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KIM IL SUNG DEAD AT AGE 82

# KIM IL SUNG DEAD AT AGE 82; LED NORTH KOREA 5 DECADES; WAS NEAR TALKS WITH SOUTH

By DAVID E. SANGER,

**TOKYO, Saturday, July 9**— Kim Il Sung, the North Korean leader since 1945 and the man who led the invasion of the South and began the Korean War, died at 2 a.m. on Friday at the age of 82, Pyongyang Radio said today.

At shortly after noon, the Korean Central News Agency, the country's official news organization, issued a seven-page announcement of Mr. Kim's death, which said that he would be remembered as a man capable of "creating something from nothing."

"He turned our country, where age-old backwardness and poverty had prevailed, into a powerful Socialist country, independent, self-supporting and self-reliant," the statement said. It called him the "sun of the nation."

Mr. Kim, who is revered throughout the country as the "Great Leader," is reported to have collapsed with a heart attack sometime on Thursday. It said his son and heir apparent, Kim Jong Il, would direct the funeral of his father.

Mr. Kim's death just hours before the negotiations with the United States began, seems certain to raise questions over whether he actually died of natural causes.

Mr. Kim was also scheduled to conduct a first summit meeting with South Korea's President, Kim Young Sam, in Pyongyang, the North's capital, on July 25. It would have been the first such summit since the division of the Korean Peninsula.

For months there have been reports of factional infighting within the Government over whether to open up the country in return for financial aid, or to continue defying the international community and press ahead with the nuclear program.

An odd announcement about Mr. Kim's recent medical treatment, issued in mid-afternoon, included some mysterious wording that will likely fuel the speculation. It said that "on July 7 he suffered from a serious myocardial infarction) owing to heavy mental strains, which was followed by a heart shock." It said he had been diagnosed as suffering from arteriosclerosis, and that a "diagnosis of the disease was fully confirmed in the pathological anatomic examination" conducted today.

A "State Funeral Committee" in Pyongyang issued another announcement, saying that the leader's coffin was lying in state at the Kumsusan Assembly Hall in central Pyongyang beginning and that a period of

mourning would last until July 17 when the funeral is scheduled. "Foreign mourning delegations will not be received," the announcement said.

It added that artillery salutes would be fired in the capital and every province. "All songs and dances, games and amusement will be banned," during the mourning period.

Mr. Kim was last seen, apparently healthy, during a remarkable two-day meeting with President Jimmy Carter at which he agreed to freeze North Korea's nuclear program in return for restarting high-level talks with the United States over an end to the country's five-decade-long isolation.

Mr. Carter said on Wednesday that Mr. Kim told him at the time that he planned to "remain active for the next 10 years."

The renewed talks with the North, after a year of brinkmanship that seemed for a while to be veering toward a new confrontation between North Korea and the West, began in Geneva on Friday. The meeting was reported by both sides to have gone well, and negotiators gave no indication of Mr. Kim's death, if they knew. The meetings were suspended today, and the chief United States delegate, Robert Gallucci, as saying "further talks are meaningless."

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who was told of the reports at 5 A.M. here, telephoned his South Korean counterpart, Han Sung Chu, and was told that the Government of South Korea regarded the reports as very credible, said Michael McCurry, a State Department spokesman.

Japanese Government officials said today that they could not confirm the announcement, which was delayed by Pyongyang for 34 hours.

For years South Korea and the United States have had extensive contingency plans for Mr. Kim's death, including higher states of military alert. The South Korean Defense Ministry said the army was on special alert today and that the same was true of the North Korean army. But the Defense Ministry said there were no special troop movements on the North Korean side. The north's military movements are tracked almost minute by minute.

The President of South Korea called an emergency cabinet meeting, the Korean Broadcasting Service in Seoul reported.

For half a century, North Korea has been essentially a family business headed by Mr. Kim, whose image is captured in monuments in every town and who is credited, in the national mythology and in song, with the country's creation and development. His cult of personality is everywhere, celebrated in "mass games" run on his birthday that involve hundreds of thousands, and in the everyday invocation of his philosophy of "juche" or national self-reliance.

Years ago, in an attempt to create something of a Stalinist dynasty, Mr. Kim designated his son, known as the Dear Leader, as his successor. But there have been persistent doubts over whether the younger Mr. Kim, a reclusive and deeply mysterious man who, according to Western intelligence reports may not be mentally stable, would win the confidence of the North Korean military.

Many have speculated that the death of the elder Mr. Kim would touch off a power struggle and perhaps a crumbling of the country's Communist Government.

But such a process could take years. There there is little understanding of the country's leadership elite beyond the elder Mr. Kim, who has been widely regarded as the only man able to make national decisions for the country.

With the nation's economy shrinking several percent a year and its factories grinding to a halt, Mr. Kim's "Paradise on Earth," as his propaganda machine calls it, seems headed toward collapse. Its nuclear program, which may or may not have already succeeded in producing one or two weapons, has in the past two years become the biggest security crisis in Asia.

Mr. Kim was installed by Stalin shortly after the end of World War II. Born on the outskirts of Pyongyang, in a thatch house that is visited daily by thousands of North Koreans, he spent nearly 20 years of his youth in Manchuria, the North Korean border areas and the Soviet Union as a guerrilla fighter against the Japanese.

Shortly after the official creation of the Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea in 1948 he consolidated his power. He launched the Korean war in 1950, in a blitzkrieg attack that took Washington and Seoul by total surprise. His goal, he said, was to reunite the Korean Peninsula, and it took three years to fight to an armistice. Ever since the Demilitarized Zone, dividing North and South, has been the most heavily-armed outpost of the Cold War, and 36,000 American troops are still stationed near it. The Weaker Korea

For years it appeared that his country would be the stronger of the two Koreas: It had all the raw materials and, until the early 1960's, a healthier economy.

But that reversed as the capitalist South, with aid from the United States and Japan, and a population of 40 million surged ahead as a producer of steel, cars and semiconductors. The North, diplomatically isolated, went into slow decline, increasingly dependent on China and the Soviet Union for oil and critical industrial goods. Its own industrial base was left over from the Japanese occupation, save for some major project that Mr. Kim was credited with directing with "on the spot guidance."

With the end of the cold war, however, Mr. Kim was quickly abandoned by his allies. Russia embraced the South, eager for its aid and its technological help. China also began relations with Seoul, and Mr. Kim, on his periodic trips to Beijing, was greeted with airport signs for Samsung, the huge South Korean conglomerate. Recently South Korea's leaders began visiting Moscow and Beijing regularly.

To save his regime, Mr. Kim turned to the nuclear option. He developed a small reactor at Yongbyon, a heavily-guarded military installation north of the capital, into a sprawling nuclear complex. While he signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty in 1985, he refused to allow inspectors into his country until two years ago. And since that time, he has conducted an increasingly tense cat-and mouse game with the United Nations and specifically the United States, keeping inspectors at bay. In March, his nuclear scientists began unloading spent fuel from a reactor at Yongbyon. The fuel, if processed, could yield enough plutonium for five or so bombs. That prompted a move for sanctions against the North in the United Nations, and those sanctions seemed likely until Mr. Carter's trip last month, which raised hopes about relaxing tensions on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Carter was heavily criticized in the United States as he left Pyongyang for appearing to accept Mr. Kim's assurances at face value. The former President said that during his trip a "miracle" had occurred,

and that Mr. Kim -- who had never before met such a high-ranking American -- was simply looking for respect.

Mr. Carter declared that, by derailing the sanctions, he and the North Korean leader had avoided a war. Sanctions, Mr. Carter declared, were a terrible idea, one that would brand Mr. Kim "a criminal and a liar," and probably prompt his 22 million indoctrinated followers to renew hostilities simply to protect the image of their President.

After all, Carter said a bit enviously later in Tokyo, "you have to remember that at home, President Kim Il Sung is treated as a combination of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Abe Lincoln."

In fact, in recent years there were two Kim Il Sungs who seemed to occupy the world stage: The one who ran the Korean gulags, who had enemies purged or executed, who presumably masterminded the attempt to assassinate the South Korean Cabinet while on a trip to Burma in the early 1980's -- and the kindly old man who met Mr. Carter.

Former Representative Stephen J. Solarz of Brooklyn, who met Mr. Kim twice, once in 1980 and then again in 1991, said of him: "He has this avuncular persona that stands in stark contrast to the reality of the regime, which is without question the most ruthless and tyrannical anywhere in the world. It is like meeting Hitler at Berchtesgaden and commenting on how he got along with the dogs and the children. He has the blood of millions on his hands; he has a society based on Orwell's '1984.' So you expect someone who will act like Saddam Hussein, a forbidding, threatening presence. And he is just the opposite, always smiling, always speaking softly."

But in North Korea Mr. Kim seemed, at least in every public utterance, to be nothing short of a god. Every gift a North Korean received from the government -- clothes, rice, a new apartment -- was said to come directly from "the Great Leader" or "the Dear Leader."

He held every important post in the country, including General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, its one party, and president of the country. His son was given increasing control over the military, but has rarely been seen in public in recent times.

There is so much state-sponsored mythology about Kim Il Sung's youth that it is nearly impossible to separate truth and fiction. But in all of the stories about his early days, including those he has written himself, there is always a clear subtext: Mr. Kim's struggles against greater powers around him, particularly the Americans and the Japanese.

They control the world, and it is the Kim family's destiny to battle them. In his memoirs, published in Pyongyang two years ago, Mr. Kim maintained that his great-grandfather set fire to the General Sherman, a "U.S. imperialist aggressors' ship" because its crew went about "stealing the people's possession and raping the women" while sailing up the Taedong River to Pyongyang in 1866. (Mr. Kim's biographer at the University of Hawaii, Suh Dae Sook, calls these stories "politically motivated fabrications," but most of them seem impossible to verify.)

Whether the stories are true or not, the myths have become the man. In the outskirts of Pyongyang, thousands of the faithful line up every day to glimpse the small mud hut where he is said to have lived with his parents, both of whom, he says, fought the Japanese occupation of Korea.

But the hut serves as more than just proof of his of-the-people roots; Mr. Kim often contrasted his own early life with that of the Americans (mostly missionaries) and the Japanese in Pyongyang. "In the 'Westerners village' at the time inhabited by Americans and the Japanese settlers, brick houses, shops and churches increased in number," he recalled vividly many decades later, but across town "the slum quarters were getting bigger."

It was around this time that he committed his first act of rebellion against Japan's brutal occupation, using a pocket knife to scratch out the title "Mother Tongue Reader" from the textbook issued by the Japanese colonial government that required all children to speak nothing but Japanese. He scratched in "Japanese Reader" on the cover, and from that moment, "whenever I saw children trying to learn Japanese, I told them Koreans must speak Korean."

Neither his own memoirs or official biographies dwell on the fact that he spent the vast majority of his youth in Manchuria, where he learned Chinese. That later turned out to be a crucial skill, as he joined up with China's communist guerrillas. And it is from China that Kim combined Communist philosophy with the nationalist mission that his father bequeathed him -- along with two pistols -- on his deathbed: To free the Korean Peninsula from Japanese domination.

Mr. Kim served as an anti-Japanese guerrilla in Manchuria, Siberia and the North Korean border areas starting in his early 20's, but it is impossible to verify the claims of his astounding feats, including the killing of a unit of Japanese special police who were tracking him in 1940. The next year, he was forced to retreat to the Soviet Union for the remainder of the war. He makes no mention of that time, perhaps because it would be too obvious that his son, the "Dear Leader" Kim Jong Il, was born there in February 1942, instead of on Korea's own soil.

At the time, Mr. Kim was married to Kim Chong Suk, who died in 1949. His current wife was scarcely seen until Jimmy Carter's visit last month, where she played a surprisingly important role.

Mr. Carter had proposed that, as a gesture of good will, Mr. Kim allow the United States to bring home the bodies of soldiers buried in the North's territory, and search for other remains. Kim wavered, saying he would have to check with his advisers and take the issue up through diplomatic channels. "His wife spoke up and said, 'We should do it now,' " Carter recalled a few weeks ago. "And he said O.K. And it was done."

In North Korea's official histories, Kim took control of the country as soon as he singlehandedly kicked out the Japanese.

Of course, Kim's emergence was a far more complicated affair than the official accounts suggest. When he arrived back in Korea in 1945, he had been absent from the country for 20 years. His Communist party was tiny, outnumbered by other nationalist groups. But he rose to power by denouncing the "lackeys" of the Japanese and the Americans in his midst, and wiped out many of his enemies.

Most importantly, he won the confidence of the Soviets, who entered the Pacific war in the last days and took administrative control of the North. They reached for Kim, who quickly moved to consolidate power in the Korean Worker's Party. But the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was not created officially until September 1948, after the United States organized the first government in the South, the Republic of Korea.

When Kim Il Sung led an invading army into the South in June, 1950 -- an unbelievable scene of carnage that today seems like another world from modern Seoul -- the Truman Administration saw the takeover as the first step in a far broader Communist plot, directed from Moscow and Beijing, to seize much of Asia.

But a remarkable new study published earlier this year by Stanford University Press -- one that is fairly chilling given the current nuclear standoff -- shows it was Kim Il Sung who did all the plotting. Documents recently made available in Russia, along with others that have slipped out of China, show that Kim was convinced he could take the South in three days.

Stalin, who had put Kim in office five years before, was skeptical during a meeting in April 1950, but said that he might go along if the Chinese did. Mao was worried as well, fearful that the United States might step in. But Kim, showing a talent that he still clearly still possesses, played the two men off against each other brilliantly, inflating Stalin's interest when talking to Mao, and Mao's when talking to Stalin. It was the first of many incidents in which he manipulated his far bigger partners not only against the West, but against each other.

After a brilliant beginning, Kim's war plans went astray. The American intervention was a surprise. The war made a desperate economic situation in the North worse. But Kim emerged in position to wipe out his remaining rivals. And he never forgot the threats issued by Gen. Douglas MacArthur, and indirectly backed up by Harry Truman, that the Americans might end the war with a mushroom cloud. That, to many minds, was the start of the North's nuclear program.

But there were dozens of small clashes over the years along the DMZ, sometimes resulting in the deaths of South Koreans and Americans. Both sides built up enormous forces: Mr. Kim's army was 1.1 million strong, though in recent years it has spent much of its time building apartments and dams rather than training.

In 1968, as the Vietnam War raged, North Korea and Mr. Kim surged into the headlines again. The North seized an American intelligence ship, the Pueblo, and its crew stayed in prison for 11 years. In 1972 there were the first gestures of peace to the South, called the Red Cross Talks, in which both sides talked of allowing families divided by the war to meet. But those talks broke off and were not resumed for 18 years.

When they did come back together the two Koreas reached an historic accord: A December, 1991 agreement on peace and denuclearization. It was not a peace treaty. But it did provide for communications between the two Koreas: Roads, radio broadcasts, exchange of mail, mutual inspection of each other's military sites. None of that has happened, and relations worsened as the nuclear crisis deepened.

Starting last year, suddenly North Korea was back on Washington's agenda. The C.I.A. predicted the country could be a year to 18 months from building a bomb. Its ambitions -- to build a weapon that could threaten Seoul and Tokyo, and to assemble an arsenal of missiles to go with it -- has been the focus of America's security problems in Asia for two years now, as officials have tried to determine if the weapons project was a bargaining chip for economic aid or an effort to remain independent.

Mr. Kim devoted a huge amount of the country's scarce resources to building a nuclear complex centered on a 25 megawatt reactor based on old technology used by the British in the 1950's. The design uses

ordinary uranium as fuel and graphite to control the nuclear reaction: The North has its own, ample supplies of both, meaning it does not have to worry about being cut off by foreign powers.

Conveniently, such old designs create waste that is high in plutonium content. The plutonium can be extracted and converted into bomb fuel with the right reprocessing technology. And the cat-and-mouse game over the past few years has been all about the North's steady progress in building that technology, while denying it all the way. For years the North denied it was building a reprocessing plant, even though a football-field sized one sticks out on satellite photographs. The Great Leader and the Dear Leader don't need a satellite: They have a guest cottage was built amid the complex. In the Spring, inspectors who got back into the non-existent reprocessing plant reported that a second manufacturing line was under construction -- to allow greater throughput.

In Washington, successive administrations sleepwalked through the evidence of the buildup. There was always another nuclear renegade to worry about: Qaddafi, Saddam, the Pakistanis. And time and time again, Washington convinced itself that this crisis was abating. When Mr. Kim signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, leading everyone to sigh in relief, even if he then violated the treaty by barring inspectors for seven years. In 1991, the North and South signed an accord denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula and banning reprocessing on either side. Again there were cheers, and again the North ignored the ban, and kept building.

Every time there was talk of finally taking action, the Asian allies fretted that Kim should not be provoked. But the warning lights became impossible to miss in March, 1993, when the North announced it would pull out of the Nonproliferation Treaty rather than face continued pressure.

Photos: Kil Il Sung embracing former President Jimmy Carter last month after talks that led to a break in a dispute on North Korea's nuclear program. (CNN via Associated Press) (pg. 1); Kim Il Sung (Reuters); north Korea's President, Kim Il Sung, embracing China's paramount leader, Deng Xiaoping, when the two met in Beijing in May 1987. (New China New Agency via The Associated Press); Kim Il Sung, pointing, with his son and heir, Kim Jong Il, 52, in front of Baegdu San mountain in North Korea some time ago. The North Korean President has designated his son to succeed him as leader in Pyongyang. (Reuters) (pg. 5)