



Kim Song-ae

Second wife of Kim Il-sung and step-mother of Kim Jong-il and Kim Kyong-hui
Former First Lady, DPRK
Former member of the KWP Central Committee and Supreme People's Assembly
Former Chair, Korean Democratic Women's Union

Born: 1924, Sunan, South Pyongan Province (presently Sunan District, Pyongyang)

Family: Married to Kim Il-sung in the mid 1950's
Kim Kyong-chin (daughter) 1951—
Kim Pyong-il (son) 1954—
Kim Yong-il (son) 1955—2000

Education:

Kangso Middle School

Pyongyang University of Education for Women

Positions held:

1952: Administrative Secretary, Kim Il-sung Residence, Pyongyang

1965: (November) Vice Chair, Korean Democratic Women's Union

Around 1967 Kim Song-ae became de-facto Chair of the KDWU after its chair Kim Ok-sun was purged from the KWP because her husband Partisan Choe Kwang was implemented in challenges to Kim Il-sung's total authority. In 1967, with the formulation and implementation of the Collective Principle, Kim Il-sung commenced to populating power posts in Party and State with his familial and personal relations which benefited Ms. Kim.

1970: (November) Member, KWP Central Committee

1971: (October) Chair, Central Committee, Korean Democratic Women's Union

1972: (December) Delegate and Presidium Member, 5th Supreme People's Assembly

Around 1973, Kim Song-ae used her SPA and KDWU positions to build her own cult of personality. Ms. Kim was officially First Lady in the DPRK, greeting foreign leaders with Kim Il-sung, and conducting her own guidance tours with a focus on light industry, food production and health care. She and her step-son, Kim Jong-il held one another mutual disdain. There are accounts that Kim Song-ae verbally and physically abused Kim Jong-il's only sibling, sister Kim Kyong-hui. Kim Song-ae had a broader interest, which was making her son Kim Pyong-il the designated successor to Kim Il-sung.

1977: (October) Delegate (deputy), 6th SPA
(December) Member, Presidium, 6th SPA

By the late 1970's Kim Jong-il successfully outmaneuvered his step-mother in the succession battle, using his perch as the Director of the Organization and Guidance Department. He convinced Kim Il-sung that she was undermining the sole-leadership system and subverting President Kim's authority. She eventually relented and publicly began singing the propagandic praises of Kim Jong-il and Kim Kyong-hui's mother, Kim Jong-suk. By the time the 6th Party Congress convened in 1980, Kim Jong-il honorably exiled his three half-siblings to central/east Europe.

1982: (February) Delegate (deputy) 7th SPA
Member, Presidium, 7th SPA

(April) Awarded, Order of Kim Il-sung

1986: (November) Delegate (deputy) 8th SPA
Member, Presidium, 8th SPA

1990: (April) Delegate (deputy) 9th SPA
Member, Presidium, 9th SPA

1994: (July) Member, Kim Il-sung Funeral Committee (#104)

1995: (February) Member, O Jin-u Funeral Committee (#114)

With President Kim's 1994 death, and Kim Jong-il virtually secluding himself to manage his own transition to power, there are reports Kim Song-ae used some of her friendly contacts in the DPRK power center to try to thwart General-Secretary Kim's succession. Kim Song-ae was not successful, because Kim Jong-il's campaign for succession was based on honoring and respecting the legacy of surviving 1st Generation leaders. There are accounts that Kim Jong-il placed his step-mother under house arrest at Kim Il-sung's Jamo Mountain villa in Pyongsong, South Pyongan Province.

1998: (April) Dismissed as Chair, Korean Democratic Women's Union

In 1998, Kim Song-ae was not a candidate for the Supreme People's Assembly, for the first time since 1972. She was publicly dismissed as Chair of the KDWU. In 2000, her youngest son Kim Yong-il passed away from cirrhosis of the liver. There have been no reports through the North Korean press of Ms. Kim's death, so it is likely that she is still alive. Her daughter currently resides in Vienna, Austria, and her son Kim Pyong-il is the DPRK Ambassador to Poland, both of them ex-patriate North Koreans. This makes it less likely that Ms. Kim (aged 85) would defect. She most likely retains personal ties to SPA Presidium members Yang Hyong-sop and her brother-in-law Kim Yong-ju, but is not involved in North Korean political life. It is also likely that she is no longer subject to house arrest by the Guard Command at an isolated villa and likely resides at one of the residences either in Samsok District, Pyongyang, or in Taesong District in close proximity to Kumsusan Memorial Palace. Then again, Ms. Kim may currently reside with one of her adult children in Europe, under the scrutiny of the State Security Department. There have been no reports about or public appearances by Kim Song-ae since her removal from the KDWU in 1998.