



Guest Workshop
Law and Diversity: Legal Categories and Identity

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Economic Justice after Genocide:

Restitution of Jewish Property in Post-Holocaust Bucharest, 1944-1950

Abstract

My research project explores the reversal of the Romanianization (local equivalent of Nazi Aryanization) of Jewish property in Bucharest during the first post-Holocaust years (1944-1950), including the responses of bureaucrats, gentile beneficiaries, and Jewish community and individual Jews. Overall, restitution proved to be a difficult and problematic process involving Jewish survivors, individual profiteers, and political and social groups. Although the new regime formally repealed previous racial legislation rather rapidly, mainly due to foreign policy considerations, reversing its effect did not go smoothly. Romanianization profiteers and various antisemitic groups opposed the restitution of real estate and businesses. The countermand process was also affected by war destruction, lack of registers, contradictory court decisions, and insufficient personnel in Romanianization agencies. In spite of these obstacles, the Jewish litigation and petitioning campaign was largely successful in the short term and many survivors recuperated their houses and businesses. However, this was a short-lived victory, and many Jews lost their properties due to the nationalization policies implemented by the postwar communist regime in 1948 and 1950.