

## Mr. Wang Jingwei's Vision of "Winning through Peace"

Mr. Wang Jingwei's private life is well known to the public. He did not smoke, did not play mahjong or other card games, and was absolutely faithful to his wife. Occasionally he would imbibe a glass of wine with close friends when discussing politics, or while composing Chinese poems. His pastime on the weekends was frequently to play with the young children of his relatives and close friends. When I was 13 and 14 years old, Mr. Wang returned to the Chinese capital Nanjing during the Sino-Japanese War to form the "peace government." As my late father, Chen Gongbo, followed Mr. Wang to Nanjing as his close confidante, I transferred from a high school in Shanghai to enroll in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades at the National Model High School near Nanjing Bamboo Bridge. Even though my home was quite close to Mr. Wang's home, I seldom participated in Mr. Wang's activities with the children. My predisposition during those years led me to pursue solitary activities, and I did not enjoy playing with younger kids. However, on the occasional weekend when movies were shown at Mr. Wang's home, I gladly joined in.

On one of those occasions (sometime in early 1942), the movie machine suddenly broke down, and Mr. Wang took the opportunity to lead his young companions (including me) to his conference room in which was hung a world map. He spoke in simplified language to the children about the meaning of peace. I was quite interested in what he was saying since his comments were quite different from the propaganda often found in the newspapers. Several days later (March 30, 1942) the schoolmaster of the Model High asked me to give a speech to all the teachers and students in the large school auditorium as we commemorated the Second Anniversary of the return of the Chinese (peace) government site to Nanjing. I composed a speech based entirely on what I had heard from Mr. Wang regarding the meaning of peace. Much to my surprise, the speech script written in my own hands was found in one of my old files, over sixty years later! Therefore, when I donated the remaining papers from my late father Chen Gongbo to his alma mater Columbia University in 2003, I included my speech manuscript among the donated papers. Below is the English translation of my speech manuscript written in 1942.

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### Second Anniversary of the Returning of National Government's Site

Kan Chen

Ladies and gentlemen-

Time is fleeting. It is now two years since the restoration of the site of our National Government to Nanjing. As we review the changes on the international stage in the past two years, it is really difficult for us to fathom. The entire world is now covered in gun smoke as the

fighting has spread to become World War II. Although we cannot know which side is going to win, the conflict between Germany and Britain, the defeat of France, and the radical alterations being made in the European map are all major events in history. Were Germany and Soviet Union not good friends through the signing of their non-aggressive treaty? Who would have predicted their sudden transformation into enmity? It was expected that Japan and America would ultimately go to war. But who could have guessed that it would come so soon? Alas, things have changed far too quickly. Within these two years, many weak countries have regained power, whereas many other countries have moved from prosperity to weakness, a few even to complete extinction. As we think about our own spacious country with its rich resources (China), it is really sad. Our infrastructure, our culture, and our economy have been ruined by the war. On the other hand, if our sacrifices had resulted in our country's liberty and renaissance, it would have been worth it. However, our country is still quite weak. Moreover, our country is still not unified under a central government. Under such conditions, we must decide whether continuing to fight or suing for peace is more beneficial to our country. Currently, the two rival global forces are almost equally powerful. Thus, WWII will certainly not end within a year or two, and may even extend to four or five years. If we could achieve peace in the middle of the turmoil of international instability, it would give us the opportunity to rest and recuperate, and to reach the goal of renaissance. Then, as WWII ends, the major powers in the world would have exhausted their energy, yet China would have regained its vitality. By that time, rather than be bullied by the major powers we will have become one of the world's strongest nations. There will be no one we need to fear. The rise of the Arab countries during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries succeeded due to the very long conflict between the Eastern Roman Empire and Persia. History has already proven this fact. Why don't we follow historical examples to seek peace?

I dare to say that, if countrywide peace had been achieved at the time of the return of our National Government's site to Nanjing two years ago, the vitality of our country would certainly have been preserved. In fact, during the past two years, our post-war reconstruction process in the occupied territories has been rather successful. Ladies and gentlemen, war is destructive, and has led to suffering. Peace is blissful, and gives happiness to the people. As we realize the benefits of peace, we should review the past and look toward the future. We need to grit our teeth, for our country and our people's sake, and endeavor to pursue the bright future. (End)

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After I delivered the speech, all my teachers and schoolmates were very surprised and wondered why I opted not to use any of the official slogans such as "Affinity between China and Japan" and "Co-existence, co-prosperity." Even the school master called me to his office and

asked where I had obtained the ideas for my speech. Only after I said I had heard the ideas directly from Chairman Wang's mouth did he begin to relax.

I have never heard Mr. Wang's talk about the meaning of peace with his little friends repeated to other audiences, especially not in his public speeches. His vision of "winning through peace" could certainly not be put into practice within the occupied territories under Japanese control. Therefore I can only say that "winning through peace" was an idea in his heart or a vision which probably guided some of his actions. Now 70 years have passed. As I reexamine his meaning of peace, the vision was not entirely wishful thinking. It was probably a goal that helped him take limited actions to help his country and his people within the occupied territories. That goal was to help China regain its vitality to the extent possible. As a matter of fact, Mr. Wang's Nanjing Government soon joined the Axis group of Japan, Germany, and Italy. However, joining the Axis Group was only a tactic to move China closer to "peace" with Japan within the occupied territories, in order to win more resources and to take back the previous concessions to the world powers. At least on the surface, the extraterritorial rights of the world powers in China were abolished. On the other hand, the Nanjing Government has never sent any Chinese soldier to fight alongside the Japanese. Nor would Japan have dared accept for fear that the Chinese soldiers might turn around at the front lines to fight the Japanese. Toward the end of World War II, Japan did loosen its grip on the Nanjing Government with the hope that Nanjing would help Japan sue for peace with the Allies. The Nanjing Government took this opportunity to improve the living standards of the Chinese people in the occupied territories with the intent to regain China's vitality. Recently some objective historians have written about the "abnormal prosperity" in the area of Shanghai, Suzhou and Hangzhou during this period (1944-45). During that time, I was already a senior high school student in Shanghai. Among the best high schools, there were no longer lessons taught in the Japanese language. Except for Chinese literature, all classes used English textbooks. After the War, the top 10 students in my class were all admitted to the best Chinese universities, such as Tsinghua University, Yenching University, and the Shanghai Jiaotong University. This "abnormal prosperity" was not restricted to the economic domain. Even in the cultural domain, there were distinguished achievements. Several famous female writers appeared during that period. There was even elevation of standards among the popular songs. At present, 70 years after Mr. Wang's talk about the meaning of peace, almost anywhere in the world with a sizable Chinese population, one can hear the popular song *Ye Lai Xiang* (Tuberose), which was composed and popularized during that period. Can you say that all these achievements have no relation to Mr. Wang's vision of "Winning through peace" and "Recovering China's vitality?"

*Original Chinese text written by Kan Chen in July, 2014*

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