

North Korean orphans in Polish Belles-lettres and literature: An overview

Abstract

Between 1953 and 1959, more than four thousand North Korean orphans were sent to Poland. Their story was told by several Polish authors. This research paper will present these masterpieces, in order to better understand the fate of these young children.

Keywords: Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa, Karolinka z Diamentowych Gór, Kim Ki Dok, Marian Brandys, Monika Warneńska.

Introduction

This historiographical paper is organized into six substantive chapters, following this introduction. It begins with a reminder regarding the presence of North Korean orphans in Poland. Later it presents the major Polish books dealing with North Korean orphans. Later, a comparative analysis is drawn. The last chapter provides some insights about the post-Poland life of these orphans. The conclusion discusses the impact of their life in Poland on these North Korean orphans.

Aim of the article

The aim of this article is to present the available literature in Polish Belles-lettres related to North Korean orphans who were living in Poland. In order to fill this gap, the author proposes a comparative approach between the available publications. The author also provides a short summary of each of these publications for the non-Polish-speaking reader. There is one Korean research paper related to the representation of Korea and the Korean War in the Polish literature,² but as currently there are no similar scientific contributions published in English, I decided to fill this gap, by making a comparison between these Polish publications dealing with North Korean orphans. This Korean publication is also complementary to this current research paper as

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2 Choi 2014.

it presents the opinion of an author on the South Korean side. This Korean publication was also prepared by the most prominent South Korean researcher on Polish Studies: Choi Sung Eun. Therefore, the current research paper is an enlargement and an update regarding the Polish literature related to North Korean orphans, especially in Poland.

Hypotheses

The paper proposes two hypotheses. The first assumes that North Korean orphans were known by the Polish population. The presence of North Korean orphans was not a tiny secret made by Polish officials. The second is that the North Korean orphans who went back to North Korea had an impact on the perception of Poland which was transmitted to further generations and which proves that North Korea is not as hermetic a society as it is often purported to be.

An overview of the North Koreans orphans who lived in Poland between 1953 and 1959.

The Korean War was a conflict which caused the death of more than one million of people. Many children lost their parents, families and friends and became orphans.

The USSR, the PRC, European communist countries, and Mongolia agreed on a global project focusing on taking care of Korean children who had lost their parents during the Korean War. This large initiative was not only conducted for humanitarian reasons but for propaganda purposes as well, used to mark the orphans as one of the consequences of the U.S. intervention in the Korean conflict. It is worth to note, that the majority of these countries were destroyed to a large extent during the Second World War, which was why welcoming North Korean orphans was an expensive operation for these governments. In any case, their populations welcomed warmly these young North Korean orphans, who were casualties of a war they did not want to be involved in.

Poland brought about 200 North Korean orphans and placed them in orphanages all around Poland, starting from November 1950.³ Initially after a journey of 14 days, the orphans found a home in Gołotczyzna, close to the city of Ciechanów. However, due to a lack of educational institutions in nearby Gołotczyzna, starting from 23 November 1951 all of the children were moved to various parts of the city of Otwock,⁴ such as Świder (an orphanage

3 Some young North Koreans arrived on 23 November 1950. Cze 1957: 4.

4 In the 1970s, Otwock was a partner city to the North Korean city of Suncheon and a Polish-Korean friendship rural cooperative was located there. Konecka 1989: 49.

on Komunardów Street) and Sopliców. In particular, the construction of the orphanage on Komunardów Street was partially funded by the North Korean embassy in Warsaw.⁵ Before their departure in 1959, the orphans planted pines and birch trees; their journey is also commemorated with a stela.⁶

The orphanage of Świder was visited by Kim Il Sung in July 1956. In the assembly hall of this former orphanage, there was a commemorative tablet that read: “In this house, we gladly exchanged wishes in 1951-1959. Forever we will remember the motherly care of the Polish nation”.

On 1 January 1955, some 1,270 new Korean orphans were placed in Płakowice, near Lwówek Śląski. When North Korean orphans arrived there, they were in touch with other orphans from Greece, Poland, and the USSR. This large institution constituted a school, some dormitories and boarding homes, and two pitches. Korean children were educated by Polish teachers and teachers from North Korea. They were also accompanied by Koreans responsible for their security. These young orphans were taught various classical subjects such as mathematics and biology but also learnt the Polish language. After a few months, many of them were able to speak proficiently in Polish. Some other orphans were placed in Zgorzelec, close to the German border.⁷ Older kids started higher education in technical schools in Warsaw. Some other 2,500 North Korean orphans were placed in other orphanages all around Poland.

Some Polish historians consider that the issue of the North Korean orphans was kept secret,⁸ but that seems to be inaccurate, mostly because the inhabitants of the previously mentioned cities were in touch with these young Koreans, for example, going together to primary school. However, Poles in these cities (such as Lwówek Śląski) signed Non-Disclosure Agreements and were not able to discuss the issue with outsiders. Secondly, this issue was also mentioned in the contemporary Polish press.⁹ For example Li San Hy, who won nationwide shooting competitions for mining schools in 1955.¹⁰ North Korean orphans in Central Europe were also regularly mentioned in the North Korean press.¹¹

5 This building was quickly called the Korean House (*Dom Koreański*).

6 The orphanage in Świder has served since 2012 as the Architecture and Construction Department of the administration of Otwock.

7 Kubrak 2015: 388.

8 Kubrak 2015: 388.

9 Anonymous, 1956: 2.

10 Centrum Edukacji w Zabrze – Kalendarium 2017: 3.

11 *진형제의마음으로*, 1956: 1.

Despite an agreement signed between Poland and North Korea stipulating that all of these children would return to North Korea after they had finished either high school or other studies, their quiet life in Poland was interrupted by the visit on 4-7 September 1959, of Jon In Saen, the North Korean deputy minister of education. This North Korean official came to Poland to discuss the return of North Korean orphans to their home country, though providing unsatisfactory explanations to the Polish authorities. The process of the removal of the North Korean orphans started earlier, in 1958 when all of them were classified according to their Songbun, a North Korean caste system subdividing the population of the country into three classes and 51 categories by trustworthiness and loyalty to the Kim family. A few years later, a minority of them considered to be less loyal toward the Kim family were supposedly either sent to labour camps or killed.¹²

In total, 606 orphans suddenly left Poland and returned to North Korea between 1957 and 1958. Once back in North Korea, some of them continued to live in orphanages but were sent to ones with other orphans from abroad. The orphans grouped themselves based on the country where they had been educated. This created factions, such as one composed of those coming from China, others from Romania, and a Polish one etc.¹³ The largest group was the Chinese one. Not all North Korean citizens who had been educated in Poland were forced to return to their native country. Students in their last year of study remained in Poland until 1959.¹⁴

Initially, some of the Polish orphans wrote letters to their European tutors, but finally, it became too difficult for them to communicate with those who had educated them in Europe. Despite a law forbidding them to do so, some North Korean people formerly based in Poland tried to send letters to Poland, explaining that the North Korean orphans who had lived in Europe were being badly treated in comparison to those who had been in China and Albania.¹⁵

The story of these North Korean orphans was described in Polish Belles Lettres literature through several books, which will be presented in the following chapters of this research article.

We may split these publications into three categories. The first is related to North Korean orphans in Poland. The second category is dealing with North

12 *Sprawozdanie* 1968: 1.

13 Kim & Kim 2009: 24.

14 In 1959, six people obtained a university degree, 89 gained a technical degree, 16 an agricultural degree, six a degree in economics, two an artistic degree, and one person was awarded a medical diploma. Levi (ed.) 2012: 73.

15 *Uzupelnienie notatki* 1963: 2.

Korean orphans in the context of the Korean War, but not based in Poland. There is also a third category of publications dealing with North Korean orphans but only partially in these publications.

These Korean children inspired many books, poems, and articles. The most famous ones were authored by Marian Brandys, such as *Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa* and *Koreańczycy Gołotczyzny*, a shorter version of the previously mentioned book aimed at younger children.

Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa

Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa is a 232-page book for children written by Marian Brandys (1912–1998) and illustrated by Helena Cygańska-Walicka (1913–1989). This book was published for the first time in 1953 and was a compulsory reading in Polish primary schools in the late 1950s. It remains however unclear why the book was compulsory reading in Polish primary schools. One reason may be the popularity of Brandys among young readers.

Marian Brandys was a Polish writer and screenwriter born in Wiesbaden into an assimilated Jewish family of the Polish intelligentsia. During his career, he focused on writing historical novels and children's books.

This book told the story of North Korean orphans who were based in Gołotczyzna, a village close to the city Ciechanów. These North Korean orphans were living in a dedicated facility. After World War II, the building had been managed by the Polish Ministry of Education, which created an orphanage for orphans of soldiers who had died during World War II there.

This book underlined the number of interactions between Poles and North Korean citizens. These North Koreans were from a group of children born in the northern part of their country. Jolanta Kryszewata, the author of *Skrzydło aniola. Historia tajnego ośrodka dla koreańskich sierot*, a book related to North Korean orphans in Poland, believes that some of these children were living in the Soviet Union between 1951 and 1953 and came sick to Poland. Before hypothetically leaving Soviet Union, half of them left to Hungary, and the second half to Poland. While in Poland, these children were taught by teachers from Poland and North Korea, such as Ten Bi Czir.¹⁶

The youngest orphans: Kim Ba Hwa (spelled as Kim Ba Chł) and Li Un Son were nine years old.¹⁷ The most active student was Pak Un Gu.¹⁸

16 Brandys 1953: 42.

17 Brandys 1953: 44.

18 Brandys 1953: 45.

Brandys evocated several North Koreans in his book, such as Kim Che Su, Li Dzon Sun,¹⁹ I Chun Chin,²⁰ Lim Sa Son, Pan Te Ion,²¹ Dzan Czan Sin,²² Kim Sun Bon,²³ Kim Ion Suk,²⁴ Kil Chon Gi.²⁵ He also mentioned Li Wan, the translator of the group.²⁶ The book described in detail the life of these young orphans in Poland including their daily gymnastic, the lectures they were taught, such as Polish, mathematics, geography and the history of Korea.²⁷ Of course, these young North Koreans coped with difficulties regarding the Polish language.²⁸ Each day started with some gymnastics.²⁹ We cannot know for sure whether these young North Korean orphans actually existed, however their detailed life related to lectures, meals etc. is based on real facts. Based on facts, we know that Brandys visited several times these North Koreans. He met them in 1957, when they moved from Golotczyzna to Świder and provided material for some pieces of his book.

This book was a success in Poland, being reprinted five times, in 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1957. Each version has the same textual content, but in some of them there are additional drawings, which were prepared by Helena Cygańska-Walicka. This book was also translated into Czechoslovakian in a version entitled *Dom na vǎzvǎrnatoto detstvo* published in 1954 with the support of the author, R. Pečikova). This book was also translated into Chinese under the romanized title of *Chaoxian haizi zai Bolan* (which can be translated as Korean Children in Poland) and published in 1955 in the city of Shanghai by the Shaonian Publishing House.

Some extracts of this book were also published in the Polish Press, for example in *Życie Warszawy* on its Christmas Edition (24-26 December 1952) on page 3. It worth noting that the first edition of this book was only published in 1953.

19 Brandys 1953: 32.

20 Brandys 1953: 36.

21 Brandys 1953: 46–47.

22 Brandys 1953: 48.

23 Brandys 1953: 54.

24 Brandys 1953: 63.

25 Brandys 1953: 64.

26 Brandys 1953: 29.

27 Brandys 1953: 53.

28 Brandys 1953: 56.

29 Brandys 1953: 42.

Koreańczycy z Golotczyzny

The author of this book is Brandys. It is a shorter version of the book entitled *Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa* as it included 142 pages in comparison to 232 pages of the previously mentioned masterpiece. One difference is that it includes a foreword written by the Polish writer Marian Bielicki (1920–1972), where he described the beautiful life in North Korea, and the attack on this country by the South Korean Army.³⁰ He also admits that in several North Korean places such as Misan or Czonsan, people acknowledged the support made by the Polish nation toward these North Korean orphans. Also different from *Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa*, the majority of illustrations are related to the Korean War and not to the life of North Koreans in Poland, for instance depicted with younger children. The probable aim was to show the pitiful life of these North Koreans during the Korean War.

Karolinka z Diamentowych Gór

This 274-pages book was written by Monika Warneńska (1922–2010), illustrated by Henryk Bzdok (Henryk Bzdok was a graduate of the Faculty of Graphics in Katowice, Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and the author of over 50 individual exhibitions in Poland and abroad, where he represented the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and edited by Krystyna Migdalska. Monika Warneńska was a poet and a writer who among other things served as a war journalist in Vietnam between 1965 and 1974.

This publication is dedicated to Jerzy Siedlecki and his wife Irena. Jerzy Siedlecki was the ambassador of Poland to North Korea between 1954 and 1959. He cooperated also with the previously mentioned Halina Ogarek-Czój, making pictures for her book entitled *Pradzieje i legendy Korei* (1981). Monika Warneńska wrote in her book entitled *Karolinka z Diamentowych Gór* of a protagonist who is sent to join a group of small Korean children who settled in Plakowice, near Wrocław. Then the book depicts these North Korean orphans, providing also some names such as Kim Bo San or Han, a teacher from North Korea, who accompanied orphans all over Poland.³¹

Karolina Józefiok (her name is shortened to Karolinka in the book) is a young girl of eleven, who was living close to the mining city of Katowice, the most important in the region of Silesia in Poland. Karolinka's parents had been living in North Korea for one year (her father) and two months (her mother) and she was living with her grandparents. Her mother wanted to write a book about Poles living in North Korea. Waiting for a letter from her parents, she finally

30 Brandys 1954: 5–11.

31 Warneńska 1966: 32.

received a package with products from North Korea. This was probably the reason for her visit to the North Korean orphans based in the city of Płakowice, close to Lwówek Śląski. She met these children and recalled that they sang *Arirang*. Later she traveled to North Korea via Moscow. At Pyongyang airport she was welcomed by representative of the Polish embassy in North Korea. Later she met her parents and left to Kaesong and to Panmunjom with them. We learn that she read the books of Brandys, which described North Korean orphans in Poland. Finally Karolinka came back to Pyongyang, where with a Polish translator named Adam, she visited a primary school and West Pyongyang, where Poles were employed. One of the last points of her journey to North Korea is the visit to an orphanage managed by Poles in the city of Wonsan. When they all came back to the Polish embassy in Pyongyang, they watched a movie about North Korean orphans in Poland. Kim Li Hyon, one North Korean teacher of the previously mentioned primary school who was with them, recognised one of his sons in the movie.³² Later it was confirmed, that this child was the son of Kim Li Hyon. The book ends with the departure of Karolinka to Poland.

Other books

There are also several more books related to North Korean orphans, however not based in Poland.

Mały łącznik Kim E-Cho is the title of a book authored by two women: Weronika Tropaczyńska-Ogarkowa (1908–1957) and Maria Krüger (1904–1999). The book was illustrated by J. Karolak and edited by W. Raclawicki. Weronika Tropaczyńska and Maria Krüger are famous Polish authors who devoted their writings to children's literature and journalism. Weronika Tropaczyńska-Ogarkowa was also the mother of Halina Ogarek-Czój (1931–2004), the most famous Koreanist in Poland who even studied and obtained an unrecognized in Poland PhD on Korean literature. Weronika Tropaczyńska-Ogarkowa was a part of the Warsaw Uprising during the Second World War and later focused on literature. In this book, there is an 18-page story related to the life of a young North Korean child during the Korean War.³³

A second publication worth of a mention is *Grupa Słowika*, which is a 138-page book written by Marian Bielicki (1920–1972), illustrated by the previously mentioned Helena Cygańska-Walicka, and edited by Hanna Lebecka. This publication was dedicated to the daughters of the author: Stenia and Bożena. The book tells the history of young children who are in living in

32 Warneńska 1974: 265.

33 Tropaczyńska-Ogarkowa & Krüger 1951: 121–139.

North Korea during the Korean War. These children are trying to make some military operations against the South Korean and US Army.

It is also worth noting that the first books introduced to Korean literature appeared during the same period of time, such as *Na południe od 38 równoleżnika. Sztuka w trzech obrazach* (1951), by Bronisław Troński; *Korea walczy. Wiersze poetów koreańskich 1950–52* (1954), by Jerzy Ficowski; *Korea walczy. Zbiór opowiadań* (1952), by Marek Lechowicz; *Bajki koreańskie* (1954), by Czesław Jastrzębiec-Kozłowski and *Ziemia* (1955). The image of the Second World War was still very present in the mind of Poles. A comparison between North Korea and Poland was also easy to draw as both countries had been heavily damaged during these conflicts, in the Polish case more than any other country in Central Europe.

Comparative analysis

Publications related to the Korean War were skewed in favour of the PRL's own historiography, claiming that the Korean War was provoked by South Korea and American imperialists. The North Korean orphans inspired many books, poems, and articles. This topic was widely covered, for instance, the second edition (1954) of *Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa* was published with a 90,000 print run, the fifth (1956) in 10,000 copies, and the sixth (1957) with 20,000 copies. A short version, entitled *Koreańczycy z Gołotczyzny* (1954), was printed in 10,000 copies in 1954. *Ptaki powracają do snów* (Saliński 1964) was made available in 20,350 copies. Concerning *Grupa Słowika* (Bielicki 1954), its first edition was printed in 10,000 copies.

These books are inter-connected. Two of them were published in the same collection of books: *Biblioteka Płomyka*, which may be translated as the Flame Library. Also in *Karolinka z Diamentowych Gór*, the author is directly referring to the publication entitled *Dom odzyskanego dzieciństwa*.³⁴ It must be noted that the children who were depicted in Brandys's texts had left Poland before those who arrived to Plakowice. This information is also provided on the Warneńska book.³⁵ Some of these books are also comparing North Korea to Poland, saying that the destruction of Pyongyang is similar to that of Warsaw or that the Taedong River in Pyongyang is the Korean Vistula.³⁶ Monika Warneńska made also a reference to the book entitled *Błask ciemności* written by a Polish doctor who was employed in North Korea, Andrzej Braun, describing the Korean War.³⁷

34 Warneńska 1974: 25.

35 Warneńska 1974: 29.

36 Warneńska 1974: 30; 121.

37 Warneńska 1974: 202.

The objectivity of the authors may be also put in doubt, as they were members of the Polish Communist Party (Marian Brandys until 1966 and Marian Bieliński). These two authors were under the pressure of governmental organizations to show an image of young children who are the most fundamental casualties of the Korean War. Some North Korean orphans were even allowed to publish some texts in the Polish press. An interesting example is the text prepared by Cze Czan Ir, a North Korean orphan educated at the Mining and Plastics Technical High School in Częstochowa, who praises the Polish authorities for supporting North Korean orphans. He underlined that he and his colleagues were not used to Polish food and its climate.³⁸

The fate of the North Korean orphans in Poland

As mentioned earlier, once back in North Korea, some of them continued to live in orphanages but were sent to ones with other orphans from abroad. Later some of them were purged as they had in the past been in contact with “non-Asian” values.³⁹

However, starting from the mid-1960s, some of the older orphans of higher Songbun (reliable citizens) were able to study and get jobs working with Eastern European engineers sent to North Korea.

In the case of those who lived in Poland, they worked in places where Polish citizens were based, such as the Polish hospital in Hamhung, the Polish mission at the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (the border between the two Koreas), and the Polish embassy in Pyongyang.⁴⁰ Others worked in fields where Polish specialists were based, and where knowledge of Korean was requested. For their jobs, no university degree was required, only knowledge of the Polish language. As proof, we can quote the case of Ri Hang Sik, who worked for Fabex-ZREMB as a translator despite having only primary education.⁴¹ In the book by Brandys, there is a reference to a Ri Han Sik, who may be the previously mentioned sportsman.⁴² There may be a potential orthographic mistake between Ri Hang Sik and Ri Han Sik, due to the limited knowledge of Korean of Brandys.

Some zoologists such as Kazimierz Kowalski, who visited North Korea, were working during field trips with several North Korean citizens who spoke Polish, at various level, such as Ku Wan Son. He was a North Korean orphan

38 Cze 1957: 4.

39 Kim & Kim 2009: 24.

40 Konecka 1989: 42.

41 Konecka 1989: 42.

42 Brandys 1954: 80.

who arrived to Poland on 23 November 1950 and was educated at the Mining and Plastics Technical High School in Częstochowa.⁴³

Another example of a translator is Kim Je Ming (born in 1941), who was initially a translator for Polish companies in North Korea in the 1970s. He returned to Poland in the 1980s and was used as a translator for five North Korean artists who worked as cartoonists in the Cartoon Studio in the city of Bielsko-Biała (*Studio Filmów Rysunkowych Bielsko-Biała*). Another orphan was a translator for a group of overseas North Korean workers delegated to Kleczanów in 2004. Furthermore, the Department of Polish Studies at Kim Il Sung University has been headed since its creation in 2007 by one of the orphans from Płakowice, Jo Song Mu. Jo Song Mu also received a Polish award as an expert in the Polish language in 2010.

It is also known that a wife of a North Korean ambassador was also an orphan based in Otwock. A military *attaché* at the North Korean embassy in Warsaw was also an orphan based in Poland. Waldemar Jan Dziak (1952-2019), the most prominent researcher on North Korean issues mentioned that Dzo Gum Dzen a First Secretary at the North Korean embassy in Warsaw in 1972, was an orphan, who had lived in Poland since the 1950s.⁴⁴ Yun So Hyon, the current officer of the Committee for Cultural Relations of North Korea, and the secretary of the association of Friendship between France and North Korea, and between Poland and North Korea, is the daughter of Yun Myong Jin, a former Secretary of the National Commission of North Korea to UNESCO and a former orphan based in Poland. Her father taught her Polish, a language she speaks perfectly.⁴⁵ As of August 2020, Yun So Hyon had travelled at least six times to Poland.

Another story to be mentioned is the case of several North Korean orphans who made sporting careers during and after their time in Poland. Two of them, born in the mid-1930s, Im Kwan Sik and Ro Jong Nam, came to Poland in 1952. A third one, Pak Ton Ho, arrived at an unknown later date. All of them were educated at the Sport High School in the Oliwa district of Gdańsk along with other North Korean citizens, including one woman who trained in athletics and three males who focused on acrobatics. Ro Jong Nam and Im

43 Ku Wan Son was educated with several other North Korean young people, Jae Jang Il (Cze Czan Ir as spelled in the newspaper), Ha Jon Sik (Ha Czon Sik), Ri Jan Hui (Li Chian Hi), Kang Jaen Kwon (Kang Jen Kwen), Ri Han Su (Li Han Su), Ho Jong Rak (Ho Zon Rak), Kim Ho Gon (Kim Ho Kon), So Jon Sik (So Ją Sik), Pak Riom Dok (Bak Rią Dok), Jo Ju Gon (Czo Ji Gon), Jae In Gon (Cze In Gon), Kim Pong Muk (Kim Bą Muk), Kye Kyong Ho (Ke Ken Ho), Kim Jae Gon (Kim Ze Gon), and Kim Sun Won (Kim Syn Won). Cze 1957: 4.

44 Dziak 2018: 37.

45 Myjak 2017: 11.

Kwan Sik were able to participate in the Polish Judo Championships due to their strong physical and technical abilities. Ro Jong Nam competed in the under-60 kg category, topping the charts in the mid-1950s. Ro Jong Nam left Poland in 1956. Im Kwan Sik was allowed to remain a few more years. Im Kwan Sik obtained some medals and with Pak Ton Ho regularly trained young Poles in the city of Elbląg. Pak Ton Ho was also awarded the Order of Merit with a Knight's Cross by the Republic of Poland in 1994 for his involvement in the North Korean cooperation with the Mining Academy of Kraków.⁴⁶

Conclusion

In this conclusion I would like to enlarge this research paper with two ways. First overall, I want to mention some non literature issues related to North Korean orphans in Poland. Secondly, I would like to assess the discussion about North Korean orphans in Poland and their impact on North Korean society.

After the Korean War, some documentaries related to these North Korean orphans were released in Poland, such as a 15-minute movie entitled *Dzieci koreańskie* prepared by Władysław Marko in 1953, describing the life of Koreans in Poland. Also, according to chronicles from Polish Television, Radio Pyongyang broadcast the message, *War orphans, go to Sinuju! From there you will be evacuated to places where there is no War*.⁴⁷

In recent years, some events and books focused on North Korean orphans have been published. The journalist Jolanta Kryszewata's programme entitled *Osieroceni* (2003), in which two orphans were found, was awarded the *Europa Award* in Berlin. She also co-directed a similar documentary called *Kim Ki Dok* (2006). This production was focused on the life of the North Korean orphan Kim Ki-dok (김기덕), who lived in Poland and was buried in Osobowicki Cemetery in Wrocław, Poland. Kim Ki Dok was also described in a poem written by her doctor Tadeusz Partyka, who had a deeply respectful feeling toward this 13-years girl. Below is a translation of this poem. No title is available. The translation was made by the author of this research paper.

Recently the South Korean producer Chu Sang Mi authored a film concerning North Korean orphans in Poland entitled *폴란드로 간 아이들* (*Pollandeuro gan aideul* [Children Gone to Poland]) and was released in 2019. On 15 March 2019, there was a conference focusing on North Korean orphans in Lwówek Śląski.

46 *Monitor Polski* 1994.

47 Levi 2009: 351.

Polish version	English version
<p style="text-align: center;">Już późno jest Jesienna mgła i tramwaj obok muru płynie Osobowicka cisza trwa Nieprędko minie Dałaś mi życia trzy miesiące które i ja Ci dałem może I zgasło słońce Jeżeli żywych kochać nie potrafię Wystarczy to, że byłeś Mam tabliczkę przy murze Osobowic I twoją dziecinną fotografię miłą</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">It's already late Autumn fog and a tram is running by the wall The silence in Osobowice continues It won't pass soon You gave me three months to live which I also gave you maybe And the sun went out If I cannot love the living It suffices that you were I have a plate close to the wall of Osobowice And your childhood photo, my dear</p>

The memories of North Korean orphans can be transmitted through the previously mentioned events, however on the other hand, the memory of people who came from North Korea during the communist era is especially present in the mind of people who were in contact with them. A perfect example illustrating this situation are the memories of the citizens of cities where North Korean orphans used to live. To a lesser extent, a similar situation can be described for those who lived closely to the Polish hospital in Hamhung.

The importance of cooperation between Poland and North Korea on the issue of orphans was a driver for the deepening of relations between both countries for the next 50 years. The past and European values were absorbed, to a certain extent, in the consciousness of the North Korean orphans who lived in Central Europe. The North Korean orphans who went back to North Korea had an impact on the perception of Poland, which was transmitted to further generations and which proves that North Korea is not as hermetic a society as it may often pretend to be. It is more than probable that these children were forbidden to talk about their life in Poland, however they learnt some habits which are incrustated in their mind as children, a way of thinking that could not be forbidden by the North Korean authorities. Those who were educated at the Mining and Plastics Technical High School in Częstochowa were also living with other foreigners, mainly from Algeria and Cuba, which may have also impacted their psychology.

These North Korean orphans possessed a large cultural background related to Poland. Even if they were not able to transmit it. Therefore, there is a constant imperative to learn and debate, and to have a better chance of finding the right balance when discussing the isolation of North Korean society.

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