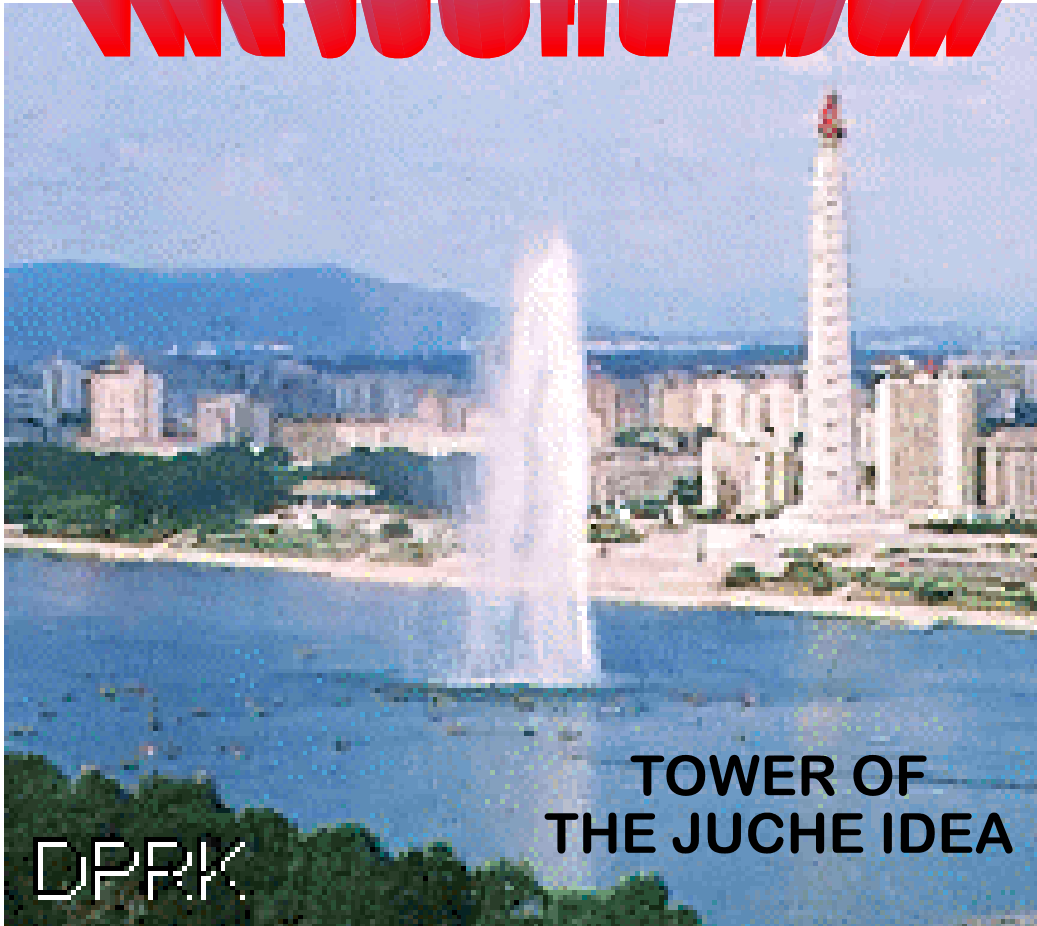


THE JUCHE IDEA



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THE 'JUCHE IDEA'

On having the opportunity to visit Pyongyang, North Korea with the Junior World Champs team, I was intrigued by the social environment I encountered. In my endeavour to understand some of the traditions, beliefs, economics etc. of the country, people and their rulers, I purchased many books on the reunification of Korea, philosophies of their leaders and the thought behind those philosophies.

A brief background to my intrigue, we arrived at Pyongyang airport, very dark no lights on during the day, personnel in uniform. Passport control, the official sits high in an enclosed kiosk, you place your passport on a shelf at least 1.8metres high and then stand back to be viewed via an angled mirror. I have never visited a communist country before and was naturally intrigued by this routine. Is this a power play over the visitor, to make them feel uncomfortable? Or is it the way in which the general populace is made aware of their standing in society?

Korea, over history has suffered repeated invasions from other countries. Japan fought with China in 1894 and Russia in 1904, finally gaining power over Korea in 1910. During the time of the Japanese rule Pyongyang had high unemployment, was dirty and disorderly. After the end of the 2nd world war, which brought about the defeat of the Japanese, Korea was finally liberated. Soviet troops then moved into North Korea, shortly after Hiroshima in August 1945. The United States ordered a division of the Korean Peninsula along the 38th latitude fearing the Soviet Union may occupy the whole Peninsula. Pyongyang became the capital of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 1948 under backing from Moscow, whereas South Korea became the Republic of Korea under backing from the United States.

It was after the division of the Korean Peninsula that the Korean War began on June 25, 1950. Many people fled from the communist north to fight for the south, the war lasted 3 years and essentially ended in a stalemate. Many people were killed both Korean and overseas troops, thousands of Korean families were separated where some members fought for the south while others remained in the North.

The city of Pyongyang was reduced to ashes during the three year Korean War, and was completely remodelled and rebuilt over a very short period under the rule of Kim IL Sung. Today Pyongyang has a population of 2 million and is the political, economic, scientific, educational and cultural centre of the North.

Pyongyang is a very scenic city with a great abundance of treed open spaces, many impressive buildings, on a very grand scale. The city flanks the Taedong River, it has a 2,000 year history as a city and was formed as the capital of Koguryo in 427 and remained so for 240 years.

The many massive buildings appear to be constructed of quality materials, with the great use of marble in foyers and faced with ceramic tiles. I learnt from our interpreter this was due to the mineral richness of the country. The city was re-built street by street, one whole street of sports arenas, football stadium, swimming pool, badminton, athletics, table tennis, weight lifting, judo etc. Another street catering entirely for children, from maternity hospital through all education institutes. Highways with 6 lanes, but very few cars.

It appears the economy is now having difficulty maintaining these buildings, and the services infrastructure ie, water, power. It was interesting to note our hotels plumbing in particular had deteriorated over the short time it had been built approx. 15 years, was it due to poor workmanship, lack of maintenance and use, or such a rapid building program?

On a tour of Pyongyang we saw many massive statues of Kim IL Sung and Kim Jong IL, these statues were cast in bronze and stood many storeys high. The people all referred to them as “the Great Leaders”, and filed past the statues with great respect and reverence. On visiting the memorials to both the Leaders, again massive marble buildings, with endless temperature controlled rooms displaying gifts and artworks endowed by visiting dignitaries from overseas, also more statues. I was put to some fast thinking with our interpreters question as to my opinion of the memorials, I shielded with an answer on the architecture and building materials - not the answer he was hoping for. All this great idolisation spurred me into some of the book buying, wanting to know why the leaders are held in such reverence by their people.

Also on our tour of Pyongyang we saw the tower of the ‘Juche Idea’, well that had to strike a note, along with all the other references to the Juche Idea. Now admitting to have not read the pattern meaning for Juche at that time, having been entirely focused on learning the pattern, I thought there was a definite need for more research on the subject, hence the purchase of ‘Kim Jong IL - on the Juche Idea’. Freely admitting to being one who likes to do things the hard way, I read the book first, then looked at the pattern meaning, the light is dawning.

My third book purchase was ‘Korea’s Reunification - A Burning Question’. Having had the opportunity to visit North Korea and witness the seemingly relaxed pace of life, where everyone walks everywhere, no rush hour traffic, to that effect no traffic, also not many pedestrians. The largest groups of people we saw were school children.

In contrast was our visit to Seoul, South Korea.

Population of Seoul 11 million, massive traffic, smog, endless shops, markets both underground and above ground. Visualise a little old lady sitting in an igloo shaped plastic sheet about 1.5m high and 1.2 wide, pouring rain, sewing cream silk blouses on an ‘electric’ sewing machine, this market is open 24 hours per day. School day 9am-5pm, one hour off for dinner, back for study 6pm-9pm, six days per week. Four weeks off per year, two of which are at summer school.

Here we have a society with all the western ‘attributes.’ Survival and capitalism appearing to be some of the major driving forces in such a fast paced overcrowded society. What a culture shock for the North and South if they reunify, how would it be managed with two so different societies?

I also took the opportunity to visit the ‘demilitarised zone’, still pitted with unexploded mines. The ‘zone’ was construction in line with the armistice agreement at the end of the Korean War. It consists of a no-man’s land 2.4 miles wide and 150 miles long across the peninsula at the 38th parallel. The threat of invasion from the North appears to be taken very seriously, but it also appears the area is visited by a great number of tourists!

I will now endeavour to explain the role, thoughts and idolisation of the great leaders.

Kim IL Sung evolved the Juche idea, as the guiding idea of the Korean Revolution.

Meaning of Juche (Tul):

Is a philosophical idea that man is the master of everything and decides everything, in other words, the idea that man is the master of the world and his own destiny. It is said that this idea was rooted in Baekdu Mountain which symbolises the spirit of the Korean people. Diagram represents Baekdu Mountain.

Kim IL Sung first explained the principles of the Juche idea at the Meeting of Leading Personnel of the Young Communist League and the anti Imperialist Youth League held at Kalun in June 1930, he put forward a Juche-oriented line for the Korean revolution. This was a historical event which heralded the creation of the Juche idea and the birth of the Juche oriented revolutionary line.

The Juche philosophy brought about radical change in the ideological and mental life of mankind thereby providing the working classes and the working masses with a powerful weapon to transform and shape their own destiny.

Kim Jong IL, the son of Kim IL Sung, was born on Mt Paektu (Baekdu), the famous mountain of the revolution. It was on Mt Paektu where Kim IL Sung first started the movement for national liberation and independence. Kim IL Sung's intense love for oppressed people was said to be a driving force behind his creation of his man centred philosophy.

The Korean people regard Mt Paektu as the supreme idea of defending human independence and dignity, while its spirit is considered as the INDOMITABLE revolutionary spirit of fighting to the end for this ideal. Its spirit being victorious with which all the injustice and evils in the world are ruthlessly punished and suppressed opening a world of FREEDOM and JUSTICE.

Kim Jong IL is regarded as the son of Mt Paektu, embodying all its powers and is therefore considered the son of the revolution.

The furthering of the Juche idea, enabled Kim Jong IL to further the man centred philosophy serving to realise the independence of the people and illuminating the road ahead of them. This philosophy is both political and revolutionary because it is the philosophy of human love, reform, transformation, creation and innovation which brightly illuminates the way to shape human destiny. Serving the people.

To explain "Man is the master of everything and decides everything" he is the master of the world and of his own destiny, and he plays the decisive role in transforming the world and his destiny. Man is a social being with Chajusong, creativity and consciousness. Man is the most developed material being who develops and changes the world to serve him. Chajusong, creativity and consciousness are man's social qualities which take shape as he develops. Chajusong is referred to as man's life and soul, his social and political integrity.

In the course of leading the Korean revolution Kim IL Sung provided scientific answers to all problems arising, in the revolution and construction, on the basis of the Juche idea. All his ideology, theory and method proceed from Juche principles and embody them. The history of the Korean revolution is a history of the application and total victory of the Juche idea.

The steady expansion and development of the revolution started with the emergence of the working class, giving birth to a new age when the working masses, who had so far been the object of history, now appeared as its masters. The new age that witnessed the appearance of the working class and other working masses, as a great force, enabled them to become masters of their own destiny, shaping it in an independent and creative way, realising the historic cause of national liberation, class emancipation and human freedom. This historic task was accomplished with the evolution of the Juche idea.

All thinking and activity of Kim Jong IL are directed to defending the independence of the people and giving full play to their creativity and consciousness. This is the basic factor which decides the scientific accuracy and invincible vitality of his leadership. It is Kim Jong IL's view that the leader is the brain of the people, the main agent of social reform, the centre of unity and cohesion, and the helmsman who organises and commands the activity and struggle of the people in a co-ordinated manner. Ultimately the supreme representative of the people.

Socrates said, "There are two ways to save reality. One is that a man of wisdom and aware of justice holds power, and the other is that the man in power is to become a man of wisdom possessed of the wisdom of justice."

Kim Jong Il's trust is the Juche-orientated faith that since people are the most precious and strongest beings in the world, one must unconditionally love them and rely on them. Namely, by virtue of his trust in and devotion to the people he wins the absolute support and faith of the people.

"Kim Jong Il is the father of the people and the saviour of their fate." *The Leadership Philosophy of Kim Jong IL by Jo Song Baek (1997)*

I now have a better understanding of the reasons behind the high regard with which the Korean people hold, Kim IL Sung and Kim Jong IL. They are considered as the fathers of the revolution, they developed and initiated the Juche idea as the basis for thought and action of the revolution.

ECONOMY:

As for economic issues I am not going to express concerns or pass judgement on current issues but to outline the ideals of Kim Jong IL's standing on economy and wealth, again aligned to the Juche idea. "The people are the masters of the Economy". Therefore, the masses must be made the owners of the means of the production if they are to be the masters of the economy, they must be made the masters of economic management.

It is considered, that the capitalist economy alienates the majority of the masses, and is for a handful of privileged people. The problem being that excessive stress is laid on the important role of money in the economic operation due to its functional character, whereas the value of man, the master of the economy, is neglected.

I can only re-iterate what I learned in Pyongyang during discussions with interpreters, when outlining further economic scenarios. I understand Pyongyang has free housing, medical services, and free education at all levels of schooling.

REUNIFICATION:

Kim IL Sung's philosophy on reunification had three principles, he felt the Korean people should.

- Approach reunification independently, without any outside interference.
- Agreements should be reached in accordance with the general will of the entire Korean people.
- In the reunification process national unity should take precedence over different social systems whereby one system cannot strive to dominate the other. Different ideology and social systems can exist within one country and people with different ideologies can co-exist within one country.

Reunification is a very complex issue, which requires a great deal of thought and discussion, if you wish to research the subject further, perform a web search on 'Korea' go to 'Pyongyang' this website has many very interesting articles. It covers the food shortages of the North, the North's disarmament talks with the USA, the issues associated with families being split during the Korean War, steps being taken to initiate reunification agreements, the economic and unemployment issues in South Korea.

So far some reunification issues agreed upon are, to form and operate a committee for North South economic co-operation, share some fishing grounds, contact and demonstrations between the North and South Taekwon-do organisations, make contact with separated families, initiate procedures for protection of investment.

Another round of reunification talks is scheduled for March 2001.

In conclusion I am very appreciative of having the opportunity to visit North Korea, we were treated with the utmost courtesy, and wanted for nothing. It was an amazing experience and certainly sparked my interest in the History of the Korean Peninsula and the changes, which will inevitably have to take place to enable reunification.

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