

Quotes from Chairman Kim Il Sung (1)

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What is new and what is old in North Korea? As was pointed out in a particularly astute recent article in the Washington Post, Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) forms the ultimate baseline for determining North Korean culture in its many forms, and for measuring its evolution.

As B.R. Myers points out in *The Cleanest Race*, the technical historical accuracy of Kim Il Sung's writings and stories about him is slightly pointless: as a North Korean, one is simply supposed to believe everything. It is "the Text," according to Myers. But when one dips into the various streams of that text, one finds that there are certain degrees of importance – the Leader's official 42-volume *Works* clearly have more power in defining Party orthodoxy than, say, the thousands of little story episodes and anecdotes manufactured about the Leader and his family well after his death.

In other words, an anecdote "discovered" and published in KCNA in 2010 about a 1959 pit stop on the Tumen where Kim Il Sung protects North Korea's fish and fowl from Chinese pollution **is a marginally interesting anecdote** that indicates how Kim Il Sung, pliable in death, has his uses for a regime which is seeking to use metaphor and manufactured precedent to assure the population that the Chinese are not going to take over everything.

On the other hand, even the document of Kim Il Sung's speech on the one tiny village square on the Korean side of the Tumen River which he managed to occupy with his guerilla forces for a few hours in 1937, while almost certainly manufactured, can only be falsified to a small degree beyond its appearance in Volume 1 of the Leader's Works.

All it takes is a quick peek at the Rodong Sinmun to understand the power of the orthodoxy, the weight which is given to the official utterances of the Kims in their sanctioned publications. Today in Pyongyang, the watchword is "creativity" to describe Kim Jong Il. The legends will proliferate, but when it comes to acceptable ranges of solutions and the manner in which they are discussed in the future among DPRK elites inside their own country, the selection of documents which end up in the Works is of critical importance.

Compiling a canon since the moment of its arrival in Wonsan on a Soviet warship in October 1945, the Kimist regime of the Korean Workers' Party takes its documents rather seriously, in its own way.

This website will be featuring some periodical blasts from the Kim Jong Il canon, as well as the official biography of his mother and the Mary Magdalena of the DPRK, Kim Jong Suk, but today, in true Confucian style, we celebrate the patriarch.

The quotes that follow, usually stripped of their context in the hectoring pedagogical style that Kim Il Sung perfected, illustrate the complex ways in which legacy might work or be interpreted in the DPRK. Like real Maoism in the PRC today, there may be a layer of subversion embedded in the old man's words, but there are also great, immense, and never-to-be-underestimated bulwarks of conservatism behind which the orthodox men who once felt Kim Il Sung's motherly embrace, and who now curate his legacy, might again take shelter behind.

While we here at SinoNK are eager to get to the twenty-seventh volume of the *Works*, and the Chairman's advice in 1972 about why men at age 28 are ideal leaders, the quotes below are all from Volume 1.

Quotes from Chairman Kim Il Sung

"A blind and badly prepared revolt is useless."¹

"As it immediately adjoins the Hamgyong and the Rangnim Mountains of our country, this area [around the Tuman-gang River] is conveniently placed for an advance into our homeland for the future revolutionary movement."²

"...we have laid solid foundations among the revolutionized masses for armed struggle in many rural areas along the Tuman-gang River."³

"Brothers and sisters, look at the flames over there. Those raging flames show that the enemy is doomed. Those flames show the whole world that our nation is not dead but alive, and that if we fight against the...plunderers we can win. Those flames will shine like a ray of hope in the hearts of our people suffering from maltreatment and hunger, and will spread throughout our three-thousand-*ri* land like a torch of struggle."⁴

¹ Kim Il Sung, "Let Us Repudiate the 'Left' Adventurist Line and Follow the Revolutionary Organizational Line: Speech Delivered at the Meeting of Party and Young Communist League Cadres Held at Mingyuegou, Yanji County," May 20, 1931, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.12.

² Kim Il Sung, "On Organizing and Waging Armed Struggle Against Japanese Imperialism: Speech Delivered at the Meeting of Party and Young Communist League Cadres Held at Mingyuegou, Yanji County," December 16, 1931, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.32.

³ Kim Il Sung, "On the Occasion of Founding the Anti-Japanese People's Guerrilla Army: Speech at the Ceremony to Found the Anti-Japanese People's Guerrilla Army," April 25, 1932, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.47.

⁴ Kim Il Sung, "Let Us Fight On Staunchly for the Liberation of the Fatherland: Speech Addressed to the People of Pochonbo,," June 4, 1937, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.131.

“By various forms of struggle you should completely frustrate all the anti-popular moves of the Governor-General of Korea, the bloodsucker that lives on the blood of our people.”⁵

“The history of our people in ancient times and in the Middle Ages was a history of struggle against aggression in defense of the homeland—repulsing the invasions of Sui and Tang and those of Khitan and Yuan to the north and curbing the invasion of the Japanese to the south. ...If in the period of the Three Kingdoms those three countries, Koguryo, Silla and Paekje, had unitedly repelled the foreign invaders, our homeland would have been further developed. When hundreds of thousands of Khitan troops invaded our country the people of Koryo under the command of General Kang Gam Chan dealt them a crushing blow at the Amnok-gang River and at Kusong, thus saving the country.”⁶

“In instituting mass organizations, we must above all organize the youth, reserve forces of the Party and the hope of the revolution.”⁷

Kim, only days after arriving in Korea in October 1945, told an audience that bases needed to be prepared in “mountainous areas” such as Kanggye and Hyesan in order that he could return to them in difficult times. “Being prepared for any unexpected event” Kim said, was a lesson gained from “experience gained in the anti-Japanese armed struggle” which showed the importance of “build[ing] up well the bases to depend on in exigencies.”⁸

“China affords us a good example of the national united front. When Japanese imperialism occupied Manchuria and extended its evil hand of aggression to the rest of the Chinese mainland, the Communist Party of China proposed that the Kuomintang and the Communist Party collaborate and come out in an anti-Japanese struggle for national salvation by rallying all forces of the nation....When the Sino-Japanese war broke out, the collaboration of the Communist Party and the Kuomintang at last crystallized and the anti-Japanese national united front was formed. The Kuomintang reactionary group that had been so stubborn was forced to accept the Communist Party’s proposal under the pressure of the unanimous demand of the Chinese people for national unity and...national salvation.”⁹

⁵ Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Fight On Staunchly for the Liberation of the Fatherland: Speech Addressed to the People of Pochonbo,” June 4, 1937, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.132.

⁶ Kim Il Sung, “The Korean Revolutionaries Must Know Korea Well: Speech Addressed to the Political Cadres and Political Instructors of the Korean People’s Revolutionary Army,” September 15, 1943, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), pp.206-207.

⁷ Kim Il Sung, “On Building the Party, State and Armed Forces in the Liberated Homeland: Speech Delivered to Military and Political Cadres,” August 20, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.231.

⁸ Kim Il Sung, “Building of New Korea and Immediate Tasks of Communists: Talk with Political Workers to Be Dispatched to Local Areas,” September 20, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.243.

⁹ Kim Il Sung, “On the Building of New Korea and the National United Front: Speech to the Responsible Functionaries of the Provincial Party Committees,” October 13, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.293.

“In the future all of youths burning with patriotic ardor should take up arms, ready to fight for the country and people with their very lives.”¹⁰

“We haven’t a single pencil either.”¹¹

“Rooted deep in the minds of our women at present are the vestiges of Japanese imperialist ideology and feudal ideas. Quite a few women think a life of idleness is good, they hold labour in contempt, and envy the rich, they are reluctant to undertake social work and have no national pride. They judge people according to their family, invite a sorceress to exorcise evil spirits and consult a fortune teller. All this is a manifestation of the survivals of Japanese imperialist and feudalistic ideologies.”¹²

“In days long ago, they crossed the Rivers Amnok-gang and Tuman-gang and the Straits of Korea, shedding tears of blood, overcome with the sorrow of a ruined nation. But now, they are re-crossing them with tears of emotion and overwhelmed with the joy of liberation.”¹³

“From every point of view—the history of America and the deeds of American troops stationed in south Korea—we must have no illusions about the US. The history of America is a history replete with aggression and plunder. Today the US troops which landed in south Korea are gradually revealing that they are an aggressive army by nature. If we harbour any illusions about the US and try to build a new country with its assistance, we cannot build an independent and sovereign state but will be reduced again to the status of a homeless race as in the past.”¹⁴

“Why, then, shouldn't we be consumed with animosity against the Japanese?”¹⁵

“If you imagine you have a vast knowledge that will be a great mistake. In fact, the knowledge accumulated by our teachers and intellectuals under Japanese imperialist rule is of little use in building a new country. If you rest content with your present knowledge and technology and do not try to learn with an open mind,

¹⁰ Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Unite and Build a New, Democratic Korea: Speech at a Welcoming Party Given by Representatives of All Social Strata in Pyongyang,” October 13, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.304.

¹¹ Kim Il Sung, “Let Us Unite and Build a New, Democratic Korea: Speech at a Welcoming Party Given by Representatives of All Social Strata in Pyongyang,” October 13, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.305.

¹² Kim Il Sung, “The Present Internal and International Situation and the Tasks of Women: Lecture to Women Work Officials in Pyongyang,” October 25, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.330.

¹³ Kim Il Sung, “Talk with Participants in the Nationalist Movement,” November 05, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.343.

¹⁴ Kim Il Sung, “Talk with Participants in the Nationalist Movement,” November 05, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.345.

¹⁵ Kim Il Sung, “On Establishing the Pyongyang Institute: Talk with Workers of the Pyongyang Institute and Local Party Organizations upon Designation of a Site for the Pyongyang Institute,” November 17, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.363.

you cannot keep abreast of developing events nor can you contribute to nation-building.”¹⁶

¹⁶ Kim Il Sung, “Tasks Confronting Intellectuals in Nation-Building: Speech Delivered before Teachers and Intellectuals in Pyongyang,” November 17, 1945, *Works, Vol. 1, June 1930 – December 1945*, (Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1980), p.376.