

Samizdat, Consumer Goods

Previously we discussed how in the last five Five Year Plans wages rose by us [Czechoslovakia or the CSSR] and in the Federal Republic of Germany [the FRG, aka West Germany], and how here and there living costs grew. Today, on the basis of average wages and retail costs, we can make a further interesting comparison: how long must a worker work, in order to be able to purchase certain goods.

| Goods | Retail Price | | Necessary Working Time | |
|--------------------------|--------------|----------|------------------------|-----------------|
| | CSSR | FRG | CSSR | FRG |
| | In Crowns | In Marks | Hours : Minutes | Hours : Minutes |
| Wheat Bread, 1 kg | 2.60 | 3.00 | 0:09 | 0:11 |
| Wheat Flour, 1 kg | 3.20 | 1.40 | 0:12 | 0:05 |
| Beef Chuck, 1 kg | 17.00 | 10.29 | 1:02 | 0:38 |
| Beef Tenderloin, 1 kg | 90.00 | 39.10 | 5:27 | 2:22 |
| Pork Cutlet, 1 kg | 46.00 | 10.16 | 2:47 | 0:37 |
| Veal Cutlet, 1 kg | 65.00 | 29.40 | 3:56 | 1:47 |
| Ham, 1 kg | 100.00 | 23.30 | 6:04 | 1:25 |
| Chicken, 1 kg | 30.00 | 5.30 | 1:49 | 0:19 |
| Butter, 1 kg | 40.00 | 9.80 | 2:25 | 0:36 |
| Milk, 1 liter | 3.00 | 1.23 | 0:22 | 0:05 |
| Potatoes, 1 kg | 1.80 | 0.78 | 0:07 | 0:03 |
| Apples, 1 kg | 6.00 | 2.95 | 0:22 | 0:11 |
| Oranges, 1 kg | 14.00 | 3.45 | 0:51 | 0:13 |
| Coffee, 1 kg | 240.00 | 23.10 | 14:32 | 1:24 |
| Refrigerator, 225 liter | 4,000.00 | 679.00 | 242:25 | 41:24 |
| Washing Machine | 6,000.00 | 900.00 | 363:38 | 54:53 |
| Electric Stove | 3,560.00 | 598.00 | 215:45 | 36:31 |
| Black & White Television | 3,400.00 | 230.00 | 206:04 | 14:01 |
| Color Television | 15,200.00 | 1,700.00 | 912:13 | 103:39 |
| Man's Suit, Wool | 2,300.00 | 370.00 | 139:23 | 22:34 |
| Man's Shirt, Cotton | 153.00 | 50.00 | 9:16 | 3:02 |
| Woman's Dress | 390.00 | 112.00 | 23:39 | 6:49 |

| | | | | |
|--|-----------|----------|--------|-------|
| Women's Shoes | 334.00 | 125.00 | 20:14 | 7:37 |
| Men's Shoes | 256.00 | 91.00 | 15:31 | 5:32 |
| Women's Hosiery | 16.00 | 5.00 | 0:59 | 0:18 |
| Man's Socks | 12.00 | 4.00 | 0:44 | 0:14 |
| Kitchen Furniture | 5,459.00 | 1,265.00 | 330:50 | 76:40 |
| Bedroom Furniture | 7,361.00 | 1,395.00 | 446:07 | 85:04 |
| Two-Star Gasoline | 8.00 | 1.20 | 0:29 | 0:04 |
| Electricity per kWh | 0.75 | 0.28 | 0:03 | 0:01 |
| Foreign Travel: | | | | |
| Bulgaria, Sunny Beach, 14 Days,, [traveling] by Air | 6,620.00 | 800.00 | 401:12 | 49:23 |
| Yugoslavia, Starigrad, 14 Days, [traveling] by Bus | 4,970.00 | 662.00 | 301:13 | 40:22 |
| Rome, Athens, the Sea 14 Days, [traveling] by Air | 11,350.00 | 1,079.00 | 687:52 | 65:47 |

This is obviously only an approximate comparison, for it takes no account of the intensity of work, of taxation, of so-called social consumption, different quality of goods, etc.

[...]

It is apparent that this overview can only provide orientation. Despite its problems it does, however, show that the highest price difference concerns long-term consumption and foreign travel. A few types of industrial products simply are not available in our market, for example those in the realm of consumer electronics. Also, in our market the assortment of everyday types of goods is incomparably poorer.

The large price differences and the impossibility of purchasing certain products in our shops have the result that these types of goods are smuggled across the border (videos, personal computers, digital watches, home appliances, equipment for home repairmen, fashion items, etc.) Also, Tuzex and a whole army of money-changers prosper.

Every year the substantially higher living standard in the FRG seduces many of our citizens to emigrate, and that is despite all the risks that this action brings with it.

Source:

"k", "What Sort of Living Standard We Have, Part II [Jakou máme životní úroveň, II]," trans. Cathleen M. Giustino, *Lidové noviny*, March 1988, no. 3, 9.