

RADIO FREE EUROPE *Research*

EAST EUROPE

Poland/10

19 May 1969

FEATURES OF THE POLISH ELECTORAL SYSTEM

Summary: An election law revised in 1956 made the 1957 Polish elections more meaningful than those that took place in the Stalinist Period, and the voters took advantage of this change to express relative non-confidence in the ruling Party. To prevent a recurrence of this, the law and related electoral procedures were again changed in 1960. The total number of candidates was limited to a maximum of half again as many as the number of deputies to be elected; the number of electoral districts was reduced; secret voting was discouraged; and the Communist Party's representation on the National Unity Front list was increased. The multiple votes cast against preferred candidates dropped to roughly 4 and 3.5 per cent respectively in the 1961 and 1965 elections. These in effect negative votes indicated that the election process was still being used as a mechanism for the expression of dissent by a section of the voting population. Aside from abstention, this dissent took the form of invalidating the ballot -- crossing off all the candidates (officially interpreted as a vote against the National Unity Front list) or crossing off one or more of the Party-preferred candidates at the top of the single list, in effect simultaneously endorsing some or all of the candidates at the bottom.

Taking as a standard of measurement the number of multiple votes cast against the Party-preferred candidates, the "negative vote" was much higher in the 1957, 1961, and 1965 elections than the official returns, formulated only in terms of support or rejection of the list of the National Unity Front, would indicate.

*

*

*

For the fourth time since October 1956, elections to the Sejm will take place on 1 June 1969, under an electoral law of the proportional-representation type which is unique in a Communist country. This law was first passed on 24 October 1956, then amended on 22 December 1960. The novum of the law as originally passed was contained in Article 39, stipulating that "the number of candidates on the list should exceed the number of deputies eligible in a given constituency by no more than two thirds." In practical terms, this meant that a constituency electing nine deputies could present to its voters as many as 15 candidates.

Another important stipulation in the law of 24 October 1956, contained in Article 54, Paragraph 1, was the presumption of the voter's obligation to vote secretly. "Having received the ballot and the envelope, the voter proceeds to a booth behind a curtain, where he acquaints himself with the ballot," this stipulation read. Paragraph 3 further stipulated that "the voter has a right to cross out certain candidates from the list for which he votes."¹

The law left no doubt as to which candidates were preferred. First of all, it stipulated that not crossing out a candidate meant voting for him. Secondly, "when the number of not-crossed-out candidates is greater than the number of deputies in a given constituency," it is presumed that the votes have been cast for those at the top of the list. This implied a distinction between the candidates at the top of the list, the "seat" candidates, and the ones at the bottom of the list, "surplus" or "expendable" ones. Returning to the example chosen above, in order to vote for the nine "seat" candidates, the voter was expected to cast the ballot without any alterations. However, if he wanted to vote for, let's say, two of the "expendable" candidates, he had to cross out two names from among the nine top-listed (seat) candidates.

Many voters availed themselves of this opportunity during the first post-October (1956) elections on 20 January 1957. In one instance, in the small town of Nowy Sacz, they succeeded in defeating a Communist seat candidate. This defeat made the Polish leaders realize that they might have gone too far in "democratizing" their electoral law. As a part of the post-October regression, they decided to reduce the chances of a similar occurrence in the future.

Changes in the Electoral System

Thus, before the elections of 16 April 1961, amendments were made in the electoral law affecting both the number of expendable candidates and the secrecy of voting. Article 39

1. Legally, thus, there is no restriction against multiple lists. In fact, however, only the single list of the National Unity Front is presented to the voter.

was amended to read as follows: "The number of candidates on the list may exceed the number of deputies eligible in a given constituency, but by no more than one half." That meant, first of all, that it was no longer obligatory to have more candidates than deputies to be elected ("should exceed" became "may exceed"); secondly, in a constituency electing, for example, nine deputies, the total number of candidates could not exceed thirteen. The practical results of this change are illustrated in the following table:

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
No. of Deputies (seat candidates)	459	460	460
No. of expendable candidates	258	156	158
Total No. of candidates	717	616	618

Regarding the provision on secret voting, Paragraph 1 of Article 54 was dropped entirely, although the stipulation in Paragraph 3 (about the voter's right to cross out) was retained. (In practice, secret voting was, however, still provided for.)

The Party leadership took one further precaution against possible surprises. The number of Communist seat candidates in 1957 was 239, i.e., 52.07 per cent of the total of 459 deputies. If the example of Nowy Sacz had been followed by nine more constituencies (this was nearly the case in almost a score of electoral districts), the Communist Party would find itself in a minority in the Sejm. Although this would not undermine its hegemonic rule in the "dictatorship of the proletariat," it would have been most embarrassing to the Party, representing a tremendous loss of prestige. Therefore the distribution of seats among the various political parties (established long before the elections by the PUPP Politburo) was changed as follows:

	<u>1957(2)</u>		<u>1961</u>		<u>1965</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Polish United Workers' (Communist) Party	239	52.07	255	55.44	255	55.43
United Peasant Party	119	25.92	117	25.43	117	25.43
Democratic Party	39	8.50	39	8.48	39	8.48
Non-party	49	10.68	38	8.26	36	7.83
Catholics	13	2.83	11	2.39	13	2.83
	<u>459</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>100.00</u>	<u>460</u>	<u>100.00</u>

2. In 1957, the representation of the satellite Parties was increased and non-Party (including lay-Catholic) representation was permitted for the first time.

At the expense of non-Party seats and, to a lesser extent, those of the satellite UPP, the number of Communist seats increased by 16. (The figure does not seem to be accidental. As mentioned above, about a score of constituencies were close to defeating Communist Party candidates in 1957.)

As an additional precaution against unpleasant electoral surprises, the constituencies were reorganized. Their number was drastically reduced prior to the 1961 election, from 116 to 80. Quite understandably, the areas most affected by these changes were the ones which in 1957 had produced negative results from the Party point of view. For instance, Cracow Voivodship, which in 1957 was divided into 11 constituencies, was reduced to 6. Katowice Voivodship, however, which in 1957 had 12 constituencies, lost only 3, retaining 9. The reason for this difference is clear if one compares the performance of the two voivodships in the 1957 election. The tables below show average percentage backing of seat candidates in pertinent constituencies. In order to demonstrate how "salutary" (from the Party point of view) the change was, the respective figures for 1961 and 1965 are also given.

Cracow Voivodship

<u>Electoral Districts:</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Bochnia	83.73		
Chrzanow	80.58	94.96	95.60
Cracow City	94.31	94.34	95.13
Cracow District	90.83	94.59	95.13
Myslenice	85.16		
Nowy Sacz	73.46	91.30	91.95
Nowy Targ	75.14		
Olkus	83.86		
Oswiecim (Wadowice)	87.54	92.59	93.37
Tarnow	84.29	91.91	91.61
Zywio	74.25		
<u>Voivodship average</u>	<u>83.01</u>	<u>93.28</u>	<u>93.80</u>

Katowice Voivodship

<u>Electoral Districts</u>	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Bielsko Biala	88.30	96.61	97.13
Bytom	97.37	98.72	99.06
Chorzow	96.24	98.63	99.08
Czestochowa	95.36	96.89	97.26
Dabrowa Gornicza		98.63	
Gliwice	88.87	97.58	97.83
Katowice	95.94	98.67	98.66
Rybnik	84.17	97.07	97.90
Sosnowiec	98.16	99.47	99.40
Tarnowskie Gory	95.32		
Tychy	93.10		
Zabrze	93.93		
Zawiercie	98.16		98.67
<u>Voivodship average</u>	<u>93.74</u>	<u>98.02</u>	<u>98.33</u>

The logical result of the reorganization of the constituencies was an increase in the average number of deputies to be elected in a given constituency: in 1957 it was four, in 1961 and 1965 almost six. It was probably not accidental that in 1961 not a single constituency elected only three deputies. The defeat suffered in 1957 by the Communist candidate in Nowy Sacz (one of the 43 constituencies that elected no more than three deputies), suggested that the smaller the number of deputies in a constituency, the greater the risk that a Communist or other seat candidate could be defeated, (i.e., crossing out could concentrate on three names instead of spreading over six or seven).³ A detailed breakdown of the numerical distribution of the deputies follows:

<u>No. of deputies per constituency:</u>	<u>1957</u>		<u>1961</u>		<u>1965</u>	
	<u>Const- ituen- cies</u>	<u>Dep- uties</u>	<u>Const- ituen- cies</u>	<u>Dep- uties</u>	<u>Const- ituen- cies</u>	<u>Dep- uties</u>
Three	43	129	-	5	1	3
Four	41	164	1	4	3	12
Five	27	135	40	200	30	150
Six	4	24	17	102	29	174
Seven	1	7	22	154	15	105
Eight	-	-	-	-	2	16
Total	116	459	80	460	80	460

To recapitulate: after the changed electoral law of 1956 permitted the Polish electorate to demonstrate relative non-confidence in the ruling Party, the law and related electoral practices were changed in 1960. The total number of candidates was limited to a maximum of half again as many as the number of deputies to be elected; the number of electoral districts was reduced; secret voting was discouraged; and the Communist Party's representation on the National Unity Front list was increased.

The Possibilities of Electoral Dissent

In spite of the measures introduced after the 1957 elections, which were narrowing the voters' freedom of expression, there remain several ways for a voter to demonstrate opposition either to the Communist Party rule and Communist-run elections in general or to individual Sejm deputies in particular. The following sections will be devoted to this aspect of the Polish electoral mechanism.

3. Only in 1965 did the Party again risk having one constituency elect only three deputies -- in "loyal" Zawiercie. Perhaps to compensate, the deputies from Nowy Sacz were increased to seven.

Abstention

Except in cases of genuine illness or absence from one's constituency, abstention from voting may be considered as reflecting a negative attitude toward the ruling Party or -- at best -- total indifference. In Communist Poland, voting is regarded as a civic duty, and pre-election propaganda constantly stresses this point. Statistically, in the last three elections this phenomenon was reflected as follows:

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Total electorate	17,944,081	18,615,185	19,645,803
Voted	16,892,213	17,653,646	18,982,316
Abstained	1,051,868	961,539	663,487

This set of absolute figures shows a marked disproportion between the increasing size of the electorate and the decreasing number of abstentions from voting. This is better illustrated by percentages:

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Voted	94.14	94.83	96.62
Abstained	5.86	5.17	3.38

Invalid Voting

Casting an irregular ballot amounts to a deliberate effort to have one's vote declared invalid. According to the Electoral Law (Article 60, Paragraph 1), only these votes are declared invalid which are cast either on an irregular ballot, i.e., on one that differs from that authorized by the electoral commission of a given constituency, or on a ballot which may be genuine but does not bear the official stamp of the electoral commission. In practice, this means that anyone who wished to invalidate his vote must replace a valid ballot form with another piece of paper. It follows that this way of registering dissatisfaction amounts to rejecting not only the idea of the Front of National Unity but, and first of all, the very idea of Communist elections. It is a clear expression of political resistance, a demonstrable act of defiance. In the past, very few invalidated their ballots, as shown by the following figures:

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Invalid ballots	58,897	19,067	13,840
Per cent of total electorate	.33	.10	.07

The above table indicates a sharp decline in the number of invalid ballots between 1957 and 1961 and an additional, more moderate decrease between 1961 and 1965.

Voting Against the List

What is a vote against the list of candidates of the Front of National Unity? On this point the Electoral Law is enigmatic. While the definition of an invalid ballot is clear, there is no provision defining a vote against the list. As noted above, according to the law failure to cross out the name of a candidate is considered to be a vote for that candidate. The inference is that crossing out his name is a vote against a particular candidate. Selective crossing out will be examined below; at this point it is sufficient to state that a vote against the list is equivalent to negative votes (crossing out) against all the candidates on the list. In other words, the list is crossed out in toto. The following table indicates the extent of this practice in the last three elections.

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
No. who voted against the Front list	270,002	292,009	226,324
Per cent of total electorate	1.50	1.57	1.15

It is noteworthy that the characteristic trend in abstentions and invalid ballots does not apply to this last set of figures pertaining to ballots cast against the single electoral list. Between 1957 and 1961 there was an increase in such ballots, and only in 1965 was there a slight decrease. This is an intriguing phenomenon, about which, however, it is only possible to speculate. It may be that the number of those who take a negative attitude to all the candidates of the Front of National Unity -- while not rejecting the elections per se -- remains rather steady. The slight drop in the number of these oppositionists in 1965 might be due to apathy on the one hand and to various forms of political pressure on the other. It may also be that in 1965 a number of these "oppositionists" preferred a different form of resistance -- namely, selection.

Before treating the final manner of expressing dissent in Polish elections, i.e., selection, it may be useful to draw up a balance between the forms of "negative" voter behavior discussed so far. Such a balance sheet is particularly important, since official election statistics disregard both the number of abstentions and the number of invalid ballots, proudly announcing, for example, that out of 18,968,476 valid ballots cast, 18,742,152 ballots -- 98.81 per cent -- were cast for the "list of candidates of the Front of National Unity."

The following table summarizes this "negative" voting in past elections:

	<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
Abstentions	1,051,868	961,539	663,487
Invalid ballots	58,897	19,067	13,840
Votes against Front list	<u>270,002</u>	<u>292,009</u>	<u>226,324</u>
Total no. of "negative" votes	<u>1,380,767</u>	<u>1,272,615</u>	<u>903,651</u>
Total electorate	17,944,081	18,615,185	19,645,803
No. of votes claimed for Front	16,563,314	17,342,570	18,742,152
Per cent of total electorate	92.31	93.16	95.40

Selection

It has been said that in a Communist country the voter does not elect -- he just votes, i.e., approves pre-determined election results. This does not apply completely to Poland. Polish elections do leave the voter a narrow measure of choice. If he cannot choose between candidates advocating different political programs, he at least can select among candidates of the same party or coalition of parties -- the Front of National Unity. This complicated procedure is examined below.

As explained above, the total number of candidates exceeds the number of deputies. Thus in each of the 80 constituencies there is at least one (and usually two or three) extra candidates, who will not be elected. In other words, this candidate is "expendable." Let us take as an example constituency No. 1 in Warsaw, where there were eight candidates, of whom only the first six on the list were to be elected, while the seventh and eighth on the list were expendable. It follows that a voter had to draw an imaginary line between the sixth and seventh candidates. In order to vote for a candidate "below the line" the voter had to cross out one of the preferred candidates "above the line."

Officially, all candidates on the ballot are put forward by the Front of National Unity. Hence, whether a person votes "for" the first candidate on the list or for the last one, he is officially declared to have cast his vote for the Front of National Unity, not against it. Yet the act of crossing out a preferred candidate is in fact considered by the Party to be an action antagonistic to the Front of National Unity and the regime itself. In 1957, on the very eve of the elections, Gomulka threatened that any crossings-out on the ballots would amount to an erasure of Poland from the map of Europe. "Do not cross out the leading candidates!" he appealed. In 1965, during a public meeting in Warsaw on May 25, he stated that "crossing out a candidate's name would be disloyal, it would be crossing out the idea of the

Front of National Unity." In Silesia, the fief of Party boss Edward Gierek, resolutions were passed at pre-electoral meetings pledging to vote without crossing out names (Głosujemy bez skreslen!) This concern is understandable; not only does crossing-out mean questioning the Party's judgment as to which candidates are expendable, but it also usually means expressing lack of confidence in the some 70 so-called "central" candidates -- Politburo members, CC secretaries, ministers, leaders of "allied" parties -- listed first on the electoral lists. Given the above, it is not the percentage of ballots cast for the "list of the National Unity Front" by which the successful outcome of the elections for the Party-state leadership should be measured, but rather the percentage of multiple votes (in a six-deputy constituency, for example, each voter has in effect six votes) cast for the preferred, seat candidates on the list.

The following example illustrates the latter point, as well as the selection process itself. According to the official election results⁴ the "number of persons entitled to vote" in constituency No. 1, Warsaw-Center, was 307,609, while the "number of persons who took part in the elections" was 293,420, or 95.39 per cent of the total electorate. The "number of valid votes" [ballots] was 293,249, of which the "number of votes [ballots] cast for the list of candidates of the Front of National Unity" was 290,728, or 99.14 per cent.

In this constituency, there were six preferred candidates and two "expendable" candidates. While the distinction is not indicated on the ballot, in theory the voter is aware that in his constituency only six of the eight candidates are to be elected. If he chooses to select among the candidates on the list, he crosses out one, two, or even more names. The optimal strategy for expressing political dissent through selection (as opposed to abstention, invalidation, and voting against the list by crossing off all names -- all of which reduce the number of votes cast for preferred candidates while not endorsing surplus or expendable candidates) requires the voter to cross out the names of all the preferred candidates but none of the surplus of expendable candidates, e.g., in the case of Warsaw-Center, the first six of the eight names on the list. (In the hypothetical case that all voters so behaved, the surplus candidates would each receive 293,420 votes, while the preferred candidates would receive no votes and only two candidates would be elected instead of six.) In practice, not all voters know how many candidates in a given constituency are real, seat candidates, and how many of them are mere figureheads. Some voters may even cross out one or both of the bottom names -- a meaningless action.

4. Monitor Polski No. 29, 5 June 1965.

The official results of the 1965 election for the Warsaw-Center constituency were as follows:

<u>Candidates</u>	<u>Valid votes</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1. Lange, Oskar	285,933	97.51
2. Wende, Jan Karol	284,095	96.88
3. Korotynski, Henryk	285,029	97.20
4. Bukowski, Jerzy	288,020	98.22
5. Czeszko, Bohdan	286,210	97.60
6. Szukala, Jerzy	286,302	97.63
7. Sobiech, Stanislaw	8,522	2.91
8. Wawer, Jan	6,532	2.23

While it was claimed that the voters cast no less than 99.14 per cent of their ballots for the list of the Front, the above figures indicate that the leading candidate scored only 98.22 per cent -- slightly below the figure claimed for the list as a whole. In order to determine what percentage of the potential multiple votes were cast for preferred candidates, as recommended by the Party, one must compare the total number of positive votes actually cast for the six seat candidates with the potential total number votes. In the Warsaw-Center constituency, the figures are as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
a) Potential total no. of votes	1,760,520	100
b) Total no. of votes cast for six seat candidates	1,715,589	97.45
(a-b) No. of scratches (negative votes)	44,931	2.55

Taking this standard of measurement, 97.45 per cent of the potential multiple votes were cast for and 2.55 per cent against the Party-preferred candidates.

This difference between the percentage of ballots interpreted as supporting the list itself and the percentage of potential multiple votes endorsing the preferred candidates was even greater in Nowy Sacz, a constituency traditionally known for its "propensity to select." According to Monitor Polski, in the 1965 elections the number of actual voters was 264,070, the number of "valid votes" [ballots] was 263,999, while the number of "votes [ballots] for the list" was 257,867, allegedly representing a 97.68-per cent electoral victory. The breakdown of votes follows:

	<u>Valid votes</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1. Motyka, Lucjan	240,980	91.28
2. Olszynski, Jozef	241,927	91.64
3. Bienkowski, Wladyslaw	242,379	91.81
4. Adamuszek, Witold	242,190	91.74
5. Cabaj, Wladyslaw	242,817	91.98
6. Razny, Jozef	244,964	92.79
7. Lubecka, Antonina	244,382	92.57
8. Gach, Franciszek	23,053	8.73
9. Cichonski, Jozef	19,159	7.26

A glance at the list of percentages suffices to demonstrate that the official claim of a 97.68-per cent electoral success in Nowy Sacz is very misleading. The calculation of the percentage of multiple votes which were cast for preferred candidates is as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Potential total votes	1,848,490	100.00
Total votes for seven seat candidates	<u>1,699,639</u>	<u>91.95</u>
Scratches (negative votes)	148,851	8.05

Thus, by this measurement, the 97.68 per cent success becomes 91.95 per cent.

A final example. The electoral commission for Tomaszow Mazowiecki constituency No. 53 published the official results of the 1957 elections as 100 per cent support for the list of the Front of National Unity.⁵ Of a total of 172,863 valid ballots, 172,863 were cast for the "candidates of the Front of National Unity." Yet the multiple votes were distributed as follows:

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
1. Korzycki, Antoni	150,381	86.99
2. Tuchowski, Roman	148,046	85.64
3. Klejnik, Stefan	156,424	90.49
4. Marczak, Stanislaw	156,348	90.45
5. Dabrowski, Witold	159,110	92.04
6. Wojciechowski, Jan	22,087	12.78
7. Glowacki, Jan	17,897	10.35
8. Wiaczek, Henryk	17,897	10.35

	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Potential total votes	867,150	100.00
Actual votes for seat candidates	<u>770,309</u>	<u>88.81</u>
Scratches	96,841	11.19

5. cf. Monitor Polski No. 5, 23 January 1957, Item 30, p. 45.

Scratches or Negative Votes

It may also be useful to examine the "scratches" or negative votes noted in the above example in greater detail. Taking again the Warsaw-Center constituency as an example, it may be seen from the official communiqué that the last two ("expendable") candidates on the list obtained a total of 15,054 votes (a figure reflecting an equal number of crossings-out above the line). Two categories of voters, those invalidating their ballots and those crossing off all candidates, rejected the list outright; while not voting for "expendable" candidates, these voters in effect voted against the six top names on the ballot. These 171 invalid ballots thus represent six times as many negative votes, i.e., 1,026. Similarly, the 2,521 ballots against the list represent six times as many negative votes, i.e., 15,126.

	No.	Per Cent
Votes for expendable candidates	57,881	59.77
Invalid ballots (567 x 5)	2,835	2.93
Negative selective votes	36,125	37.30
Total Scratches	96,841	100.00

It is only a matter of speculation why these different forms of expressing dissent are employed by different individual voters.

It would be very useful to know how many voters crossed out one or more preferred candidates. Unfortunately, one cannot establish these data on the basis of the figures published by the Electoral Commission. Only the number of voters who invalidated ballots and the number who preferred crossing out the whole ballot can be determined. To this number, it is possible to add a minimum number of additional voters, equivalent to the largest number of votes cast for an expendable candidate, who chose to vote selectively. In Warsaw-Center, for example, of the 293,420 citizens who voted, 171 invalidated their ballots, 2,521 crossed off all the names, and at least 8,522 crossed out the names of preferred candidates. Adding abstentions to this figure, at least 8.3 per cent (the actual figure, although undeterminable, is higher) of the total electorate in fact cast a negative vote, from the Party's point of view.

Kazimierz Zamorski

Polish Unit

ADDENDUM

Actual Election Results

Despite the limitations of the official data, one can arrive at a clear picture of voters' behavior by tabulating negative votes or scratches. The relevant figures on the national scale are as follows:

	<u>1957</u>		<u>1961</u>		<u>1965</u>	
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Potential total no. of votes (excluding abstentions)	70,750,875	100.00	103,788,680	100.00	112,133,194	100.00
Votes for seat candidates	63,442,812	89.67	99,721,942	96.08	108,298,314	96.58
Total scratches	7,308,063	10.33	4,066,738	3.92	3,834,880	3.42
<u>Of these scratches:</u>						
Votes for expendable candidates	4,610,595	6.52	925,330	.89	1,118,332	.99
Invalid ballots	247,425	.35	113,991	.11	81,863	.07
Total crossings out of ballots	1,116,296	1.58	1,708,685	1.65	1,322,796	1.19
Negative selective votes	1,333,747	1.88	1,318,732	1.27	1,311,889	1.17

Officially Claimed Support for the "list of the National Unity Front"

<u>1957</u>	<u>1961</u>	<u>1965</u>
98.40	98.34	98.81

The above table shows a trend in effect supporting the Communist regime: increasing voters' participation and voters' approval of seat candidates, with a parallel, but not quite proportionate, decrease in negative voting, i.e., scratches. It is also evident from this table, as well as from previous statistics, that the turning point is 1961. The proportions established in 1961 remained almost constant in

1965, with a small but clear improvement in favor of the regime.

There is no uniform trend evident in the lower set of figures, pertaining to voters' preferences as to how to cross out candidates. This diversity is illustrated by the following table:

Percentage Division of Scratches

	1957	1961	1965
For expendable candidates	63.09	22.76	29.16
Invalid ballots	3.38	2.80	2.14
Ballots "against" the Front (total crossings-out)	15.28	42.01	34.49
Negative selective votes	18.25	32.43	34.21
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00

Officially Claimed Support for the "List of the National Unity Front"

1965	1961	1957
98.81	98.34	96.40

The above table shows a trend in effect supporting the Communist regime, increasing voters' participation and voters' approval of candidates, with a parallel, but not quite proportionate, decrease in negative voting, i.e., scratches. It is also evident from this table, as well as from previous statistics, that the turning point in 1961. The proportions established in 1961 remained almost constant in 1965.