

Introduction

Puberty and Politics

'People are putting themselves at risk, massive paper shortages and here, TM are squandering half a page on sex, positions, etc. This is no subject for S.'s primary organ!'¹ wrote D. (1987: 4) in a letter to *Tygodnik Mazowsze* (TM/the *Mazovia Weekly*), a newspaper that the anti-communist trade union Solidarity (S.) published in samizdat from 1982 to 1989. D.'s sentiments are echoed by a reader using the pseudonym 'Omega', who saw more sinister forces at play: 'commies will do what they can to drive a wedge inside the opposition and between the opposition and the Church' (1987: 3). A priest also struggled to contain his outrage, accusing the editors of recklessness and belligerence towards Catholicism (Małkowski 1987: 4). All this indignation was caused by a school handbook authored by Wiesław Sokoluk, Dagmara Andziak and Maria Trawińska (1987) or, basically, a review of it written by Anna Dodziuk, a psychotherapist affiliated to the Planned Parenthood Association for many years who also happened to edit the *Mazovia Weekly*. In the National Independence Day issue of 11 November 1987, Dodziuk defended the handbook, which, following heated debate and pressure from the Church, had been withdrawn from schools. What remained of the print run was shredded. 'It survived for only two months, and only that long because the Ministry of Education makes decisions bureaucratically, so – slowly' (Dodziuk 1987: 4). According to this psychotherapist, the handbook's failure was a foregone conclusion:

No wonder [it failed], because it's good and, as such, couldn't last. By good, I mean: 1) it addresses young people seriously, on equal terms, urging them to form their own judgements; 2) it takes account of the obvious fact that teenage girls and boys have feelings, and some of these are sexual; in fact, they even have bodies. Until very recently, schools had consistently successfully evaded those two cardinal sins, and now what a scandal! (Dodziuk 1987: 4)

Dodziuk was certainly not seeking to drive a wedge between the opposition and the Church. However, she was indeed renouncing some of the handbook's critics, but mainly because they had not gone to the trouble of studying it. She wrote: 'The collective indignation is being organized by people who have not even seen the book. I would go so far as to say that only (a few) individuals deigned to read the book and the majority of those – whether they were believers or not – must have thought it was good' (Dodziuk 1987: 4). Others threw hysterics, mainly because of two quite conventional sketches printed in the book: 'Some parishes are calling parents' meetings where the only information to be gleaned is from a slide projection featuring two incriminating drawings, after which it is resolved that they should, as one, return (their children's) handbooks' (1987: 4). Everyone nodded their approval at these meetings. It was rare for anyone to try to get to the bottom of the matter. And yet the book teaches young adults to be responsible, discourages them from seeking an abortion and discusses natural family planning methods in depth. In Dodziuk's view, the main sticking point for the book's critics was that sex is presented 'as an opportunity for joyful, love-filled relations between two people, bringing them closing to each other and enriching them. It is this that Polish schools should not be doing' (1987: 4). The author attempts to prove her point that such topics must in fact be taught by citing the following statement made by a Catholic doctor, Włodzimierz Fijałkowski: 'The aura surrounding sexuality exudes coolness, mistrustfulness, a sense of foreboding or guilt and wariness. What fails to come across here is love of sexuality as a gift from God, as an evangelical aptitude that should be nurtured rather than sunk into the ground' (quoted in Dodziuk 1987: 4).

Dodziuk was quite right to write that the greatest indignation is often provoked by what is 'unseen'. Four years later, Dominican Father Bernard Skrzydłowski, or 'the episcopal censor for sexual education', as my interview partner Zbigniew Izdebski (today a major sex researcher and educator) called him, accepted an invitation to a conference on youth sexuality at which the leading Polish sexologists were due to appear. It was organized by Izdebski, who only held a master's degree at the time. He recalls that the cleric 'was terrified that they would be a group of sex maniacs' and the secular educators were also a little scared of the Church's representative. But when Skrzydłowski 'heard Sokoluk, he later commented: "I didn't expect that this Sokoluk would be such a normal person"'. Despite their differences – over contraception, for example – it turned out that the two warring factions agreed on many issues, and existing conflicts had often arisen from damaging representations.

However, returning to 1987, the discussion about the handbook was the only time that sex-related issues appeared in the *Mazovia Weekly*. It is at this point that a fierce conflict arose about such issues in Polish society, which embroiled the Solidarity camp as well. This conflict has flared up again today: ‘All the debates that are currently firing us up revolve around – pardon the expression – the arse and thereabouts. They address issues associated with sexual morality’, the philosopher, historian of ideas and former dissident Marcin Król (2014) commented. For him, however, this topic was a red herring:

But this is not the primary focus of social life, even when such an important issue as abortion is included. The progressive elites have become involved in gender and sexual inequality and completely lost sight of fundamental economic inequalities, which are scandalous. [They think:] what’s the point in discussing some nineteenth-century social categories [when there are] newer, more interesting ones? (Król 2014)

Inequalities are scandalous. But is sex really an issue of secondary importance in which the political Left has only become interested relatively recently? In fact, it was much earlier – ironically, in the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century – that progressives noted that there was no chance of equality being achieved without sexual reform. All those years ago, they were campaigning for universal egalitarian sex education because – as they claimed – this form of inequality lies at the very centre of social life. At the very beginning of the twentieth century, Dr Waleńty Łukasz Mikłaszewski called for a dramatic overhaul of society grounded in sexual-gender reform. He stated his case clearly:

So long as girls are brought up in such a way as to develop passivity in them and stifle their innate drives to think and act, so long as a girl has no chance of becoming an independent person or obtaining equal rights to a young man, relations between the sexes will be immoral and will have to be settled on the basis of the physical and legal superiority man holds over woman. (Mikłaszewski 1906b: 968)

According to Mikłaszewski, this had led to the scourge of venereal diseases and prostitution as well as male delinquency and bestiality – in a world of inequalities, they were losing their humanity: ‘And men will continue to desire women as a source of sexual pleasure so long as they fail to recognize them as people equal to themselves with whom they should be united in fulfilling life’s important purpose: creating a new generation, securing their own immortality’ (1906b: 968). Mikłaszewski

got to the heart of the matter: the Augustan poet Horace was wrong to claim that masculine production and artistic pursuits could deliver everlasting fame. The only fail-safe method of ensuring one's immortality is sexual reproduction (Miklaszewski 1906a: 886).

But, of course, it was not only progressive social activists who wanted to change the approach to sexuality and all that this entailed. Its importance was also appreciated by twentieth-century tyrants. In the Third Reich, a special office for combating abortion and homosexuality was created as early as 1936. During the Second World War, Heinrich Himmler banned the sale of contraceptives (with the exception of condoms) and in 1943 the death penalty was introduced for aborting foetuses (Herzog 2011: 70). In the USSR, one of Stalin's first directives was a ban on abortion. He abandoned the liberal sexual policy of the revolutionary period. As well as dispatching eulogist of free love Alexandra Kollontai to a diplomatic posting, he made it more difficult to divorce and began prosecuting homosexuals. However, Nikita Khrushchev reformed most of his predecessor's anti-sexual legislation during the Thaw, though the anti-homosexual legislation was retained – he claimed that intimacy between people of the same sex had first taken root in the Gulag and if Soviet citizens didn't want camp-style manners to develop in society, it had to be suppressed (Healey 2001).

Many more such examples could be cited from around the world. But what was the situation in Poland? The twentieth century was dominated by debates on sexuality and the transformations associated with it. These peaked at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In 1993, heated discussions led to the prohibition of abortion, which had been free and available on request since 1956. The new legislation only permitted it in the event of a woman's health or life being threatened, a foetus being deformed or the pregnancy having occurred as a result of a crime being committed (Zielińska 2000). Moreover, in the 1990s, the state stopped subsidising contraception and paying for in vitro fertilization (this became possible towards the very end of state socialism, a short period during which it could be used for free; see Radkowska-Walkowicz (2013)) and gender reassignment surgery. The latter was also legally restricted (Dębińska 2013).

However, this period of transformation provoked by political interference in the history of sexuality had still not run its course. In 1993, a debate that was heated – albeit not as fierce as the one over abortion – began over whether masturbation was appropriate behaviour for Poles in the new Poland (Kościańska 2012). Many claimed it was not. At the same time, it was after 1989 that social movements campaigning on sexuality-related issues began to flourish. Over time, they began to

call for the legalization of same-sex civil partnerships and more effective combating of sexual violence (Kościńska 2021a [2014]). Pornography was legalized. The Church began to become heavily involved in sexuality issues. The 1990s witnessed a complete break with a tradition of sex education that had been developed by progressive educators, social activists and psychologists over the course of the twentieth century. The shredded book authored by Sokoluk, Trawińska and Andziak was indisputably this tradition's greatest achievement. After the postsocialist transformation, guidebooks were still being written by people from this milieu, but their works were gradually being marginalized. Although *Nowoczesne wychowanie seksualne (Modern Sex Education)*, which was published in 1996 by sexologists Zbigniew Lew-Starowicz and Kazimierz Szczerba, never reached the shredder, it shared a similar fate to Sokoluk, Andziak and Trawińska's handbook published almost a decade before: in both cases, specially prepared pastoral letters were read out in churches and the authors were accused of being involved in an international conspiracy against the Polish nation. Lew-Starowicz recalls that he was assailed in the street: 'You've destroyed the Polish family!' (Lew-Starowicz 2013: 150–51). *Kocha, lubi, szanuje (Love, Like, Respect)*, which was written in 1999 by sex educators Andrzej Jaczewski and Zbigniew Izdebski as a guidebook for middle school students (those aged fourteen to sixteen), was packaged in a dust jacket suggesting it be used in high schools (for those aged seventeen to nineteen). For a very short period, schools offered a subject titled 'sexual life knowledge', which was conceived as being neutral in terms of worldview and focused on sexual health, but the coming to power of the conservative Solidarity Electoral Action in 1997 effectively signed its death warrant, even though the team that designed the programme had made a concerted effort to win over conservative educators, including Teresa Król (today's 'first lady' of sex education for schools) and the Jesuit Professor Józef Augustyn (from 1997 the governmental reviewer of preparation for family life coursebooks). Nevertheless, when these two educators took over the Ministry of Education, it turned out that these efforts to win them over had backfired. *Ja i Ty. Wychowanie do życia w rodzinie. Podręcznik dla gimnazjalistek i gimnazjalistów (Me and You: A Handbook for Middle School Girls and Boys)* by Alicja Długołęcka and Grażyna Tworkiewicz-Bieniaś was permitted in classrooms, but only for a short time.

In the 1990s, new textbooks appeared that severed all links with Polish educators' previous accomplishments: first – in 1993 – *Zanim wybierzesz (Before You Choose)*, which was written by three Catholic married couples (Grabowski et al. 1993), and soon afterwards, *Wędrując ku dorosłości (Journeying into Adulthood)*, which is still a regularly updated

staple of the Polish classroom (edited by the aforementioned Teresa Król (1994)). Both of these books almost completely reject earlier Polish accomplishments in the sex education field and are based on Catholicism and – particularly in the first one’s case – knowledge collated by the international conservative community. The authors draw liberally from North American works. There is little difference between these publications and similar works produced in other countries. Although they make substantial reference to the global sexual revolution, which they held responsible for the Polish nation’s downfall since the fall of the Iron Curtain, they hardly mention Poland’s typical problems and otherwise unusually rich local Catholic tradition.

This subject was approached completely differently by educators affiliated to the Planned Parenthood Association – an organization that consulted prewar traditions and drew upon international science, yet was also firmly rooted in national realities. During the Polish People’s Republic, they analysed Polish research from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, referenced the educational activism of such 1930s sex reformers as Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński and Irena Krzywicka (Gawin 2009), and made use of a humanistic and holistic approach to sexuality developed by Kazimierz Imieliński, the founder of postwar Polish sexology (Kościńska 2014, 2016). During the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was a clash within the domain of Polish sexuality between progressive Polish thought and the kind of global conservatism promoted by local defenders of the homeland.

A Little Chronology

The first sex education class on Polish soil took place in 1904 (Sikorska-Kulesza 2004: 37). It was taught by Wacław Jezierski, a biology teacher, progressive and advocate of institutional awareness-raising. Even before this biologist started teaching young adults, guidebooks for adults, and in particular married women, were being published as early as the nineteenth century. Men learned everything from prostitutes, as every early study of sexuality and the resultant epidemic of venereal diseases made clear. Women were tasked with restraining their husbands’ sexual impulses. In what is probably the earliest handbook, published in 1817 by Ignacy Lubicz Czerwiński as *Sposób szczęśliwego pożycia między mężem i żoną czyli cnoty istotne, które ich to tego celu doprowadzać powinny* (*A Method for Successful Relations between Husband and Wife, or Essential Virtues That Should Guide Them to This Objective*), it can be read that the wife ‘is destined by Nature itself to temper her Husband’s

unruliness and crudity' (1817: 86). This theme of restraining male lust runs right through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The historian Bożena Urbanek (2004: 63) has counted as many as twenty-one manuals for adults published in the nineteenth century. There was also no shortage of works devoted to sexology, a field that was emerging at the time, mainly in Central European countries. *Psychopathia Sexualis* by the Austrian doctor Richard von Krafft-Ebing was first published in Polish in Kraków in 1888, only two years after the Viennese edition. The following decades saw the appearance of a home-grown Polish sexology, or 'płciownictwo' (as its creator, the Cracovian physician Stanisław Kurkiewicz, favoured the Polonization of all terminology; see Kurkiewicz (1913)).

Works addressed to parents were also published, advising them how to tackle the 'stork' (often brought up when young people asked where children came from). Notable examples include Izabela Moszczeńska's handbooks titled *Jak rozmawiać z dziećmi o kwestyach drażliwych: wskazówki dla matek* (*How to Talk to Children about Sensitive Issues: Tips for Mothers*) and *Co każda matka swojej dorastającej córce powiedzieć powinna* (*What Every Mother Should Tell Her Adolescent Daughter*), both published in 1904. Foreign books were also translated. For example, in 1903, a Polish-language edition appeared of the much commented-upon handbook *Baby Buds*, which was written by the famous British suffragette Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy (under the pseudonym Ellis Ethelmer).

This period also saw the publication of the first studies of young people's sex lives. Surveys were carried out by Zdzisław Kowalski among students at the University of Warsaw in 1899 and, four years later, Izabela Moszczeńska at the Warsaw University of Technology, Tadeusz Łazowski and Konrad Siwicki (among students of both universities) and also Marian Falski among pupils of 'middle school classes' (Falski 1906a: 781). These studies revealed a great need for professional sex education. Boys who were told the facts of life at a very young age by their peers, servants and prostitutes easily succumbed to venereal diseases and many were losing their virginity in brothels. It is therefore hardly surprising that such books, which took the form of appeals addressed to young people, discussed the issue of sex for money in depth. These publications appeared more or less at the same time as the first sex education class was being conducted. Some of them, like the earlier cited text by Miklaszewski, called for equality and sexual reform.

Shortly after the gaining of independence in 1918, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education introduced instruction on the facts of life to schools. The headteachers were supposed to invite physi-

cians to discuss matters of hygiene with young people. It was also recommended that schoolchildren should read Aleksandr Herzen's rather outdated (first published in 1904) *Odezwa do męskiej młodzieży* (*Appeal to the Male Youth*), which was only addressed to boys (Babik 2010: 131).

During the interwar period, new actors entered the educational stage from the ranks of a literary-medical community centred around *Wiedomości Literackie* (*Literary News*), a major literary weekly in interwar Poland. Irena Krzywicka, Tadeusz Boy-Żeleński and Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka were just a few of the creators of the Society for Conscious Motherhood and the Polish branch of the League for Sexual Reform, which was founded in Berlin by Magnus Hirschfeld, a Jewish doctor from Kolberg (now Kołobrzeg, in Poland) as an activist research organization that demanded rights for people who were sexually different or wanted to divorce or use birth control, as well as illegitimate children and prostitutes (Bauer 2017; Wolff 1986). They found themselves in continual conflict with conservative communities, some of whom were active in the field.

What took place in the first decades of the twentieth century on Polish soil gave the lie to the official international version of the history of sex education, which more or less went as follows: modern sex education for schools was born in Sweden and Great Britain in the 1940s and 1950s. As early as 1942, a special subject was introduced at Swedish primary schools that treated sex as an autonomous sphere. Shortly afterwards, it was in Great Britain that the first sexual education handbook was produced (Chomczyńska-Miliszkievicz 2002). The Swedish example is often idealized. Yet research undertaken in 2007 on how sex education is managed in this country shows that teachers often feel embarrassed when talking with pupils about sex and as many as 90 per cent feel insufficiently prepared to give classes on this subject (Zimmerman 2015: 4).

By contrast, in the United States in the 1930s, Alfred Kinsey, the author of the famous reports, not only taught his students biology, but also ran a premarital course for them. However, he was unable to find any coursebook, or even book, that could furnish him with the information he needed to answer his students' questions (Irvine 2005: 19). This prompted him to observe prostitutes at work, as he believed that this was the only way at the time to learn anything about sex (observation was used by Kurkiewicz at the end of the nineteenth century). A few years later, he sent out pollsters to question Americans about their sex lives, and his reports formed the basis of knowledge of this sphere of life for decades. If Kinsey had been able to read Polish, he could have

referred to *Życie Świadome* (*Conscious Living*) (a *Literary News* supplement) or Krzywicka's novel *Pierwsza krew* (*The First Blood*), in which she discussed puberty issues and the rigours of sexual and married life.

Equally interesting developments occurred later. Following the war and the period of Stalinist stagnation, the Society for Conscious Motherhood came into being. In 1971, it changed its name to the Family Planning Association and, eight years later, to the Society for Family Development (throughout this book, this organization is referred to as the Planned Parenthood Association). It adopted Boy-Żeleński as its patron to highlight its prewar pedigree. Mikołaj Kozakiewicz, who headed the Association for many years, took care to ensure that the 'activists', as they were called in those days, received a rounded education. Training sessions were organized both within and outside Poland (in Eastern Bloc countries, mainly in Czechoslovakia) and coursebooks were published for schoolteachers (see also Ignaciuk 2019; Kuźma-Markowska 2013). Apart from this, according to Izdebski, who later became Chairman of the Planned Parenthood Association, Kozakiewicz was a person of dialogue. Despite representing a secular institution that by and large implemented the policies of the authorities, he attempted – with varying degrees of success – to reach agreement with the Church. He and other people from the Planned Parenthood Association took the opportunity to publish in Catholic magazines and co-publish books with Catholic authors, such as *Pro i contra w planowaniu rodziny, w wychowaniu seksualnym* (*Pro and Contra in Family Planning and Sex Education*), published in 1989. Unfortunately, this dialogue failed to survive the political disputes over sex in postsocialist Poland.

Doctors, psychologists and educators affiliated to the Association regularly discussed sexuality at walk-in clinics (and also over the telephone and through written correspondence), in the press and at schools, initially during hygiene classes. *Radar*, a magazine that arrived in the wake of the Thaw, published *Szkoła miłości* (*The School of Love*) in instalments. The young doctor Michalina Wiśłocka roamed towns and villages giving lectures about family planning and how to live as a couple, provoking a number of scandals. In an interview given to Darek Zaborek shortly before she died, she recalled:

This was in the fifties, a village club just outside Warsaw. They invited me and Professor Lesiński. I was saying have as many children as needed: use coitus interruptus or condoms. Those who attended were naysayers and wanted to shower us with the rotten muck they'd prepared beforehand. Professor Lesiński, who was very loyal to the party, and the Union of Polish Youth functionaries who had invited us, led us out through the back exit, because there would have been a scandal. (Wiśłocka 2004)

This activism lasted a while longer. But by the late 1960s and early 1970s, the systematic development of sexology with an educational dimension had begun. During this period, sexologists began to regularly publish in the press, notably Kazimierz Imieliński and, soon afterwards, the recently qualified doctor Zbigniew Lew-Starowicz in the student magazine *Id* (*Etc*) and Wisłocka in *Perspektywy* (*Perspectives*). Gradually, the list of periodicals with a regular sex column lengthened. These included *Zwierciadło* (*The Mirror*), which was published by the Polish Women's League, the *Tygodnik Kulturalny* (*Cultural Weekly*), which was addressed to rural communities, the youth magazine *Razem* (*Together*), the scouting magazine *Na Przełaj* (*Cross-Country*) and *Jestem* (*I'm Here*), which was published by the Red Cross. These were filled with answers given by physicians and psychologists to readers' letters.

Numerous handbooks for young people were also published. The most notable of these were *O dziewczętach dla dziewcząt* (*About Girls for Girls*), written by Wanda Kobyłecka and Andrzej Jaczewski (the first edition came out in 1967), and Jaczewski and Jerzy Żmijewski's *Książka dla chłopów* (*Book for Boys*), beautifully illustrated by Bohdan Butenko, which was published under this title in 1973 (and earlier, in 1964 and 1967, as *Między nami mężczyznami* (*Between Us Men*)), but there were also lesser-known works, such as Janusz Łopuski's *Co chce wiedzieć każdy chłopiec* (*What Every Boy Wants to Know*) (first edition 1957), Michałaj Kozakiewicz's *Zanim staniecie się kobietami* (*Before You Become Women*) (first edition 1970) or Jadwiga Beaupré's *Dziewczęce sprawy* (*Girl Stuff*), published in 1966. All these books (except the last one) went through multiple editions and many print runs, with around 100,000 copies being printed for each of the first two (for example, 90,000 copies for the 1981 edition of *About Girls for Girls* and 120,000 for the 1973 edition of *Book for Boys*). By comparison, the 60,000 printed copies of *Girl Stuff* would appear to be a poor return. Apart from the above, puberty issues were also discussed in handbooks for adults. Michalina Wisłocka devoted a great deal of space to such issues in *Sztuka kochania* (*The Art of Love*) (first edition 1978) – by far the most popular Polish book on sex (it is estimated to have sold a total of 7 million copies). What all of these books have in common is that they directly address their readers' needs. Their authors refer to issues raised at meetings and schools, in letters and at clinics. Some of them are even almost entirely (Kozakiewicz's book) or at least partially (both of Jaczewski's books) presented in question-and-answer form.

The educational merits of this endeavour are incontestable. But there is also another dimension to such an approach. It was at this precise point when specialists started engaging in a dialogue with their reader-

ship that globally unique Polish sexology was forged. It was created by Kazimierz Imieliński, who believed in sexual science's interdisciplinarity and that it could only be understood by taking account of cultural, social and psychological conditions (Kościańska 2014). This was in stark contrast to North America's leading sexologists William Masters and Virginia Johnson, who shut volunteers inside a laboratory, connected them up to various apparatus and observed how their bodies responded to stimulation, effectively isolating sex from any social context (Irvine 2005; Tiefer 2001: 75–82). Polish sexology scholars also differed from their Russian or Czechoslovakian counterparts, who focused on describing the pathology (Healey 2009) and the creation of facilities for 'delinquents', or sexually degenerate young people, as sexologists based in these countries referred to them (Lišková 2016a). Since Polish physicians were in continuous dialogue with their patients, they were dealing with people of flesh and blood who were involved in various relationships, were turning to them for advice, which was not always medical, and wished to share their reflections. On the basis of such knowledge, the Association's sexologist-activists were able to create programmes of instruction, write books and articles, and prepare lectures. This dialogism, at least theoretically, entered schools when, in 1969/1970, education in intimate matters finally became a formal curriculum requirement. At primary schools, sexuality was taught in biology and Polish classes and during form periods, while high schools introduced it into biology and hygiene classes. These classes focused not only on anatomical structure, but also on the family, married life and parenthood.

A few years later, in 1973, a pilot subject titled 'Preparing for Life in a Socialist Family' was trialled at schools. In 1975, this subject was adopted permanently and a curriculum was created for it. It lasted until 1981, at which point the subject was transformed into twelve classes a year to be offered at primary schools to classes of between five and eight during form periods, as well as at all other higher-level schools. From 1986, these classes became compulsory and a new, more progressive programme was introduced (Chomczyńska-Miliszkiwicz 2002; Lišková, Jarska and Szegedi 2019; Wojewódzka Rada Postępu 1987).

How did this programme work in practice? What was taught in socialist Poland and how was it taught?

The programme implemented from 1975 to 1985 appears to have been extremely progressive. The authors postulated that it could only be successfully put into practice by fully applying 'the principle of treating each pupil on equal terms' (Ministerstwo Oświaty i Wychowania 1975: 32). This method was reasonably familiar, as Miklaszewski (1906a, 1906b) had favoured it earlier. The programme creators encour-

aged young people to participate ‘in planning and preparatory activities needed to complete the classes’ (Ministerstwo Oświaty i Wychowania 1975: 32). Furthermore, this focus on treating pupils on equal terms was expressed through ‘young people participating in the choice of themed topics to be covered in classes’ (1975: 32). This mechanism was similar to that operating in the sex columns: learners, much like letter writers, were meant to set the tone for the instruction process. They were encouraged to participate in class discussions, report on what they had read and conduct interviews.

Class interaction was imagined as follows: ‘The principle of treating pupils on equal terms implies the need to preserve and maintain friendly interpersonal relations between teacher and learner based on trust and mutual respect’ (Ministerstwo Oświaty i Wychowania 1975: 33). And such relations enable ‘the honest and open exchange of views, opinions and appraisals in the classroom, young people’s active participation in lessons and the awakening of respect for independent thinking and self-evaluation’ (1975: 33). They also make it impossible for one person’s views to be imposed on others or ‘a learner to be targeted for his/her personal views in the event of that learner being neglectful or misbehaving’ (1975: 33). This was supposed to facilitate the complete internalization of proper attitudes. This was explained as follows: ‘The process of adopting and reinforcing ideological-moral views is accelerated by the fact that these opinions are shared by the community, and especially those groups whose company the individual values the most – classmates and friends, youth organizations, clubs, etc.’ (1975: 33). This community exerted peer pressure. The aim of this subject was therefore for young people to adopt certain positions, which they were expected to arrive at under teacher supervision. But what exactly were these positions? The authors of this curriculum perceived the adoption of family life as an objective that served to ‘develop the basis for a scientific worldview and pave the way to a correct understanding of the socialist norms of community’ (1975: 3). They also cite a parliamentary resolution dating from 1973 titled *On the Tasks of the Nation and State Pertaining to the Education of Youth and Their Participation in the Construction of Socialist Poland*, which mentioned the shaping of such attributes as ‘integrity of character, reliability, courage of conviction and independent thinking, social sensitivity and respect for one’s elders, ... responsibility for oneself and others, a sense of one’s own dignity and respect for the dignity of others’ (quoted in Ministerstwo Oświaty i Wychowania 1975: 3). They called for egalitarianism within marriage and for families to be open to cooperation with their local communities, namely their social, cultural and political contacts.

The curriculum gets straight to the point: ‘Sexual problems and accompanying issues of a psychological, ideological, health-related or legal nature are extremely significant problems from a social point of view that are, at the same time, vividly experienced by youth’ (1975: 4). For young people, marriage is still a long way off, but sexuality is a pressing issue relating to the here and now, so schools certainly cannot sidestep this issue.

The new curriculum developed in 1984 by, among others, Sokoluk arrived at schools two years later. It was largely based on the same assumptions as the previous one, underlining the importance of discussion and relating educational content to experience and observation. However, it envisioned much more matter-of-fact discussions about sexual issues. It tackled issues such as ‘adolescent sexual relations, their nature and moral assessment’ (Ministerstwo Oświaty i Wychowania 1986: 4), ‘sexual activity within adolescent relationships’ (1986: 5), sexual initiation, ‘responsibility towards a partner arising from the crossing of successive “boundaries of intimacy” and ‘birth control’ (1986: 5).

The official line was contrasted with the Catholic approach, which to some extent was also present at schools. The religious perspective is strongly represented, for example, in a teachers’ handbook published in 1987 by the Teaching Training Institute in Bielsko-Biała. It can be read there that girls should learn about their fertility and the kind of love that leads to starting a family – fondling and kissing only do harm when it comes to love. Boys need to learn self-control. According to this publication, ‘the sexual act relies on willpower’ (Wojewódzka Rada Postępu 1987: 89). It is also recommended that young people create a poster about the unborn child’s right to life (1987: 95).

In practice, things sometimes did not quite go to plan. For example, as a high school student in Żary, a town in western Poland, Zbigniew Izdebski – who is currently Head of Postgraduate Studies in Sex Education at the University of Warsaw – had things relatively good. His class was one of the first to incorporate the ‘Preparing for Life in a Socialist Family’ subject into the curriculum. Nothing was said about socialism. Instead, the pupils in his group used to discuss Julian Godlewski’s *Życie płciowe człowieka* (*Human Sex Life*, 1969), an important medical textbook. When Izdebski started working as a teacher, following his graduation at the end of the 1970s, at a local complex of motor vehicle engineering schools, he also tried to teach the issue seriously. He was shocked by the reality he encountered in class. His pupils were not interested in subjects such as comradeship or friendship. They wanted to talk about sex – about masturbation, dealing with girls, what had happened at the disco and their fears about their approaching military

service ('How will I survive that time without women?'). They only knew vulgarisms, which often made things more difficult. The young teacher explained that a cultured, civilized person didn't speak that way and wrote out some synonyms on the board: 'chuj' (cock) was 'penis' or 'member'; 'pizda' (cunt) was 'vagina'. The emotions that must have accompanied these classes are best illustrated by a comment Izdebski made very recently – forty years later, it would be interesting to know what would have happened if 'the headteacher had walked into the class at that very moment'.

However, sex education usually turned out badly, both at school and in the home. At the beginning of the 1970s, Lew-Starowicz shared the following experiences while reflecting on young people's state of readiness for their sexual initiation: 'During a lecture I gave a couple of days ago to [fourteen-year-old] pupils, I discovered that only 3 per cent of parents had deigned to discuss sexual issues with their children at least once' (1971a: 14). The doctor points out a certain asymmetry to such adolescents' guardians' attitudes: 'They go easy on boys; the double ethics myth still widely persists that men should let off steam before marriage. In the event that their darling progeny gets himself into trouble, e.g. his girlfriend falls pregnant – it is of course her submissiveness and parents that are to blame' (1971a: 14). Girls are raised differently: 'They tend to be more cautious. As a rule, they attempt to popularize abstinence before marriage, but it's their arguments that are most interesting: "Men like it when women put up a resistance!" or "If you hold out until you get married, your husband will respect you"' (1971a: 14).

The research conducted in the late 1980s and early 1990s by the sexologist Maria Beisert among some students of the time (who were born at the beginning of the 1970s) confirmed Lew-Starowicz's observations that young people's parents were not discussing sex with them at home. One of the respondents, E.N., a twenty-year-old, recalled: 'My parents had conservative views. They cut drawings or text out of newspapers and magazines that appeared to them to be unsuitable. They regarded the interest that young or older children showed in their bodies, and in particular their sex organs, as indecent ... We were spanked as punishment for contravening bans' (Beisert 1991: 21). However, other guardians approached the matter differently. The slightly older S.P. said: 'At home, no issue was made out of parents or children being naked ... Our parents responded to all our questions relating to sexuality ... That this attitude is not the only one I first discovered, in quite painful circumstances, at kindergarten' (1991: 21). E.N.'s and S.P.'s parents represented the two extremes. The biographies Beisert collected of 142 students show that

most parents basically ignored the subject. They were more likely to say: 'That's not for you. Wait until you grow up' (1991: 24).

In this situation, schools could fill an important gap, but they were only pretending that they were actually doing anything. Lew-Starowicz reported:

When it comes to sexual issues, there's a conspiracy of silence, and the best thing [to do] is to invite an outside speaker; then, the joy is genuine as it can be boasted before the local education authority that the school was aware of modern-day needs and the school can gain peace of mind for itself – that a disagreeable 'job' has now been done. The speaker is presented with a document to sign and all is well for another year. I have many lectures at schools and I sometimes don't know who is happier to see me – the teachers or the young people. (Lew-Starowicz 1971a: 14)

The upshot of all this was that the matter of education was being dealt with by 'experienced' classmates with a hotchpotch of knowledge to pass on 'because that "experience" is either invented on the fly or an unsuccessful attempt to transmit curiosities heard from their elders' (1971a: 14). As a result, 'boys begin to move in circles where myths and stereotypes are usually laced with vulgarity. Meanwhile, girls' ears are filled with romantic fairy tales or apocalyptic visions of the suffering of defloration' (1971a: 14). Lew-Starowicz laid things bare – education was a must:

If we want to counter the effects of the wave of pornography and sexual or moral pathology, we need to shake up the lethargic and oblivious parents, youth activists and all the others involved with young people. The scourge of venereal diseases, infantilism, alcoholism and sexual pathology is an alarm call proving that this problem, rather than being marginal, is now much more widespread. (1971a: 14)

He called for schools, parents, the media and social organizations to cooperate on the provision of sex education that should incorporate the following issues:

1. Knowledge of eroticism (the psychophysiology of sexuality, gender psychology, sexual needs, sex determinants, the significance of the sexual act, the evolution of love in stages, sexual ethics, etc.).
2. Developing the correct motivations for sexual behaviour (intercourse only within the bounds of mature love, mutual understanding and friendship for the purpose of deepening and developing love. The

sexual act [perceived] as entering the integral world of another person's personality while maintaining an attitude of respect and responsibility).

3. Developing sexual self-restraint in the name of the interests of more remote goals (marriage, personal development, social tasks).

4. Fertility regulation (recognizing the fertile and infertile days [of the menstrual cycle], pregnancy physiology and prevention, a sense of responsibility for unplanned motherhood, the value of parenting).

5. Integral education (towards a whole and harmonized personality). (1971a: 14)

Young People Write to Sexologists

Inexplicable changes in the body, menstruation, nocturnal emissions, erections, first love, fear of unwanted pregnancy, conflicts with adults, complicated and intense peer relationships, and, finally, the discovery of gender, class and sometimes ethnic differences – these were, and still are, some of young people's primary preoccupations. Irena Krzywicka, the leading sex educator between the wars, recalled in *Wyznania gorszycielki* (*Confessions of a Debaucheres*) (1998) that it was only at school that she came to understand that she was Jewish.

And all this was often happening in conditions that have long been completely forgotten: overcrowded tenements with outside toilets and no running water, squalid boarding houses and compulsory military service. Yet little has changed in some respects: schools were failing through lack of understanding on the part of teachers and ever-present violence, only some of which was verbal, and perpetually overworked parents.

Elżbieta Jackiewiczowa, a writer and educator associated for many years with both the popular girls' magazine *Filipinka* and the scouting magazine *Cross-Country* who used the pseudonymous Ewa, published in 1961 some of the letters that had been received by the editorial team in the form of a book presenting teenagers' afflictions. Jackiewiczowa summarizes their concerns as 'What is happening to us?' (1961: 11–15) and appeals to parents and teachers to really listen to them. They are no longer children because they have learned to recognize the taste of bitter love. They do not know what they are doing, are not in control of the feelings and are struggling to deal with reality.

The first affliction is forbidden love, impossible and hopeless, namely worshipping of teachers, especially female ones. Jackiewiczowa protects

the letter writers' anonymity by referring to all the girls as Ania and all the boys as Tadek. One of these Ania's, aged thirteen, writes: 'A year ago, I fell in love with a young female teacher' (1961: 15). However, that teacher – despite liking Ania – got married and moved away. 'At first, I really missed her, but now a year has gone by and the madness has passed' (1961: 15). And then, a new teacher, also young, appeared. 'So long as "that one" was still around, I lived with "this one" as a friend. And she was always nice to me. But when "that one" left, I understood that I only love Miss Lucyna' (1961: 15). The girl speaks of her teacher as follows:

She's always keeping me in a state of suspense. Sometimes I think that she really likes me and at other times, that she hates me. Why does she torment me like this? She doesn't go out and say: 'I hate you, don't think about me, get out of my sight'. She prefers to say that she likes me, then acts in a way that goes against her words. (1961: 15–16)

This is followed by a dramatic appeal for help: 'I'm begging you, Ewa, don't keep me in suspense' (1961: 16). She prefers the worst-case scenario to being left in a state of uncertainty, so asks: 'Write whether she loves me or hates me' (1961: 16).

Girls also sighed over male teachers: 'I'm a seventh-grade pupil', another Ania writes (1961: 17). A young teacher has taken over her class. The author of this letter is 'simply captivated by him': '[he's] gorgeous, smart, his eyebrows are so gorgeous' (1961: 17). The correspondent melts with admiration: 'His lips are so gorgeous that I could just run up to him and lunge at his neck and kiss him, kiss him without ever stopping' (1961: 17). Unfortunately, seventh grade is coming to an end: 'Now I'll never hear another word from him. And that's a blessing – for love, as I won't get any more attention from him. Very often that makes me cry' (1961: 17). She goes on to generalize her problems. The main source of these, as it turns out, is not this respectable teacher, who fortunately remains indifferent to this adolescent's affections:

Anyhow, nobody is ever able to love me, so why should he? The other thing is that I have such an ugly name: Maryla. I would like to be called Elwira, Ada, Anita, Kalina or Liliana. Ewa, I'm not able to describe to you what I feel towards him, how I love him, how very desperate I am. I know that I am very, very foolish, but I'm waiting for your response, please make it as quick as possible. (1961: 17)

Being in love with a peer could hurt even more. As chance would have it, another Ania was walking around 'in a stupor': 'I was at Mum's

office and this boy had just come in' (1961: 19). And it began: 'Since then, he has always nodded at me. He's very handsome and should have many female admirers. Where we live, every handsome boy is basically being torn to shreds. But he's not going out with anyone' (1961: 19). The correspondent explains why by painting a picture of the predilections of young people of the 1950s and 1960s: 'Because he wears a school cap, an ordinary school cap. He goes around in an anorak and wide trousers. Girls prefer boys in tight trousers and short coats (black ones, of course)' (1961: 19). Ania goes to the cinema. When she is returning, she meets him on the tram. In fact, 'meets' is saying too much: 'I always ride the tram near the driver, he rides on the rear platform' (1961: 19). The only contact they have is her 'goodnight', spoken as she disembarks, and the gaze he fixed on her when he was left behind in the carriage. Nothing else besides. The teenager explains 'I didn't speak to him' (1961: 19), but when she returns and he is nowhere to be seen, she wants to cry. Her head is awash with conflicting emotions: 'I like him, but sometimes I hate him' (1961: 20). Nonetheless, she writes: 'When I went home in the evening and He wasn't by my side, it seemed that I'd rather take one across the face from Dad (my Dad slaps me across the face and head for nothing) if only I could at least see Him' (1961: 20).

Usually, however, something actually happened between peers. Another Ania confesses: 'I met him at my cousin's wedding. He was playing the drums. Immediately, I noticed that he was following me with his eyes. I wasn't particularly bothered. Up until then, I'd made light work of amorous guys' (1961: 18). When she left the wedding hall for a moment, he ran out after her, then did the same again. In the end, she started to pay attention to him: 'We were drinking wine from the same glass' (1961: 18), she confides. It was only with her that he would dance – 'he was telling me he loved me' (1961: 18). And it happened. 'That day, the twenty-third of August, was the last night of summer. It was still light, warm. Then I said "yes" and he kissed me for the first time in my life, smack on my lips' (1961: 18). And that's how it ended. 'I saw him again later, he greeted me, and I fled' (1961: 18). Yet she remembers, in fact, her body remembers, and the desire lingers on:

I had never thought that being kissed by a boy was such bliss and it was so painful when he is no longer to be seen. I'm trying now to study and read as much as possible to take it off my mind. I don't love him, but there's this indescribable, burning sensation. I know he's this Don Juan, an ass, a hooligan, a dunce – and I know that he kissed me. (1961: 18)

And then comes the self-reflection: 'It's so hard for me. Because it was actually me who turned him way. Maybe that's for the best. Let me

know what you think, Ewa' (1961: 18). She shoulders the editorial team with quite some responsibility: 'I happen to have some potassium cyanide. A few times already, I've been wondering whether I should use it. Maybe, then, it would end ... What should I do? Poison myself? Study? Approach him, talk things through and go out with him? Or something else?' (1961: 18–19).

Sometimes everything falls to pieces and the young girl simply doesn't know what is going on. She doesn't understand or accept her own behaviour and is unable to discuss it with anyone. The girls' magazine *Filipinka* is her last hope, as is the case here: 'I'm a ninth-grade student. Until recently, I enjoyed a good reputation among my teachers as a capable pupil. I was regarded as the best, that's not bragging at all. My home conditions are very good, I have peace and quiet, my own room, all the help I could wish for, etc.' (1961: 24). Her afternoons used to be filled with trips to the cinema and the theatre and walks. But all of this 'has changed over the last year' (1961: 24). It was then that she met a boy in his final year at technical college. 'I fancied him, and he me, and it began' (1961: 24). Then they fell out and she saw that she would be starved of his company. Along with this emotional void came bad grades. 'I wanted to study, but wasn't able to. I sat with my books for hours and rather than studying, I was thinking of him' (1961: 25), she writes. She received a fail for botany at the end of the semester. She was overcome with despair, heightened by her awareness that her father would feel embarrassed at the parents' evening. She couldn't stop crying and became unbearable. She gave up the violin, books, the cinema and the theatre. Male and female friends, her parents and her teachers began to grumble about her: "'He" did not want to get out of my head' (1961: 25). A sense of secrecy appeared: 'I used to confide in Mummy. Now, I don't have the courage to speak' (1961: 25). The teenager dreamed of the past. 'I'd like to return to the way things were in the past. To be myself again' (1961: 26). She concludes with a dramatic question: 'Is there no hope for me?' (1961: 26).

Besides passion, young people uncover class differences that theoretically did not exist in state socialist Poland. For example, a girl from 'a respectable home – the father is an engineer-technician' (1961: 28) fell in love with a painter and decorator's assistant who returned her feelings, but 'does not have a good reputation, he smokes cigarettes and gets up to mischief with the boys' (1961: 28). She harbours doubts over whether their love will last and what is going to happen when she finishes school in three years and goes to university, while he stays on to help the decorator. 'Then, it would turn out that I had wasted three years of his life' (1961: 28), she pronounces. She also thinks about her own future:

I'd like to have a cultured boy rather than a 'farmhand'. I want to live in the future with a person like me rather than one who is able to produce a bunch of kids and hand me a few zlotys, and get to work, woman! slaving over a hot stove and nappies like a chimney sweep. I want to be someone in life. To raise children as I was raised myself. (1961: 28)

Another girl writes about a female friend. Joanna told her mum, who did not like the look of her daughter's boyfriend: 'Give it a rest, mum! He's not a hoodlum, he's a decent boy. As far as you're concerned, tight trousers and a hair-do are enough to make anyone a hooligan' (1961: 29). However, a few months later, Joanna discovered that he wasn't called Marian at all; his actual name was Paweł and, to make matters worse, he was asking her every time they met: 'Do you love me? So where's the proof?' (1961: 29).

Another teenager who bemoans her fate to Ewa has been under her aunt's guardianship since the death of her mother. Her mother (who brought her up alone because her father was killed in the war) had a great deal of warmth in her, but her aunt merely demands that she follow her rules. She orders the girl to take up embroidery and deprives her of her bicycle, skates and the right to meet Tadek, who is a nonbeliever. Yet another teenager has fallen in love with a tuberculosis patient and doesn't know if he genuinely loves her or is toying with her and using his illness to take advantage of her (1961: 31–36).

Boys suffer too. Feelings affect them as well: 'I'm almost twenty. I'm working and preparing for my baccalaureate at the same time. Three years ago, when I was on holiday, I saw a beautiful girl who made a huge impression on me, and naturally, I fell in love with her at first sight' (1961: 49). He saw her again at the station when he was leaving. He looked at her, and she at him, but he didn't have the courage to approach her. He managed to get hold of her address. They began to write to each other. Three years later, he suggested that they meet. She invited him to her home. And some of her classmates also came by at the same time. 'After they left, I asked Ania if she had friendly relations with boys. She told me that of course she did, but she didn't single out any of them for special attention and there was nothing suspicious about having schoolmates. I was also of the same opinion, but ... After I returned, I confided in a friend' (1961: 42). This friend sowed doubts in his mind. He also asked if they had kissed – no, because Ania hadn't let him kiss her. This only means one thing: she's indifferent, his friend proclaimed. He encouraged him to break off the relationship. However, the letter writer professes to love Ania and does not know what to do: 'If a girl doesn't let someone kiss her, does that really mean that she's indifferent? Ewa, write back to me!' (1961: 42).

Another boy fell in love with his friend's girlfriend, even though he'd never spoken to her; when his friend's parents forced him to split up with her, she went through a phase when she was constantly on the lookout for brief sexual encounters, but in the end, she began going out with Tadek. Tadek was a bad sort, he drank vodka, she wanted to help him, to rescue him from his predicament: 'she was helping him study and going with him to the theatre. And she believed that she'd make a good person out of him' (1961: 43). In the end, Ania met the letter writer at a new year's party and he confessed his love for her in the early hours of the morning. Ania told him that she loved someone else, that Tadek. Nevertheless, she began seeing the letter writer and kissed him (only because she enjoyed kissing, he suspected). He wrote letters to her, but she was showing them to Tadek. In the end, it turned out that Ania had become pregnant. Tadek beat her so badly that she fainted. She had an abortion. She cried inconsolably. 'How sorry I feel for Ania! After all, she was such a good girl! What did he do to her? She has changed beyond recognition. I explain to her that she needs to finish with him, that she's torturing herself for no reason' (1961: 45). But he doesn't get the response he hopes for:

She says that she can't love me because she'd cheat on me with the others. Yet I still love her very much. I want her to be happy. I want to rescue her from this swamp because as things stand, she's only impressed by the likes of Tadek, who only keeps her for the sake of convenience. I'm very good to her, she's said that to me herself, but it doesn't change her behaviour. How can I repair the situation? What should I do? After all, this is awful. She's talking about suicide. She's going to die! (1961: 45)

When youthful love led to sex and the difficulties associated with it, young people generally preferred to write to a sexologist, such as Zbigniew Lew-Starowicz, who collected the most interesting and representative letters in a book:

Jola: I met my boyfriend when I was still in sixth grade [thirteen years old]. We went out together for two years, we made a good couple, but did have our differences. I thought that we'd manage to survive the difficult moments and I wanted to be together. We ended up having intercourse together, I was fifteen then. I gave in to his strong encouragement. (Lew-Starowicz 1989a: 61)

This sex brought sad consequences. He became indifferent and told everything to all his friends. She broke up with him. Fortunately, she had not become pregnant.

Antoni, a fifteen-year-old second-year technical college student, asks about issues that are bothering him: 'Often, when I am close to a girl physically (but not having sex), my member becomes erect and then I ejaculate' (1989a: 62). But that wasn't all: 'Also, often when I see a young woman, I can't help classifying her physical qualities in my mind. When it comes to girls, I am only interested in eroticism and sexual intercourse' (1989a: 62).

Klaudia begins as follows: 'I'm fourteen and I'm still not sure if I did the right thing when I was with my boyfriend' (1989a: 63). His parents left, so Klaudia was alone with him in his home. They were drinking alcohol. She undressed to her underwear and he – despite her protests – pulled down her bra. 'He was kissing my breasts so passionately that both of us became breathless, we were cuddled up to each other very tight' (1989a: 64). They also became breathless as his kisses became more passionate and purposeful. Klaudia hit her boyfriend in the face, got dressed and left. Later, he apologized 'and we're still going out' (1989: 64), but the girl is wondering why he acted that way and whether she did the right thing. She also asks: 'If both of us want intercourse, should I take off all my clothes myself? And should I lie on my back or my belly?' (1989: 65).

Nikodem is in a quandary over the size of his member: 'My penis in its normal state is so shrivelled that it resembles the penis of boy of a few years old in size. During an erection, its size doesn't change much and its dimensions are 7 cm in length and 2.5 cm in diameter' (1989a: 67).

Twenty-three-year-old Magda is bemoaning the fact that since she started having sex (four years ago), she has not had a single orgasm during sex. This does not mean that she is not interested in sex; on the contrary:

I should explain that before [I had sex], I had very rich auto-erotic experiences because I was pleasuring myself since I was ten years old. I am highly sexed and very easily aroused and sex has never been something I had no particular interest in. Now I masturbate as well because this is the only way I can satisfy myself. (1989a: 81)

She tried having sex with another boy, 'but it was exactly the same, even worse' (1989a: 81). 'I told my partner that I'd only have a clitoral orgasm. Time and again, he's tried to satisfy me, but with no effect, because over many years of masturbation, I've developed a very precise "code" of visual and physical stimuli' (1989a: 82). Consequently, he is unable to satisfy her: 'I've lost interest in sex' (1989a: 82).

Marian worries about his relationship: 'Recently, I experienced an uncomfortable feeling when my girlfriend said that she's unable to kiss' (1989a: 68).

And Ewa from Bydgoszcz (nineteen years old) tells her story as – she writes – a warning: 'While I was completing primary school, I lived in the countryside. Wishing to continue my studies, I chose one of Bydgoszcz's vocational schools with a dormitory.' She was fifteen at the time: 'I shared a room with two older classmates who hadn't made it through to the next grade. The classmates knew each other well. After all, they'd been living together. They didn't feel awkward in front of me at all because the very next day, they were walking around the room naked and they spent the evening masturbating' (1989a: 82). At the time, masturbation was an unfamiliar practice to Ewa. 'But by the third day I was walking around naked with them and in the evening, I tried masturbating. I didn't like it at all, but the next day, I was itching to try again. Well, that's how it started!' (1989a: 83). One of the girls had had sex with a boy. Ewa wanted to try this as well – first with one, then another, until she started taking money for it and lost her place at the school. 'I think I'm going to improve myself and quit this awful profession and get down to finding a respectable job, though that will be difficult' (1989a: 83).

To See a Moose, or Responding to the Dilemmas of Pubescent Girls and Boys

What did educators have to say about these ailments? The two most important state socialist-era books for young people naturally take up the challenge. Even though girls and boys reported similar problems, the authors of these books make a clear division between their worlds, hence the titles *About Girls for Girls* and *Book for Boys*. These authors make an effort to meet the needs of young people, but give very cautious responses, as is typical, in fact, of counselling during the first decades of state socialism (Szpakowska 2003: 73–82).

Jaczewski and Żmijewski devote a great deal of space in the *Book for Boys* to discussing the dramatic changes in the bodies of pubescents. But they consider the fundamental component of changes affecting teenagers to be the criticism they direct at their parents and the world at large. They warn that 'such an attitude towards one's surroundings causes continual conflicts' (1973: 56). They employ a scouting story to make their point. The protagonists are a scout called Tomek and his father, 'an experienced tourist' and 'a wise man' (1973: 57). Jaczewski observes

their relationship: 'They were spending their holidays on a hiking trips, often in the mountains, and Tomek knew that his father was very familiar with the tourist regulations' (1973: 57). Initially, the main protagonist values his father's advice and takes advantage of his experience in a newly created troop that 'was led by a boy not much older than Tomek and his peers' (1973: 57). Scouting gives the boys an opportunity to 'go camping, cook over an open fire, spit-roast and spend the night by the campfire' (1973: 57). Tomek becomes increasingly critical of his father, arguing with him, and 'the form of the comments he directed at his father was increasingly inappropriate' (1973: 57). Yet: 'When the boys went on excursions, Tomek threw in comments about what his father did in similar situations. Until the group leader finally lost his patience and said "You father is old; that's how it used to be done. Now, it's done differently"' (1973: 58). Tomek stops talking about his father.

One day, the troop visits the Kampinos forest to 'see' moose. Tomek returns home the next day really hungry, apparently satisfied with the trip, but he didn't see any moose because they arrived too late and didn't even reach their intended destination. Nobody had checked when the bus departed and the food was tasteless because nobody had taken any salt ('But they did have a lot of pork fat, which melted in the heat' (1973: 58)). Jaczewski concludes: 'One didn't need to be a great tourist to gather: it was a pretty lame trip' (1973: 59). His father doesn't omit to mention this, arguing that everything should have been planned and checked in advance. Tomek becomes indignant: 'Who said the trip hadn't worked out? As his father says, old-timers go on trips. But, for him, that particular trip had had its appeal. At the end of the day, he would have ample opportunity in the future to see moose' (1973: 60). His father takes offence and tells his son that he is being foolish. The intergenerational conflict and emotions of a boy going through puberty are governed by their own logic – at the earliest opportunity, the main character lays into his friends, telling them it was a lame trip, 'one big improvisation' (1973: 60), and that such things need to be planned. Tomek, concludes Jaczewski, 'is an example of a boy searching for the truth', but 'during this quest, he quarrels with everyone' (1973: 61).

Ewa, Tomek's female counterpart in *About Girls for Girls* (Kobytecka and Jaczewski 1981), behaves differently – rather than being critical, she is emotional. She breaks into laughter for no apparent reason at the most inopportune moments. Her parents don't allow her to go on a trip (though there's no moose-stalking involved). This leads her to rebel and run away from home. The authors caution: 'She wandered and roamed.

Ever more rebellious, ever more resentful. She ends up with “friends”, who give her a “helping” hand. It ends up in court. A year of the girl’s education went to waste, then another one. For a long time, she couldn’t shake herself free of her adventures and experiences and [new] commitments’ (1981: 49).

About Girls for Girls is more than a book about the dangers lurking for teenage girls. Young women could find answers in it to many of the issues that were troubling them. Kobylecka and Jaczewski say: everything is normal – this is basically what puberty involves. They explain what happens at this time in the hormonal and nervous systems, how girls’ internal organs change, how we grow and what premenstrual tension is. The text is accompanied by illustrations – for example, a drawing of the hormonal system as well as drawings of the reproductive organs, sperm and an egg cell. The authors describe what menstruation is and how readers should tend to their hygiene during this time, and explain that it is worth visiting a gynaecologist. They encourage them to observe their menstrual cycle and make notes. This enables them to plan trips in such a way that these do not coincide with their periods. Of course, such knowledge will turn out to be particularly important after the commencement of a regular sex life, though the authors do not give any details of this (1981: 23–31).

Kobylecka and Jaczewski emphasize that menstruation is not a disease, though girls should go a little easy on themselves at this time, wash frequently and use special ‘cotton wool or cellulose pads’ that – surely overly optimistic under state socialism – ‘can be bought in any pharmacy or drugstore’ (1981: 30). However, it was best to act with discretion: ‘it is not the done thing to make a public display of one’s “ailment”’. Menstruation is a personal and intimate thing’ (1981: 30). Yet how can this be achieved when women need to fight for the right to tend to their personal hygiene? ‘Because not everywhere in our country has high level sanitary culture; it is worth doing something to at least make it better in our personal environment. Consequently, it is worth mobilizing girls from the student government and Polish Red Cross club to ensure that special buckets with lids (so-called “plungers”), or at least baskets, appear in the school toilet – so that pads are not thrown into the toilet bowls and they do not get clogged’ (1981: 30).

The issue of trips to the forests makes a return. The boy scout in Jaczewski could not pass over another opportunity to preach to female tourists: ‘At summer camps, in latrines, a discarded pad should be covered thoroughly (and not sprinkled!) with sand. It reflects dreadfully on girls’ culture when the forest and bushes within the vicinity of scout

camp, camping sites or summer camps are scattered with – bloody pads’ (1981: 30).

There is no doubt that young people can learn a great deal about the puberty process from books. Nonetheless, the authors of these handbooks, the most popular of their time, make no attempt to address issues directly connected with sexuality – though it is clear from letters written to Lew-Starowicz that these were most definitely of concern to both sexes – and stop short of resolving problems arising from gender differences, as Miklaszewski (mentioned earlier in this chapter) emphasized. However, a very small number of exceptions to this rule can be found. Anna Lanota (the first editor-in-chief of *Przyjaciółka* (*Girlfriend*), the most popular women’s magazine under state socialism) and Irena Merżan (a kindergarten children specialist) wrote in a handbook for parents published in 1978 by the Planned Parenthood Association: ‘It is not right to restrict how a child can play on the basis of their gender. It is also not right to say that something is not becoming, purely because it has predominately been boys who have traditionally played that way’ (Lanota and Merżan 1978: 32). Citing Janusz Korczak, a progressive interwar educator and pioneering advocate of children’s rights, they appealed for girls to be liberated from what is ‘not becoming’. Moreover, in *What Every Boy Wants to Know*, Dr Janusz Łopuski rebuked men for mocking working women and harassing them: ‘Instead of bombarding them with unwanted advances, they should be shown courteous goodwill because they are colleagues and comrades for whom it is more difficult than for men to be stationed at the lathe or lay bricks. And if that work is more difficult for them, they should be accorded greater respect for the same work’ (1957: 41). Usually, however, gender issues were approached differently in state socialism-era books for young people. Male teenagers are critical and female ones are emotional. And when girls become reflexive and complain about inequality, authors respond ambiguously. ‘So much for equal rights! At our scout camps, only the girls have been cooking. Because you know best how to do it! – said the guide leader’ (Kobyłecka and Jaczewski 1981: 70). Kobyłecka and Jaczewski confess that they are ashamed of the guide leader: ‘As everybody knows, nobody so far has been born with the ability to cook. Yet everyone is born with a need to eat. Cooking is simply a skill that needs to be learned. Why shouldn’t boys be able to cook?’ (1981: 70). After all, some boys are chemists whose skills ‘could also be put to the test while cooking’ (1981: 70). They also emphasize that women are overworked and should have the right to recuperate. At the same time, the responsibility for changing this state of affairs is almost entirely borne by women:

The correct approach to gender equality issues largely depends on us, 'we' being:

- mothers who teach their sons how to do the housework,
- sisters who will make their dear brothers do basic, normal, daily chores,
- every girl or boy who devises something to make the housework easier or simpler or organize it properly. (1981: 70)

Real change did not come until the second half of the 1980s. A more literal-minded approach to sexual issues and emancipatory viewpoint on gender issues was taken by Wiesław Sokoluk, who, unlike Jaczewski, came from the younger generation of sex educators. In his booklet *Czy to już teraz? (Is It Time Already?)* he addresses girls and boys alike. This is how he defines puberty:

Puberty is, among other things, the development and preparation of the organism to perform its reproductive functions. But that's not all. Apart from the changes you observe in your body and signals that the reproductive system is beginning to function (periods in girls and nocturnal emissions in boys), puberty is associated with the appearance and sensation of new needs. What this primarily involves is a bond, that is, an emotional relationship with a person of the opposite sex and the need to relieve sexual tension. The latter is sometimes called a 'sex drive'. The appearance of such needs is a natural consequence of puberty. (Sokoluk 1987a: 4)

The author immediately expands on this: 'Each part of the system regulating sexual behaviour matures at an uneven pace. The reproductive system matures relatively early, but the mental regulation, unfortunately, matures quite late' (1987a: 4). This is due to gender differences: 'Boys tend to experience sexual tension quite intensely, even "acutely". However, girls experience it mildly or not at all. Their predominant needs are for affection, to be loved or adored and a desire to bestow affection on a close person. This does not of course mean that boys do not feel similar needs' (1987a: 4), as is perfectly clear from the earlier cited letters from 'Tadeks'. He emphasizes that this varies from individual to individual: 'Puberty's uneven nature also means that the earliest feelings tend to be fragile and transitory. Another problem is that every individual matures at their own personal pace and it is difficult to arbitrarily establish when each person will attain full psychosexual maturity' (1987a: 4), which is defined as follows: 'The ability to create lasting and deep emotional rela-

tionships in which both discussed needs constitute a whole' (1987a: 4) and this means 'Among other things, precisely that is the final outcome of development' (1987a: 4).

Maturity is a learning process. Sokoluk explains that during this time, relationships are unstable and it often appears as if we are 'madly in love' (1987a: 6), but rather than loving our partner, we are actually loving how we imagine him or her. However, 'despite this period not lasting long, these first attempts to be with another person can be a source of important experiences for you' (1987a: 6). Wanting them is enough:

You can learn what it means to be different from one another or how your partner or the opposite sex are different from you. You can also learn about and better understand needs that are different from your own, and so the opportunity presents itself for you to try giving up some of your own egotism, to not only 'take', but also 'give'. (1987a: 6)

The Handbook That Got Shredded

Young people finally received a full response to their dilemmas in 1987, when the grown-ups ultimately decided to publish a handbook on how to prepare for family life. 'The education system can be congratulated for its presence of mind', Ryszarda Moszczeńska (1987: 3), a *Życie Warszawy* (*Warsaw Life*) journalist, noted ironically in a review. She reports the book's dramatic history as follows: 'From the point at which the subject was introduced into schools to the publishing of this handbook, fourteen years have elapsed. Two months were enough time for its use to be suspended in schools, or rather for it to be withdrawn from bookshops, if any copies at all were still left there' (1987: 3). Moszczeńska does not write that for the first thirteen years, nobody even considered publishing such a handbook. It was created at a frantic pace. Reviews of it were coming in as soon as it was going to print. They were not very good at all, yet the print run for this version of the book still ran to half a million copies.

This controversy was provoked by a book co-authored by Sokoluk, Andziak and Trawińska (1987). What did the authors say – or, as a matter of fact, the main author, because most of the accusations were levelled at the part Sokoluk wrote about sex – for the book to not even last a single semester? The matters that they discussed were treated with due gravity. They did not make light of the material or sow fear; instead, they used language that was sometimes even excessively scientific yet also secular and neutral. It can be read there that: 'The woman already begins

feeling foetal movements from the sixteenth week' (1987: 9). Sokoluk does in fact speak of sex without going off on a lengthy tangent about moose expeditions. Instead, he provides detailed information about the physical and psychological development processes, anatomical structure, contraception, the physiology of intercourse and the intricacies of living with a partner and within a family environment. He takes a positive approach to sex. He talks about pleasure – a real watershed moment in youth counselling. There are also drawings of caressing, sexual positions (two), erogenous zones and illustrated instructions for using contraception: the handbook contains a detailed description of the sympto-thermal method and using mechanical methods (condoms, the diaphragm and others). The book's critics were united in their outrage at this section. The Catholic psychologist Maria Braun-Gałkowska wrote: 'I consider these illustrations improper, not because I think that the fact that during intercourse people take different positions is or should be a secret, but because life-like drawings have been reproduced in a book for fifteen-year-olds, which in addition is intended to be used in co-educational classes' (1987: 9).² To make matters worse, she continued, it may turn out that the drawings will not only provoke mirth or embarrassment, but will also be 'calmly and casually' studied like a map in a history textbook or diagrams of experiments in a physics textbook. This infringes upon what should remain intimate and robs sex of its aura of romanticism and love.

The book was born out of the Polish sexological tradition. The authors situate sexuality within its social, cultural, familial and psychological context. In many respects, they not only make use of Polish sexology's accomplishments to date, but also surpass them – especially in Sokoluk's case. At the time, sexology for adults – much like *About Girls for Girls* – was replete with caveats against the emancipation of women: if this went too far, it could threaten existing models of a successful sex life. Lew-Starowicz wrote in 1983 in *Seks partnerski (Sex on Equal Terms)* that: 'There is a marked growth in sexual demands and expectations from women that are an indirect outcome of emancipation and sex education. This phenomenon is currently one of the most prevalent causes of sexual dysfunctions in men' (1983d: 334). Wiśłocka (1978: 76–77) advocated in *The Art of Love* that women should never directly say what they wanted or initiate intercourse, but should instead aim to become practitioners of 'female diplomacy' and make themselves sexually obtainable ('Under no circumstances should his pride be hurt, what is needed is a "feminine touch", for the destination to be reached by a roundabout route' (1978: 110)) because 'a man wants to be masterful, powerful, protective, absolutely indispensable to his chosen one and

always deserving of her admiration'. Only one conclusion can be drawn from this: 'You can be educated, you can work in science, you can be a professional, or you might be an activist, but at home and in love, a woman must be a woman and a man a man if they want to live a full life, avoiding disappointments and complexes' (1978: 91).³

The handbook's authors treat gender equality seriously, both in terms of the language they use (they employ gender-specific verb forms to address girls or boys) and content. They grant women the full complement of sexual rights rather than adding the various 'ifs and buts' familiar from other publications. They state, for example, that 'the moral evaluation of sexual behaviour should be absolutely the same for both sexes'⁴ (Sokoluk, Andziak and Trawińska 1987: 165). Years later, Sokoluk shrugged this off, claiming that rather than supporting feminism here, he was simply showing the respect for women his Silesian home had inspired in him. It is impossible not to notice that a great deal of thought went into this aspect of the book. Another aspect of its approach to equality is the manner in which it treats sexual orientation. Sokoluk does not regard sex between people of the same gender as a disease. He gives priority to heterosexual relationships, but it needs to be remembered that in the 1980s, homosexuality held a permanent place on the World Health Organization's list of mental illnesses. Finally, and fundamentally, the handbook treats pupils on equal terms. Young people not only receive detailed knowledge about the sexual aspect of their lives, but also tools enabling them to be reflexive and take independent decisions.

It was the handbook's emphasis on students' independence and its openness to sexual issues that moralists found impossible to swallow. They came to the unanimous opinion that the book was an assault on Poland's youth. Why did the handbook not offer clear (Catholic) prescriptions? What were the implications of young people reflecting on such issues by searching their consciences? Surely, they did not have enough knowledge and experience to do this. Evidently, the handbook's critics had completely forgotten that according to the law, fifteen year olds could have sex and girls a year older could get married. Were they really not reading in the press the letters that boys and girls from the entire country had been sending to sexologists?

Bogusław Jeznach was the first to give voice to these objections in a review bearing the poetic title 'The Handbook of Masturbation and Defloration'. This supporter of National Democracy (a nationalistic and xenophobic political party active in the interwar period) wrote the following in the Catholic daily *Słowo Powszechne* (*The Universal Word*): 'It cannot be said that Sokoluk encourages our children to engage in

intercourse without any safeguards whatsoever. Here and there, he interjects various offhand and worn-out clichés about culture, hygiene, discretion, and especially about reason' (1987: 7).⁵ Jeznach quotes the following passage of the book: 'A rational and deeply thought-out decision is a necessary precondition, yet it does not suffice to make this next joint experience a truly good beginning of a new phase in sexual activity' (Sokoluk, Andziak and Trawińska 1987: 195),⁶ only to ask: 'To whom is this appeal for this "rational and deeply thought-out decision" addressed? To fifteen-year-olds?' (Jeznach 1987: 7). Bolesław Suszka, another Catholic critic and dendrologist by education, does not pull any punches: 'The life experience of adolescent pupils is often negligible or one sided'⁸ (1987: 4).

Maria Braun-Gałkowska puts in her two cents, claiming that the book also encourages early sexual initiation in other ways. In her view, it argues that 'premarital relationships improve a person's non-sex-related performance and have a positive bearing on their general development as well as their future relationships' (1987: 10). To make matters worse, she thunders, sex is not only examined outside marriage, but also outside love. Her viewpoint is echoed by Bolesław Suszka, who perceives the book's anti-Catholic nature in its failure to condemn different forms of extramarital and recreational sex: 'Self-abuse and sexual relationships' are presented as 'stages in a boy or girl's development' leading to the 'complete "relief" of sexual tension' (1987: 6). All of this is accompanied by condemnation of the 'contraception instructions' (1987: 6).

Jeznach was particularly outraged by the claim that one's system of sexual values is formed on the basis of one's own experiences' (Sokoluk, Andziak and Trawińska 1987: 167) and that the decision to get married should not be taken too hastily. He concludes by not only questioning the prudence of pupils, but also the Ministry's prudence in commissioning a publication he labels as an 'unbalanced publishing prank' (Jeznach 1987: 7). Bishop Kazimierz Majdański (1987) adds in a pastoral letter written to mark the occasion that the publication of this prank coincided – surely not by chance? – with a pilgrimage by Pope John Paul II to his Polish homeland.

The next important point of contention is the book's portrayal of children and adolescents being autonomous, within limits, from their family – an inescapable consequence of treating them on equal terms. Braun-Gałkowska takes a dislike, for example, to how the handbook explains parents' unwillingness to accept that their children are having sex. This is presented as an outcome of 'a sense of threat resulting from the [fear that] they are losing an exclusive emotional bond [with their children]' (1987: 12) as well as various hardships encountered in

the parents' own lives. According to Braun-Gałkowska's interpretation, Sokoluk, Trawińska and Andziak are telling young people that there is no need for them to listen to their parents. Consequently, they are undermining these adults' authority: 'If their [parents'] argumentation results only from their own emotional difficulties, related to, for example, aging, there is no reason to take into account their perspective on other issues, such as patriotism, honesty, solid work, sobriety and other values which the older generation should try to convey to the younger.'⁹ The psychologist is also appalled that the authors inform young people about the Family and Guardianship Code and that various family issues can be taken to court. She concludes as follows: 'It is clear that there is nothing joyful or encouraging about the family (as opposed to premarital sexual activity)'¹⁰ (1987: 13).

Catholics of the time were unanimously demanding education based on Christian values that omitted contraception and sex before marriage. However, family and Catholic values were coming under fire, so Braun-Gałkowska discerns threats to civilization in the book: 'If the young people to whom [the handbook] is addressed adopt the Author's suggestions, they will morally regress back to the most primitive level' (1987: 7). Her sentiments are echoed by Suszka: 'These days, a particularly repulsive form of atheization is coming to prominence: through demoralization. The handbook is attacking the consciousness of the Nation's greatest treasure: our youth' (1987: 11). Braun-Gałkowska sums up as follows:

Of course, the handbook is not the first or only attempt at demoralizing the youth, but this has never occurred to such an extent, or on such a scale. Until recently, if a teen did not look for this sort of reading material directly, it would be hard to just come across. Parents could also, at least to some degree, maintain control over the books available at home. Now this reading material has been literally handed to ... all fifteen-year-olds, with the school's blessing and the approval of the Ministry of Education and Upbringing. (1987: 7)¹¹

The conclusion Braun-Gałkowska draws is unequivocal – the handbook should be withdrawn from schools: 'The book should be assessed as being extremely harmful due to its content and vast range of influence' (1987: 16). So great is the psychologist's determination that she even invokes the reviled Communist Constitution:

These effects are unlawful because encouraging young people to start their sexual lives, while undermining the parents' authority is not preparation for family living, but an act to its detriment, i.e. conduct contrary to what is prescribed in the Constitution, Article 79 of which says that

‘Marriage, motherhood and family are cared for and protected by the Polish People’s Republic’. (1987: 16)¹²

Some of the book’s critics, such as Suszka, claimed that the damage had already been done: ‘It is not difficult to predict the proliferation and growth of sexual neuroses, teen pregnancies, a new wave of sexually transmitted diseases ... the killing of unborn babies still developing in the wombs of young girls, themselves still almost children, in secret, or worse, under pressure from their own parents’ (1987: 12).¹³

In Braun-Gałkowska’s view, despite appearances, it was not in fact too late: ‘Opinions proclaiming that there is no point [in taking action] because the harm has already been done are beside the point because though it is true that the handbook has already been given to young people, its withdrawal from school under the influence of public opinion would serve as proof that its theses are not acceptable’ (1987: 16). There was one thing on which all the book’s critics were in agreement: it had to be opposed. As Suszka put it, ‘the stakes are high’ (1987: 12), for it was the Nation that was under attack.

As Andrzej Jaczewski recalls, Braun-Gałkowska was not alone in her demands: ‘There was a such a wave of accusations about the demoralizing impact the book was having as well as attacks – even from pulpits – that the authorities fell into a panic and withdrew the book’ (Jaczewski 2014: 179–80).¹⁴ Even the Planned Parenthood Association made no attempt to defend the book’s authors. The Association’s activists claimed that the book was too progressive and anti-Catholic. For example, Michalina Wiśłocka (a Lutheran by confession) said in an interview given to *Sztandar Młodych* (*Youth Banner*):

In writing such a book, it is necessary to take into account that violating these rules will result in a sea of protest. Taboo topics are: premarital intercourse, contraception in all its varieties, and youth masturbation. I could be accused of criticizing the handbook for taking up matters that I did not care to ignore in my own book. But what is allowed the author in his own book, which anyone can read or reject at will, should be treated with immense care and prudence in a handbook that is obligatory reading for schoolchildren. And both parents and the Catholic Church, which has many followers in this country, should be taken into consideration. (Wiśłocka 1987)¹⁵

At the same time, she emphasized that the book itself, including the part about erotic life, was very good. Her only other qualms were that the cover was too graphic (it should be emanating love rather than sex) and the language was too hermetic.

The language was also highlighted by the book's peer reviewers – they maintained that the guidebook was too serious, too long and readers would not understand it. Could the contentious issue of treating young people on equal terms be rearing its head again? Kozakiewicz and Jaczewski proposed that the book should be thoroughly re-edited and published as a handbook for teachers. The latter wrote that 'I feel sorry for pupils who would have to "struggle through" such content' and thought that a handbook written in such a way 'could have an adverse effect on the subject' (Jaczewski 1986: 1). Kozakiewicz cautioned against 'competing against Wiśłocka' (1986: 3), whose most popular Polish marriage manual gave very detailed instructions about sex (Wiśłocka 1978). He argued that: 'Giving instructions about a technique for breaking the hymen in a handbook for schools is also excessive' (Kozakiewicz 1986: 3). He sensed problems ahead and foretold 'an official protest from the Episcopate' (1986: 3) (which actually happened: a pastoral letter 'against demoralization' was read out in churches (Majdański 1987)). Another reviewer, Barbara Ochońska (1986) from the Teacher Training Centre, suggested that the handbook was suitable for high school students, but not for vocational schools, for whose students something more accessible should be prepared. A positive review was written by the educationalist Janina Maciaszkowa (1986), who proposed precise changes to fourteen pages of the typescript to improve the book. Apparently anticipating a negative response, she also urged greater caution towards the issue of sexual values.

However, there were also others who defended the publication. On the television programme *Daniel Passent and Guests*, the host – as journalist Aleksander Malak reported – threw his full support behind Sokoluk. However, his efforts were of little avail because Sokoluk, who suddenly found himself very much in the public eye, was not even attempting to defend himself by now. Malak tried to raise his spirits by seeking the viewpoint of 'those who are supposed to be using the book' (Malak 1987). The young people it was intended for, delighted and emboldened, gave their unanimous conclusion: 'The handbook – it's great it's out there and we'll make our own choice now. Ourselves!' (Malak 1987). This is confirmed by a *Kurier Lubelski* (*Lublin Herald*) poll, which was cited by the journalist Ryszarda Moszczeńska, another defender of Sokoluk: 'Pupils have read the handbook by now from cover to cover and they are "in favour" of it' (1987: 3). Parents and teachers were also 'in favour' of it because they had finally been given an important tool. The former 'felt they've been given a helping hand' (1987: 3). Moszczeńska counters the argument that the book is demoralizing and anti-Catholic by emphasizing that its authors make it clear that Ca-

tholicism has its own principles covering sexuality and go on to present them. But – as the journalist underlines – in Poland, in spite of many people (including young people) professing themselves to be Catholic, the age of sexual initiation is falling and divorces and other un-Catholic behaviour are taking place. ‘I doubt that this was all caused by a handbook introduced barely two months ago ... and what it is alleged to contain – an inducement to *faire l’amour*’ (1987: 3), she adds. And maybe reading it would even benefit adults.

True admiration for Sokoluk can be seen in the letters he received from young people. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, he was giving advice in the press (in *Cross-Country* and *I’m Here*) and in the Planned Parenthood Association’s Youth Counselling Centre. For example, a nineteen year old from Silesia wrote the following in a letter sent to him care of the *I’m Here* editorial team:

For a long time now, I’ve wanted to write to you, but I never did. I didn’t want anyone to know what I’m like. I read the book you co-authored (*Preparing for Family Life*) and your articles in *Cross-Country* as well. I like your writing style because first and foremost, you write for young people, you use normal language that’s not so academic or dry. Moving on from my admiration for you, I was reading *I’m Here* when I came across one of your articles again. I was very glad about this. I’d really like you to help me. (Letters to Wiesław Sokoluk)

When this letter and the others young people addressed to Sokoluk are read, it is clear that the book reviewers – like Kozakiewicz or Jaczewski – who thought that Sokoluk was using inappropriate language to address girls and boys had no idea what such young people expected. The author of this letter also gives the lie to Jeznach’s assessment. She is not interested in masturbation or defloration. Her problem is that she cannot find true love: ‘Sex is not love to me.’ For this reason, she had decided not to have sex or accept any other form of intimacy. Just once she allowed someone to hug her. Would this seeker of true feelings choose to write to Sokoluk, of all people, if he was really the kind of demoralizing influence that Jeznach portrays him as?

Apart from this, it was not only teenagers who Sokoluk inspired. Teachers at a high school medical academy in the Mazovia Region invited him on behalf of the young people who studied there (and probably in their own name as well) to visit the academy:

We are writing to you on behalf of the ‘Health Leaders’ group that was created this year in our school with a humble request ... The many topics the leaders are working on include health education for the young

women [under our care]. They have chosen you as a person with whom they would like to develop a certain understanding of sex education issues affecting young people so that they would be in a position to pass on information about certain issues at meetings held for their younger colleagues. (Letters to Wiesław Sokoluk)

Pupils at one Warsaw high school even wore badges emblazoned with the slogan ‘Give us back our handbook’ (quoted in Jaczewski 2014: 180). The authorities did not accede to their wishes. Never again would a Polish school decide to introduce such a progressive teaching aid. In postsocialist Poland, school education has been following the script written by Sokoluk’s fiercest critics.

Notes

1. Unless otherwise noted, quotes from Polish sources are translated by Philip Palmer.
2. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
3. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
4. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
5. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
6. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
7. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
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12. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
13. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
14. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.
15. Translated by Marta Rozmysłowicz.