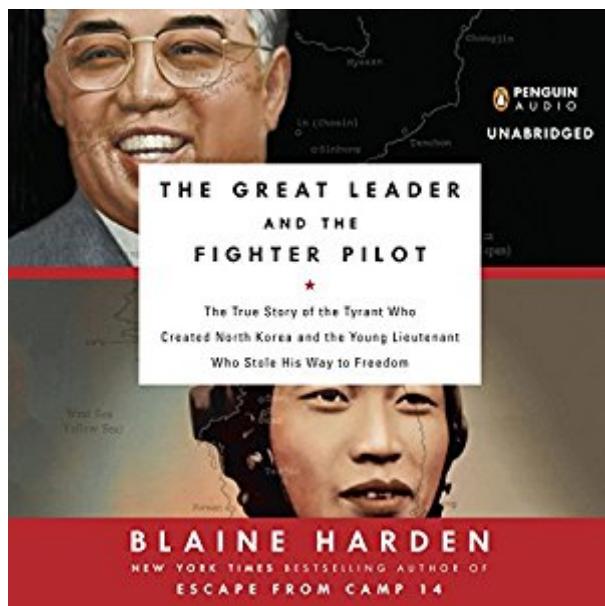


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# The Great Leader And The Fighter Pilot: The True Story Of The Tyrant Who Created North Korea And The Young Lieutenant Who Stole His Way To Freedom



## Synopsis

From the best-selling author of *Escape from Camp 14*, the murderous rise of North Korea's founding dictator and the fighter pilot who faked him out in *The Great Leader and the Fighter Pilot*, New York Times best-selling author Blaine Harden tells the riveting story of how Kim Il Sung grabbed power and plunged his country into war against the United States while the youngest fighter pilot in his air force was playing a high-risk game of deception - and escape. As Kim ascended from Soviet puppet to godlike ruler, No Kum Sok noisily pretended to love his Great Leader. That was until he swiped a Soviet MiG-15 and delivered it to the Americans, not knowing they were offering a \$100,000 bounty for the warplane (the equivalent of nearly \$1 million today). The theft - just weeks after the Korean War ended in July 1953 - electrified the world and incited Kim's bloody vengeance. During the Korean War, the United States brutally carpet bombed the North, killing hundreds of thousands of civilians and giving the Kim dynasty, as Harden reveals, the fact-based narrative it would use to this day to sell paranoia and hatred of Americans. Drawing on documents from Chinese and Russian archives about the role of Mao and Stalin in Kim's shadowy rise as well as from never-before-released US intelligence and interrogation files, Harden gives us a heart-pounding escape adventure and an entirely new way to understand the world's longest-lasting totalitarian state.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The behavior of North Korea among the community of nations has been problematic for decades. There have been recent aspects that have a comic-opera silliness about them, like the faked photos

of a supposedly successful missile testing, or Kim Jong Un's tantrum over a terrapin farm that wasn't producing the lobsters he wanted, or the nation's reaction to the movie *\_The Interview\_*. It isn't silly, though, that North Korea has nuclear arms, or has the most repressive political system in the world with many documented crimes against humanity. The monstrous government came into being with Kim's grandfather, Kim Il Sung, and the history of how this happened is one part of the story within *\_The Great Leader and the Fighter Pilot: The True Story of the Tyrant Who Created North Korea and the Young Lieutenant Who Stole His Way to Freedom\_* (Viking) by Blaine Harden. Harden wrote *\_Escape from Camp 14\_*, published in 2012, about a young man's harrowing escape from a North Korean slave labor camp. A reader of that book called him to see if Harden had ever heard of the pilot who stole a MiG from North Korea in 1953. Harden had not, whereupon the caller laughed a little and suggested that Harden might be better informed. The caller was the pilot himself, the former No Kum Sok, and Harden did get better informed, and has brought out a fascinating book that is an excellent primer of North Korean history. Harden's book switches short chapters between Kim Il Sung and No Kum Sok. Kim was 25 in 1937 when he lead a guerrilla attack against a little town controlled by the Japanese. It was a tiny and strategically insignificant success, but he gradually parlayed it into tyranny by toadying to Stalin.

The Korean War is little remembered in the US. After all, the hostilities ended more than sixty years ago, and that so-called "police action" (in Harry Truman's words) has long been overshadowed by the even more destructive wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq – despite the fact that 37,000 Americans lost their lives in the conflict. It seems unlikely, then, that more than a handful of us in the US are aware of the extraordinary story Blaine Harden tells in *The Great Leader and the Fighter Pilot*. Far more than his previous book about North Korean history, *Escape from Camp 14*, which merely confirms what we already knew (or thought we knew) about the massive and brutal human rights violations that keep the Kim regime in power, *The Great Leader* illuminates the origins of the country in World War II and the overarching role of the Korean War in determining what North Korea has become today. The "Great Leader" of the title is, of course, Kim Il Sung, a client of Stalin's Russia – he served in the Soviet army, never rising above captain – and the "Fighter Pilot" was a young man born No Kum Sok. No was, in fact, the youngest pilot in the North Korean air force when he defected in 1953 shortly after the armistice that concluded the Korean War, delivering a late-model MiG-15 jet fighter to a US airfield in South Korea. The event was headline news at the time. For an American, the most revealing and disturbing revelation

that emerges from The Great Leader is the utter savagery with which the US bombed North Korea and the critical role that massive offensive has played in shaping North Koreans'™ worldview to this day.

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