

THE COMMUNITY OF NORTH KOREAN ELITES
AND DEFECTORS IN EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

Koreans have existed as a single united ethnic group for more than 2000 years.¹ Following the terrible division of Korea (after the end of the Korean War, 1950–1953),² some North Koreans have managed to flee for the following reasons: political, religious and economic. Why? This is due to the fact that both Koreas emerged through different ideological and economical models. Regarding South Korea, this country has evolved into a capitalist industrial society being open to foreign countries. On the contrary, North Korea has remained a very closed society centered completely on the leader of this country: Kim Il Sung (and then his son: Kim Jong Il). North Korean people cannot leave their country without any permits. If they are caught abroad without this permission, they are then treated as “traitors” and are very often incarcerated in re-education camps.³ An increasing number of North Korean defectors⁴ and their difficulties to settle in South Korea

¹ The constitution of the Republic of Korea, known as South Korea, states that the territory of South Korea shall consist of the Korean Peninsula and its adjacent islands. According to South Korean officials, since the South Korean constitution considers all Koreans on the Korean Peninsula, including North Koreans, to be citizens of South Korea, North Koreans generally are entitled to South Korean citizenship, with some exceptions.

² A war between North and Korea which took place between 1950 and 1953.

³ Historically speaking, the first defection occurred shortly after the signing of the armistice at the end of the Korean War, on September 1953. A young Air Force pilot called No Kum Sok, flying with his MiG-15, defected North Korea. Some defections took place between the 60–80, however the big wave felt in the 1990s. Why? This was due to the awful food situation in North Korea. About 600 000 to over 2 million North Koreans were killed by the famine of the 1990's. Final Report of Jay Lefkowitz, U.S. Special Envoy for Human Rights in North Korea, 17 January 2009.

⁴ The terms used to describe defectors have changed throughout history, reflecting the hard relations between North Korea and South Korea. North-South relationship or the government's definition of defectors at the time. The cause of defection has also changed mainly in response to changing situations in North Korea. However, despite the fluctuations, South Korea still remains the most prominent host for North Korean defectors and one of the most desired destination for the defectors. With the defector issue directly related to the North-South relationship and the unification plan, the government of South Korea faces many tough challenges.

has created a new flow of migration for North Koreans. An augmenting number of these people are moving to other countries and other parts of the world. A relatively small number of North Koreans in China have managed to reach South Korea, Japan, or the United States via other countries in the region, including Mongolia and Thailand. Why a relatively small number? Because it's estimated that 200 thousand of North Koreans are still illegally living in China,⁵ trying to reach their final (South Korea or another country) destination. South Korea accepts all North Koreans as citizens under its constitution. As of 2012, South Korea has admitted more than 22,000 North Koreans,⁶ Japan has accepted more than 100, and the US have accepted a few dozen so far. Canada,⁷ Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, and a few other European countries have granted refugee status to several hundreds of North Koreans in recent years.⁸ Concerning EEC, some are living in Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic.

Usually North Koreans use the following road to leave their country: They cross the border into Jilin and Liaoning provinces (provinces located in the north-eastern part of China). Only after they fled to a third country. They have to flee to a so-called third country because the People's Republic of China (further in paper documents mentioned as China), the closest ally of Pyongyang, still refuses to grant North Korean defectors refugee status and therefore China considers them as illegal economic migrants. If the defectors are caught in China, they are automatically repatriated back to North Korea where they will endure severe interrogations and punishment. Some of them will be also sent to political prison camps. There are however some views, that some of them,

⁵ The Chinese government does not consider North Koreans who cross into China to be refugees. They are considered as "economic migrants" seeking to better their lives. When such people illegally enter other countries, they can be deported to North Korea. B. May, *A North Korean Refugee Dilemma*, "The Diplomat", 8 March 2012.

⁶ *Only 20 N. Korean defectors work as public servants in S. Korea: lawmaker*, "Yonhap News Agency", 9 October 2011. Estimates of the numbers of North Koreans outside of North Korea have varied widely over the past decade, according to scholars and some Non Governmental Organizations, Estimates have ranged from 6,000 to over 300,000, depending on the source of the data and the time period in which the data were collected.

⁷ Canada had 385 refugee claims from North Koreans last year, up from just 26 in 2006, according to Immigration and Refugee Board figures. In 2011, 117 claims from North Korean defectors were accepted, 12 were rejected and 41 were either abandoned or withdrawn. Some of these cases had been carried over from previous years. There has been controversy recently about the veracity of refugee claimants' stories of abuse and even their birthplace. The suspicion is some are actually South Koreans posing as persecuted North Koreans. M. Reeder, *North Korean refugees in Toronto carry burden of fear*, vtncankor.wordpress.com (accessed: 30.04.2012).

⁸ A UNHCR statistic report as of 2010, 581 North Korean refugees reside in the United Kingdom. Other North-Koreans defectors are mainly living in Western Europe.

being repatriated to North Korea, in exchange for bribes, can go back to their previous life in North Korea.⁹

The notion of defector

Firstly, the division of the Korean Peninsula is a result of World War II. Around 65 years ago, important differences emerged between both Koreas. Since the 60s, many North Koreans are risking their lives to cross the border between both Koreas. Leaving their home country without a permission is still considered as being illegal under the North Korean criminal code (북한 형법 – Pukhan Hyongbom). Since 1953, 100,000–300,000 North Koreans have left, most of whom have fled to Russia or China. Religious groups supporting overseas defectors claim, however, that there are approximately 1,000–2,000 defectors in Russia and approximately 100,000–200,000 in China.¹⁰ Between 1950 and 1989, 607 North Korean defectors arrived in South Korea. From the 1990s, North Koreans began to move to China at a large scale. Crossing the border between North Korea and China is not an unreachable task as both countries are separated by the Tumen and Yalu river which is narrow, and frozen during winter times. As of the end of 2015, there are 28,597 North Korean defectors established in South Korea. Based on a study of South Korean defectors, women make up the majority of defections. In 2002 they comprised 55.5% of defections to South Korea (1,138 people) and by 2011 the number had grown to 70.5% (2,706 people). More women leave the North because, as the breadwinners of the family, they are more likely to suffer financial hardships. This is due to the prevalence of women in service sector jobs whereas men are employed in the military – 33% of defectors cited economic reasons as most important.¹¹ Men, in contrast, had a higher tendency to leave the country due to political, ideological or surveillance pressure. In South Korea there are different ways of calling defectors. The average North Korean defector is a poor woman from the Northern part of North Korea. In comparison, the typical Soviet defector was a member of the Soviet *Intelligentsia*. Secondly, defectors were granted different identities taking into account the historical timeframe. Different terms, official and unofficial, refer to North Korean refugees.

Regarding the reasons for defection, according to Sung Hong-ko, generally speaking, until the early 1990s, the motivation tended to be mostly ideological, hav-

⁹ Interview with a defector realized by myself in Seoul in July 2012. For security purposes, the identity of the defector won't be revealed.

¹⁰ Yoon In-jin, *North Korean Diaspora: North Korean defectors abroad and in South Korea*, "Development and Society", June 2001, vol. 30, no. 1, p. 3.

¹¹ S. Hegarty, *North Korea: Defectors adjust to life abroad*, BBC News Magazine, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-22209894> (accessed: 23.04.2013).

ing to do with dissatisfaction with the North Korean system and unfavorable comparison to that of South Korea. People motivated by these reasons included soldiers, diplomats, students, and traders sent abroad. Since the mid-1990s, particularly after the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, economic motifs caused by the food crisis became more dominant.¹² Since the mid 1990s, defecting women became also more dominant especially from the northern parts of North Korea (from the following provinces: Jjagang, North Hamgyung, North Pyongan, and Yanggang). According to Andrei Lankov, elite defectors represent 10 percent of the total number of refugees.¹³ Interestingly not only people with a low-background are going to South Korea. Some North Korean elites are also moving from their former country for the following reasons. The first one is that these people do not feel secure in their own country, this argument is prevalent for North Korean defectors who belonged to the key structures of the North Korean apparatus (Korean Workers' Party, Korean People's Army, Foreign Trade North Korean Company). As examples we can quote the personalities of Hwang Yan-yop, the initiator of the North Korean ideology, the Juche, and the chief political ideologue; Choe Kun-Chol – former Regional KWP Secretary). Regarding regular North Korean defectors, they used to defect because of economic issues and similarly because they felt threatened after having expressed skepticism and criticism of the North Korean system.¹⁴

The International Community's concerns on North Korean Human Rights

The hard reality of the situation of Human Rights in North Korea started to be explained and known to the Western world in the beginning of the 1990's with an extremely important arrival of North Korean defectors in South Korea. The human rights situation in North Korea has since become an increasingly prominent international issue and topic. Non Governmental organizations (such as Amnesty International, Liberty in North Korea, Human Rights Watch) are on a regular basis publishing reports analyzing the current humanitarian situation in North Korea.

At an international scale, various acts were adopted concerning the condemnation of North Korea related to the treatment of its refugees. On 19 November 2009, The United Nations adopted a strong resolution condemning North Korea for its

¹² Sung Ho-ko, Kiseon Chung, Yoo-seok Oh, *North Korean Defectors: Their Life and Well-Being After Defection*, "Asian Perspective" 2004, vol. 28, no. 2, p. 75.

¹³ A. Lankov, *The Real North Korea – Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia*, New York 2013, p. 96.

¹⁴ Interview with a North Korean elite defector. The interview was conducted on the 6 July 2015 in Seoul (South Korea).

“systemic, widespread and grave violations” of human rights.¹⁵ Concerning Europe, its institutions are trying to improve its human rights conditions.¹⁶ Of course North Korean diplomats (such as Pak Kil Yon – the Permanent Representative to the United Nations – and Ri Chol – a former NK ambassador to Switzerland – are used to dismiss these reports mentioning that these information is forged.

The role of EEC concerning asylum for refugees

This is not the key-point of this report, however we have to present a short overview related to the role of EEC concerning their general approach to refugees. After the downfall of communism and the implementation of democratic reforms, EEC have become major transit countries for asylum-seekers heading for western Europe, as well as, to a lesser extent, host countries. Although some of these countries have made considerable progress in refugee protection, others offer no means of obtaining asylum (it's concerning especially the Baltic States and some Balkan countries which are coping with other challenges).

The countries of central and eastern Europe were not involved in large-scale movements of refugees until the democratic reforms of 1989. They are now facing the arrival of asylum-seekers, especially from Vietnam and Africa. Concerning the refugees issue, the main challenge of the EEC is the fact that most of the countries in the region concerned serve mainly as transit points for asylum-seekers on their way to western countries. I believe, however, that due the current economical situation in Europe, some crucial EEC will start to receive a large number of refugees (Poland keeps doing so well despite the economical crisis).

According to a report entitled “Report on refugees and asylum-seekers in central and eastern Europe” published by the European Parliament, the situation of asylum-seekers varies from one country to another. The majority of asylum-seekers in Bulgaria and Romania come from the Middle East, Asia and Africa, in the Czech Republic they are mainly from the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Romania. In Hungary, refugees come from Romania. Concerning Poland, refugees come mainly from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine.¹⁷

¹⁵ Some of these acts had a limited impact. On 9–13 November 2009, the French envoy to North Korea, Jack Lang, tried to discuss the communist country's human rights issues and nuclear programs without any viable success. Only a cultural desk was opened in Pyongyang in order to erect a cultural diplomacy.

¹⁶ Some Labour Camps are also closed: Kim Kwang Jin, *Camp 22 Disbanded on Defection Fear*, “DailyNK.com”, 29 September 2012.

¹⁷ The available statistics show clearly that EEC are mainly used for transit and implied that there is no real structures for long-term refugees.

Who are defectors?

A historical background

As mentioned above, as of 2006, tens of thousands of North Koreans fled to China for food, survival, opportunity, and for life. Some even attempt to cross the border in search of food items to use or sell in North Korea. If caught attempting to leave North Korea, North Koreans are arrested and executed, or indefinitely imprisoned. If caught in China, North Koreans are deported by China to North Korea, and face the same consequences of death or indefinite imprisonment.¹⁸ According to interviews that I realized in the past, about 70% of defectors come from the north-eastern provinces bordering China.¹⁹ Until 1993, North Korean defectors were called kwisunsa (귀순자 – defectors) or kuisunyongsa (귀순용사 – brave defectors), between 1994 and 1996 Ttalpukja and kuisunpukhantongpo (귀순북한동포). Between 1997 and 2004, two appellations were used: Ttalpukja (탈북자 – “people who fled the North”) and Pukhanitaljumin (북한이탈주민 – “people, who renounced from North Korea”). Starting from 9 January 2005, the South Korean Ministry of Unification (통일부, Tongilbu) announced the use of saeteomin (새터민 – “people of new land”) instead of Ttalpukja, a term about which North Korean officials expressed displeasure. There are various categories of North Koreans who may potentially emigrate to EEC. The first category represent those who are researching a security in a country in Europe. I personally had the occasion to talk to North Koreans who absolutely wanted to stay in Poland (they were working for Polish companies). The second category are those who have already the South Korean nationality and who want to emigrate to Europe (not especially EEC). As an example, The United Kingdom is rejecting this kind of people in the case they want to get the British Nationality. The third category are those who are already living in EEC not as defectors but as workers.

Causes of defections

The cause of defection has changed over the years. We can classify the waves of defectors into three stages: pre-war and war defectors, early post-war defectors and recent defectors. Concerning the pre-war and war defectors, their main cause of defection was political. Some of them used to support democracy and therefore were forced to move to the South. The second wave of defectors are those who escaped

¹⁸ S. Haggard, M. Noland, E. Weeks, *Famine in North Korea? The Evidence*, “The Korea Herald”, 20 May 2008.

¹⁹ Interview with Professor Waldemar J. Dziak, a Polish fellow on North-Eastern Asian issues. The interview was realized in June 2012.

between the early 60's and the beginning of the 90's. They constituted about 5 to 10 people a year. During these times North Koreans faced a relative prosperity which led to the migration of a large number of North Koreans to South Korea.²⁰ The main incentive for those who did leave North Korea was political, and most of them were members of the elite class with the chance to leave North Korea. With the end of the Cold War came the fall of communist regimes, the North Korean economy began to fall dramatically and led to years of famine. That is why starting from the mid-90s, a lot of North Koreans started to defect from their home-country looking for a better future.

North Korean defectors in Europe

Due to adaptation problems in South Korea,²¹ a lot of North Korean people are trying to reach another destination where they can settle. Thus there is an increasing number of defectors from North Korea finding home in Europe. According to various reports, defectors are living in western European countries.²² Some Western European countries (Denmark, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Belgium, France, Norway and the Netherlands) have granted political asylum to a total of about 300 North Korean people. It is, however, known that 700 North Koreans are still applying for political asylum in Europe. Germany is the country which is the most open to North Korean defectors: Germany granted about 60% of North Korean demands. The British government granted also asylum to 40 North Koreans between 2004 and 2008 declining, however, about 70 applications. Other countries accepted North Korean defectors on a smaller scale.

Concerning the figures of North Korean defectors in EEC, according to private data that I have collected through meetings with officials of EEC, there are actually about 10 to 20 North Korean defectors in EEC. They live in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. However, due to security reasons, their identities cannot be divulged. It has also to be mentioned that some North Koreans that were living in EEC escaped from their work places.²³ The low number of North Korean defectors in Central Europe cannot prevent us from erecting a potential strategy for the future inflow of North Koreans after a (potential) collapse of North Korea. This strategy will be presented below. However, I would like to present the similarities

²⁰ Koreans in Japan are the ethnic Korean residents of Japan (about 500,000 of people). They currently constitute the second largest ethnic group in Japan. The majority of Koreans in Japan are Zainichi Koreans for short, who are the permanent ethnic Korean residents of Japan. There are two main organizations for Koreans living in Japan, Mindan and Chongryon.

²¹ *Hope and Struggle Among North Koreans Living in South Korea*, <http://www.alexiafoundation.org/stories/hope-and-struggle-north-korean-defectors-living-in-south-korea> (accessed: 23.05.2017).

²² *NK defectors flee from Seoul to UK for asylum*, "Korea Times", 27 August 2010.

²³ N. Levi, *North Koreans Suffer Around the World*, "DailyNK.com", 3 June 2009.

between EEC and North Korea. These similarities are crucial because they limit the role of EEC concerning the settlement of North Korean refugees.

EEC and North Korea Similarities between EEC and North Korea

EEC and North Korea have a lot of similarities due to history and ideology. In these both geographical entities, the dominant ideology was communism, therefore a cooperation was developed between EEC and North Korea. It has to be said that in the 50's, the nationality which was the most represented among foreign students in Poland was North Korea.²⁴ These also concerned countries from the Eastern Bloc. Lots of North Korean people were studying (after the theoretical end of the Korean War) in the former Eastern Germany (especially in Berlin and Dresden), a lot of North Koreans were educated in the field of economy in Budapest and Prague (some analysts even mentioned the constitution of the North Korean School of Economy of Prague). Yon Hyong Muk, the most powerful person in North Korea outside the Kim family in the 80's was the Prime Minister of North Korea from 1989 until 1992. He was educated in the former Czechoslovakia. Paek Nam San, a former North Korea politician was a North Korean ambassador to Poland. All these elements underline the cooperation between EEC and North Korea.

Furthermore, I would like to introduce the example of North Korean workers who are working in EEC: Even under UN sanctions, North Korea has a good number of sources of hard currency – one of them being exporting contract workers to various countries for wages which are then largely taken from them by the government back home. North Korean workers are to be found in, among others, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland. North Korea has dispatched dozens of construction workers to Poland, sending them to sites in several cities mainly in the northwest of the country. The total number working in Poland is currently more than five hundred. They live under the strict control of Polish-speaking North Korean supervisors. The problem in Poland (but not only there), as for many of the countries where North Koreans are to be found, is that there are no legal restrictions or minimum wages, so as long as North Koreans have work permits there is nothing more their host government can or needs to do. We can consider that these workers may propagate a friendly

²⁴ N. Levi, *Zarys stosunków między Polską Republiką Ludową a Koreańską Republiką Ludowo-Demokratyczną* [in:] *Świat i Polska wobec globalnych wyzwań* [Relations between North Korea and the Communist Poland], ed. R. Żelichowski, Warszawa 2009, p. 349; N. Levi, *Dlaczego Polska musi utrzymywać stosunki z KRLD?* [Why Poland should maintain diplomatic relations with DPRK?], 6 March 2012, <http://nicolaslevi.natemat.pl/4119,dlaczego-polska-musi-utrzymywac-stosunki-z-krlld/> (accessed: 5.03.2017).

image of the EEC when they will come back to their home countries. This image may be a strong asset for the future relations between EEC and North Korea. That's why the cooperation in this area should be enlarged under the condition of the control of working conditions of North Koreans.

Solutions for potential North Korean defectors

In order to integrate North Korean refugees in Europe on a small scale, EEC should first integrate small groups of North Korean refugees and create programs similar to the ones functioning in South Korea. An example of the integration of North Korean refugees in the United States and United Kingdom should also be analyzed. The following elements should be taken into account:

- a Reinforcement of cooperation with EEC humanitarian organization dealing with North Korea (such as Polska Akcja Humanitarna, the Helsinki Committee in EEC) in order to prevent the repatriation of defectors to North Korea and for the attainment of refugee status.²⁵
- a resettlement support and resources for defectors who settled in EEC (through a viable cooperation with specialized South Koreans institutions such as the Hanawon Center²⁶). Potential North Korean refugees need basic education, and that means a broad range, like social skills.” Many are illiterate and cannot perform simple tasks such as using a bank or searching for housing. Each generation faces these challenges.
- Due to the career resettlement funds, there is a difficulty regarding the stability of the defectors and their children. Thus, finding employment is difficult and there is a dual difficulty about resettlement funds decreasing. The implementation of a stable career support system is required along with employment centers to find workplaces for defectors.

²⁵ Resettlement agency support includes assistance provided to refugees to cover necessary expenses and living costs for the first 30 days in Poland. This assistance can last up to 3 months.

²⁶ To facilitate North Koreans' resettlement, the South Korean government established the Hanawon Social Adaptation Education facility in 1999 to provide North Koreans with a 3 months training course before they resettle in local communities (not only in Seoul but also out of the main South Korean city). The Hanawon curriculum is divided into four categories: mental stability and health education, career guidance and basic vocational training, introduction to South Korean society and overcoming socio-cultural differences, and initial settlement support. Following graduation from Hanawon and resettlement in a South Korean community, North Koreans may continue their education through local Hana Centers that provide an additional 3 weeks of job and employment training. South Korea helps North Koreans find rental units and provides the security deposit as well as the resettlement assistants who offer additional support after a family moves into a South Korean community. US Department of State, report number GAO-10-691, Humanitarian Assistance: Status of North Korean Refugee Resettlement and Asylum in the United States, 24 June 2010.

Obstacles to the integration of North Korean refugees in EEC

In order to satisfy the various needs of current and future defectors, EEC should provide financial supports, home and social advantages for defectors/refugees who are coming from North Korea. Is it possible? Taking into account the reality of the EEC economy and the worldwide context, it seems difficult to imagine an inflow of North Korean refugees in selected EEC. We can quote Hungary which is facing huge economical problems. Romania and Bulgaria have also other crucial issues to solve. Countries which seem to be the most ready to continue welcoming North Korean refugees are Poland and the Czech Republic. These countries have the best economy among EEC and the best infrastructure.

The long relations between EEC and NK are also jeopardizing the future of North Korean refugees in Europe. NK will accept the presence of North Korean refugees in countries with which it had relations. Taking into account the past, the potential situation may create some problems. We can quote an example, that is in a way off-topic, of the opening of relations between Hungary and South Korea and its impact on the North Korean presence in Budapest. As soon as South Korea and Hungary developed relations in December 1988, the North Korean ambassador to Hungary (Kim Pyong Il, the step-brother of the deceased Kim Jong Il) was recalled to Pyongyang after Hungary opened diplomatic relations with South Korea in February 1989. In these times, North Korea accused Hungary of “treachery” in opening the mission. Seoul had before no formal ties with communist countries, though it has exchanged trade offices with Yugoslavia, signed trade office pacts with Poland and Bulgaria and agreed to open trade offices with the Soviet Union.²⁷ North Korean students who were living in Hungary (122 people) were expelled from Hungary and were forbidden to come back to Europe,²⁸ some of them were also sent to Labour Camps.²⁹ Hungary still does not maintain crucial relations with North Korea, however in the case of Poland (there is a huge presence of North Koreans in Poland), the situation can be different. Anyway, it seems that North Korea is not really disturbed by the issue of North Korean defectors in western countries. Pak Kil Yon, a north Korean diplomat who is the representative to the United Nations is also the North Korean ambassador to Canada... a country which is welcoming North Korean defectors.

In other words, the relations between EEC and North Korea seem to be an obstacle to welcoming North Korean refugees in these countries. It may jeopardize the relations (already weak) between these countries and North Korea. The development

²⁷ Yu Yung Ok, *Pukhan kwonryok sunggye-ni pyonsu Kim Pyong Il*, „Pukhan” 1991, no. 7; N. Levi, *A Biography of Kim Pyong Il: A Second Dauphin?*, „Parallax” (Suffolk University – USA) 2010, vol. 7, no. 1.

²⁸ *Pyongyang’s reaction to recent political reforms in East European Communist Countries*, „Vantage Point. Developments in North Korea”, October 1989, vol. 12, no. 10, p. 22.

²⁹ T. North, *The Kim Jong Il Succession Problem in the Context of the North Korean Political Structure*, „Korea and World Affairs” 1992, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 55.

of a new leadership in North Korea may change the nature of relations between these partners. We can even imagine a migration of NK people to EEC without having the status of refugees. In my personal opinion, I think that EEC and North Korea are countries with a lot of similarities. These elements have to be taken into account in order to create a solution which may satisfy each party of the dialog. Taking the past into account (the inflow of North Korean students in Eastern and Central Europe Universities in the 50–70's), we can imagine that the same Universities may welcome the future leadership of North Koreans. Some economical seminars for North Korean economists took places in Prague. EEC should also accept the application of musicians. A lot of North Koreans won some successes in EEC contests (especially in Warsaw).³⁰ I'm deeply convinced that these North Koreans should be educated in EEC institutions and should constitute the future musical elite of North Korea. This is an asset that western countries did not possess. That is why these strong relations cannot be undermined by the inflow of a limited number of North Korean refugees.

The financial issue is also limiting the acceptance of NK defectors in Central Europe. The 1951 UN Refugee Convention, ratified by Poland in 1991, stipulates that refugees must not be forced to return to the countries they have fled from. Host governments are primarily responsible for protecting these refugees. Despite the idealism and spirit of justice behind such an agreement, Poland lacks the financial resources to transform those ideals into reality. With the GDP per capita of only 13,799 USD, the resources available for Poland are insignificant in comparison to Western countries. Despite its efforts, the lack of financial resources in Poland limits the speed of the asylum process.

North Korean defectors should learn EEC languages. For those who are already in EEC, some languages classes are offered during the day and are very irregularly attended. However, this can plunge refugees into a vicious circle, for without a sound knowledge of a EEC language they have very little chance for permanent and legal employment. On the other hand, even speaking an EEC language well may not be enough to guarantee a long term success of integration. Refugee integration is a two way process that cannot be successful without the support of the local population. The ethnocentrism which is quite common within EEC will constitute a limit to the integration of North Koreans in this part of Europe. For example Poland is already in trouble when it comes to the integration of other nations. We can quote the example of Vietnamese who are not really assimilated in Poland. Of course they are living well there but they are living out of the Polish reality as far as they are rejecting Polish values. As a summary, North Koreans face

³⁰ We have also to mention the following element: some of the potential newcomers could be spies sent by Pyongyang to keep an eye on immigrant communities and steal technological secrets since they are well-educated, well-groomed and speak fluent English.

various medical,³¹ economic, linguistic, social and other key challenges when resettling in another country.

Taking the experience of North Korean refugees in United Kingdom³² into account, similar mistakes should be avoided. Actually, about one thousand of North Korean refugees lives in the United Kingdom. All of them are out of London. They face a lot of problems (psychological and economical). One of them mentioned that they are isolated and have no friends around here and their children³³ have been bullied at school.³⁴

North Korean elites in Central Europe

The main North Korean elites based in Central Europe belong on one side to the Kim family. On the other side, these elites are responsible for the inflows of money for the Kim family. Some of the North Korean elites are also collecting foreign currencies for the Kim regime. There is also a foundation connecting Poland and North Korea. In the Czech Republic, there were several North Korean trading companies collecting foreign currencies for the Kim regime. Kim Jong Ryul, a former North Korean agent who fled to Austria being in mission in Europe, travelled all over Central Europe, buying items for Kim Jong Il.

Conclusion

The task of resettling North Korea's long-suffering refugees is completely different from the task of changing the regime's behavior. The European answer to the NK refugees issue should be clear to the difference of China and South Korea, which are reluctant to rescue North Korean refugees. Both China and South Korea are afraid of revolutionary changes in North Korea. These countries remember the flow of refugees from the former East Germany to Western Germany and are afraid of a similar scenario with North Korea. Concerning EEC, the problem is that North

³¹ According to a South Korean diplomat who served in Hungary (for security, I cannot divulgate his identity) Both EEC and South Korea provide resettled North Koreans with cash and medical assistance for those who are living in EEC.

³² The United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, and Japan have provided North Koreans with a humanitarian protection status to allow them to remain in their countries.

³³ To all these difficulties are added the problems of the youngest second generation acculturation. At home, North Korean children hear that they must work hard and do well in school in order to move up; on the North Korea street they learn a different lesson. Today's popular culture, brought to North Koreans exposes children to the lifestyles and consumption standards of the European society. It's creating a breakdown between the old and the young generation.

³⁴ D. Southcott, *It's not all grim up North*, <http://londonkoreanlinks.net> (accessed: 28.03.2011).

Korean refugees see EEC as transitional countries.³⁵ So what can we do? I am deeply convinced that a cooperative program managed by public and private institutions may solve this issue at least partially. The main idea of this strategy would be to switch some responsibilities to the private sector, making it thus less of a budget strain for the government. However it implies a larger number of North Korean refugees who would like to settle in this part of Europe. I also want to clarify that North Koreans are not barred from eligibility for the refugee status or asylum in EEC, however there are some crucial barriers that cannot be solved at the moment. EEC should not only be able to welcome North Korean refugees but also be able to offer a durable humanitarian solution to the plight of North Korean refugees. This is due to fact that EEC consider the North Korean refugee issues to be sensitive and prefer that these issues be handled discreetly. According to officials, one reason for these countries' reluctance to assist in Poland processing of North Korean cases is the concern about creating tensions with the North Korean government.³⁶

STRESZCZENIE

SPOŁECZNOŚĆ PÓLNOCNOKOREAŃSKICH ELIT I UCIEKINIERÓW W EUROPIE WSCHODNIEJ

W literaturze dotyczącej uciekinierów z Korei Północnej przeważa kwestia ich dostosowania się do życia w społeczeństwie Korei Południowej, jednak niewiele mówi się o ich osiedleniu w innych częściach świata (choćby w krajach zachodnich). W niniejszym artykule skupiono się na kwestii uciekinierów z Korei Północnej osiedlających się w krajach Europy Wschodniej i roli tych państw w ich przyjmowaniu. Zwrócono uwagę na możliwości przyjmowania uciekinierów z Korei Północnej przez kraje Europy Wschodniej. Rozważaniom poddano takie zagadnienia, jak: 1) historia uciekinierów z Korei Północnej oraz okoliczności przebywania w krajach Europy Wschodniej; 2) sposoby osiedlenia się, 3) potencjalne wyzwania związane z osiedleniem się w krajach Europy Wschodniej. Autor zdecydował się skupić na relacjach polskich instytucji i potencjalnych uciekinierów z Korei Północnej (choć nie pominięto innych krajów Europy Wschodniej).

³⁵ For example, the fact that a substantial number of North Koreans have received refugee status/asylum in one country and have picked up and moved to other countries asking for asylum as well. I have heard anecdotally that this has been an issue in countries such as Germany, the UK (and the EU in general), the US, and Canada. N. Levi, *A comparison between North Korea and Eastern European Countries*, lecture on conference "The Rise of Asia: A Perspective from Eastern Europe", The European Institute for Asian Studies, Brussels, 7 December 2011.

³⁶ In order to avoid tensions with the DPRK government, due to changing laws, North Korean refugees in Australia are being deported to South Korea. Because South Korea considers all of the citizens of North Korea as citizens of South Korea, Australia, too, accepts this position and will not be deporting the refugees who have settled in Australia back to the DPRK.