

Ardent Wish of the People

On October 8, 1997 Kim Jong Il (1942-2011) was elected General Secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea. There is a moving story about how he was elected to the leadership of the Party.

After the demise of President Kim Il Sung (1912-1994), the Korean people desired earnestly to have Kim Jong Il at the helm of the WPK and the state at the earliest possible date. The Korean people's desire was unanimous as Kim Jong Il had achieved great exploits for the country and the people for several decades and the Korean people were fascinated by him.

However, regarding the unanimous desire of the people as their deep trust in and high expectation of him, Kim Jong Il delayed his election for three years and devoted his all to the work of succeeding the cause of President Kim Il Sung. This came from his ennobling sense of moral obligation.

The struggle to defend socialism waged in the international arena in the closing years of last century was the grimmest one unprecedented in history.

The United States, styling itself as the "sole superpower" after the end of the Cold War, and its allies concentrated all their efforts on overthrowing the socialist Korea in their attempt to terminate socialism in the world.

The offensives of the anti-socialist forces were an unprecedented pressure and challenge for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea which was not big in terms of population and territory. Worse still, natural calamities hit the country for several consecutive years. Thus the Korean people experienced immeasurable difficulties in their living and the factories had to suspend their operation. It was indeed the worst-ever ordeal for the country.

Many people of the world were apprehensive about what would become of the socialist Korea. But they soon came to see the DPRK from a new perspective.

Standing up to the unprecedented challenge all alone, Kim Jong Il formulated the Songun-based politics of attaching importance and giving precedence to the

military affairs and pushing ahead with the overall affairs of the revolution and construction with the army as the core force in accomplishing the cause of socialism and implemented it in a comprehensive way.

He said that in the prevailing situation in which the country was exposed to the acute military threats of the imperialist forces there could be neither the people, nor socialist state nor the Party without a powerful army, and that in this sense the army is just the people, the state and the Party. His logic is very reasonable.

With this faith and will, he staunchly defended socialism from all kinds of challenges and threats of the imperialists.

Consequently, the schemes of the United States to stifle the DPRK militarily were smashed to pieces.

In those days, Kim Jong Il's noble traits as befitting the people's leader and a seasoned statesman was displayed more clearly, and the people's trust in him became absolute.

At the time, the VOA commented: The socialist system, which has long been in confrontation with the Western countries, was collapsed in recent years, but the DPRK, a country in the East, is invariably maintaining socialism. This is because President Kim Il Sung, a veteran hardliner who was uncommon in the circle of the international communist movement, has brilliantly succeeded in rearing his heir and Kim Jong Il, who is a seasoned statesman and military commander, inherited the cause of the President.

It continued: Therefore, it is premature to raise cheers about the complete collapse of socialism. Keep watchful eyes on north Korea if you think that socialism has collapsed. Then, you can see the stirring reality of socialism led by Kim Jong Il who is successfully inheriting the communist leadership and feel a sense of fear and coercion that it might impose threatening challenge upon the free world of the West. Socialism is not dead.

In the DPRK, it posed as the ardent desire and urgent requirement of the whole Party and all the people to place Kim Jong Il in the top post of the WPK and

the state. Reflecting the desire, a Party-wide work took place to elect him to the leadership of the WPK.

A conference of the South Phyongan Provincial Committee of the WPK was held on September 21, 1997, and a conference of the KPA Committee of the WPK the next day. And similar meetings were held in Pyongyang, provinces, ministries, central organs and other Party organizations with the equivalent authority of a provincial Party committee. All the conferences adopted the decision to elect Kim Jong Il General Secretary of the WPK with the unanimous approval of the participants.

On October 8, 1997, the Central Committee of the WPK and the Central Military Commission of the WPK released a special announcement that Kim Jong Il was elected General Secretary of the WPK.

The world's mass media commented his election as a significant event in the history of politics in the 20th century.

Over 1 300 state, government and party leaders of many countries sent congratulatory messages to Kim Jong Il and grand celebrations were held in more than 80 countries. Over 600 mass media of over 100 countries reported this event on more than 1 000 occasions.