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## OPINIONS ON THE NEW SEJM

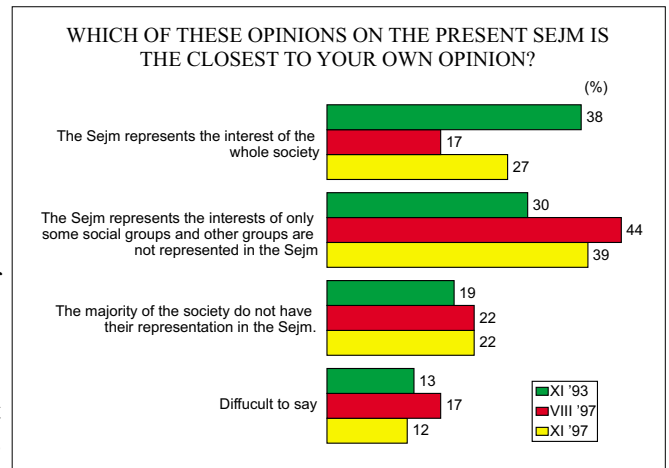
It has been only two months since the first session of the new Sejm. It is too short a period to evaluate its achievements. Therefore we asked our respondents to express their expectations connected with the new Sejm.

More than one in four of respondents believe that the present Sejm represents the interests of the whole society. Much less persons expressed the same opinion about the previous Sejm at the end of its term. However, the result of the

comparison of opinions about the representativeness of both Sejms recorded less than three months after each parliamentary election is more favourable for the Sejm of the previous term. In November '93 almost two fifths of respondents believed that deputies represented the interests of the whole society. It is rather surprising considering the fact that right-wing political groupings were in fact absent from the Sejm of the previous term, while in the present Sejm there are representatives of all political options - the left, the centre and the right. It follows from the above that the public opinion does not identify a many-party Sejm with representing the interests of the whole society.

The factors which to the largest extent affect the respondents' opinion in this matter include political identification and sympathy for different political parties. The conviction that the present Sejm represents the interests of the whole society is expressed by respondents with right-wing views the most frequently (44%), while respondents identifying themselves with the left believe that the majority of the society do not have their representation in the present Sejm more frequently than others (32%).

More than one fifth of respondents (22%) share the view that the majority of the society do not have their representation in the present Sejm. At the same time, however, only one in ten of respondents says that the Sejm lacks deputies whose views he/ she might identify with. Therefore as far as social perception is concerned the present Sejm can be regarded as an institution which to a larger or lesser extent represents the considerable majority of Poles.



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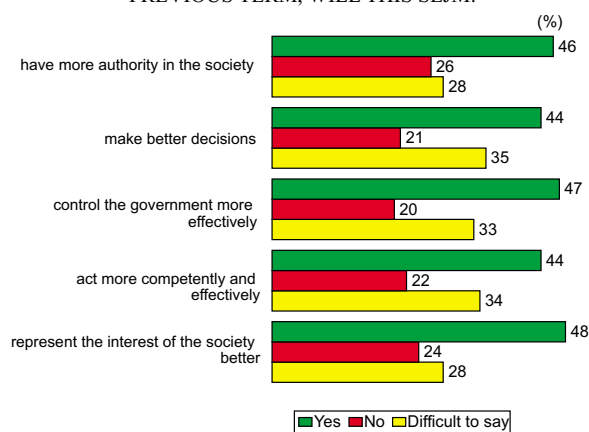
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IN YOUR OPINION, COMPARED TO THE SEJM OF THE PREVIOUS TERM, WILL THIS SEJM:



The present Sejm is perceived as dominated by right-wing and centre groupings, favouring the Church and religion. The degree of identification with the views of deputies is determined first of all by such factors as religio-usness of respondents, measured on the basis of their declared frequency of religious practices, and their political views. Full identification is considerably stronger among respondents identifying themselves with the right (30%) than those identifying themselves with the left (9%) and among respondents who often take part in religious practices.

In August '97, i.e. just before the end of the second term of the Sejm, respondents believed that its work was dominated by private interests of MPs. Respondents who assumed that deputies were guided by the good of the whole society or at least of the groups which had voted for them in the election formed a small minority. On the contrary, at the end of the term deputies of the last Sejm were believed to be motivated by the interest of their parties or even by their private interest. Now, despite the fact that the composition of the Sejm and the alignment of political powers have changed, the opinions are similar. More than half of respondents believe that current MPs are not motivated by the interest of the society, but they represent the interest of their parties or their own private interest. These opinions may follow from the fact that many of current deputies had already been deputies to the Sejm of the second or/ and first term, and many are known for their political or trade union activity out of the Parliament. Therefore in a large part respondents evaluate persons who have been known to them before and are with certain actions, initiatives or views. One can also suppose that the society has in a way become familiar with democratic procedures, and declarations of politicians made before or after elections are now approached from a distance, so the motivations of MPs are evaluated more realistically, regardless of the political option they represent.

Dominant groups of respondents expect from the Sejm of the third term more efficient control over the government, more accurate decisions and more competent work. Despite a rather unfavourable assessment of representativeness of the present Sejm and motives of deputies, almost half of respondents expect that this Sejm will represent the interest of the society better than the previous one. The opinion that the present Sejm will have more authority in the society than the previous one, but also that there will be more arguments and conflicts among the deputies, is predominant among respondents.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Public opinion on the new Sejm", December '97.

## SOCIAL EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING INFLATION

In one of the latest surveys we asked our respondents about the expected level of this year's inflation and about prognoses concerning inflation connected with the policy of Jerzy Buzek's government.

At present more than one in four of respondents expect that inflation will reach 13% at the end of the year, i.e. it will be at the level assumed by the government or lower than the assumed level. Over one third of those polled expect that inflation will not be higher than 17%, and 16% of respondents believe that it will reach the level of 20% or higher.

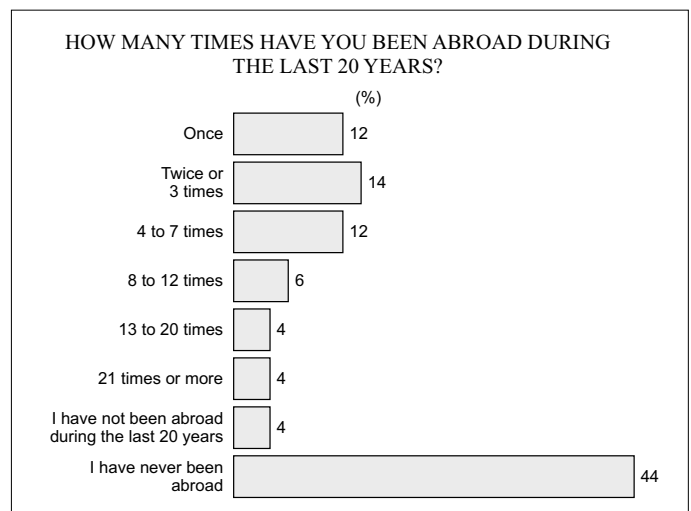
The conviction that inflation will not exceed the level assumed by the government is shared most frequently by persons with higher education as well as managerial staff and intelligentsia. This belief is also shared by the respondents who are optimistic about the general direction in which the situation in Poland is heading and by supporters of the government. The unemployed are the most pessimistic; over one fourth of them expect at least 20% inflation.

Opinions about the influence of the present cabinet on the level of the next year's inflation are connected with the attitude towards the government and the political orientation of respondents. Those who support the government and respondents with right-wing views expect the inflation to decrease. Opponents of the government and respondents declaring left-wing orientation rather expect the inflation to increase.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Inflation - the social definition and the expected level", December '97.

## DO POLES KNOW THE WORLD?

For years Poles had limited possibilities of international travel, especially to Western countries. Those problems ended in 1990s, when passports became available to everyone and many countries abolished visas for Poles. Barriers stopping us from travelling abroad became to a large extent limited to financial matters.



Compared to the year 1993, the percentage of respondents declaring foreign trips has risen only slightly (from 50% to 56%). A visit to a foreign country depends very strongly on the characteristics determining the social status of a respondent - first of all education and occupational group. First of all persons with higher education, intelligentsia and managerial staff were found among those who travelled abroad both this year and in 1993. It should be stressed, however, that, compared to four years ago, a visit to a foreign country is now declared by considerably more respondents with trade

school education, farmers and skilled workers. For this reason we can speak of certain "democratisation" of foreign travel.

Poles most often visit neighbouring countries. One in three Poles has visited Germany during the last 20 years, also almost one in three has visited the Czech Republic or Slovakia. In the same period 17% of respondents have visited Eastern neighbours of Poland and one in seven of respondents has visited Hungary. The following Western European countries have been most frequently visited by Poles: Austria, Italy and France (each of them has been visited by 7% of respondents).

There has been an important change in the directions in which Poles travel abroad. Up to 1993 we travelled first of all to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, while now the numbers of persons travelling to the countries of the former Eastern bloc and those travelling to Western European countries have become equal.

The considerable majority of those who travel abroad declare multiple trips and familiarity with at least two countries. Both the frequency of foreign trips and the number of visited countries depend first of all on education, social and occupational group and income of a respondent.

Nearly two thirds of those who travel abroad declare that the aim of their trips was to get to know other countries. Trade was the aim of travel for over one fourth of persons in this group, slightly less people visited their relatives or friends abroad, and one in five travelled to work abroad.

More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Do Poles know the world?", December '97.

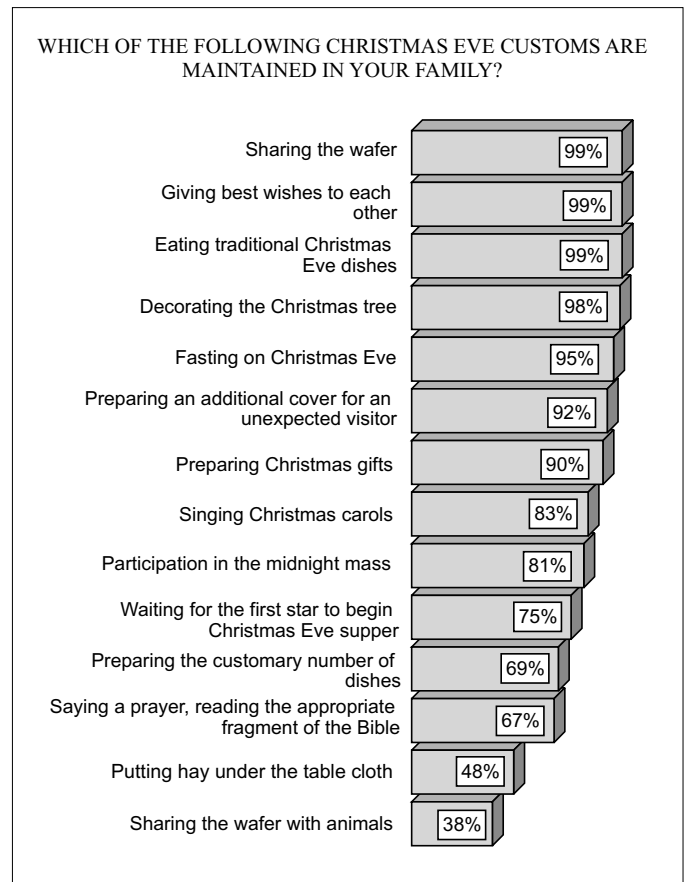
### POLISH CHRISTMAS EVE '97

Like in the previous years, we asked respondents which of the best known Christmas Eve customs are maintained in their families.

Christmas Eve is a very special holiday for Poles. Almost every family celebrates it in accordance with Polish tradition and customs passed on from one generation to another. That evening almost all of us gather around the family table, near the Christmas tree, share the wafer with our nearest and dearest and give best wishes to each other. On almost every Christmas Eve table there is an additional cover for an unexpected visitor. In most families the religious character of the celebration lies in singing Christmas carols together and participating in the midnight mass, as well as (although it is less frequent) reading the appropriate fragment of the Bible or saying a prayer. In three quarters of homes the Christmas Eve supper begins at the moment when the first star appears on the sky. Almost everybody fasts on that day and eats traditional dishes during the

ceremonial supper. In almost every home there are Christmas gifts under the Christmas tree. Relatively the smallest number of families put hay under the table cloth according to the old custom or share the wafer with animals. Therefore for most Poles the contemporary Polish Christmas Eve maintains its unique character and variety of customs related to it.

Christmas Eve is a commonly celebrated holiday; only a few persons stated that their families had not celebrated that evening. The considerable majority of Poles spent the last Christmas Eve at their family homes, one in seven - at his/ her relatives' or friends' living nearby, and 8% - at relatives' outside their place of residence.



More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "Polish Christmas Eve A.D. 1997", December '97.

### ON SOME ASPECTS OF THE NEW AGE AWARENESS

In one of the recent surveys we analysed the perception of the concept of New Age and beliefs associated with it, such as the occurrence of unusual, supernatural phenomena and the belief in prophecies. We presented to our respondents a series of statements containing selected New Age ideas and asked them to give their opinion on each of them.

The statements declaring equal rights of all religions met with the highest approval of respondents. As many as 83% of those polled agree with the opinion that every religion is as good as any other if only it allows a human being to live their life in the best possible way. Over three quarters of respondents (76%) believe that believers in different religious systems in fact worship the same God. Slightly less persons (71%) tend to believe that all religions lead to the same purpose. The common belief in the unity of all religions may seem a little surprising in the Polish society, which is so uniform as far as religion is concerned.

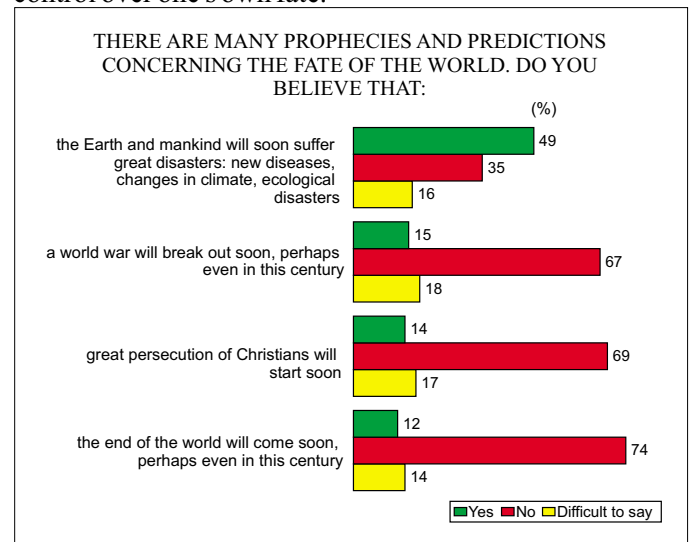
The belief in parapsychological characteristics of the human mind is quite widely spread among Poles. Nearly two thirds of respondents believe that some people have clairvoyant powers. Over half of respondents believe that there are persons who can predict the future, and nearly half claim that telepathy, i.e. the sending of thoughts over a distance, is possible.

The question of the existence of an extraterrestrial civilisation proved the most difficult for respondents to assess. However, the hypothesis that we are not alone in the universe has a little more followers (39%) than opponents (35%). At the same time, though, less than a quarter of respondents believe in the existence of UFO.

The end of the millennium may bring an increase of different fears and anxiety and it may cause a rise in catastrophic and fatalistic attitudes. For this reason we analysed the presence of decadent moods in the society. The most persons believe that the Earth will soon suffer great disasters: ecological disasters, changes in climate, new diseases. The belief in the remaining

prophecies, predicting the outbreak of war, persecutions of Christians, the end of the world is declared by a relatively small percentage of respondents. The possibility of the approaching end of the world was rejected particularly strongly.

In general, the belief in prophecies is more popular among persons with a lower social and material status, while respondents with a higher social and material status and non-religious persons are sceptical about it. The belief in prophecies can be a form of an "escape from the reality", perceived as difficult and not entirely understandable. On the other hand, difficulties with adapting to the changing reality can be associated with a decreasing feeling of control over one's own fate.



More information on this subject can be found in the CBOS report "On some aspects of the New Age awareness", December '97.

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

The evaluation of the Sejm expose of the Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek  
 Operation "Youngster" in the public opinion  
 The Poles' attitude towards refugees  
 The first evaluations of Jerzy Buzek's government  
 Anaesthesiologists' strike in the public opinion  
 Social moods in November  
 Needs and aspirations, i.e. what we would use a big prize for  
 Unity of the new government coalition  
 Poles on advertising and advertisers  
 Confidence in politicians in the new political situation

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