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Controversies Surrounding the Selection of Candidates for MPs Before the Election to the PRL Sejm of January 1957¹

*Kontrowersje wokół wyłaniania kandydatów na posłów przed wyborami
do Sejmu PRL ze stycznia 1957 roku*

ABSTRACT

The article is aimed at presenting the selection process of candidates for MPs before the elections to the PRL Sejm of 1957. The analysis has been performed predominantly on the basis of numerous archival sources and the existing literature. The transformations of 1956 in Poland fostered the opportunity to reassign the Parliament the role it deserved, an aspect universally considered to be important in the process of liberalization of the political and government system. The coming election, based on the changed Electoral Law, were to open the path to the Sejm not only to persons nominated by the Party, but also to the representatives of circles less associated with the authorities. The United People's Party

PUBLICATION INFO			
	 WYDAWNICTWO	 UNIVERSITAT ZIELONA GORA POLSKA	e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060
			
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SOURCE OF FUNDING: Statutory Research of the Institute of History of the University of Zielona Góra			
SUBMITTED: 2018.10.10	ACCEPTED: 2020.01.15	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2020.12.21	
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: https://journals.umcs.pl/rh		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE E-mail: reshistorica@umcs.pl	

¹ This article is an extended version of a section from the nearly completed monograph on the election to the PRL Sejm of 1957.

(ZSL) and the Alliance of Democrats (SD) also wanted to benefit from the circumstances, as they strove to widen the margin of their independence from the weakened PZPR. Meanwhile, the new Party leadership under Gomułka, aimed at restoring political balance, strove to maintain domination over the choice and selection of the contenders for the seats in the Sejm. Hence, they made efforts which, for the price of minor compromises, ensured that the PZPR played a decisive role in the final approval of candidate slates.

The regulations introduced by the authorities, stipulated not only the procedure and mode of submitting candidates, but also the division of seats in the future Sejm, and imposed the so-called central candidates upon many districts. This, however could not quell thousands of initiatives throughout the country aimed at obtaining the desired representative in the Parliament. In this context, the activity by a large portion of the PRL citizens constituted not a mere result of the atmosphere of the 'political thaw', but rather a form of acting out the repressive realities of the preceding period, and the emerging social antagonisms. What lied at the root of those was oftentimes genuine care about the interests of all the various milieux, local communities, professional groups, organizations to a greater or lesser extent associated with authorities, as well as ethnic minorities. And even though spontaneously submitted candidacies, usually put forth during pre-election meetings, were doomed to fail, it nevertheless served as a proof that people had high hopes for the election and continued democratization of political relations.

Key words: Front of National Unity, political thaw, Electoral Law, candidates for Deputies to the Sejm, Deputies of the Sejm

The transformations of 1956 in Poland, preceded as they were by a long-lasting ferment, gained momentum after the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the death of Bolesław Bierut. Ever more heated conflicts and political disputes were spreading not only though the milieu of the Party and various social organizations, but virtually swept the entire country. Among many issues at the time discussed, there was also that of the Sejm, that was usually touched upon in the context of it providing the body with an actual role, and making the electoral system more democratic. From the spring of 1956, according to Paweł Machcewicz, both in the press and in declarations issued by party institutions the demands started to emerge to make the Parliament more than just a 'shell' institution, postulating that it should instead become a forum for divergent opinions and attitudes to clash, and above all a constitutional instrument of control over the executive authority².

The need to introduce changes to the operation and election of the Sejm was also recognized by some representatives of the Party leadership, particularly in the face of the growing social upheaval (June revolt in Poznań) and the incoming political crisis. Thus, a resolution of the Seventh

² P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, in: *Kampania wyborcza i wybory do Sejmu 20 stycznia 1957*, ed. P. Machcewicz, Warszawa 2000, p. 5.

Plenum of the Central Committee (KC) of Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) in July 1956 announced that: 'The elevation of the Sejm's role and ensuring that it fulfils its constitutional tasks must become constituents in the process of democratization of the country's political life. In order to ensure the Sejm is able to perform its function as the highest legislative body, exercising control the operation of all other State organs, it is necessary to subject the Government to a more efficient supervision by the Sejm, to limit the practice of enacting decrees, to increase the introduction of projects of laws into the Sejm sittings, to improve the operation of Sejm commissions, to convene plenary sessions more frequently, and to provide the MPs with a better access to the information on the functioning of State organs. In order to augment the responsibility of MPs and councilors before their electorate, regulations must be developed allowing voters to dismiss their representatives from the Sejm and State councils, according to constitutional requirements'³.

On 1 September 1956, the Interdepartmental Commission of the KC towards Sejm, in a session with the participation of the members of the Government and of the Council of State, proposed three variants of the project of the new electoral system. Each envisaged changes to the existing regulations, although their scope differed. The first variant envisioned 'maintaining the regulations of the existing electoral system'⁴ with a simultaneous introduction of a series of modifications aimed to make the system more demarcating (incl. changes in selecting the candidates for MPs, an increase in the number of voting districts). The key element of variant two allowed the possibility of submitting a greater number of candidates than that of mandates from a given district (with their multi-member character retained). Meanwhile, the third, most radical variant proposed the introduction of single-member districts (JOW), in which

³ 'Podniesienie roli Sejmu i zapewnienie pełnego wykonania przezeń jego konstytucyjnych zadań musi się stać składową częścią demokratyzacji politycznego życia kraju. Aby zapewnić spełnienie przez Sejm jego funkcji, jako najwyższego ciała ustawodawczego i kontrolującego działanie wszystkich innych organów państwowych, konieczne jest poddanie działalności rządu bardziej skutecznej kontroli Sejmu, ograniczenie praktyki uchwalania dekretów i szersze wnoszenie pod obrady Sejmu projektów ustaw, ulepszenie pracy komisji sejmowych, częstsze zwoływanie sesji plenarnych oraz szersze udostępnienie posłom informacji o działalności organów państwowych. W celu podniesienia odpowiedzialności posłów i radnych przed wyborcami należy opracować przepisy prawne o trybie odwoływania przez wyborców swych przedstawicieli w Sejmie i w radach narodowych zgodnie z wymogami konstytucji'. *Uchwała VII Plenum KC PZPR o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej kraju i zadaniach partii*, in: *Dokumenty programowe polskiego ruchu robotniczego 1878–1984*, eds. N. Kołomejczyk, B. Syzdek, Warszawa 1986, p. 488.

⁴ 'utrzymanie zasad dotychczasowej ordynacji wyborczej'.

many candidates would compete against one another⁵. At the same time, there was a discussion on the date of the election. There was a marked shift towards the opinion that the constitutional date of the election, that of 16 December, would have to be postponed. Officials argued that within social and political unrest it would allow for better arrangements both for the new voting system and the election campaign⁶.

On 1–2 October 1956, the solutions developed by the Interdepartmental Commission of the KC towards the Sejm were discussed by the Politburo of the PZPR. On that occasion, the members of this most influential Party body decided to keep the multi-member districts and adopt a provision that 'the submitted slates of candidates for MPs should include a greater number of surnames than the number of mandates available in a given district. The number of candidates on the slate should not in principle exceed that of the mandates by more than 50%'⁷. Simultaneously, the Politburo resolved to appoint a body to organize the Sejm election, as well as a Commission to develop the program election platform. The members of the former institution were: Jerzy Albrecht, Edward Gierek, Witold Jarosiński, Stefan Misiaszek, Andrzej Werblan and Roman Zambrowski, whereas the members of the Commission were: Witold Jarosiński, Józef Kalinowski, Leon Kasman, Wiktor Kłosiewicz, Henryk Korotyński, Józef Kowalczyk, Artur Starewicz, Jan Szydłak, Walenty Titkow, Andrzej Werblan and Roman Werfel⁸.

Meanwhile on 17 October 1956, during a session of the Politburo, already with Władysław Gomułka, the decision was reached to postpone the election. It was arranged then that the vote would be carried out on 20 January 1957. Formally, that date was set by the session of the Sejm of 25 October 1956, while two days later it received the approval of the Council of State⁹. The postponement of the election was allegedly motivated

⁵ *Notatka Międzywydziałowej Komisji KC PZPR z 1 września 1956 r. w sprawie projektu zmiany ordynacji wyborczej do Sejmu*, in: *Kampania*, pp. 35–39. It was the third variant of the changes to the electoral system that Władysław Gomułka was said to have promoted; however, as he remembered years later, the solution was met with the opposition of other members of the Politburo; as cited in: M. Siedziako, *Kampania wyborcza i wybory do Sejmu PRL w 1957 roku: stan badań, aktualne ustalenia i perspektywy badawcze*, 'Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość' 2016, 2, pp. 281–282.

⁶ P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 6.

⁷ '[...] zgłoszone listy kandydatów na posłów do Sejmu zawierają większą ilość nazwisk aniżeli ilość mandatów danego okręgu. Ilość kandydatów na liście nie powinna w zasadzie przekraczać o więcej niż 50% ilości mandatów'. *Protokół nr 122 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 1 i 2 października 1956 r.*, in: *Kampania*, p. 40.

⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 39–40.

⁹ *Protokół Nr 127 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 17 października 1956 r.*, in: *Centrum władzy. Protokoły posiedzeń kierownictwa PZPR. Wybór z lat 1949–1970*, eds.

by the stipulation that the opening the term of office of the Sejm was to be the date of its first sitting and not that of its appointment. However, it was a well known fact that of much greater importance were the strictly political considerations – the disorganized and demotivated Party would not be able to appease the social moods and run the electoral campaign; therefore, the adherents of Władysław Gomułka needed another month to gain control over the domestic situation and prepare themselves for the election, which was considered an important stage in stabilizing their power and consolidating the new system at the summit of the State¹⁰.

Thus, it can hardly be surprising that the issues of the election, the electoral system, and the shape of the future Sejm constituted a major element during the debate and the resultant resolution adopted by the breakthrough Eighth Plenum of the KC PZPR on 19–21 October 1956. It was then that Władysław Gomułka made the pledge: ‘In the program of democratization, the elevation of the Sejm to the role of the highest organ of State authority it to be perhaps of utmost importance’¹¹. He declared that in the coming election, every citizen will not only vote, but also will be able to make an actual choice. The First Secretary attempted to address the issue of what had to be done in order for the Parliament to serve the function envisaged for it in the constitution. Hence, he recommended a wider use of the institution of a professional parliamentarian, more frequent sessions of the Parliament, such an organization of the works of the Sejm’s commissions that ‘their members could have the power to develop legislative acts’¹² the limitation of Council of the State’s rule by decree to only ‘the matters most urgent’¹³ with a concurrent guarantee for the Sejm ‘of the right to waive or change those decrees’¹⁴. According to Gomułka, ‘the reinstatements of State Supreme Audit Office (NIK) under the supervision of the Sejm’¹⁵ was to be enacted as well; the Parliament ‘ought to be granted the right to supervise [...] trade deals signed with

A. Dudek, A. Kochański, K. Persak, Warszawa 2000, p. 207; P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, pp. 7–8; ‘Dziennik Ustaw Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej’ [hereinafter: ‘Dz.U. PRL’] 1956, 47, 211, *Uchwała Rady Państwa z dnia 26 października 1956 r. w sprawie zmiany daty wyborów do Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*.

¹⁰ As pointed out by: Z. Pełczyński, *Polska droga od komunizmu. Refleksje nad historią i polityką 1956–2006*, Warszawa 2007, p. 85; P. Machcewicz, *Polski rok 1956*, Warszawa 1993, p. 197.

¹¹ ‘W programie zamierzeń demokratyzacyjnych podniesienie roli Sejmu do najwyższego organu władzy państwowej posiadać będzie największe bodaj znaczenie’.

¹² ‘mogło skoncentrować się w ich rękach opracowanie aktów prawnych’.

¹³ ‘spraw niecierpiących zwłoki’.

¹⁴ ‘prawo uchylania bądź zmieniania tych dekretów’.

¹⁵ ‘przywrócić Najwyższą Izbę Kontroli Państwa podlegającą Sejmowi’.

foreign countries'¹⁶ and the right to approve all international agreements signed by the Government and ratified by Council of State; regarding the relation with the Government, it was the Sejm that should assess the quality the performed work and drawing conclusions and consequences towards those members of the Council of Ministers who would not satisfactorily perform their duties¹⁷.

On 24 October 1956, the Sejm passed the new Electoral Law. Obviously, it had its legal basis in the binding Constitution of the PRL of 1952, which specified that the members of the Sejm would be elected in territorial districts with the ratio of one member per sixty thousand inhabitants (it was this regulation that caused the number of MPs of the PRL Sejm's second term of office (459) to exceed that of the first term (425)); that the elections were to be universal, equal, direct and anonymous, whereas the voting age was set at twenty one for the candidates and eighteen for the voters; the institution of a deputy MP was abolished¹⁸. However, the most significant section of the Law, in relation to the regulations binding during the previous election, was the entry in the Article 39, specifying the number of MP candidates from a given district, which was now to exceed the number of the stipulated number of mandates, but by no more than two thirds¹⁹. That entailed a slate with five candidates in the smallest and of eleven in the largest district, with the in-between variants also possible. Only the first three, four, five surnames and so on, respective to the number of seats available in a given district were subject to counting the votes. The Law also specified that 'In the case, when the number of the candidates not crossed out exceeds that of the number of MPs allocated to a given voting district, the vote is considered to have been cast in favor of the those candidates not crossed out whose names are placed first on

¹⁶ 'winien mieć prawo kontroli [...] umów handlowych zawartych z innymi państwami'.

¹⁷ As indicated in: L. Mażewski, *Dyskusja na temat reformy ustroju Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej w latach 1956–1957*, 'Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne' 2010, 1, pp. 226–227; VIII Plenum KC PZPR, *tow. Władysław Gomułka (dyskusja)*, 'Nowe Drogi' 1956, 10, pp. 44–45.

¹⁸ 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210, *Ustawa z dnia 24 października 1956 r. Ordynacja wyborcza do Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej; Projekt Ordynacji Wyborczej do Sejmu Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej przyjęty przez Komisję Sejmową w dniu 20. X. 1956 r.*; 'Trybuna Ludu' 1956, 296; M. Siedziako, *Bez wyboru. Głosowania do Sejmu PRL (1952–1989)*, Warszawa 2018, pp. 167–168.

¹⁹ Meaning that the number of candidates for a single seat was greater than the level set by the Politburo before the Eighth Plenum (the number of candidates only greater by 50%). Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 88; M. Siedziako, *Bez wyboru*, p. 168; R. Kraczkowski, *Sejm w okresie PRL*, in: *Dzieje Sejmu Polskiego*, ed. J. Bardach et al., Warszawa 2011, pp. 249–250; T. Mołdawa, *Sejm Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej*, in: *Historia Sejmu Polskiego*, vol. 3, *Polska Ludowa*, ed. A. Ajnenkiel, Warszawa 1989, p. 162; 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210.

the slate²⁰ that is in the so-called mandated positions (articles 30, pt. 3). As it turned out later, the authorities used the regulation as the main instrument in shaping the lineup of the coming Sejm²¹. The new Electoral Law did not introduce major changes into the already existing method of selecting the MP candidates: 'The right to nominate candidates is reserved for political, professional and co-operative organizations, Peasants' Self-Help Union, Union of Polish Youth, as well as mass social organizations of the working people'²². Thus, everything was to be carried out just like during the previous elections, with the intermediary being the Front of National Unity (FN). Consequently, no unassociated groups of citizens, let alone organization unacknowledged by the authorities, were given any opportunity to submit their own candidates. Certain possibilities for independent political agents were concealed in Article 36 of the Election Law, which declared that organizations may submit candidates of their own initiative, 'as well as from among the candidatures submitted during workers' meetings in places of employment, during local meetings, during community and village meetings, during the meetings of peasants' production co-operatives, those of workers of the State Agricultural Farms, and soldiers in military units'²³. In the political and social realities of the end of 1956, the entry may have constituted a backdoor for promoting candidates enjoying actual social respect. Such persons could be proffered, for instance, by field units of state-wide organizations or by associations and unions less controlled by the authorities. Such an eventuality posed the greatest election-related threat to the Party leadership²⁴.

Another 'unpredictable' solution, and hence, one involving a serious risk for the governing milieu was the regulation included in the Election Law,

²⁰ 'W przypadku, gdy liczba nieskreślonych kandydatów przewyższa liczbę posłów przypadającą na dany okręg wyborczy, głos uważa się za oddany na tych nieskreślonych kandydatów, których nazwiska zamieszczono na karcie do głosowania w pierwszej kolejności'.

²¹ As indicated by: P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 8; Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 89–90; 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210.

²² 'Prawo do zgłaszania kandydatów przysługuje organizacjom politycznym, zawodowym i spółdzielczym, Związkowi Samopomocy Chłopskiej, Związkowi Młodzieży Polskiej, jak również innym masowym organizacjom społecznym ludu pracującego'. 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210, article 33.

²³ 'jak również spośród osób wysuniętych na zebraniach pracowników w zakładach pracy, na zebraniach śródowniskowych, na zebraniach gromadzkich i wiejskich, na zebraniach członków rolniczych spółdzielni produkcyjnych, pracowników państwach gospodarstw rolnych i żołnierzy w jednostkach wojskowych'. 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210, article 36.

²⁴ J. Wróbel, *Kampania polityczna w Łodzi przed wyborami do Sejmu PRL 20 stycznia 1957 r.*, in: *Łódź w latach 1956–1957*, eds. L. Próchniak, J. Wróbel, Łódź 2006, p. 215; P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 9; 'Dz.U. PRL' 1956, 47, 210.

allowing for a submission of more than one voting slate within a district. Admittedly, the Election Law of 1952 also permitted for many candidates' lists; however, at the turn of 1956, with the moods surrounding the Eighth Plenum, the society was likely to make use of such a resolution. Then, the voting ballots could feature two or more competing lists, meaning that the voters would actually be able to make a real choice. In such a case, if no crossed out names were discovered on the ballots, it would be the candidates from the list recognized as the first that would go on to be elected²⁵.

The leadership of the PZPR soon became aware that if the existing mechanism for selecting candidates for MPs were to be preserved, they could run the risk of losing control over the choice of contenders for the seats in the Sejm. Such apprehension were voiced by Edward Ochab on 22 November, at a meeting with the representatives of the United People's Party (ZSL) and the Alliance of Democrats (SD), as well as by Władysław Gomułka who, commenting on the method of submitting candidates for MPs by the National Front (FN), openly declared that '[...] a certain unrestrained element emerges at this point, and it cannot be known who may be elevated by it [...]. The entire activity, the election campaign, ought to be concentrated in the Coordinating Commissions, and carried out through the Coordinating Commissions [...], and not by the National Fronts in the field, because who the hell knows what they have there, and who they have there, and what it is like there; it is very chaotic and accidental, today – this man, tomorrow – that man, no organizational structures; all of it elementally spontaneous, and with the elements, no one knows where they lead, today in such a way, tomorrow in another'²⁶.

The Politburo of the PZPR was quick to submit a proposal that the candidate slates be structured by way of direct arrangements reached among the respective sections of the Party and other political factions. The representatives of both the ZSL and the SD voiced their support for the solution, believing it would bring them new opportunities for emancipation from the influence of the PZPR and buttress their parties. Thus, the decision was made to establish the Central Coordination

²⁵ J. Karpiński, *Wykres gorączki. Polska pod rządami komunistycznymi*, Lublin 2001, p. 143; P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, pp. 197–198.

²⁶ '[...] wytwarza się tutaj pewien nieopanowany żywioł i na tym żywiole nie wiadomo kto może wypłynąć [...]. Cała akcja, kampania wyborcza, to ta się właściwie już winna koncentrować w komisjach porozumiewawczych i przez komisje porozumiewawcze być prowadzona [...], a nie już przez fronty narodowe w terenie, bo tam diabli wiedzą, co tam jest i co jest, i jak to jest, to jest zupełnie luźne, przypadkowe, dziś taki, jutro inny, to nie ma żadnych form organizacyjnych, to jest żywiołowe, a żywioł nie wiadomo nigdy, gdzie prowadzi, dziś taki, jutro inny'. As cited in: P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 10; see M. Siedziako, *Kampania*, pp. 285–286.

Commission of Political Associations and Social Organisations [hereinafter: Central Coordination Commission], which – much like in the period of 1944–1947 – was to coordinate the activity of political factions, and most of all to select and ration the jointly submitted candidates. The Central Coordination Commission was formed on 27 November 1956, and it brought together three representatives from each of the political parties, and two representatives of social organizations; hence, from the PZPR: Aleksander Zawadzki, Józef Cyrankiewicz and Roman Zambrowski, from the ZSL – Józef Ozga-Michalski, Czesław Wycech and Władysław Jagusztyn, and from the SD – Leon Chajm, Jerzy Jodłowski and Stanisław Kulczyński. Furthermore, the gremium comprised the representatives of Central Council for Trade Unions (CRZZ), Union of Polish Youth (ZMP), Peasants' Self-Help Union (ZSch), Women's League (LK), National Co-operative Council (NRS), Federation of Engineering Associations (NOT), as well as Catholic activists. In the subsequently set-up local equivalents to the Central Coordination Commission (at the level of voivodeships, *powiaty*, and separate cities), there were two representatives from the leadership of the PZPR, ZSL, SD, and a single member from the ZMP, ZSch, LK, and the co-operative movement²⁷.

On 29 November, as a following step, the National Conference of Political and Social Activists was summoned to Warsaw, the attendance at which amounted to three thousand delegates. It was there that the existing National Front (FN) was hastily transformed into the Front of National Unity (FJN). The conference participants, besides submitting the declaration of support for the changes introduced by the Eighth Plenum and adopting of a Programme Manifesto, announced that political associations and social organizations would participate in the election with a single, joint electoral slate, in a move that practically eliminated the undesired eventuality of other lists being submitted²⁸. The very FJN was

²⁷ P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, p. 198; Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 99; M. Siedziako, *Kampania*, p. 286; A.L. Sowa, *Historia polityczna Polski 1944–1991*, Kraków 2011, pp. 260–261; J. Olejniczak, *Wybory do Sejmu i rad narodowych w województwie bydgoskim w okresie tzw. małej stabilizacji (1956–1970)*, Toruń 2010, p. 180; S. Stepka, *Chłopi wobec wydarzeń politycznych w Polsce (1956–1959)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 121; *Powołanie Centralnej Komisji Stronnictw Politycznych i Organizacji Społecznych. Wspólne posiedzenie PZPR, ZSL i SD*, 'Trybuna Ludu' 1956, 327; *Zebrań Komisji Stronnictw Politycznych i Organizacji Społecznych. Uchwała o powołaniu komisji porozumiewawczych niższych szczebli. Prace nad programem wyborczym*, 'Trybuna Ludu' 1956, 332; Archiwum Akt Nowych [hereinafter: AAN], Stronnictwo Demokratyczne [hereinafter: SD], ref. no. 1/111, sheets 386–387.

²⁸ Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 95–96; P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, p. 198; AAN, Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej [hereinafter: PZPR], ref. no. 237/V/245, sheets 1 and *passim*; SD, ref. no. 1/111, sheet 387.

described as 'the ideological, political and organizational form uniting all democratic and political forces of the Polish nation in the name of struggle for peace and further development of Socialism'²⁹. The National Committee of the FJN was established at the central level; meanwhile in the field, the Committees of the FJN were to operate in voivodeships, *powiaty*, separated cities, and their districts. The structure of the National Committee of the FJN incorporated the Central Coordination Commission in the capacity of its decision center, as well as representatives of various organizations and social milieux³⁰.

Actually, the most important role in creating the candidate slates was played by the PZPR apparatus, for it was the Voivodeship Committees that analyzed and ultimately approved the candidates, submitted by Voivodeship Coordination Commissions after consulting the Central Coordination Commission, as well as with the field committees of the FJN. Of course, Voivodeship Committees (KW) of the PZPR sanctioned not only the candidates of the Party, but also those selected by the ZSL, SD, and social organizations, as well as those not belonging to any political party. It was only later, as Joanna Olejniczak wrote, that Voivodeship Coordination Commissions were able to compose the candidate slates in their final lineup to present them to the district electoral commissions within the term stipulated in the electoral calendar, i.e. before 16 December³¹. Such a mechanism allowed for elimination of undesirable candidates or placing them on the positions, from which they would not acquire the mandate.

Much like the mode of selecting candidates for MPs, so, too, the percentage ratio of mandate distribution between the PZPR and the 'allied factions' constituted a major issue. The leaders of the Party realistically anticipated that the first to be crossed out of the lists during the voting would be the candidates put forth by the PZPR. Therefore, a special Politburo Commission Towards the Election, supervised by Edward Ochab³², presented a project that envisaged the PZPR to receive 54% of

²⁹ 'ideowo-polityczna i organizacyjna forma wszystkich demokratycznych i patriotycznych sił narodu polskiego w imię walki o pokój i dalszy rozwój socjalizmu'. As cited in: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

³⁰ As indicated in: *Ibidem*.

³¹ As indicated in: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 180–181; see: M. Siedziako, *Bez wyboru*, p. 170.

³² P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, pp. 12–13. The Politburo Commission Towards the Election was appointed by the decision the Politburo of 10 November 1956. Besides Ochab, the members were Jerzy Albrecht, Zenon Kliszko, Artur Starewicz and the representatives of the CRZZ and the General Board of the ZMP. (*Protokół Nr 139 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 10 listopada 1956 r.*, in: *Centrum*, p. 227). Subsequently, because of the illness suffered by Edward Ochab, the responsibility for the Commission was bestowed upon Roman Zambrowski, while on 27 December the leadership was granted to Jerzy Morawski

mandate eligible positions (first on the candidate slates, advancing to the Sejm if no-one is crossed out), the ZSL – 24%, and the SD 7%, while candidates not associated with any party (incl. Catholic ones) – 15%. Meanwhile, with regard to the ineligible places, it was assumed that 50% would be granted to the PZPR, 20% – the ZSL, 5% – the SD, with 25% for the non-party candidates (in the case of a large number of crossed-out candidates from the seat-eligible positions, the development that the Party feared, the lineup of further positions proved of greatest importance for the leaderships)³³.

Obviously, the ZSL and the SD wanted to extend their presence in the Sejm benches as compared with the Parliament elected in 1952. Stefan Ignar, the new President of the Supreme Committee of the ZSL (who replaced Władysław Kowalski in the office), demanded that his party be granted 26–28% of seats, whereas the leadership of the SD wanted 9% (an equivalent of 40 MPs), referring back to the fact that in the Legislative Sejm they had as many as 11% of the seats. Additionally, both parties suggested that the scheme devised for the positions eligible for seats should be used for the ineligible positions as well. At the same time, they opposed granting as many as 25% of seats in the Sejm to non-party candidates, which they say as occurring at the expense of both factions³⁴.

It was only in mid-December that they were able to reach an agreement on the matter, barely meeting the deadline for submitting candidate slates. The agreement largely accommodated the demands of the ‘allied factions’ and assumed that the candidates of the PZPR would receive 52% of seats in the future Set (239 MPs), the ZSL – 26% (118 MPs), the SD – 8.5% (39 MPs), whereas the non-party candidates were to receive almost 14% seats in the Sejm, amounting to 63 MPs (it was 8.5% in the previous Sejm, hence only 37 seats)³⁵.

Another issue was linked to the slate of the so-called central candidates, comprising a total of 78 names, including mainly the leading representatives of the PZPR – 40 persons, but also of the ZSL – 20, the SD – 6, and those unaffiliated with any party – 12. The candidates from that group were to be situated in the slates of the respective voting districts; however,

(*Protokół Nr 143 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 24 listopada 1956 r.*, in: *Centrum*, p. 239; *Protokół Nr 151 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 27 grudnia 1956 r.*, in: *Centrum*, p. 248).

³³ *Notatka Komisji Biura Politycznego KC PZPR do Spraw Wyborów z listopada 1956 r.*, in: *Kampania*, p. 45; J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–182; J. Kwiek, *Przebieg wyborów do Sejmu w styczniu 1957 roku w województwie krakowskim*, ‘*Studia Historyczne*’ 2000, 1, p. 106.

³⁴ P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, pp. 12–14; J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–183; AAN, SD, ref. no. 1/111, sheets 407–408.

³⁵ As indicated in: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 182–183; P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, pp. 13–14.

it was made dependent on the number of seats apportioned to a given district. Thus, it was agreed that they would not run from three-member districts, there would be a single such candidate in four- and five-member districts, whereas in those with six members and more to be elected – a pair. It is only natural that the Party authorities reserved for them the first positions in the candidate slates, even though they oftentimes had no direct relation to the districts they were running in³⁶.

In the case of the central candidates, particular import was granted to the participation in the election of a score or so persons from the direct leadership of the PZPR – members of the Politburo and the Secretariat of the Central Committee (KC). They were distributed onto candidate slates in several voivodeships: in Warsaw, it was Władysław Gomułka (district no. 3) and Jerzy Albrecht (district no. 1), in Łódź – Ignacy Loga-Sowiński (district no. 6) and Roman Zambrowski (district no. 4), in Gdańsk – Stefan Jędrzychowski (district no. 18), in Krakow – Józef Cyrankiewicz (district no. 34), in Katowice Voivodeship – Edward Ochab (district no. 87 in Katowice; originally, Ochab was to be fielded in the district no. 17 in Włocławek), Aleksander Zawadzki (district no. 91 in Zawiercie), and Edward Gierek (district no. 86 in Sosnowiec), in Wrocław Voivodeship – Jerzy Morawski (district no. 110 in Wałbrzych), Władysław Matwin (district no. 109 in Świdnica), and Adam Rapacki (district no. 111 in Wrocław; initially A. Rapacki was to be fielded in Szczecin), in Bydgoszcz Voivodeship – Witold Jaroński (district no. 13 in Grudziądz). Also Marshal Konstantin Rokossowsky, before he left Poland following the Eighth Plenum, was regarded by the executive of the Voivodeship Committee (KW) PZPR in Gdańsk as the candidate for MP, opening the slate in a voting district in Gdynia (such a move had been planned already before the October revolt)³⁷.

The submission of some of the central candidates constituted a sort of a survey of popularity and popular support. The persons preferred were, of course, those who gained in political significance during the precedent several months, or suffered reprisals under the regime of Bierut

³⁶ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V-271, sheet 75; J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 182; R. Stokłosa, *Wybory do Sejmu PRL w latach 1957–1969 w świetle wrocławskiej prasy*, in: *Obraz wyborów w prasie XIX i XX wieku na Pomorzu, Śląsku i w Wielkopolsce*, eds. A. Chlebowska, J. Nowosielska-Sobel, Szczecin 2007, p. 367.

³⁷ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V-271, sheet 212; M. Skoczyła, *Przygotowanie, przebieg i wyniki wyborów parlamentarnych z 20 stycznia 1957 r. w województwie gdańskim w świetle dokumentów KC PZPR*, 'Rocznik Gdański' 1998, 1, p. 62; M. Żukowski, *Komitet Wojewódzki Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej w Gdańsku w okresie Października '56 i wyborów do Sejmu w 1957 r.*, in: *Wybory i referenda w PRL*, eds. S. Ligarski, M. Siedziako, Szczecin 2014, p. 182; J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 199–201.

and his associates. Władysław Gomułka was proposed by the Municipal Coordination Commission in Warsaw on 8 December; however, almost concurrently he was submitted by many industrial plants of the capital and other cities (incl. H. Cegielski Metal Industry Complex in Poznań). Among the most frequently nominated candidates was one of the heroes of the October events (subsequently positioned as ineligible number seven in the district no. 3 in Warsaw), as well as others activists affiliated with Gomułka – Władysław Bienkowski (number two in district no. 71 in Poznań), Zenon Kliszko (number one in district no. 19 Gdynia), Ignacy Loga-Sowiński, and generals: Marian Spychalski, Minister of National Defence (number one in district no. 71 in Poznań), Jan Frey-Bielecki, Commander-in-chief of the Air Force (number four in the district no. 1 in Warsaw), as well as Waclaw Komar, Commander-in-chief of Internal Troops (who eventually did not run)³⁸.

The remaining central candidates, both from the PZPR and elsewhere, who had been members of the preceding authorities, were met with opposition, or at least surrounded by controversies, also within the Party apparatus. During a plenary session of KW PZPR in Wrocław of 6 December, there was a backlash against the eventuality of passive approval for candidates submitted in Warsaw³⁹. A member of the executive of the KW PZPR in Krakow was critical of the candidacy of Józef Cyrankiewicz, who bore part of the responsibility for the perversions of the Stalinist era. Particularly hostile towards the Prime Minister were said to be young party activists⁴⁰. Meanwhile, there was a rumor about Roman Zambrowski that he could only barely find support among the workers of Julian Marchlewski Cotton Plant in Łódź, where his candidacy was formally put forward. Electoral commissions were later sent leaflets saying 'Away with Zambrowski!'. The atmosphere of aversion surrounding the candidate was also fueled by the Polish Section of the Radio Free Europe,

³⁸ Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–102. Besides the aforementioned Generals, there were four high ranked officers running for the Sejm: Gen. Janusz Zarzycki, Chief of the Central Political Board of the Polish Military – number one in the district no. 16 in Tuchola, Counter Admiral Jan Wiśniewski, Commander-in-chief of the Navy – number two in the electoral district no. 18 in Gdańsk, Gen. Józef Kuropieska, Commander of the Warsaw Military District – number one in the electoral district no. 96 in Garwolin, and Col. Tadeusz Cynkin, Head of Officers Training Corps at Jagiellonian University – number seven in the electoral district no. 34 in Krakow; see: J. Kuropieska, *Od października do marca*, part 1, Warszawa 1992, p. 42.

³⁹ As indicated in: S. Ciesielski, *Wrocław 1956*, Wrocław 1999, pp. 170–171.

⁴⁰ As indicated in: S. Drabik, *Wojewódzka organizacja partyjna PZPR w Krakowie w Październiku 1956 i w okresie wyborów w styczniu 1957 roku*, 'Pamięć i Sprawiedliwość' 2011, 1, p. 255.

which in one of its programs dedicated to the MP candidates reminded the audience of Zambrowski's 'legacy' of the preceding twelve years: 'He ruined farmhouses. He destroyed craftsmen, he subdued all aspects of private initiative. He established labor camps. He disorganized the State administration. It is no wonder that coming across his name the voter will stop for a moment of reflection'⁴¹.

In Krakow Voivodeship, similar problems were experienced by another of the candidates 'from the Headquarters' – Lucjan Motyka, a member of the KC PZPR and a Deputy Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture and Art. Even though the First Secretary of the Party's Voivodeship Committee in Krakow, Bolesław Drobner, exerted direct influence on the Powiat Committee (PK) of the PZPR in Chrzanów, so that they would place Motyka on their slate for the Sejm, the members of the District Electoral Commission in the session on 14 December 1956 rejected his candidacy, and put forth their own contenders for the Sejm. Ultimately, however, after a decisive intervention by the KW PZPR, Lucjan Motyka was granted number one on the list in the district no. 33 in Chrzanów⁴².

Meanwhile, the candidacy of Stefan Jędrychowski stirred openly expressed doubts among the executive of the KW PZPR in Gdańsk (the selection of the remaining local candidates also led to much friction). The discussion of the matter was held during a plenary session of the said body on 6 December 1956. It was joined by Zenon Kliszko, who was entrusted the task of stimulating the local Party management to accelerate the electoral activity. During the sitting, the members of the executive demanded that instead of Jędrychowski, who was associated with the Stalinist era (Deputy Prime Minister between 1951 and 1956, and a member of the PRL Sejm of the first term), Zenon Kliszko, perhaps Ignacy Loga-Sowński or Piotr Jaroszewicz be selected to run in Gdańsk. Admittedly, the Party Headquarters agreed that Zenon Kliszko would be a candidate in the voivodeship (district no. 19 in Gdynia); nevertheless, the candidacy of Stefan Jędrychowski was never withdrawn, how, as already mentioned, made it to the candidate slate in Gdańsk (district no. 18)⁴³.

⁴¹ 'Doprowadził do ruiny gospodarstwa wiejskie. Zniszczył rzemiosło, zdusił wszelkie przejawy inicjatywy prywatnej. Stworzył obozy pracy przymusowej. Zdezorganizował administrację państwową. Nic więc dziwnego, że przy jego nazwisku wyborca zatrzyma się dłużej i namyśli się'. As cited in: M. Szumiło, *Roman Zambrowski 1909–1977. Studium z dziejów elity komunistycznej w Polsce*, Warszawa 2014, pp. 372–373; see: Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

⁴² J. Kwiek, *op. cit.*, p. 113.

⁴³ M. Skoczyła, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. Żukowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 184–185; K. Kozłowski, *Od października '56 do grudnia '70. Ewolucja stosunków społeczno-politycznych na Wybrzeżu (1956–1970)*, Szczecin 2002, pp. 131–132; *Raport na temat kampanii wyborczej PZPR w województwie gdańskim (28 stycznia 1957 r.)*, in: *Kampania*, p. 194.

In Bydgoszcz Voivodeship (district no. 14 in Inowrocław) the candidacy of Jan Dąb-Kocioł from the ZSL was met with protests. The politician was directly blamed for the authorities' reprisal activity against peasants during the period of collectivization of villages. These charges were far from being unfounded, as J. Dąb-Kocioł was at the helm of the Ministry of Agriculture for a period of seven years (1947–1954; between 1947 and 1951 it was the Ministry of Agriculture and Agricultural Reforms)⁴⁴. In the same region, major dissatisfaction was caused by another 'Headquarter-driven' candidacy of Stefan Stefański from the SD, who was to run for a seat in the Sejm in the district no. 15 in Toruń. Introducing Stefański on a list in Bydgoszcz Voivodeship resulted in the local candidate from the same party being shifted from an eligible to an ineligible position⁴⁵.

From Kielce Voivodeship, reports were sent about the dissatisfaction with the fact that Józef Ozga – Michalski was selected to run for the Sejm from the district no. 22 in Busko Zdrój. As a member of ZSL leadership and Deputy Marshal of the Sejm in the period of 1952–1956, he was strongly associated with the previous era. He was particularly firmly opposed by the youth centered in the Revolutionary Union of the Youth (RZM), and the workers from the Kielce Metalworks Plant. The Voivodeship Committee of the FJN and KW PZPR received both letters and anonymous messages about the issue, accusing the candidate of working in his private interest and passivity as a member of the PRL Sejm of the first term⁴⁶.

At times, some of the candidacies garnered mixed opinions. For instance, the sailors from the Maritime Specialist School the Border Protection Troops in Gdańsk expressed their warm support for Counter Admiral Jan Wiśniewski, Commander-in-chief of the Navy from 12 October 1956 (electoral district no. 18)⁴⁷. However, contrary opinions of the candidate were circulated in the Navy units in Gdynia, especially among senior officers. Counter Admiral was criticized not only for his lack of training for sea service (as he had commenced his career in the infantry), but most of all he was accused of not having fulfilled his obligations, when he promised officers to provide them accommodation. In order to win over the trust of electorate outside the military, he was supposed to transfer numerous buildings, until that moment accommodating the civil administration of the army. According to a large group of sailors, Jan Wiśniewski had been

⁴⁴ J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 201–202; AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII–2757, sheet 12.

⁴⁵ As indicated in: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

⁴⁶ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V–271, sheet 106.

⁴⁷ Archiwum Straży Granicznej, Dowództwo Wojsk Ochrony Pogranicza, ref. no. 1282/88, sheet 64.

placed on a list in Gdańsk, because in his home town of Gdynia ‘everyone knows him and nobody would vote for him’⁴⁸.

Apart from those against the central candidates, there were voices against the candidacies of persons who were not popular in their own communities. In Słupsk, for example, many members of the staff at the Voivodeship Hospital expressed loud criticisms at the Sejm bid of a female doctor from their hospital, Janina Doliwa, a member of the Party (in district no. 30), claiming she had no authority⁴⁹. The candidacy of Marian Marchlik, placed as number one on the slate in the district no. 116 in Żary, Zielona Góra Voivodeship, stirred a backlash among the peasants from the village of Bielice in the powiat of Rzepin. As a testament to the emotions among the farmers one could read the letter (signed by several scores of persons) that they addressed to Władysław Gomułka, to oppose Marchlik, who they accused of his Stalinist past (there were simultaneous demands that he be replaced with a teacher by the name of Masło)⁵⁰. In Zielona Góra Voivodeship, many negative responses were also caused by the candidacy of Andrzej Mania (number four in the district no. 115 in Zielona Góra). These resulted from a letter by engineer Kazimierz Brodowski to the KW PZPR in Zielona Góra, in which he described his wartime imprisonment in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp alongside Andrzej Mania. The candidate for MP was reported to have purported to be a German and exercised the function of a Kapo⁵¹.

During the process of composing the lineup of the candidate slates throughout the country, acts of authentic competition and antagonisms were witnessed between the PZPR and the ‘allied factions’, particularly the ZSL. The conflict was particularly acute in Krakow Voivodeship. The leadership of the local ZSL assumed that the general percentage ratio for the seats applied to the entire country, whereas in the respective regions it could be formed differently. They argued, therefore, that in voivodeships with strong folk tradition, with Krakow being one of those, the peasant party ought to be granted more seats in the future Sejm than in other regions. It must be underscored that the local Voivodeship Committee of the ZSL were strongly pressurized by the members of their party, including ex-activists of the Polish People’s Party (PSL) (most active in the *powiaty* of Dąbrowa, Krakow, Wadowice, and Bochnia), calling for self-government

⁴⁸ ‘wszyscy go znają i nikt by głosu na niego nie oddał’. Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, Gabinet Ministra Obrony Narodowej, ref. no. IV. 500. 1/C. 324, sheet 87.

⁴⁹ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII–2757, sheet 2.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, sheet 72; AAN, Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza [hereinafter: PKW], ref. no. 317, sheet 243.

⁵¹ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V–271, sheets 165–166.

and shifting the party in the direction of an actual peasant movement. In the respective *powiaty*, there were also noticeable tendencies to select their own candidates – well known peasant activists, but not associated with the ZLS – for instance, in Dąbrowa Tarnowska they opted for Stanisław Mierzwa, Władysław Witek, Józef Rzepka, and Stanisław Klimczak⁵².

Meanwhile, during the meeting of the executive of the KW PZPR with first secretaries of powiat committees, an arbitrary decision was made, on the basis of the so-called central arrangement, that in the Voivodeship of Krakow the PZPR would receive twenty-four seats, whereas the ZSL a meagre nine (with two more seats intended for the SD, and four – for unaffiliated candidates). Furthermore, the peasant party was to be forced to accept the names pre-approved in the powiat committees of persons running for seats in the Sejm from among their party. The voivodeship leadership of the ZSL reacted by demanding twelve eligible and eight ineligible positions for their party (with the bottom line against the PZPR being set at eleven and seven, respectively). It should be stressed that the complication in the talks on the division of electoral mandates resulted not only from the strength and traditions of the peasant movement in the region, or political appetite of the local ZSL, but also from a distressful, or even hostile attitude towards them of the aforementioned First Secretary of the KW PZPR Bolesław Drobner, who accused the Supreme Committee of the ZSL of being sympathizers of the Natolin fraction of the PZPR. Ultimately, when the parties failed to reach an agreement, the matter was resolved in the Central Coordination Commission, which decided to raise to ten the number of seats available to the ZSL in Krakow Voivodeship⁵³.

However, the verdict on the distribution of mandates in Krakow Voivodeship did not put an end to conflicts surrounding the election candidacies in the region. In the respective *powiaty*, the lineup and order on the slates were lumberingly negotiated, with conflicts between the PZPR and the ZSL occurring besides frictions within the very peasant movement. In the district of Myślenice, the Powiat Committee (PK) of the ZSL attempted to perch Edward Trojanowski atop the list, but his candidacy was thrice rejected by the PZPR. In such circumstances, the ZSL decided to support the first on the list unaffiliated candidate, Józef Marek. They also put forth their own contender – Adam Mamak, who, in turn, did not receive the approval of the Voivodeship Committee of the

⁵² J. Kwiek, *op. cit.*, pp. 108–109.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, pp. 107–110; M. Szpytma, *ZSL w województwie krakowskim (1949–1956). Geneza – ludzie – działalność*, Kraków 2013, pp. 250–251; S. Drabik, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–256; Archiwum Zakładu Historii Ruchu Ludowego [hereinafter: ZZHRL], Naczelny Komitet Zjednoczonego Stronnictwa Ludowego [hereinafter: NK ZSL], ref. no. 121, sheet 287.

ZSL. Then, the central leadership of the party forced upon the district the central candidate Stanisław Cieślak (at number three), leaving the local representatives with the sole option of submitting Franciszek Bedrawa, as the last the list⁵⁴.

With regard to Krakow Voivodeship, there is one more situation that requires a mention, this time associated with the rivalry between Zakopane and Nowy Targ. Now, Zakopane, which from 1951 enjoyed the status of a separate city-*powiat*, was subordinated to three-member electoral district no. 38 in Nowy Targ. Consequently, the city authorities demanded to be granted a representative in the Sejm, and hence petitioned for a separate, single-member sub-district for Zakopane within the said district no. 38. In a letter to Council of State, the representatives of the Municipal National Council, political factions, and social organizations from the capital of the Polish Tatra Mountains claimed that 'The district of Zakopane, owing to its climatic, landscape, and cultural values possesses major and very special significance for the population of the whole country'⁵⁵. Thus, it was argued that Zakopane, as a tourist and recreational centre, 'intended as regeneration space for the entire Polish workforce'⁵⁶, ought to have a seat in the Sejm secured, so that the city was represented 'in the Legislative (sic!) Sejm in the name of the well-understood interest of the country's population'⁵⁷. In an official statement, Council of State rejected the demand, on the basis of regulations provided in the Constitution of the PRL and in the adopted Electoral Law, which ruled out the establishment of a separate, single-member district, solely of Zakopane⁵⁸.

An intriguing issue, associated with the selection process of MP candidates, was the competition to land a spot on the list among the representatives of the peasant movement. In Kazimierza Wielka *powiat* of Kielce Voivodeship, the person intent on running was a Jan Maniak, an adherent of the local peasant movement since before the war, and later also active in the PSL. His candidacy received the support of the Secretary of the *Powiat* Committee of the ZSL. Even though the names of the faction's contenders for seats in the Sejm had already been determined, a deputation of peasants was sent to the Supreme Committee in Warsaw,

⁵⁴ As indicated in: J. Kwiek, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–111; see: M. Szpytma, *op. cit.*, pp. 451–452.

⁵⁵ 'Okręg Zakopanego, dzięki swym wartościom klimatycznym, krajobrazowym i kulturalnym, posiada dla ludności całej Polski specjalne i poważne znaczenie'.

⁵⁶ 'przeznaczonego na regenerację sił świata pracy całego kraju'.

⁵⁷ 'w Sejmie Ustawodawczym (!) w imię słusznego pojętego interesu całej ludności kraju'. AAN, PKW, ref. no. 317, sheets 91–92.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, sheets 96, 98.

in order to push through Jan Maniak's Sejm bid⁵⁹. A similar situation occurred also in several *powiaty* of Łódź Voivodeship. The most high-profile case was that of the *powiat* of Wieluń, where the representatives of the Polish Teachers' Union (ZNP) submitted the candidacy of a member of the ZSL, Idzi Żurek, knowing that the voivodeship leadership of the party had already confirmed the list of peasant activists to run in the election. The Voivodeship Committee in Łódź received protests from numerous members of the ZSL, threatening to downright boycott the vote if the candidates that had selected would not be included on the slates⁶⁰. Also in Rzeszów Voivodeship, local committees of the ZSL, in Kolbuszowa, Tarnobrzeg and Nisko submitted their own nominees for MPs, ignoring the position of the voivodeship leaders of the faction, who had designated entirely different persons to participate in the election⁶¹.

The PZPR decided to allow representatives of Catholic circles to run in the election; their activity in 1956 bore the fruit of formation of several scores of debate clubs, with the flagship among those being the National Club of Progressive Catholic Intelligentsia (OKPIK), established on 23 October 1956, with Jerzy Zawieyski as its first President⁶². Its members voiced their support for the new direction in domestic policy heralded by the associates of Gomułka during the Eighth Plenum, and could prove to be a useful instrument for the Party leadership both in their contacts with the Episcopate, particularly with Primate Stefan Wyszyński, and with the wider Catholic milieu. Having conducted talks with the representatives of the authorities, Władysław Gomułka and Edward Ochab, the OKPIK started to participate in the sittings of the Central Coordination Commission, and the decision was made to put forth Catholic candidates for the election (additionally, the authorities gave their consent that *Tygodnik Powszechny* weekly could be reinstated, and *Znak* monthly magazine – established). Among the latter, there were Jerzy Zawieyski (running in the district no. 4 in Warsaw), Stanisław Stomma (district no. 34 in Krakow), Stefan Kisielewski (district no. 111 in Wrocław), Zbigniew Makarczyk (district no. 59 in Olsztyn), and Antoni Gładysz (district no. 41 in Tarnów). Subsequently, all of the above formed in the Sejm the Catholic Deputies' Group 'Znak', later joined by several unaffiliated parliamentarians – Miron Kołakowski, Paweł Kwoczek, Wanda Pieniężna, Bolesław Jackiewicz, Kazimierz Skowroński and the

⁵⁹ AZHRL, NK ZSL, ref. no. 112, sheet 223.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, sheet 234.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, sheet 19.

⁶² A. Friszke, *Koło postów 'Znak' w Sejmie PRL 1957–1976*, Warszawa 2002, p. 6; idem, *Oaza na Kopernika. Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej 1956–1989*, Warszawa 1997, p. 42 and *passim*.

ex-members of the PAX Association – Jan Frankowski and Konstanty Łubieński⁶³.

It should be added that several candidacies of Catholic activists did not receive approval. Thus, for instance in Łódź, some Catholic groups opposed the election bid of Józef Kononowicz, Chief Editor of Łódź office of *Słowo Powszechne*. They argued in this case that the journalist is associated with the discredited President of PAX Association – Bolesław Piasecki. At the same time, members of Catholic intelligentsia from Łódź submitted the candidacies of local solicitors – Grabowski and Konstanty Jocz. There were also talks of a potential compromise within the city's entire Catholic movement, entailing the support for the electoral run of a well-known doctor, Helena Dzioba. However, it was Józef Kononowicz who received support from the authorities and appeared as number two in the candidate slate in the district no. 6 in Łódź (the propaganda materials during the campaign did not mention his associations with PAX)⁶⁴.

Meanwhile, the candidacy of aforementioned Bolesław Piasecki, submitted by the activists of PAX Association in Warsaw for the district no. 54 in Wieluń was rejected by the District Electoral Commission (OKW). In an official statement of reasons for the decision, the OKW in Wieluń, citing the regulations of the Electoral Law, claimed that 'the Commission is of the opinion that PAX Association in Warsaw is not a political, professional, nor cooperative organization, nor a mass social organization of the working people, and therefore the candidacy of citizen Piasecki Bolesław cannot be registered'⁶⁵. An official complaint filed by the Board of PAX Association against the decision of the OKW in Wieluń proved of no avail, as it was dismissed by the National Electoral Commission (PKW), most likely not without inspiration from the

⁶³ M. Siedziako, *Bez wyboru*, p. 288; A. Friszke, *Koło*, p. 7 and *passim*. The authorities did not content to another two candidacies of the Catholic community – those of Stanisław Broniewski, former Commander of 'Grey Ranks' and Krzysztof Morawski – a pre-war squire and farmer-engineer (J. Zabłocki, *Dzienniki 1956–1965*, vol. 1, Warszawa 2008, p. 57; T. Danilecki, *Wybory ze stycznia 1957 r. w województwie białostockim – przygotowania, przebieg, wyniki*, in: *Mała stabilizacja' w województwie białostockim 1956–1970*, ed. M. Markiewicz, Białystok 2012, p. 23; A. Friszke, *Koło*, p. 10). Meanwhile, Antoni Gładysz replaced on the slate in Tarnów (district no. 41) the candidate previously recommended for the Sejm by *Tygodnik Powszechny*, Tadeusz Myślik (J. Zabłocki, *op. cit.*, p. 57).

⁶⁴ J. Wróbel, *op. cit.*, pp. 218, 220.

⁶⁵ 'zdaniem Komisji Stowarzyszenie 'PAX' w Warszawie nie jest organizacją polityczną, zawodową, spółdzielczą ani też masową organizacją społeczną ludu pracującego i dlatego to zgłoszona kandydatura ob. Piaseckiego Bolesława nie jest zarejestrowana'. AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheet 4.

leadership of the PZPR (Bolesław Piasecki would have become a member of the PRL Sejm only in 1965)⁶⁶.

The central arrangements as to the manner of candidate submission and the percentage ratio of deputy mandates for the future Sejm did not stop numerous grass-root attempts at putting forth not only single candidates, but even entire candidate slates without approval from the local electoral commissions. Insofar as during the 1952 election the Party machinery was able to exercise strict control over everything, and the 'spontaneous nominations' in the field constituted mere propaganda stunts, now all the limitations from before were breaking down. *Powiat* units of the Party, of the ZSL, local branches of social and youth organizations wanted to have their own candidates, not to mention large industrial plants, whose delegations oftentimes threatened to hold street demonstrations or boycott the election, should their demands not be met. Efforts to nominate candidate for future Deputies of the Sejm were also undertaken by circles striving to restore or establish anew non-communist parties and political organizations – be they national, Christian democratic, socialist or Catholic⁶⁷.

Therefore, it can hardly come as a surprise that throughout the country there was an avalanche of submissions of contenders for the seats in the Sejm. Only in the city of Łódź, for instance, a total of seventy-four persons were proposed (with seventeen positions on the lists and eleven deputy mandates to be distributed), whereas in Warsaw by 14 December, approx. 160⁶⁸. In Białystok Voivodeship, according to the data of 12 December, ca. 300 candidates were submitted, whereas ultimately there were reports of 427 candidacies from the region (only in the *powiat* of Sokółka there were several scores of those)⁶⁹; in Bydgoszcz Voivodeship, during various sessions, mass meetings, and rallies the number of persons nominated to run for the Sejm reached ca. five hundred⁷⁰. Meanwhile, in Lublin Voivodeship, two hundred candidates were submitted, of whom sixty representing the ZSL⁷¹.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, sheet 5; *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r. w sprawie rejestracji list kandydatów na posłów*, in: *Kampania*, pp. 50–51; A. Dudek, G. Pytel, *Bolesław Piasecki. Próba biografii politycznej*, Londyn 1990, pp. 258, 284.

⁶⁷ P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, p. 198; J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 183; Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–101; AZHRL, NK ZSL, ref. no. 121, sheet 304, *Ocena wstępna przebiegu kampanii wyborczej do Sejmu PRL*.

⁶⁸ J. Wróbel, *op. cit.*, pp. 215–216; P. Ossowski, *Wybory do Sejmu PRL II kadencji w dniu 2 stycznia 1957 r. (na przykładzie Łodzi)*, 'Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica' 2013, 91, p. 181; Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁶⁹ AAN, PKW, ref. no. 309, sheet 148; T. Danilecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 24–25, 27.

⁷⁰ J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 202–203.

⁷¹ *Raport WK ZSL w Lublinie na temat kampanii wyborczej w województwie lubelskim (styczeń 1957 r.)*, in: *Kampania*, p. 221.

Additionally, the Pensioners' Association (ZE) envisaged having their own representatives in the Sejm, when they proposed ten candidates, and so did the Polish Hunters' Association (PZŁ), submitting three persons⁷². In Krakow Voivodeship, attempts at putting forth candidacies were made, among others, by: Krakow Polytechnic (Prof. Bronisław Kopyciński), Praesidium of Voivodeship Council of the Board of Worker Cooperative (Stanisław Wójcicki), Praesidium of Municipal Committee of the FJN in Maków Podhalański (Józef Miśkowiec), PAX Association, together with the editorial boards of *Kierunki* and *Słowo Powszechne* (Włodzimierz Wnuk), Women's League (Stefania Ćwiklińska and Stefania Bajorkowa), as well as Committee for Revival of Work Cooperativeness (Stanisław Nawara). Also Krakow Voivodeship saw a more complicated situation. The District Electoral Commission (OKW) in Oświęcim (district no. 40) refused to register the so-called 'Peasants List', comprising four candidates, with number one granted to Józef Putek (the Minister of Post and Telegraphs in the period of 1946–1948), approved by the *Powiat* Committee of the ZSL in Wadowice. Interestingly, Józef Putek, who in fact enjoyed genuine endorsement of the local populace, had previously been indicated as the central candidate by the NK ZSL. However, because of his critical comments about both the PZPR and the ZSL, and the submission of the said 'Peasants List', he was withdrawn from the election. The candidacy put forth to replace Józef Putek was Władysław Szatkowski, Deputy President of the NK ZSL, placed at the eligible number three on the slate in the district no. 40⁷³.

In Białystok Voivodeship, the inhabitants of the *powiat* of Siemiatycze endorsed as their candidate barrister Romuald Noryśkiewicz, whereas the employees of the Textile Industry Plant in Zambrów – Stefan Orczykowski, the manager of professional training and a member of the Presidium of the Workers' Council. In Jarosław (Rzeszów Voivodeship, district no. 75), an attempt was made to register '*Independent Peasants List*', submitted by circles of the Peasants' Self-Help Union (ZSch) of two *gromady*, Workers' Council of the State Agricultural Farms (PGR), and Praesidium of Gromadzka National Council (GRN) (the list comprised the names of four candidates, headed by Antoni Kędziora, a barrister from Przeworsk); in the *powiaty* of Jaorsław, Przeworsk, and Lubaczów, signatures were collected for the list of Wiktor Jedliński (a barrister from Jarosław, former Voivode of Rzeszów)⁷⁴. The Basic Party Unit (POP) of the PZPR and the clubs of

⁷² Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 101.

⁷³ J. Kwiek, *op. cit.*, pp. 110–112; M. Szpytma, *op. cit.*, pp. 452–453; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheets 118–119; *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r.*, p. 51.

⁷⁴ T. Danilecki, *op. cit.*, p. 24; P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 14; M. Szpytma, *op. cit.*, pp. 452–453; S. Stępka, *Władze partyjno-państwowe a chłopcy w okresie wyborów (1947–1957)*, in: *Represje*

the ZSL and the ZSCh in Wolica Ługowa (*powiat* of Ropczyce) submitted the candidacy of Stefan Ziomek. In the *powiat* of Myszków (Katowice Voivodeship), there was a nomination for Stanisław Glinka, a farmer from the village of Mzyki. Another farmer, Franciszek Broca, was intended for candidate slates by the inhabitants of the *powiat* of Bytów in Koszalin Voivodeship. Meanwhile, in Wodzisław (Kielce Voivodeship), there were demands that Henryk Łaski should run for the Sejm; while in the *powiat* of Żywiec, citizens wanted to nominate Bolesław Sroka (submitted by the local PK ZSL) and Czesław Bocian (endorsed by the workers from the local plants); in Krakow Voivodeship, peasants from the village of Zalasowa called for Józef Kanwa, and the farmers from Kasinka Mała wanted the Sejm for Jan Cież⁷⁵.

Among the circles that put forth their own candidates for the Sejm, there were: Association of Civil Invalids, Widows, and Orphans in Krotoszyn (Władysław Mazurek), Association of Polish Lawyers the Circle in Bochnia (Walerian Hans), Trade Union of Communication Workers in Sławno (Jan Budnik), Trade Union of Commerce Workers in Bytom (Tadeusz Kobyłka), Trade Union of Civil Engineering and Building Materials Industry Workers in Krakow, Association of Private House Owners in Łódź, Guild of Various Crafts in Brodnica, Voivodeship Board of Women's League in Bydgoszcz, Association of Work Invalids – branches in Wałbrzych and Krakow, 'Ekstrakt' Food and Vegetable Processing Unit of Workers Cooperative in Warsaw, farmers from the *powiat* of Sandomierz, and even Warsaw stall holders⁷⁶. There were also cases of people who promoted their own candidacies, offering to grant their future electorate 'non-returnable loans', whereas a certain doctor promised free medical cover. Common practice included demagogic promises of abolition of contingents of compulsory supplies in the villages, of pay rises, solution to housing problems, abolition of censorship, as well as... inviting people to

wobec wsi i ruchu ludowego (1944–1956). Materiały z konferencji naukowej 5–6 grudnia 2002 r. w Rzeszowie, vol. 1, eds. J. Gmitruk, Z. Nawrocki, Warszawa 2003, pp. 60–61; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheets 75, 173; *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r.*, p. 51.

⁷⁵ AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheet 27; KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII–2757, sheets 23–24; *Biuletyn Biura Listów i Inspekcji KC PZPR z 4 stycznia 1957 r. nr 1/169*, in: *Kampania*, pp. 90–94; M. Szpytma, *op. cit.*, pp. 452.

⁷⁶ Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 100–101; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheets 14–15, 150–151, 179, ref. no. 311, sheets 32, 122, 151; *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r.*, p. 50; *Biuletyn Biura Listów i Inspekcji KC PZPR*, pp. 94–95. The efforts of the Voivodeship Board of Women's League in Bydgoszcz to submit a female candidacy in the region proved successful. The executive of the KW PZPR agreed to place Irena Jankiewicz, a teacher from Mogilno, at a Sejm-eligible position on the candidate slate in the district no. 14 in Inowrocław; as indicated by: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, pp. 203–204.

drinking parties. Various plots aimed at candidates (or rather candidates for candidates) also occurred frequently, initiated by their opponents⁷⁷.

Some candidacies were intended as having a broader, nation-wide significance by the organizations that submitted them. For instance, the Zielona Góra Office of Polish Pharmaceutical Association put forth the candidacy of Prof. Stanisław Krauze, lecturer at the College of Medicine in Warsaw, a distinguished scientist in the field of bromatology (food science). The initiative was endorsed by the General Congress of Polish Pharmaceutical Association, held on 2 December 1956 in Warsaw. There were calls that Prof. S. Krauze should be placed on the central candidates' slate⁷⁸. Meanwhile, Supreme Council of Advocates (NRA) submitted the candidacies of four barristers (Stanisław Garlicki, Tadeusz Kłosiński, Franciszek Sadurski and Oktaw Pietruski), who had been nominated during the session of the Warsaw Circle of the Association of Polish Lawyers. As grounds for the submission, the NRA pointed out that 'in the future Sejm there should be room, among others, for persons with complete legal training, who concurrently in their everyday work encounter [...] the most painful social conflicts'⁷⁹.

The 'wild lists' and uncomfortable candidacies, undesirable for the authorities, were blocked by the District Electoral Commissions (OKW), able to justify their decisions using the imprecise regulations of the Electoral Law, which was therefore easy to interpret whichever way. It was, for instance, frequently claimed that a given organization, submitting a name of the candidate for the Sejm, was not in fact a 'mass social organization of the working people'. Such an interpretation was used, among others, by the OKW no. 65 in Jarocin, refusing to register a candidate slate for the Sejm, put forth by the *powiat* branch of the Association of Civil Invalids, Widows, and Orphans in Krotoszyn; by the OKW no. 100 in Płock, that did not admit a list submitted by the Płock and Bydgoszcz units of the Federation of Engineering Associations; and by the aforementioned OKW in Wieluń, opposing the candidacy of Bolesław Piasecki put forth by PAX Association⁸⁰. Another method to reject individual candidates was qualifying those as incomplete, and thus invalid list submissions. In line

⁷⁷ Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁷⁸ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII-2757, sheet 10.

⁷⁹ 'w przyszłym Sejmie powinny znaleźć się – między innymi – osoby posiadające pełne przygotowanie prawnicze, a jednocześnie stykające się w swojej codziennej pracy [...] z najbardziej bolesnymi konfliktami społecznymi'. AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII-2757, sheet 11.

⁸⁰ AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheet 33; ref. no. 311, sheet 78; KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII-2757, sheets 25–26.

with Art. 39 of the Electoral Law, such lists could not comprise two or three names, but had to, as we can read in one of the documents of the National Electoral Commission (PKW) 'include a number of candidates greater than the number of deputy mandates allocated to a given electoral district'⁸¹. That method of dismissing submitted candidacies was used *i.a.* in the district no. 73 in Dębica, district no. 34 in Krakow, district no. 101 in Pruszków, district no. 105 in Jelenia Góra, and in district no. 32 in Bochnia⁸². Many submissions of contenders for the Sejm or entire candidate slates were simply ignored by District Electoral Commissions, a fact about which the submitting organizations only learned after the announcement of official candidate slates. Some candidacies were put forward too late, that is after the date of 16 December, stipulated in the Law⁸³.

The composition of candidate slates, and selection of candidates to sit in the Sejm caused vocal responses among the indigenous people and minority groups, although the majority of those proved either critical of or indifferent to the election. The October transformations did ease the State's policy towards the autochthons and ethnic minorities; however, the authorities had no interest in stimulating their activity. If they agreed to certain people from those circles running for the Sejm, these had to have earned the Party's trust, and that was oftentimes contradictory to the endorsement in their own milieu.

With regard to the indigenous people, it ought to be highlighted that their attitude to the ongoing political events, including the election, to a large degree resulted from the previous politics adopted by the State, associated with national verification, conflicts over real estate, collectivization of villages, as well as stormy relationships with the incoming population⁸⁴. In some however, clear-cut demands were voiced, also pertaining to the lineup of the candidate slates. In the *powiat* of Racibórz, the indigenous people expressed the demand that there should be a representative from

⁸¹ 'obejmować kandydatów w liczbie większej od liczby mandatów, przypadających na dany okręg wyborczy'. AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheet 20.

⁸² AAN, PKW, ref. no. 310, sheets 28, 152; ref. no. 311, sheets 35, 44, 84.

⁸³ AAN, PKW, ref. no. 311, sheet 180; Front Jedności Narodu, ref. no. 91; KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII-2757, sheets 47, 57.

⁸⁴ According to the division into voivodeships, the totals of indigenous people were as follows, Voivodeship of: Białystok – 2,809 persons, Gdańsk – 55,743, Katowice – 397,362, Koszalin – 15,704, Olsztyn – 106,709, Opole – 424,466, Szczecin – 697, Wrocław – 10,709, and Zielona Góra – 8,320. Cz. Osękowski, *Spółczesność Polski zachodniej i północnej w latach 1945–1956. Procesy integracji i dezintegracji*, Zielona Góra 1994, p. 120. On the distribution of the indigenous populace, see: G. Strauchold, *Autochtoni, Polacy, Niemcy, czy... Od nacjonalizmu do komunizmu (1945–1949)*, Toruń 2001.

their territory nominated for the Sejm⁸⁵. Similar claims were reported in the *powiat* of Opole, where the locals spoke of the need to establish a larger number of voting districts, where they could vote for the people who enjoyed their trust. It was also added that it should be made possible for the voters to add appropriate candidates (*sic!*)⁸⁶.

Some indigenous communities nominated particular persons as candidates for the Sejm. On 9 December 1956 in Koszalin Voivodeship, during a voivodeship Congress of Catholic activists, organised by PAX Association, a group of indigenous-Catholics demanded that a congress of local populace be called in Złotów, in order to nominate an MP-candidate from their region. Such a congress was in fact held, with the support of PAX, several days later, on 11 December, when Rev. Stanisław Brzęczek submitted the candidacy of Teofil Kołakowski, a cooperative movement activist, and a prisoner of Sachsenhausen and Auschwitz Concentration Camps⁸⁷.

The Thaw and the transformation of the Polish October built up the hopes and expectations of the Ukrainian and Lemeko populations, deported to the so-called Recovered Territories as part of Operation Vistula. Already in June 1956, a founding congress was held of the Ukrainian Social and Cultural Association (UTSK) with the participation of delegates from all voivodeships inhabited by Ukrainians. Their communities – besides the ability to return to their homeland and the abolition of the decree of 27 July 1949⁸⁸ – demanded that the Ukrainian minority should be granted deputy mandates in the PRL Sejm⁸⁹. Many representatives of the nationality in Olsztyn (particularly the *powiat* of Braniewo) and Koszalin Voivodeships openly claimed that they would not participate in the election if their candidates were not included on the slates⁹⁰. As the only representative of the Ukrainian ethnic minority (who acknowledged his background) could,

⁸⁵ Archiwum Instytutu Pamięci Narodowej [hereinafter: AIPN] Bu, ref. no. 00231/86/, vol. 135, sheet 10.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁷ AIPN Bu, ref. no. 00231/86, vol. 133, sheet 444; Z. Romanow, *Problemy polskiej ludności rodzimej powiatu złotowskiego w memoriale Polskiego Związku Zachodniego z 1948 roku*, 'Słupskie Studia Historyczne' 2004, 11, p. 279.

⁸⁸ The decree deprived Ukrainians of their ownership of homesteads they had been deported from during Operation Vistula along with the property they had left behind. 'Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej' 1949, 46; R. Drozd, *Polityka władz wobec ludności ukraińskiej w Polsce w latach 1944–1989*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 125 and *passim*.

⁸⁹ As indicated by: R. Drozd, *Ukraińcy w Polsce w okresie przełomów politycznych 1944–1981*, in: *Mniejszości narodowe w Polsce. Państwo i społeczeństwo polskie a mniejszości narodowe w okresie przełomów politycznych (1944–1989)*, ed. P. Madajczyk, Warszawa 1998, pp. 210–212.

⁹⁰ AIPN Bu, ref. no. 0296/78, vol. 3, sheet 12; ref. no. 00231/86, vol. 133, sheet 445.

in a sense, be regarded Bronisław Ostapczuk, running as a candidate of the PZPR in the district no. 112 in Wrocław, who as a member of voivodeship Party leadership in Wrocław, largely helped to establish the structures of UTSK in the capital of Lower Silesia⁹¹.

In Białystok Voivodeship, the process of nominating candidates for the Sejm, saw the conflicts, in turn, between Poles and Lithuanians, as well as between Poles and Belarusians. For instance, during a meeting of the inhabitants of the region of Sejny, representatives of the Polish circles submitted Piotr Szyryński, as a counter-candidate for Józef Maksimowicz, put forth by the local Lithuanians⁹². Eventually, the candidate slates in Białystok Voivodeship did not include any candidates directly identified as Belarusian or Ukrainian activist, such as: Sergiusz Soroka, Headmaster of Belarusian High School in Hajnówka; Nina Muszyńska, a supervisor of Belarusian folk ensembles, or the above-mentioned Józef Maksimowicz, Lithuanian activist from the region of Puńsk. They were replaced by people less associated with minority communities – Makary Demianowicz, Jan Maciejuk (mandate-eligible positions in the district no. 7 in Bielsko Podlaskie) and Paweł Chrzanowski (ineligible position in the district no. 8 in Białystok)⁹³.

In Gdańsk Voivodeship, Kashubian Association – the first social and cultural organization of Kashubians after World War II, established at the end of October 1956 – demanded to be granted their own electoral district. The executive of the KW PZPR in Gdańsk, however, deemed the initiative to be an expression of their separatist tendencies. Admittedly, the MP candidate from the Kashubian community was Bernard Szcześny (Mayor of Wejherowo in the period of 1945–1948, and, subsequently, the President of the General Board of Kashubian Association); however, he was positioned at the awarded no mandate for the Sejm position seven on the slate in the district no. 19 in Gdynia. In spite of that fact, Kashubian Association prevailed on to support the Party's candidates⁹⁴.

In the cases when it proved to be impossible to position on the slate a specific candidate, nominated by a community or an organization, what followed were oftentimes intervention at the central level – either directly in the Central Committee, or with the members of the leadership – Zenon Kliszko and Władysław Gomułka. On such occasions it was argued that

⁹¹ J. Syrnyk, *O ukraińską reprezentację w Sejmie PRL*, in: *Wybory i referenda w PRL*, eds. S. Ligarski, M. Siedziako, Szczecin 2014, p. 600.

⁹² T. Danilecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 22–23; see: AAN, PKW, ref. no. 309, sheet 148.

⁹³ T. Danilecki, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁹⁴ K. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 132–133; M. Skoczylas, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. Żukowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 185–187.

the local party members block access to the slates, and the headquarters were pleaded for the assistance in reaching the demands. One such instance occurred in Białystok Voivodeship, where in the *powiat* of Ełk and in Kurpie lands demands were voiced, with threats of election boycott, that the candidate Stanisław Krupka should replace the number three in the list (district no. 9 in Łomża) Krzysztof Morawski, a representative of the OKPiK. Attempts to push through S. Krupka, when the slates had already been sealed by the PKW, was undertaken in the KC PZPR by the District Committee of the FJN in Łomża. With the same objective, a group of inhabitants of the *powiat* of Kolno went to the capital, intending to meet Władysław Gomułka, as well as several activists of the local ZSL, pithing to negotiate the matter with the NKW ZSL. All these efforts were only partly successful. Krzysztof Morawski was indeed removed from the slate; however, Stanisław Krupka was not admitted on the list, with the former's place being granted to Franciszek Zabielski of the ZSL, initially placed at the bottom of the list (thus, the number of candidates for the district had been diminished)⁹⁵.

By 16 December 1956, as indicated by Joanna Olejniczak, the Central Committee had received forty letters, telegrams, and resolutions from various organizations (oftentimes signed by hundreds of persons), pertaining to the submission of candidates. These were only considered, however, in the cases when they had been endorsed by the *powiat* coordination commissions. Additionally, after 16 December, another twenty-two telegrams from social organizations and fourteen letters from the respective communities and private persons were received, which questioned some candidates from the already approved slates. Besides the written interventions, thirty deputations from various parts of the country applied to Central Coordination Commission, demanding certain candidates to be allowed to run in the election, or protesting against undesirable contenders on the lists. These deputations were informed that the number of candidates submitted had been too high and not all of them could seek deputy mandates, or that the deadline for submitting lists stipulated in the Electoral Law had passed, and no more changes were possible⁹⁶.

The fact that the authorities rejected certain candidacies, submitted during electoral rallies and enjoying genuine endorsement within their communities, could at times stir up sharp conflicts. Such situation happened, for instance, during the loud case of Prof. Zygmunt Izdebski, a lecturer and

⁹⁵ T. Danilecki, *op. cit.*, pp. 25–27.

⁹⁶ As indicated by: J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

a former Rector of the High School of Economics in Łódź, nominated as the candidate for the Sejm by students during a rally held on 10 December 1956 in the auditorium of the University of Łódź. The Professor's popularity resulted from his 1956 publications critical of the realities of the political system in Poland and the fact that he had been removed as Rector in 1954, with his case being investigated by the Commission of Party Control at the KC PZPR (he was also an object of interest for the security forces). The past and the outlook of Zygmunt Izdebski disqualified him in the opinion of the authorities as a potential Deputy, a decision arbitrarily made by Cooperation Commission in Łódź. However, according to the official argumentation, due to his short residence in Łódź Izdebski allegedly lacked the merits towards the city. The rejection of Professor's candidacy resulted in a protest by the student community of Łódź, particularly those from the Polytechnic. There was a rally and a manifestation under the banner of introducing Z. Izdebski onto the candidate slate, that reverberated throughout the country. Student opposition was denounced by the Łódź Committee of the PZPR (with Michalina Tatarkówna-Majakowska at the helm, who presided over the coordination commission and was a member of the Central Committee of the PZPR and, as already mentioned, also pursued a seat in the Sejm), whereas *Trybuna Ludu* published a critical article on the matter. Also local periodicals – *Głos Robotniczy* and *Dziennik Łódzki* – printed texts denouncing the students. In municipal work plants, the party organized meetings and inspired the adoption of resolutions condemning the youth's attitude (though staff in some plants treated students' demands with much understanding). Meanwhile, the students addressed a direct complaint to Władysław Gomułka, with their deputation also leaving for Warsaw, where they were received by Zenon Kliszko, who learned from them of the origins of the conflict. Despite all that, the removal of Prof. Izdebski's candidacy proved definite and was to be echoed in the future electoral campaign in Łódź. Unwilling to accept the refusal of their demands, the student community turned against said Michalina Tatarkówna-Majakowska and Roman Zambrowski, fiercely attacking both candidates (using leaflets, anonymous letters, slogans, and breaking up electoral rallies), and calling people to cross out their names during the vote⁹⁷.

The most momentous situation associated with the opposition of candidate lists occurred in Nowy Sącz, in the district no. 37. The district was to see the five candidates compete for three deputy mandates, placed on the list by the local coordination commission in

⁹⁷ J. Wróbel, *op. cit.*, pp. 220 and *passim*; P. Ossowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 181 and *passim*.; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 311, sheets 131, 133–134.

the following order: 1. Jerzy Mroczkowski (member of the PZPR, Head Engineer at Rail-Rolling Stock Repair Workshops (ZNTK) in Nowy Sącz), 2. Jan Schneider (President of the *Powiat* Committee of the ZSL in Nowy Sącz, farmer), 3. Zbigniew Gertych (member of the PZPR, Head of the Instytut of Pomology in Brzezna), 4. Franciszek Wiśniewski (nonpartisan teacher), 5. Jan Antoniszczak (member of the PZPR, former Secretary of the Praesidium of the WRN in Krakow). However, as a result of subsequent moves by Jan Antoniszczak, supported by Bolesław Drobner, he was shifted up to eligible number three, with other candidates being pushed down – Jan Gertych to inadmissible number four, and Jan Wiśniewski to number five. In that form, the slate was registered by the District Electoral Commission in Nowy Sącz. Protests against Jan Antoniszczak having been moved to a position eligible for Deputy mandate were voiced by the workers of the ZNTK, whose forty-member deputation intervened regarding that matter with the Municipal Committee of the PZPR. They demanded the candidate list to be reverted to its initial order, and treated to go on strike, should their request not be met. However, the OKW in Nowy Sącz did not change its decision, and the controversial candidate remained in the eligible spot on the list. As a result, Jan Antoniszczak lost the election, and for that reason in the district no. 37 in Nowy Sącz, the only in the entire country, it was necessary to hold another election⁹⁸.

It should also be stressed that initial approval of the lineup of candidates for the Sejm at the level of Voivodeship Coordination Commissions did not guarantee either the participation in the election or a specific position on the slate. In Lublin Voivodeship, the district electoral commissions of Tomaszów Lubelski and Zamość disapproved of the proposed order of candidates on the lists. In Zamość (district no. 48), the OKW opposed the candidacy of Teofil Głowacki from the PZPR; however, after an intervention made by the Voivodeship Coordination Commission, it eventually consented. In Chełm (district no. 43), one of the Party candidacies was successfully rejected, to be replaced by another member of the PZPR, Mateusz Jaszak, who, however, was placed on a position not granted a mandate⁹⁹. Now in Milicz (Wrocław Voivodeship) of no avail proved the protest submitted by the KP PZPR against the pushing the Party candidate in the district no 108 in Oleśnica, Jan Demski, down from eligible number three, to the last, fifth position

⁹⁸ M. Smoleń, *Wybory do Sejmu PRL w 1957 roku w Sądeckiem*, 'Rocznik Sądecki' 1999, 27, pp. 245 and *passim*; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 206, sheets 2–3; ref. no. 320, sheets 249–250.

⁹⁹ *Raport WK ZSL w Lublinie*, p. 222.

on the slate. The final decision regarding the matter was to be reached at the level of the Central Committee¹⁰⁰.

At the outset of January 1957, Head of the Propaganda Department of the KC PZPR, Andrzej Werblan, in a statement for *Trybuna Ludu* estimated that several tens of thousands of candidates for MPs had been submitted in the country, whereas during a post-electoral council of the KC on 29 January, some sixty thousand names (sic!) had been mentioned. The grand total may have been even higher, as submissions were being sent until the very last moment. Ultimately, the list of the Front of National Unity, issued on 17 December 1956, comprised 724 candidacies. However, before the election was held, the number was lowered to 717 persons, a development to be discussed below¹⁰¹.

From among the candidates, 369 belong to the PZPR (51%), 180 (25%) to the ZSL, 56 (8%) to the SD, whereas 112 (ca. 16%) did not belong to any party. Only 83 candidates (12%) running on that occasion for a seat in the Sejm, had been Deputies in the Parliament of the preceding term, with the rest comprising new MPs, though some of them had participated in the Legislative Sejm of 1947–1952. The electoral slates featured only a small number of women. Only 27 female candidates (4%) contended for the seats in the Sejm, a step-back in comparison to the Sejm of the first term, in which there were 74 women (i.e. over 17%). It resulted both from the preferences of the electorate, but also from the relatively passive stance of Women's League, the official organization of women in the campaign¹⁰².

The age and education level distribution among the candidates also seemed rather interesting. The average age of those making a bid to sit in the Sejm was slightly over forty years old (meaning it was higher than in the previous election). There were 36 candidates (5%) less than thirty years old (with the youngest candidate being a twenty-three-year-old man from Krakow), 217 (30%) in the range between thirty and forty years old, the largest portion – 287 (39%) between forty and fifty, and 187 (26%) over fifty (like the youngest, so, too, the oldest candidate, at seventy-six, hailed from Krakow). Approximately 80% of candidates had at least secondary-school education, with over a half graduates at higher education institutions (in Warsaw, a whooping 65% of contenders for MP positions had university education). We can fully agree with the opinion on the issue presented by Zbigniew Pełczyński, who argues that the predominance of intelligentsia

¹⁰⁰ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 237/VII–2757, sheet 65.

¹⁰¹ P. Machciewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 14; Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, p. 101; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 306, sheet 123.

¹⁰² Z. Pełczyński, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–104; P. Machciewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 14.

among the candidates was the expression of general desire for a better qualified legislative authority, and potentially even – in part subconscious – willingness to return to the pre-war model of the elite¹⁰³.

The mentioned limitation of the number of candidates from 723 to 717 resulted both from random accidents (demise), and from a resolution adopted by Central Electoral Commission on 10 January of removing from candidate lists several persons undesirable by the authorities, even though the Electoral Law did not envisage such an eventuality. Thus, the decision had been made illegally, and it was signed by Władysław Gomułka and the leaders of the other factions – President of the Supreme Committee of the ZSL Stefan Ignar, and President of the Central Committee of the SD Stanisław Kulczyński¹⁰⁴.

The most high-profile cases, disclosed to the public, were those of the candidacies from the PZPR – Edward Osóbka-Morawski and Jan Krężel. The former President of the Polish Committee for National Liberation (PKWN) and the Prime minister of two post-war Governments was fielded as number one in the district no. 44 in Lublin. The motivation of his removal from the candidate slate was provided rather laconically by *Trybuna Ludu*: '[...] Edward Osóbka-Morawski during the electoral campaign took a stance fundamentally contrary to the programme endorsed by the Front of National Unity – District Coordination Commission of Political Factions in Lublin, upon the request of the KC PZPR decided to remove the candidacy of E. Osóbka-Morawski from the FJN candidate slate'¹⁰⁵.

The First Secretary of the KW PZPR in Lublin, Władysław Kozdra, reported to the leadership of the Party that the former Prime Minister, during his meetings with the electorate 'spoke of the PZPR extremely sneeringly'¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, he commented that 'Polish Workers Party (PPR) did not represent either the nation or the working class, but was based on the power of the Soviet Union and the Red Army'¹⁰⁷ and claimed that 'Comrade Gomułka had been freed for fear that whole Poland would

¹⁰³ As indicated by: *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁴ S. Stęпка, *Chłopi*, p. 122.

¹⁰⁵ '[...] Edward Osóbka-Morawski w toku kampanii wyborczej w swoich wystąpieniach zajął stanowisko zasadniczo sprzeczne z programem Frontu Jedności Narodu – Okręgowa Komisja Porozumiewawcza Stronnictw Politycznych w Lublinie, na wniosek KC PZPR, postanowiła wycofać kandydaturę E. Osóbki-Morawskiego z listy kandydatów Frontu Jedności Narodu'. *Wycofanie kandydatur E. Osóbki-Morawskiego i J. Krężla*, *Trybuna Ludu* 1957, 16; Z. Rykowski, W. Władyka, *Polska próba. Październik '56*, Kraków 1989, p. 286.

¹⁰⁶ 'bardzo kpiąco wyrażał się o PZPR'.

¹⁰⁷ 'PPR po wyzwoleniu nie stanowiła reprezentacji narodu i klasy robotniczej, opierała się na sile Związku Radzieckiego i Armii Czerwonej'.

turn into Poznań'¹⁰⁸. E. Osóbka-Morawski was not secretive about his opinions on other matter, either. During one of the pre-election meetings in Warsaw on 5 January 1957, when asked: 'if in his view a single candidate list proved the democratic character of the current election'¹⁰⁹, he responded that 'Poland has such a democracy, as the country's political circumstances allow'¹¹⁰. He argued, moreover, that fully democratic election, like that in Great Britain, are impossible, for Poland had not developed 'such culture of parliamentarism', whereas the authorities do not prepare election to loose it. Concurrently, he was referring to the pre-war period, explaining that under the rule of Sanation, the practice had been the same¹¹¹.

Particularly unnerving for the leadership of the PZPR was the fact that the Ex-Prime Minister openly spoke of the reactivation of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS), and reminded his audience that after its unification with the PPR, all prominent activists of the PPS had been removed. He also pointed out the threat posed by Kremlin, warning that the USSR could one day treat Poland as it had Hungary, may discover 'a Kadar' in Poland, and only the reactivation of the PPS 'may secure Polish sovereignty'. The statements made by Osóbka-Morawski, as underscored by the said First Secretary of the KW in Lublin, also set the tone for and had influence on the positions presented by other candidates for Deputies from the region¹¹². There was additional influx of information provided by sources in the intelligence, indicating that former members of the PPS in Warsaw were discussing the situation in the country and were seeking contact with Osóbka-Morawski, considering him to be their moral leader¹¹³.

Meanwhile Jan Krężel, insolent First Secretary of *Powiat* Committee of the PZPR in Olkusz (previously a worker in the local Enamelware Factory) ran from the district no. 39 in Miechów. Keeping in constant contact with the intelligentsia, 'he perpetrated troublemaking activity in the *powiaty* of Olkusz and Miechów'¹¹⁴, attacking his two counter-candidates from the Party – Henryk Puskarczyn and Władysław Machejek. The first he referred

¹⁰⁸ 'obecnie wypuszczono tow. Gomułkę ze strachu, ażeby cała Polska nie stała się Poznaniem'. As cited in: P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, pp. 204–205; *Dalekopis Władysława Kozdry, I sekretarza KW PZPR w Lublinie w sprawie kampanii wyborczej Edwarda Osóbki-Morawskiego (10 stycznia 1957 r.)*, in: *Kampania*, pp. 150–151; see also: AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V–271, sheets 174–175.

¹⁰⁹ 'czy jego zdaniem jedna lista jest dowodem demokracji obecnych wyborów'.

¹¹⁰ 'Polska ma taką demokrację, na jaką jej położenie polityczne pozwala'.

¹¹¹ AAN, KC PZPR, ref. no. 235/V–271, sheet 178.

¹¹² As cited in: P. Machcewicz, *Polski*, p. 205.

¹¹³ AIPN Bu, ref. no. 00231/86, vol. 135, sheets 223–224.

¹¹⁴ 'prowadził rozrabiacką działalność na terenie powiatu olkuskiego i miechowskiego'.

to as 'the secret police (UB) doctor'¹¹⁵, whereas the other he considered to have been 'a former commander of the secret police (UB), who should not be elected'¹¹⁶. Thus, on 12 January 1957, the Executive of the KW PZPR in Krakow decided that Krężel was a person 'dangerous, ideologically alien, striving to sabotage the Party from within'¹¹⁷, and adopted a resolution as to his removal with the use of administrative measures. Upon a request from the District Electoral Commission he was struck from the candidate slate (soon, Krężel was also removed from the office of First Secretary of the KP in Olkusz)¹¹⁸.

A major problem for the KW PZPR in Krakow turned out to be another candidate for the Sejm, Bernard Tejkowski, especially because until not long before he had been a member of the Party executive. Running in the district no. 34, and a position intelligible for a mandate, he contended during one of his pre-election meetings that 'in the twelve past years the Party had neither been Polish nor workers'¹¹⁹. Eventually, B. Tejkowski was expelled from the Party leadership only after the election, in February 1957 (it is worth adding that during the election he got almost 40 thousand votes in his district, taking ninety place out of eleven candidates)¹²⁰.

In the electoral district no. 106 in Kłodzko, Zbigniew Gidziński was struck from the candidate list, officially because he had withdrawn his agreement to participate in the election to the Sejm (he was replaced by Leon Kruczkowski). However, in this instance the reasons were in fact more complex, as the case of Gidziński was investigated by the Secretariat of the KC. During a session of the body the decision was made not only to remove him from the candidate slate of the FJN, but also deprive him of the office First Secretary of the KP PZPR in Bystrzyca 'for transgressing the Party's directives'¹²¹. During the very same session, as indicated by Michał Siedziako, the members also excluded the candidacies of Tadeusz Okaz in the district no. 41 in Tarnów, and Feliks Dragan in the district no. 96 in Garwolin. However, as it turned out later, they remained in the lists of candidates, but in last positions, that practically made it impossible for them to acquire a deputy mandate. Now, in the district no. 61 in Opole,

¹¹⁵ 'lekarzem UB'.

¹¹⁶ 'byłego komendanta UB, który nie powinien być wybrany'.

¹¹⁷ 'groźny, obcy ideowo, usiłujący rozsadzić partię od środka'.

¹¹⁸ S. Drabik, *op. cit.*, p. 254; P. Machcewicz, *Wstęp*, p. 20; Z. Rykowski, W. Władyka, *op. cit.*, p. 286; 'Trybuna Ludu' 1957, 16.

¹¹⁹ 'w ciągu ostatnich 12 lat partia nie była ani polska, ani robotnicza'.

¹²⁰ As cited in: S. Drabik, *op. cit.*, pp. 254–255, 257–258.

¹²¹ 'za łamanie dyrektyw partii'. As indicated by: M. Siedziako, *Kampania*, p. 291; see: *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r.*, p. 51.

a judge and a member of the ZSL, Bronisław Fułat, was struck from the list, having been charged with 'making unrealistic promises in order to gain voters'¹²² (still, the candidate had not been position to stand a chance of being elected for the Sejm)¹²³.

A slightly different situation took place in the district no. 95 in Ciechanów, where on 23 December the District Electoral Committee of the FJN removed the candidacy of Mikołaj Dachow, Deputy President of the Voivodeship Committee of the ZSL in Warsaw (and previously a member of the Legislative Sejm in the period of 1947–1952), proposing to replace him with Wincenty Lipowski. With the approval of the NKW ZSL, the National Electoral Commission struck Mikołaj Dachow from the list, but concurrently did not agree to the candidacy of W. Lipowski. A change was also introduced into a previously registered candidate slate in the district no. 83 in Częstochowa. Here, as number six, not granting a mandate, Jadwiga Muszkiet (textile worker) who had resigned from running, was replaced by Władysław Turczyński. Meanwhile, in the district no. 50 in Kutno, Bronisław Drzewiecki (engineer-agronomist) was shifted up from no-mandate position eight to the eligible fifth position, and another candidate, Feliks Tarczyński (individual farmer) was conversely moved from number five to eight¹²⁴.

A week before the election, on 13 January, an MP candidate in the district no. 104 in Bolesławiec, Klemens Rudziński was killed in a car accident. The accident occurred in the village of Grabów (powiat of Lwówek), when K. Rudziński was driving his private to a meeting with the voters¹²⁵. Meanwhile, on 16 January, that is four day before the vote, an MP candidate in the district no. 12 in Bydgoszcz, Stanisław Mędelski committed suicide. The alleged cause of the act of the might-have-been Deputy was the backlash he had encountered during his campaign, a reaction most likely instigated by the activists of the KW PZPR, taking their revenge on Mędelski for his attitude during the October events, when he was calling for democratization and personal changes in the Voivodeship Committee (KW)¹²⁶.

¹²² 'dla pozyskania wyborców szafował nierealnymi obietnicami'.

¹²³ M. Siedziako, *Kampania*, p. 291; Z. Rykowski, W. Władyka, *op. cit.*, p. 286.

¹²⁴ *Notatka Państwowej Komisji Wyborczej z 24 grudnia 1956 r.*, pp. 51–52.

¹²⁵ AIPN Bu, 00231/86, vol. 135, sheet 333; AAN, PKW, ref. no. 306, sheet 123.

¹²⁶ J. Olejniczak, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

SUMMARY

In the social awareness shaped by the Polish Thaw, the reinstatement of the role that the Sejm had deserved, was universally perceived as a significant component of liberalization of the political and government system. It is hardly surprising as in a country for many years deprived of genuine political activity, the citizens longing for democratic liberties, wanted finally regain any influence over the State. The new Electoral Law and the October atmosphere were to open the path to the Parliament not only to the persons nominated by the Party, as had been the case during the 1952 election, but also to the representatives of circles less associated with the authorities. The United People's Party (ZSL) and the Alliance of Democrats (SD) also wanted to benefit from the circumstances, as they strove to widen the margin of their independence from the weakened PZPR.

Members of the new Party leadership were well aware of the fact that they would not be able to maintain control over the mechanism of nominating Deputy candidates, and thus the over composition of the future Sejm. For the adherents of Władysław Gomułka, nevertheless, the election was to constitute an element in the process of restoring balance to the political situation, and a stimulus to reinforce the PZPR. The election was also intended as a means of setting one of the boundary lines for acceptable liberalization, and concurrently appeasing the leaders of other communist states, who had observed with growing uneasiness the progress of the 'counter-revolution' in Poland. Hence, efforts were made which – at the cost of minor concessions to the 'allied factions' and approval of candidacies from, among others, Catholic circles – enabled the leaders to maintain the hegemony of the PZPR regarding the choice and selection of contenders for the seats in the Sejm. The crucial elements of that process turned out to be: the establishment of the Central Coordination Commission; the introduction of the rule of a single, united slate of the FJN per an electoral district; the practice of systematic pushing undesirable candidates to the positions ineligible for mandates; and, above all, ensuring the decisive role of the voivodeship committees of the Party in final approval of candidate lists. Thus, the authorities proved largely able to contain the *unrestrained element* and concerning the election of depriving the citizens of a chance to make a meaningful choice¹²⁷.

¹²⁷ A complement of these démarches and at the same time a reaction to the fierceness of the electoral campaign and the intensity of the criticism of the Party came in the form of an appeal by Gomułka of 9 January 1957 that people should vote by crossing no-one out; see: *Protokół nr 152 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 7 stycznia 1957 r.*, in: *Centrum*, pp. 249–250.

Many emotional reactions were caused by the group of the so-called central candidates, intended to be arbitrarily fielded onto the lists in selected districts. Some of them, associated with the October transformations, enjoyed genuine social endorsement, but majority was met with opposition. They were usually accused of having no connection with the given territory or people were able to remember the infamous roles these had played before 1956. That particularly concerned the leading representatives of the PZPR, but also those hailing from other parties or from no party, including the Catholic activists. Concurrently, in spite of prior arrangements, major frictions and contradictions in the process of nominating candidates and ordering them on the slates were noticeable between the PZPR and the ZSL, and to a certain extent also the SD.

The regulations imposed by the authorities, stipulating the procedure of submitting candidates and the division of seats in the future Sejm, could not quell thousands of initiatives throughout the country aimed at obtaining the desired representative in the Parliament. In this context, the activity undertaken by a large portion of the citizens of the PRL constituted not merely a from the atmosphere of the 'thaw', but rather that of acting out the repressive realities of the preceding period, and of the emerging social antagonisms. What lied at the root of those was oftentimes genuine care about the interests of various milieux, local communities, professional groups, organizations to a greater or lesser extent associated with authorities, as well as ethnic minorities. And even though spontaneously submitted candidacies, usually put forth during pre-election meetings, were doomed to fail, it nevertheless served as a proof that people had high hopes for the election and continued democratization of political relations. Meanwhile, the new Party leadership under Gomułka, aiming to restore political balance, wanted to maintain the hegemony in the choice and selection of candidates for the seats in the Sejm. Hence, they undertook efforts which, for the price of minor concessions, secured the decisive role in approving candidates slates for the PZPR.

(translated by LINGUA LAB)

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STRESZCZENIE

Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie procesu wyłaniania kandydatów na posłów przed wyborami do Sejmu PRL z 1957 r. Analizy dokonano głównie na podstawie licznych źródeł archiwalnych oraz dotychczasowej literatury. Przemiany 1956 r. w Polsce stworzyły możliwości przywrócenia należnej roli parlamentowi, co powszechnie traktowano jako ważny element liberalizacji ustroju i systemu władzy. Nadchodzące wybory, oparte na zmienionej ordynacji, miały otwierać drogę do Sejmu już nie tylko partyjnym nominatom, ale także dać szansę reprezentantom środowisk mniej powiązanych z władzą. Sytuację taką planowały też wykorzystać Zjednoczone Stronnictwo Ludowe i Stronnictwo Demokratyczne, dążące do poszerzenia marginesu swojej niezależności wobec osłabionej PZPR. Tymczasem nowa ekipa przywódcza na czele z Gomułką, zorientowana na przywrócenie politycznej stabilizacji, zamierzała utrzymać hegemonię w doborze i selekcji pretendentów do ław poselskich. Podjęła więc działania, które, za cenę pewnych ustępstw, zapewniły PZPR decydującą rolę w ostatecznym zatwierdzeniu list kandydatów.

Wprowadzone przez władze regulacje dotyczyły nie tylko sposobu i trybu zgłaszania kandydatur, ale ustalały też z góry podział miejsc w przyszłym Sejmie oraz narzucały w wielu okręgach tzw. kandydatury centralne. Nie zdołało to jednak stłumić tysięcy inicjatyw w całym kraju, których celem stało się posiadanie własnego przedstawiciela w parlamencie. W tym kontekście aktywność sporej części obywateli PRL była nie tylko skutkiem odwilżowego klimatu, formą odreagowania represywnej rzeczywistości poprzedniego okresu, czy też ujawniających się antagonizmów społecznych. U jej podłoża tkwiła często rzeczywista troska o interesy poszczególnych środowisk, społeczności lokalnych, grup zawodowych, organizacji mniej lub bardziej powiązanych z władzą oraz mniejszości narodowych. I choć spontaniczne wysuwanie kandydatów, odbywające się najczęściej w trakcie zebrań wyborczych, było z góry skazane na niepowodzenie, to jednak dowodziło, że z wyborami wiązano generalnie duże nadzieje na dalszą demokratyzację stosunków politycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: Front Jedności Narodu, odwilż polityczna, ordynacja wyborcza, kandydaci na posłów do Sejmu, posłowie na Sejm

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