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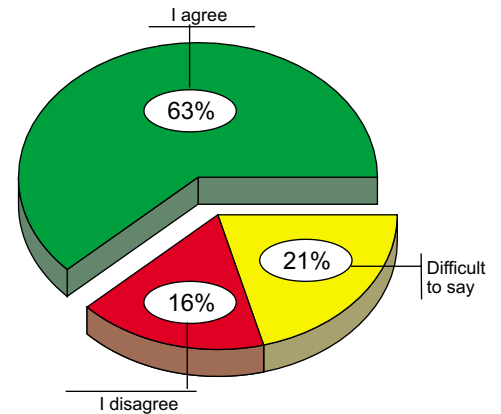
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THE ATTITUDE TO DEMOCRACY

Social opinions about the democratic system as a form of government have been rather stable for several years now. The majority of Poles seem to share the view that despite its shortcomings democracy is the best of the forms of government known so far. However, the conviction about the superiority of democracy over all other forms of government expressed by the majority of respondents is not absolute. More than one in three of those convinced about the superiority of democracy believe that there are situations in which undemocratic government would be a better solution, and one in four believes in better effectiveness of authoritarian rule.

DO YOU AGREE OR NOT WITH THE STATEMENT THAT DEMOCRACY HAS AN ADVANTAGE OVER ALL OTHER FORMS OF GOVERNMENT?

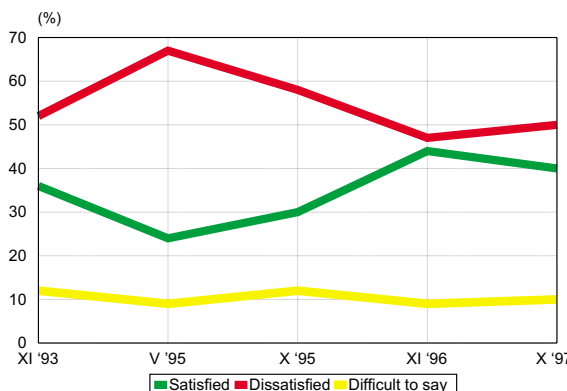


The attitude to democracy as one of the forms of government depends to a large extent on the assessment of the realisation of this theory in practice, i.e. the functioning of democracy in our country. Satisfaction with the Polish democracy clearly favours general approval of this system of government. The attitude to democracy is also, although to a lesser extent, modified by such factors as the personal feeling of influence on the national affairs realised through participation in democratic procedures, the assessment of one's own material conditions of living and satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the result of the September parliamentary elections.

The majority of respondents (63%) share the opinion that democracy means first of all personal freedom, less than one in four (23%) see it rather as mess and chaos. Persons who accept the democratic system identify it with individual freedom, while opponents of democracy define it rather as mess and chaos.

As far as socio-demographic characteristics are concerned, the attitude to democracy varies first of all with education and occupational position of respondents. Acceptance of this form of government increases with the level of education; moreover, representatives of managerial staff and intelligentsia support democracy the most frequently. On the other hand, opponents of this form of government are relatively the most frequently found among persons with primary or trade school education, farmers and unskilled workers.

ARE YOU GENERALLY SATISFIED OR DISSATISFIED WITH THE WAY DEMOCRACY FUNCTIONS IN OUR COUNTRY?



The general attitude to democracy varies only slightly according to the political identification of respondents - acceptance of the democratic system prevails among both the persons with right-wing orientation and those with left-wing orientation. It should be stressed, however, that respondents with left-wing political views would more readily accept undemocratic rule in some situations and they also more frequently see democracy as mess and chaos.

After eight years of democratic rule most respondents are dissatisfied with the way the Polish democracy functions. Compa-

red to the previous year, when we recorded the highest degree of satisfaction, the current evaluations are a little less favourable. It should be stressed, however, that the percentage of those who positively evaluate the functioning of democracy in Poland is higher than in the previous years, when negative evaluations prevailed considerably.

It is characteristic that the evaluations concerning the way democracy functions in our country are not modified by the events as important for it as elections. The opinions on this matter from November '93 and October '97, i.e. just after the parliamentary elections which in both cases resulted in an important change on the political scene, are not more in favour of democracy than those expressed at other times. Therefore it seems that according to the common opinion the act of electing the nation's representatives to the legislative authorities is not an indication of proper functioning of democratic procedures. On the other hand, these opinions are to the largest extent affected by the following: the level of satisfaction with the result of the latest parliamentary election, the personal feeling of influence on the national affairs and the assessment of one's own material situation. Thus, the evaluations of the Polish democracy are based on personal experience resulting from the consequences of democratic rule rather than on the efficiency of its procedures. It should be noted that the result of elections is more important for the social assessment of the functioning of democracy than the very act of voting. The fact of winning the election by a "strange" political option often results in negative evaluations of the functioning of democracy.

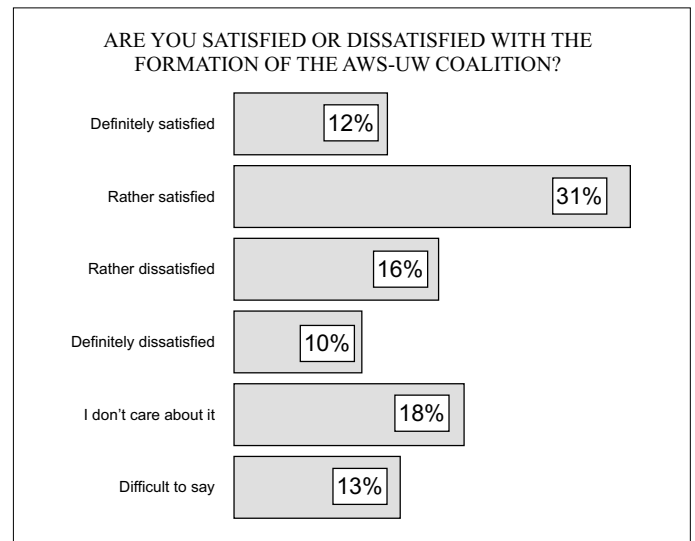
The percentage of those who express positive opinions about our political system increased a little compared to the year 1995. However, these changes are small and the views on this issue can be regarded as rather stable. Like previously, the opinion that the system is not good and requires more or less radical changes prevails among respondents at the moment. The respondents' views on the Polish political system do not vary according to their political identification. Persons with right and left-wing orientation present similar opinions, the most frequently supporting the view that the Polish political system requires many changes.

The opinions of the electorates of particular political parties on the way democracy functions in Poland have changed considerably during the last year. One should suppose that the September parliamentary election was the factor which had the biggest influence on these opinions. Compared to November '96, supporters of the Solidarity Election Action (AWS) and the Freedom Union (UW) approve of the functioning of democracy in our country more now, while the opinions of supporters of the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), the Polish Peasant Party (PSL), the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP) and the Labour Union (UP) are less favourable now.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "The social attitude to democracy", November '97.

NEW COALITION, NEW GOVERNMENT, NEW PRIME MINISTER

During the negotiations between the parties forming the coalition and the new government, after Jerzy Buzek had been designated as the Prime Minister, we asked respondents about their attitude toward the new coalition and the new head of the government, as well as their expectations from this government. The survey was conducted before the Prime Minister's *expose* and before the final appointment of the new Cabinet by the Parliament.



Reactions to the establishment of a new AWS (the Solidarity Election Action) - UW (the Freedom Union) coalition are dominated by satisfaction. It is declared first of all by persons with higher or secondary education, living in big cities. The higher the income per person in the family and the more frequent the participation in religious services, the bigger the support for the post-Solidarity government coalition. Among the socio-occupational groups, the new coalition received the most support from college/ university and secondary school students, lower rank office workers, as well as managerial staff and intelligentsia. On the other hand, farmers are the only group in which the dissatisfied prevail over the satisfied.

The attitude toward the new government coalition is first of all connected with the declared political views - respondents with right-wing views are definitely satisfied with the formation of this coalition. Declarations of satisfaction also prevail among persons with centre views. On the other hand, respondents identifying their views as left-wing usually express a negative attitude toward the formation of the AWS-UW coalition.

It is obvious that the formation of the new government coalition was received with the most enthusiasm by persons who voted for the parties forming this coalition in the last parliamentary election. The dissatisfied with the formation of the AWS-UW coalition can be most frequently found among the supporters of the parties which ruled during the last four years, first of

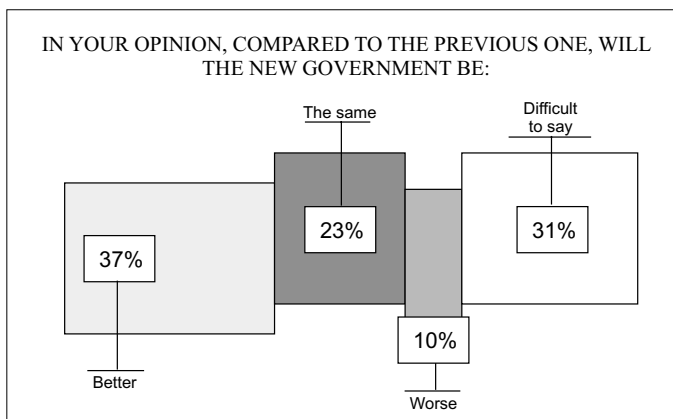
all among the electorate of the Polish Peasant Party (PSL). The opinions concerning the new government are divided in a similar way. The conviction that it will not come up to the Cabinet of Włodzimierz Cimoszewicz prevails among the supporters of SLD and PSL, while the conviction that the present government will be better than the previous one dominates among the electorates of the other parties.

And what do Poles expect from the AWS-UW coalition? As far as the economic situation is concerned, the opinions that it will not change or that it will improve received the most indications. The answers concerning the conditions of living in Poland are divided similarly: the largest groups of respondents do not expect changes or expect improvement.

Respondents count on reduction of unemployment rather than increase, while their opinions concerning the expected inflation vary: roughly the same numbers of persons believe that it will increase, decrease or remain unchanged.

The expectations concerning privatisation are more defined - over two fifths of respondents suppose that under the rule of the AWS-UW coalition it will proceed faster than it has so far. On the other hand, respondents do not really hope that thanks to the new government the number of business scandals will decrease - the most persons do not expect any changes here.

As far as political matters are concerned, the expectations connected with the improvement of the relations between the government and the Church are the most visible. The prognoses concerning the contacts of Poland with western countries are also favourable - in this case the majority believe that the government of the new coalition will improve them. On the other hand, respondents show less optimism when they express their opinions on our future relations with Russia - although the majority do not expect changes, over one fifth expect them to become worse.



More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS reports "New coalition, new government, new Prime Minister" and "Expectations from the new government", November '97.

THE CREDIT BOOM

The phenomenon of households running into debt by contracting bank loans or buying on the installment system, on the scale which exists in Poland

now, has been regarded as dangerous for the stability of our financial system. The National Bank of Poland has taken a number of steps aimed at "taking away" a part of financial means from the market in order to stop the credit boom. Do Poles really live on borrowed money?

According to the respondents' opinion, from January to October '97 nearly two fifths (37%) of households contracted debts either in the form of a bank loan, or buying something on the installment system. 13% of them both obtained a bank loan and bought something on the installment system.

The tendency to contracting loans can be a sign of high economic aspirations, which cannot be satisfied without running into debt. From another point of view this phenomenon can be interpreted as an indication of economic optimism based on the feeling of confidence that debts will be paid off. In general, it would mean that the households running into debt have a feeling of material stability. The most probable explanation, however, is that "living on borrowed money" is viewed as a natural element of the consumption strategy of households, like in other countries with longer tradition in this respect. It is confirmed by the fact that contracting bank loans or buying on the installment system does not depend on the declared standard of living of households.

This year one in four households (25%) has contracted a bank loan, and 5% intend to do it before the end of the year. One in eleven respondents either has already taken a loan on his/ her personal bank account or plans to apply for it. One in four families has invested in something bought on the installment system, and one in twenty respondents intends to use this system before 31 December this year. Therefore we can anticipate that if all the respondents' plans are carried into effect, next year almost one in three households (30%) will pay off bank loans contracted this year, a similar percentage of households (31%) will pay in installments for goods bought this year, and some families will have liabilities connected with both these sources of debt.

Bank loans are more frequently used by younger persons than older ones and by inhabitants of villages than those living in towns. As far as socio-occupational groups are concerned, farmers contract bank loans the most frequently - over half of them declared obtaining a bank loan this year. The respondents' level of education and the material conditions of households do not affect this form of contracting loans.

Installment buying is more or less equally popular among the persons with different material status and standard of living. Semi-manual workers and young persons aged 25-34 use this system more frequently than others. As far as working people are concerned, representatives of managerial staff and intelligentsia use this system of financing their purchases the least frequently.

Generally speaking, the tendency toward increasing the share of borrowed money (from the bank or from private persons) in financing investments of households, which was first recorded in January '96, remains stable. Popularity of loans granted by banks or installment buying can be a symptom of economic optimism of households, an indication of the feeling of financial security, confidence about the ability to meet financial liabilities.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Credit boom", November '97.

THE POLES' ATTITUDE TOWARDS REFUGEES

The influx of immigrants from other countries to Poland is a relatively new phenomenon, as are the problems caused by it.

The term "refugee" is ambiguous for Poles. Although the most respondents associate this term - according to the definition adopted by UNO - with persons who left their country because they feared persecution or who left a country at war, over a half (57%) of those polled use this term to define persons migrating for economic reasons as well. A little lower percentage of respondents (46%) regard the Poles from the East (e.g. Kazakhstan) as refugees, and one in four uses this term to describe national minorities living in Poland.

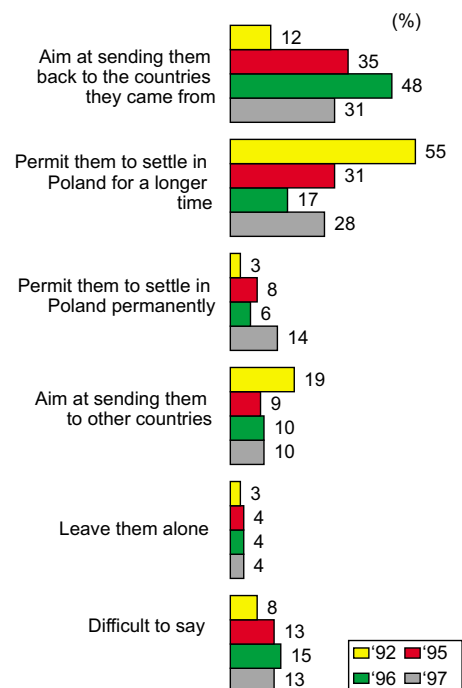
The opinion of the Polish public on the problem of refugees has changed quite radically over the last years. In 1992, when this phenomenon was still completely new and the number of refugees coming to Poland was relatively small, over half of respondents were willing to accept their settlement in Poland for a longer time. However, in the next years the attitude of respondents to this matter changed dramatically. The acceptance of permitting immigrants to settle in Poland for a longer time dropped considerably, while the percentage of respondents who regarded sending them back to the countries they had come from as the best solution increased.

One of the possible reasons for such a radical change of Polish public opinion concerning the problem of refugees could be the fact that after the collapse of the USSR our Eastern border became less hermetic and the influx of all sorts of immigrants, not only those from the former USSR, but also those coming from Asia that way, increased.

The most repulsive attitudes towards refugees were recorded last year, when nearly half of respondents postulated sending them back to their country of origin.

However, the year 1997 brought a decrease of prejudice and an increasing acceptance of leaving them in Poland, both for "a longer time" and for ever.

IN YOUR OPINION, HOW SHOULD WE DEAL WITH REFUGEES?



Views on the most suitable way of dealing with refugees (the term applies to all groups regarded by respondents as refugees) are independent on political views, but they vary according to the material situation and education of respondents. Leaving refugees in our country is accepted first of all by persons with higher education and those with the highest incomes.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "The Poles' attitude towards refugees", December '97.

In addition to the bulletins referred to above, the following have been published recently:

The voters' motivations

The problem of the presence of a crucifix in the Sejm

What do Poles know about the national holiday on 11 November?

Social moods a month after the election

Savings and loans

The rating list of the Prime Ministers of the 3rd Republic (post-communist Poland)

Once more about Colonel Kukliński

Civil subjectivity of Poles - the feeling of influence on public affairs

Material standard of living of families

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