

POLAND

Date of Elections: March 19, 1972

Reason for Elections

Elections were held to renew all the members of Parliament who, on December 22, 1971, had voted for its dissolution 2% years before its normal expiration, and had also set the date for new elections. The normal expiry date was June 1, 1973.

Characteristics of Parliament

The unicameral Polish Parliament, the *Sejm*, is composed of 460 members elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

All citizens of either sex are entitled to vote provided they are at least 18 years old, have not been deprived of their civil rights by court decree and are not mentally deficient. Also entitled are persons permanently resident in Poland with no other nationality, even if their Polish citizenship is not yet established.

For any elector, registration on the electoral lists, which the local People's Council compile at least 38 days before each election, is compulsory. Voting is not compulsory.

Any voter who has reached the age of 21 may stand for election to Parliament. The office of Deputy is not incompatible with any other public or private function.

Candidatures must be submitted by political, professional, co-operative, and social organizations and State authorities at all levels. In each constituency, they are acceptable no later than 35 days preceding elections by the relevant electoral committee. A candidate may only present himself in a single constituency and on a single list.

The country is divided into 80 electoral constituencies. The number of seats to be allocated to each is proportional to its population. Deputies are elected by party-list majority system with preferential vote. A single list — or several, in accordance with the electoral law — is submitted to the electorate. The names of candidates borne on it may exceed the number of seats to be filled

in the constituency by 50 %. The voter may cross out certain names on the list he supports, thereby showing his preference for the other candidates. However, if there are more names left than seats to be filled in the constituency, the vote is considered as going to the candidates who are placed highest on the list.

The candidates with most votes are considered elected if they receive an absolute majority of the valid votes.

Upon recommendation of the former holder's political party, Parliament may decide to have the " next-in-line " of the same list fill a seat which becomes vacant between general elections, on condition that this former titular had won an absolute majority of the valid votes. If Parliament decides against this, but at least one-third of the seats attributed to the relevant constituency are vacant and the legislature has at least another 6 months to run, then a by-election is held.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

In accordance with the electoral law, the campaign began 60 days before elections. The National Unity Front, which represents several diverse groups — the United Workers' Party, the United Peasant Party, the Democratic Party, non-Party candidates and 2 Catholic groups, " Znak " and " Pax " — presented 625 candidates for the 460 seats; only 180 of them were members of the outgoing Parliament.

The main themes in the electoral campaign bore on a higher standard of living and economic reforms through more social planning.

All the candidates heading lists were elected. The new Parliament thereupon chose a new Government on March 29; several changes were noticeable within the Executive. The make-up of the Council of State (a collegiate body fulfilling the functions of Head of State) was substantially altered: only 7 of its 17 members were re-elected. The former Minister of Education, M. H. Tablonski, replaced M. J. Cyrankiewicz as President of the Council.

Statistics

1. Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the Sjem

Number of registered voters.	22,313,851	
Voters.	21,854,481	(97.94%)
Blank or void ballot papers.	5,084	
Valid votes.	21,849,397	
<i>Votes in favor of the National Unity Front.</i>	21,746,242	

Political

United Workers' Party.	255 (=)
United Peasant Party.	117 (=)
Democratic Party.	39 (=)
No affiliation.	37 (+2)
Catholic Groups (Pax — Znak).	12 (—2)
	^60

2. *Distribution of Deputies According to Sex*

Men.	387
Women.	73
	460

3. *Distribution of Parliamentarians according to Age Group*

Under 25.	1
26-30.	10
31-40.	76
41-50.	209
51-60.	128
61-70.	33
Over 70.	3
	460