Review of 70 years of North Korean studies in Poland

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The aim of this presentation is to provide a review of North Korean studies made in Poland for the past 70 years.
Hypothesis

- The development of North Korean studies is due to the deep relations between Poland and North Korea.
Important remark

- Poland, being a former NK communist was close to NK due to ideological reasons.
- This also applies to similar countries from EEC.
- Being close to NK, an access to NK document was easier.
- For instance, several institutions collected NK newspapers (*Rodong Sinmun, Pyongyang Times*) since the 50's.
Why 70 years?

- Poland and the North Korea (aka DPRK) established diplomatic relations in October 1948.
- Poland was one of the first state which recognized North Korea. Warsaw recognized Pyongyang regime on the 18th October 1948.
- Initially the PL embassy was based in Pekin.
- PL diplomats moved to Pyongyang in 1951.
- NK diplomats moved to Poland in 1951.
Due to political & ideological connections between the DPRK and Poland, research on North Korean issues was never considered as a taboo.
The first Polish institute, which has published ahead with North Korean studies during the Cold War era, is the faculty of Korean studies of the University of Warsaw.

According to Christoph Janasiak (Warsaw University - a virulent opponent to the North Korean ideology), The history of Korea as a subject of university study in Poland began in 1953.
However, some Polish books related to the modern Korean Peninsula were already published in 1951. One of them is “Zeszyt znaleziony w Sunczen” (A copybook found in Sunchon), a book written by Roman Kim, a Russian author with Korean roots.

It was translated by Janusz Przymanowski (based on the Russian version), a famous Polish translator who passed away in 1998.

The most famous polish researcher on Korean issues was Halina Ogarek-Czoj (1931-2004).
Halina Ogarek-czoj bio

- This lady studied in North Korea after the Korean War at the Kim Il-sung University. Later she got married with a North Korean politician (The case of 5 Poles based in North Korea got married with North Koreans is known).
- Nevertheless in summer 1963, the North Korean regime launched a campaign against mixed marriages and Non-Korean partners were forced to leave the DPRK.
- Halina Ogarek-Czoj left Pyongyang with her daughter and never met again her husband in spite of several additional trips to the DPRK (she became an official translator for the Polish leadership).
- Her works were focused on Korean literature.
- She passed away in 2004.
NK students in Poland

- From 1951 till 1989, the DPRK sent many North Korean students to Poland.
- They studied not only in Warsaw but also in other main cities of Poland such as Cracow, Katowice, Lodz and Wroclaw. They were students of various fields (with a focus on technical issues).
- Some worked/work at the North Korean embassy in Warsaw.
- In the 70’s the NK Academy of Sciences was supposed to have a branch in Warsaw.
- These students were in touch with regular Poles and scientists.
Due to the political symbiosis, until the 80’s, a portion of North Korean studies was aimed as describing the North Korean Communist regime as a “friendly country” to Poland.

Main authors (Marceli Burdelski, Waldemar Dziak, Sławomir Guzowski, and Stefan Kojło) used to write propaganda texts.

All of them were only able to provide a raw approach of the North Korean regime due to ideological reasons.

All of them belonged to PL-NK friendship associations/Juche associations,…
Sławomir Guzowski

- Sławomir Guzowski is still a key leader of the Polish-North Korean friendship association.
- The main studies of the previous quoted authors were related to the causes of the Korean War (including the rhetorical question: who started the Korean War), to North Korean orphans in Poland, to relations between both countries and to the North Korean ideology.
The oldest generation of researchers

- The oldest generation of Korean analysts (Waldemar Dziak, Marceli Burdelski) was working during and after the communist era. During the communist era, bilateral relations between Poland and North Korea were dynamic.

- Therefore these specialists (among others) were able not only to go on a regular basis to North Korea but also to be in touch with different groups of North Koreans (diplomats, students, delegations).
Both of them used also to assist on a regular basis to World Juche Congress (the Juche – is the national ideology of North Korea) and had an access to the top North Korean leadership (including Hwang Jang-yop) in the 70s/80s.

Since the mid-2000’s, Waldemar Dziak has no access to North Korea.

Regarding Marceli Burdelski, he’s still travelling to North Korea, however his last book was published in 2004.

He’s unobjective toward NK issues.
The youngest generation of researchers

- Currently many of the researchers of the youngest generation (Edgar Czop, Oskar Pietrewicz, Agnieszka Śmiatacz, and myself) may face difficulties when analyzing North Korea.

- The Polish Ministry of Education is granting less amount of money for researchers than in the past, preferring non humanistic sciences.

- Furthermore the same institution is not supporting North Korean studies.
The youngest generation of researchers

- Researchers are now forced to have a double professional occupation in order to deal with daily life as wages in the education and research field are very weak.
- Polish State Institutions are not fully aware of the Korean market and strategically localization.
Many South Korean researchers are visiting former European communist countries. They observe our geographical region and try to assess the future development of North Korea (which is also a former communist country).

Based on our countries, they try to draw some potential future scenarios of development for the Northern part of the Korean Peninsula.
Conclusion

- I Strongly regret that in spite of the “Unification Process”, researchers are focused only on one Korea.
- The nature of the Polish Labour Market jeopardize Korean studies in Poland.