


Construction of the Structures of the Polish Workers' Party in the Districts of the Lublin Voivodeship in the Light of the Documents of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in the Years 1945–1948

Budowa struktur Polskiej Partii Robotniczej w powiatach województwa lubelskiego w świetle dokumentów Wojewódzkiej Komisji Kontroli Partyjnej w latach 1945–1948

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Abstract: The priority of the Polish communists after the end of World War II was the expansion of the small, staff Polish Workers' Party (PPR) and its transformation into a mass party capable of exercising power. For the leadership of the "workers' party," this was a difficult task, since a significant percentage of the society was against their rule, the ranks of the organisation rarely included people worthy of the title of communist, and the field structures were formed in the conditions of the struggle against the Polish independence underground. The article attempts to show the process of building district party organs of power in the Lublin area – an important area with revolutionary and communist traditions dating back to the 19th century for the executors of Joseph Stalin's will. The source for consideration are archival materials of the PPR Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin.

Keywords: Polish Workers' Party, Voivodeship Party Control Commission, District Committee, Lublin region, Poland in 1944–1948

Streszczenie: Priorytetem polskich komunistów po zakończeniu II wojny światowej była rozbudowa nielicznej, kadrowej Polskiej Partii Robotniczej (PPR) i przekształcenie jej w zdolną do sprawowania władzy partię masową. Dla kierownictwa "partii robotniczej" stanowiło to trudne zadanie, gdyż znaczny odsetek społeczeństwa był przeciwny ich rządowi, w szeregi organizacji rzadko wstępowały osoby godne miana komunisty, zaś struktury terenowe powstawały w warunkach walki z polskim podziemiem niepodległościowym. W artykule podjęto próbę ukazania procesu budowy powiatowych organów władzy partyjnej na terenie Lubelszczyzny – istotnego dla wykonawców woli Józefa Stalina obszaru o sięgających XIX w. tradycjach rewolucyjnych i komunistycznych. Źródło dla rozważań stanowią materiały archiwalne Wojewódzkiej Komisji Kontroli Partyjnej PPR w Lublinie.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska Partia Robotnicza, Wojewódzka Komisja Kontroli Partyjnej, Komitet Powiatowy, Lubelszczyzna, Polska w latach 1944–1948

The Polish Workers' Party (PPR) was founded on the initiative of the Communist International (Comintern) during the German occupation as a staff conspiracy organization. Its creators were Moscow-trained communists with pre-war experience and a narrow circle of their supporters. The party, thanks to favorable war decisions and the support of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), began to take power in post-war Poland, which gave rise to the hegemonic party system in our country (Sokół, Żmigrodzki 2005: 114–115). It was necessary to expand its structures, allowing the creation of party-state administration bodies and field structures of the party (Gontarczyk 2016: 26–34; Wrona 1995: 26–35). This would not have been possible without the supervision of the PPR cells by the Central Party Control Commission (CKKP) and the voivodeship commissions. Their role was not only to discipline members, but also to control party institutions (Libera 2015: 169).

The CKKP was not directly involved in the creation of the PPR field cells. More valid is the reflection on the activities of the provincial commission, whose members were activists who knew the structures they supervised. One of the most important areas for the communists was Lublin—the area of vigorous activities of the pre-war Communist Party of Poland (KPP), an important center of the communist guerrilla during the war, the headquarters of the Polish Committee for National Liberation (PKWN) and an important point of recruitment of PPR members.

Ideologically free reflection on the functioning of communist parties in Poland became possible after the collapse of the system in 1989. Despite the growing number of scientific dissertations on this topic, many related issues, especially at a regional level, remain unexplored. The issue of the activity of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission (WKKP) in Lublin in its various aspects has already been taken up by the author of the presented article (Bednarczyk 2016a, 2016b). The issues raised in this study have been reduced to the necessary minimum. The source of the considerations is the archives of the WKKP PPR, which are part of the team of the Voivodeship Committee of the PPR in Lublin, stored in the State Archives in Lublin (APL), supplemented by the documents of the CKKP collected in the Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw (AAN).

The communist political system was centralized. Decisions taken at the meetings of the highest bodies – The Political Bureau and the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the PPR – were then submitted for implementation by lower – level activists in voivodeship and district committees. Formulated by central decision-makers, who have no direct contact with the serial

PPR-s implementing them, m.in. in terms of expanding and strengthening the field structures of the PPR, they encountered serious difficulties, of which the representatives of the Central Committee (KC) usually did not realize.

The aim of the article is to analyze, firstly, the implementation of decisions taken in Warsaw on the creation of PPR structures in the districts of the Lublin Voivodeship between June 1945 and December 1948, and secondly, the difficulties faced by the then field party activists. A chronological and problem-based approach was used, which will show how the above problems changed on the way to the expansion of the conspiracy organization to the level of the mass party. The starting point for consideration is the presentation of the control institutions of the PPR and their competence in the districts, then the implementation of these duties before the people's referendum, during the elections to the Legislative Sejm, after the falsified elections, and in the era of "cleansing the ranks" before the establishment of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR).

1. Institutions of party control of the Polish Workers' Party, party offences and penalties

In "people's democracy," party instruments of control were part of the party-state power apparatus. Institutions with a hierarchical structure and investigative powers played a key role—they were supposed to ensure the stability of the system and the party. The PPR did not differ in its pedigree from other communist parties of the Eastern Bloc (Mażewski 2020: 74–77). The control system was therefore a copy of the solutions adopted in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union (Oseka 2008: 262). The CKKP was established by the decision of the Secretariat of the KC of 30 May 1945. (Kochański 2001: 32). It functioned under the laws of the KC department (Kochański 2001: 214–215), its task was to supervise the implementation of KC resolutions, as well as to discipline members who violate "the principles of party ethics, do not comply with the statute and do not comply with PPR resolutions" (Statute 1947: 18). During the period under review, the commission was headed by Zenon Kliszko and then by Waław Lewikowski. The CKKP consisted of 4–5 full-time employees of PPR. In June 1947, in addition to the staff of the apparatus, 11 non-permanent members were admitted to the commission (APL, Information Bulletin of the Central Party Control Commission, ref. 483, k. 2).

As early as 1945, the CKKP set up field committees cooperating with the provincial committees (Statute 1947: 13–14, 18–19). The chairmen of the commission in Lublin were Franciszek Piątkowski, Szczepan Kudła and Olga Żebruń, to whom two employees were subordinate. In July 1947, the membership was expanded by 9 non-permanent members (AAN, Minutes of the meeting of the CKKP in an expanded composition on 24 X 1946, ref. 295/IV-1, k. 5a). The WKKP could not punish representatives of the provincial asset, which was done by the CKKP (AAN, Report from the First Meeting of the National Party Control Commission of the PPR on 20 II 1946, ref. 295/IV-1, k. 6). Instead, they had the right to discipline activists in district committees. They were not subject to the Voivodeship Committee (KW), and the work of the Lublin commission was first analyzed by the executive in November 1950. (Zawadka 2014: 51). The main duty was to adjudicate in the disciplinary proceedings of the PPR members. During the 3 years of its work, the Lublin commission received 1358 applications, and considered 1356 (APL, [Register] Cases settled by the Voivodeship KKP [1947–1948], ref. 446, *passim*; APL, [Register] – Incoming Cases; Completed Cases [1947–1948], ref. 447, *passim*). The generality of the regulations led to arbitrariness in issuing regulations (Kochański 2001: 298). Undesirable persons in the party were: (a) members who joined the PPR in order to get a position or a job, (b) PPR members acting immorally and also identified as a “hostile element,” and (c) members of the KPP acting to its detriment (Osęka 2012: 76). Among the charges, violations of party discipline and ethics were also significant (Osęka 2008: 265), material and financial abuse, abuse of official powers, cooperation with the enemy, as well as cooperation with the pre-war police, called “snitching” (pl. *sypactwo*). The committees could issue reprimands or reprimands, strip party and state positions, or remove them from the party, although they also dismissed cases (Osęka 2008: 78–90). The defendants had the right to appeal to the CKKP (Osęka 2008: 273).

2. Control powers of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in the district committees of the Polish Workers’ Party

The main source of information about party structures in the districts were inspection trips. Every month, the inspectors should go at least once for a several-day visit to the elected district committee. During the visit, they held talks with employees of the party apparatus of all levels, security

agencies and members of the PPR circles. Documentation should also be analysed (Magier 2012: 505–506, 511). Representatives of the WKKP did not consider the inspections in Lublin and Lublin district to be departures. The selection of districts was dictated by the appeals for help received and the local “security conditions” – the efficiency of the security authorities and the size of the anti-communist underground. In the first months of its existence, due to staff shortages and lack of work instructions, the commission did not organize departures (APL, Report of the WKKP PPR in Lublin to the Central Party Control Commission of the PPR in Warsaw 9 XII 1945, ref. 443, k. 1). The scale of organized trips is presented in the Table below.

Table. Visits of representatives of the WKKP in the period from June 1945 to December 1948

District	Number of inspections	Percentage
Krasnystaw	9	9.89
Lubartów	9	9.89
Kraśnik	8	8.79
Hrubieszów	8	8.79
Chełm	7	7.69
Zamość	7	7.69
Puławy	6	6.59
Tomaszów	6	6.59
Włodawa	6	6.59
Biała	5	5.49
Siedlce	4	4.40
Biłgoraj	3	3.30
Lublin	2	2.20
Łuków	2	2.20
Radzyń	2	2.20
Lublin city	1	1.10
No data available	6	6.59
Total	91	–

Source: APL, departures of representatives of the WKKP in the period from VI 1945 to XII 1948, ref. 443–444, *passim*.

Only two inspections were carried out in the Lublin District Committee (KP). Typically, districts close to Lublin and working most efficiently were visited, especially Krasnystaw, Lubartów and Kraśnik. Areas further from the city, which were weaker organizationally, less numerous and more threatened by the armed underground, were neglected. The preponderance of control in Lublin shows that the influence of the WKKP was greatest at the headquarters of the KW. Inspections were cancelled, among other reasons, because of office duties in Lublin (APL, Monthly Report of the WKKP PPR in Lublin to the Central Party Control Commission of the PPR in Warsaw from XI to 3 XII 1945, ref. 443, k. 3), a large number of disciplinary cases to be drawn up (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin. For the period from 25 XII 1946 to 25 II 1947, ref. 443, k. 39), involvement in other tasks, e.g., in the people's referendum (APL, Report of the provincial party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of June 1946, ref. 443, k. 19), or elections to the Legislative Sejm (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of August, ref. 443, k. 23). Sometimes trips were organised more frequently, including because of the need to support activists in the field (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 X to 25 XI 1946, ref. 443, k. 30). Knowledge of the situation in the districts was also obtained during trips on the orders of the Voivodeship Committee (KW) and for investigative purposes (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 III to 25 IV 1948, ref. 444, k. 19). In 1948, the number of trips and their regularity have increased. This was due, among other things, to the activation of the part-time members of the WKKP. The analysis of the functioning of the committees also took place during talks at the headquarters of the KW with representatives of the Party Control called before the commission (APL, Report of the WKKP in Lublin for July, ref. 443, k. 21).

3. Activities of party control bodies before the people's referendum

The first field inspections took place in October and November 1945. The commission judged the activists from the committee in Biłgoraj the best, who allegedly worked closely with members of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and the People's Party, as well as with members of the organization

rebuilding after the collapse of the underground in Krasnystaw. The work in Łuków and Kraśnik, where there was no proper management, was considered the most neglected. In Zamość, on the other hand, the problem of conflicts between activists was noticed (APL, Monthly Report of the WKKP PPR in Lublin to the Central Party Control Commission of the PPR in Warsaw from XI to 3 XII 1945, ref. 443, k. 3).

At the end of 1945 and the beginning of 1946, the employees of the commission came to the conclusion that there were increasing differences in the work of the district structures, e.g., the Tomaszów and Hrubieszów commissions did not fulfil their duties (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the months of December and January 1945–1946, ref. 443, k. 7). Difficulties were caused by the enforcement of quotas from farmers, the cells were “susceptible to provocations” from the armed underground and opposition parties (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of February 1946, ref. 443, k. 8). In the run-up to the committee elections in March, commission representatives checked the committees’ performance, especially in the units whose managers were accused of incompetence. Members of the WKKP interfered in the election of secretaries. At the same time, information was obtained on the work of the starosts; despite irregularities, it was not always possible to remove them from their posts, among other things because of a lack of successors (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of March 1946, ref. 443, k. 10–11). In April 1946, district organizations functioned more efficiently, the activities of lower structures were considered insufficient (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of April 1946 (including the holiday of May 1), ref. 443, k. 12).

Members of the WKKP drew attention to the expansion of the PPR structures – representatives of the KC assumed that the fight against the underground by the security apparatus would guarantee the growth of the party’s personal status. At the beginning of 1946, the commission, having analysed the records and personal questionnaires, concluded that the increase was satisfactory. In April, there was a decline due to the displacement of Ukrainians from the Lublin region, who after the end of hostilities joined the party (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of March 1946, ref. 443, k. 10–11). There was also an increase in the interest of women in the PPR (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of May 1946, ref. 443, k. 15).

During the Referendum, members of the WKKP noticed that the weaker activity of the underground and the opposition usually results in a stronger position of the PPR in the district. Communist-dominated areas, however, were in the minority. The auditors assessed the work of agitators encouraging voting, as well as the number of meetings and attendance at them. The quality of work was supposed to be evidenced by involvement in propaganda operations, including in areas with high underground activity. No activity of members of parties allied to the PPR was observed, with the exception of the PPS. Participants in the rallies and meetings of the WKKP delegates analysed discussions mainly on the eastern border and the economy. In spite of the "victory" in the elections, it was perceived that if activists from KW and KC delegates had not been sent to work in the field, the campaign might not have been carried out because the district structures were too weak (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the month of June 1946, ref. 443, k. 18–19).

4. Activity of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission from the people's referendum to the elections to the Legislative Sejm

The first post-Referendum control of reports from the districts was organized in August 1946, and it concerned the resettlement of the Ukrainian population (Motyka 2011: 390–392, 426–432; Wysocki 2011: 62–74, 83–92). More attention was paid to Włodawa, where 381 of the approximately 800 PPR members had disappeared (Wysocki 2011: 89–90). The void was filled by people who were encouraged to join by party instructors (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of August, ref. 443, k. 24). The work of district secretaries, new PPR members and officers of the District Public Security Offices was examined (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of August, ref. 443, k. 24–25). The districts with the weakest organisation and the smallest number of PPR members: Łuków, Biała and Radzyń were rated lowest, while Chełm and Biłgoraj were ranked higher (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of August, ref. 443, k. 25; APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of September, ref. 443, k. 29). The nearest District Committee in Lublin did not function, as a result of the need

to ensure the efficiency of the Lublin KW (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the month of August, ref. 443, k. 25). The WKKP carried out more thorough checks before the elections, between October and December 1946. Attention was drawn to the functioning of committees, cooperation with other parties, the functioning of the Citizens' Militia (MO), The Security Office (UB), the Citizens' Militia Volunteer Reserve (ORMO), the Peasants' Self-Help Union and the Youth Struggle Union, as well as the growth of the PPR in numbers. The conclusions of the inspectors were not optimistic, the activity of party structures was unsatisfactory (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 X to 25 XI 1946, ref. 443, k. 30–34). After the vote, field trips were limited, due to bad weather conditions, reports did not reach Lublin (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin. For the period from 25 XII 1946 to 25 II 1947, ref. 443, k. 41).

More frequent presence in the field during the Referendum made the inspectors aware of the façade of unregulated cooperation with other parties (APL, WKKP Monthly Reports [for the period 1945–1947], Report of the WKKP in Lublin for the month of July, ref. 443, k. 20). On the December 19, 1946, during the meeting of the district secretaries and the PPR and PPS assets, a resolution on cooperation was signed in the presence of the WKKP delegate. The agreement did not translate into a change of mood. In the field, the committee observed an increase in resentment towards the PPS; the population, allegedly supporting the PPR, was to be convinced that the socialists did not get involved in the fight against the communist opponents, and were destabilising the situation themselves (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission for the period from 25 XI to 25 XII 1946, ref. 443, k. 36).

5. Voivodeship Party Control Commission from March 1947 to February 1948

In March 1947, the WKKP analysed the elections of party authorities in the districts. An obstacle to their efficient implementation in field organizations was staff shortages and asset fatigue caused by an intensive campaign before the elections to the Sejm. The secretaries complained of too many tasks and a lack of competence. In the course of consultations with the population, the commission noted an improvement in the mood of

the population, the spread of rumours of the outbreak of another world conflict was prosecuted by the UB (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 II to 25 III 1947, ref. 443, k. 92–93). The following month, in connection with the elections in the committees, secretaries were changed. The commission gave the highest marks to the district committees in Krasnystaw, Zamość, Puławy, Lubartów and Tomaszów, which were developing their structures; the most efficient was the committee in Biłgoraj (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin from 25 III to 25 IV 1947, ref. 443, k. 48). The WKKP found that the lowest-level activists lacked experience and knowledge of the party's principles, the new secretaries did not meet the requirements (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 V to 25 VII 1947, ref. 443, k. 59). The inspectors held talks with the activists, which resulted in a positive opinion of the secretary from Chełm, who had been changed after the commission's intervention, while the one from Puławy was said not to be interested in the job (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 VII to 25 VIII 1947, ref. 443, k. 64). The WKKP, while consulting the population in the field, received complaints about improper handling of cases (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin from 25 V to 25 VII 1947, ref. 443, k. 58).

In September 1947, members of the WKKP examined the effectiveness of the reception of candidates, the issuing IDs, the regularity of meetings, and the collection of contributions. In the opinion of the inspectors, the district committees in Lublin and Kraśnik discharged these duties most poorly, and the secretaries in Siedlce did not work properly because of a dispute (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the period from 25 VIII to 25 IX 1947, ref. 443, k. 72). In October, members of the WKKP made an unsuccessful attempt to dismiss one of the secretaries, the KW Secretariat intervened in his defense. The northern districts were rebuilding their structures, while in the southern districts, which had been included in the settlement campaign, development prospects were seen (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission at the PPR Central Commission in Lublin for the period from 25 IX to 15 X 1947, ref. 443, k. 82). Attention was drawn to the Hrubieszów district. According to the commission, the fragile situation has been improved thanks to the security authorities. The women's department of the KW did not conduct effective agitation

among women, the exchange of IDs was slow. In November, the commission continued to monitor the work of the secretaries. There was also an exchange of ID cards, there was no purge. According to the controllers, the work has become easier thanks to the fight against the underground. However, villagers complained about taxes and shortages of supplies (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the Voivodeship Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 X to 25 XI 1947, ref. 443, k. 87–89).

In December, the number of “dead souls” in the districts was revealed. Out of the 4,000 people listed in the records, 1,331 left the Krasnystaw district without notifying their superiors; this number also included people who did not consider themselves members of the PPR (APL, Report of Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the Lublin Voivodeship Commission of the PPR for December 1947, ref. 443, k. 96). WKKP requested a change of secretary from Tomaszów, who committed abuses, summoned before the WKKP did not change the procedure. At the beginning of 1948, the commission took part in the conference of starosts and chairmen of District National Councils (PRN) in Hrubieszów, supervised the exam during the training (APL, Monthly Reports of the WKKP 1948, Report of the Voivodeship Control Commission at the WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 1 I to 25 I 1948, ref. 444, k. 1). A delegate sent to Kraśnik observed the elections of the authorities. In February, in Biała County, an activist of the WKKP, analyzing the course of voting in rural committees, noticed a lack of knowledge of competence by KP employees. Chairwoman O. Żebruń controlled the KP in Tomaszów and Zamość, at the meeting of the circle she delivered a paper on “the moral face of a party member and party discipline.” In another circle consisting of former activists, the WKKP noticed manifestations of “sectarianism” – it manifested itself in the rejection of new members. In the Lubartów district, on the orders of the CC, data on the wheels were collected, the PPR was supposed to work badly (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 I to 25 II 1948, ref. 444, k. 4–6).

In June 1947, members of the WKKP were involved in the “resettlement campaign.” The local population was negative about the actions of the PPR, the displacement of Ukrainians were to be carried out using “German methods” (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin from 25 V to 25 VII 1947, ref. 443, k. 58). The action caused problems for KW in Lublin. Initially, the “settlement” went according to plan, there were many interested people, tempted by the vision of fertile land in

the Tomaszów and Hrubieszów counties. After the departure from this area of the military units protecting the action, groups of Ukrainians appeared, who set fire to the villages from which the settlers fled. Instead of detaining fugitives and initiating the creation of self-defence, members of the district committees were busy cataloguing the property of the displaced (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 VII to 25 VIII 1947, ref. 443, k. 63). ORMÓ could not stop the attacks. KW led to the return of some of the settlers (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission in Lublin for the period from 25 VIII to 25 IX 1947, ref. 443, k. 71). In the Tomaszów and Hrubieszów districts, the campaign proceeded more smoothly, as the army was involved, and the PPR structures there began recruiting settlers (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission of the Voivodeship Committee of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 X to 25 XI 1947, ref. 443, k. 87).

6. Activities of the Voivodeship Party Control Commission from March to September 1948

In March, in Hrubieszów County, the Commission President observed the effects of the resettlement operation. The reception of settlers allegedly proceeded according to plan. Discernment showed that the district was safe, and the organization of the party efficient. The number of PPRs increased, some of the newly admitted were already holders of ID cards in their former places of residence, the most active were placed in positions. KP had to work properly, the only problem was the small number of assets, so the management was burdened. The delegate sent to the Puławy district noticed an unhealthy atmosphere among the members of the KP executive. The control of the Krasnystaw district took place at the beginning of the elections, the preparatory assemblies were analysed. The PPR was the most numerous there, and the secretary was supposed to be exhausted, but staffing shortages prevented his replacement. Some of the secretaries were supposed to abuse alcohol, and members committed offenses. Due to the large number of vacant positions it was called to focus on training (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 II to 25 III 1948, ref. 444, k. 11–12).

In April, O. Żebruń went to the Biłgoraj district. The municipal elections, contrary to the statute, were attended by non-party members, who were supposed to be more active than members of the PPR. The chairwoman considered that a significant percentage of people outside the PPR indicated the authority of the party in the rural environment. During other conferences, she observed a large turnout, especially among the intelligentsia. The representative of the WKKP sent to the Siedlce district noticed the interest of the non-partisan in the affairs of the party. He stated that the Lublin organisation raised the level of work in the countryside, it was supposed to be a merit of better cooperation between KW and KP. In May, great importance was attached to the control of the examination of the correspondence course "A." During the test, O. Żebruń observed the students' reluctance to study, the conversation prompted a request to retake the test. According to the controlling PC, they ignored this issue and did not press for party schools conducting training (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the PPR Central Committee in Lublin for the period from 25 III to 25 IV 1948, ref. 444, k. 20–26). Members of the committee also assessed the collection of money for the construction of the "common party house" (APL, Instruction of the Committee of the May 1 Collection for the Construction of the Central House of the United Party of the Working Class, ref. 12, k. 84–86), as well as contributions and replacement of IDs from temporary to permanent. In the Kraśnik district, the preparation of the KP for the collection and the compliance of the elections with the party's statute (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 II to 25 III 1948, ref. 444, k. 26–27).

In June 1948, O. Żebruń during her stay in Zamość stated that the work of the KP was insufficient, and the secretary was at the same time an MP. The organization was among the most numerous, and at the same time more "cluttered," the president assumed that most of the members of the circles were suspected of activities against the party, so she recommended that the KP take a greater interest in the issue. Similar was the situation in Krasnystaw, and the secretary went to the party school, the duties were performed by one of the instructors sent by the KW. The delegate sent to the Łuków district noticed a lack of diligence in the issuance of IDs, there was no evidence of the distribution of documents. He also assessed the payment of contributions; money was coming in with difficulty, the rural population was not used to paying it (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the KW PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 V to 20 VI 1948, ref. 444, k. 33).

In July, during a trip to Lubartow, a WKKP envoy conducted the election of delegates to the Party Congress, while in the Włodawa district he “popularised the resolutions” of the July plenum of the Central Committee (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the PPR KW in Lublin for the period from 25 VI to 25 VII 1948, ref. 444, k. 41).

In September, in Tomaszów, O. Żebruń participated in the plenary session of the KP, where the first secretary delivered a paper on criticism and self-criticism, while she analyzed its assumptions and correctness. In Hrubieszów she participated in a briefing of commune activists, at which she presented the issue of “right-wing nationalist deviation” and the tasks of the party in the countryside (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the PPR KW in Lublin for the period from 25 VIII to 25 IX 1948, ref. 444, k. 53–54). Peasants were supposed to report abuses in cooperatives, accusations were made of entrusting positions to rich farmers. They also stigmatized the amount of the entry fee, the lack of order during the reception of grain, and activists from the KW and KP were also accused of accepting the wrong people into the PPR. They were supposed to agree with the paper and criticize Władysław Gomułka. Olga Żebruń assessed this as a success of propaganda activities. According to data collected from representatives of the KP, similar meetings took place in other districts. They drew attention to rumours, including about the reasons for the removal of W. Gomułka from the post of General Secretary, which were believed to be due to his “critical attitude to the kolkhozes” (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the PPR KW in Lublin for the period from 25 VIII to 25 IX 1948, ref. 444, k. 53–54).

7. Voivodeship Party Control Commission during the period of “cleansing the party ranks” (October–December 1948)

Although the aim of the campaign was to purge the party, the departures provided an opportunity to observe the functioning of the PPR. Members of the WKKP were the most important participants in the verification teams of “unworthy of party membership.” They also consisted of “trusted persons” seconded by the KW and nearly 200 trained persons, who were divided among the districts (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Committee of the PPR in Lublin for October 1948, ref. 19, k. 145). At the stage of the appointment of the tripods by the PC – some of them consisted only of delegates

of the WKKP, others consisted only of heads of departments – it was not always possible to select suitable activists (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the WK of the PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 IX to 25 X 1948, ref. 444, k. 63).

The members of the commission stated that the representatives of the district activists were satisfied with the course of the action, and postulated that such actions should be carried out every three months (APL, Minutes of the meeting of the Executive of the Voivodeship Committee of the PPR in Lublin of October 20, 1948, ref. 9, k. 77–83). When “cleansing” was noticed “poor grasp of classist elements,” it was necessary to help the wheels unable to exclude them. The cases of those excluded from the highest posts had to be made public in the press in order to persuade members to maintain the right attitude (APL, Minutes of the meeting of the Extended Executive of the Voivodeship Committee of the Polish Workers' Party in Lublin on October 23, 1948, ref. 9, k. 86–92). Most of the excluded belonged to the PPR in Kraśnik and Krasnystaw (75 people), the cells there were the most numerous, had the longest “tradition,” and the activists were recruited from among the members of the WKKP. In the least numerous districts, less than 40 people were excluded, counting on the development of activists (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the WK PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 IX to 25 X 1948, ref. 444, k. 63).

The campaign ended in November 1948. The commission saw that this activity was intended to activate the circles, increase the effectiveness of the collection for the construction of the PZPR building and member contributions. According to O. Żebruń, removal from the party was supposed to increase its authority among non-partisans (APL, Report of the Party Control Commission at the KW PPR in Lublin for the period from 25 X to 25 XI 1948, ref. 444, k. 66). Members of the KW assessed that the majority of activists in the districts joined it properly. The representatives of the circles were supposed to demonstrate an “ideologically sound approach,” the committee did not find the removal groundless. The “cleansing” was intended to strengthen the PPR, increase its prestige and authority, and activate and discipline its activists. During the campaign there was to be increased interest in new members joining the PPR (APL, Report of the Voivodeship Committee of the PPR in Lublin for October 1948, ref. 444, k. 146–147; APL, Report on the cleansing of the ranks of the Party in the Lublin Voivodeship, ref. 9, k. 169–171).

Conclusions

PPR did not enjoy significant support in the society. The communist movement, almost completely liquidated before the war, had to be built from scratch. The basis of the party, which during the occupation took the form of a conspiratorial, largely agency-based organization, were activists who came to the occupied lands from the USSR, as well as a handful of surviving pre-war communists. In the very weak communist system in Poland, especially in the first years of its functioning, which placed emphasis on "Bolshevik compactness of ranks," the availability and obedience of party members and the existence of tools of control were crucial. To this end, following the example of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks), appropriate organs were set up, as reflected in the CKKP, which by its very nature could not deal with detailed aspects of party life in the field, so the emerging provincial, district and lower PPR structures played a significant role.

The primary function of the commission was to supervise the work of the KW, KP and lower PPR. Particular attention was paid to the implementation of intra-party duties, including the maintenance of party records, the organisation of meetings, the organisation of membership records, the collection of party dues and the exchange of cards, as well as the effectiveness of encouraging new members to join the party. The main source of information for the commission should be monthly inspection trips, during which activists had to observe the work of the party "pits" with their own eyes. However, due to time constraints, difficulties in transport or unfavorable conditions on the ground, this was not always possible. Departures were usually limited to the nearest county commission headquarters. Interestingly, one of the most neglected in this regard was the Lublin district, where the KP did not function. Conversations with representatives of lower organizations who came to Lublin were also not always enough. This was due to the fact that the PPR in the field did not have sufficient personnel, which meant that not all structures were functioning properly. In particular, the committees in the districts where the "workers' party" had cells expanded during the war functioned more efficiently. Organizations in districts threatened by the attacks of the independence underground functioned ephemerally, positions were not filled, and activists represented a low level. Representatives of the WKKP interfered with the functioning of the lower levels, engaging in their personnel policy, organising training and suggesting the necessary improvements, as well as taking part in political and propaganda campaigns

carried out in the districts. The difficulties that arose in the period under consideration largely remained present in the party structures of the successor of the PPR – the PZPR.

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