

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

- THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY AND POLAND - - COMPARISON OF OPINIONS ON LIVING STANDARDS, THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE GOVERNMENT
- WE ARE IN THE NATO
- THE PERCEIVED AND POSTULATED HIERARCHY OF INCOME
- RELIGIOUSNESS OF POLES

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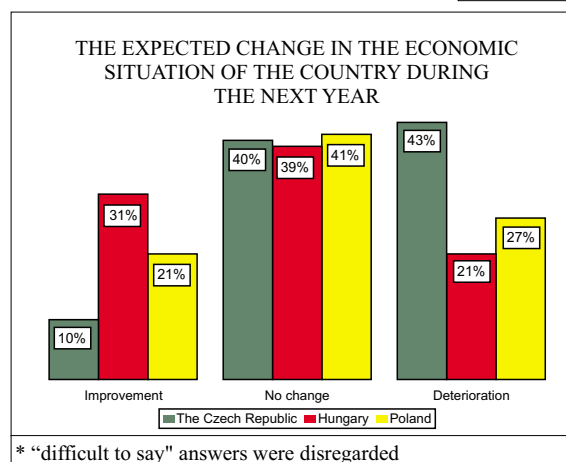
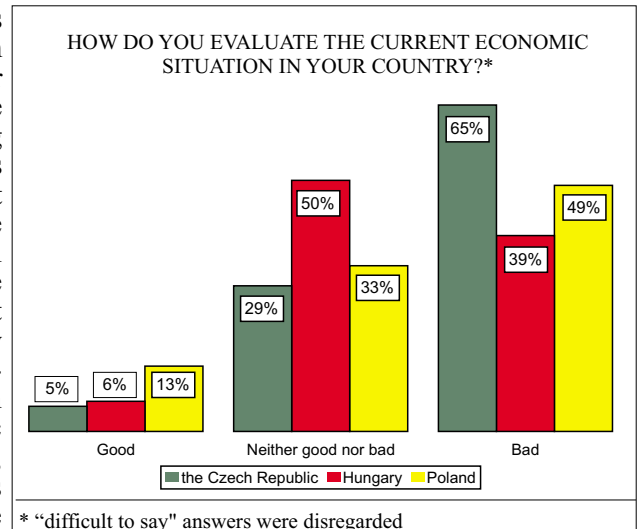
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## THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY AND POLAND - - COMPARISON OF OPINIONS ON LIVING STANDARDS, THE ECONOMIC SITUATION AND THE GOVERNMENT

The states once described as the "Vysehrad Triangle" have been admitted to NATO before other former members of the Warsaw Pact. These countries have been reconstructing their economic and political systems more or less successfully for the last few years, slowly heading towards the European Union standards. External observers, especially those from the other side of the Atlantic, often treat the Central European countries as very similar to one another. In co-operation with the public opinion research centres in the Czech Republic (IVVM) and Hungary (TARKI), CBOS made an attempt to verify this stereotype, at least in respect of the



public opinion, i.e. what citizens of the particular countries think about them.

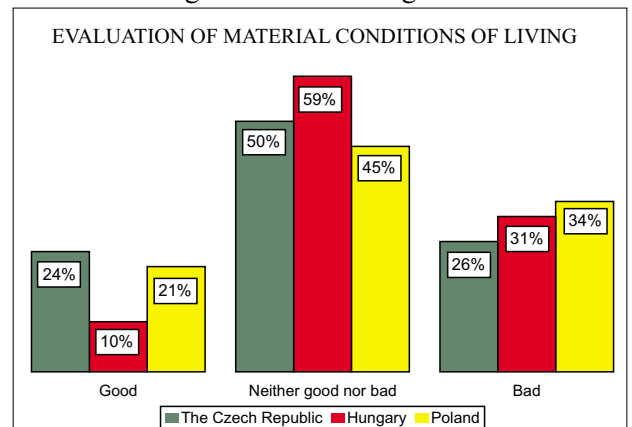
Opinions of residents of these three countries on both the current situation of their countries and their personal situation are different. The biggest differences have been observed in the evaluation of the economic situation, opinions on the conditions of living and the government. Differences concerning the expected changes in the economic situation of the country and the financial situation of families are less visible.

As compared with Poles and Hungarians, the Czech have the worst opinion on the condition of their economy, but, paradoxically, they evaluate their living conditions the highest. At the same

economy, but, paradoxically, they evaluate their living conditions the highest. At the same time, they are the most afraid of changes for worse in both these respects.

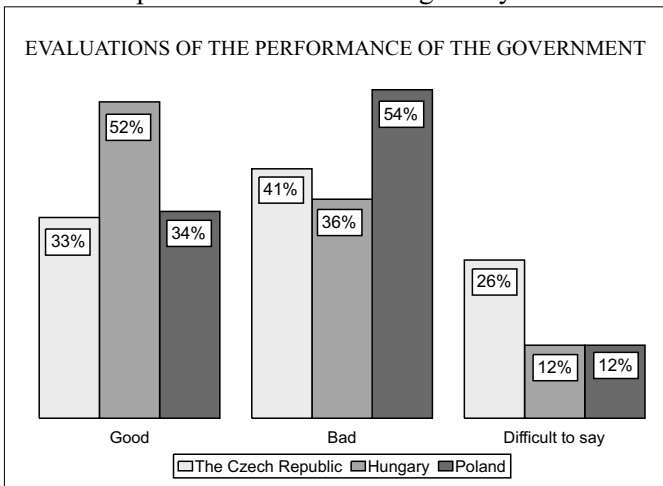
Hungarians evaluate their economy better than the Czech and slightly better than Poles. Hungarians are the most optimistic about the expected economic development of their country. On the other hand, their satisfaction with what they have achieved so far is relatively low, as the percentage of people evaluating their material living conditions as good is small.

Poles have a better opinion on their economy than the Czech, although they evaluate it lower than Hungarians (especially recently). However, it is rather difficult to compare the opinions of Hungarians and Poles, as the opinions of Poles are quite highly polarised, while Hungarians tend to choose neutral



opinions on this matter. Poles evaluate their material conditions of living a little lower than the Czech, who are the most satisfied with their present standard of living. On the other hand, Poles are satisfied with it more than Hungarians. The level of optimism is equal among Poles and Hungarians. The Czech are much less optimistic.

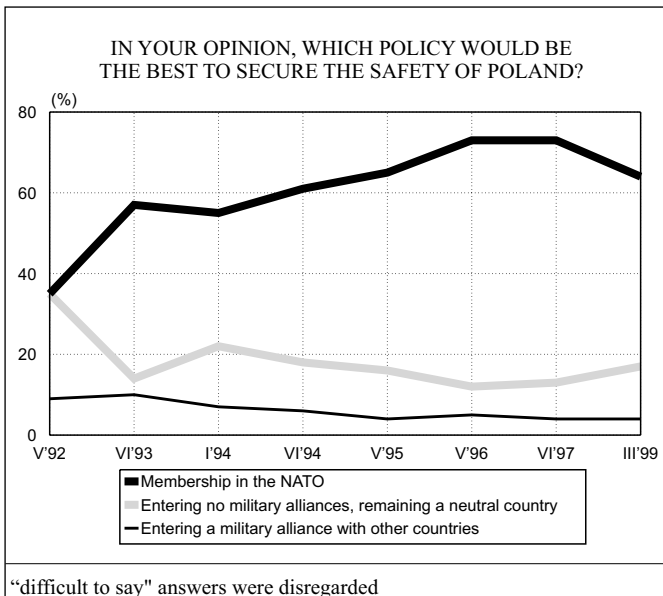
The Hungarian government enjoys the best opinion of its citizens. In the Czech Republic negative opinions on the government outnumber positive ones. As far as the number of positive opinions is concerned, the result of the Polish government is the same as that of the Czech government. However, the Polish government obtained the highest percentage of negative opinions over a half of respondents evaluated in negatively.



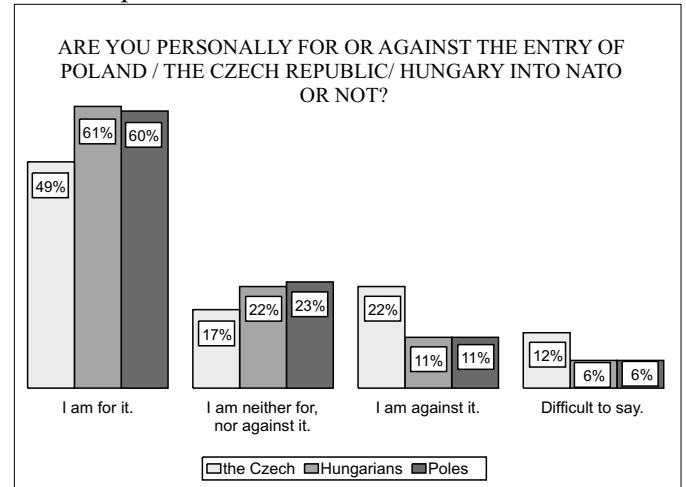
More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Opinions on the economic situation, living conditions and performance of the government in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary", March '99.

## WE ARE IN THE NATO

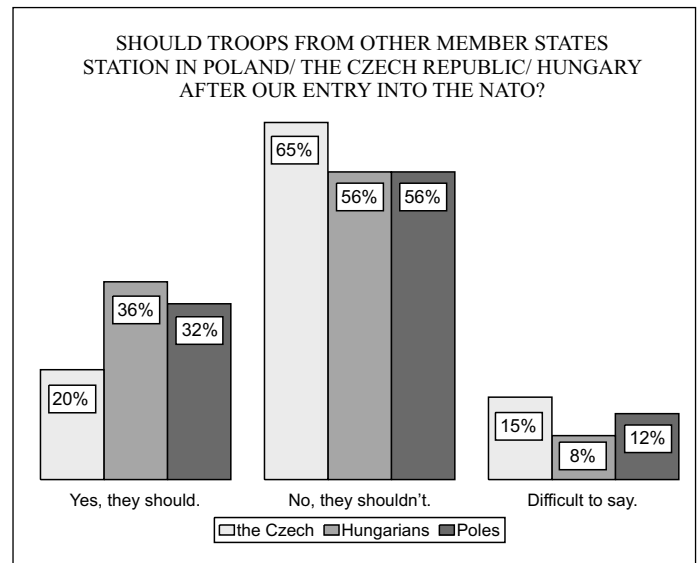
The Poles' support for our membership in the NATO has been high in the last years. At the moment almost two thirds of respondents believe that joining NATO is the best way to secure the safety of our country.



In Poland support for joining the NATO is the same as in Hungary and considerably higher than in the Czech Republic.



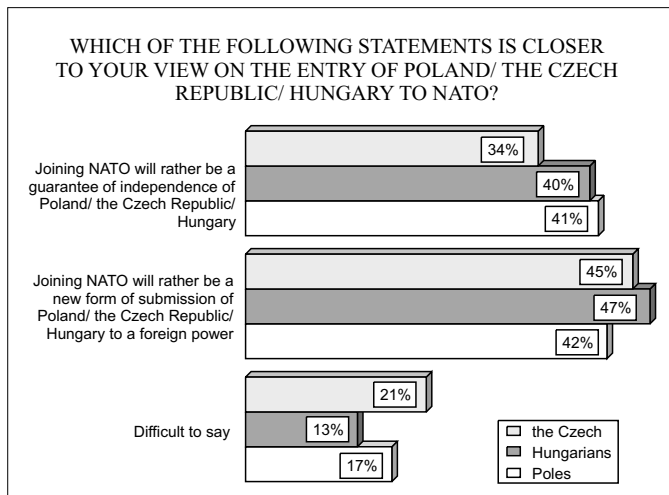
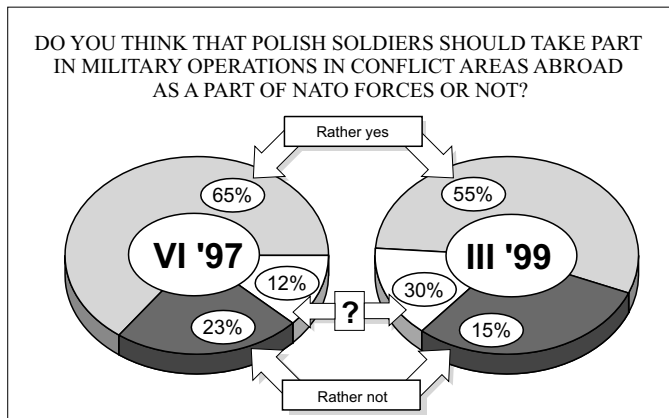
Approval of NATO membership does not, however, mean unconditional acceptance of the presence of troops of other member states. In all three countries most respondents believe that NATO forces should not station in their countries. The Czech oppose it the strongest.



The situation is different, however, (at least in Poland) in the case of acceptance for the participation of our soldiers as part of the NATO forces in military operations in conflict areas. Most respondents accept the participation of Polish troops in military actions taken by the NATO. However, as the date of our entry into the NATO is getting closer and such a possibility becomes more real, the Poles' support for such activities shrinks. Now the number of Poles who accept the participation of our soldiers in military operations of the NATO is smaller than a year ago.

In Poland opinions on the political sense of joining the NATO by our country are divided. The percentage of respondents who believe that the admission of our country into the NATO will first and foremost be a guarantee of Polish independence is the same as the percentage of those who believe that it will rather mean giving up a part of our independence. Hungarians, and especially the Czech are even more sceptical about it - the percentage of people who

believe that joining NATO will be a form of submission of their country to a foreign power is in each of these countries higher than the percentage of those who think that it will be a guarantee of their independence.

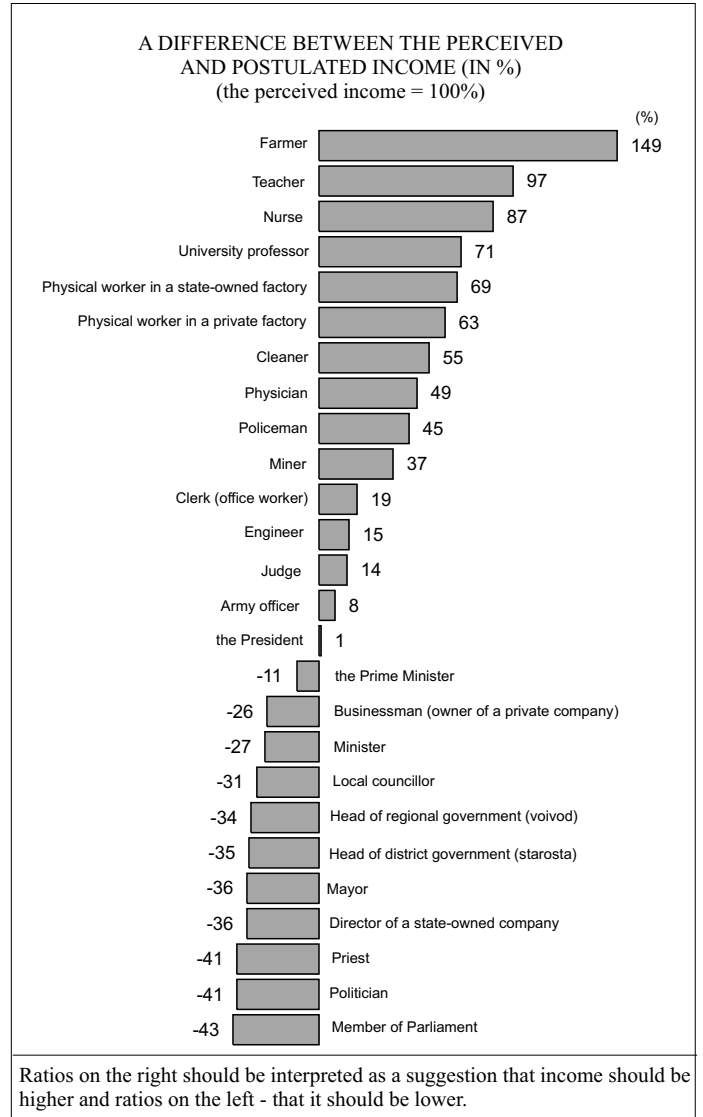


More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS reports "Poland in the NATO" and "Poles and Hungarians on the entry of their countries into the NATO", March '99.

### THE PERCEIVED AND POSTULATED HIERARCHY OF INCOME

According to the public opinion, which in this respect has not changed since 1994, the highest earnings are those obtained by the President, the Prime Minister and an owner of a private company. On the other hand, cleaners, physical workers from state-owned factories and teachers are paid the worst. The second half of the nineties is perceived as a period of growing differentiation between incomes obtained by different social groups. According to respondents, in 1994 the proportion between the average earnings of the lowest and the highest paid social groups was 1:9, while now it is 1:13. According to the public opinion, lately, i.e. since July 1996, the situation of those occupational groups which have always occupied high positions in the hierarchy of income, has improved the most. These groups include mainly representatives of the political class (politicians, the Prime Minister, ministers and Members of Parliament), as well as the President,

although to a much lesser extent. The next group whose income has grown comprises judges, engineers and directors of state-owned companies. The earnings of representatives of other occupational groups have increased much less. As far as farmers are concerned, it is even believed that their income has decreased. According to respondents, the income of this occupational group has decreased as compared with the year 1996 in nominal terms.



It should be noted, however, that the growing differences in income as perceived by respondents are accompanied by an increasing acceptance of these differences. However, the socially accepted differences between incomes of different social groups do not grow as quickly as the existing differences diagnosed by respondents and the results of our research reveal that there is a tendency in our society to "flatten" the structure of income. It should be noted, however, that respondents are more determined in their demands to increase too low salaries (on average by 56%) than decrease those believed to be too high (the average postulated decrease is 33%). It may mean that Poles do not actually want to "take away from the rich", but they just think that ordinary people's wages do not secure a satisfying living standard for those who earn them and their families.

As compared with the years 1995 and 1996, there is growing opposition to the financial discrimination of such groups as farmers, teachers and university professors, as well as physicians and policemen (as representatives of professions which give citizens the feeling of personal safety). It is accompanied by growing disapproval of financial privileges of representatives of the political class: Members of Parliament and politicians. At the same time, more and more people accept the salaries of persons in the highest positions in the country: the President and, although to a lesser extent, the Prime Minister.

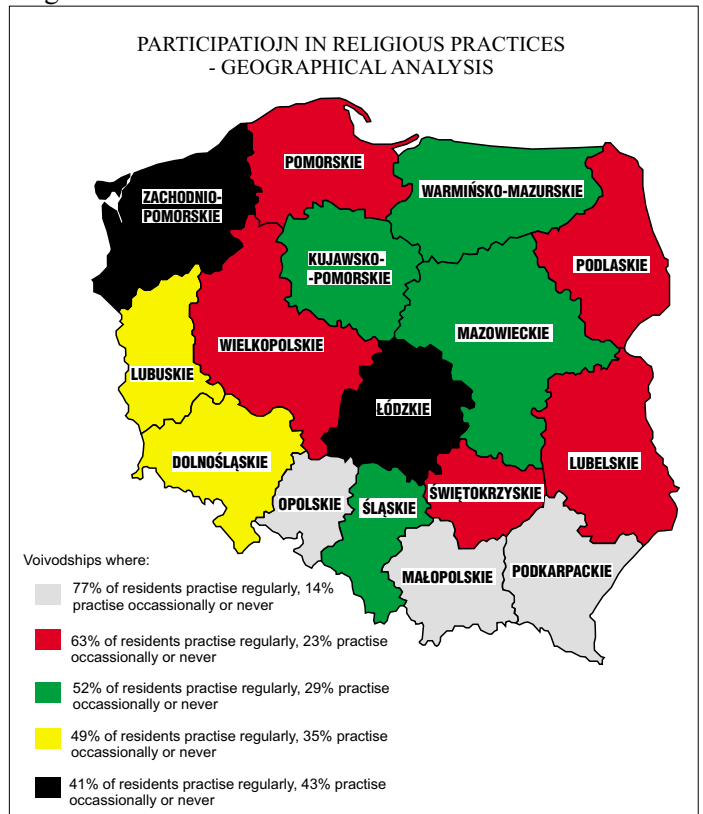
More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "How much we earn and how much we should earn", March '99.

## RELIGIOUSNESS OF POLES

Religiousness is one of those elements of the Polish culture which are the most immune to changes. In spite of the fundamental political, economic and social changes, the self-identification of Poles in respect of their religiousness has remained basically unchanged since March 1986. Over half of Poles (58%) are believers, who according to their own declarations, take part in religious practices regularly (i.e. at least once a week). Over one seventh (15%) declare their faith, but admit that they do not participate in religious practices regularly: only once or twice a month. Almost one fifth of respondents (18%) consider themselves as believers, but take part in religious practices only a few times a year. Those who believe, but do not practise their religion at all (5%) and those who declare that they do not believe and do not practise religion (3%) or practise a few times a year (1%) form the smallest groups.

The frequency of participation in religious practices is visibly different in different parts of Poland. These differences undoubtedly follow from the history and culture of these regions, but they are also connected with the social structure of the population of these voivodships, especially with the percentage of rural population. The highest level of religiousness is observed in Southern voivodships: Podkarpackie, Małopolskie and Opolskie, where almost everybody considers themselves as a believer and one in seven respondents declares deep faith. At the same time over three quarters of residents of these

voivodships participate in religious practices regularly. The lowest level of religiousness is observed in Zachodniopomorskie and Łódzkie voivodships. Although the level of self-identification in respect of faith in these voivodships is not much lower than average, the frequency of religious practices is significantly lower than in other voivodships. Only two fifths of residents of these voivodships take part in religious services regularly. The number of persons who do not practise religion at all is almost twice as high there as in the most religious voivodships and the number of those who do it only during the most important church holidays - almost four times higher.



More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Religiousness of Poles today", March '99.

### In addition to the bulletins referred to above, the following have been published recently (in Polish):

- Trust in politicians in the new voivodships
- Purchases at the beginning of the year
- Opinions on the activities of selected political institutions and the Parliamentary opposition
- Opinions on salaries of local authorities
- After the general strike - opinions on protests in the health service
- Hopes and fears of Poles
- Political party preferences in March
- Social prestige of different occupations
- Social moods in March
- Attitude to the government in March

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