

“Dear Demise” of Kim Jong-Il & “Brilliant Succession” of Kim Jong-Un!

... in the name of the Grandfather, the Grandson and the Unholy Ghost ... a Kim trinity!

January 2012, Adrian Cowell, Director and Fund Manager

Is something more rotten than usual in the embalmed state that is the Kimdom of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)? There is plenty on which to speculate, and the potential cast of characters is greater than it may initially seem.

After much fruitless speculation since his original stroke(s) in August 2008 and subsequent complications, on 17th December 2011 at 0830hrs, the Dear Leader, Kim Jong-Il, finally met his Dear Demise, apparently whilst on his private armour-plated train. The train was his cross border conveyance of choice in this world and is presumably the same for his journey into the next. Demise cause is attributed to stress - “a great mental and physical strain” quoted KCNA ... the train took the ultimate (not quite what British Rail had in mind with their ex-advertising slogan), and will now convey him towards the Democratic People’s Pantheon, presumably at its maximum speed of around 60kph. The northern half of the divided peninsula will be hoping that there are neither leaves on the line nor points that are frozen! The nasty Fat Controller is ex his platform shoes. Mind the gap!

Official details of Kim Jong-Il’s birth claim that he was born on 16th February 1941 or 1942 during the liberation struggle against the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula, led of course by his father, the Great Leader, Kim Il-Sung. Location - a log cabin on the slopes of Mt Paektu, a mountain of particular mythological significance on the border of the DPRK and China. The event coincided with sightings of a swallow, a brilliant double rainbow and a new bright star in the heavens! Hail *Hallyu* (Korean wave)! Where did that idea come from?

Reality is somewhat different – Soviet records show that Yuri Irsenovich Kim was born 16th February 1941 in a camp in Vyatskoye, near Khabarovsk in eastern Siberia where his parents were, dad as a commander of the Soviet 88th Brigade of Korean and Chinese exiles ... Kim Il-Sung had been living in Manchuria since the age of 8 or so and on his return to Korea at the end of World War 2 spoke poor Korean ...

... and Joseph Stalin with Police Chief Beria had a lot to do with the “leadership” selection process, and they and China with most of everything that has followed.



It is good bye from me ...and hello from him?

Source: www.cleveland.com



Irony; top gear, a mid-70’s Lincoln Continental!

Source: www.businessinsider.com

Big Brother leaves “the house” leaving the “Jong Ones” behind in the apartment! Princes in the Juche Tower?

The Dear Leader, embodiment of George Orwell’s Big Brother, has finally left the building voted out by the Grim Reaper. The tragic reality show that is the DPRK has been gripped by scenes of mass hysteria, wailing and gnashing of teeth from the Pyongyang populace (a Pyongyang “post code” as opposed to one for the countryside or gulags accords elite status). Tearful *dongmunim* (comrades) vied to outdo each other in exaggerated grief, and diligently brushed snow off the streets along which the cortege was to pass. Third and youngest son, Kim Jong-Un, Chairman of the Funeral Committee led the funeral under the watchful eyes of his Uncle. His elder brother and half brother were not obviously in evidence.

DPRK propaganda moved quickly dubbing Kim Jung-Un, the 28 or 29 year old recently anointed heir to the Kimdom, the Great Successor to the revolutionary cause of *Juche* (self-reliance). He was the Brilliant Comrade; he is the Great Successor! Grooming for the position had been “fast tracked” since the Dear Stroke(s), and was publically acknowledged with his promotion from nowhere to Four Star General at the hastily convened 7th Party Congress last autumn. Grooming has allegedly included cosmetic surgery and grand paternal mimickery (swagger, demeanor, laugh, clothes, hairstyle) in an effort to legitimise his claim to the dynastic line from revered nation founder, his grandfather, the Great Leader, Kim Il-Sung.

In a family clean sweep at the self same 7th Party Conference, Aunt and favoured younger sister of the Dear Leader, Kim Kyong-Hui and her husband/Uncle Jang Sung-Thaek were also both elevated to Four Star Generals. Token military promotions, or something more? She joined the Politburo as a full member, and he was appointed an Alternate member. Alternates can be heard but can not vote – a subtle difference in status. Blood is thicker than water? Those moves seem to be designed to keep the Kimdom in the immediate family with the Aunt-Uncle as Regents! But there are reportedly other moves too ...

Auntie Kim Kyong-Hui and Uncle Jang Song-Thaek



The possible Regents, Dear sister Kim Kyong-Hui, and her husband, Jang Song-Thaek high profile companions of Kim Jong-Il on trips post Dear Strokes in the months before the Dear Demise

Source: www.grantmontgomery.blogspot.com

Aunt and uncle have had somewhat chequered “careers” but re-emerged into prominence from June 2009 post the Dear Strokes - Jang was in effect briefly in charge until the Dear Leader limped back onto his feet. Born in 1946, Kyong-Hui is younger than her brother, and is known for a violent temper, a very stubborn streak and for being a heavy drinker, having enthusiastically joined the Dear drinking binges. She may be an alcoholic and in poor health. Of late, she had been one of if not the closest Dear Confidante, until the Dear Successor’s late run. It was not always thus.

There is also another younger sister, Kim Kyoung-Suk born in 1947, mother of three, but for now out of the picture. A brother, Kim Pyong-II was born in 1944 but died in 1947, allegedly drowned in the house swimming pool, with reports, of course unconfirmed, that Kim Jong-II, aged 5/6, may have caused the accident (who knows?).

Their mother, Kim Jung-Suk (1917-1949, married 1941), was Kim Il-Sung’s first wife dying allegedly in child birth (one story suggests a possible shooting by Kim Il-Sung). Kim Jong-II and Kim Kyong-Hui left North Korea during the Korean War. On returning, Kyong-Hui failed to get on with her new step mother, Kim Song-Ae (born 1924- and as Kim Il-Sung’s former secretary she had taken over running the household on the death of Kim Jung-Suk, “married” 1952). Some accounts suggest that she deprived or underfed the step children and that Kyong-Hui refused to call her mother. The step mother bore three rival children, daughter Kim Kyung-Jin (b 1952), and sons Kim Pyong-II (b 1954 and named after the drowned half brother ...) and Kim Yong-II (1955-2000).

In the ‘70’s Kim Song-Ae tried to promote her son Pyong-II (with the closest physical likeness to Kim Il-Sung) as successor as opposed to the older Kim Jong-II, and expunge Kim Jung-Suk, her predecessor and Kim Jong-II’s mother, from history. Long on intrigue, definitely not a recipe for one big happy family, neither before nor after the anointing of Kim Jong-II as Dear Leader and heir apparent in 1982. Kim Jong-II purged his step mother’s clique and brothers, exiled his half siblings, and, following the death of Kim Il-Sung in 1994, kept Kim Song-Ae under house arrest. Could the two surviving half siblings have a lingering interest in the succession? Kim Pyong-II has been “parked” ambassadorially in Europe since 1988, accused of “violating the monolithic ideological system”. He is well out of Kim Jong-II’s way, and away from any potential power base, though he returns to DPRK from time to time as his mother is ailing. His sister has a lower profile.

Whilst studying at Kim Il Sung University, Kyong-Hui met Jang Song-Thaek of a worthy apparatchik background, but without the requisite glorious military heritage befitting the daughter of the founder of the nation. Kim Il-Sung was opposed to any marriage, moved Jang away from Pyongyang only for daughter to follow, finally conceded and the couple wed in 1972. Jang’s career proceeded smoothly upwards through various key and powerful positions, until, having been criticized for promoting his own faction, he was temporarily purged by Kim Jong-II in 2004. A challenge! Ooops brother-in-law! But there is more ... Jang was apparently involved in an earlier purge of Kim Yong-Ju, Kim Jong-II’s uncle, who was instrumental in promoting Kim Jong-II’s rise! Rivalry with previous!

Kyong-Hui is reported to have pleaded Jang’s case with her Dear brother. As a possible aside and interalia, Kyong-Hui and Jang’s daughter, Jang Kum-Song, born in 1977, had studied in Paris and was refusing to return to the DPRK. She died in 2006, circumstances unclear, possibly suicide or possibly murder. If suicide, that then may have contributed to Kim Jong-II pardoning his sister and her husband for his factional inclinations, and could partly explain their rehabilitation within a couple of years in 2006. However if murder, this would raise some intriguing complications, and temptations. Could be the marzipan layer?

So is it her and/or her husband with or without others?

Kim Kyong-Hui may be the possibly pickled second generation guardian of the Kim blood line, but even through an alcoholic haze, she could harbour ambitions of her own, with or without her husband? Jang, reluctantly approved of by Kim Il-Sung all those years ago, complicit in the purge of Kim Jong-Il's uncle, more recently purged himself, albeit briefly, by his brother-in-law for factional inclinations, and having lost a daughter in mysterious circumstances has previous, with or without his wife! Patience rewarded? He just may find his nephews rather troublesome. Or have there been moves to once again clip his wings?



1951 Kyong-Hui with Kim Jong-Il, and brother and father in 1966

Sources: nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com and www.koreaherald.com



Jang Song-Thaek, 65

Source: Wikipedia.com

History is not replete with examples of Regents happily stepping aside as and when.

The “Jong Ones”

The Young Ones was an anarchic, abusive and physically rough alternative comedy series shown on British TV in the '80's with certain inspiration from the “rock” deity Cliff Richard and the Shadows.

The “Jong Ones” show Shadowy similarities in the tragic rather than comic category.

There are three key players in this saga, together with a growing supporting cast! Kim Jong-Il seems to have sired 7 children (four daughters and three sons) from covering five “wives” (acknowledged as such if not formally married to them), and others could emerge.

For the moment the daughters perhaps have less relevance; they will presumably not want to cross their tipsy Auntie Kyong-Hui.

The “Jong Ones” are the third generation of Kim sons;

Jong-Nam, the eldest born in 1971, mothered by Song Hye-Rim (1937-2002), an older married actress who did not meet with Great Leader approval, living in “disgrace” in Macau since 2004 effectively under the protection of China, and the father of six of his own children. He could now be based in China, or still in Macau. In between bouts of roulette there are suggestions that he may be preparing to publish his book on it all! Kim Il-Sung had removed Song Hye-Rim early on in the piece and Kim Jong-Il was apparently not aware of his son until Jong-Nam was several years old, or perhaps it was the other way around with Kim Jong-Il hiding him and her, and Kim Il-Sung was in ignorance. Anyway. Initially raised by his mother's sister,

Sung Hye-Ryang, he then spent much of the '80's in Moscow with his by then exiled mother and in Switzerland before returning to Korea in the '90's. In the late-90's Jong-Nam was looking in pole position as eventual successor (1998-2001) before he got ahead of himself with reformist zeal and it all went horribly wrong. The damage may have been done before his arrest in Tokyo on a forged Dominican Republic passport attempting to take family to Tokyo Disneyland amidst other unseemly revelations concerning the extent of his endowment and disbursements therefrom. Anyway Japan was the last straw. He now claims to be against dynastic succession, but in the past tried to assassinate his irritating younger half-brothers. He allegedly paid his respects to his father going to Pyongyang on 17th December, but leaving after a few days well before the funeral. Love is lost and all has yet to end well.

Jong-Chul, the middle one born 1981 mothered by Ko Young-Hee (1953-2004), alleged Dear Paramour. An ethnic Korean from Japan, daughter of a professional wrestler, she was a dancer in the Mansudae Art Troupe (more less-than-suitable maternity, but she was promoted as the "Respected Mother" from 2003 possibly to promote Jong-Chul). He is living in Pyongyang, married but reportedly less than manly in countenance and behaviour, and as such is an unacceptable succession candidate, clearly not in any of the Great, Dear or Brilliant moulds. But he is a fan of Eric Clapton and apparently attended a concert in Singapore in February 2011. Ooooh, you are awful, but I don't like you!

Jong-Un, the Brilliant Successor, likes guns. He is a "genius of artillery". He was born 8th January 1981 (clearly not given brother's birthday) or possibly 1983, mothered also by Ko Young-Hee, who apparently doted upon him, calling him the "Morning Star King". He spent some undistinguished years at school in Berne, Switzerland (1993-98), before the usual Kim Il-Sung University finishing school and Kim Il-Sung Military Academy. He could more recently have developed a violent and unpredictable streak, and is possibly showing early signs of less than rude health (allegedly diabetes and heart disease, but who knows). Jong-Un reportedly tried to assassinate Jong-Nam just last year in Macau, but the plot was foiled, and Jong-Nam was saved by the Chinese authorities. Jong-Un was appointed Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army on 30th December 2011, a post of great titular significance.

Squabbling princes in the Juche Tower? How long will Auntie or Uncle tolerate Successor peccadilloes, however Great, before calling for the "butt of malmsey" *soju*? But hark! In December in the days immediately before the Dear Demise, Jong-Un and Kim Jong-Il oversaw a purge led by U Dong-Chik, Senior Deputy Chief of State Security of 200 supporters of ... Uncle Jang, and General O Kuk-Ryol, a Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission, heroic Korean war orphan and childhood friend of Kim Jong-Il, and for long considered the number two to Kim Jong-Il. Perhaps too long? The raids discovered stashes of US dollars (counterfeit or real? General O was behind the DPRK's extensive counterfeit currency printing activities) with anyone having over \$50,000 expected to be shot! Ebb and flow testing survival skills?

How long now before the Great Successor is in a position to initiate his own purges from a position of strength? It took Kim Jong-Il three years from his father's death in 1994 to consolidate power, courtesy of the military. He held sway, but can Junior? The military holds the key....

The Military and the Propaganda

Since the death of his father in 1994, Kim Jong-Il followed a policy of *Songun*, military first, granting the military primacy in DPRK government and society. It was his only choice to defeat the old partisans/party cadres and to secure his position. This policy initially worked alongside *Juche* (self reliance) before effectively if not officially supplanting it. In 1998, the Defence Commission Chairmanship, held by Kim Jong-Il was declared the "the highest post in the state"! The economy has been on a permanent war footing.

Songun has broken the economy, imposing untold hardship and famine. Military personnel total 1.2million, out of a total population of 24.5million. At official exchange rates, 2009 GDP is estimated at \$28bn, of which defence spending was around 23% of GDP, the highest proportion of any country in the world, and double that in second place. Per capita GDP was \$1,800 with the official monthly wage estimated at \$2, augmented through the black economy to an estimated \$15. The economy shrunk by 0.9% in 2009, with exports of \$1.997bn and imports of \$3.096bn. Official exports are augmented by sales of missiles and weapons, drugs, and counterfeit cigarettes and currency. China was 75% of trade, with RoK in second place.

The legacy of *Songun* is a powerful military clique. It was the military that staged the Dear funeral ceremony.

For many years General O Kuk-Ryol had been seen as the de facto number two to Kim Jong-II, until he tripped up. The December purge of his followers probably puts an end to his future prospects. Anyway there is a rising star in Vice Marshall Ri Yong-Ho, Chief of General Staff of the Korean People's Army since February 2009, and elected to the Politburo and appointed Vice Chairman of the Central Military Commission on 28th September 2010. Pay special attention to photo shoot positioning!



Kim Jong-Un on the right hubcap, Jang Song-Thaek watching his back, and Vice Marshall Ri Yong-Ho left flanking in a “standard” military manoeuvre

Source: www.theatlantic.com



Vice Marshall Ri Yong-Ho flanked by the Kims 9th Sep 2011 at a 63rd Anniversary parade in Pyongyang

Source: www.independent.co.uk

Ri Yong-Ho, 69, is the son and grandson of key Kim military aides and a known hard-liner and long time member of the Kim Jong-Il inner military circle. He was appointed Commander of the Pyongyang Defence Command in 2003 (a key position) which he held until 2009 when he was promoted to Chief of General Staff of the Korean People's Army. In 2010 he was promoted to Vice Marshall (there are three in total; one is also powerful and active, Kim Yong-Chun, 75, minister of the armed forces and Vice Chairman of the National Defence Commission, and the third is not). He is also a member of the Politburo. The next General of significance is Kim Jong-Gak who is an alternate member of the Politburo.

The Military top brass have all vowed "to become human rifles and bombs" should the DPRK be threatened and have pledged support to the Great Successor. They have moved fast. On Monday 19th December, on announcement of the Dear Demise, two short range missiles were fired, presumably creating two vapour trails to evoke the double rainbow that appeared at the time of the Dear Birth.



Tearful military top brass at Kumsusan Memorial Hall

Source: www.news.yahoo.com

The state propaganda machine screened a documentary on the Great Successor on 8th January, his birthday, which explained his military genius. He apparently wrote his first thesis on military strategy at the age of 16, and was described by his father as "the genius of the geniuses in military knowledge".



An iron horse, my Kimdom for an iron horse ... or the front end of the eponymous pantomime animal

Sources: rokdop.com and guardian.co.uk

The Great Successor has said that nothing will change. Bet the Generals back that, but is it his decision?

The Respected Mother

So far the state propaganda system has focused more on Kim Jong-Un's grand mother, Kim Jung-Suk, the first wife of Kim Il-Sung, and her heroic efforts. Under normal circumstances it should be only a matter of time before Jong-Un's mother, Ko Young-Hee (1953-2004), would be idolized, but this presents a few problems. As an ethnic Korean from Japan and daughter of a professional wrestler, her quality and purity is not of sufficiently high grade, and her career as a dancer is far from the socialist ideal, however many veils were cast off for the Dear Leader. Her future status will be an interesting side show.



Kim Jong-Suk, heroic grandmother, and Ko Young-Hee, Dear Paramour, dancer, ethnic Korean from Japan, wife 3/4 of Kim Jong-Il, mother of Kim Jung-Un

Sources: nkleadershipwatch.wordpress.com, www.japanfocus.com and english.chosun.com

What next?

In a New Year message for 2012, it was declared that the military would be bolstered and food shortages addressed. The DPRK will become "a mighty and prosperous nation". And "the whole party, the entire army and all the people should possess a firm conviction that they will become human bulwarks and human shields in defending Kim Jong-Un unto death".

15th April 2012 is the centenary of the birth of Kim Il-Sung, a date by which the country has repeatedly vowed to become a prosperous nation. What chance that national prosperity will be evidenced solely and exclusively by another nuclear test?

It is also the centenary of the sinking of the Titanic. So adoption by the DPRK of the Celine Dion anthem, "My Heart Will Go On"? Every night in my dreams I see you, I feel you that is how I know you go on.

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well if it were done quickly, or, is now the winter of our discontent?

With the onset of spring can we expect the arrival of a *Kimjongunia* flower, dandelion (le pis-en-lit) perhaps, to join the orchid *Kimilsungia* and the begonia *Kimjongilia*.

Stability?

The world called for it. Pundits have predicted or identified it. Neighbouring external geo-political interests and markets want it – no or little change, not wanting to face up to the alternative. The internal DPRK military clique and party apparatchiks will want little or no change too, as indeed will Kim Jong-Un, none wishing to put themselves out of a job. The passing of an utterly ruthless autocrat, who demanded absolute loyalty and brooked no criticism, and the arrival of a callow youth reliant on others? With those others in the mix and moving targets, toadying will become so much more complicated ... can the situation in the upper echelons really be described as stable? Borgia versus Medici ... and hope for no overspill.

Conclusion

The pain of the popular TV *durama* (soap operas) in the RoK and increasingly screened around the world ceases when the television is switched off, and life goes on. The pain in the *durama* that is life in the DPRK for the average *Dongmu* (comrade) looks set to continue for some time yet.