

= Polish legislative election , 1957 =

Parliamentary elections were held in Poland on 20 January 1957 . They were the second election to the Sejm ? the bicameral parliament of the People 's Republic of Poland , and the third ever in the history of Communist Poland . It took place during the liberalization period , following W?adys?aw Gomu?ka 's ascension to power . Although freer than previous elections , they were not a free election . Polish voters of 1957 were given the right to vote against some official candidates ; de facto having a small chance to express a vote of no confidence against the government and the Party , but no possibility to elect any real opposition , whose members were not allowed to run in the elections . The elections resulted in a predictable victory for the Front of National Unity coalition dominated by the ruling Polish communist party ? the Polish United Workers ' Party ( PZPR ) , and communist leader , W?adys?aw Gomu?ka .

The elections , while victorious for Gomu?ka , did not guarantee lasting changes in the Polish society . The new regime was much more liberal than its Stalinist predecessor , and enjoyed moderate support during the first few years after the election in the " little stabilization " period of 1957 ? 1963 . However , by mid @-@ 1960s it faced opposition from the competing factions in the communist party itself . Coupled with growing popular opposition to the communist rule , Gomu?ka would be removed from power in the aftermath of the 1968 political crisis and the Polish 1970 protests .

The previous elections in Poland were held in 1952 . These were followed by the 1961 elections .

= = Background = =

The elections were originally planned for the December of 1956 but due to significant political changes in the government , resulting from W?adys?aw Gomu?ka 's ascension to power , they were delayed until early 1957 . Among the various promises made by First Secretary Gomu?ka , during the Polish October peaceful revolution , to the restless Polish population was that of free elections . He knew that this was a promise that he could not keep without seeing his party defeated . In the January 1957 elections the new ' democratic ' aspect was the reintroduction of the secret ballot , and more importantly , there were more candidates than available seats in the parliament ; in the 1952 elections the number of candidates equaled the number of seats in the Sejm . Another liberalizing factor was that unlike in previous elections , intimidation by the secret police ( S?u?ba Bezpiecze?stwa ) and the government against the opposition was limited .

The candidates were divided into two groups - one officially supported by the party and the ' independents ' ( broadly following the communist party line but not declared members of the party ) . The latter would be only considered if over half of the registered voters in the district voted against the official candidates ; otherwise all seats from the district ( on average between 3 and 6 ) would be awarded to the official candidates .

Over 60 @,@ 000 candidates were registered for the 459 seats in the Sejm . The government was not prepared to release its hold on power , so the candidates were screened and only 720 or 723 out of 60 @,@ 000 were finally allowed to participate and be published on the official list by the Front of National Unity ( Polish : Front Jedno?ci Narodu , FJN ) , the only organization allowed to put forth candidates in Polish elections . Factors such as the number of signatures in support of a candidate were deemed to be irrelevant .

According to an official government press agency dispatch , about half of the candidates ( approx . 360 ) were PZPR members . A majority of the remainder belonged to PZPR allies ( Democratic Party ( SD ) , United People 's Party ( ZSL ) ) . There was no opposition party in Poland since all political groupings had to support the program of the PZPR . As a result , no real opposition candidates were permitted to run in the elections , but in theory the Polish voters could have stripped the communists from their claimed legitimacy by abstaining from voting . Another means of preventing the PZPR from obtaining a political victory would have occurred if all of the PZPR candidates were struck out , leaving only 100 to be elected .

Despite the lack of genuine opposition , the liberalized election format allowed for various power

struggles to be played out , primarily between the communist party candidates . A particularly notable case was the rivalry between certain candidates from the main communist party ( PZPR ) and one of the lesser communist parties ( ZSL ) .

A day before the elections , Gomu?ka appealed to Polish citizens not to vote against the Party 's candidates , asserting that ' crossing them out would equal crossing Poland off the map of Europe ' and would bring upon Poland the fate of Hungary . The fear of a possible Soviet intervention , in case of Gomu?ka 's loss , was also repeated by Radio Free Europe , which noted that Gomu?ka 's argument while " cruel " , is likely " entirely correct . " Gomu?ka also persuaded the Catholic Church to urge voters to go to the polls and declare a vote of confidence in the government . Supporting him , Cardinal Stefan Wyszy?ski officially declared his support for the ' no crossing ' policy .

= = Results = =

The Polish United Workers ' Party ( PZPR ) won 237 ( 239 after by @-@ elections ) seats out of 459 while the remainder went its satellite parties ( Democratic Party and United People 's Party ) and a few independents . PZPR 237 seats gave it 51 @.@ 7 % of total , ZSL with 120 ( 118 after by @-@ elections ) had 26 @.@ 1 % , the independents with 63 had 14 % ( non @-@ party faction , 51 , and Catholics from the Znak association , 12 ) and SD with 39 had 8 @.@ 5 % . The FJN alliance was victorious , with 80 @.@ 8 % of the seats .

Overall , the FJN alliance gained 8 seats compared to its 1952 results , but the independents nearly doubled their presence , from 37 to 63 ( this is explained as the Sejm of 1957 had 459 seats , an increase of 34 from the 1952 , which had only 425 seats ) . PZPR was the biggest loser , with 34 seats less than in 1952 , ZSL gained 28 , and SD , 14 . However , as the other parties and " independents " were in fact subordinate to PZPR , its control of the Sejm was , in fact , total . The representational pattern in the Sejm would be nearly stable for the next 30 years , following a slight swing from the independents to PZPR in 1961 .

According to official data , turnout was 94 @.@ 14 % , which are considered to be somewhat suspect considering heavy snowfalls and unfavorable weather conditions prevailing in Poland at the time , and 98 @.@ 4 % of votes were cast for official candidates . Approximately 10 @.@ 6 % of the voters disobeyed the calls for " no crossing " , but in the end only one seat ( in Nowy S?cz ) remained unfilled due to no candidate achieving absolute majority .

The new Sejm had its first session on 20 February . Its senior marshal ( speaker ) was Boles?aw Drobner ; its Sejm marshal was Czes?aw Wycech . Only 12 % of the new deputies were members of the previous , 1952 , Sejm .

Two by @-@ elections were held after the main election . The first took place on 17 March 1957 at Nowy S?cz . The second took place at Wielu? on 5 May 1957 to replace the incumbent who died on February 5 . Those by @-@ elections were won by the PZPR and the ZSL respectively . Two more by @-@ elections took place on October 19 , 1958 in My?lenice and Ole?nica . In those by @-@ elections , ZSL lost the seats to PZPR .

= = Aftermath = =

Despite Gomu?ka 's hopes , the elections , while victorious for him , did not mean the end of opposition to the communist rule . For a while , support for the Gomu?ka @-@ led communist party ran high . Reflecting this , the period 1957 @-@ 1963 is known as " little stabilization " . While his regime was much more liberal than the one he succeeded , this gave rise to an opposition within the PZPR party , as some communist politicians , like General Mieczys?aw Moczar , saw Gomu?ka as " too soft . " Meanwhile , dissension with the communist rule would grow , and the Polish 1970 protests , soon after the 1968 Polish political crisis , would eventually cause him to lose support with the PZPR party ; suffering from nervous exhaustion , Gomu?ka would be forced to resign and replaced by Edward Gierek .