

Films from a Country that Fights for Freedom: An Overview of North Korean Cinema in the Polish People's Republic

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This paper investigates the rare accounts of North Korean cinema in the Polish People's Republic. Drawing on Polish socialist film magazines, cinema viewership data, posters made for North Korean films, and other archival materials, two distinct periods of interest in North Korean films are identified: the 1950s and the 1980s. In the 1950s, the DPRK films were introduced as part of a broader political campaign of anti-Americanism and support for North Korea in the Korean War. In the 1980s, interest in North Korean film re-emerged under the military government of Wojciech Jaruzelski. While mostly unpopular, *Hong Kil Dong* (1986), released in Poland as *Hong Kil Dong: Karate Master*, gained unexpected admiration, matching the growing popularity of taekwondo, and echoing the reception of Bruce Lee's *Enter the Dragon* (1973). Polish viewers rejected the didactics of North Korean cinema until it began tempting people with the fairytale-like magic of the Orient. However, the DPRK failed to respond to the sudden interest, and the *Hong Kil Dong* phenomenon was short-lived.

Keywords: North Korean cinema, North Korea-Poland relations, North Korean soft power, cultural exchange, *Hong Kil Dong*

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