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HOME EDUCATION DURING THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF  
POLAND – A RETRIEVED CASE\*

**Introduction:** The article concerns home education in the People's Republic of Poland which was cultivated by Danuta and Bartłomiej Maria Boba. They did not send their five children to school in the years 1952–1981; despite the ban, they educated them on their own.

**Research Aim:** The aim of the study was to fill an existing gap in the knowledge about the story of home education in Poland after the Second World War. So far, there have been no known examples of homeschooling in the socialist times. It was thought that it did not take place at all and only started to emerge after the political changes.

**Method:** The study is of a qualitative nature; it was conducted using the narrative interview method. The resulting material was subjected to analysis and interpretation. Additionally, document examination was used.

**Results:** Despite the government's efforts to force all citizens into participation in the education system controlled by the state, there was a case of homeschooling in Poland. The reconstruction of the Boba family's experience gives knowledge of the motivation to raise children away from the influence of school, as well as on the methods and effects of teaching off school. It brings knowledge of the values the family attached to home education and provides a proof of determination of the parents who stood firmly in their commitment despite repressions against them.

**Conclusions:** The case retrieved is isolated. The hardships suffered by the Boba family did not contribute to any legal changes, nor did they affect other families' fates. Their fight against the communist regime complements the image of home education known so far and enables a better understanding of it. It shows how important it can be for parents to raise children in line with their own conscience. Freedom, reconstructed in previous studies as a core value attributed to home education both nowadays and in the distant past, turned out to be the core value in this case as well. The Boba family education is a historical link between tradition and the present day of Polish homeschooling.

**Keywords:** homeschooling, home education, family, People's Republic of Poland, freedom

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## INTRODUCTION

Seventeen years ago, in December 2006, the *Dziennik Polski* published an article describing homeschooling (Piłat, 2006), portraying it as a niche solution concerning about thirty families at the time. Among the several interviewees talking both about the reasons for making such a decision with regard to how they would bring up their children, and about the way they implemented this on a daily basis, there was also a member of the Boba family from Kraków who did not relate to current events in the article, but recalled home education provided by her parents during the socialist period. This account, which is very important for the description of the history of home education in Poland, did not, however, attract enough interest at the time for the matter to be further explored, and neither did the Boba couple's lifestyle during the time when they did not send their children to school. The family, who provided education for their own five children away from the school that promoted communist ideals, was a constant object of interest to the authorities of the time, but did not become an inspiration to other parents. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, society, preoccupied with building a new, post-war order and completely subordinated to the people's government, was not interested in educating its children on its own, and handed over this task, generally unreflectively, or even willingly and with the conviction of securing a "better future" for the child, to the institutions of the state.

Therefore, until recently it was believed that home education did not exist in Poland from the end of the Second World War until the mid-1990s. There was a lack of knowledge about the history of home education in the period of People's Republic of Poland (Jakubiak, 2004). Although my research partly fills this gap, it should still be borne in mind that it is still a subject matter worth exploring.

It is crucial for understanding the case presented here to analyse the laws regulating citizens' obligations with regard to education. Nowadays, there are three types of educational obligation in Poland, i.e. compulsory year-long pre-school preparation, compulsory school attendance and compulsory education as specified in the Education Law (Journal of Laws of 2017, item 59 as amended; Art. 31(4), Art. 35(1) and (2)), which means that each child is obliged to attend an appropriate educational institution during certain years of life. However, subject to the permission of the head of the relevant institution, each of these obligations can be fulfilled outside the institutions listed in the Act, and this formal arrangement is colloquially referred to as *homeschooling*.

This has not always been the case. Homeschooling has existed since the beginning of mankind, originally in the form of natural education. Later on, education took place both within the family and at increasingly organised institutions. For many centuries, learning was not regulated by law and was seen more as a privilege. This was changed by the introduction of compulsory education. However, even after the enforcement of the decree on compulsory education in Poland in

1919 (Journal of Laws of 1919, No. 4, item 147), homeschooling was for a long time a legally permitted way of fulfilling this obligation. And, although after the Second World War this method was no longer approved by the authorities, and the regulation became a dead letter, it was not until 1956 that this form of education was formally abolished by another decree (Journal of Laws of 1956, No. 9, item 52). Therefore, the history of home education provided by Mr and Mrs Boba from 1952 to 1981 is remarkable, marked by the struggle against the communist regime and suffering of various kinds; previously unexplored and unknown; and, as such, it represents a kind of bridge between the past and the present of home education.

### RESEARCH AIM AND QUESTION

The aim of the study presented in this article was to describe home education provided between 1952 and 1981 in the household of Bartłomiej Maria and Danuta Boba, in order to thus complement the history of home education in Poland and thereby attempt to gain an ever better understanding of contemporary home education against the background of its fate in the history of education. The study is another part of the enquiry that I have been conducting for years, devoted to understanding the phenomenon of home education.

In undertaking the study I posed the following research questions: 1) What was home education for the Boba family?, 2) How did they practise it and what meaning did they attach to it?, 3) What motivated them to home educate?, 4) What outcomes did they achieve?

### RESEARCH METHOD AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

Where research is conducted within a humanistic research orientation and is intended to lead to an understanding and interpretation of a particular educational idea and practice, the most appropriate, as far as I am concerned, is biographical and narrative research. In particular, it was important that the aim of the study is to learn about the history of one family, so the individual experiences of its members, the option to freely choose these experiences (which they would do), the way they describe them and the possibility to present an interpretation were all crucial for the success of the study and the achievement of the objectives.

I collected data using a narrative interview technique in direct personal contact with the study subjects. In conformance with the basic phases of the narrative interview (Każmierska, 2012), in January 2020, I conducted 4 interviews in the Boba family, i.e. with Mrs Danuta Boba, a mother homeschooling her five children from 1952 to 1981 (aged 99 on the day of the interview) and her three daughters,

Mrs Bogumiła Boba (aged 75), Mrs Bolesława Habdank-Wojewódzka (aged 71) and Mrs Bożena Boba-Dyga (aged 53). The question I asked my interlocutors was: “What are your experiences of education?” By phrasing the question in this way, i.e. without suggesting any specific aspects of these experiences or imposing any particular structure of the statements, I obtained very personal narratives, full of emotions and recollections of family life, as well as the meanings attached thereto by the narrators. I recorded all the statements using a voice recorder. I also made use of documents relating to the education of Mr and Mrs Boba’s children as well as photographs from the period of home education gathered in the Boba family archive and made available to me by Bożena Boba-Dyga.

### STATISTICAL DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

I had the recordings transcribed, and then the passages emphasised by the narrators were highlighted in capital letters. I also used smiley emoticons to mark those places where my interlocutors spoke with a smile (one emoticon), laughed (two emoticons), or where there was prolonged laughter (three emoticons). I also marked pauses with an ellipsis, longer pauses with a double ellipsis and moments of prolonged silence with a triple ellipsis. These symbols are important for the proper reception of the narratives by the readers of my studies who cannot listen to them, but only read them.

Being an open and flexible research method (Kaźmierska, 2012), narrative interview enables the use of a heuristic approach in the research procedure. I took advantage of this feature and only partially (i.e. with regard to the data collection technique described) applied the proposal of the creator of this method (Fritz Schütze). I abandoned the data analysis procedure he developed which by definition leads to the generation of theoretical models and is useful in sociological research. My study aimed for descriptive, not explanatory knowledge, and the very nature of the study and the selection of its participants precluded the formulation of any generalisations.

I subjected the transcribed narratives to analysis and then interpretation, the aim of which was to get at the facts and meanings given individually to biographical experiences of education. I therefore looked for the categories emerging from those narratives, but I was also made effort to reconstruct the educational practices that the narrators spoke about. I found this way of analysing the research material to be appropriate because it aligns with the overall purpose of the research and enables to achieve this purpose. The point of the research with the Bobas was to document the unknown history of the home education that they created and to explore the meanings they attributed to their actions and experiences, in order to better understand an educational phenomenon that is relevant in modern times. I was therefore

interested in both common and different categories for the narratives which in the next stage of analysis I was able to compare with the meanings that emerged in my earlier research on home education with contemporary families.

The documents that were made available to me, e.g. letters written by Bartłomiej Boba (the father), appeals lodged in court procedures, summonses, fines imposed, and the children's school certificates, all served to complement the narratives and broaden the picture for the purpose of reconstructing the course of events. They also gave me an idea of Bartłomiej Maria Boba. He died in 1984 and could only indirectly become a participant in this study through his own statements from the period of home education, recorded in writing, often handwritten. For the same purpose, I also used some photographs through which I was able to gain an insight into the Boba family's past.

For obvious reasons and with the explicit consent of my interviewees, I did not anonymise the statements and documents, which means that all the names in the excerpts quoted are real.

## RESULTS

Mrs Danuta Boba, *née* Vašina, and Mr Bartłomiej Maria Boba were married on 15 August 1944 in Kraków, Poland. There was a big gap between them in terms of age (22 years) and life experience, but they were united by their love of science. He, born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was educated and had already gained work experience, as well as political experience, in Poland and in the United States while she, gifted in mathematics and one of only three women admitted to the AGH University of Science and Technology in 1939 for studies in the field of metallurgy, did not begin her studies due to the outbreak of the Second World War, and then, after the war, having become a mother, devoted herself entirely to family life and never returned to university. This did not prevent her from speaking several languages, and she pursued her educational passions by educating her own children, and occasionally helping other children to learn. However, it was not her idea to embark on home education with her family.

Mr and Mrs Boba became the parents of five children; they had a daughter Bogumiła, two years younger sons Bogdan and Bogusław (twins), another two years younger daughter Bolesława and the youngest daughter Bożena, born after another 18 years. They brought up each of their children in home education, which they started as early as in 1952 when the first of the siblings, then seven-year-old Bogumiła, was due to go to school.

The failure to send Bogumiła to school initiated a years-long struggle between the Boba family and the state authorities. Although the decree on compulsory schooling that was in force in 1952 made provision for this obligation to be fulfilled

at home, the education authorities did not respect it and demanded that Bartłomiej Boba enrol the child in school. The document initiating the first administrative proceedings in this case was the call for the father to “immediately send the child Bogumiła Boba to school” signed by the head of the Public Common School No. 2 in Kozy (where the Boba family lived at the time) dated 9 October 1952 (Letter from the Head of the Public Common School No. 2 in Kozy dated 9 October 1952, Boba family archive), also warning of the possibility of punishing Bartłomiej Boba for not fulfilling this obligation.

However, the father, who was the originator of the home education scheme for his own children and the staunchest opponent in the family of the then communist school system, did not comply with that call and for the next 10 years waged a bitter struggle with the authorities to keep Bogumiła off school and to prevent the other children in the Boba family from going to school when they entered the compulsory school age.

This struggle entailed suffering of the whole family. The people’s government used a number of means against the Bobas to force them to submit to the will of the state. Initially, there was economic repression; Bartłomiej Boba was deprived of his position as school headmaster and dismissed from his job, and it was forbidden to employ him anywhere, which caused the family to suffer poverty to such an extent that, as the Boba daughters tell us, sometimes there was nothing to eat. The parents sold off family possessions, such as jewellery and works of art (Danuta came from a wealthy family), in order to provide the children with a basic living standard. Now and again they were faced with the impossibility of heating their flat because there was a ban on selling them fuel. The authorities were very inventive in putting pressure on the Boba couple, but they stuck to their resolutions.

At the same time, court proceedings were taking place, and the Bobas were deprived of their parental rights, fines were imposed on them and the children were threatened with deportation to Siberia. The Czeczów Palace in Kozy, where the Bobas lived, was watched by the Security Service (secret police), and the officers’ visits to the Bobas’ flat, the searches and taking their father for interrogation, are part of the children’s dramatic memories of that period.

Among other things, the family archive preserves a letter from their father to the Council of Ministers (government) from February 1955 which captures the atmosphere of those events, “the provincial party-administrative »petty chieftains« at our place are perpetrating wrongs and rapes on my personality, crying out to Almighty God for vengeance; they are trying to steal my small children from me. Unheard of: child thieves! I ask for your immediate intervention and protection because I no longer have the strength to keep vigil day and night, with an axe at my feet, to guard my children”.

It appears from the statements of Bartłomiej’s daughters that attempts were made to take them away from their parents and that the aforementioned axe did

actually stand in the house by the front door; the children lived in fear that they might be stolen from the house by officers. The daughters also recall the day when their father, defending the children from some “men in black coats” who wanted to take them away, set upon them with a sabre taken down from the wall.

By sticking to the decision to pursue home education the family became exposed to not only repression by the authorities, but also to social ostracism. In addition, the children had a sense of being different from their peers and consequently also lonesome.

Before it was possible to legally sanction the parents' choice that they would educate their children away from the ideological influences of the school, 18 court hearings related to the matter took place over a period of 10 years. They finally managed to obtain court approval for home education in 1962, after a 10-year court battle and after the children had passed their school curriculum examinations. The approval concerned only 4 children as the youngest daughter was born later, and permission for her home education was granted on the basis of the same judgment, without any such dramatic experiences.

The study shows that the main motivation driving Bartłomiej Boba in making the decision to homeschool and in consistently persisting in it despite such severe and extensive consequences of this decision was the desire to protect the children from the communist ideology promoted by the school of the time. The father was convinced that in this way he would be able to raise his children in the spirit of the values he shared, away from the materialism promoted at school, and that it would be very damaging for them if they had to cope with the ideological rift between the family home and school. Bartłomiej Boba dreamt about Poland having educational pluralism and offering the option to choose schools that taught Christian values; he wanted such opportunities for all children, not just his own, and he described his actions as “the fight for the soul of the Polish child”:

on the one hand, there was no such CONTEMPT, as it were for this state education, only... hmm... as if father had always presented it saying that this COMMUNIST education, which kind of CUTS everything to one size, and just simply FORMATS the brain, it simply washes it, INDOCTRINATES it – father called it indoctrination, well, that it is a GREAT EVIL. For the child. And that, well, a good parent must not allow this [...] the child to be harmed. [...] Because my father always believed that, well, he was such a great humanist, you could say..., and he believed that man was VASTLY IMPORTANT. And he called this fight “the fight for the soul of the Polish child”. [Bożena, daughter, 53]

The children's mother shared her husband's beliefs, but she was certainly not as determined as he was to implement the resolution on home education. The husband, however, was an autocratic person, and it seems that Danuta was not in a position to make a decision different from what he expected. Nor did the

parents, unlike today, ask for their children's consent in this matter. As madam Danuta puts it:

But the children were not allowed to speak on the matter, right? So they didn't go to school. So, they don't go; they had to learn at home. THEY HAD TO! As for myself... [Danuta, mother, 99]

This problem with school, right, was there. It was growing with us. Between my husband and me. The point was that he was convinced [...] my husband asserted [...] it was: WE DO NOT SEND. [Danuta, mother, 99]

Although Danuta Boba was neither the originator nor, as one might assume, an absolute supporter of the idea to continue to bring her children up away from school, she was the one who organised and provided education for her children on a daily basis. Her daughters recall lessons taught by their mother and the help they received from her in their learning. Homeschooling in the Boba family, to the extent required by the school curriculum, followed the model of school lessons taught by mum, or took the form of independent learning from textbooks:

We had a division of lessons; we also had 45-minute lessons [...] We also worked a lot on our own, that's also true, because, er, [...] no, it wasn't possible for mum to do everything with us... three different; so we had to read set passages from textbooks, from here to here, and learn them; and then mum would quiz us. [Bolesława, daughter, 71]

This form of daily learning differs from contemporary home education, but this is not surprising and is due to the possibilities available at the time; it would be difficult to expect other methods of providing home education in those circumstances.

The father was rather concerned with fostering issues, and teaching was an occasional, unplanned and spontaneous activity; he explained the natural and social world during walks, conversations or other life situations. From the daughters' accounts it can be concluded that he was very skilful in making educational use of so-called educational opportunities. He noticed the developmental potential of situations and was able to turn them into educational benefits for the children. This is how his daughters recall it:

So I attended RE lessons, well, and being such a [...] fourth-grader [...] I came, and such "bla, bla, bla" [...] "And this girl had an ugly skirt, and that one's pigtails [...]" [...] and such criticism of the girls' appearance. And dad sits opposite me and looks and looks, and says, "My child, would you like these friends to hear what you say to me?". Well, I felt a bit silly, and then Dad says, "Remember, if you say something critical, say it to that person and in private. But never say anything critical to anyone, anything that you wouldn't want to be repeated to that person". And such a simple instruction has stayed with me all my life. I think this is great wisdom for life and I received a lot of such wisdom from my dad. [Bolesława, daughter, 71]



[...] it was like that with me, too, that dad would take me for a walk, and a lot of information; it was actually a nature lesson, a history lesson you could say, only conducted not in such classroom conditions, but [...] dad really wasn't in the habit of conducting such lessons [...] to sit down at the table, for example; and now let's open the textbook, now take out the notebook. [...] It wasn't his style at all. You could come to him in the library, and he would sit me on his knee and we would read poetry, for example; or we would learn poems by heart. [...] He would take out books and show me that it was Queen Jadwiga, and then he would tell the whole story [...] and it was King Łokietek [Ladislaus the Elbow-High], and the pictures of that, and such a philosopher, and such a politician [...] or just showing a lot from a book, and some photographs from his life, and in the process, right, you could learn about the history of the United States or, let me think, Winston Churchill's role in world politics, or [...] or whatever; or learn how to play chess or checkers, for example. Apart from that, my father was the one who sold a lot of knowledge on these walks and [...] and he would suggest books, that happened, too, to read on our own [...] he would encourage us to read for yourselves. [Bożena, daughter, 53]

Bartłomiej Boba also attended to the formal aspects of home education; he was the one who represented the children's interests before the education authorities, he conducted extensive correspondence on the matter and wrote court letters. The role he took on corresponds to that of a father in former homeschooling, and it is likely that in Bartłomiej's case that was the result of a traditional upbringing and a commitment to traditional values that he carried through his life to the very end.

Certainly, home education was paramount for Danuta and Bartłomiej Boba, but it was only a means to an educational end. Educating children away from the influence of school was intended to ensure that they grew up in a world of consistent values, approved and shared by their parents. It was also a way of preserving their personal freedom; it was in their nature to resist the demands of the people's government and, in particular, it all had to do with Bartłomiej's opposition activities. As a matter of fact, however, in their desire to give their children freedom from the influence of communism the Bobas actually significantly restricted their children's freedom by requiring them to submit to their father's will regarding their non-attendance at school, and thus exposing them to social rejection, a sense of otherness, and a scarcity of satisfying peer contacts (the Bobas' children had fingers pointed at them; other children were set against them, and there were times when their parents forbade them to play with the little Boba siblings).

I think that those [...] and those memories of that time, of not going to school [...] those are not cool. Very uncool. [Bogumiła, daughter, 75]

Despite the negative memories of their childhood and the many dramatic events they were involved in, which were definitely beyond a child's emotional capacity, years later, from a mature perspective, each of the Boba daughters says

they are grateful to their parents for the kind of education they received. Danuta Boba, too, evaluating that period of her life, when asked if she would do it again says without hesitation that she would, and immediately adds, “Maybe better”.

In assessing the formal effects of the home education provided in the Boba family, it has to be said that contrary to the fears expressed at the time, all the children completed higher education and, in addition, manifested social activity and artistic talents. Each of them also performed teaching roles to some extent at some point in their lives. Bogumiła, who never went to school, became a surgeon, an orthopaedic traumatologist; she also taught at a medical school, was a member of parliament, and has been a local government councillor for many terms. Bogdan followed the path that was once interrupted for his mother by the war, i.e. he became an engineer at the Faculty of Chemistry of the AGH University of Science and Technology; he prepared patent drafts, and later in life became a student again, and now he teaches crafts at a Waldorf school. Bogusław became an artist, a painter; he creates under the artistic pseudonym “Colin”, and has received numerous awards for his works. He too worked with children and young people leading an art group at the Provincial Centre for Aesthetic Education in Bielsko-Biała. Bolesława graduated in art education from Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin and later completed some postgraduate courses. She is a teacher at a Waldorf school. The Bobas’ middle children, the twin brothers and daughter Bolesława, were home-schooled throughout primary school and partly in secondary school. The youngest, Bożena, who was home-schooled until completing primary school, is a well-known art restorer in Kraków. She graduated from the Faculty of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, and is also developing as a poet as well as in the field of music. She is another one with teaching experience; she takes care of trainees at the Academy of Fine Arts and runs the Youth Circle at the Association of Polish Artists in Kraków. For her work she has been awarded and decorated multiple times; for instance, she has been awarded the Golden Cross of Merit by the President of the Republic of Poland, Merit for Polish Culture and the Golden Badge for the Care of Monuments by the Minister of Culture and National Heritage.

Speaking of her adult children and assessing the effects of the homeschooling years ago, Danuta Boba says on her 99<sup>th</sup> birthday:

I cannot complain. I can VALUE the state that each of the children have reached. [Danuta, mother, 99]

She herself, after years of struggling with the difficult conditions of living alongside an oppositionist, after years of mental and physical suffering inflicted by security officers, uncertainty about the fate of her children, and after repeated humiliation and mockery from educational authorities, 40 years after she completed her home education, she was awarded the Medal of the Commission of National

Education by the Minister of Education and Science, and then by the Mayor of Kraków Prof. Jacek Majchrowski with the badge of Honoris Gratia, and the City Council of Bielsko-Biała awarded her the honorary title of Merit to the City.

In 2021, the story of home education in the Boba family became the subject of a documentary film the work on which was commenced by Piotr Augustynek as script writer and director, and Krzysztof Ridan as editor and producer. The premiere of the film they produced with the participation of the Third Track [Trzeci Tor] Film Association from Kraków, entitled *In the Name of the Highest Values* [*W imię najwyższych wartości*], took place on 13 May 2023 in the Czecz Manor in Kozy near Bielsko-Biała, i.e. the place where the story began. Together with the premiere of the film, there was also a presentation of a book in which I described in more detail the results of the research presented here (Giercarz-Borkowska, 2022). The event attracted a large audience and marked the beginning of a series of meetings planned to be held throughout Poland.

## DISCUSSION

The study provided an opportunity to describe a case of the implementation of home education during the People's Republic of Poland, which seemed to be absent. This knowledge thus fills an existing gap in the knowledge of the post-war fate of home education in Poland.

Undoubtedly, although embedded in other socio-political and legal realities, the home teaching implemented in the years 1952–1981 in the family of Danuta and Bartłomiej Boba fits into the contemporary understanding of home education defined as a lifestyle (Giercarz-Borkowska, 2019, 2021, 2022). Also freedom, reconstructed in earlier studies as the strongest value attached by home educators to this educational practice, highly valued by them and characterising this lifestyle, is the value the Bobas associated with it. In their understanding of home education one can also find other meanings that are associated with it in modern times, such as independence and responsibility, concern for the child's natural cognitive curiosity, and self-education, but these are not exposed as prominently as freedom and were neither the motivation nor the main objective of the activity carried out by the Bobas. Instead, they are valued by their daughters, pointing out, e.g. the opportunity to be themselves that they have experienced and shaped in themselves through home education in their view.

The everyday ways in which home education was practised in the Boba family are, apart from the obvious differences in learning practices due to the non-existence in those days of the information and communication technology now available, also to some extent similar to those of today although they were rather narrowed down to school-type learning with the use of textbooks, and doing the

tasks contained in them, and with a strong participation of the parent in the role of teacher. This parent was the mother, which is also consistent with the currently observed greater involvement of mothers than fathers in organising and running home education (Bielecka-Prus and Heleniak, 2018; Giercarz-Borkowska, 2020), although nowadays mothers less often take on the role of teacher and more often become organisers. The Boba children's learning was more disciplined, methodical and linked to the content of the school curriculum as compared with what can be observed today. They also learned through educational opportunities, but this was a supplement rather than the core of their education. This situation is similar to the dichotomy emphasised by children currently being home-schooled between learning "for exams" and "for yourself" (Giercarz-Borkowska, 2022, p. 216). This spontaneous education, not necessarily related to the curriculum, was handled by the father, and is an aspect of their upbringing that is hugely valued by their now adult daughters.

"The struggle for the soul of the Polish child" that Bartłomiej Boba waged with the socialist authorities was intended to liberate children from the influence of unwanted ideology and lead to educational pluralism. The man's dream was for parents to be able to choose schools that corresponded to their personal worldview and ensured that their children were brought up in accordance with the shared values. If there had been a school in those days that was free of the ideals promoted by the authorities of the time, Bartłomiej Boba would not have sought other solutions. Parents' motivations for raising their children off school therefore fall within the range of the set of motivations accompanying modern parents who are motivated, among other things, by the concern that children should be raised within the values they endorse and not have to experience moral dilemmas resulting from a different value system at school and at home (Budajczak, 2004). Nowadays, motivations related to a critical approach to the institution of school are also prevalent, but they tend to concern phenomena such as violence or poor quality of teaching (Frasunkiewicz, 2022; Szafrńska and Pawlak, 2020).

Bartłomiej Boba only managed to protect his own five children from the influence of communist ideology and the materialist worldview promoted in schools. His "struggle for the soul of the Polish child" had no tangible effect on other children. The dramatic (at times) and very interesting story of homeschooling in the Boba family did not in the least produce a change in the social environment. They did not find any followers, did not pave the way for other families, and did not bring about any changes in the law to make homeschooling legal. Their story remained only a family story.

The findings so far do not make it clear whether the Bobas were the only family that did not send their children to school during the communist era although no other documented cases are known. Even if it turned out that they were not the only ones, their experience would remain isolated anyway. The Bobas acted

without public support and their story did not penetrate the consciousness of the Polish people or become part of the public memory. Bartłomiej Boba did not live to see the changes in the political system that again allowed home education which began to be slowly revived in the mid-1990s.

Nowadays, home education is a very rapidly developing alternative to general education that follows models known for centuries. It is enough to note that in the last ten years, between 2012 and 2022, the number of children being home educated increased from 389 by almost 8,000% and was 31,477 as of 30 September 2022 according to the data from the Educational Information System. In the last two years alone, this number has more than doubled (from 14,822 people in 2020 to 31,477 in 2022; own work based on the data published by the Ministry of Education and Science).

At the same time, a small number of parents undertaking home education as well as a small part of the public observing their activities see it as a continuation of a solution known from the history of education and proven multiple times in the past, treating it as a novelty without any reference models. This makes it all the more important to strive for the fullest possible description of this educational idea and practice.

The story I have reconstructed in the study grows out of the past. Bartłomiej Boba was familiar with the experience of pre-war home education and also worked as a home teacher at some time in his life, and the effects of home education can be observed today. It can constitute a moral value for families who decide to educate their children in this way today. It is a peculiar link between the tradition and the present day of home education. This tradition was interrupted during the People's Republic of Poland when such education was banned. As a result, there is no tradition of home education in the families of over 30,000 children being currently home educated. There is a lack of a memory that is alive and belongs to a community in the sense proposed by Pierre Nora, a memory that this community carries through life. Unlike history, memory lives in people's everyday life while history only reconstructs the past and reveals the mechanisms that govern it. History is shared, but at the same time it is nobody's, it belongs to no one (Nowak-Dziemiałowicz, 2017, p. 81).

Home education lacked the community memory forming a link with the past. All that was left of the centuries-old tradition of home education were historical accounts thereof, poorly known representations of that past. There has been a rupture, the tradition of homeschooling has been interrupted and displaced by the experience and memory of compulsory education. The family history of the Bobas exists, as it were, in isolation from what has gone before and what has come after, and is developing now, and it is therefore a historical link only.

## CONCLUSIONS

Home education that took place in the family of Danuta and Bartłomiej Boba between 1952 and 1981, in the socio-political and legal realities of the People's Republic of Poland, is an example of the existence of home education in the post-war period, and prior to the political changes of the mid-1990s. Spreading knowledge of this case might contribute to a better understanding of home education considered as a lifestyle of the whole family.

## STUDY LIMITATIONS

This study only covers the fate of one family and there is no aspiration to generalise the results in any way. There is still an open question about the post-war fate of home education in Poland, i.e. whether there were any other families that practised it? If so, where and when did it take place, how did it proceed, what was its significance?

In the case of homeschooling in the Boba family described here, particularly with regard to the oppressive actions of the state against members of this family, the father's political involvement is not insignificant. In order to objectively assess the facts recalled from the distant past by the Boba children, now adults, but then young, it would be important to learn also about this area of Bartłomiej Boba's life and to determine to what extent the repressions recalled by the daughters were related exclusively to home education and to what extent to their father's opposition activities, of which the children may not even have been aware.

When interpreting research results, it must also be borne in mind that the material obtained in narrative interviews is produced spontaneously by the participants who spin the narrative and present the events in a selective manner (the narrative is driven by a compulsion to condense) and, secondly, interpret them through the prism of their current knowledge and experiences. Human memory is fallible and acts selectively, especially when it refers to events from some 40–70 years ago as in this case. Finally, research results are the joint work of the research participants and the researcher; they arise in an interaction and are intersubjective.

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### Legal acts

- Act of 14 December 2016 Education law, Journal of Laws of 2017, item 59.
- Decree of 7 February 1919 on compulsory education, Journal of Laws of 1919, No. 4, item 147.
- Decree of 23 March 1956 on school obligation, Journal of Laws of 1956, No. 9, item 52.

### Documents

- Letter from the head of the Public Common School No. 2 in Kozy dated 9 October 1952, Boba family archive.

## EDUKACJA DOMOWA W OKRESIE POLSKIEJ RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ LUDOWEJ – PRZYPADEK ODNALEZIONY

**Wprowadzenie:** Artykuł dotyczy edukacji domowej realizowanej w Polskiej Rzeczypospolitej Ludowej. Państwo Danuta i Bartłomiej Maria Boba w latach 1952–1981 nie posyłali do szkoły pięciorga swoich dzieci – mimo zakazu kształcili je we własnym zakresie.

**Cel badań:** Celem badania było uzupełnienie wiedzy o losach edukacji domowej w Polsce po II wojnie światowej. Dotychczas nie znano przypadków nauczania domowego w okresie socjalizmu – sądzono, że w tym czasie nie było realizowane i zaczęło odradzać się dopiero po przełomie ustrojowym.

**Metoda badań:** Badania przeprowadzono w tradycji jakościowej, metodą wywiadu narracyjnego. Uzyskany materiał badawczy poddano analizie i interpretacji. Dodatkowo wykorzystano badanie dokumentów.

**Wyniki:** Pomimo wysiłków władz państwa, by zmusić wszystkich obywateli do udziału w edukacji państwowej, istniał w Polsce przypadek nauczania domowego. Zrekonstruowanie doświadczeń rodziny Bobów dostarcza wiedzy o motywacjach do wychowywania dzieci z dala od wpływów szkoły, sposobach i efektach uczenia poza nią. Niesie wiedzę o wartościach, jakie rodzina przypisywała edukacji domowej i jest świadectwem determinacji rodziców, którzy wytrwali w postanowieniu pomimo stosowanych wobec nich represji.

**Wnioski:** Odnaleziony przypadek jest odosobniony. Trudne doświadczenie rodziny Bobów nie wpłynęło ani na zmianę prawa, ani na los innych rodzin. Ich walka z komunistycznym reżimem uzupełnia znany dotychczas opis edukacji domowej i pozwala lepiej ją rozumieć. Pokazuje, jak wielkie znaczenie może mieć dla rodziców wychowywanie dzieci w zgodzie z własnym sumieniem. Wolność – zrekonstruowana we wcześniejszych badaniach jako podstawowa wartość łączona z edukacją domową współcześnie i w odległej przeszłości – okazała się również w tym przypadku wartością nadrzędną. Rodzinna edukacja Bobów jest historycznym łącznikiem między tradycją a współczesnością polskiej edukacji domowej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** edukacja domowa, nauczanie domowe, rodzina, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, wolność