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OPINIONS ON POLISH INTEGRATION INTO THE EUROPEAN UNION

In July the European Commission positively endorsed Poland's candidature for membership of the European Union, recognising that our country fulfilled the basic requirements connected with this such as: democracy, the rule of law and a stable market economy. The time for beginning negotiations on this matter was set for the beginning of next year. This means that Poland's joining the EU is becoming a progressively more real prospect and will possibly take place even before the year 2005.

The indispensable element of a successful integration is public support for this process resulting from the conviction that the inclusion of Poland into European structures lies in the interests of our country and its citizens. How therefore does the public assess the degree of Poland's preparation for membership of the European Union against the background of its relations until now with the states grouped together in that organisation? When should we find ourselves in the European structures and what, generally speaking will be the consequences of this?

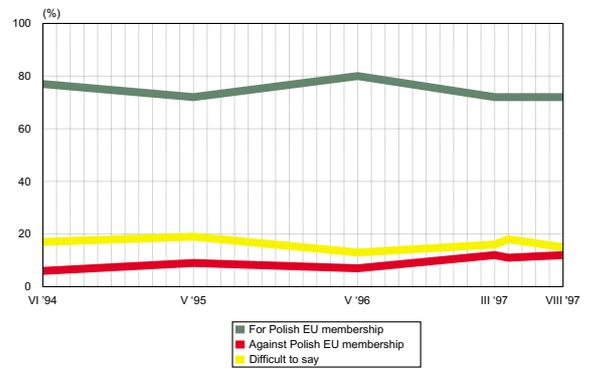
Public support for Poland's integration into the European Union has been at the same level since March this year. In a possible future referendum on this matter 72 percent would today vote "for" with 12 percent "against". In the period from June '94 to August this year the approval for our country entering European structures oscillated slightly (we recorded the most supporters for this process in May '96). However the number of opponents of integration increased in this time by six percentage points, which means it has doubled. It is difficult to evaluate whether the percentage of supporters will decrease as the date for the start of this process draws closer. It seems however that the inevitable confrontation of hopes and expectations concerning integration with the concrete decisions and stipulations of the negotiation process makes this scenario likely.

From May '96 to August '97 the number of opponents of integration has clearly increased among farmers (by 19 percentage points) and unskilled workers (by 15 points), among whom at present 22 percent and 16 percent would vote against in a possible future referendum. The biggest support for Polish membership of the EU maintains itself among people of a higher socio-material status - respondents with a higher education, managerial staff and the intelligentsia, private entrepreneurs, people with the highest per capita income in their family. Among the party electorates the supporters of the Freedom Union (UW - 91 percent) are most in favour of integration, while the Polish Peasant Party's followers (PSL - 67 percent for and 16 against) are least in favour.

Politicians believe that Poland's achievement of membership of the EU is a question of the next few years at worst. The same number of respondents think that it should take place now as propose a five-year period of waiting for entry into European structures.

Respondents await the acceptance of Poland into the community of EU member-states with measured optimism - they expect the positive effects of integration to take place mainly on a nationwide scale. This is because there is a dominant opinion that membership of our country in European structures will bring Poland more good than bad. Just one in ten respondents thinks that the integration balance sheet will be disadvantageous to our country. The assessment of the effects of integration on a personal level will cause the respondents more difficulties - almost one in three is not able to define the consequences of this process on himself and his family.

IF THERE WERE A REFERENDUM TODAY ON POLAND JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION, WOULD YOU VOTE:



The positive effects of integration, both for the country and for oneself personally and one's family are expected above all by respondents with a higher education, management staff and the intelligentsia, school students and students and respondents assessing their material conditions as being good. The self-employed prefer to speak of an equal balance of gains and losses. On the other hand farmers and unskilled workers most often fear the negative consequences of Poland joining the EU.

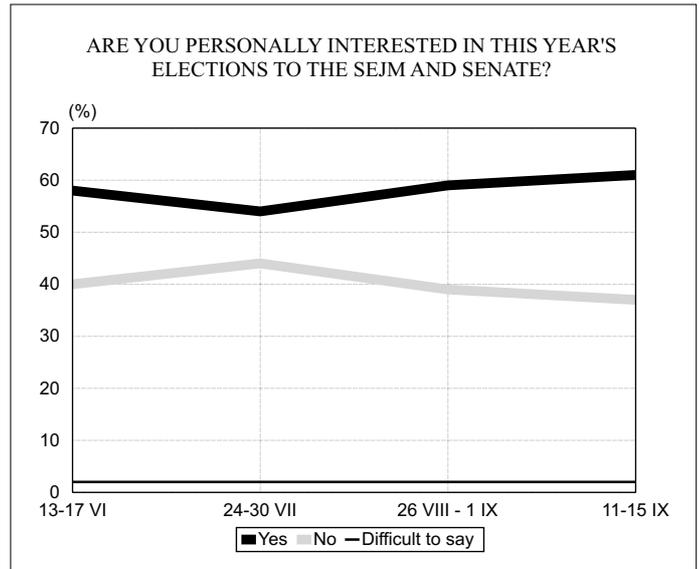
The relationship between Poland and the European Union until now is seen most often to be of equal benefit to both sides. More than one in three respondents takes this view. The remaining respondents think that the Fifteen will mainly profit rather than Poland. In the period between May '96 to August '97 therefore the conviction concerning the mutual benefits stemming from the bilateral relationship has weakened. The evaluation of the relationship between both partners until now is differentiated in particular electorates. Freedom Union sympathisers feel most satisfied - almost half of them think the relationship to be mutually beneficial. Critical assessments predominate however mainly among the supporters of the Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP), and to a lesser degree among Solidarity Election Action (AWS) supporters.

Source: CBOS bulletin "Opinions on the integration of Poland with the European Union", September '97.

THE LEVEL OF INTEREST IN THE ELECTIONS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

In the weeks preceding September 21 much space was devoted to the parliamentary elections in the mass media. In the deciding phase of the election campaign posters appeared on the streets showing the politicians who were contesting seats, election programmes were broadcast on radio and television and candidates for parliamentary deputy and senator took part in various kinds of fetes and meetings with voters. To what extent did this atmosphere of "political fever" spread to wider social groups? In the month before the elections did politics accompany people in their everyday lives, did the approaching elections increase public interest in them?

It turns out that the parliamentary elections did not absorb wider sections of society in August to such an extent as to make it the subject of private conversations. Over half of adult Poles did not talk about politics at all in the month before the elections, and only less than one sixth claim they discussed these matters many times. This data contrasts with that from January '96 when over one third of the respondents said they had taken part in conversations on political topics many times. This indicates that the events of that time - the results of the presidential elections and almost certainly also the "Oleky affair" moved the public more than this year's parliamentary elections.



The degree of interest in the elections declared by respondents also indicates that an atmosphere of "pre-election fever" was lacking. After the July decrease which was connected with the floods pushing political questions into the background, interest in the elections returned to the June level - not much more than half the respondents were interested in them. Interest in the elections was more frequent the higher the education of the respondents. We noted the most interest among managerial staff and the intelligentsia, while school students and students were also interested in them to a greater than average degree, as were low level white collar workers and private entrepreneurs.

Only one in three respondents thought the present campaign interesting while both the campaign preceding the presidential elections in 1995 and the 1993 parliamentary elections had interested almost half of them. The view that this year's campaign was vague predominated. On the other hand in contrast to the previous two elections the present ones were seen as significantly more peaceful. It is very characteristic that in comparison with the previous election campaigns a significantly greater number of respondents was unable to assess the elections in any of the three categories given. This undoubtedly shows that there is less of an interest in the elections than before.

More or less one in seven respondents watched the party political election broadcasts in the so-called "election blocks". The programmes of the three victorious groupings - the AWS, SLD and UW - obtained the approval of the people who watched the election blocks. The Freedom Union programmes gained the highest approval rating - it was thought they were the most interesting, to the point and non-aggressive.

Source: CBOS bulletin "Interest in the elections" and "Interest in the elections and the assessment of the election campaign", September '97.

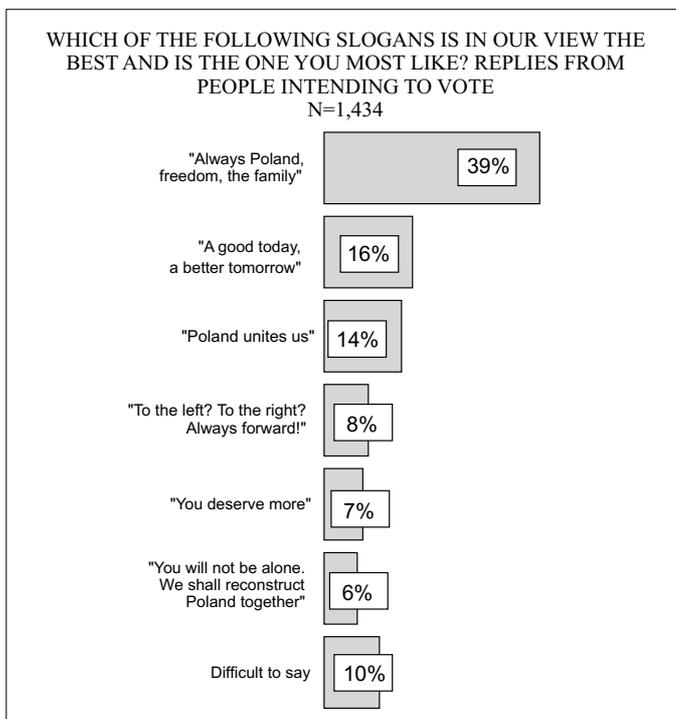
AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ELECTION SLOGANS

In the opinion poll conducted at the end of August, and therefore before the beginning of the

election campaign in the media, we asked respondents how they viewed the election slogans which particular groupings intended to begin their campaigns with. Unfortunately in the case of the Freedom Union it turned out that its actual slogan - "A wise choice, a better tomorrow" was different from the one announced earlier. We had analysed the stillborn slogan of this grouping "To the left? To the right? Always forward!"

Respondents thought that the most successful slogan of this year's elections was that of the AWS - "Always Poland, freedom, the family" - two fifths of respondents thought it was the best. The main rival of the AWS, the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD), received less than half of that approval rating for its "A good today, better tomorrow". Only slightly fewer people chose the Polish Peasant Party's slogan "Poland unites us". The slogans of the Union of Labour (UP), ROP and the former slogan of the UW were liked less.

It is interesting to follow the popularity of the slogans in the electorates of political groupings. This may facilitate orienting oneself as to what programmatic elements and what "language" the voters of specific parties are sensitive to. With the exception of the UW and SLD supporters the slogan the potential voters of the remaining groupings, and those undecided on who to vote for, liked the AWS slogan - Always Poland, freedom, the family". Supporters of the UW, apart from the slogan which they recognised as their own, felt that the slogans which were most on target were those which referred to patriotic and national values. The potential voters of the SLD had similar preferences. The most off target seems to have been the slogan of the Union of Labour. Even in the electorate of this party the slogan "You deserve more" was liked least of all the ones presented, on the other hand the slogans of the AWS and SLD were liked most.



We also asked respondents which slogans suited particular groupings most and most aptly fitted the image the public had of them.

The most recognisable slogans which were most associated with the groupings proclaiming them were the slogans of the AWS, SLD and ROP. The identification of the ROP slogan - "You will not be alone. We shall reconstruct Poland together" - turned out to be the easiest by far, probably because the acronym of the grouping was encoded in it. The slogan "A good today, a better tomorrow" was also quite clearly associated with the SLD. Similarly, the slogan "Always Poland, freedom, the family" was quite unambiguously attributed to the AWS, although one in nine respondents identified it as the UW slogan. Opinions on the UP and the original UW slogan were less clear, and the most puzzling turned out to be the PSL slogan "Poland unites us", which otherwise was well received. It was mainly associated with the AWS and ROP, the PSL being named in third place.

Generally speaking patriotic slogans enjoy more popularity among voters - ones which refer rather to sentiments of national community and freedom rather than those concerning welfare which refer to the idea of equality. The fact that the AWS slogan received unquestionably the greatest public acceptance was probably not without influence on the impressive election results of this grouping.

Source: CBOS bulletin "Assessment of the election slogans", September '97

POLES ASSESSMENT OF THE SEJM OF THE SECOND TERM

The special moment which the elections to a new parliament represent favour various kinds of summing up and drawing up of balance sheets. One of the most frequently raised subjects is the assessment of the achievements and the method of activity of the outgoing Sejm and Senate. These questions were the subject of a CBOS opinion survey conducted a short time before the elections.

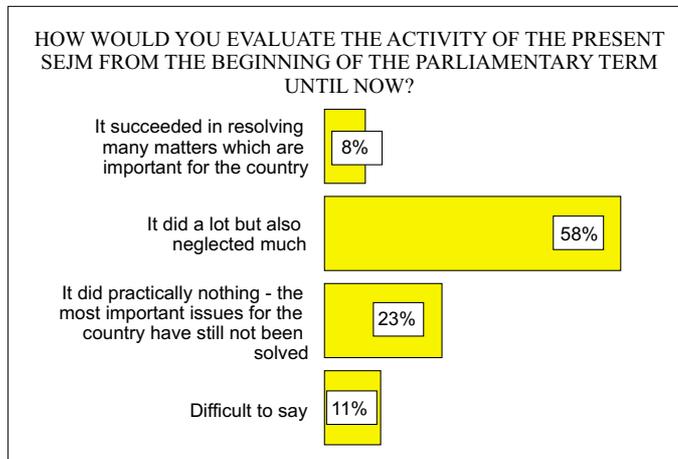
Most respondents are of the opinion that the Sejm chosen in 1993 was not representative. Two fifths think that it represented the interests of only some social groups, one fifth are of the opinion that most Poles were unrepresented in the Sejm. Only 17 percent of respondents said the outgoing Sejm represented the interests of the whole society.

It seems that in speaking of the non-representative aspect, respondents had in mind above all the "party" make up of the outgoing Sejm, dominated by groupings declaring a left or centrist orientation. The specific "labels" of particular parliamentary parties seem more important for this kind of assessment than the real views and convictions of parliamentarians. So that inasmuch as only 17 percent of those polled see this Sejm as being representative of the whole society, as many as 74 percent of respondents identify themselves with the views and convictions of at least some deputies.

In the view of most respondents, the activities of the outgoing Sejm were dominated by the particular interests of parliamentarians. There is a decided minority of respondents who see deputies as being motivated by the common good of society or at least of the groups which voted for them in the 1993 elections.

It was most often indicated that the former deputies represented the interests of their parties or even their own interests.

The supporters of the UW, AWS and ROP were the most critical of the deputies of the outgoing parliament.



Among respondents there was a dominant view that at least half of the 460 deputies in the outgoing Sejm did not have sufficient qualifications and the competence necessary to fulfil this function and more than one third ascribe this ability to only a few deputies. In this respect the ROP electorate has the worst opinion by far of the deputies of the Sejm of the second term - nearly two thirds of the people in this group judge that only a few have the competence required. Supporters of the UW and AWS are critical as well - two fifths of their electorates agree with the above opinion.

Poles rather do not share the optimism of Sejm Speaker Józef Zych who assessed the past parliament as being workmanlike and stabilising for the Polish political scene. The majority of respondents express the view that the Sejm of the second term worked too sluggishly and half think that in general it spent time on matters of little

importance. Almost half the respondents think that it did not work well and it lacked effectiveness in controlling the government. Opinions concerning the aptness of the decisions taken are also rather disadvantageous to the Sejm. In addition among respondents the view clearly predominates that the outgoing Sejm did not enjoy a great deal of social authority. Decidedly the most critical towards the method of activity and image of the outgoing Sejm are the electorates of the extra-parliamentary opposition until now - ROP and the AWS - while the best assessment of the Sejm, was made by supporters of the SLD no doubt seeing it as "their own".

Poles also critically sum up the balance of achievements of the Sejm of the second term. Over half of those polled (58 percent) are of the opinion that it did a lot but also neglected much. At the same time only one in thirteen respondents is inclined to recognise that the Sejm succeeded in solving many issues important for their country, while on the other hand one in four thinks that the Sejm practically did nothing - the most important problems continue to remain unsolved. The political identification and the party sympathies of respondents were a factor strongly differentiating opinions on this question. This leads us to suppose that the assessment of the achievements of the outgoing Sejm may to a large degree have a political character, and its basis in many instances is not so much the premises based on the merits of the issue but a generalised sympathy or antipathy for this institution in its make up at that time. The views of Poles on the subject of the achievements of the Sejm of the second term is illustrated very well by the statement by Deputy Speaker Olga Krzyżanowska who thinks that it was a "Sejm of wasted opportunities".

Source: CBOS bulletin "Poles' assessment of the Sejm of the second term", October '97.

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

An assessment of the clarity of the Polish political scene. The election 'preferences' of undecided people
Poles and cars

Parliamentary elections '97 - preferences three weeks before voting

An assessment of the activities of political institutions

Attitudes to the government

Public moods before the elections

Party sympathies of the undecided

The popularity of politicians before the elections

The certainty of voting. Election alternatives

Elections '97 - the public's assessment of the chances of political parties and tactical voting

The social balance sheet after the floods

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