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THE FUTURE POLISH SEJM: A PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS

Summary: On the basis of an initial examination of the lists of candidates, this paper reviews the probable composition of the future Sejm. In addition, comparisons are drawn between the present candidates and past members of the Sejm. In some regards, the conclusions are hardly optimistic. The present election campaign is being run in much the same fashion as were the one in 1969 and earlier ones. Secrecy surrounds certain details of the candidates' background, the preselection procedure has probably been more rigid than ever before, the political distribution of the Sejm seats is the same, and so is the number of "excess" candidates (only slightly exceeding one third, although as much as one half is legally possible).

On the other hand, it is clear that a major rejuvenation of the Sejm is being undertaken. Of the 460 members of the former body, only 169 are candidates in this election. Most of the discredited figures of the Gomulka clique are not up for re-election. Although the political aspects of the rejuvenation are not yet apparent, it is obvious that the new Sejm will contain more young people, industrial workers, and experts than did its predecessor.

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In accordance with the electoral law, at least 30 days before the elections to the Sejm (slated to take place on Sunday, March 19) the lists of candidates were officially made available on February 18 and were also published by "local papers." (1) Trybuna Ludu published the whole list of 625 candidates on February 20. This figure comprises the 460 candidates who will be actually elected and 165 "excess" or "expendable" candidates. If the wording of a few key sections of the electoral law, on the one hand, and past experience, on the other, serve as any indication, these "expendable"

- (1) Trybuna Ludu, 19 February 1972. Since not all the seats of the constituencies may have their own "local" paper, it is to be assumed that the lists were published at least in the voivodship party dailies.

candidates -- who are easily identified, since their names appear at the bottom of the lists, i.e., in excess of the number of deputies to be elected in a given constituency -- indeed have a slim chance to become Sejm deputies on March 19. (2) For the purpose of this study, the 460 "seat" candidates (those placed at the top of the various lists and whose number corresponds to the number of deputies to be elected) are subjected to scrutiny.

Information Gaps

The task is not easy because -- at this stage -- there are substantial gaps in the information available on these candidates, in particular on their party affiliation, as well as age. In this respect, as well as in other aspects of the present electoral campaign, there are similarities with the past. The lack of details regarding the backgrounds of the candidates is all the more surprising in view of the appointment -- almost one year ago -- of a government spokesman, a move that, at that point, was described as "allowing journalists, and through them the whole of society, to obtain fuller information on the most important problems of the country." (3)

Considering the claims made during the intense, seven-week-long election campaign about the importance and role of the Sejm and about what a Sejm deputy should be, (4) it would be really difficult to say that essential information on a future Sejm deputy is of less importance to the electorate than, for instance, the communiqué about what the Council of Ministers was deliberating about yesterday. (5) This restraint of the central press was in at least one instance explained by the fact that the distribution of Sejm seats had been made beforehand, according to a strict percentage pattern, which brought about a situation in which:

The parts are thus cast beforehand in such a well defined way that the very political identification of the candidates on the electoral lists is considered superfluous. (6)

- (2) However, they can be summoned later to fill a possible vacancy caused by either the death or the resignation of a deputy. For more on the intricacies of the Polish electoral system, see Kazimierz Zamorski, "Features of the Polish Electoral System," Polish Background Report/10, Radio Free Europe Research (EERA), 19 May 1969.
- (3) See Polish Situation Report/19, RFER (EERA), 19 March 1971, Item 5.
- (4) For a sample of these views, see Polish SR/10, RFER (EERA), 10 March 1972, Item 3.
- (5) These communiqués, as well as those on the meetings of the Politburo, seem to be the only improvement as far as dissemination of official information is concerned. Włodzimierz Janiurek, being a government spokesman, may claim he has no authority to do otherwise when failing to provide vital information on party life (e.g., internal CC appointments, which continue to be as secret as they have previously been), but there is no excuse for not revealing the political affiliation of Sejm candidate Piotr Piłul, a peasant from the constituency of Tarnow.
- (6) Harry Schleicher, Frankfurter Rundschau, 15 March 1972.

However, it should be noted in all fairness that quite a number of local (voivodship) papers have published either short or extensive biographies of local candidates.

Preselection Procedure

There seems to be little doubt that the actual election of candidates to the Sejm took place at a much earlier date, when the lists were prepared, checked, and rechecked at the appropriate CC department and presented to the Politburo for final approval. True enough, official media claim that "the selection of candidates for deputies was preceded by a broad consultation," first within party bodies, then by the voivodship committees of the Front of National Unity. But these claims sound unconvincing. These consultations have, in many instances, been arranged without due publicity, if not in outright secrecy. For instance, if it is claimed that 150,000 activists took part in these consultations, this is only a fraction of 1 per cent of the total electorate of over 20,000,000. Another official claim, that about 80 per cent of party members took part in these consultations in a number of voivodships, does not sound really serious. Considering the fact that total party membership is over 2,000,000, and that the average party membership in a voivodship is 100,000, the figure, corresponding to 80 per cent would be out of all proportion to the 150,000 "consultants." (7)

These inconsistencies and doubts are increased by the unusual haste characteristic of the whole election procedure, beginning with the rather hurried, although not unexpected, announcement by party leader Edward Gierek during the sixth party congress (in December 1971) of imminent Sejm elections, through the change of the Constitution needed for carrying out such elections more than a year before the expiration of the Sejm's term, to the speedy (and efficiently organized) electoral campaign.

All these elements, as well as a preliminary analysis of the list of candidates, seem to support the following statement of a Western correspondent (8) stationed in Warsaw:

Some Western observers have asserted that the selection process was even less democratic than in previous years, with Warsaw party leaders assuming some of the selection roles that had been handled in the past by their regional colleagues.

According to an influential Polish official, Mr. Gierek and his aides absorbed more of the selection power than had been expected to ensure the election of reform-minded candidates against the opposition of more conservative party members.

(7) Polish SR/7, RFER (EERA), 18 February 1972, Item 5.

(8) James Feron in The New York Times, 9 March 1972.

Another observer on the spot (9) supplemented the above opinion as follows:

There has been little public discussion on the way the candidates are selected. While the initial list seems to have been compiled under close scrutiny by the Politburo, meetings with grass-roots organizations in the 80 constituencies produced some amendments.

Ouster of Pre-December Leaders

There is no doubt that Gierek saw to it that -- with very few exceptions -- no party leader discredited during and before December 1970 will be elected to the Sejm. Agency reports from Warsaw immediately picked up the names of those leaders conspicuously absent from the lists of candidates to the Sejm. The list of those missing was, quite understandably, headed by Wladyslaw Gomulka and included his close lieutenants Zenon Kliszko, Marian Spychalski, Ryszard Strzelecki, and Ignacy Loga-Sowinski. Missing also are Boleslaw Jaszczuk and Stanislaw Kociolek, both former Politburo members, as well as Artur Scarewicz, former CC secretary. (10)

It is also of some interest that two other names do not appear on the electoral lists, those of State Council Chairman Jozef Cyrankiewicz (former Politburo member and premier) and Finance Minister Stefan Jedrychowski (former Politburo member and foreign minister). There is no doubt that both these officials belonged to the discredited pre-December 1970 team. The workers who rebelled in December 1970 and struck in January-February 1971 openly demanded the dismissal of Cyrankiewicz, whom they blamed for mismanagement of the country's affairs as premier. They also demanded the ouster of Jedrychowski who had earlier been the chief economic planner and thus -- the workers insisted -- contributed toward the economic plight of the country. Of the two, the omission of Jedrychowski may be easily explained by the fact that not all ministers must be members of the Sejm, while that of Cyrankiewicz amounts to a public rebuke, if only because he is still chairman of the State Council and as such is supposed to be a Sejm deputy. Rumors have been current for quite some time that Cyrankiewicz will be replaced by Professor Henryk Jablonski, Politburo member and General and Higher Education Minister. The change, in any case, will have to await the first meeting of the newly elected Sejm. (11)

There was surprise in quite a number of quarters at the inclusion on the lists of candidates of Mieczyslaw Moczar, the disgraced former Politburo

(9) Jonathan Steele writing from Cracow for The Guardian, 15 March 1972.

(10) Kociolek had to resign his Politburo position, but he is not in total disgrace. Last June he was appointed ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg. Starewicz is ambassador to the Court of Saint James.

(11) According to Section 24 of the Constitution, the Sejm elects "from among its membership" the Council of State, including its chairman.

member and CC secretary, who is now chairman of the Supreme Chamber of Control. While his retention among the Sejm deputies is a political fact, it need not necessarily be interpreted as a political act, even if it is difficult to suggest that the once-powerful leader of the Partisan faction has lost all his influence. It may be argued that he has remained in the Sejm owing to his official position. While the Constitution does not specifically require (as it does with respect to the chairman of the State Council) that the chairman of the Supreme Chamber of Control be a Sejm deputy, past practice indicates that such an official has always been a member of the Polish parliament, to which the Supreme Chamber of Control is subordinated.

Central Candidates

As in all previous instances, the present list of Sejm candidates includes a number of the so-called central candidates, i.e., key party and government officials, almost all of them stationed in Warsaw, who are supposed to be Sejm deputies but who -- for obvious reasons -- cannot all be candidates in the constituency of Warsaw. They are spread among constituencies all over the country. Thus, Gierek is a candidate in Silesia, Politburo member and CC Secretary Edward Babiuch in Poznan, while Moczar is a candidate in the small town of Konskie, Kielce Voivodship.

While the definition of a central candidate is not a matter on which everybody would agree -- e.g., is Stanislaw Mojkowski, chairman of the Polish Journalists' Association, who is stationed in Warsaw but is a Sejm candidate in Szczecin Voivodship, a central candidate? -- the number of such candidates has generally wavered between 60 and 70. In this respect, there is no change in 1972, no departure from the pattern established in the past.

As in the past, all members of the Politburo and CC secretariat -- 19 persons altogether -- are candidates. Similarly, all the party voivodship first secretaries (they are not considered central candidates) are on the electoral lists, as they were in 1969. Among the central candidates are top leaders of the "allied" parties: about a dozen from the United Peasant Party and four from the Democratic Party. There is a slight difference in the representation on the lists of Sejm candidates of the members of the Council of Ministers (deputy prime ministers and ministers). While in 1969 their number was 13 (including the premier), the corresponding figure now is 17.

In addition to these party and government officials, there are a number of managers, directors of central offices, writers, journalists, and officials of social organizations. Not all of them are central candidates, but in this connection, it is worth noting at least some of the specific figures: 6 writers, 18 journalists, 33 scientists (pure science prevailing over the humanities), and 8 high military officers on active duty. The corresponding figures for 1969 were: 3 writers, 18 journalists, 25 scientists, and 8 officers on active duty. Thus, there is a marked increase in the number of writers and scientists.

Catholic Representation

Polish Catholics have been represented in the Sejm since at least 1957. However, since the very beginning of such representation, Catholic politicians have been split into three groups whose numerical strength in the Sejm has certainly not reflected the actual extent of their political influence in the country. The most important is the Znak group, loyal to the Church hierarchy; then comes Pax, a "movement" of "progressive" Catholics co-operating with the regime; and finally, the Christian Social Association (ChSA), a small splinter group of "progressives" who pretend to be loyal to the Church hierarchy. In 1969, the number of ChSA deputies was cut from three to two, and a representative of Caritas, a Catholic charity organization which is officially independent but actually totally controlled by the regime, was added. These groups have been represented in the Sejm as follows:

Sejm term	Znak	Pax	ChSA	Caritas	Total
1957	9	3	1	-	13
1961	5	3	3	-	11
1965	5	5	3	-	13
1969	5	5	2	1	13
1972	5	5	2	1	13

Thus, as compared with 1969, there has been no change in the Catholic representation in the Sejm.

Political Distribution of Seats

As already stressed, complete data on the political affiliation of the candidates is not yet available. However, several Western correspondents reported a percentile division which -- when decimal fractions are added -- is identical with that of the previous Sejm, i.e.:

Party (12)	Number of Seats	Per cent
PUWP	255	55.5
UPP	117	25.4
DP	39	8.5
Nonparty	49	10.6
Total	460	100.0

- (12) These abbreviations stand for: Polish United Workers' Party, United Peasant Party, and Democratic Party. Among the 49 nonparty deputies and/or candidates are the Catholics.

These percentages seem to be reflected in the following figures so far available with respect to the 1972 "seat" candidates: PUWP: 241; UPP: 106; DP: 35; nonparty: 37 (of these, 13 are Catholics); unknown: 41.

In this connection, it is interesting to note that the total of PUWP candidates, i.e., the "seat" ones and those who are "expendable," is 368. (13) This would mean that, out of a total of 165 "expendable" candidates, no fewer than 113 -- or close to 70 per cent -- are party members. This may indicate that the party leadership is not taking any chances, even if the risk is purely theoretical. Thus, for example, in the event that the electorate should undertake to cross off the names of communist candidates and even if such crossings-off were to eliminate 50 per cent of the "seat" candidates, the precaution of placing no fewer than 113 party members on the lists of "expendable" candidates would still produce an absolute communist majority in the Sejm. To present a hypothetical example for the sake of clarity: half of the communist candidates, i.e., 127, are crossed off. There still remain 128 candidates, who would be joined by the 113 candidates "from below the line."

Other Statistical Details

The available data (about 80 per cent) on the candidates' ages allow the following comparison:

Age Group	1969	1972
up to 30	5	10
31-40	72	59
41-50	199	154
51 and over	184	143
unknown	-	94
Total	460	460

These figures seem to indicate that only in the lowest age group has there been a measure of "rejuvenation." Regarding the rest, the prospects are that there is little major change in the age structure.

However, there has been a dramatic overhaul with respect to the new and old Sejm deputies. While in 1969 a total of 263 former Sejm deputies were elected, thus leaving only 197 (43 per cent) seats for the newcomers, the present (1972) lists of candidates indicate that the proportion is 169 old deputies and 291 (i.e., approximately 63 per cent) prospective newcomers. In this regard, it is of interest to note that in 6 of the 80 constituencies there is not a single old candidate for the Sejm, and there are also no fewer than 18 constituencies with only one candidate who was a Sejm deputy in the previous

(13) Glos Wybrzeza, 17 February 1972.

term. The constituencies of Gdansk and Gdynia fall into the former category, while those in Szczecin and Stargard Szczecinski are in the latter. Given the lack of credibility of the former deputies from these constituencies, all situated in the Baltic region where the December 1970 workers' revolt took place, the extensive turnover comes as no surprise.

It is rather difficult to determine the social composition of the candidates. The problem is one of the oft-conflicting criteria of social origin and actual function and social position. Without resorting to such extreme examples as First Secretary Gierek (a worker by origin, a former miner, a graduate engineer, industrial manager, and party apparatchik), hundreds of examples can be cited of people who may -- with full justification -- be put under more than one category: for instance, Zbigniew Zaluski, a high officer (colonel) on active duty, a writer and a journalist at the same time. It is only logical that, as a statistical entry, he will appear among the officers on active duty and among intellectuals (writers). It is probable that this complexity partially explains the fact that official sources do not contain complete statistics on the social composition of the candidates. An authoritative reference yearbook summed up the problem in the previous Sejm as follows:

The most numerous professional group is composed of deputies directly employed in industry: they number 106. This group consists of 79 workers, 17 graduate engineers and technicians, and 7 directors of enterprises and industrial associations. Seventy deputies work in agriculture, including 54 individual farmers and 11 agricultural specialists. In addition, there are among the Sejm deputies 20 teachers; 18 scientific workers; 27 writers, journalists, and columnists; 8 physicians and workers in the health service; 6 lawyers; 8 artisans; and 7 military personnel on active service. (14)

A preliminary scrutiny of the 1972 candidates reveals that there are among them no fewer than 98 workers (21 per cent, as against 17 per cent in 1969), and 66 peasants (14 per cent, slightly less than in 1969). The remaining groups are intellectuals (57), intelligentsia members (118), and a non-descript mixture of party apparatchiks, government and local government officials, members of social and youth organizations, etc., who number 121 persons.

The only valid conclusion that can be drawn from these figures is that there has been an increase in workers' representation, which -- coupled with the increase in scientific workers -- reflects two current trends: to introduce more workers into "representative" bodies, and to adapt Poland's economy to the technological age.

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(14) Rocznik polityczny i gospodarczy 1970. (Political and Economic Yearbook 1970), p. 96.