

North Koreans mourn their fallen 'Great Leader'



SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — Weeping mourners touch their heads to the ground and wail aloud. Solemn music blares incessantly from loudspeakers, and flowers pile up like drifts of snow.

But this week of official mourning in North Korea for the late "Great Leader" Kim Il Sung — as reported by the official media of the closed and secretive state — is just a preview.

The national outpouring of grief for Kim, who died Friday of a heart attack at 82, will culminate Sunday in what could be the biggest Stalinist-style funeral in years.

But the world won't be there to see it. Foreign dignitaries have not been invited, and foreigners are barred from travel to the North during the period of mourning, which continues through Sunday.

During his four decades of absolute rule, Kim was the center of a bizarre and pervasive cult of personality. He was praised at every turn, revered as a godlike figure in an officially atheist state.

The funeral of Kim, who was installed by Stalin in 1948, is expected to reflect

the adulation always paid him in life and could be one of the last great state funerals for a Communist dictator. But little has been publicly disclosed about the funeral plans.

A huge rally is scheduled in Pyongyang on Sunday, and observances are to include a gun volley and a three-minute blowing of whistles by ships and locomotives across the country, official media have said.

During North Korea's mourning period, all forms of entertainment are forbidden, including singing and dancing, the South's North-watching Naewoo Press reported.

The North said Kim's body would lie in state at the presidential palace, but so far, official reports have made no mention of ordinary mourners being allowed to view it.

Instead, television footage has shown weeping citizens converging by the tens of thousands on a towering 60-foot statue of Kim in the center of the capital.

A report by a correspondent for the Russian ITAR-Tass news agency described a disorderly crush of mourners at the statue in the first hours after Kim's death was announced.

But North Korea is one of the world's

most tightly controlled police states, and by the next day, order prevailed. Authorities were controlling the crowd, directing traffic and even enforcing queues for laying flowers, the report said. And plenty of plainclothes officers milled among the mourners.

However disciplined a society it is, to hear the North's media tell it, people are all but unhinged by grief.

"All who had believed that the respected leader would never depart from them are beating their chests," the North's official Korean Central News Agency said in a dispatch Monday. "Big tears are running down their cheeks upon hearing the sad news that came like a bolt from the blue."

It said citizens were flocking to sites associated with Kim's life and deeds to pay tribute.

There's no shortage of places to go and commune with the spirit of the departed leader. North Korea is dotted with statues of Kim. Portraits adorn the walls of nearly every building. Buildings and stadiums bear his name.

It's hard to see how any funeral oration could top the praise that's already been lavished on Kim in nonstop eulogies.

"The august name and tender image of

the Great Leader ... will always remain in the hearts of the people, and his immortal revolutionary exploits will shine forever," KCNA cited an official newspaper commentary as saying Sunday.

Television showed clips reviewing Kim's accomplishments, and messages of condolences filled the pages of newspapers.

But even if Kim was larger than life, life goes on. Within days, the commemorative programs dropped off, making way for regular news reports — and glowing praise of the new leader, Kim's son Kim Jong Il.

The younger Kim's official ascension is considered unlikely until after the funeral, but groundwork may already be being laid. South Korea's foreign minister said the ruling party's central committee met Monday, and other Southern officials said the gathering might be part of preparations for Kim's formal selection as party chief.

The North withheld news of death for a full day after the fact, and it will be nine days later by the time the funeral is held.

That defies Korean tradition, which calls for burial within three to five days. But it conforms with the custom of burial on an odd-numbered day; Sunday is the 17th.

Haiti expels human rights observers

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Haiti's army-installed government abruptly ordered the expulsion of international human rights observers Monday, declaring them undesirable aliens and accusing them of disrupting state security.

U.N. officials said in New York that no decision had been made about withdrawing the personnel and whether to capitulate to the expulsion demand. The Security Council was to meet formally Tuesday to issue a statement condemning Haiti's action.

The decree outraged U.N. diplomats and officials and widened the void between Haiti's coup leaders and other nations. Haitian rights advocates said the threatened expulsion may have a chilling effect on their efforts.

"By its irregular presence on national soil, the mission is troubling internal public order and threatens state security," read the decree, signed by de facto foreign minister Charles David.

Haitians gathered around radios Monday morning to hear the order.

The 104 U.N. and Organization of American States human rights observers and administrative workers were given 48 hours to leave. Law enforcement officials were notified to enforce the order, the government said.

At sunset Monday, U.N. officials were shredding documents and moving files from an office in suburban Petionville, attempting to protect Haitian sources of information on rights abuses before their expected departure.

The U.N. envoy for Haiti, Dante Caputo, called

the decree an insult.

"They (the soldiers and their allies) kill, they murder and rape people and they do not want any witnesses," he said from U.N. headquarters in New York.

Caputo called it a "very, very delicate situation as far as security is concerned" for the monitors.

Secretary of State Warren Christopher, in Germany with President Clinton, said he agreed with Caputo. "It's really part of the pattern of increasing repression by the Haitian regime."

The order would not affect other U.N. operations in Haiti, such as the U.N. Children's Fund and the U.N. Development Program.

At the United Nations, U.S. Ambassador Madeleine K. Albright read a statement outside Security Council chambers on behalf of the United States, Argentina, Canada, France and Venezuela, known as "the five friends" of Haiti.

"We strongly condemn the decision by the illegal, de facto regime to expel the ... mission. During months of turbulence and ever increasing human rights abuses, ... (it) has been the international community's eyes in Haiti."

Albright declined to say if the United States was pushed closer to invasion, but repeated that it hasn't excluded any option.

The incident comes as the United States is positioning new warships and 2,000 more Marines off Haiti. Eight warships and 15 Coast Guard cutters are already posted off Haiti to enforce a world trade embargo against the Caribbean nation.

Peace proposal doesn't stop fighting in Bosnia

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) — Fighting persisted in northwestern Bosnia on Monday while international pressure mounted on the warring sides to extend a truce accord and agree to the peaceful division of the war-torn republic.

The combatants have only eight more days to accept or reject an international peace plan that would give ethnic Serbs 49 percent of Bosnian territory and a Muslim-Croat federation the rest. Serbs hold more than 70 percent after 27 months of fighting.

The plan's authors — the United States, Russia, Germany, France and Britain — have warned that rejection would mean tougher international sanctions.

After talks with Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, negotiator Lord Owen of the European Union and U.N. envoy Thorvald Stoltenberg conferred in Zagreb with Yasushi Akashi, the top U.N. official in former Yugoslavia, and President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia.

Owen told reporters that Bosnian Serb leaders were now "much more aware" that there was no possibility of being given more time beyond the July 19 deadline for responding on the peace plan.

Leaders of Bosnia's Muslim-led government already recommended that their parliament endorse the proposal.

Despite the deadline, Owen said, the Muslim-Croat federation and Serbs could "make adjustments among themselves," meaning possible exchanges of territory.

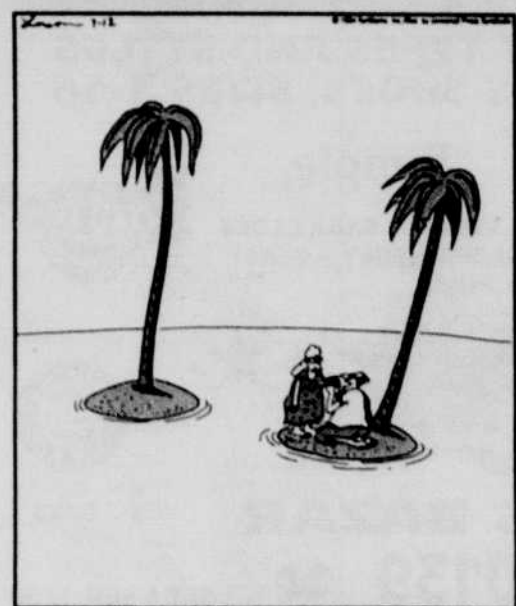
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