

Arms and the Hammer and Sickle: Kim Il Sung and the Rise of the Partisan Generals in the 1960s

Dae-Sook Suh

This essay will examine the rise to political power of the North Korean generals who were guerrilla partisans fighting against the Japanese, and some of the consequences of their attempt during the 1960s to expand their political and social influence in North Korea. The record of the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party of Korea, held from December 10 to 14, 1962, proclaims the famous slogan, "Arms in one hand and hammer and sickle in the other." This was to become the guiding principle of the DPRK during the 1960s. The principle stated that the task of all party members and workers was to build socialism by "protecting our streets and villages and our homeland from our enemies with arms in one hand and hammer and sickle in the other." By the time of the Fifth Party Congress in November 1970, however, Kim was frankly admitting that North Korea was not an advanced country in military technology and was not able to compete with advanced countries. Since modern warfare was not decided by weapons or military technology, he said, there was no need for North Korea to do so, but it was important to gain superiority in political and ideological consciousness. The eight years between these announcements witnessed both the high point and the beginning of the decline in political prominence for Kim Il Sung's guerrilla partisans.

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1. The crucial decision to strengthen the military may have been made at the fourth plenum of the Central Committee. This plenum was held sometime between March and December 1962 and its agenda was kept secret. It became the practice that whenever important problems were discussed in a plenum, both the agenda and date were kept secret.
 2. *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam* (1963), pp. 157–162. The plenum is also reported in *Nodong Shinmun*, December 16, 1962. There is a huge sign bearing this slogan in the Revolutionary Museum in Pyongyang. When I was introduced to the Socialist Construction Section of the museum, I jokingly mentioned the slogan, implying that a man can neither shoot nor work with both hands occupied with arms, hammer, and sickle. This remark drew immediate anger and I quickly offered my apology. They were serious about the slogan. For Kim's reference to this slogan, see *Kim Il Sung Chŏjak Sŏn'jip*, 4:365. See also *Chosŏn Nodongdang Yŏksa Kyojae*, pp. 494–495.

military technology and was not able to compete with advanced countries—nor was there any need for it to do so, since modern warfare was not decided by weapons or military technology, but by superiority in political and ideological consciousness.³ The eight years between these announcements witnessed both the high point and the beginning of the decline in political prominence for Kim Il Sung's guerrilla compatriots. In this paper I will examine the rise to political power of the partisan generals who fought with him against the Japanese and some of the consequences of their attempt during the 1960s to expand their political and social influence in the DPRK.

The Rise of the Military

After the Fourth Party Congress, when Kim Il Sung consolidated his political power beyond challenge, his partisans increasingly occupied important positions in both the party and the government. Their prominence was responsible for two subsequent developments in the 1960s: the emergence of technocrats to augment the lack of managerial and technical skills of the partisans, and the rise of the military. For example, only ten out of some thirty ministers were retained when a new cabinet was formed in October 1962, and they as well as the more than twenty newly recruited ministers were either partisan political appointees or technocrats. These partisans and experts were expected to carry out an ambitious new seven-year economic plan, develop the economy, and refine the existing political system. However, it was not long before the inherent tensions surfaced between the military priorities of the partisans and the drive for economic development.

The majority of the partisans were generals on active duty or retired military professionals, and they insisted on strengthening the national defense by modernizing the armed forces. The Soviet-Korean dispute had serious economic consequences for the North, as the Soviets withdrew technical support and aid, but it had a still greater impact on the military. At the time when the Soviet Union was curtailing its military

3. Kim said this in a speech delivered on the first day of the Fifth Party Congress, November 2, 1970. For the full text, see Kim Il Sung, *Chosŏn nodongdang che och'a taehoe esŏ han chungang wiwŏnhoe sŏp ch'onghwa pogo*.

assistance, it was beyond the reach of the North Korean economy and technology to furnish sophisticated military machinery, technology, supplies, replacement parts, and fuel sources. After a North Korean military delegation headed by General Kim Kwang-hyŏp, who was vice-chairman of the Party as well as vice-premier, returned emptyhanded from a November 1962 visit to the Soviet Union, the partisans greatly increased their demands to build up the North Korean military and make it self-sufficient.⁴ The “Arms in one hand and hammer and sickle in the other” drive captured the spirit of this demand. The course set by the fifth plenum in 1962 emphasized the determination of the partisan generals to strengthen their military capabilities, even at the cost of compromising and limiting economic development.

It was also at the fifth plenum that the generals revealed the four basic military policies of the party: to arm the entire populace, fortification of the whole country, cadre training for every soldier and the modernization of military weapons and equipment. In October 1966, at the Second Party Conference, Kim elaborated on these four military policies.⁵ Arming the entire populace, Kim declared, meant building a flawless defense system in both the front and the rear, by arming not only the soliders, but also the workers, peasants, and the entire population. This policy reorganized and reinforced what was known as the Worker Peasant Red Guards (*Nonomg chŏgwidae*), more than 1.5 million strong, and also led to the creation of the Red Young Guards (*Pulgŭn ch'ŏngyŏn kŭnwidae*), with seven hundred thousand members. Each factory and cooperative farm incorporated military drills and lessons and military maneuvers in its routines. From young children seven or eight years old to elders in their late sixties — all were taught to shoot and handle guns. Members of the Red Young Guards were given as much as five hundred hours of military training per year.⁶

The second policy, to fortify the entire country, referred to the idea that success in modern warfare depends greatly on the endurance of

4. For a report on Kim Kwang-hyŏp's visit, see *Nodong Shinmun*, December 6, 1962. Only a short article indicating his return was featured, and the usual lengthy report of a high official's visit to the Soviet Union was omitted.

5. Kim Il Sung, *The Present Situation and the Tasks of Our Party*, pp. 51–95.

6. The Red Young Guard were reorganized from the Student Worker-Peasant Red Guards on Kim's fifty-eighth birthday, April 15, 1970. The guards consisted mostly of North Korean high school students. See *Pukhan Chŏnsŏ*, 1:37.

the citizenry and the storage of material to sustain a protracted war. This required, Kim argued, that preparations should be made to facilitate the transformation of all North Korean industries into wartime production. Under this policy, the North Koreans dug underground shelters, built underground storage facilities, and dispersed the people from urban to rural areas. They began to build a number of underground factories and even built several underground arsenals.

The third policy, cadre training for the military, meant that everyone from enlisted personnel to ranking officers would be trained to fulfil the duties not only of their own position but also of the person above them. This policy had two objectives: to upgrade the morale of the soldiers and to prepare the regular army for expansion in case of emergency.

On the fourth policy, calling for the modernization of the armed forces, Kim argued that since the enemy was armed to the teeth with modern weapons, North Koreans should modernize their weapons whenever possible. It is important to remember that at the time these policies were being formulated, a new and more efficient regime in South Korea was effectively strengthening and modernizing its military personnel and technology and upgrading its ties with the United States military by sending troops to Vietnam. It was not until after 1965, when North Korea and the Soviet Union restored normal relations, that North Koreans were able to import advanced modern weapons, but from December 1962 they began to concentrate on the development of machine industries to produce conventional weapons—to the great detriment of national economic development.

Confronted with the temporary suspension of military aid from the Soviet Union during the Soviet-Korean dispute, Kim reiterated the need to arm the soldiers not only with the most advanced weapons, but also with the most stringent revolutionary thought and hatred toward the enemy.⁷ Kim said that the North Korean economy had reached the stage where it could produce enough arms to equip everyone with a rifle. He urged that tunnels be dug near the front and factories be built in under-

7. Kim Il Sung, "Uri inmin kundae rŭl hyŏngmyŏng kundae ro mandŭl myŏ kukbang esŏ chawi ūi pangch'im ūl kwanch'ŏl haja" [Let us transform our People's Army into a revolutionary army and implement the self-defense policy in the national defense], in *Uri hyŏngmyŏng esŏ ūi chuch'e e taehayŏ*, 1:216–234.

ground shelters. Should hostilities begin, the entire nation should and take orders from the military and serve military objectives.

Such heavy emphasis on independent military buildup was costly to the economic development of North Korea. Although the policy called for the simultaneous development of economic construction and military buildup, the two were mutually exclusive goals, because the level of economic development rarely complemented the sophisticated military arsenal previously supplied by the Soviet Union. During the 1962–1964 Soviet-Korean dispute, the military suffered a considerable setback in its capabilities. In the succeeding drive to create an independently powerful military establishment, North Korea lost ground both in economic development and in military strength.

When the military policy was first announced at the fifth plenum in December 1962, the party gave the people ten economic development tasks,⁸ impossible goals to fulfill even with superhuman effort, and in his New Year address in 1963, Kim frankly admitted that some of the economic goals he had set for the past year had not been met.⁹ To counter such setbacks, he ordered the mobilization of one million women into the labor force,¹⁰ he also said that since the workers were not strictly observing the eight-hour workday, he was instituting a 480-minute workday instead.¹¹ He then divided the day into segments: work eight hours, study eight hours, and rest eight hours. Under such a system, it was the workers' rest hours that usually suffered.

The domestic difficulty in both the military and economic sectors prompted the North Koreans to react swiftly to the fall of Khrushchev in 1964. Immediately after his fall, Kim Il and Kim Ch'ang-man went to Moscow to celebrate the forty-seventh anniversary of the October

8. For details on these ten goals, see *Chosŏn chungang yŏn'gam* (1963), pp. 161–162.

9. *Nodong Shinmun*, January 1, 1963. The address also appears in *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam* (1964), pp. 1–5.

10. Kim Il Sung, "Nongch'on e taehan noryŏk chiwŏn saŏp ūl chŏn inminjŏk undong ūro pŏllimyŏ kŏnsŏl e taehan chido ch'egye rŭl koch'ilite taehayŏ" [On developing the program to augment manpower in agriculture into the movement of the entire people and correcting the leadership system in construction], in *Sahoe chuŭi kyŏngje kwalli munje e taehayŏ*, 3; 467–492.

11. This instruction was given to the workers in the Ŭnyul mines on January 22, 1965. Kim said that some workers made their eight-hour workday as little as a 190-minute workday, and that this should be corrected to have everyone work 480 minutes per day. See Kim Il Sung, *Soedol saengsan esŏ hyŏksin ūl irŭk'ilte taehayŏ*, pp. 2–28.

Revolution, and shortly after Premier Kosygin's visit to North Korea in 1965, a military delegation headed by Ch'oe Kwang, North Korean chief of staff, went to Moscow to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet victory over Germany. Soviet technicians returned and trade volume increased. Mutual visits were frequent and a number of agreements on technical assistance programs were signed. In May 1967 Vladimir Novikov visited Pyongyang and North Korean vice-premier Yi Chu-yŏn visited Moscow in October, establishing an economic, scientific, and technical consultative commission.¹²

Kim may have regained some lost ground by the renewed trade with the Soviet Union, and may also have updated his military equipment and technology, but the problems related to the policy of simultaneous emphasis on economic development and strengthening military capabilities were affecting the basic growth of national strength. The military outlay in the national budget jumped from about 2.6 percent in 1961 to 5.8 percent in 1964 and 10 percent in 1966. The following year it tripled to 30.4 percent and remained in the 30 percent range until 1971.

Kim acknowledge as early as 1965 that the pace of economic development was retarded by the increased military expenditures, and that the goals of the seven-year economic plan would not be met on schedule.¹³ But he kept up a relentless pressure to achieve the goals, and outlined detailed methods for planning and achieving a balanced, unified national economy.¹⁴ No matter what plans were devised, however, the people began to show signs of exhaustion. The arms in one hand and

12. Between 1965 and 1969 North Korea and the Soviet Union signed more than a dozen agreements, including two defense-related military agreements, on May 31, 1965, and March 2, 1967. See George Ginsburgs and Roy U.T. Kim, *Calendar of Diplomatic Affairs, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, 1945-75*, pp. 91-123. For a number of individual agreements see, for example, *Izvestia*, February 24, 1965, March 14, 1965, February 16, 1967; *Pravda*, March 6, 1967; and *Nodong Shinmun*, March 4, 1965. The agreements are listed in the North Korean yearbooks; for example, *Chosŏn chungang yŏn'gam*, 1966-67, p. 394.

13. See Kim's New Year address of January 1, 1965, in *Chosŏn Chungan Yŏn'gam*, 1966-67, pp. 1-5.

14. See, for example, his instruction at the party meeting of the State Planning Commission, in Kim Il Sung, *Inmin kyŏngie kyehoek ūi irwonhwa, sebhwa ūi widae han saenghwillyŏk ūl namgim ōpsi palhwi hagi wihayŏ*. See also his speech of October 10, 1965, on the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Worker's Party of Korea, in *Kim Il Sung Chŏjak Sŏnjip*, 4: 279-316. The North Koreans were indeed forced to follow the policy, as shown by an editorial in *Nodong Shinmun*, November 7, 1966.

hammer and sickle in the other were too heavy for the North Korean worker, and the hand that held the hammer and sickle gradually began to sink.

At the thirteenth plenum of the Central Committee in the spring of 1966, the convocation of the Second Party Conference was announced for October 1966. The conference was to serve three purposes. The first was to formalize the extension of the seven-year economic plan for an additional three years. Kim Il, the first vice-premier, reported that the extension had become necessary because of the heavy national burden in defense expenditures. The second purpose was for Kim Il Sung to break his long silence about North Korean relations with the fraternal socialist countries, particularly North Korea's position in the Sino-Soviet dispute. The third purpose was to replace a number of members and candidate members of the Central Committee who had been demoted and purged since the Fourth Party Congress in 1961.

At the Second Party Conference the extension of the economic plan for another three years to 1970 was made official, but there was no change in the policy of simultaneously fulfilling the goals of economic development and strengthened military capability. Kim made a strong statement about North Korea's independence from both the Soviet Union and China, and disassociated himself from the Sino-Soviet dispute. He also made a number of important statements on the conditions for revolution in South Korea and on the North Korean position regarding Vietnam.¹⁵

It was the third purpose of the conference that revealed the significant change that had taken place in the party hierarchy and leadership since 1961. From the composition of the executive group of the conference, it was clear that more than one-fifth of the members of the Central Committee had been replaced. The new lineup contained numerous partisans and generals. For example, of the eleven-member Political Committee of the Central Committee, five nonpartisans were removed. The six remaining members and four of the five new appointees were partisans or partisan-related. Not only was the Political Com-

15. For the text of the declaration of the party conference on the Vietnam problem, dated October 12, 1966, see *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam, 1966-67*, pp. 130-131. For Kim's speech on international relations, see Dae-Sook Suh, *Kim Il Sung: The North Korean Leader*, chapter 10.

mittee thus completely without technocrats and dominated by partisans and relatives of partisans, but nearly all its members had professional military backgrounds. Some, such as Kim Kwang-hyŏp, Kim Ch'ang-bong, Ch'oe Hyŏn, and Yi Yŏng-ho, were generals and admirals on active duty.

A similar pattern can be observed in the candidate membership of the Political Committee. The number of candidate members was increased from four to nine. The nine new candidate members were, in rank order, four partisan generals on active military duty, two partisans, and three partisan-related candidate members, including Kim Il Sung's younger brother, Kim Yŏng-ju.

The party conference also made one important structural change in the party organization, replacing the offices of chairman and vice-chairmen of the Central Committee with a secretariat staffed by one general secretary and ten secretaries. Kim Il Sung was elected general secretary, and the ten secretaries were, with one exception, partisan generals who were members and candidate members of the Political Committee.¹⁶

The emphasis on military buildup between 1962 and 1966 thus brought the partisan generals and their relatives to political prominence. The process increasingly excluded technocrats, replacing them with partisan generals on active duty. The phenomenon somewhat resembled the trend in Japan in the 1930s when fanatic military officers controlled politics. When military fanatics, however patriotic or whatever their cause, dominate a political system, the system tends to overreact to the slightest provocation. Indeed, at times such a system tends to initiate incidents that cannot be controlled. Following the overmilitarization that occurred at the end of the 1966, the North Koreans attempted a number of unprovoked incidents against South Korea and the United States.

The Partisan Generals and South Korean Revolution

North Korea's emphasis on strengthening their military capability might have arisen from an insecurity and fear of isolation during the

16. The secretaries were Ch'oe Yong-gŏn, Kim Il, Pak Kŭm-ch'ŏl, Yi Hyo-sun, Kim Kwang-hyŏp, Sŏk San, Hŏ Pong-hak, Kim Yŏng-ju, Pak Yong-guk, and Kim To-man. Kim Il Sung was general secretary.

Soviet-Korean dispute, but when they restored normal relations with the Soviet Union, they used their newfound military strength to pursue an independent course of action. Kim's primary concern was an increasingly militant South Korea. The development in the South after the fall of the two republics was something he could not overlook. Due primarily to his own difficulties at the beginning of the Sino-Soviet dispute, shuttling back and forth from Moscow to Beijing, Kim lost the opportunity to exploit the vulnerable political situation of the South in the early 1960s. However, he was forced to pay close attention to the developments following the military revolution of May 1961—not so much because he recognized the potential the young generals later demonstrated in modernizing the country, but because the new regime in the South was about to consolidate political power by strengthening its ties with Japan through normalizing relations for the first time since the end of Japanese colonial rule in Korea. Furthermore the young military group in the South was contemplating sending Korean troops to participate in the Vietnam War on the American side, the first time in history that Koreans had ever sent troops outside their country.

In view of the help the South Koreans had received from the United Nations during the Korean War, there was little resistance in the South to sending troops to defend South Vietnam from the “communist menace,” but there was considerable opposition to the conclusion of a normalization treaty with Japan. It was this opportunity that the North Koreans tried to exploit in order to implant a viable revolutionary organization of their own in the South.

Kim had always claimed that unification was the foremost goal of his government and of the party, but between the conclusion of the Korean War and 1964 he never once devoted an entire speech to the question of reunification. However, at the eighth plenum of the fourth Central Committee, in February 1964, the question of achieving unification by fostering a revolution in South Korea was seriously discussed.¹⁷ On the

17. The eighth plenum was held from February 25 to 27, 1964. At this plenum Kim revealed his theses on socialist agrarian questions, and in general the discussion of these theses overshadowed other important items on the agenda. Yi Hyo-sun, who was in charge of the party's South Korean operation, gave a long speech in connection with the unification issue. The third item involved strengthening the work with the masses, and Pak Kūm-ch'ōl also spoke on the subject. The speeches by Yi and Pak were not made public. For the reports of the eighth plenum, see *Nodong Shinmun*, February 26 and 28, 1964.

last day of the plenum, February 27, 1964, Kim spoke at length about the party's policy on the unification of Korea.¹⁸ He said that three revolutionary forces needed to be strengthened to bring about reunification of the fatherland: the revolutionary force of the North, the revolutionary force of the South, and the international revolutionary force. He emphasized that all small revolutionary organizations in the South should form a united front against the counterrevolutionary forces. Kim said that the North Korean people were willing to help them, and he urged that South Korean defectors to the North be trained and returned for revolutionary work in the South.

In the South the young generals who had successfully carried out the military coup of May 1961 were firmly ensconced in the new third republic, and pushed their policy of normalizing relations with Japan. In spite of massive student demonstrations in major universities in Seoul, the normalization treaty was concluded in June 1965. The North Korean reaction was a swiftly-mounted propaganda campaign to nullify the treaty.¹⁹ What infuriated Kim and his generals even more, however, was the agreement between the United States and Korea to send South Korean troops to Vietnam. Kim on numerous occasions condemned the South Korean decision, and said he stood ready to send North Korean troops to Vietnam also.²⁰ What Kim really wanted was to form an international army of the socialist and communist countries to aid Vietnam, but the Sino-Soviet split made such cooperation unfeasible.

18. Kim Il Sung, *Choguk t'ongil wiŏp ūl sirhyŏn hagi wihayŏ hyŏngmyŏng yŏngyang ūl paekbang ūro kanghwa haja*, pp. 1-24.

19. The Supreme People's Assembly's decision condemning the treaty was issued on May 21, 1965. A memorandum on the crimes of the Korea-Japan Treaty by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was issued on June 18, 1965. This was a long memorandum reviewing Korea-Japan relations throughout history. After the formal signing of the treaty, another memo was issued on June 18, 1965. These documents are found in *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam*, 1966-67, pp. 63-64, 71-78, and 90-92. Some writers equated this treaty with the treaty of 1905 that made possible the formal annexation of Korea by Japan. See, among others, Pae Pyŏng-du, "Kannichi kaidan to otsui hogo joyaku." There are many editorials and articles about this treaty in newspapers and magazines; see, among others, *Nodong Shinmun*, August 25, 1965.

20. See, for example, Kim's reply to a question by Cuban reporters, in Kim Il Sung, *Oeguk kijadŏl i cheghihan chilmun e taehan taedap*, 1:32-45. Kim repeats the pledge in an October 14, 1965, interview with reporters from the United Arab Republic; *ibid.*, pp. 46-54. See the decision of the Supreme People's Assembly of May 20, 1965. Numerous memoranda of the North Korean government about the Vietnam situation and Korea are found in *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam* 1966-67, pp. 61-141.

Kim was reluctant to face South Korean soldiers in the jungles of Vietnam. He clearly preferred to face them in Korea, but he was suffering from strained relations with the Soviet Union during the first half of the 1960s and in the second half from worsening relations with China.

The task of creating a revolutionary force to incite antigovernment activities was not as easy as Kim and his partisans had first thought. When they purged the South Korean communists under Pal Hŏn-yŏng, the North Koreans lost most of their supporters in the South, and successive post-War governments in the South uprooted organized communist activities. Kim admitted that the struggle of the revolutionary forces was an arduous task undertaken by a small group, but he urged the South Korean people to fight the normalization treaty and oppose the reintroduction of Japanese militarism in Korea.²¹ Kim failed to realize the difference between the opposition to the normalization treaty and support for the cause of communism in Korea. Those South Korean leaders who opposed the government and the treaty were as anti-communist as the government, if not more so, and Kim refused to recognize this fact.

Within the party an unofficial organ called the Liaison Bureau directed operations in South Korea. It had been created by communists from South Korea, but after their purge, it had been taken over by Soviet Koreans such as Pak Il-yong and Yim Hae, who knew nothing about the situation in the South. When the partisans took over the bureau at the time of the Fourth Party Congress in 1961, Yi Hyo-sun was appointed director. Yi was a partisan and vice-chairman of the Central Committee, and served on the bureau from 1961 to 1967.

Under Yi's direction there were a few isolated incidents in which North Korean agents infiltrated the South. Yi knew how difficult it was to penetrate the anti-Communist front and that organizing a revolutionary force, selecting its core leaders, and forming a united front of the masses was a nearly impossible assignment. However, during the fifteenth and sixteenth plenums of the Central Committee, held between May and July 1967, Kim and his partisan generals decided to force the issue of

21. Kim made these remarks in speeches at the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Worker's Party of Korea in October 1965 and at the Second Party Conference in October 1966. See Kim Il Sung, *Chosŏn nodongdang ch'anggon chun'yŏn e chehayo*, and *The Present Situation and the Tasks of Our Party*, pp. 95-123.

a South Korean revolution.²²

During these two plenums Kim and the partisans removed two of the most powerful nonmilitary partisans, Pak Kŭm-ch'ŏl and Yi, the fourth- and fifth-ranking members of the Political Committee and party secretaries. Yi was removed from the Liaison Bureau for failure to carry out more actively the party's policy on South Korean revolution. Pak was accused of being unenthusiastic about the party's military policy. Perhaps the most immediate cause for their dismissal may have been differences over the strategy of the South Korean revolution. The partisan generals, perhaps interpreting the failure to incite a revolution to mean a lack of tactical guerrilla skills among nonmilitary partisans, might have thought that an outright guerrilla operation in the South should replace the tactics of political subversion.

Whatever the full reasons, Yi was replaced by a partisan general, Hŏ Pong-hak.²³ After the sixteenth plenum of the Central Committee in July 1967, the attention of all the North Korean leaders was directed toward the South, and the unchecked fervor of the partisan generals added fuel to the desire to unify the country, Kim himself emphasized the importance of liberating the southern half of the country during his own generation, and he warned that they should not bequeath a divided fatherland to the next generation.²⁴

22. The official North Korean accounts do not disclose when the fifteenth plenum was held. South Korean accounts estimate that the plenum was held in March 1966. The sixteenth plenum was held for five days from May 4 to May 8, 1967. See Paek Pong, *Minjok ūi t'aeyang Kim Il Sung changgun*, 2:920. The sixteenth plenum was held from June 28 to July 3, 1967. As is the general practice referred to in Note 1 for plenums when important decisions are made, the date and agendas of both plenums were kept secret.

23. Hŏ Pong-hak is a typical partisan general. He joined the partisan group in the early 1930s and fought under another famous partisan, the late An Kil. He has written a number of articles reminiscing about the guerrilla days in Manchuria. There is a record of his participation in the campaign of the Third Directional Army in August 1939, with Ch'oe Hyŏn, An Kil, Chŏn Tong-gyu, and Pak Un-sŏp. Hŏ was already a major general during the Korean War; he became a full general in 1963; and was director of the Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army. He was elected to the Central Committee of the party and to the Supreme People's Assembly, and when the partisan generals became politically prominent, his speeches were printed in the newspapers. See, for example, his speeches in *Nodong Shinmun*, October 26, 1963, and June 26, 1965. Hŏ's wife is also a partisan, Kim Ok-sun, former chairman of the Democratic Women's Union of Korea. Both were later purged (see p. 23).

24. "Namchosŏn hyŏngmyŏng ūl chŏkkŭk chiwŏn hayŏ uri sedae e kiŏk'o choguk t'ongil

In a speech at the fourth Supreme People's Assembly, on December 16, 1967, Kim went further than ever before, saying that "the present situation requires us to conduct all our work in a more active, more revolutionary manner and subordinate everything to the struggle to accomplish the South Korean revolution by giving them support in their struggle and to reunify our country."²⁵ This call and the rise of the partisan generals brought about two subsequent events: an attempt by North Korean commandos on the life of the South Korean president, Park Chung Hee, and the occurrences surrounding the establishment of the Revolutionary Party for Reunification (*T'ongil hyŏngmyŏng tang*) in the South. The rise of the generals to political prominence and their programs of arming the entire populace and fortifying the nation also eventually led to dangerous adventures, in the seizing of the USS Pueblo and the downing of the American EC-121 spy plane.

The partisan generals began to implement the policy of fomenting South Korean revolution in late 1967. The method they chose was to send small guerrilla units to the South for limited purposes, perhaps because they needed quick and spectacular results to show for their takeover of the South Korean operation. Their most daring decision may have been to attempt to assassinate South Korean President Park Chung Hee, on February 8, 1968, in conjunction with the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army.

A commando squad of thirty-one armed guerrillas left Pyongyang on January 16, 1968, and crossed the thirty-eighth parallel near Kaesŏng two days later. They spent the first night in the South on a mountain near Pŏbwŏlli, but were immediately detected by a pair of villagers. It is reported that the squad debated whether to silence the villagers by killing them or to release them with a stern warning not to report the squad to the authorities. They chose the latter alternative and the villagers, of course, reported them. Nevertheless the guerrillas reached Seoul and approached within five hundred meters of the presidential residence on the night of January 21. After a brief skirmish twenty-seven commandos were killed on the spot, three escaped, and one was

ül silhyŏn haja" [Let us assist the South Korean revolution and accomplish the fatherland unification in our generation], *Källoja* (1968), No.1 (311), pp. 16-24.

25. Kim Il Sung, *Let Us Embody More Thoroughly the Revolutionary Spirit of Independence, Self-Sustenance and Self-Defense in All Fields of State Activity*, p.28.

captured.²⁶

The captured guerrilla, Kim Sin-jo, revealed that the assassination squad was organized in 1967, and was trained to infiltrate the presidential residence in Seoul and assassinate President Park. He also confessed that there were a number of other armed guerrilla units trained for infiltration of the South. A number of small units consisting of three to five armed espionage agents were reported in various coastal areas, but none of the high-risk guerrilla activities succeeded. The South Korean police and intelligence forces stepped up their vigil and captured most of the North Korean armed guerrillas after the attack on the presidential residence.

The North Korean armed guerrillas and commando raids all ended in defeat without accomplishing their objectives. What really saved the partisans' strategy of increased military activity and balanced the failures of the wild adventures in the South, was the seizure of the American intelligence vessel, the *Pueblo*. From all indications on the North Korean side, the capture of the *Pueblo* was an accident, not a planned action methodically executed. Irrespective of the legality of the ship's location, whether within territorial waters or on the high seas, the seizure of the vessel was an unexpected prize, caught with minimum effort and no preparation. Analysis of the domestic North Korean scene makes it clear that Kim Il Sung and his partisan generals were concentrating their energies on the South Korean revolution. It would have been unthinkable for them to seek a direct confrontation with the United States while they were nursing strained relations with China and barely recovering from a sharp confrontation with the Soviet Union.²⁷

26. The captured commando, Kim Sin-jo, later confessed the entire undertaking, from the recruitment and training to the execution. Most of the South Korean accounts of the incident come from his testimony. See, among others, Kim Chong-gi, *Pukko'e ūi taenam chōllyak ūl haebu handa*, pp. 108–112; see also *Pukhan Ch'onggam*, pp. 231–232, and *Tong-a Ilbo*, January 22–February 28, 1968.

27. It is not my purpose here to discuss the *Pueblo* incident, but only its impact on North Korean domestic developments. For the official North Korean account of the incident, see the North Korean government declarations on January 27, 1968, and an article in *Chosŏn Chungang Yŏn'gam*, 1969, pp. 189–192 and 529. For the North Korean account of their release of the crew of the *Pueblo* in December 1968, see the statement by the Foreign Ministry spokesman on December 23, 1968, and the news release by the Korean Central News Agency on December 23, 1968; *ibid.*, pp. 550–551. For the capture of the *Pueblo*, see the *Nodong Shinmun*, article on January 24, 1968, and editorial on January 28.

When the United States carrier *Enterprise* was positioned in the Sea of Japan, Kim panicked and mobilized his entire armed forces. He had been reciting his self-reliance theme too long and too often to expect any help from the Soviet Union or China, and his newly acquired friends among the nonaligned nations were no friends at all in this situation. Furthermore he was not really ready to test his self-defense theory, at least not with such a formidable enemy. All festivities for the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the Korean People's Army were canceled, and even the report he made on February 8, 1968, at a small ceremony in the evening, was the shortest speech he had ever made on such an anniversary.²⁸ To confront the Americans in Korea was neither planned nor contemplated. The seizure of the *Pueblo* was a by-product of the heightened militarization of the North. Although Kim congratulated the officers and men of the 661st Army Unit and the 2423rd Unit of the North Korean Coast Guard for their capture of the *Pueblo*, he and his partisan generals knew the price they had paid for such military adventurism.²⁹ After the *Pueblo* Kim was called an evervictorious, iron-willed genius, but few understood how fortunate he was to have avoided a direct confrontation.

While the armed guerrilla and commando operations had limited and short-range objectives, a more serious effort was made to implant a revolutionary party in the South. One of the most famous cases involved an organization in the South known as the Revolutionary Party for Reunification (RPR). The RPR was an underground organization founded by a South Korean Communist named Kim Chong-t'ae together with North Korean espionage agents.³⁰ After finishing two years of college at Tongguk University in Seoul, Kim returned to his native province of Kyōngsang Pukto and taught at a number of high schools. He once

28. For the text of his speech in English see a small pamphlet, Kim Il Sung, *On the 20th Anniversary of the Founding of the Korean People's Army*.

29. For the congratulatory messages from Kim to these units, see *Invincible is the Korean People's Army Founded and Trained by Ever-Victorious, Iron-Willed, Genius Commander, Marshal Kim Il Sung*, pp. 14–34.

30. Kim Chong-t'ae was born on November 24, 1926, in Naengch'ōn-dong, Kūmhomyōn, Yongch'on country, Kyōngsang pukto. There are a number of accounts of this incident from both the North and South. For the North Korean accounts, see *Chosōn Chungang Yōn'gam*, 1969, pp. 311–314. See also *Chōsen Shiryō* (August 1969), no. 99, pp. 2–9. For the South Korean account see, among others, *Pukhan Chōnso*, 3:75–91. See also Kim Chong-gi, *Pukkoe ūi taenam chōllyak ūl haebu handa*.

served as personal secretary to his elder brother, Kim Sang-do, a member of the National Assembly from 1954 to 1958, and he was managing a small store in Taegu when he was approached in March 1964 by a North Korean agent named Kim Mu-sam to organize an antigovernment revolutionary party.

Kim Chong-t'ae left Taegu to meet the chief North Korean agent in the South, Ch'oe Yǒng-do, at Imjado, an island off the southwest coast of Korea. There he met Ch'oe and was taken to North Korea by boat, on March 19, 1964. He stayed in Pyongyang less than a week, returning to Ch'oe in Imjado by March 24. By this route he traveled to the North again in April 1964, July 1966, and May 1968, receiving instructions and funds for clandestine operations.

While in the North, Kim was trained and instructed to organize a basic underground organization by recruiting former members of the Worker's Party of South Korea; to publish secret journals; to train cadres from among the students of Seoul National University; to organize a vanguard unit together with small groups of intellectuals, students and young men; to secure an operational base where guerrillas could be trained; to form a united front of all antigovernment organizations in South Korea; and to prepare for an ultimate armed uprising in Seoul. He carried out some of these directives. The North Koreans claim that Kim and Ch'oe Yǒng-do, who later died of an illness, organized the RPR on March 15, 1964, as the central underground organization for the South Korean revolution and that Kim pledged to Kim Il Sung that the revolution would be carried by South Koreans like himself. They further claim that Kim succeeded in forming nine organizations involving about 150 people.³¹

After the unsuccessful commando raid to assassinate President Park in January 1968, South Korean intelligence organizations, intensified

31. The North Koreans claim that Kim Chong-t'ae organized, among others, the *Sae munhwa yǒn'guhoe* [New Culture Institute] for students of the College of Arts and Science of Seoul National University; *Pulgyo ch'ǒngnyǒnhoe* [Buddhist Young Men's Association] for the students of Sǒnggyun'gwan University; *Minjok chu'ui yǒn'guhoe* [National Research Association] for Tongguk University students; *Ch'ǒng-maek hoe* [Blue Ridge Association] for Ewha Women's University students; *Ch'ǒngnyǒn munhakka hyǒphoe* [Young Literary Writers' Council]; *Tonghak hoe* [Eastern Learning Association]; *Kitokkyo ch'ǒngnyǒn kyǒngje pokchihoe* [Christian Youth Economic Assurance Association]; and *Sǒngsan suyanghoe* [Sǒngsan Disciplinary Association]. Most of these were organizations in name only, with a token membership to justify the name. See *Chosǒn chungang yǒn'gam*, 1967.

the search for North Korean agents and Communist sympathizers. It was not too long thereafter, on July 4, 1968, that Kim Chong-t'ae was arrested. The South Korean authorities virtually wiped out the entire operation of the RPR and arrested a total of 158 people related to the organization. Kim Chong-t'ae was quickly prosecuted, convicted, and sentenced to death. The death sentence was carried out on January 24, 1969.³²

Kim Il Sung's grand design to implant a revolutionary force in the South ended with this incident. There were no spontaneous uprisings and no massive outcry by the South Korean people in response to Kim's call for revolution. In fact his commando raids, assassination attempts, and the effort to organize a revolutionary party stiffened the anti-Communist resolve of both the government and the people of the South. South Koreans who had experienced the cruelty of Communism during the Korean War reacted strongly against armed guerrillas and any attempt to implant a revolutionary organization in the South.

It was only in August 1969, after the execution of Kim Chong-t'ae, that the North Koreans made public several documents relating to the RPR, such as its declaration and twelve-point platform.³³ They also claimed that Kim was only the chairman of the Seoul Committee and that the RPR continued to function in the South. This sort of claim only intensified the South Korean vigil and did not serve the North's cause. In his speech at the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the North Korean republic, Kim still insisted that the North was the only legitimate government in all Korea and still advocated armed struggle in the South.³⁴

32. Kim Chong-t'ae and his four accomplices, including Yi Mun-gyu, were sentenced to death—four others were sentenced to life imprisonment; and Kim's wife, Yim Yong-suk, and twenty-one others related to Kim's family were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment from two to twenty-five years.

33. For the full text of the documents, see *Chosŏn chungang yŏn'gam*, 1970, pp. 513–517. Kim said that the platform was made public in August 1969 by the party headquarters in Seoul. For Kim's reference to this platform, see *Kim Il Sung chŏjak sŏnjip*, 5:485.

34. For the text of the Kim's speech on the twentieth anniversary of the founding of the republic (September 7, 1968), see *Kim Il Sung chŏjak sŏnjip*, 5: 133–200. See also an article by Paek Kil-man, "Namchosŏn inmin dŭl ūn ojik p'ongyŏk chŏk pangbŏp e ūihaesŏman chugwŏn ūl chaengch'wi halsu itta."

Disintegration of the Partisan Group

By the end of 1968 Kim had come to realize that the prominence of the partisan generals and the militarization of the North had drawbacks as much as advantages. The policy of arming all the people and fortifying the entire country may have increased the North's military preparedness, but the militarization cost him the extension of the economic plan, and the efforts to arouse revolutionary fervor in the South had failed just as surely as all the efforts before them. In fact, the strategy of the partisan generals to send armed guerrillas into the South had proved in some ways counterproductive, not just because it failed but because such military action unified the people behind the government in the South. The seizure of the Pueblo might have given Kim the satisfaction of seeing the Americans cowed, but he suffered greatly from the ensuing panic over confronting the United States at a time when his allies were not behind him.

The generals even began to give directives on nonmilitary affairs. For example, Kim Kwang-hyŏp, a leading partisan general who was vice-premier as well as a party secretary, gave a long speech about the advantages of the small-unit management system in agriculture.³⁵ Furthermore their overconfidence in their own military strength after the Pueblo was becoming dangerous. While the seizure of the Pueblo was an unplanned encounter, the shooting down of the American EC-121 spy plane in 1969 was a deliberate attempt by the partisan generals to prove their military prowess. The partisan generals were taking Kim to the brink too often and too recklessly. The overzealous generals were too domineering, and Kim may even have felt a certain threat from them.³⁶

There was no formal announcement of the fall of the partisan generals. In the early 1960s Kim had learned to refrain from publicly condemning the purged political leaders of any factions, and since these generals

35. For the text of this speech by Kim Kwang-hyŏp, see *Nodong sinmun*, February 15, 1968.

36. The partisan generals dominated the political scene on every occasion and made frequent speeches. The texts of their speeches were often printed in full in newspapers. See, for example, Kim Ch'ang-bong's speeches of February 8 and June 28, 1968; Ch'oe Kwang's speech on July 27, 1968; and Yi Yŏng-ho's speech on July 29, 1968.

were partisans, Kim did not mention them at all. Hŏ Pong-hak, director of the Liaison Bureau and responsible for the commando raids and the armed guerrilla units sent to the South, was quietly replaced by Kim Chung-nin, who was neither a partisan nor a military man.³⁷ In addition to Hŏ approximately ten of the highest-ranking party generals were removed in 1969. These included Kim Kwang-hyŏp, vice-premier and one of the top partisan generals, secretary, and member of the Political Committee; Defense Minister Kim Ch'ang-bong; chief of staff of the North Korean armed forces, Ch'oe Kwang; Yi Yŏng-ho, admiral and member of the Political Committee; and Sŏk Sañ, minister of public security and party secretary.

Serious conflict seems to have arisen between politically prominent partisans who advocated moderation and the partisan generals who advocated rapid modernization of their military arsenals. It has been alleged that Oh Chin-u, a partisan general who survived the purge to become the defense minister, led a criticism session on January 13, 1969, and presented some thirteen items of misconduct by the military group. These charges included, among others, nepotism in the military ranks, refusal to carry out instructions from the party, inadequate evaluation of the rank and file, the use of the armed forces in nonmilitary work and waste of military supplies.

In the absence of original documentation to substantiate these charges, the circumstances surrounding the purges of the generals are not clear. There is no doubt about their downfall, however, and from their past activities and subsequent developments the charges seem to have concentrated on four major topics. The first was the fact that the partisan generals had neglected the army's experiences during the Korean War and stressed only advanced weapons unsuitable for Korea; the second was the errors they committed in carrying out the policy of fortifying the entire country, by failing to dig tunnels, and at times building underground bases in unsafe areas; the third was the allegation that they

37. Kim Chung-nin is a native of Hamgyŏng pukto who has worked in his native provincial party organization for a long time. He was elected a candidate member of the Central Committee at the time of the Fourth Party Congress in 1961, but worked as a key member of the North Korean Red Cross, representing the North at Geneva Red Cross meetings. He facilitated the return of Koreans in Japan to North Korea. After the purge of the partisan generals, he became prominent and was the tenth-ranking member of the Central Committee by the Fifth Congress in 1970.

had wasted military supplies in some sectors and neglected to prepare an adequate supply of parts and equipment in others; and the fourth was the accusation that the partisan generals surrounding defense minister Kim Ch'ang-bong had attempted to form their own clique within the military and had operated a number of regiments as though they were their own private army.

Irrespective of the reasons for their dismissal, the fall of these generals signified several things. Foremost was the disintegration of the partisan group that had united behind Kim and supported him all their lives. By the end of the 1960s Kim may have thought that his position was sufficiently firm that the partisan group's support was no longer essential. The political prominence of any powerful military group, even his partisans, might have been uncomfortable for Kim, particularly when partisan records had been glorified as a matter of national policy.

The purge also signaled the end of the militant policy of the 1960s. With the restoration of normal relations with both China and the Soviet Union toward the end of the 1960s, Kim might have wanted to return to the neglected work of economic development and the refinement of his political system and thus might have taken this drastic measure to curb the generals. Also significant was the rise of technocrats and young leaders trained by the partisans in their tradition. Along with the emergence of new, young partisan-trained party faithfuls, the prominence of Kim's immediate relatives was also detectable. For example, Kim Yŏng-ju, Kim's younger brother, advanced to the fourth-ranking party post in the Political Committee, and Kim's wife, Kim Sŏng-ae, replaced Kim Ok-Sun, Wife of the purged partisan general Ch'oe Kwang, as chair of the Democratic Women's Union of Korea.

When the partisan generals were purged and military expenditures were checked, Kim returned to his old habits of visiting factories, farm cooperatives, mines, steel mills, and other production centers, urging the workers to meet the goals of the seven-year economic plan. The emphasis on strengthening the military had taken a heavy toll on the North's economic development, and his renewed emphasis on the hammer and sickle instead of arms was not having the intended result. As early as December 1969 Kim claimed that he had reached the goals of the seven-year plan. A resolution at the twentieth plenum of the Central Committee stipulated that the Fifth Party Congress was to be held in October 1970, and it resolved to propose a new five-year

economic plan.³⁸

The Fifth Party Congress was delayed a month, however, and was held from November 2 to 13, 1970. A six-year economic plan instead was presented and adopted. There were 1,871 delegates representing nearly two million members, and 1,160 observers participating in the Party Congress. Kim gave a long and comprehensive report on the work of the Central Committee.³⁹ On the domestic front, Kim said that North Korea had now completed the transformation from a developing nation into a socialist industrial state, citing accomplishments in machine industries, the technological revolution in agriculture, the new nine-year compulsory education system, ideological unity, the defense system, and the socialist economic management system. He cited a number of statistics in all major industrial sectors comparing recent performance with past accomplishments. In agriculture Kim said that for the first time the North had become self-sufficient in grain production. On the question of national defense, Kim said that the 1960s had been a difficult decade militarily. He supported the policy of arming the entire people and fortifying the entire nation, but he revealed that during this period the country's defense industries had heavily taxed economic development.

Kim's report was a review of the 1960s without giving details of what had transpired during the period. His policy of simultaneous economic and military development had failed dismally. He had suffered the consequences of the rise of the military partisans, and had come to realize that there was not even token, let alone overwhelming, support for him in the South. While he was being called leader of the forty million Korean people by his loyal subjects in the North, he knew that his subjects amounted to less than one-third of the entire Korean population. Kim's report made it obvious that he was now abandoning the policy of forcing arms in one hand and hammer and sickle in the other.

On the last day of the Congress, November 13, 1970, new officers and members of the Central Committee were elected, and the selection revealed much about the changes in party leadership. Out of 117 elected

38. *Choson chungang yon'gam*, 1970, pp. 202-205.

39. For the full text see Kim Il Sung, *Chosŏn nodongdang che och'a taehoe esŏ han chungang wiwŏnhoe saŏp ch'onghwa pogo*. This speech was delivered on the first day, November 2, 1970.

members of the Fifth Central Committee, only 31 were reelected from the Fourth Central Committee. Out of ten secretaries elected at the time of the Second Party Conference in October 1966, only three remained. It is important to note that the seven who were dropped from the secretariat were partisan generals and those who replaced them were partisan-trained technocrats and nonmilitary partisans such as Kim Tong-gyu, Han Ik-su, Kim Chungnin, Hyŏn Mu-gwang, and Yang Hyŏng-sŏp. Only Oh Chin-u, who condemned other partisan generals for their militant policy, remained on active duty and a member of the secretariat.

Similarly in the Political Committee, seven of the eleven members were replaced, leaving only Kim Il Sung, Ch'oe Yong-gŏn Kim Il, and Ch'oe Hyŏn. Except for Oh Chin-u, all of the newly elected members were nonmilitary partisans (Pak Sŏng-ch'ŏl, Kim Yŏng-ju, Kim Tong-gyu, Sŏ Ch'ŏl, Han Ik-su, and Kim Chung-nin). All candidate members of the Political Committee were replaced with nonmilitary functionaries.⁴⁰

The new lineup of party leadership made obvious that the militant policy of the party had changed to promote nonmilitary goals in the North. The only three durable partisans were Kim Il Sung, Ch'oe Yong-gŏn, and Kim Il, and their recruitment of nonmilitary partisans and technocrats was made clear in the choice of Pak Sŏng-ch'ŏl, Kim Tong-gyu, Kim Chung-nin, Yang Hyŏng-sŏp, and Chŏng Chun-t'aek. The Fifth Party Congress signaled the emergence of a new group of relatively unknown leaders who were not partisans but partisan-trained party functionaries. These young technocrats were loyal to Kim, and constituted nearly 70 out of the 117 members of the new Central Committee of the Fifth Party Congress.

During the 1960s the lack of foreign technological assistance had retarded the pace of the North's economic development, and Kim's quarrels with China and the Soviet Union had undermined the security he had so long taken for granted. He was therefore forced to concentrate on a costly military buildup, and with it came the prominence of the partisan generals. They were his old comrades from the plains of Manchuria and fellow partisans, but they forced the policy of arming all the people and fortifying the entire nation. They imported far more sophisticated military equipment than was needed for the North, at great sacrifice

40. The complete roster of newly elected members and the analysis of the change is found in Dae-Sook Suh, *Korean Communism, 1945-1980*, pp. 309-337.

to the economy. The seven-year economic development plan had to be extended another three years, to become an unprecedented ten-year economic plan, and even that did not ensure its success.

In spite of the domestic difficulties the generals were charting an adventurous course in dealing with South Korea, sending armed guerrillas and commandos to the South. Their efforts to create a diversionary action to keep the South Koreans from sending combat troops to Vietnam failed; and their effort to establish a foothold in the South, utilizing the popular dissent over South Korea's normalization of relations with Japan, also foundered. The South Koreans were strengthening their position by solidifying their relations with both Japan and the United States, at the same time that Kim was suffering from the heavy burden of standing alone and quarreling with both the Soviet Union and China.

Kim's generals became more and more adamant, eventually transforming their military prominence into political influence. They took Kim and the North to the brink of a precipice with the seizure of the *Pueblo* and the shooting down of the American EC-121 spy plane. The attempt to balance arms and the hammer and sickle had failed. Kim consequently had to purge most of his loyal comrades in arms from the partisan days. By the time of the Fifth Party Congress Kim had experienced many of the difficulties of independence and complexities of self-reliance, and had returned to the normalcy of building a socialist state in the North.