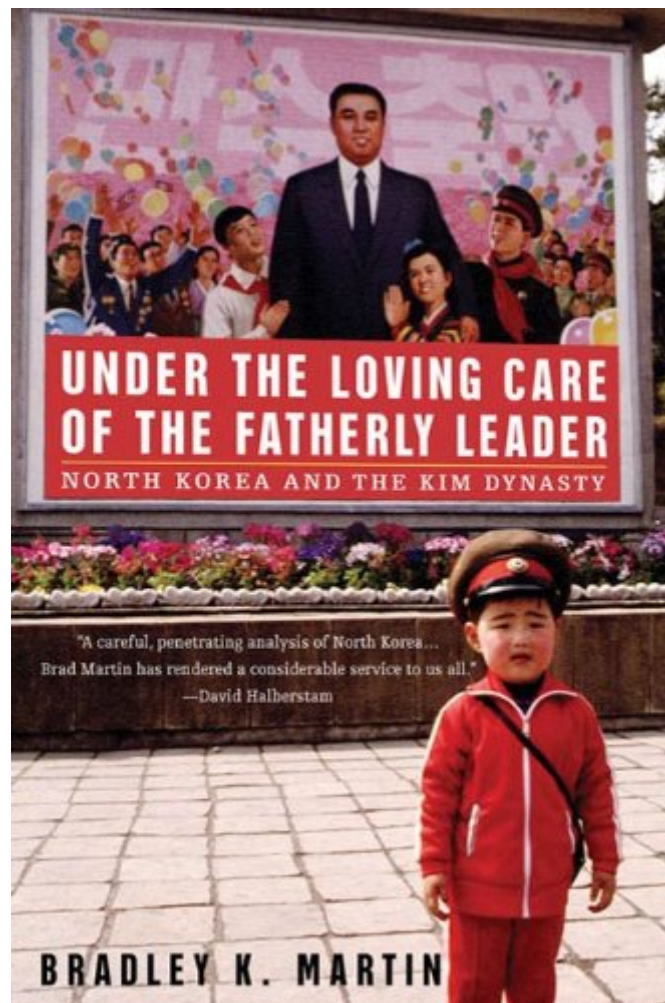




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Under The Loving Care Of The Fatherly Leader: North Korea And The Kim Dynasty



Synopsis

Under the Loving Care of the Fatherly Leader offers in-depth portraits of North Korea's two ruthless and bizarrely Orwellian leaders, Kim Il-Sung and Kim Jong-Il. Lifting North Korea's curtain of self-imposed isolation, this book will take readers inside a society, that to a Westerner, will appear to be from another planet. Subsisting on a diet short on food grains and long on lies, North Koreans have been indoctrinated from birth to follow unquestioningly a father-son team of megalomaniacs. To North Koreans, the Kims are more than just leaders. Kim Il-Sung is the country's leading novelist, philosopher, historian, educator, designer, literary critic, architect, general, farmer, and ping-pong trainer. Radios are made so they can only be tuned to the official state frequency. "Newspapers" are filled with endless columns of Kim speeches and propaganda. And instead of Christmas, North Koreans celebrate Kim's birthday--and he presents each child a present, just like Santa. The regime that the Kim Dynasty has built remains technically at war with the United States nearly a half century after the armistice that halted actual fighting in the Korean War. This fascinating and complete history takes full advantage of a great deal of source material that has only recently become available (some from archives in Moscow and Beijing), and brings the reader up to the tensions of the current day. For as this book will explain, North Korea appears more and more to be the greatest threat among the Axis of Evil countries--with some defector testimony warning that Kim Jong-Il has enough chemical weapons to wipe out the entire population of South Korea.

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Customer Reviews

I really loved this book. Bradley Martin is a reporter who has extensively travelled in North Korea and has met many of the Kim regimes ruling caste members. He paints an intriguing portrait of North Korea. There are many chapters, but they basically break into three categories. These deal with the rise of the Kim regime, life in North Korea, and the future of North Korea. There is certainly overlap, but these are the primary categories. The most difficult chapters are certainly those dealing with the rise to power of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il. I say this because, as Martin freely admits, there are very complicated mythologies surrounding these characters. Mr. Martin goes on the assumption that there is a nugget of truth in all myths and tries very hard to find them. As an example, there is a myth that Kim Il Sung was the most important anti-Japanese guerilla leader who nearly single handedly ejected Japanese forces from Korea. After detailed and exhaustive research, the author shows that Kim was a moderately important guerilla leader who threw his lot in with the Soviet Red Army after being defeated by Japanese forces. In this way, Mr. Martin develops what could be the most accurate picture we have of the Kims' early days. If he is found to ever be wrong, it won't be for not trying hard. The next set of chapters revolve around everyday life in the DPRK. He gets his information partially through his trips there, but more importantly through defector testimony. Needless to say, life in the Workers' Paradise sucks. There is little food (unless you are a high level party member) and there is a constant risk you will offend someone and wind up in a prison camp. Not much we don't already know, but Martin reveals much that is new.

Unfortunately, in the 21st century, nobody on the planet can afford to be ignorant about North Korea. If you had to read just one book on the country, this would be it. I picked up this book with some trepidation. At 868 pages (including over 100 pages of excellent end-notes), it is heavy in more ways than one. Nonetheless, despite strange looks from my wife (why did you bring *that* to the beach?), I found myself drawn to finish it - wanting to soak up the next chapter of detailed firsthand testimony and thorough research that Brad Martin has laid out. Both Korea-watching 'newbies' (like myself) and longtime experts on the peninsula will find plenty here on which to reflect. In a similar vein, it would be difficult and unfair to pigeon-hole the book as kow-towing to left or the right. Although Martin reveals his liberal leanings in some of his conclusions, he has given the

reader enough first-hand material to make up her mind on her own. As a longtime journalist, Martin takes pains to mostly keep his own opinions and analysis in the background, letting the enormity of the North Korean regime gradually sink in with the reader - as it appears to have done over the course of Martin's career-long involvement with the recluse nation. At several points, after reading a "just the facts ma'am" chapter, I almost wanted to scream: "you've been watching these guys for 25 years Brad, tell us what YOU think and what we should do!" But Martin carefully builds a body of knowledge in the reader as a prerequisite to his informed, high level analyses. North Korea is a complex, inscrutable country, and Martin has done a great job of bringing its horrors and the twisted internal logic of the Kims to light.

An extraordinary glimpse into one of the world's last Stalinist military states. Nearly impossible to penetrate and with little credible information getting out (except for high level intelligence), Bradley Martin tells an amazing story of a very important and dangerous place. To make things worse for a serious investigative writer, Kim Il-sung and Kim Jong-il have created a high octane, no holds barred cult of personality for both father and son which make it extremely difficult to separate out the real story. He deserves a great deal of credit for this undertaking and it is far and away the best and most informative work on the DPRK to be found in English. What I also admired about this book was Martin's restraint and his willingness to portray the actual facts, including positive ones. Granted, there is not a great deal of good news coming out of Pyongyang in the last few decades. And it would be tempting to paint both Kims as evil incarnate. Indeed, our own government has presented a two-dimensional cartoon like vision of a planetary bad guy. More of such counter-mythology is not helpful in understanding this complex and dangerous society. I was amazed at the amount of information Martin was able to pull together and the complex portrait he was able to present. Unfortunately, the people who could most benefit from reading this book will probably never go near it. One aspect of the book I appreciated was the comparison between today's ultra-marxist state and the early Choson dynasty which governed Korea for nearly 600 years until the Japanese invasion in the 1890s. North Korea has almost completely replicated the Ancient "Hermit Kingdom" that remained closed to outsiders for centuries.

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