



ARMY IN NORTH KOREA



The very first order you receive from your guide when arriving in North Korea is NOT to take pictures of the soldiers. Then uniforms look like in the 50's: for one good reason, as the Korean People's Army was created in 1948 in the Soviet occupation zone of Korea. The uniforms were copied from the USSR.



Many soldiers are used as a labor force to compensate for the ineffective North Korean economy, so the army is not only about military organization.



An occupation I saw many times during my 6 trips in North Korea: skinny soldiers collecting wood. For heating. North Korean soldiers can be seen working in fields, farms, or on construction sites in many places, far from military exercises.



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Letter from a former Yongbuk high school student in Pyongyang that joined the army and who tells about his life as a soldier.

This kind of letter can be seen in the entrances of schools or universities.

In North Korea, most of the soldiers serve in military for 10 years, female soldiers for seven years. Some high level students only serve few years to work quickly and to be more efficient than when they carry wood...

Once in the army, the contacts with the families are very complicated.



-Who is the soldier in the frame?

-He is my son Mr Eric; I haven't heard from him in a long time... it takes four years for him to serve in the army. He is a sergeant.

-When will he end his army service?

-He won't be back until the reunification of the two Koreas.



A romantic time for a military man and his wife. After a cadet graduates from the military academy and becomes lieutenant, he can be married and live in a private house, not at the army base. For long time, under Kim Jong Il , junior soldiers were forbidden to have girlfriends.



A propaganda painting (for sale in a shop) showing Kim Jong Il serving soup to happy soldiers. A pure propaganda image as soldiers have serious problem to have decent food in the army. Many North Korean soldiers are skinny and malnourished. Many soldiers try to flee the military for this reason.



*-What's your ideal job when you grow up?
-I want to join in the army. Because a soldier can do what ever he wants!*

The military dream is still working on the kids who receive an early propaganda when in kindergarden.



The soldiers are melting with local population. So you can sometimes see them packed in overloaded trucks.



Soldiers can be seen everywhere in the country. They must keep their uniforms at any occasion, even when visiting a video game center in Pyongyang.



Army is everywhere in the propaganda and in every movie produced in North Korea. Most of the times, the hero will be a soldier risking his life or even sacrificing his life for his country.

The movie posters can be seen in the street, many have been displayed for years.



The north korean television broadcasts lot of shows with soldiers. Those ones were singing patriotic songs.



*-General, why do you have so many medals?
-It's because I have killed many people.*

General Pak Shan Su was a hero during war against USA and makes conferences at the War Museum.



In the main squares of Pyongyang, you can spot soldiers rehearsing a parade for hours. They do not like to have witnesses as everything not -yet- perfect but have no choice as they need huge spaces to train. Each soldier has a number to allow the officers to tell who is good and who is bad.



The Korean Demilitarized Zone is on the 38th parallel. It is a buffer zone between North and South Korea. It may look like a kind of folklore but incidents happen frequently with casualties. The two Koreas have signed armistice but not peace. This place is called a demilitarized zone, but in fact it is the most armed zone in the world! North Korean soldiers like to pause with the tourists.



*-Mr Eric, the soldier is asking you
if you have a cigarette?
-I only have American ones!
-It is not a problem.*



When north korean soldiers wear the helmet on the DMZ, it means they are on high military alert... It is also a psychological sign to impress the south korean who can see them just few meters behind treble barracks of the UN.



-What happens if a South Korean crosses the border at the DMZ and comes to the North?

-We welcome him.

-And if a North Korean goes to the South?

-They shoot him.

Very few north korean soldiers escape the south, the last one was in september 2016.



On the DMZ, the north korean soldiers who monitor the border must keep their fists closed, ready to fight like a boxer told me my guide.



This colonel on the DMZ is proud to show South Korea that is just over the little hills. He is more acting like a PR than a soldier.



A giant image made with thousands of human pixels during Arirang. As most of the spectators in the stadium were soldiers (a reward to see the show) each time a soldier image appeared, the crowd was becoming crazy.



The crowd coming out go Kim Il Sung stadium in Pyongyang after the Arising show. Most of them are soldiers. only the best and the most faithful to the regime will have the privilege to see the show.



On the propaganda posters that can be seen on the walls of the towns or villages, soldiers are always ready to defend their country against the american invasion.

The south korean soldiers are called « puppets » as they work with the american soldiers.



My guide told me that those girls are orphans and that they enter Army to serve the country that raised them. A chance according to him. From 2015 the DPRK started to conscript women as well.



Soldiers from all around the country are making trips in Pyongyang as a kind of reward. They pay respect to the Leaders statues in Mansudae hill in Pyongyang. On Sundays, thousands of soldiers queue to put flowers in this place.



Another stop is in the Kumsusan Memorial Palace, where lie the mummified bodies of the dear Leaders. At this occasion, the soldiers pause for a photo souvenir that they will later put on the wall of their houses. This will be the only decoration allowed with the official portraits of the dear Leaders.



The dolphinarium in Pyongyang has become a place where thousands of soldiers come to see the show. One more time, a privilege for the best soldiers and a good way to make propaganda in the countryside after this show that those poorly educated men will enjoy like kids.



My favorite song is "My Father". The lyrics and the melody are sentimental. Since I was a child, the dear leader Kim Jong Il has been our source of happiness. That's why I consider him as the father of my family.



Soldiers at the fun fair, shooting on target symbolizing an american GI. The slogan say « Kill the US Imperialists »



Soldiers are supposed to get a perfect attitude in public areas. But on a sunday, those ones were much more relaxed.



Soldiers in front of a rollercoaster in Pyongyang. Not all the soldiers can access to the attractions.



Soldiers having fun in Pyongyang fun fair. For many this time is a reward.



Sunday time in the countryside is a rather boring moment for those sailors. No fun fairs for them.



Those soldiers were preparing the fireworks on Taedong river in Pyongyang to celebrate the anniversary of the regim.



The kind of scene you can see in North Korea: in the middle of nowhere, a soldier woman walking alone. The next village will be kilometers from this place.



« The strong men are in the South and the beautiful women are in the North! » says a north korean proverb. Those girls are not soldiers, but are used for their sexy show during Arirang festival.



The soldier girl told me that the dog acts like Americans: it lies down in front of North Korea!



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