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Gabriel Moisa • Sorin Șipoș

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**Gruia Fazecaș • Florina Ciure • Ioan Goman
Cornel Abrudan • Ioan Ciorba**

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ABOUT THE BIHOR COUNTY PARTY NOMENKLATURA IN 1989

Gabriel MOISA*
Andreea Maria POP**

ABSTRACT

The study aims to capture, as in a photograph, the Bihor communist nomenclature of 1989. It was a very well-structured, all-encompassing one, and one that was preparing to lead Bihor “to the highest peaks of culture and civilization”. The events of December 1989 seemed to sweep these structures from the forefront of social, political, economic, cultural, educational life, etc. It has been proven over time that this did not happen, but they very well occupied the new national landscape after 1989.

Therefore, we believe we are not far off the mark when we state that the Bihor County/local leadership consisted of members of the R.C.P. (in Romanian P.C.R.) County Political Bureau and the R.C.P. County Committee, as well as party activists from Oradea or smaller towns, from communes, or from basic organizations within various institutions. It also included members of other county-level bodies, such as the Inter-County Party School. All of them were deeply committed to the political party to which they belonged, as their privileges depended on the party's continued existence. Furthermore, they were paid for their political work, and their positions entailed responsibilities of varying degrees of complexity. They represented, in fact, “the ideological elite of communist systems, the body tasked with developing and propagating socialist values”. Practically, these were the regime's “loyalists” in Bihor, being - as previously mentioned - remunerated to ensure the perpetuation of the system.

Keywords: Nomenklatura, communism, Bihor, Romania, ideology, politics

Apart from the major nomenklatura of the Romanian communist state, there was also a category of county/local privileged elites, less important relative to the central one, yet well-defined and closely connected to the regime's benefits—benefits that were invisible to the majority of the population. On the vertical axis of Romanian communist nomenklatura, this group was situated at the lower end, yet enjoyed perks nearly similar to those of the central elite. The privileged individuals of Bihor County under communism, much like those in other counties, effectively ensured the regime's operation, serving as the apparatus that controlled even the recruitment of new members into this category in order to perpetuate the dictatorship.

Based on one of the definitions of the term “nomenklatura”, according to which “*the ensemble of nominal and confidential lists containing positions of responsibility within communist society, as hierarchically established by the Party, constituted the Nomenklatura*,”¹ and based on the discovery in the Oradea archives of lists containing the decision-makers and officials of the county organization of the Romanian Communist Party, as revealed at the Bihor County Conference of Communists in November 1989, we can say that among them were members of the county/local nomenklatura².

The lists included several individuals in the autumn of 1989. Even if they are not described by the official term of nomenklatura - as they appear, for example, in official documents that refer directly to it³ - they were the party's local privileged elite, key figures of the communist state holding political, administrative, economic, cultural-scientific positions, as well as roles within mass organizations, etc., who held fundamental decision-making power for the functioning of the regime at the county level.

* Țării Crișurilor Museum Oradea – Museum Complex, University of Oradea; e-mail: gabimoisa@hotmail.com.

** Țării Crișurilor Museum Oradea – Museum Complex; e-mail: andreea.pop87@yahoo.com.

¹ Raluca Groșescu, *Fizionomia nomenclaturii [The Physiognomy of the Nomenklatura]* in *Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc [Yearbook of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile]*, 2022, p.112.

² National Archives. Bihor County Branch, inv. 1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor [Bihor R.C.P. County Committee]*, fond 1022, file. 324-331; *Ibidem*, inv.1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 5, 1989, unnumbered (hereinafter: A.N.S.J.Bh.).

³ Florin Constantiniu, *Geneza nomenclaturii comuniste [The Genesis of the Communist Nomenklatura]*, in *Dosarele istoriei*, no. 4, 1996, p. 58; Raluca Groșescu, *Fizionomia nomenclaturii [The Physiognomy of the Nomenklatura]*, in *Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc [Yearbook of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile]*, 2022, p. 135-140.

Of course, some of them belonged to the category of those institutionally defined by the regime as part of the nomenklatura, but at the local level, all of them were among the system's privileged elites. Among the positions listed in the late autumn of 1989 in Bihor County and classified in official documents as belonging to the category of "full-time"⁴ nomenklatura members, we note the First Secretary of the Bihor County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (R.C.P., in Romanian P.C.R.) and the members of the Bihor County R.C.P. Committee's Bureau, the President of the Executive Committee of the Regional People's Council, the commander of the army in Oradea, the head of the county Militia and the heads of the institution's operational departments, the head of the county Security Directorate, the chief of staff to the county party secretary, the deputy heads of sectors, the heads of services, the territorial instructors of the Propaganda and Agitation Section, the first secretaries and second secretaries of the city party committees, the editors-in-chief of the county cultural magazines, the editors-in-chief of the regional newspapers, the chief regional prosecutors, the presidents of the County Courts, the president of the Military Region Tribunal, the heads of departments and sectors at the regional party committees, the director of the Oradea Inter-County Party School, secretaries of city party committees, secretaries of committees at major enterprises, construction sites and university centers, vice-presidents and secretaries of regional mass organizations, vice-presidents and secretaries of the executive committees of the County People's Council, directors of the theater, the museum, and the philharmonic in Oradea.

In addition to these, the lists included people who held positions within the communist system's power structures and were well connected to the regime's privileges. They were the system's trusted figures, co-opted into the Bihor County Party Committee. The committee consisted of 95 members, with another 46 serving as alternates⁵, for a total of 141 people. Added to them, in that snapshot, were another 140 people classified as "*the group of propagandists of the County Party Committee*"⁶. Thus, in the autumn of 1989, 281 citizens of Bihor held positions and enjoyed privileges specific to the totalitarian communist regime.

Members of the County Party Committee⁷

1	Bărbos Eugenia	President of the County Committee for Culture and Socialist Education
2	Bei Silvia	Knitwear production foreman, deputy secretary of the Party Committee, Miorița knitwear enterprise, Oradea
3	Beleneși Teodor	Foreman, Secretary of the Party Committee, County Directorate of Post and Telecommunications
4	Berinde Dumitru	Secretary for Economic Affairs of the County Party Committee
5	Binșeleian Mihail	Secretary for Agricultural Affairs of the County Party Committee
6.	Bocșe Flore	President of the C.A.P. Călăcea
7	Bodnar Margareta	Peasant woman, secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Curtuișeni
8	Bonta Traian	Director, General Construction and Assembly Enterprise Trust
9	BörColoman	President, C.A.P. Borș
10	Bulinschi Gheorghe	Director, Aleșd Binder and Asbestos-Cement Plant
11	Caba Maria	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, "Solidaritatea" Enterprise Oradea
12	Capizisu Marin	Director General, County General Directorate for Agriculture Bihor
13	Căuș Ana	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, Wood Processing Complex, Oradea
14	Ciordaș Nistor	First Vice-President of the Executive Committee of the County People's Council
15	Ciupe Victoria	Peasant woman, secretary of the Bureau of the Basic Organization, C.A.P. Avram Iancu
16	Ciurtin Gheorghe	Director, Dr. Petru Groza city Mechanical Enterprise
17	Cosma Horia Voicu	Director, Mechanical and Spare Parts Enterprise, Oradea
18	Cristina Mina	Lead technician, secretary of the Party Committee, Construction Materials Enterprise, Oradea
19	Csete Mihai	Senior foreman, member of the Party Committee Bureau, Mechanical Enterprise, Oradea
20	Csucsuj Paraschiva Elisabeta	Secretary for Social Affairs of the County Party Committee
21	Curta Florian	Locksmith, secretary of the Party Committee at the CFR Oradea Depot

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ A.N.S.J.Bh., inv. 1285, *Comitetul județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 1, f. 324-331.

⁶ *Idem*, inv.1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 5, 1989, unnumbered.

Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor, fond 1022, inv. 1285, file 1, f. 324-331.

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22	Czégé Alexandru	President of C.A.P. Salonta
23	Danciu Gheorghina	President of the County Council of Trade Unions
24	Dascălu Carmen Elena	First Secretary of the U.T.C. County Committee
25	Degău Ioan	Director, County Branch of the National Bank
26	Derer Ferenc	Editor-in-Chief, <i>Fáklya</i> newspaper
27	Dubei Iuliana	Secretary of the Party Committee and Mayor of Salonta town
28	Filip Gheorghe	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee "Electrocentrale" Enterprise, Oradea
29	Florea Floarea	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, "Arta" Footwear Enterprise, Oradea
30	Fodor Valentin	Party organizer, president of C.U.A.S.C., Valea lui Mihai
31	Fürtös Emil	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, Mechanical and Spare Parts Enterprise, Oradea
32	Gali Gheorghe	Secretary of the Party Committee, Spare Parts Factory, Salonta
33	Ghiuca Maria Firoanda	President of U.J.C.A.P.
34	Ghiula Vasile	Foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Oil and Gas Production Platform, Marghita
35	Gligor Gheorghe	Vice President of the Executive Committee of the County People's Council Bihor
36	Groza Butiri Ioan	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, Șuncuiș Mine
37	Groza Gheorghe	First secretary of the Party Committee and Mayor of Oradea town
38	Gruie Silvia	Team Leader, secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Buntești
39	Hebriștean Teodor	Director, Suplacu de Barcău Oil Production Platform
40	Hințiu Vasile	President, C.A.P. Drăgănești
41	Horga Iosif	Mining foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Dobrești Mining Enterprise
42	Ianceu Cornel	Electrician, secretary of the Party Committee at the Electrical Grid Enterprise, Oradea
43	Jakab Edit	Director, "Drum Nou" Textile Enterprise, Oradea
44	Jakab Irina	Peasant woman, secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Diosig
45	Kiss Ileana	Foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Garment Manufacturing Enterprise, Marghita
46	Kovács Ludovic	Teacher, No. 5 High School, Oradea; President of the Council of Romanian Workers of Hungarian Nationality
47	Laza Gheorghe	Director, Oradea Agrozootechnical Research Station
48	Laza Ioan	Instructor for the County Party Committee and correspondent for the <i>Scînteia</i> newspaper
49	Lazăr Aurica	Plastics operator, deputy secretary of the Party Committee, "Viitorul" Plastics Enterprise, Oradea
50	Liptak Iuliana	Footwear Maker, secretary of the Party Committee, "Crișul" Leather and Footwear Enterprise, Oradea
51	Maghiar Teodor	Dean, Sub-Engineers Institute, Oradea
52	Malița Maximilian	Electrician, secretary of the Party Committee "Alumina" Enterprise, Oradea
53	Manciu Aurelia-Ana	President of the County Women's Committee, consultant-instructor at the County Office for ideological and political-educational Activity
54	Marc Vasile	Mechanical foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, S.M.T. Tileagd
55	Mathe Iosif Alexandru	"Sinteza" Chemical Enterprise Oradea
56	Mateăș Elena	President C.A.P. Homorog
57	Mateăș Traian	President C.A.P. Tinca
58	Maxim Gheorghe	Director, Garment Manufacturing Enterprise, Oradea
59	Mintaș Ioan	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee I.J.G.C.L.
60	Moga Niculina	General inspector, County School Inspectorate
61	Moza Vasile	President of the County Party Committee
62	Mușuroaia Gheorghe	Head of Bihor County Inspectorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs
63	Onița Dumitru	Electro mechanic, C.T. 3 C.F.R. Oradea
64	Pantea Floare	Livestock technician, secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Holod
65	Pătruică Emil	Director, Voivozi Mining Enterprise
66	Peli Ilona Gyöngy	Team Leader, secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Săcuieni
67	Pescaru Ana	Secretary of the Party Committee, C.A.P. Vadu Crișului
68	Petrea Ioan	Chief Inspector, State Territorial Inspectorate for Labor Protection

69	Pintea Floare	Locksmith, secretary of the Party Committee, "Metalica" Enterprise, Oradea
70	Pop Ioan	President, C.A.P. Sântandrei
71	Popa Dumitru	Foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Remeți Hydroelectric Construction Enterprise Brigade
72	Popa Ioan	Director, Sanitary Veterinary Directorate
73	Popovici Viorica	Quality control inspector, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Beiuș Furniture factory
74	Pusta Maria	Commercial worker, secretary of the Party Committee, State Commercial Enterprise for Food Products
75	Sălăjan Floare	Head of the propaganda department, County Party Committee
76	Săndulescu Ana	Secretary for propaganda affairs of the County Party Committee
77	Seracin Ioan	Director, Agricultural mechanization trust
78	Sorcoiu Andrei	First Secretary of the County Party Committee
79	Stana Vasile	Foreman, secretary of the Party Committee, Dr. Petru Groza City mining operation
80	Suciu Maria	Peasant woman with her own farm, Bratca Commune
81	Szabo Emeric	Director, I.A.S. Trust
82	Szaniszlai Iuliu Iosif	Vice president, C.A.P. Ciumeghiu
83	Szilagyi Ștefan	Secretary of Party Committee and Mayor of Biharia Commune
84	Șaitoș Viorica	Chief Prosecutor, County Prosecutor's Office
85	Șchiopu Nicolae	Commander of the Oradea Garrison
86	Stancu Gheorghe	Commander of the Oradea Border Guard Brigade
87	Sora Gheorghe	Head of the Organizational Department of the County Party Committee
88	Tarcea Alexandru	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Oradea Industrial Construction Enterprise
89	Trifan Gavril	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Marghita Machine Tool Enterprise
90	Țeț Emil	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Enterprise for Subassemblies and Parts for Transportation Vehicles, Oradea
91	Țârle Elisabeta	Peasant woman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, C.A.P. Chișlaz
92	Ungur Ionel	Director, "Înfrățirea" Enterprise Oradea
93	Vlădescu Eleonora	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Electrometal Enterprise Oradea
94	Vulturar Ioan	Secretary for organizational affairs of the County Party Committee
95	Zărnescu Viorica Marta	Head of Department, Secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, County Design Center

Alternate members of the County Party Committee⁸

1	Alexandru Andrițoiu	Editor-in-Chief of <i>Familia</i> magazine
2	Badon Elena	Peasant woman, C.A.P. Suplacu de Barcău-Balc
3	Balog Floare	Peasant woman, secretary of Party Committee, C.A.P. Popești
4	Benedek Rozalia	Peasant woman, member of the Bureau of the Commune Party Committee, C.A.P. Finiș
5	Bitea Floare	Preparer, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Oradea Milk Processing Enterprise
6	Bodea Margareta	President, C.A.P. Rieni-Lazuri
7	Bonațiu Dumitru	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, "Avântul" Enterprise, Oradea
8	Bradea Florica	Commercial worker with inventory management responsibilities, secretary of Party Committee, I.C.S. Textiles - Footwear
9	Carțiș Maria	Commercial worker, secretary of Party Committee, Milling and Bakery Enterprise, Oradea
10	Cătană Teodor	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Glassware Enterprise from Pădurea Neagră
11	Chindlea Ioan	Laboratory technician, secretary of Party Committee, Palota State Enterprise for Pig Breeding and Fattening
12	Chirodea Maria	Livestock technician, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Oradea Poultry Enterprise

⁸ *Ibidem.*

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13	Crainic Silvia	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Beer, Alcohol, and Yeast Enterprise Oradea
14	Dărăban Victoria	Fur tailor, secretary of Party Committee, "1 st of May" Fur Enterprise Oradea
15	Dobrin Angela	President U.J.C.M. Oradea
16	Duma Radu Marcel Teodor	Director, Motor Transport Enterprise
17	Florința Ilie	Electrician, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Băița-Nucet Marble Quarry
18	Furlan Petru	Ferman, secretary of Party Committee, Aleșd Refractories Enterprise
19	Gîrba Grigore	Deputy Brigade Chief, secretary of Party Committee, Oradea Installation and Assembly Enterprise
20	Iacob Aurel	Foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Vașcău Marble Factory
21	Iacob Aurel	Technician, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, I.J.T.L. Oradea
22	Iovan Vasile	Foreman, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee, I.T.A. Bihor
23	Iuonoi Ioan	Mechanical foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, I.A.S. Valea lui Mihai
24	Isac Neculai	Chief of Staff of the Patriotic Guards
25	Kupas Andrei	Vicepresident C.A.P. Buduslău, member of the Communal Party Committee
26	Lakatos Rodica	Mechanical harvester, secretary of Party Committee, "Crișana" Printing Enterprise Oradea
27	Lazăr Ioan	Presiding Judge, Bihor County Court
28	Lucaciu Maria	Brigadier, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, C.A.P. Sîmbăta
29	Malița Maria	Peasant woman with her own farm, member of the Communal Party Committee Vîrciorog
30	Matei Floare	Weaver, secretary of Party Committee, "Crișana" Textile Enterprise Oradea
31	Mesaros Dumitru	Mechanical Locksmith, secretary of Party Committee, Sugar Beet Processing Enterprise Oradea
32	Mihincău Maria	Quality control inspector, Deputy Secretary of the Party Committee, Meat Processing Enterprise Oradea
33	Moisin Irina	President, C.A.P. Măgești
34	Morariu Alexandru	Electrician, secretary of Party Committee, I.U.G.T.C. Oradea
35	Muntean Maria	Horticultural worker, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Oradea Greenhouse Enterprise
36	Ogășanu Dumitru	The Head of the Bihor County Securitate
37	Papp Silvia	Secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, C.A.P. Suplacu de Barcău-Balc
38	Samașca Ioan	Milling machine operator, secretary of Party Committee, Beiuș Machine Tool Factory
39	Seican Floare	Weaver, secretary of Party Committee, Salonta Cotton Weaving Mill
40	Șipoș Elena	Peasant woman, secretary of Party Committee, C.A.P. Ciurmeșiu
41	Talabur Floare	Foreman, secretary of Party Committee, Knitwear Section, Dr. Petru Groza Town of the "Miorița" Enterprise
42	Telente Gheorghe	Head of the County Militia
43	Todincă Ioan	President, C.A.P. Bătar
44	Tușinovschi Iosif	Peasant with his own farm in Șinteu Commune, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization
45	Ursu Vasile	Commander of the Oradea Military Center
46	Vereș Teodor	Foreman, secretary of the Bureau of the basic organization, Cefa Repair Center

Investigating the documents in the local archives, we find the same national cross-sections, albeit on a slightly smaller scale, when discussing the nomenclatura. The debate initiated here reveals the existence – at the county and local levels as well – of the same type of regime-privileged individuals. Thus, we find there both those privileged by the party and those privileged by the state, those in the Army and the Securitate, within mass organizations, as well as those in the economic sphere and in the cultural and scientific space⁹.

⁹ Raluca Groșescu, *Fizionomia nomenclaturii [The Physiognomy of the Nomenclatura]*, in *Anuarul Institutului de Investigare a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc [Yearbook of the Institute for the Investigation of Communist Crimes and the Memory of the Romanian Exile]*, 2022, p. 125-128.

Therefore, we believe we are not far off the mark when we state that the Bihor County/local leadership consisted of members of the R.C.P. County Political Bureau and the R.C.P. County Committee, as well as party activists from Oradea or smaller towns, from communes, or from basic organizations within various institutions. It also included members of other county-level bodies, such as the Inter-County Party School. All of them were deeply committed to the political party to which they belonged, as their privileges depended on the party's continued existence. Furthermore, they were paid for their political work, and their positions entailed responsibilities of varying degrees of complexity. They represented, in fact, "the ideological elite of communist systems, the body tasked with developing and propagating socialist values"¹⁰. Practically, these were the regime's "loyalists" in Bihor, being – as previously mentioned – remunerated to ensure the perpetuation of the system.

The Bihor County state nomenklatura included the county's state institutions, such as the county and local administrations, the prosecutor's office, etc. Here we find the regime's "technocrats". However, things evolved here as well, because while in the first part of Romania's communist regime these positions were accessible to people without specialized studies or with limited professional training, in the second part – especially during Nicolae Ceaușescu's years – these positions began to be filled by university graduates with specializations appropriate to their posts. This category often found itself at odds with the party nomenklatura because, as time went on, it became aware of the impasses into which Romanian society was falling. This was a consequence of the unrealistic plans required to be put into practice by the party nomenklatura¹¹.

The nomenklatura of the Army, Militia, and Securitate constituted the repressive pillar of communist power, a fact that remained relevant throughout the 45 years of communism, including in December 1989. These were the structures upon which the Romanian Communist Party relied to secure control over the entire society, and when necessary, they resorted to repression following the orders of the communist party. At the county level in Bihor, this nomenklatura was found within these institutions, primarily in their leadership positions. However, other members of the aforementioned structures were also, in turn, beneficiaries of privileged positions in society.

The nomenklatura of mass organizations refers to the leadership of trade unions and numerous unions, professional associations, national minority unions, women's associations, etc. Their leadership was highly politicized, having the sole purpose of implementing party policies in practice. They were conceived as organizations that, in one way or another, encompassed the entire population of Romania, being completely subordinate to the communists.

The economic nomenklatura of Bihor County was very powerful due to the implications generated by its activities. It included the leadership of industrial enterprises, agricultural production cooperatives, state-owned agricultural enterprises, banks, and other economic entities. It was closer to the state nomenklatura because it also addressed the management of contradictions between the theoretical plans set forth by the party nomenklatura and their implementation in practice. Very often over the years – in our case, 1989 – its members found themselves in very complicated situations, balancing between maintaining their privileges and acknowledging the economic realities of an economy on the brink of collapse. In the case of Bihor, the year 1989 was illustrative from this perspective, with some of the directors choosing, as will be seen, to call a spade a spade even if this put their positions in jeopardy¹². This indeed happened only in the summer and autumn of 1989.

The cultural and scientific nomenklatura of Bihor is the hardest to "capture" in a still frame. As part of a system designed to safeguard the ideological health of society, it was, in fact, at the "core" of the regime's efforts to indoctrinate the population. Aligned with the party nomenklatura, she would serve as its second-in-command in many of the communist regime's propaganda activities in Bihor. This group included the leadership and heads of the county's cultural institutions and the education sector, as well as the entire local mass media. Its members were generally university-educated individuals capable of meeting the ideological, political, propagandistic, and manipulative needs of the population as demanded by the party.

We will encounter all of them in the pages below, deeply involved in their primary task: collaborating to preserve the communist regime. Of course, it falls to the historian – often a thankless task – to bring the events to light with *sine ira et studio*, as they actually occurred and to the extent that is humanly possible.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 125-126.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 126.

¹² A.N.S.J.Bh., inv.1285, fond 1022, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, file 1, f. 245-297.

The year 1989, marked by political events at both the local and national levels, brought the county/local nomenklatura into much sharper focus. Most members of this nomenklatura had passed through the regime's ideological filters, both at the central and local levels. In fact, Leonte Răutu, the longest-serving rector of the "Ștefan Gheorghiu" Academy of Social and Political Sciences (1972–1981), concluded that once at the helm of party, state, military, cultural, or economic structures, "*every leadership cadre, regardless of the specialized field in which they carry out their activity, is, first and foremost, a revolutionary militant, a political figure who acts steadfastly for the implementation of the internal and international policy of the R.C.P., demonstrates boundless devotion to the party, to the motherland, to our socialist nation, and applies in practice the principles of socialist ethics, equity, and socialist humanism*"¹³.

In the autumn of 1989, however, there were still a few leading representatives of the Bihor Communists who can be considered part of the major national nomenklatura, such as those nominated at the Bihor County Conference of the Romanian Communist Party on November 8, 1989, as candidates for the central bodies of the Romanian Communist Party at the 14th Congress, which was set to take place in Bucharest from November 20–24, 1989. They were Andrei Sorcoiu, Gheorghe Groza, Nistor Ciordaș, Csucsuj Paraschiva Elisabeta, Czégé Alexandru, Gheorghina Danciu, Iuliana Liptak, Rudolf Vladimir Oros, Emil Pătruică, Nicolae Șchiopu, Sorin Ungur, Gheorghe Vesa, and Ioan Vulturar. They were representatives of the Bihor organization of the R.C.P. who were to be elected to various central party bodies, thus placing themselves close to the top of the communist power pyramid in Romania¹⁴.

As we could observe, in Bihor there was a somewhat broader circle of those actively involved in the ideological-political sphere. Alongside those nominated to enter the central sphere of decision-making, at the local level, those in the second category played a decisive role in maintaining control over, guiding, and overseeing society.

Assuming what historian Florin Abraham also argued, it can be stated that this local political-administrative and economic nomenklatura was strong, constituting a very solid texture of the regime. It can be asserted without error that although it did not participate in decision-making at the central level, it was the entity that controlled and ensured that these decisions were implemented to the letter and in accordance with the policies decided by the supreme leader, Dej or Ceaușescu, in Romania's case. Thus, its members can be considered key elements in the effective exercise of central power from Bucharest, ensuring that party policies were implemented at the Bihor County level.

Delving into the "technical" details, we observe that the local communist party elite is found primarily within the Bureau of the R.C.P. Bihor County Committee, among the alternate members of the same body, within the organization's secretariat, and, more broadly, within the Bihor County Party Committee. The composition of these respective bodies was representative according to Marxist ideology. According to this ideology, the leadership of communist parties must include both professional revolutionaries – that is, political activists, intellectuals, workers, and peasants – as well as representatives of all *co-inhabiting nationalities*.

The organizational scheme of the Bihor County Committee was complex and covered a wide spectrum of socio-economic and, of course, political life. It operated in accordance with Law 57/1968 on the organization and functioning of the People's Councils and Law 21/1979 amending the former law. Subordinated to the Bihor County Committee of the R.C.P. were the town and communal committees. At the head of the structure was a first secretary, who was generally obedient to the party's general secretary, especially after 1971 when the position was assigned through rotation, as part of that nationwide cadre rotation. Each year, the organization held its own plenary session to review its activities¹⁵.

The party *committee* was merely a subdivision of the party that coordinated the organization's nuclei (cells) within its area of competence. It was one of the most important organizational, control, and supervisory structures. The Bihor County Committee carried out its activity in the county seat, being composed of members of subordinate committees and party nuclei (cells). The County Committee comprised a Secretariat and a Political Bureau. The Secretariat was responsible for implementing plans devised at the central level, including overseeing their implementation and addressing personnel issues,

¹³ Academia Ștefan Gheorghiu, on https://howlingpixel.com/i-ro/Academia_%C8%98tefan_Gheorghiu, accessed on July 22, 2025.

¹⁴ Gheorghe Crișan, *Piramida puterii. Oameni politici de stat din România* [The Pyramid of Power. Politicians and State Officials in Romania], București 2001, 300 p.

¹⁵ See at length regarding the organization of the P.C.R. Bihor County Committee in Cristian Culiciu, *Structura organizatorică a Comitetului Județean P.C.R. Bihor. Statistici 1968-1988* [The Organizational Structure of the P.C.R. Bihor County Committee. Statistics 1968–1988] in *Crisia*, 2016, p. 168.1

while the Political Bureau was responsible for supervising the economic, social, and political situation at the county level¹⁶.

The Bihor County Party Committee thus comprised the elite of the communists from Bihor, those who benefited from all the opportunities of the totalitarian regime and whose daily lives unfolded in a parallel universe to that of the vast majority of the population. They were not many. In 1989, the Bihor County Party Committee consisted of only 95 full members subscribing to all the benefits of totalitarianism in Romania, with another 46 serving as alternate members of the same county leadership structure¹⁷, a total of 141 people.

Given that Bihor County's population in 1989 was 660,116¹⁸, it follows that those who controlled the county politically, administratively, economically, culturally, and scientifically – as stipulated by the Romanian Communist Party's Statute – as an active part of the party nomenklatura, represented only 0.02% of the total population. Thus, a minuscule percentage of Bihor's citizens coordinated, controlled, and oversaw the implementation of communist state policies at the county level, and this ensured their connection to the less visible aspects of communist life – a life strictly defined by party privileges and to which other residents had no access.

The total number of party members in Bihor in July 1989 was 102,469¹⁹, which means that the 141 members represented about 0.13% of all party members in Bihor. If we compare the 102,469 members to the total population of Bihor, it becomes clear that 15.5% of Bihor's residents were members of the Romanian Communist Party.

Among the current benefits – which made most members of the local nomenklatura feel like true superhumans – were more comfortable homes in prime locations, all in the central area or the newly emerging Civic Center. Some of the homes were built specifically for this elite, while for others, comfortable apartments and villas were found – former properties of those less fortunate after the communist regime took power. They also had access to local closed-circuit stores that shielded them from the hardships of daily life, vacations in locations reserved specifically for them, special classes in schools and kindergartens for their children, and so on. They were the regime's primary beneficiaries at the local level.

They came from various sectors of society, both from among intellectuals and from the ranks of workers and peasants – Romanians, Hungarians, and Slovaks alike. However, all were *closely united around the party and the supreme leader*, each being part of different communist structures or heading state, administrative, and economic entities in equal measure.

The 141 local favorites of the regime, as revealed by the documents of the Bihor Party organization's County Conference in November 1989, were mostly “employed”, though this was, of course, largely a formality. There, they put the party's directives and the moral conduct of the new communist into practice, guiding people along the path of “building a multilaterally developed socialist society”²⁰, following the direction set by the supreme leader.

Among the 141, we find engineers, teachers, economists, journalists, party activists who graduated from the “Ștefan Gheorghiu” Academy, agronomists, and zootechnicians, as well as foremen, technicians, or simple cooperative peasants.

An analysis of this group of fortunate individuals reveals a series of very interesting facts for readers interested in the subject. By examining the fields of activity of these 141 individuals, we discover the following reality:

- political activists - 18
- industry - 63
- agriculture - 39
- trade - 3
- administration and law enforcement institutions - 11
- banking system - 1
- education - 3
- media - 3

¹⁶ Constantin Maimuca, *Tehnica și tactica comunistă* [Communist Technique and Tactics], Oradea: Editura Primus, 2011, p. 48-53.

¹⁷ A.N.S.J.Bh., inv. 1285, *Comitetul județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 1, f. 324-331.

¹⁸ <https://ro.scribd.com/document/728434966/Populatia-Romaniei-Pe-Judete>, accessed on August 5, 2025.

¹⁹ A.N.S.J.Bh., inv. 1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 1, f. 46-48.

²⁰ See Nicolae Ceaușescu, *România pe drumul construirii societății socialiste multilateral dezvoltate* [Romania on the Way of Building the Multilaterally Developed Socialist Society], Politic Publishing House, București, vols. 1-36.

Regarding the educational background of the main representatives of the communist regime in Bihor – with graduates of the *Ștefan Gheorghiu* Academy considered to have a university education - the situation was as follows:

- higher education - 61
- elementary, secondary, vocational, and high school - 80

We note that a comfortable majority of the members of the Bureau of the Bihor County Committee of the R.C.P., the alternate members of the same body, the organization's Secretariat, and the Bihor County Party Committee were made up of individuals who lacked higher education. This probably reflects the increased emphasis on demonstrating that the communist party was the political organization representing working people—workers first and foremost, and only then intellectuals or other categories.

In fact, this is precisely what Marxist theory has maintained from the very beginning – namely, first and foremost, the need for the proletariat to exercise control over politics and the economy to build communism, the higher stage of society that could be reached only through the proletariat, which had to dominate the social landscape. Marx and Engels emphasized as early as 1848 in *The Communist Party Manifesto* that when “*in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared and all production has been concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, then public power will lose its political character. In the proper sense of the word, political power is the organized power of one class to oppress another. If the proletariat, in its struggle against the bourgeoisie, necessarily unites as a class; if, through revolution, it becomes the ruling class and, as the ruling class, abolishes the old relations of production by force, then it abolishes, along with these relations of production, the conditions of existence of class antagonism, of classes in general, and, thereby, its own class domination. In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, there arises an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all*”²¹.

The efforts of communist societies had to be directed toward reaching the final stage of communism, where Karl Marx himself had clearly established as early as the 19th century that “*in the higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals to the division of labor – and, with it, the opposition between intellectual and physical labor; when labor ceases to be merely a means of existence and becomes itself the primary vital necessity; when, alongside the multifaceted development of individuals, the forces of production also grow, and all the sources of collective wealth will gush forth like a torrent - only then will the narrow limits of bourgeois law be completely overcome, and society will be able to inscribe on its banners: From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs!*”²².

Returning to the discussion regarding the most important privileged figures of the regime in Bihor and considering the territorial distribution of the 141 local specialists of the regime, we note that 97 of them carried out their activity in urban areas, while the remaining 44 operated in rural areas.

Their placement within the county leadership bodies is also interesting. Given that the vast majority of the Bihor nomenklatura consisted of people with average or below-average educational backgrounds, we find that, strictly speaking, the county leadership bodies were dominated by those with higher education – a sign that Marxist doctrine had been significantly modified in Bihor. Thus, among the full members of the Bureau of the Bihor County Committee of the R.C.P. (21 individuals) and alternate members (9 individuals), totaling 30 comrades, the situation regarding their level of education was as follows – with the note that graduates of the “*Ștefan Gheorghiu*” Academy were also considered to have higher education:

- higher education - 26
- elementary, secondary, vocational, and high school - 4

Regarding the ethnic origin of the 30 members and alternate members of the Executive Committee of the Bihor County Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, we can say that each nationality residing in Bihor was represented as follows:

- Romanians - 25
- Hungarians - 4
- Slovaks - 1

An interesting observation can be made here. It concerns a reality pointing toward a percentage representation that fairly faithfully respected the ethnic realities of Bihor County. The communists were quite attentive to this detail as well, especially given that towards the end of the 1980s, criticism from

²¹ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *Manifestul Partidului Comunist* [*The Communist Party Manifesto*], at <https://www.marxists.org/romana/m-e/1848/manifest/index.htm>, accessed on August 5, 2025.

²² Karl Marx, *Critica Programului de la Gotha* [*Critique of the Gotha Programme*], at <https://www.marxists.org/romana/m-e/1875/gotha/c01.htm>, accessed on August 5, 2025.

Budapest regarding the discriminatory treatment to which Hungarians in Romania were subjected was becoming increasingly frequent²³.

We also have a relatively balanced representation from this perspective among the 633 delegates elected to participate in the County Conference of the Bihor R.C.P. organization, held on November 8, 1989. The 633 delegates were elected based on a representation quota approved at the Plenary Session of the Bihor County Committee of the R.C.P. in July 1989, which stipulated one delegate for every 170 party members as of July 31, 1989²⁴. This means that only 0.61% of the total number of party members were present at the county conference on November 8, 1989, and, relative to the total population of Bihor, only 0.09%.

The ethnic composition of the delegates to the Bihor County Conference of Communists – using the terminology of the time when referring to ethnic groups, which were officially designated as cohabiting nationalities²⁵ – was as follows: “Romanians 517, Romanians of Hungarian nationality 114, Romanians of Slovak nationality 2”²⁶. These figures help us understand the ethnic composition of party members in Bihor, as represented according to the ratio of 1 delegate per 170 party members. We can thus deduce that of the total 102,469, no fewer than 87,890 were Romanians, 19,380 were Hungarians, while 340 belonged to the Slovak minority. In percentage terms, 81.7% of party members in Bihor County were ethnic Romanians, 18% were ethnic Hungarians, and the remaining 0.3% were Slovaks.

Interesting data also emerges when we analyze the occupations of the 633 delegates. Thus, there were 249 workers, 146 farmers, 202 civil servants, and 36 officers; and if we examine their length of party membership, we see that 10 had been party members since before 1948, 166 joined between 1952 and 1965, 446 joined the Communist Party between 1965 and 1984, and only 11 of the delegates present joined the party between 1984 and 1989²⁷. Furthermore, regarding the age of those attending as delegates at the conference, 26 were under 30 years old, 232 were between 30–40, 81 were between 41–50, and another 177 were over 50 years old²⁸.

It should also be noted that there was a certain balance in terms of gender representation: of the 633 delegates, 58.5% were men, while women accounted for 41.5%²⁹.

Returning to the “core” of the party nomenklatura in Bihor – that is, the 30 members of the Bihor County Committee Bureau of the Romanian Communist Party – concerning their fields of activity, half of them (51%) worked in the ideological sector, while the rest came from various economic sectors according to the following breakdown:

- political activists - 15 (51%)
- industry - 4 (13%)
- agriculture - 4 (13%)
- administration and law enforcement institutions - 4 (13%)
- banking system - 1 (3%)
- education - 2 (7%)

Finally, 29 of them were active and worked in urban areas, and only one in a rural area. The Secretariat of the Bihor County Organization of the Romanian Communist Party consisted of six people, all with higher education, while from the perspective of ethnic background, five were ethnic Romanians and one was ethnic Hungarian.

This was the local party nomenklatura, or the privileged officials of Bihor County in 1989. They enjoyed most of the privileges specific to the national communist nomenklatura. They were the party’s trusted *comrades* at the local level, its backbone in Bihor County, and for this they had to be rewarded. They were the ones around whom the communist party’s policies in Bihor were built during the final years of the regime – in this case, during its final year. Those elected to the county leadership structures at the

²³ Gabriel Moisa, *Kádár et Ceaușescu. Réunions tendues (1985)*, in *Chi era János Kádár?*, Rome, Carocci Publishing House, 2012, p. 98-117 (eds. Papo A., Nemeth G., Rosselli A.).

²⁴ A.N.S.J.Bh., inv.1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 1, f. 47.

²⁵ On this point, see Gabor Vincze, *Nașterea unei „Organizații fantomă” în România: Consiliul Oamenilor Muncii de Naționalitate Maghiară [The Birth of a “Phantom Organization” in Romania: The Council of Working People of Hungarian Nationality]* in *Minoritatea maghiară în perioada comunistă [The Hungarian Minority during the Communist Period]*, (eds. Olti Ágoston, Gidó Attila) Cluj Napoca; Publishing House of the Institute for Studying National Minorities, Kriterion Publishing House, 2009, p. 161-188.

²⁶ A.N.S.J.Bh., inv.1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 1, f. 47.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 47-48.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, f. 48.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

County Party Conference on November 8, 1989, held at the State Theater in Oradea, were to serve as the core members for the next five-year plan.

However, this was not meant to last just for the next five-year plan but for many more years, since for the vast majority of them, the events of December 1989 opened up unimagined horizons, and they became the backbone of the new political, governmental, and local administrative structures in the context of the transition to the democracy as we have known it over the past 35 years. The model from Bihor was not unique but part of a paradigm that encompassed all of Romania. Within this paradigm, a common nuance is noticeable, according to which the communist nomenklatura is detectable across all levels of post-December Romanian society, with elements belonging to the main power centers of the Romanian Communist Party.

Knowing Romanian society and taking a balanced view of the context and situation, we reach the conclusion that things unfolded this way because it could hardly have happened otherwise. However, this weighed decisively on the pace at which Romania broke away from communism – a very slow pace on its path toward a functional democratic system. The communist-type texture that built, supported, and gave direction to Romanian society after 1989 was very deeply anchored in pre-December Romanian realities, and did not know – and we believe did not even intend – to impart a different rhythm to Romania than the one we all know.

Of course, in addition to these privileged individuals, there was also a category of people who gravitated toward these trusted figures of the regime and who, in turn, enjoyed privileges substantial enough to prompt them to place themselves or agree to serve the regime. Describing them as members of the local nomenklatura might be going too far, but we do not believe we are mistaken in classifying them as part of that dense, solid fabric that left a deep imprint on the post-December period. Most of those at the forefront of post-1989 Romanian society up to the present day were drawn from these ranks. They were the ones who helped slow down the rapid march toward Western-style democracy, since they could not really understand what it was all about. Instead, they intuitively realized that if they did not stall the process, they would lose the privileges they had attained immediately after 1989 – and which they had already secured even before that year. Their presence in the public space after the fall of Nicolae Ceaușescu has been constantly felt, with their underground connections coming to the surface at specific moments in the evolution of events from that time until today. If we look only at what happened in Romania during the most recent local, parliamentary, and presidential elections, we come to the conclusion that their influence remains extremely significant, and the invisible web we mentioned binds them very tightly to one another.

Many had been lecturers or simply collaborators of the Intercounty Party School in Oradea, others collaborators of the Securitate or of other law enforcement structures belonging to the old regime – some proven with documents in order once the archives of the repressive institutions were declassified, while others remain unproven but were certainly in similar situations.

Before 1989, this “collaborationism” was done out of conviction, but also for minor benefits, such as a gas cylinder obtained out of turn, a kg of meat, or a fuel voucher beyond the monthly ration, an invitation to an official event, or an allocation of a more spacious home for those with larger families. Others, however, volunteered to serve the regime’s representatives, driven by the desire to obtain more significant benefits or, at times, by boundless pride intended to demonstrate their momentary power by aligning themselves with the powerful figures of the time. Few were those who had the opportunity to enjoy, for instance, a cup of coffee with the head of the Bihor Securitate right in his office – whether it was Ion Popescu until August 1989 or Dumitru Ogășanu afterward – discussing, how else, the major problems of Romania of that time, trying to find, naturally, solutions to preserve the regime. Just as few were those received at any hour of the day by the head of the municipal party organization, Gheorghe Groza, the head of the county party organization, Andrei Sorcoiu, or the secretary in charge of organizational affairs, Ioan Vulturar, for important and especially serious issues facing Romanian society, but also to solve their personal problems.

This is the category that can be considered the “minor nomenklatura” at the county level. Looking at things in perspective, we observe that it was perhaps more dangerous and slippery than those on the front lines, manifesting itself fully after 1989 up to the present day, using practices and habits acquired during communism. It was also the main breeding ground for cadres in the new political power structures, particularly the National Salvation Front but also other political parties; from among them were selected the administrative structures of the county, cities, and communes for a long time after 1989. Some had been less visible before 1989 as men of the regime, but after 1989 they could dissemble much more easily than, for example, former members of the Bihor County Committee of the R.C.P. could have done. Consequently, they could pose effectively and credibly as democrats – cardboard ones, it is true.

Most of those in this category were active before 1989 within the local political, ideological, and propaganda structures at the institutions where they worked, as well as around the Intercounty Party School and the County Party Committee³⁰. They were collaborators of the regime, referred to in a document dated January 5, 1989, as “*the group of propagandists of the County Party Committee*”³¹.

Looking at the names listed here – 140 individuals in total – we realize that most of them, along with the majority of the 633 delegates to the Bihor County Conference of the Romanian Communist Party on November 8, 1989, constituted the group that controlled Oradea and Bihor County after December 1989 – either they themselves or their successors. We find them starting in January 1990 in all political, administrative, economic, social, educational, cultural, and other spheres – practically everywhere – and they will contribute to organizing the new Romania according to their understanding, image, and likeness. They will form political parties – democratic, of course – they will administer, democratically of course, Oradea and Bihor County, they will control, now in a capitalist manner, the county’s economy and “restructure” it according to their interests; and they will lead the judiciary, educational institutions, and cultural institutions.

In essence, they will insinuate themselves into, lead, and carefully control the entire Bihor society, being a multiplication of what happened at the national level. They have created a society that they still control quite firmly to this day, even though things have changed slightly in the meantime. What they have built over three and a half decades of Romanian democracy is very difficult to change, as the ramifications are complicated and hard to decipher, thus defining the destiny of the country for a long time. Any attempt at real change or reform – aimed at making the system as compatible as possible with a functional democracy – meets with incredible resistance, which emerges from every corner of Romanian society and from places that are impossible to detect. We firmly believe that this is largely due to the connections with the past held by far too many of those who still occupy important positions in Romanian society.

Let’s consider that in Bihor County alone there were 633 (delegates to the County Conference of the Romanian Communist Party on November 8, 1989) plus 140 (the group of propagandists from the County Party Committee) – comrades who had become “gentlemen” and “ladies” – who, broadly speaking, “took control” of Bihor County. In total, therefore, 773 people, but they extended their reach through family members, loyal confidants, numerous “aunts” or “uncles,” or others in the same category. How many there might have been nationwide – perhaps tens of thousands of people in the year 1990. They sense and scent one another. This is possible because they all think and act alike, and one of their primary distinguishing marks is the promotion of personal interest over institutional interest, lacking any ethics aimed at the societal and institutional consolidation of Romania. Coming from a communist background, most of them simply cannot understand that institutions should function first and foremost for the public good, and by no means be subordinated to personal interests.

All of them have created highly organized, impenetrable structures and can be found everywhere: in politics, administration, justice, state law enforcement structures, economy, education, culture, etc., in fact, shaping the face of Romania today. Realistically speaking, and given the Romanian context, we believe Romania could not possibly look any different than it does now. This does not mean that efforts should not be made to bring the country into line with the functional Euro-Atlantic democratic model and to distance Romania as far as possible from the “steppe” model of civilization.

Today, as we move further away from December 1989, things are becoming increasingly clear from this perspective. Gaining access to the archives, the Braudelian understanding of events over the long term, and simply historical observation show us with greater clarity how things actually were. Consequently, well-articulated scientific works have emerged, exposing painful truths. Some of the secrets of this world have been fully revealed³². All of them, however, demonstrate a remarkable quality of this minor nomenclature: its ability to survive regardless of the political regime, leading to a possible conclusion that it was specifically prepared for this purpose during the final years of the regime. Future research will undoubtedly shed more light on this matter.

³⁰ Idem, inv.1285, *Comitetul Județean P.C.R. Bihor*, fond 1022, file 5, 1989, unnumbered.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² On this point, see Marius Oprea, *Moștenitorii Securității [The Heirs of the Securitate]*, 2nd revised and expanded edition, Iași, Polirom Publishing House, 2018, and Cătălin Augustin Stoica, *România continuă. Schimbare și adaptare în comunism și postcomunism [Romania Continues. Change and Adaptation in Communism and Post-Communism]*, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 2018.