CHAPTER 3

Visualizing the Occupied Leader

The RNG was, and remains today, inexorably associated with the figure of Wang Jingwei.[1] Wang's name, face, writings, and voice were seen, reproduced, and heard everywhere under occupation (at least up until 1944), and the very idea of the RNG itself was linked to Wang's personal claims to political legitimacy. Despite this, few scholars have looked critically at the ways in which Wang was visualized during the war, or at the use of various forms of visual media in both the promotion and the denigration of him. This is unusual, because so much of the RNG's iconographies of occupation revolved around Wang's figure and face—these being constant objects of official veneration. It also puts the scholarship on the RNG at odds with research on cognate administrations, much of which has demonstrated how the visual veneration of the "collaborationist" leader is so central to understanding client regimes.[2]

This chapter examines the origins, development, and fate of the Wang Jingwei personality cult under Japanese occupation. In keeping with the overall themes of this book, the chapter demonstrates how a focus on the visual realm can produce a quite different perspective from the biographical accounts that have dominated research on Wang thus far, many of which interrogate his decision in 1939 to seek a negotiated peace. A closer reading of the visual texts manufactured as part of the Wang cult—and the responses to these—can shed light on the very nature of the RNG in ways we might not expect.

Various groups—including Japanese news agencies, the Peace Movement, and sections of the RNG bureaucracy—sought to promote and embellish Wang's image for specific purposes and through a variety of visual media. This is not, therefore, a simple story of the celebration of a leader by an authoritarian regime. Rather, it is an account of the manipulation of Wang's image by an array of agents, as well as the place of Wang's image within a wider set of wartime visual cultures. Like the broader iconographies that were generated in occupied China, the Wang personality cult drew on

various prewar and early wartime precedents, while responding to wartime changes both in China and abroad. This led to the emergence of a number of different Wangs, each of which could be called upon to promote quite different messages at specific points between 1939 and the end of the war.

Reinventing Wang Jingwei

The Japanese invasion of China in 1937 did not "make" Wang Jingwei. Nor did the *huandu*. As a long-serving Chinese statesman and a veteran of the early revolutionary movement, Wang had been in the public eye for decades. Indeed, the sheer longevity of his public image equaled and perhaps even surpassed that of his main rivals, including Chiang Kai-shek. A standard narrative of Wang's life and career had circulated among the Chinese reading public for well over a decade prior to 1937, especially in those parts of urban China in which Wang enjoyed political support at various periods, such as Guangzhou and Wuhan. This narrative was manufactured by courtiers such as T'ang Leang-li, by the KMT's reorganization faction, and by Wang himself.[3]

The story that all of these groups presented was remarkably consistent. It stressed Wang's credentials as a revolutionary, as witnessed in his arrest and his subsequent "almost martyrdom"—for Wang escaped execution by the Qing authorities—following his attempt to assassinate the Manchu prince regent Zaifeng with explosives in 1910.[4] In such accounts, Wang's personal and ideological proximity to Sun Yat-sen were always highlighted: Wang had, after all, been at Sun's deathbed, had helped pen Sun's testament, and had been a prominent figure in the public expressions of mourning for Sun in 1925.[5] Photography of Wang from before the Northern Expedition (Bei fa) regularly showed an active Wang, dressed in a Zhongshan tunic (*Zhongshan zhuang*), in the throes of oratory (figure 3.1).[6] At a more informal level, Wang is also said to have developed a following among educated women in China in the 1920s as a sex symbol.[7] He was certainly depicted by his followers within the KMT as a man of "consummate elegance and taste."[8]

Concurrently, negative comparisons were often made between Wang and Chiang Kai-shek, the latter presented by Wang's supporters as a dictator.[9] This dichotomy would be intensified in 1927 and again in 1931 when Wang headed short-lived Nationalist administrations that challenged the authority of Chiang. At such times, Wang was presented by his followers as being from the true "revolutionary faction" (*gemingpai*), and Chiang as from the "counterrevolutionary faction" (*fan gemingpai*).[10] This image of Wang as a "romantic revolutionary," as Howard Boorman described it, was also promoted

Figure 3.1. Wang Jingwei making a speech at the Second National Congress of the Kuomintang, Guangzhou, January 1926. Photograph by Fu Bingchang. Image courtesy of C. H. Foo, Y. W. Foo, and Historical Photographs of China, University of Bristol (www.hpcbristol.net).

abroad.[11] An illustrated portrait by Samuel Johnson Woolf of "Premier Wang"—looking remarkably like socialist realist imaginings of Mao Zedong in the 1960s—graced the cover of *Time* magazine in March 1935.[12]

A less revolutionary image of Wang also emerged in partisan publications in the 1930s. This development owed much to the burgeoning industry of studio photography in cities such as Shanghai and to the practice of using studio portraits as objects of political veneration, or simply as political gifts, in Republican China.[13] One of the most regularly reproduced photographic portraits of Wang from the time was a 1935 portrait produced by Kwong Hwa Photographic Studio (Guanghua zhaoxiangguan)—a privately run, Nanjing-based studio that was often patronized by KMT politicians.[14] This image, reprinted in hagiographies and in collections of Wang's writings, presented Wang as a man of letters.[15] He wore a contemplative expression, his eyebrows raised toward the center of his forehead so as to give him a slightly "distressed countenance" (*chourong manmian*),[16] his lips pursed, and his cheeks and jowls immaculately shaven (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Studio portrait of Wang Jingwei (photographer unknown), circa 1935, featured as the frontispiece in Se-yuan Shu, ed., *Poems of Wang Ching-wei* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1938). © The British Library Board (11110.b.32, frontispiece).

There were also newsworthy events in the 1930s that generated a significant number of images of Wang, though in a far different guise. The attempted assassination of Wang in November 1935 at a meeting of the KMT in Beijing, supposedly by agents affiliated with Chiang Kai-shek, resulted in a series of graphic pictures of an injured Wang in the Chinese press.[17] Photographs produced by international news agencies such as TASS

and showing Wang lying on a hospital bed with his left temple bandaged were printed on the front page of major newspapers in China.[18] Such images would be widely circulated for the rest of Wang's career, conveniently deployed by his supporters whenever it was necessary to present Wang as a victim of political violence.[19]

As with other politicians of this era, however, Wang was never able to fully control his own image. He was subject to pictorial satire in the burgeoning print culture developing in Shanghai in the 1930s, just as his contemporaries were. In magazines and newspapers, portraiture of Wang was abstracted and reinvented in diverse ways.[20] Wang's physical traits and facial features proved particularly malleable in the hands of cartoonists such as Zhang Guangyu and Zhang Zhengyu (figure 3.3). These and numerous other artists accentuated Wang's drooping eyebrows, square jaw, and brilliantined hair (in contrast to the cropped and shaven heads of Wang's military opponents), thereby establishing a set of visual and physical markers that would later come to be recycled by Wang's critics, *and* his supporters, during the occupation.[21]

Be it in news photographs or satirical cartoons, the single most important element in imagery of Wang emerging prior to the war was a visual association with civilianism. Images of Wang from the 1930s regularly showed him dressed in a scholar's robe (*changpao*) or a Western lounge suit, for example—that is, clothing that was associated at this time with "worldliness, progress, action, and financial success" rather than with revolution.[22] This was in contrast to depictions of Wang's rivals (such as Chiang Kai-shek), for whom a visual association with martial prowess (via uniforms, capes, and military headwear) was de rigueur. Yet it also set Wang apart from his late mentor, the tunic-clad or (in generalissimo mode) epauletted Sun Yat-sen. Images of Wang circulating in the immediate prewar years thus placed him, not alongside other pretenders to national power, but next to civilian politicians such as Hu Shih and T. V. Soong.

In light of such antecedents, it would be tempting *not* to read Wang Jingwei's defection from Chongqing as marking a new point of departure in the crafting of his public image. The visual record suggests a more complicated story, however. For a start, Wang's disappearance from Free China in December 1938 was precisely that. While Wang did little initially to hide his whereabouts upon arrival in colonial Hanoi, he also did little to publicize his presence there, and few photographs were taken during his early phase of negotiations with the Japanese. Indeed, even news outlets that professed an affiliation with Wang, such as Lin Baisheng's Hong Kong-based *Nanhua ribao,* rarely printed photographs of Wang in this period, while Japanese

Figure 3.3. Cartoon of Wang Jingwei and Chiang Kai-shek by Zhang Zhengyu, entitled *Shizijia* (Crucifix). Featured in *Duli manhua* [Oriental puck] 2 (1935). Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

new agencies illustrated their accounts with prewar news photography of him.[23] In early 1939, Wang Jingwei was a name, a voice, and an opinion but not a publicly visible figure. Such invisibility would only intensify following the failed attempt on Wang's life by resistance agents in March 1939.

At the same time, Wang bore the brunt of extensive visual and rhetorical attacks from resistance-affiliated sources. Chiang Kai-shek instructed his cultural workers to launch what visual cultures theorists would today refer

to as "image-weapons" against Wang, following his declaration of intent to negotiate a peaceful resolution with Japan.[24] Such calumny was not focused purely on Wang's actions. It was, just as importantly, directed at Wang himself. Muralists envisaged Wang's mutilation. Slogans calling for Wang to be "pushed into a grave" were scrawled across walls.[25] Many depictions from this period took prewar visual markers associated with Wang's apparent urbaneness and translated them into signs of feminine weakness—the gendering of "traitors" was a common theme in resistance vitriol. Wang was commonly drawn in drag, for example; in order to undermine Wang's claims to a revolutionary heritage, artists such as Zhang Guangyu depicted Wang as a ghost haunting the graves of martyrs in Guangzhou.[26] Another common trope took the very notion of the gaze and combined this with satire concerning Wang's apparent self-consciousness: Wang would often be drawn beside a mirror (only to have an animal or demon staring back at him) (figure 3.4). In such depictions Wang's raised eyebrows might be accentuated to create an impression of fear, fatigue, or naivete, and his nostrils could be enlarged to achieve a porcine appearance.[27]

This was also a period in which an entire genre of anti-Wang sculpture was initiated. The crafting of kneeling statues (*guixiang*) of Wang, upon which civilians would be encouraged to spit (in order to express their scorn for him in absentia), was started in 1939 with this purpose in mind.[28] The most celebrated kneeling statue in China prior to the Japanese invasion had been that dedicated to Qin Kuai (a Song-dynasty chancellor who had long been presented as the archetypal traitor in Chinese history due to his role in his kingdom's capitulation to the Jin empire).[29] The making of similar statues for Wang thus linked him to this figure. Resistance artists such as Xu Fubao published designs for the crafting of these anti-Wang statues in periodicals associated with the National Salvation Cartoon Propaganda Corps (Manhua xuanchuandui), for example.[30] Kneeling statues of Wang were subsequently built throughout unoccupied China from 1939 onward.

From mid-1939, however, various groups began to take part in the creation of new, sympathetic representations of Wang Jingwei. These included Mabuchi Itsuo's Propaganda Corps, Japanese news agencies such as Mainichi, and even pre-RNG client regimes.[31] Perhaps most important in the visual repackaging of Wang in this period, however, was one of the main vehicles of the Peace Movement—Lin Baisheng's Shanghai-based *Central China Daily News*. In the summer of 1939, this newspaper unveiled a new photographic portrait of Wang that would become one of the most frequently used and definitive images of him for the remainder of the war. Though the

Figure 3.4. Unattributed cartoon image of Wang Jingwei sitting in front of a mirror, included in a 1939 anti-Wang leaflet produced by the Kuomintang. Courtesy of the KMT Party Archives (yi ban, 537/21).

provenance and precise date of the production of this portrait are difficult to determine through extant sources,[32] it was almost certainly taken during or shortly after Wang's stay in Shanghai in late May 1939, when Wang was engaged in formal negotiations with the Japanese.[33] As with many early portraits of Wang produced in the 1939–1940 period, it was never formally attributed to a single photographer. It first appeared in the *Tairiku shinpō* over a month prior to its first appearance in the *Zhonghua ribao*.[34]

In this image, Wang was dressed as he had been in most portraits produced in the 1930s—that is, in a dark three-piece suit, the attire of a modern Chinese

Figure 3.5. Portrait of Wang Jingwei, circa May 1939, by unknown photographer. Courtesy of The Mainichi Newspaper/AFLO.

statesman rather than a pro-Japanese activist or revolutionary. Indeed, the image looked not unlike the glamour portraits of Chinese celebrities that were common in Shanghai pictorials in the 1930s. Split lighting rendered the left side of Wang's face dark and drew attention to his brilliantined hair. The soft focus of the image and the pose assumed by Wang gave the photograph an almost pictorialist quality. Wang gazed off camera into the right middle distance with an expression that suggested idealism and purpose, but with the same raised eyebrows that had typified the 1935 Kwong Hwa studio portrait (figure 3.5).

This new portrait presented a defiant image of Wang. It offered visual proof that Wang had survived the assassination attempt by resistance agents

just a few months earlier. By showing most of Wang's body in its three-quarter framing, it emphasized that Wang was in good health, despite the attempt on his life and the deluge of visual attacks on his image by cultural workers in the southwest. Descriptions of the image—such as an extended essay that accompanied it in a September 1939 issue of the *Kabun,* entitled "Tingshen fenqi heping jiuguo" (Lifting himself upright to save the nation through peace)—stressed Wang's corporeality but also his supposed vitality.[35] As Wang was rising from the (almost) dead, so too was an occupied China rising from the ashes of war.

The nondescript background of this image was matched by a lack of props or symbolic accoutrements in Wang's outfit. It is this austere and almost timeless quality that may explain the portrait's longevity. This image was the preferred choice in Chinese-language media when such outlets were reintroducing their readers to Wang in the second half of 1939, and a number of newspapers used it on their front pages to mark Wang's assumption of power on March 30, 1940.[36] Occupation newspapers were still using it some four years after its production as a generic image that could illustrate Wang-themed news, especially during periods later in the war when Wang's health was deteriorating.[37] On the recognition of the RNG by Germany and Italy in 1941, the same portrait was placed by Mainichi editors alongside photographs of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. For the RNG itself, this image continued to be used as the frontispiece for MoP publications well into 1941,[38] as well as the basis for murals and banners of Wang (figure 3.6).

This was not the only studio portrait of Wang to be produced in this early period, however. A number of new portraits, also unattributed and undated, presented a quite different image of Wang and were used for different purposes. In January 1940, for example, a new head shot of Wang, this time gazing directly at the viewer (as he had done in the 1935 portrait) began to be circulated. This new image showed a more fully lit Wang in a slightly clearer focus. The defiant and slightly romantic air of 1939 was replaced in this image by an expression of amiable solemnity, though the prominence given to his hair marked one commonality between the two images (figure 3.7).

This portrait was distributed precisely as Wang's imminent return to Nanjing was being openly discussed in the Chinese press. Its circulation was almost certainly timed to coincide with the conclusion of the Qingdao Conference (Qingdao huiyi) in January 1940, when the structure of Wang's nascent administration was being decided. The *Kabun* used a colorized version of this portrait on the cover of the issue it published to celebrate the inauguration of Wang's regime, as did the MoP, which used it as the cover image of one its very first publications, a bilingual (Chinese and English) program produced to mark the festivities of March 1940.[39]

Figure 3.6 (top). Crowds in Guangzhou carrying a banner of Wang Jingwei, circa 1940. Photo by *Asahi shimbun* via Getty Images.

Figure 3.7 (right). Cover of Ministry of Publicity, *Special Commemoration Issue: Return of the National Government of the Republic of China to Its Capital* (Nanjing: Ministry of Publicity, 1940), featuring studio portrait of Wang Jingwei. Courtesy of Shanghai Library.

These studio portraits did not represent the full extent of Wangiana emerging in or around the *huandu,* however.[40] As the return of the RNG looked increasingly imminent in the winter of 1939–1940, organizations in and around Nanjing scrambled to produce a coherent view of what Wang looked like. This included groups that had had little to do with Wang previously, such as the Daminhui. The Daminhui's March 1940 pamphlet *Mr. Wang Jingwei and the New Central Government* (*Wang Jingwei xiansheng yu xin zhongyang zhengfu*), for example, included stylized illustrations of a bare-chested, muscular Wang bearing a torch and the Daminhui flag, looking not unlike a revolutionary worker. It also, however, included cartoon images of Wang in his lounge suit, with a full head of hair and his now trademark upturned eyebrows.[41] In Wuhan, hastily manufactured posters of Wang that drew on prewar photography but also included a distinctly Manchukuo flavor appeared in the first weeks of 1940. These posters showed Wang in oratory in front of a city wall emanating the light of dawn. Wang was also transformed into a metaphor: a lantern lighting the path to a new China, or a colossal arm distributing peace to the people.[42]

Japanese government agencies, news agencies, and even commercial advertisers also attempted to shape Wang's image in a variety of ways in this period. Just prior to the *huandu,* for example, unnamed Japanese painters were commissioned to produce life-size oil paintings of Wang (and other RNG leaders)—a process that, it appears, RNG officials themselves had little say in (figure 3.8).[43] In other cases, Japanese artists such as Asai Kan'emon were flown to Nanjing to paint portraits in oils of Wang in 1940 (figure 3.9).[44] Few of the resulting prototypes survived the RNG's first year, and many of the images produced in this period have been largely lost.[45] They nonetheless demonstrated that the Japanese government saw the benefits in making Japanese cultural workers contribute to the Wang personality cult.

Not all Japanese interventions were aligned with RNG sensibilities, however. The 1939 *Central China Daily News* portrait, for example, was recycled by the Japanese pharmaceutical firm Rohto. This company published a lithographic version of the portrait in a newspaper advertisement on the very day of the *huandu,* using it to promote "the world famous eyedrops of great men."[46]

The Militarization of Wang's Image

As I have argued elsewhere, the cult of personality built around Wang by his courtiers following the *huandu* was initially manufactured with the aim

Figure 3.8. Photograph of Wang Jingwei admiring an oil painting of himself by an unidentified artist, circa 1940. Chu Minyi Collection (Lot 11700), Prints and Photographs Reading Room, Library of Congress.

of drawing a distinction between Wang and Chiang Kai-shek.[47] This attempt at what Jan Plamper has called "contradistinction"[48] has been noted in scholarship on the ideologies of the early RNG before,[49] but the visual implications of such a strategy have rarely been considered.

The Japanese invasion of 1937 had led to an explosion of rhetorical and pictorial depictions of Chiang Kai-shek as a national savior within resistance ranks. This was thanks particularly to the work of the Political Department of the Military Affairs Commission (PDMAC) (Junshi weiyuanhui zhengzhibu). This arm of the Nationalist state, restructured in January 1938, was managed by intellectuals such as Guo Moruo but included artists of diverse political proclivities.[50] In the early war years, it was tasked with producing posters, pamphlets, and murals of Chiang. As a result of such efforts, Chiang Kai-shek sat *alongside,* rather than below, Sun Yat-sen in the visual pantheon of Chinese strongmen after 1938, a fact that found expres-

Figure 3.9. Photograph of Wang Jingwei having his portrait painted by Asai Kan'emon, August 1940. Denshō Digital Repository (ddr-njpa-1-1067), Hawai'i Times Photo Archives. Courtesy of the Hawai'i Times Photo Archives Foundation.

sion in the wartime rewriting of regulations on the production and use of Chiang's image and name in areas beyond Japanese influence.[51] The focus placed on civilianism by groups such as the *Zhonghua ribao* and the MoP was therefore clearly used to distinguish a "peaceful" and humble Wang from the aggressive and self-important Chiang that was being imagined by the PDMAC at the same time.

However, such contradistinction began to wane following the first anniversary of Wang's return in the spring of 1941. It was at this stage, according to the RNG official Luo Junqiang, that Wang was convinced by Lin Baisheng to adopt a more overtly militaristic approach to his public persona—to be seen to frequent military march-pasts, for example—in an attempt to promote the RNG as a quasi-Axis power. It was certainly the case that Lin's MoP stressed the need to celebrate the foundation of the armed forces

Figure 3.10. CNA photograph of military march-past in front of a large portrait of Wang Jingwei, in Guangzhou, circa 1941. Courtesy of Academia Historica.

(*jianjun*) and the modernization of the army under Wang in propaganda directives published in March 1941.[52] Many of the surviving images of Wang saluting troops date from this "Axis turn" in RNG visual cultures at around the same time (figure 3.10).[53]

Over the summer of 1941, the MoP also published new documentary images of Wang that sought to emulate early wartime depictions of Chiang Kai-shek in the PDMAC style. These were linked to the start of the Rural Pacification campaigns and specifically to Wang's multiple inspection tours (*xunshi*) of pacified areas in the Lower Yangtze delta that year. "President Wang Ching-wei in uniform" was the name given to this new entity,[54] as regime-backed pictorials showed Wang dressed in a field officer's uniform and cap, inspecting villages cleared of communist banditry (figure 3.11). Wang rode in sedan chairs, studied maps, and inspected RNG cadres. It was in this guise that some of the most frequently recycled images of Wang were produced, almost certainly by Japanese photographers. One of these, dating from October 1941, showed a uniformed Wang on location while touring a pacified area, saluting to unseen individuals to the right of the image.[55] It was also during these inspection tours of pacified areas, how-

Figure 3.11. Photograph of Wang Jingwei during an inspection of Rural Pacification areas in 1941, possibly by Chen Guoqi. Courtesy of Academia Historica.

ever, that CNA photographers such as Chen Guoqi were tasked, for the first time, with pictorially documenting Wang's presence in the countryside.[56]

Rural Pacification also provided the context for the manufacture of a new and very different set of portraits of Wang. In the fall of 1941, the MoP approached a commercial purveyor of studio portraiture, Bann's Studio, to craft a new set of images of Wang Jingwei to align with Rural Pacification. It was one of Bann's Nanjing-based photographers, Liang Boping, who was responsible for this new set of 1941 "President Wang in uniform" portraits. These would be subsequently reproduced in significant number during the occupation (figure 3.12).

Aesthetically, there is little remarkable about Bann's portraits from 1941. In terms of their composition, for example, they represent nothing unusual or innovative in the grander scheme of studio portraiture in Republican China. The manufacture of these new portraits, however, did mark an important departure in the framing of a leader who had spent his entire career cultivating a civilian persona and who had been repackaged by his support-

Figure 3.12. Liang Boping studio portrait of Wang Jingwei in Rural Pacification mode, 1941. Wang Jingwei and Lin Baisheng Photograph Collection. Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

ers in 1939 in a decidedly civilian, if romantic, fashion. Prior to 1941, Wang had never been photographed in a studio while wearing a military uniform.

In these new portraits, a be-medaled Wang was shown dressed in the uniform of a field officer. Some of the portraits were three-quarter-length images, while others showed Wang from the shoulders up. In some cases, Wang held a ceremonial sword in gloved hands. In all cases, Wang gazed

directly at the viewer—his face fully lit and bearing what can only be described as a neutral and unemotional expression with none of the vaguely idealistic or romantic features of the 1939 portrait. Far less emphasis was placed on Wang's brilliantined hair in these portraits; indeed, in a number of these images, Wang wore a military cap.

In their inclusion of medals, collar insignia pins, buckles, and belts, these new portraits adopted elements of the iconic imagery of Chiang Kai-shek that had been produced early in the war, and in the name of resistance. Wang in 1941 was dressed in a similar uniform to the one that Chiang had often worn in early wartime propaganda. Yet these new portraits also presented Wang in a far less idealistic guise. Under much fuller lighting and using a far sharper focus, Liang Boping revealed the circles under Wang's eyes and the impurities in his facial skin. The hazy but timeless idealist of 1939 was thus replaced by an older but more thoughtful military leader. Wang had visibly aged during his almost two years in power, and the claims to martyrdom that RNG cadres made about him were now in full view, etched in his very face.

This militarization of Wang's image in late 1941 laid the basis for a wave of Wang hagiography under the NCM from the start of 1942. An important part of the NCM was the dissemination of leader worship throughout occupied China. References to Wang as the supreme leader (*zuigao lingxiu*) became commonplace, and members of the RNG Youth Corps were expected to publicly swear "to follow the Three Principles of the People, partake in the New Citizens Movement, and fulfill the Chinese revolution under the guidance of the supreme leader."[57] MoP staff also started experimenting with new methods of representing Wang in this period. At the second anniversary of the *huandu* in March 1942, for example, cadres created half-bodied (*banshen*) cutouts of Wang, each standing more than thirteen meters high, to be erected in central Nanjing.[58] In Shanghai, former Daminhui artists such as Wang Chuan produced photo-realist woodcut portraits of Wang for NCM leaflets distributed by the municipal government.[59] This was also a period in which Wang's frequent trips to Japan—undertaken ostensibly to negotiate further autonomy for his regime—resulted in copious amounts of news photography (much of it produced by Japanese news agencies), all of which showed Wang as a competent, if compliant, statesman.[60]

In the context of such adulation, iconoclasm was viewed particularly seriously. When an RNG army cadet was arrested for having defaced an image of Wang, for example, the case was considered serious enough to

Figure 3.13. Photograph of Wang Jingwei accepting a bust of himself, circa 1943. Courtesy of Academia Historica.

prompt the Executive Yuan (Xingzhengyuan) to become involved, ordering that schools and educational bureaus throughout the RNG realm inform pupils of the gravity of such an offense.[61] In other cases, RNG agencies became increasingly nervous about the unauthorized reproduction of Wang's face by non-state actors. A local merchant in Hangzhou was found to have been selling unauthorized badges featuring Wang's image in June 1942. While the badges themselves contained nothing offensive, the fact that this was being done without state permission worried MoP personnel, and the practice was stopped.[62] In early 1943, Wang Jingwei himself also ordered an immediate halt to the unregulated production of busts of his likeness (some based on the 1941 Bann's Studio portraits) after learning that local elites in Suzhou, in a practice common in prewar political culture, were commissioning such objects as a means of currying favor with government officials (figure 3.13).[63]

This obsession with public reactions to Wang's face (both on the part of the RNG and on the part of Wang himself) was telling. In cultivating a

metonymic relationship between Wang and the regime he led under the NCM, MoP cadres had equated devotion to Wang's likeness with loyalty to the RNG cause. This is why, by 1942, Wang began to take on a more overt pictorial association with the RNG navy.[64] A striking photolithographic portrait of a saluting Wang in full naval uniform was produced on the front cover of the *Kabun* in May 1942, for example. The pose adopted in this image of Wang was matched in its NCM-infused, militarized nature only by the image of an unnamed youth, adopting the exact same pose, in an advertisement for the pharmaceutical company Jintan on the inside cover of the same issue.[65] In other cases, Wang was photographed aboard naval vessels or alongside maritime props, such as ship's wheels. So prominent are photographs of Wang Jingwei flanked by RNG naval officials and dressed in the uniform of an admiral in the Wang Jingwei and Lin Baisheng Photograph Collection (housed today at Stanford University's East Asia Library)—images largely produced by the CNA photographer Chen Guoqi—that it would seem Wang himself was at the very least acquiescent in (if not fully supportive of) the promotion of this visual link (figure 3.14).[66] Indeed, given the riparian geography of this regime (discussed in chapter 1), naval-themed photography could pictorially underline the metonymic link between Wang and his government.

There was a clear connection between this NCM-era "naval Wang" and the "President Wang Ching-wei in uniform" of the Rural Pacification campaigns, produced a year earlier. In fact, under the NCM, these two Wangs were conflated. Liang Boping's portraits were added to NCM-era photomontages in 1942 and 1943, for example. The field uniform portrait of late 1941 provenance was deployed to illustrate special GEACPS-themed issues of the *Changjiang huakan* in 1942;[67] the republic's national day in 1943 was marked in Shanghai pictorials with photomontages using Rural Pacification–themed photographs of Wang from late 1941.[68]

Such developments were accompanied by practical strategies to spread Wang's image in ways that looked remarkably similar to Axis propaganda of the time. For example, the MoP revived programs it had started on a much smaller scale earlier in the war, and reproduced Wang's image on lapel badges.[69] Lin Baisheng ordered the production and compulsory wearing of badges bearing Wang's image as a means of "expressing respect and esteem for our one and only leader" in the summer of 1943, for example—a technique that was said to be borrowed from "advanced countries." "Come

Figure 3.14. Portrait of Wang Jingwei in admiral's uniform by unknown photographer, circa 1942. Wang Jingwei and Lin Baisheng Photograph Collection. Courtesy of the East Asia Library, Stanford University.

on!" called MoP workers. "Let's make sure that the Chairman's image can be seen on every collar!"[70]

It was still in the realm of photography, however, that this late-war image of Wang was most frequently promoted. For example, the Greater East Asia Conference of November 1943, for which Wang traveled to Tokyo, became a major source of new Wang iconography. While this event was dismissed even by those in Japan who reported on it as having

nothing more than propaganda value,[71] it marked a major development in RNG celebration of its leader. Dressed in his morning suit, Wang stood together with figures such as Ba Maw and José P. Laurel at this event, thus being presented as not merely a Chinese statesman but also a GEACPS leader. Wang in this GEACPS mode was a product of Japanese news photography.

Often overlooked, however, is just how important photographic depictions of Wang's interactions with other Japanese-sponsored Pan-Asian figures came to be for the RNG in late 1943. The visit to Nanjing of Subhas Chandra Bose, the leader of the Indian National Army (INA) and Azad Hind, was a much publicized event in occupied China. Despite its brevity, it resulted in the production of numerous images by RNG and Japanese photographers that conflated RNG nationalism and leader worship with new notions of Pan-Asian brotherhood and the aesthetics of "Asian-style fascism." Bose had become a common feature of RNG pictorials in late 1943, his garrison-capped head superimposed over images of INA troops or used in photomontages celebrating the end of British imperialism in Southeast Asia.[72] The visit of Bose to the Sun Mausoleum in November 1943, however, led to the creation of new images that thrust Wang and Bose into the same frame. Reprising his Rural Pacification field uniform, Wang was pictured from a low angle by RNG photographers such as Chen Guoqi alongside—though slightly higher than—a saluting Bose. Images of Bose's presence at this most revered of sites in Nanjing helped lend to the "supreme leader" Wang an entirely new significance. Alone, the uniformed Chinese leader evoked memories of the Rural Pacification campaigns of 1941; standing beside the Netaji, however, he brought the symbols of Republican nationalism firmly into the orbit of GEACPS propaganda. In such imagery, it was almost as if the RNG was aspiring to the same image of "militant patriotism centred on a strong leadership" that Bose had successfully circulated for himself around the Axis world (figure 3.15).[73]

As suddenly as Wang had appeared on the GEACPS stage in late 1943, however, he disappeared from public view. In March 1944, Wang left for Japan to seek medical treatment for multiple myeloma—believed, at the time, to have been caused by shrapnel he carried in his body from the 1935 attempt on his life. None of this was hidden from the Chinese public. Indeed, some of the last photographic images we have of Wang alive are those apparently taken while he lay on an operating table, surrounded by Japanese surgeons (figure 3.16). Photographic evidence of the pain and discomfort

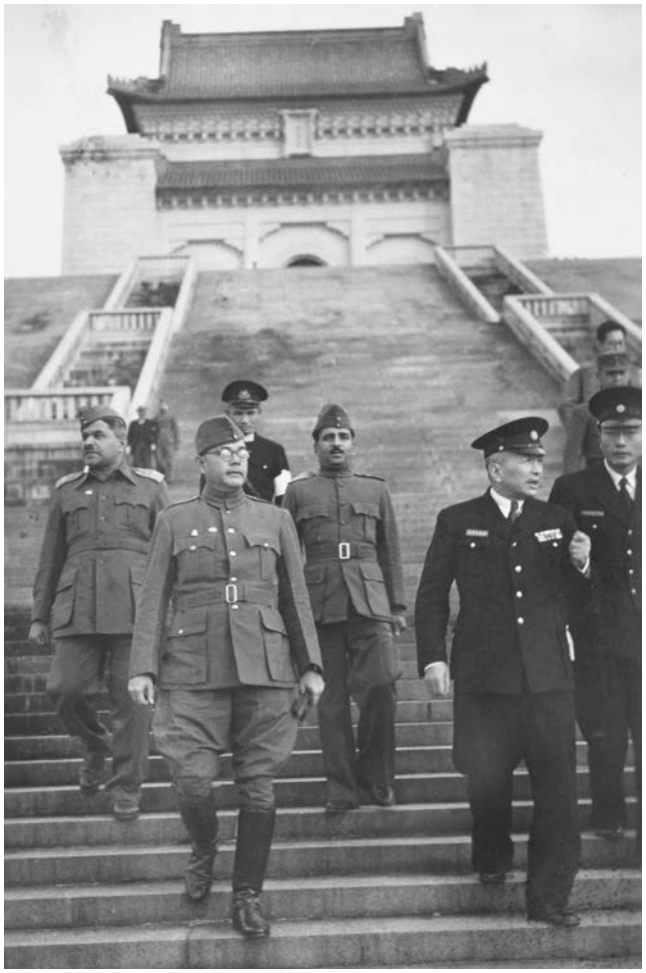

Figure 3.15. Photograph of Subhas Chandra Bose, Chu Minyi, and other INA and RNG officials on the steps of the Sun Yat-sen Mausoleum, November 1943. Chu Minyi Collection (Lot 11700), Prints and Photographs Reading Room, Library of Congress.

that Wang was willing to go through to remove bullet fragments from his back could be (and was) presented as proof of the broader selflessness that this "martyr-in-waiting" supposedly embodied.[74] It also visually recalled images from 1935 of a wounded Wang lying in a Beijing hospital bed as he recovered from the same attack.

Figure 3.16. Photographic feature showing Wang Jingwei undergoing an operation to remove bullet fragments from his body. *Zhonghua huabao* [China pictorial] 2, no. 1 (February 1944): 2–3. Courtesy of Shanghai Library.

"The Spark Which Kept the Peace Movement Alight Was Gone"

Wang Jingwei died on the afternoon of November 10, 1944, in Nagoya Imperial University Hospital. While the RNG would remain in existence until August 1945, Wang's death was seen as major setback in terms of regime morale. As one employee of the regime phrased it in a retrospective account, "the spark which [had] kept the Peace Movement alight was gone."[75] To be sure, Chen Gongbo accepted the mantle of RNG leader and continued to rule as a temporary chairman (*dai zhuxi*) of the national government until August 1945.[76] But the departure of the one individual who had been so central to the supposed validity of the RNG project undermined any attempt by this regime to reinvent itself. Thus, while Wang's demise does nothing to contradict Henrietta Harrison's argument that "during the Republican period, the death of a political figure was a crucial moment for defining his subsequent image," Wang's death was far more significant than earlier deaths.[77] In light of the changing dynamics of the war in 1944 and a general belief that Japan was headed for defeat by this stage, this was

a crucial moment for defining the RNG itself ahead of expected postwar retribution.

Posthumously, therefore, Wang's public image would be manipulated in 1944–1945 to fit certain ideas about his significance and the meaning of the regime he led. Such efforts started within days of Wang's death, for he had died just two days before the seventy-eighth anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birth (November 12). This was almost certainly one factor in determining that news of Wang's death was not publicly reported in occupied China until the late afternoon of November 12 (i.e., well after commemorative events marking Sun's birthday had concluded).[78] This unplanned coincidence of Wang's death and Sun's birth (brought closer together via the delayed announcement of the former) represented an opportunity for the RNG. The calendrical overlap of the two dates could be made to suggest a cosmological connection between the two men. This implied connection would, in turn, infuse many aspects of the ways in which Wang's death was presented by RNG authorities.

Wang's body did not lie in state upon its return to China, and no new images of Wang prior to his death were circulated—although a newsreel of his body's return to Nanjing was made by the Nippon Newsreel Company (Nihon Nyūsu Eigasha).[79] This physical invisibility, however, meant that sections of the RNG administration could begin to rewrite a narrative of Wang through ritual, spectacle, and even funerary architecture—rather than portraiture. According to the archival record, Chen Bijun took the lead in many of these efforts. It was Chen, for example, who insisted that initial discussions about a state funeral for Wang—publicly discussed the day following his death—be set aside. Wang's "laying to rest" (*anzang dianli*), Chen suggested, should instead emphasize the qualities of humility and self-sacrifice that the late leader had apparently embodied when alive (the hagiography of the NCM seemingly long forgotten). "The regal practices of the feudal times of old were something that the chairman [i.e., Wang] had always loathed," wrote MoP bureaucrats. How could an ostentatious state funeral be appropriate for someone who thought only of the people?[80] Rather than bury Wang as a great GEACPS leader then, Chen was appealing for a return to earlier hagiography that had presented Wang as a martyr. Given that Japan's defeat in the war was, by late 1944, fully expected, this made sense. A return to the notion of Wang as a martyr to the cause of peace underlined the notion that the RNG and its leadership were themselves victims of, rather than complicit in, foreign occupation.

The subsequent burial of Wang on November 23, 1944, was a highly choreographed affair. The day's proceedings were designed to communicate specific meanings about Wang's life in the wider story of the Chinese Republic. Accordingly, every facet of the day's agenda was accounted for.[81] The day commenced at half past six in the morning at the central government compound. Inside, the room was decorated with a photographic portrait of Wang in his morning suit that had been produced on the occasion of his visit to Japan in 1941. It was in this hall that RNG civilian and military officials, together with Japanese and diplomatic representatives, bowed in respect before Wang's flag-draped coffin, which was adorned with a naval portrait of Wang (in contrast to the civilian portrait at government headquarters). A cortege led by RNG soldiers on horseback bearing KMT and ROC flags, but including Wang's widow and other family members dressed in dark mourning clothes, then took Wang's casket through central Nanjing, past the bronze statue of Sun Yat-sen in Xin Jiekou, and eventually to Purple Mountain.

As reference to the statue of Sun suggests, RNG authorities managed to weave into the visual and textual narrative of Wang's funeral overt parallels with the funeral of Sun Yat-sen in 1925. This was something that Japanese news agencies were only too happy to oblige. A Japanese journalist who had been present at Sun's funeral even penned an article that made explicit connections between both events, recalling Wang's presence at Sun's funeral in 1925 as he described the scenes that unfolded during Wang's funeral in 1944.[82] More importantly, however, Sun's legacy could be felt in the siting of Wang's tomb. Wang was buried in a plot of land within the wider Purple Mountain area, but in a specific location that was christened by the RNG as "Meihuashan" (literally, "Plum Blossom Mount"). This was a grand name—deliberately reminiscent, so Wang's postwar detractors later claimed, of Huanghuagang in Guangzhou[83]—for what was little more than a knoll, a short distance from the Ming tombs and the Sun mausoleum.[84] The site was planted with plums—the plum blossom had been the ROC's national flower (*guohua*) since 1929—only after the decision was made to bury Wang there.[85] However, the design of Wang's tomb was clearly planned to suggest Wang's subservience to (rather than parity with) Sun. Indeed, the tomb was conspicuous in its austere scale.[86] Wang's tomb was a circular, grass-topped mound about eight meters wide and four meters high.[87] It looked not remotely like the Sun Mausoleum. Instead, it recalled the graves of earlier Republican statesmen in

Nanjing, such as Tan Yankai, suggesting an attempt at visual continuity with distinctly Nationalist political traditions.[88]

Crucially, however, the official narrative about Wang's death did not present this site as a permanent resting place. Sun Yat-sen's funeral in Beijing in 1925 had been but a temporary solution until permanent interment in a mausoleum in the capital of a unified China could be achieved. Wang's burial on Plum Blossom Mount would thus also be presented as a provisional measure. In accounts published by the CNA, Wang's apparent desire to be ultimately laid to rest not in Nanjing but in the city of his birth, Guangzhou, was explicitly mentioned. Indeed, clear instructions about this were given in the authoritative account published shortly after the burial:

> It was Chairman Wang's wish that he be buried in Guangzhou with already deceased revolutionary comrades. He had thus chosen a burial plot below Baiyunshan in Guangzhou. In order that the Chairman's wishes, and the orders of the national government, be respected, a temporary burial shall take place on Meihuashan, in front of the Ming tombs, in Nanjing. A state funeral shall be held [in Guangzhou] after full peace is achieved.[89]

As Wang had been *almost* martyred in 1910, it was only fitting that, some three decades later, his body would be eventually destined for burial, not with so great a figure as Sun, but with other martyrs from the city that had been key to the birth of the Republican movement. Wang was so selfless, such claims suggested, that he wished, not to be commemorated individually in death, but to be laid next to (other) Cantonese martyrs in a communal grave.[90] By destroying the supposedly temporary tomb in Nanjing with dynamite in 1946 and burning Wang's body thereafter, Chiang Kai-shek's returning Nationalists ensured that this wish would never be fulfilled.[91]

Very few images of Wang's tomb survive today. I am aware of only two publicly accessible images of the site. One is held by the Central News Agency in Taipei; another (uncaptioned and unattributed) image can be found among the photographs of Chu Minyi, now held by the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. (figure 3.17). Chiang Kai-shek's attempts at rendering this site invisible through its physical destruction in 1946,

Figure 3.17. Chu Minyi overseeing the planting of plum trees, possibly in front of Wang Jingwei's tomb, circa 1944. Chu Minyi Collection (Lot 11700), Prints and Photographs Reading Room, Library of Congress.

therefore, seem to have been largely successful. Such invisibility has also had consequences for the scholarship, which has continued to feed false assumptions about the RNG's attempts to posthumously honor Wang. Contrary to a number of frequently made assertions in the secondary literature, for example, no "huge new mausoleum was built on top of the Purple and Gold Mountain just outside Nanjing [*sic*]" for Wang.[92]

In contrast, visitors to Nanjing today will still frequently encounter reproductions of the 1939 *Zhonghua ribao* portrait of Wang. The timeless quality of this image, together with its lack of a clear provenance, have ironically given it a longevity that perhaps even Lin Baisheng would not have expected, for it is now included on explanatory boards at tourist sites in the city.

The invisibility of Wang's tomb suggests that some of Wang's own apparent fears about iconoclasm were well founded. The continuing use of the 1939 portrait today, however, also suggests that the iconographies of occupation at least partially achieved what they were designed to do. Wang was reimagined by the Peace Movement as rising from near death in Hanoi and leading a resurgent, if occupied, China. That the visual ephemera of such efforts are now used to illustrate sites designed to educate Chinese

tourists about Wang's treason ironically underlines the efficacy of such imaginings. The physical traces of Wang's body have long been destroyed, but the ephemeral traces of his wartime personality cult remain.

If we observe the Wang cult in 1940, we find a fairly typical set of Republican Chinese visual symbols associated with a leader claiming validity via rhetorical and spiritual proximity to Sun Yat-sen. For all the attempts to make a contradistinction between Wang and Chiang Kai-shek in wartime, the RNG inherited and deployed many of the same practices of leader worship that had been developed by Chiang Kai-shek in the Nanjing decade.[93] It is in this regard that we see just how *Chinese* the RNG aspired to look. Indeed, in light of precedents set by earlier client regimes—some of which emulated Japanese methods of leader and emperor worship (Manchukuo, for instance)—the early wartime Wang Jingwei personality cult is remarkable in its reliance on distinctly modern Chinese modes of visuality. In commissioning studio portraits by the likes of Bann's Studio, for example, the RNG was simply following a modern tradition of leader worship perfected by Chiang Kai-shek in the 1930s. The *Zhonghua ribao* and Bann's Studio portraits thus helped the RNG sustain an occupied gaze that looked remarkably different from that imposed on China by the Japanese.

However, in the changing narratives written around Wang through these images, and in the shifting visibility of Wang himself from 1944 onward, we also witness just how reliant the RNG was on its relationship with Tokyo for putting this gaze into practice. Changes to the Wang cult, and to the use of different types of visual media designed to spread the products of that cult, reflected changing policies that were not initiated in Nanjing itself and over which the RNG had little control. How could Wang's supporters establish a coherent image that could be sustained throughout the life of this regime when they were continually responding to Japanese policies, attacks from the resistance, and attempts to attain greater levels of autonomy? Over the course of only five years, therefore, we see the development of a polysemic cult—one that was visualized by a diverse community of cadres, editors, photographers, and artists and that saw Wang represented in a wide variety of often contradictory ways. Wang was a peacemaker, a brand ambassador, a field officer, a Pan-Asian statesman, and a humble martyr. Throughout all of these changing roles, however, he would remain the face of the RNG.