

POLAND

Date of Elections: 23 March 1980

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the members of Parliament on the normal expiry of their term of office.

Characteristics of Parliament

The Polish Parliament is unicameral. The Diet (*Sejm*) is composed of 460 Deputies elected for 4 years.

Electoral System

All Polish citizens are entitled to vote provided they are at least 18 years of age; also qualified are persons who have resided in the country for five years and are stateless, even if their Polish citizenship is not yet established. Disqualified from voting are persons under court-imposed guardianship due to mental deficiency and those deprived of their civil rights by court decision.

Prior to each election, electoral registers are compiled at the constituency level by the local organs of State administration and scrutinized by the electors. Voting is not compulsory.

Any qualified elector who is at least 21 years of age may stand for election to the Diet. The office of Deputy is not incompatible with any other public or private function. Lists of candidates are drawn up after consultation of the electorate. Nominations are made by the National Unity Front, which embraces the political parties and social organizations which originally proposed the candidates.

For Diet elections, Poland is divided into 72 constituencies, each of which returns from three to 10 Deputies, depending on population. Election is on the basis of absolute majority. Each elector votes for the candidates who appear on the ballot paper and for as many names as there are seats allotted to the constituency. Since the number of candidates may exceed the number of allotted seats, voters can cast preferential votes or cross out certain names.

If not enough candidates to fill the available seats in the constituency obtain the absolute majority of votes in the first ballot, or if less than an absolute majority of registered electors have voted, a second ballot is held. On this second ballot—for the remaining seats—a simple majority of votes is sufficient for election.

In the event of a *Sejm* vacancy between general elections, the Diet may decide that the seats should be filled by the "next-in-line" candidate on the list of the party which formerly held the seat in question.

General Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

The polling date was announced on 23 January 1980. The names of the 646 candidates contesting the 460 Diet seats were published on 3 March. The lists of candidates had been drawn up by the National Unity Front, the organization which embraces all the political parties and social organizations of Poland, especially the Polish United Workers' Party (led by Mr. Edward Gierek), the United Peasants' Party and the Democratic Party. The country's economic situation was one of the main issues during the period immediately preceding the elections; Mr. Gierek made a statement on this question at the opening of the United Workers' Party Congress on 11 February 1980.

On polling day, approximately half of the successful candidates were elected for the first time. The distribution of seats among the political parties and non-party Deputies remained unchanged; as before, the United Workers' Party obtained the absolute majority of Diet seats, winning 57%.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats
in the Diet*

Number of registered electors.	25,098,816
Voters.	24,816,304 (98.87%)
Blank or void ballot papers.13,692
Valid votes.	24,802,612
<i>Votes in favour of the National Unity Front . . .</i>	<i>24,683,056</i>

Political Group	Number of Seats
National Unity Front	
Polish United Workers' Party	261
United Peasants' Party. I . . .	113
Democratic Party	37
Non-party, including three circles of Catholic Deputies	49
	460

2. *Distribution of Members of the Diet
according to Sex*

Men	354
Women	106
	460

3. *Distribution of Members of the Diet
according to Age Group*

Under 25 years	2
25-29	0
30-39	63
40-49	148
50-59	180
60-69	43
70 and over	12
	460