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## POLES AND NATO

The problem of NATO extension to the East (including the admission of Poland to this alliance) was a permanent topic in international politics over several years. Now, when this problem has been solved and the question "if?" has been replaced with the question "when?", the attitude of the Polish society to this issue is worth investigating.

The Madrid summit was preceded by signing the so-called NATO - Russia Charter. The majority opinion among the respondents is that this agreement is in fact a concession to Russia's opposition towards the extension of NATO to the East and a recognition of her right to express an opinion on the issues of our region. Moreover, the majority of the respondents disapprove of the intentions of Russian policy concerning NATO extension, sharing the view that Russia's opposition towards Poland's entry into NATO was caused first of all by her desire to regain influence in our country.

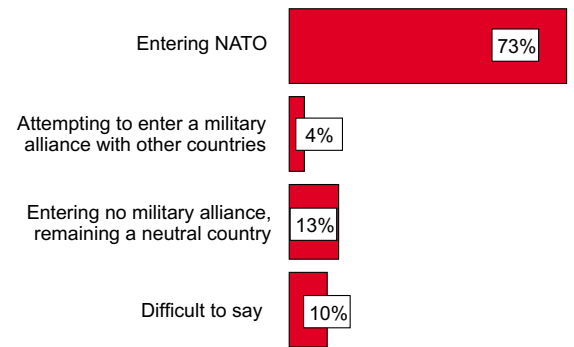
The majority opinion on the policy of NATO countries towards Poland is also distrust; almost half of the polled population believe that it is possible that NATO countries discuss Polish problems with Russia behind our backs. Similarly to the question of evaluating Russia's intentions, this distrust is the largest among the respondents with higher education and the ones declaring big interest in politics.

Despite considerably large distrust in the Western policy towards Poland, almost three quarters of the respondents regard joining NATO as the optimal solution as far as the security of our country is concerned, and 80% declare voting for it in a referendum on this issue, if such a referendum took place. The higher the level of education of the respondents and their interest in politics, the higher the acceptance of Poland entering NATO. The respondents with the lowest incomes, over 65 years of age, residents of villages and small towns and farmers are a little more reserved than others. Political views of the polled do not influence their level of acceptance of taking this step.

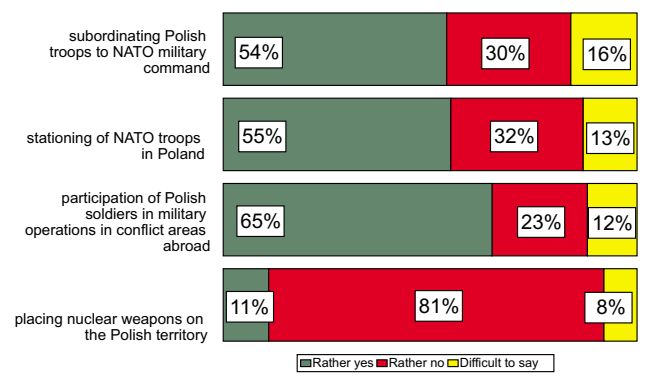
The support for Poland's integration with NATO decreases when the respondents realize the possible consequences of this step: the subordination of Polish troops to the NATO military command, the stationing of NATO troops on the Polish territory, the participation of Polish soldiers in military operations in conflict areas abroad. However, most respondents still accept the pro-NATO option, although they reject placing nuclear weapons on our territory. This attitude has not changed since the last year.

The vast majority of the society have no doubts that the admission of Poland to NATO will contribute to the increase of stability and peace in Europe. The acceptance of our entry into NATO does not mean, however, that we seek protection in this alliance from some direct threat to the independence of our country, as the majority of the respondents do not see any such threat.

WHICH POLICY IS NOW THE BEST FOR ENSURING POLISH SECURITY?

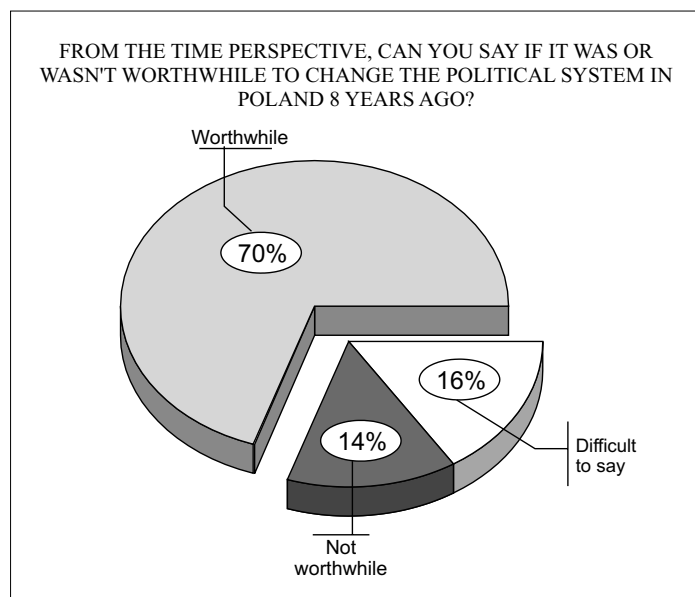


WOULD YOU SUPPORT POLISH ENTRY INTO NATO IF IT MEANT::



## WHEN WAS LIFE BETTER: IN THE PRL (COMMUNIST POLAND) OR IN THE 3<sup>RD</sup> REPUBLIC (NOW)?

8 years passed in June since the memorable election of 1989, which resulted in the Polish Workers' Party giving up power and the transformation of the country's political system. How do Poles evaluate now the rightness of the transformation? Do they miss the times of the PRL?

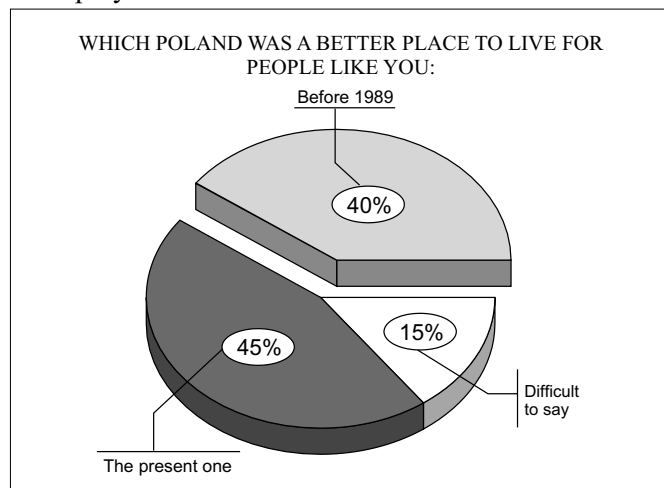


Almost as many as one in four of the respondents believe that the communist system was of more advantage than disadvantage to most people in Poland, and even more people think that gains and losses were equal. On the other hand, almost one third of the polled population share the opinion that communism brought first of all losses. The communist system has negative connotations first of all for those who adapted better to capitalism because of their high professional qualifications or education. Compared to other social groups, managerial and intellectual groups, secondary school and university students and people with higher education mention the profits that Poles gained under the communist system significantly less frequently, while they more frequently mention the losses. The opposite view is expressed first of all by farmers and the respondents over 65 years of age.

Despite a quite common belief that communism brought us advantages (or both advantages and disadvantages), the majority of the respondents share the view that our life would be much better now if there were no communism in the Polish history. This conviction rises with the level of education: it is shared by less than half of the respondents with primary education compared to three quarters of respondents with higher education.

The respondents vary in their opinions on the question which Poland - the present one or the communist one - is (was) a better place to live. The opinions are almost equally divided. The PRL (Communist) period is preferred first of all by the respondents with lower social

and professional standing and low income, who are not pleased with their material standard of living. On the other hand, the present situation is considered as more attractive by people with higher education and higher professional and material position. Therefore, the people who long for PRL are first of all those who due to their poor professional skills and education are the most likely to experience negative effects of transformation, particularly unemployment.



Poland before 1989 is much more frequently regarded as a better place to live by people declaring left rather than right wing political views (46% to 28%). It should be stressed, however, that among the people declaring left wing political views the opinions vary; almost as many of them prefer the PRL as the present period. The respondents declaring right wing views choose the present situation much more frequently.

The respondents' opinions on the changes taking place in Poland since 1989 are varied. The group regarding them as favourable is almost the same in size as the one regarding them as unfavourable. The largest group expresses the opinion that they have both positive and negative consequences.

The attitude towards the changes which took place in 1989 is determined first of all by two factors: material and ideological, i.e. connected with one's outlook on life. Satisfaction with one's own material situation implies the conviction that the situation in the country is changing for better. Political views cause less variation of the respondents' opinions, which could mean that material matters are more important for this question than ideology. In addition, the consequences of the system transformation are more positively evaluated by the persons critical of the achievements of communism.

In spite of the diversity of opinion on the effects of transformation and the sentiment for PRL characteristic of some social groups, the conviction that it was worthwhile to change the political system dominates in all social and occupational groups. This conviction is stronger among the respondents who regard the changes which took place after 1989 as a step in the right direction. It also rises proportionally to the education of the respondents. Good material conditions of living also have a positive effect on it - the higher the income per head in a family and one's

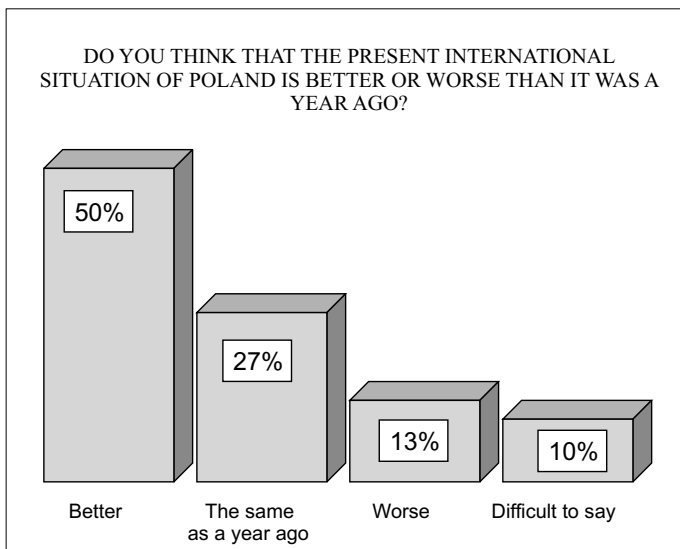
evaluation of their own standard of living, the more frequent the feeling that the change of the system was right. Compared to other occupational groups, the one which is exceptionally critical of the systemic change is farmers. The conviction that the transformation was right clearly dominates among people declaring both right- and left wing political views, although in the former group it is a little stronger.

Source: CBOS bulletin "When was life better: in the PRL (Communist Poland) or in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic (now)?", July '97.

## THE SITUATION OF POLAND ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

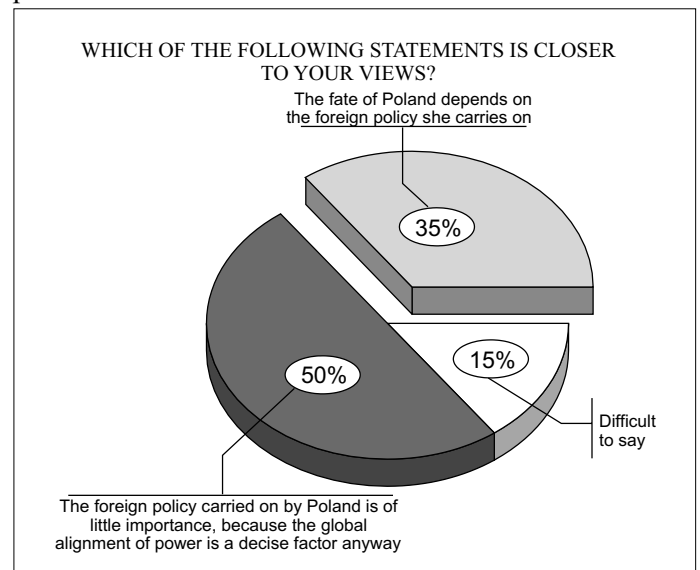
The survey in which the respondents expressed their views on the relations of Poland with other states was conducted a week after signing the so-called NATO - Russia Charter in Paris, but before the Madrid NATO summit and Bill Clinton's visit to Poland.

The results show that one in two of those polled considered the present situation of Poland in the world as better than a year ago, and only one in eight evaluated it as worse. One can rightly assume that the improvement of the evaluations of the international situation of Poland was affected by the conclusion of several years' debate on NATO extension to the East and the announcement that we will soon be invited to join this organization. The conviction that the situation of Poland in the world has improved is more frequent among the respondents interested in politics, familiar with the situation in international politics and having a better orientation in current affairs. It is also more frequently shared by the respondents with higher education, declaring higher income per head in the family and pleased with their own material situation.



Half of the respondents are sceptical about the subjectivity of our country on the international scene,

because they believe that the global alignment of power is a decisive factor and Polish foreign policy is of little importance in this situation. It is worth noting, however, that the views on this subject are rather stable and they were not affected by the talks between NATO and Russia. The opinions on this issue are connected with age. The conviction that Poland's fate depends first of all on her foreign policy is most often shared by young people under 35 years of age, who started their adult life in independent Poland. One can suppose that their better opinion on the subjectivity of our country on the international scene is connected with this very fact. In view of this interpretation the belief of half of the respondents that Poland's fate depends first of all on the global alignment of power can be explained by their experience of the PRL (communist) period.



Half of the respondents share the view that in the near future two powers will decide about the fate of the world - Russia and the USA. The conviction about a renewed polarization of power in international politics has particularly many followers among the people who understand signing the NATO - Russia Charter as a concession of the West to Russia.

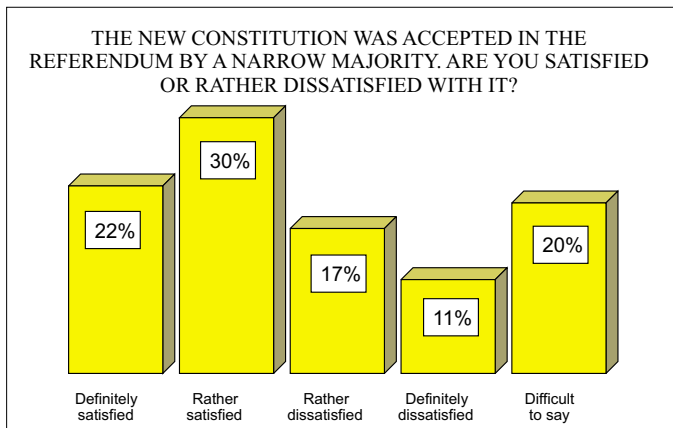
Source: CBOS bulletin "The situation of Poland on the international scene", July '97.

## SATISFACTION FROM ACCEPTING THE CONSTITUTION. THE MOTIVES FOR VOTING AGAINST IT

On May 25 1997 there was a referendum which ratified the constitution passed by the National Assembly. The State Election Committee informed that 43% of the citizens with the right to vote took part in the referendum; 53% of the voters were for the constitution. According to the data from polls, the participants in the referendum were first of all people with higher social and material position: the respondents with higher

education, the members of intellectual and managerial groups, the respondents with the highest incomes per a family member, as well as old age pensioners, residents of big cities and the respondents who often participate in religious practices. Participation in the referendum was also more common among people interested in politics and having their own defined political views (left or right wing).

The respondents who declared voting against the constitution were asked about the reasons for this decision. In their spontaneous replies they usually just expressed their general criticism about the constitution, stating that it arouses reservations, does not fulfill social expectations or contradicts their convictions. A considerable part of the respondents regarded the text of the constitution as not polished up, obscure and too complicated. An important reason for voting against the constitution was a conviction that it is contradictory to the teachings of the Church, that it insufficiently stresses the Christian tradition of the Polish nation or respects the Christian system of values.



The most frequently raised objection to the concrete solutions written in the constitution was the question of a threat to Poland's independence, perceived by 13% of the respondents declaring voting against the constitution as real in view of the accepted resolutions.

The argument that it does not guarantee the parents' right to bring up their children and limits parental power, raised by the opponents of the constitution, also met with a relatively wide response of the public. The procedure of passing the constitution - the lack of choice among different drafts - also raised objections.

It is worth noting that arguments referring to the state's political system were almost absent and ideological explanations clearly prevailed.

The respondents' declarations, i.e. their general character as well as the way of presenting arguments, indicate a low level of knowledge of the constitution. On the one hand it follows from the complexity of the matter, about which a common citizen feels unqualified to decide, and on the other hand - from the character of the pre-referendum campaign which to a larger extent appealed to feelings than rational opinions.

A little over half of the respondents declare satisfaction from accepting the constitution in the referendum, and over one quarter declare dissatisfaction. The attitude towards passing the constitution is determined first of all by the political views of the respondents. Satisfaction from the result of the vote is declared by 85% of the respondents with a left-wing orientation and only 30% of the respondents with a right-wing orientation. The number of the dissatisfied among the persons with right-wing views reaches 59%. The biggest number of the respondents satisfied with passing the constitution can be found among the supporters of the ruling parties. The potential electorate of the Freedom Union (UW), the Labour Union (UP) and the National Party of Pensioners (KPEiR) is also in a large part satisfied. On the other hand, the electorates of the groupings seen as right-wing, i.e. the "Solidarity" Electoral Action (AWS) and the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP), are clearly dominated by dissatisfaction.

Source: CBOS bulletin "Privatisation '97", June '97.

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

Happiness and the modern history - the most successful period in the Poles' lives

Poles on the pilgrimage of John Paul II to his homeland

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Opinions on public institutions

Certainty of voting. "Second choice" parties

Parliamentary election of 1997 - preferences in July.

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