Under their Eyes
Guang Niu

Under their Eyes

In keeping with the official notion that a protective, parent-child relationship exists between the Kims and North Korea’s 22 million residents, portraits of the two Kims are expected to be hung in homes, schools, hotel rooms, offices, stores, and even in subway cars. Failure to keep the framed photos dusted and properly maintained can earn the violator a year’s worth of written self-criticism sessions as punishment.
As North Korean billboards proclaim, “Whatever the Great Comrade Kim Jong-Il decides, we do!” Here, more than 1 million “volunteers” pack into downtown Pyongyang in January 2003 to support North Korea’s withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. The move came after demands from the U.S. and the International Atomic Energy Administration that North Korea halt its uranium enrichment program. According to the official agency Korean News, the global ban on nuclear weapons development was used by the U.S. To disarm North Korea and “destroy its system by force” - - a policy at odds with the official doctrine of “juche” or self-reliance.
Two teenagers, wearing military-style caps, wait for a bus in Pyongyang. Like the rest of North Korea’s population, the capital’s youth is kept organized into groups that guarantee conformity with state ideology. Between the ages of 14 and 30, these boys will serve in the Kim Il Sung Socialist Youth League, a group for students, soldiers and workers that supports the activities of the Korean Workers’ Party through propaganda, outreach activities and volunteer labor. Upon graduation from high school, most North Korean boys are sent to serve in the military. Serve time? Ten years.
Together We Stand
M. Torres

Together We Stand

Pyongyang has its towering monuments devoted to the wisdom of kimilsungism, but few could be so imposing as the Monument to Party Foundation. Erected in 1995 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Korean Workers’ Party, each part of this statute stands 164 feet tall and is designed, in the words of the official PYONGYANG REVIEW, to be “symbolic of the single-minded unity of the leader, Party and people.” Unlike the traditional communist symbol of hammer and sickle for workers and peasants, North Korea’s emblem features a writing brush for intellectuals – supposedly used to reinforce the importance of education after the country’s postwar brain drain.
Tot’s Tears
John Leicester

Tot’s Tears

In North Korea, indoctrination in the teachings of Kim Il-Sung begins at an early age. Here, kindergarteners cry in unison as they sing “Kim Il Sung, We Want to See You One More Time” during a rally in downtown Pyongyang held not long after the death of “the great leader and great father” in 1994. Official mourning for North Korea’s founder would last until 1997.
Work Tunes

As a brass band plays revolutionary songs to stir enthusiasm, members of a 2,500-strong work team struggle to repair a flood-damaged farm land near Hamhong in eastern North Korea. This 1999 shot was taken as the North Korean famine was beginning to subside, but after an estimated 2-3 million North Koreans had lost their lives from starvation and disease related to malnutrition. The musical touch is characteristic of North Korean “vigorous speed campaigns,” high-priority rush construction workers. In this case, the band faced a daunting task: workers were expected to rebuild canals, drain fields, and halt and overflow of the Kwangpho River.
Flower Power
Julian Rake

Flower Power
At a February 2003 flower show to celebrate the 61st birthday of Kim Jong Il, kimjongilia -- otherwise known as red begonias -- bear tribute to North Korea’s leaders. Developed by a Japanese botanist, the kimjongilia flower is meant to symbolize the “wisdom, love, of justice, and peace” inherent in North Korea’s ruling ideology of “juche”or self-reliance, official descriptions say. Now, North Korea’s national flower, the kimjongilia is a frequent icon in mass spectacles, parades or demonstrations held to honor the Dear Leader or his father, Kim Il Sung. North Korea claims that his red perennial has even taken on some revolutionary impulses of its own, spreading to more than 60 countries around the world, including the U.S.
Wisdom Wanted
Julian Rake

Wisdom Wanted

Forget the Internet. When North Koreans want to dig into the writings of Kim Il Sung or Kim Jong Il, they head for the People’s Study Hall in Pyongyang. The hall attracts around 30,000 people per day, according to North Korean guidebooks. Aside from kimilsungism, visitors can dig into such so-called literary masterpieces by the Great Leader as the THE FATE OF A SELF-DEFENSE CORPS MAN and THE SEA OF BLOOD, or listen to recordings or revolutionary music. Selections of foreign books are slim, but staff claim they have any tome visitors require. However, upon requesting George Orwell’s 1984, one recent Western visitor reported that he was presented instead with CONNECTING LOCAL AREA NETWORKS.
Two women bow to a 65-foot high bronze statue of Kim Il Sung, his arm extended to rally the masses, that dominates downtown Pyongyang. Bowing to images or statues of Kim Il sung or his son, Kim Jong Il, reportedly often marks the start and end of each day in North Korea. A bow and a bouquet of flowers for the Eternal Great Leader is an obligatory part of any foreigner’s tour of Pyongyang as well. Keeping a respectful distance is de rigueur.
Show Time
Chien-Min Chung

Show Time

He’s known as “The Sun.” Here, thousands of performers hold up cards to form a portrait of North Korean founder Kim Il Sung for visiting U.S. Secretary of State Madeline Albright in October 2000, while dancers simulate a wave of the official state flower, kimjonilia, based on the name of Kim Jong Il. Such mass spectacles are a North Korean specialty, though, reportedly, not one that helps the country’s ailing economy. In 2002, national preparations for Kim Jong Il’s birthday, the founding of the North Korean army and the Arirang arts festival led to a 36 percent decline in industrial productivity, according to South Korea’s Ministry of Unification.