholic Bishopric, so that the latter could meet its contractual obligations to the widow, Mary Kren.

Very different were the buildings belonging to village schools, most of them made of wood and daub and having one or two classrooms, at most, plus the house of the teacher-headmaster and a few additional facilities: courtyard, flower/vegetable garden, stables and coops, woodshed, hayloft. Their assets sometimes included a pasture, a hayfield, the school’s plot of arable land and that of the teacher, the latter sometimes being quite considerable: 80 hectares for the Diosig school, 16 for that in Cubulcut, 14.6 hectares for the one in Belfir, and 9 hectares for the Sâniob school, all of them Roman-Catholic; 9.5 hectares for the Reformed school of Parhida, 9.5 for the one in Vaida (arable land and hayfield), 8.5 hectares for the Boiu school, 8.08 hectares for the one in Niued. The Orthodox denominational schools held smaller arable plots, first being the school from Gepiș, with 4 hectares, the one from Fonău, with 3.88 hectares, and the one from Olcea, with 3.2 hectares.

Many school buildings had been more or less damaged during the war. The boys’ Roman-Catholic school from Seleuș burned down, leaving just a few walls standing, but the location was deemed appropriate for the construction of a new school. Still, the funds allocated by villages or churches for the repair or construction of schools were far from sufficient. Even furniture was scarce,

and the existing inventory was hardly suitable for didactic activities. Although school cooperatives existed in most town and villages, these were rather modest, poorly organized and considerably hit by the currency devaluation. Under these circumstances, it is little surprising that the value of school buildings—also estimated in the newly denominated currency, as requested in the dispositions concerning the inventorying of state assets—was quite modest. The value of the buildings of Orthodox denominational schools was set at 24,928 lei for the village of Batăr, at 70,000 lei for Holod, at 105,000 lei for Oșand, and at 113,000 for Căpâlna. At the opposite end we find the schools from Foașu, with a value estimated at 1,041,350 lei, and from Căușd, estimated to be worth 992,000 lei. It must be said that the currency value was estimated only for the buildings and the inventory of Orthodox schools, as the fixed and movable assets of Roman-Catholic, Reformed, and Greek-Catholic schools were simply rated as being in good, average, or bad condition, or according to the degree of wear and tear. Some schools were in a really good situation, such as, for instance, the three Reformed schools from Diosig, built in 1930 and 1936 in brick over a stone foundation, or the three Reformed schools from Episcopia-Bihor, merged into one following the nationalization.

A report sent by the Bihor County Inspectorate to the Ministry of Public Education with regard to the situation of Bihor education in the 1947–1948 academic year highlighted, among other things, the dire living conditions of village schoolteachers, who were frequently very isolated and the only educated persons in their respective villages, without any access to newspapers, magazines, books, or radio, and therefore unable to stay in touch with the rapid changes affecting the country.

The takeovers followed a standard procedure. They were the work of a commission, usually comprised of a delegate of the Ministry of Education appointed by the County School Inspectorate, one or two delegates representing the Romanian Workers Party/RWP (county and local organizations), and sometimes delegates sent by the State Security or by the Gendarmerie. The commissions sent to take over the major schools from the urban areas also included delegates of the County Economic Oversight Office or, in the case of rural areas, representatives of the mayor's office. When it came to the denominational schools owned by the village community, the takeover was effected by the school committee, as it happened at Sititelec, Talpoș, or Briheni, and sometimes in the presence of delegates sent by the Hungarian Popular Union, as with the Reformed school from Cheșa.

The commission that took over the coeducational high school from Beiuș, previously part of the Pavelian Estate of the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Oradea, included Géza Walkovsky, the delegate of the Beiuș section of the RWP, I. Munteanu, the delegate of the Oradea section of the RWP, Nicolae Fântânu, representing



the Ministry of Public Education, and I. Deleanu, representing the Beiuș office of the State Security. The commission that took over Emanuil Gojdu high school from Oradea consisted of Professor Emilian Roșescu, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and Mihai Sime, delegated by the RWP organization, the commission from St. Vincent's Roman-Catholic secondary school for girls included Clara Sonnenwirth, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and Lajos Markus, delegated by the RWP organization, while the Institute's kindergarten and elementary school were signed over to a commission consisting of Maria Leitner, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and József Imre, the party representative. The Reformed girls' secondary school and boarding house from Oradea were taken over by a commission consisting of Petru Cicortaș, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and Alexander Markovics, delegated by the RWP organization, and the elementary school and the Hebrew high school were taken over by Gyula Izsák, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and Antal Feldmann, representing the RWP. The boys' pedagogic school of the Greek-Catholic Bishopric was taken over by Victor Rusu, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, and by Dumitru Dumitrescu, delegated by the RWP, Immaculata normal school for institutrices by Adalbert Olmacher, delegated by the RWP, and by Irina Morariu, delegated by the Ministry of Public Education, St. Joseph's Institute by Maria Varga and Alexander Markovics, while Samuil Vulcan high school from Beiuș was handed over to a commission that included Ioan Călugăru, sent by the Ministry, Ladislau Binnnet and Pavel Oală, sent by the Oradea and the Beiuș organizations of the RWP, Octavian Deleanu, representing the State Security, and Ioan Fluța, representing the county Economic Office.

Similar commissions oversaw the handover of elementary schools located in rural areas. The Reformed school from the village of Ghiorac was taken over by a commission consisting of Lajos Csozs, teacher and headmaster of the school, Sándor Jakó, the village mayor, Imre Varga, secretary of the local RWP organization, and schoolteacher Rozália Nagy, while the Roman-Catholic school from Aleșd was taken over by a commission comprised of Zoltán Orbán, sent by the Inspectorate, János Kovács and Ioan Ban, representing the RWP. The Reformed school from Petreu was nationalized by Petru Lazău, RWP delegate, Eugen Catona, delegated by the School Inspectorate, and by Ioan Munteanu, representing the Teachers' Union, the Roman-Catholic school from the same village by Alexander Rosenberg and Márton Ostereich, representing the School Inspectorate, Traian Hurgoiu, sent by the mayor's office, Mary Baronthy, representing the state-run elementary school, and by Tiberiu Braun of the RWP, while the Reformed school from Boiu was nationalized by Teodor Andor, sent by the Inspectorate, accompanied by three party representatives, Ioan Iercan, Károly Simon, and Lajos Nagy.

The schools were handed over by their headmasters, representatives of the respective denominations. In the case of Roman-Catholic, Reformed, and Greek-Catholic schools, most of the headmasters were replaced, and the delegates of the Ministry of Education took provisional charge of the schools. In the case of Orthodox schools located in the rural environment, the handover and the takeover were much simpler, occurring between the delegates of the Church, the village priest, and sometimes the church committee, on the one hand and, on the other, the teachers-headmasters of the schools in question, now delegated by the Ministry/School Inspectorate, who kept their old positions. Sometimes, as with the schools from Căpâlna and Olcea, present were the mayor, the notary, the RWP representative, or the chairman of the Farmers' Union.

The procedure was the same everywhere and was implemented in keeping with the received instructions. After presenting its written dispositions, the commission would place a seal on the telephone, the safe, the offices, the library, the archive, the classrooms, laboratories, etc. Gendarmes guarded the entrance, so that no one could enter or leave the building during the handover. Then, the commission would inventory the fixed and movable assets, and in the case of the major schools this stage actually took several days to complete. Making the inventory was rendered difficult by the absence of old inventories, allegedly on account of the damages caused by the war, even if the Ministry of Public Education, in its Decision 7849 of 20 February 1948 and Order 166369/1948 had requested that all private and denominational schools make and submit by 25 July 1948 a copy of the inventory. The inventories had to include the fixed and the movable assets held and used by the school on 1 September 1947 and those received or taken over after this date, following which no sale or acquisition of assets was permitted without the prior consent of the Ministry of Public Education.<sup>19</sup>

Other difficulties stemmed from the fact that, in view of maintenance work, the furniture had been crammed into the larger rooms, and there were no available specialists who could check the books and accounting records, the specialized laboratories, and the libraries. The latter could be inventoried only after the teachers returned from their holidays, while the safes were sealed and the funds frozen. As libraries were inventoried, they were also "purged" of all remaining chauvinistic, revisionist, fascist, or anti-Semitic books. "Approximately 20,000 volumes have been thrown into a pile that also includes religious books, to say nothing about the fascist press, many examples of which could be found," wrote Adam Cupe, delegated to take over the Premonstratensian high school, in the report submitted to the School Inspectorate on 31 July 1948. In the basement of the boarding house of Zsuzsanna Lorántffi Reformed high school for girls from Oradea, the commission found a closet filled with "purged" books which had not been destroyed. The inventory of the library belonging to Immaculata Institute, used both by the secondary school and by the normal school, was com-

pletely remade, with new catalog numbers and following a new purge conducted under the supervision of the inventory commission. In the space of six long days, working from dawn till dusk, the commission making the inventory of Samuil Vulcan high school from Beiuș managed to discover, in the drawing room, the private correspondence of teacher Ioan Bușița, which it handed over to the RWP organization of Beiuș.

There were very few attempts to hide various assets from the commission. For instance, the headmistress of the Reformed secondary school for girls from Oradea, Erzsébet Galbory, tried to stash away money and food. Also, at St. Joseph's Institute, headmaster Victor Wallner led the commission to one cellar, while the building actually had two. The abuses, however, were quite numerous. Except for the items used during the religious service, all the other assets were requisitioned. Ulmann Palace was nationalized in its entirety, even though the ground floor had never been used for education purposes. The ground floor had hosted Jewish shops, and the Orthodox Jewish Community petitioned the School Inspectorate in order to spare it from nationalization.<sup>20</sup>

Some school buildings belonged to private individuals, who had rented them out. The boarding house of the girls' technical school of economic administration from Oradea belonged to the Boto family estate, that of the Reformed elementary school from Oradea was the property of one István Soós, rented by the Hungarian Popular Union for the school, and that of elementary school no. 1 belonged to László Rimanotzy. The buildings that hosted elementary schools nos. 12, 14, and 17 of Oradea were owned by Floare Lucaci, Béla Ritter, and József Erdélyi, while the building of Notre-Dame de Sion Institute, used by the vocational school of Romanian Rail, belonged to István Lipcsei.<sup>21</sup> The building of the school from Căpâlna was the property of Nicolae Florea, who had purchased it in 1939 from M. Friedmann and had leased it to the school in 1941. The building was listed in the real estate record as belonging to the school following a ruling of the Tinca Popular Court and subsequently nationalized. In Seleuș, where the building of the Roman-Catholic school for boys had been destroyed during the war, they nationalized the house used by the school, property of the Winkler Foundation, as well as the wooden beams and the roof tiles purchased in order to repair the village church.<sup>22</sup>

There were also cases when the handover took place in the absence of the former owners, as it happened with the building of school no. 14 from Oradea whose owner, Béla Ritter, lived in Paris, or with elementary school no. 5 from the same city, where school inspector Ioan Liber signed the inventory over to himself. The same happened at the Roman-Catholic elementary school for girls from Seleuș, where the handover only involved the delegate of the School Inspectorate, schoolteacher Nicolae Negruțiu, and the RWP delegate, Sándor Lőrincz.<sup>23</sup>

The takeovers and the inventories were accompanied by written reports and minutes, usually in five copies, three for the county School Inspectorate, one for the local RWP organization, and one for the school archive. Their investigation allows us to identify the commissions that took over each of these schools, the inventory of fixed and movable assets that were nationalized, the responses to the process—often in the form of fake enthusiasm or of resignation in front of an unavoidable fate—, the thoroughness and the dedication with which the commissions make the inventories, listing even the most insignificant of items.

**T**HE MINUTES and the reports of the commissions that took over the schools in question indicate that the authorities never feared a reaction coming from the dispossessed, the latter generally receiving the news with resignation. Article 37 of Decree 175, which stated clearly that those who would in any way attempt to obstruct the takeover would be sentenced to between 5 and 10 years of hard labor and have their assets confiscated,<sup>24</sup> ensured that the process proceeded unimpeded. “On the historic occasion of the nationalization of denominational schools”—stated the report submitted to the Inspectorate by Dumitru Vanea and Mihai Şuteu, who had overseen the takeover of the Greek-Catholic Seminary from Oradea—“the administration of the aforementioned institution demonstrated complete understanding, cooperation, and goodwill. No instances of animosity or opposition were noticed.”<sup>25</sup> The representatives of the Reformed Church Community from Oradea, Károly Kiss, chairman and priest, and Lajos Szabó, chairman of the school council, “demonstrated complete understanding during the takeover” of Reformed school nos. 1, 2, and 3 from the city, according to those who had nationalized the schools, I. Bancsic, delegated by the Ministry of Education, and Ferenc Nagy, the RWP delegate.<sup>26</sup>

No incidents are mentioned, but it is difficult, if not downright impossible, to imagine that the representatives of the various church communities were pleased with the nationalization, as some reports suggest. Equally unrealistic is the statement whereby the takeover was effected “in a fair manner, . . . humanely and justly,” as it is stated in the report signed by the commission which nationalized Immaculata normal school of Oradea.<sup>27</sup> Most likely, to quote the report concerning the nationalization of the Beiuş Greek-Catholic boarding house for boys, “they understood the situation,” surrendering everything and putting up no resistance whatsoever.

Some proved to be quite eager, offering their full assistance to the commissions, but others showed quiet opposition. According to the aforementioned report, while the commission was inventorying the assets of the Beiuş Greek-Catholic boarding house, the “Assumptionist” monks who managed the facility, led by father Bernard Ştef, “remained isolated in the house.” Furthermore,

at the Roman-Catholic school for girls from Aleșd, the teacher nuns refused to sign the inventory, which did nothing to prevent the takeover.

On the opposite side, that of the takeover commissions, we see mild enthusiasm and satisfaction with a job well done, but there were also some exaggerated reactions. “We are proud to have been chosen to put our modest efforts in the service of the great reform of our national education. Knowing that we have indeed done our duty, we thank the distinguished Government and the Central Committee of the Romanian Workers Party for the trust they put in our modest abilities,” states the report signed by Stephen Neim and Emerich Blau, members of the commission which nationalized the Roman-Catholic elementary school for boys from the village of Seleuș.

□

## Notes

1. *Repertoriul general al legislației în vigoare publicată pînă la data de 1 ianuarie 1957, pe materii-cronologic-alfabetic* (Bucharest: Ed. Științifică, 1957), 541.
2. *Colecțiune de legi, decrete și decizii*, vol. 26, 1948, 1–31 August (Bucharest: Ed. de Stat, 1948), 1779.
3. *Monitorul oficial*, no. 177, 3 August 1948: 6323–6324.
4. *Ibid.*, 6324.
5. *Colecțiune de legi, decrete și decizii*, 1778.
6. National Archives, Bihor County Division (hereafter cited as NABCD), fund *Revizoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 11, f. 146–147.
7. *Ibid.*, file 12, f. 150–153.
8. *Ibid.*, file 20, f. 104.
9. *Monitorul oficial*, no. 177, 1948: 6324.
10. NABCD, fund *Inspectoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 68, f. 109.
11. *Monitorul oficial*, no. 221, 27 September 1948: 7833–7836.
12. NABCD, fund *Inspectoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 124, f. 163.
13. *Ibid.*, file 124, f. 247.
14. *Ibid.*, file 75, f. 331–347.
15. Albiș, Ant, Arpășel, Balc, Biharea, Boiu, Borș, Buduslău, Cadea, Cauaceu, Ceica, Cetariu, Cherechiu, Cheț, Ciocăia, Cubulcut, Episcopia-Bihor, Finiș, Ghiorac, Mișca, Niuved, Niuved-Cătun, Olosig, Oșorhei, Paleu, Parhida, Petreu, Poșolaca, Remetea, Roșiori, Săcuieni, Săldăbagiu de Munte, Sâniob, Sânnicolaul de Munte, Santăul Mare, Santăul Mic, Sântion, Satu Negru, Sișterea, Suplacu de Barcău, Tămașda, Tămașeu, Târcaia, Târgușor, Tileagd, Tinca, Uileacu de Beiuș, Uileacu de Criș, Uileacu de Munte, Urvind and Vaida.
16. Aleșd, Belfir, Beliu, Biharea, Cefa, Ceica, Cetariu, Diosig, Episcopia-Bihor, Gurbediu, Mișca, Oșorhei, Palota, Petreu, Săcuieni, Sâniob, Șauaieu, Seleuș—with two schools,

one for boys and one for girls, Târgușor, Tărian, Tăutelec, Tileagd, Tinca, Uileacu de Munte.

17. Samuil Vulcan Greek-Catholic high school for boys, the Greek-Catholic high school for girls, the Orthodox boarding school for boys, the Orthodox boarding school for girls, the Greek-Catholic boarding school for boys, the Pavelian Greek-Catholic boarding school for girls, the Reformed and Roman-Catholic elementary schools.
18. NABCD, fund *Inspectoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 91, f. 1–300.
19. *Buletinul Inspectoratului Școlar Regional Român Cluj*, no. 23–24, 14 July 1948: 7.
20. NABCD, fund *Inspectoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 68, f. 607.
21. *Ibid.*, file 91, f. 13, 21, 160, 191, 253 and 260.
22. *Ibid.*, file 75, f. 221–222.
23. *Ibid.*, file 75, f. 231.
24. *Monitorul oficial*, no. 177, 1948: 6324.
25. NABCD, fund *Inspectoratul Școlar Bihor*, file 91, f. 145.
26. *Ibid.*, file 68, f. 178.
27. *Ibid.*, file 68, f. 646.

## Abstract

Aspects Concerning the Nationalization of Denominational and Private Schools from Bihor County (1948–1949)

The nationalization process which began on an unprecedented scale in the early postwar years did not spare the education institutions under private or ecclesiastical administration. In Bihor county, the nationalization proceeded in three stages: 26–28 July 1948, January–February, and June–July 1949. First to be nationalized were the Roman-Catholic and the Reformed schools, followed by those of the Greek-Catholic and of the Orthodox denominations. Numerous documents present in the county archives come to shed light on the nature of the various assets that were nationalized, on the standard procedure employed, and on the membership of the commissions which implemented the nationalization directives. Also, the reports submitted by these commissions suggest that the responses to the process ranged between false enthusiasm and resignation or tacit opposition.

## Keywords

nationalization of schools, Bihor county, Roman-Catholic schools, Greek-Catholic schools, Reformed schools, Orthodox schools