

The group portrait of female MPs in Post-War Poland (1947-1989)

After World War II, the communist's regime took power in Poland and eagerly declared their desire to ensure gender equality in society. The Constitution of the Polish People's Republic, adopted on 22 July 1952, was supposed to guarantee women equal rights in all fields of life (in accordance with the Article 66 - *Women in the Polish People's Republic have equal rights with men in all spheres of public, political, economic, social and cultural life.*). However, the reality was far from the promises made at the beginning of the new state existence.

Women's representation in the Sejm between 1947 and 1989 ranked from 4% to 23%. During this period, as I calculated during my preliminary research, a total of 577 women held a parliamentary seat. The goal of the project is an attempt to create a group portrait of female MPs under the communist regime. By this I mean scrutinizing archival materials related to information on 577 women who held parliamentary seats in the post-war Poland, analyzing the collected data in terms of sociopolitical characteristics (age, origin, education, professional career and political background), political advancement during the term of Office and political activity. The archival research will be supplemented by oral histories, i.e. interviews with living female MPs from the period under study. The whole project leads to an answer to the question of whether women holding parliamentary seats in post-war Poland were meticulously selected by the authorities, who guarded that each of them met certain requirements and fit into the imposed collective.

The research methodology is based on a thorough analysis of the archival source (numerous searches throughout Poland), comparative analysis (to verify the extent to which female MPs constituted a representative group in the parliament in the period under review), statistical methods (to show changes occurring in the context of subsequent terms of office), biographical methods – in order to achieve the most important effect – the creation of a group portrait of female MPs in Poland under the communist regime (these include an analysis of memories from the era and women's press) and oral history (history considered as interviews with living female MPs who held the parliamentary seats in the period under study).

The analysis of the biographies of women who have held parliamentary seats from 1947 to 1989 and their sociopolitical characteristics in order to create a group portrait of female MPs has never been a topic of research in a synthetic and comprehensive manner.

The issues related to the presence and activity of female MPs are part of a broader issue related to the distribution of power in Poland after World War II. An analysis of women's participation in politics and their representation in various power structures during the communist period reveals the paradoxes of a system which, on the one hand, proclaimed the idea of gender equality and, on the other, limited their actual possibilities of influence. The implementation of the project is a huge step towards understanding the mechanisms that guided the authorities who held the positions. The research is part of the current of broadly understood gender studies, the history of gender equality in political discourse, and - perhaps above all - the history of Polish parliamentarism.