

who writes *Youtai* (Jew) on his identity card.

For Bush the film represents a breakthrough.

"If I pull this off it will be a real coup. I have the opportunity and a good relationship with the Chinese."

Bush, like all documentary film makers, bemoans the low standing documentary films receive and the fact that documentary film makers are becoming as rare as... well as rare as Kaifeng Jews.

Chinese officials have been cooperative and he has two Chinese advisors working in Beijing. "They are proud of their own tolerance, that Jews were never discriminated against for just being Jews."

Acting as associate producer will be Vancouver-based Lily Liu, who has been a visiting research fellow at UBC. Liu works at China's Aca-

demy of Social Sciences in Beijing.

Bush has finished scouting and scriptwriting and is well into the financing stage.

"I'm trying to interest companies in Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal. I've just made a deal with PBS who want T.V. distribution for the U.S."

The film will have a shoestring budget of \$265,000—less than one MacGyver episode, a sardonic Bush points out. But he has big plans, including bringing in a world class musician like Isaac Stern for the soundtrack.

"I haven't had as much good feeling in my gut on any film as I've had with this one."

Bush sees the film playing four important roles.

"First, if it is a success it will be a vital tool in Sino-Judaic studies. Second it will bring to an end the

isolation between the Kaifeng Jews and the Jews of the rest of the world. Third, it will enhance Chinese-Canadian friendship. And finally it will enhance Chinese-Jewish relations."

"This has international appeal. It is going to knock the socks off people. I hope it wins an Oscar," he says, laughing and whipping his fingers through his thickly matted curls.

Shooting will begin next Passover (1989) and the movie will be ready after four additional months of post-production.

Bush counts his fingers and sighs, "That will only be six years in the making..."

"Six years. That's all right, the Kaifeng Jews were cut off from the rest of the world's Jews for 125 years. So they can wait a little longer for the film."



VOL. 3, NO. 3

OCTOBER, 1988

### THE SINO-JUDAIC BIBLIOGRAPHIES REPUBLISHED

by Rena Krasno

Hundred of books, notices, reports and articles on the Jews of China have been written in many languages during the past centuries. Translation and retranslations have been turned out by scholars, reporters and voyagers.

The man who pulled all this research together in a prodigious scholarly effort, was Doctor Rudolf Loewenthal. His three annotated Bibliographies on the Chinese Jews remain to this day a classic resource for all interested in this subject.

Dr. Loewenthal's work, which takes us to the year 1946, has been out of print for decades, and scholars have met with extreme difficulty in seeking out this important resource.

As a result of expanded interest, both in the West and in China itself, THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE in Cincinnati, Ohio, and THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE in Palo Alto, California, take great pride in announcing their joint publication of the Loewenthal Bibliographies. Henceforth, scholars, China experts and the interested public will have once again direct access to material of invaluable importance.

Dr. Loewenthal, now a resident of New York State, had a long life crowned with extraordinary achievements. Appointed Professor at the prestigious Yenching University in Beijing in 1934, he was awarded the extremely rare honor of Chinese citizenship. He added Russian to his linguistic repertoire and soon gained international reputation as an expert in Sino-Soviet relations.

Doctor Loewenthal later emigrated to the United States and was invited to teach at Cornell and Georgetown Universities. After achieving citizenship, Dr. Loewen-

thal extended his scope of research and published other bibliographies, dealing not only with China, but including Africa, Turkey and Arab countries.

Of all Dr. Loewenthal's widely acclaimed works, none supercede his annotated Bibliographies on the Chinese Jews. Here he broke new ground by bringing together numerous books, articles and papers, thus making long-forgotten works available to scholars.

On November 6th, at the Hebrew Union College in New York City, THE HEBREW UNION COLLEGE and THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE, will hold an affair paying due tribute to Dr. Loewenthal and celebrating the republication of his Bibliographies. Thus a neglected facet of Jewish history will be brought into perspective once again.

### CHINESE PROFESSOR VISITS HEBREW UNIVERSITY

by Prof. Irene Eber

Professor Xu Xin of Nanjing University was the guest of the Truman Research Institute of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem from June 24-30, 1988. Professor Xu teaches English literature and in recent years his special field of interest is American-Jewish fiction, a topic on which he has written several articles in addition to translating into Chinese a number of short stories by American-Jewish authors. His desire to learn more about Judaism, its practices and society, he told us, culminated in his decision to visit Israel.

The Truman Institute arranged tours to Tel Aviv and to the Galilee. In Jerusalem, members of the department of East Asian Studies took turns introducing him to the many sights of interest in the city. Nothing escaped Professor Xu's at-

tention and we had long conversations about this most complex of religious meeting grounds and its history. Professor Xu also visited Yad Vashem and he was visibly shocked by the pictorial exhibits. He particularly responded to the realization that Jews were persecuted in practically every European country during World War II. I shall never forget his remark when we emerged from the gloomy hall into the bright Jerusalem sunshine: "Now I understand at last why the Jews needed a state and safety from this terrible persecution."

On June 27th, Professor Xu delivered a lecture at the Truman Research Institute entitled "Jews and Judaism through Chinese Eyes". He spoke movingly of his impressions of Jerusalem; of his knowledge of Judaism gleaned from books and encyclopedias and how this is being transformed by contact with the living reality. He told us how for years he laboriously gathered information on Jews and how scarce and fragmentary such information in China is. He told us of the difficulties the scholar in China faces when dealing with so "esoteric" a topic like Judaism and Jewish literature. And he also told us of his continuing commitment to translation work which he sees as one of the major avenues for bringing Jews and Judaism into Chinese intellectual discourse.

A large portion of Professor Xu's lecture was devoted to his study and interpretation of the works of Bernard Malamud and Saul Bellow. Considering the isolation in which he has carried on his studies of these authors, Professor Xu's insights and sensitivity to the Jewish issues in their works were indeed impressive.

We were both pleased and grateful for having had the opportunity not only of hearing Professor Xu

(continued on page 6)

### "SJI CHINESE JEWS OF KAIFENG" SLIDE SHOW OR VIDEO NOW AVAILABLE

The CHINESE JEWS OF KAIFENG is ideal for use in community centers and in the classroom, as well as for personal viewing in one's home. It is being distributed by the SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE on a non-profit basis for educational use in two versions, either as a set of 48 slides with a 30 minute cassette containing a narrative, or as a 30 minute videotape. Both include a list of credits, a selected bibliography and a chronology.

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## From the Editor:

*This year, for the first time in ten years, I led High Holy Day services. I share this with you by way of making my excuses for the delay in publishing the fall issue of Points East. Obviously there is a great danger in an enterprise such as ours that an occasional publication might become an intermittent one (or worse yet). I shall do my best to keep Points East occasional on a regular basis.*

*This issue focuses on the many diverse points of contact between Jewish (and Israeli) and Chinese cultures. Even though I strive to include every news item about which I learn, I still feel that many more escape our attention. Nonetheless, the assembled items are extraordinary: a new Chinese-Hebrew dictionary, a new Chinese centre for Jewish studies, a Chinese professor lecturing in Jerusalem, the republication of the Loewenthal bibliographies, etc.*

*Next issue we will once again turn our attention to the other Jewish communities of the Far East (or, as we say here in Seattle, the Far West): India, Burma, Hong Kong, Bangkok. All I ask is for someone to send me an article on Singapore and its Jewish community. By February 1989 --- that is when this occasional publication is next regularly published.*

Anson Laytner

## Points East:

An Occasional Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

Anson Laytner, Editor

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## IN THE FIELD

- Rena Krasno, has assumed the job of SJI Program Chairperson. Rena was born and educated in Shanghai. She proposed the idea of a Kaifeng-Jewish exhibit at Beth Hatefutsoth on the Tel Aviv Campus, and is so recognized in the brochure published by Beth Hatefutsoth. We wish her well in assuming this volunteer position for the SJI.
- Prof. I.I. Glass, a member of our Advisory Council, and of the Institute for Aerospace Studies at the University of Toronto, has donated to the SJI, his work on SHOCK WAVES AND MAN, in English and translations as well into Chinese and Japanese. His work has also been translated into Russian, Polish and several other languages. Prof. Glass has visited Kaifeng and interviewed descendants of the Chinese Jews.
- A new Chinese edition of some of the plays of Sholem Aleichem, has recently appeared in China.
- Our SJI officer, Prof. Albert Dien, is spending some 3 or 4 months in the Far East. He will be visiting China, Taiwan, Hongkong, Tibet, and Singapore. We look forward to his report on his travels.
- Israel has just issued a new postage stamp with the picture of the old Kaifeng Synagogue.
- Mr. Li Kexiu, Curator of the Kaifeng Museum, advises that "the Museum would like to collect materials for the section of the Chinese Jews. This section will, as they planned, be especially open to those people who are interested in the history of the Chinese Jews."
- The new Kaifeng Museum opened on the National Day of China, October 1, 1988.
- The new Hotel in Kaifeng, DONG-JING HOTEL (Eastern Capitol Hotel) will be partially opened in late October. The Manager of the Hotel, Mr. Liu Wenquing, will send POINTS EAST pictures of the hotel, as well as an article describing its amenities. Mr. Liu was formerly associated with the Kaifeng C.I.T.S., and is perfectly aware of the needs of tourists.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

Louis Schwartz, in "A Plea for Involvement, Not Just Study" (Points East, June

1988), raised the point that more "soul" and "personal contact" is needed in our dealings with the descendants of Chinese Jews. While I agree that warmth and cordiality on our part is necessary as a means of both expanding our academic knowledge of Chinese Jewry and, perhaps, sparking a Jewish revival in China, I vigorously protest the theological implications inherent in Mr. Schwartz's argument.

Mr. Schwartz asks, "Regardless of your definition of who is or who is not a Jew, does it not behoove us to give new interpretation to ancient Jewish law?" As an Orthodox Jew and as one who is aware of the fact that the entire issue of who is a Jew centers precisely around the very question of when and how are reinterpretations of Halacha needed, my response is a resounding "no". According to Halacha, there is no such thing as being 1/6 or 1/20 part Jewish, one is either Jewish or not Jewish. Sentimentality and wishful thinking aside, the descendants of Chinese Jews are halachically not Jewish. This does not mean to imply that we should ignore these "Jewish" descendants. I am in full support of friendly and meaningful overtures on our part which might inspire a Jewish reawakening (k'Halacha) among these descendants.

I hope that in the future Points East will be more selective in publishing articles and statements that reflect philosophical prejudices. An earlier instance of where such a prejudice is present with regards to the issue of who is a Jew is the article "Shabbat in Kaifeng, August 1985" by Rabbi Belzer (Points East, April 1986). In the board report of the April, 1986 issue it is stated that, "there was total opposition to any activity which smacks of proselytism." I believe that the goals of our Institute and of Points East would best be served by retaining this principle.

Moshe S. Fuksbrumer  
Brooklyn, NY

To the Editor:

In the latest issue of Points East you have published an excerpt from a proposed new preface for the Chinese edition of *The Survival of the Chinese Jews* by Donald Daniel Leslie. I know this excellent book very well and have been in touch with its author by mail ever since its appearance. However he writes about the Kaifeng Jews: "... they are no longer Jews by race..." There never have been Jews by race! The only criterion is Judaism. There is a fine and scholarly book on this very subject: *The Myth of the Jewish Race* by Raphael Patai, New York, 1975. For those who read German I also recommend *Stammeskunde der Juden* by Sigmund Feist, Leipzig, 1925.

Theodor Kartz  
Stockholm, Sweden

To the Editor:

"Gabow's article on 'Artifacts' is fine. I only have one error to point out: He should not write 'Religious books dealing with Jewish Law,' which might mislead enthusiasts to think that some really interesting material was hidden behind the phrase. What these 34 booklets are are 'Section books (parashiot) of the Torah (Five Books of Moses), see my analysis in *Abr-Nahrain*.

D.D. Leslie  
Canberra, Australia

The proposal was conveyed by a new trading company, which was established to examine the possibility of economic cooperation between Israel and China.

Al Hamishmar reported that the first official economic delegation from China will visit Israel next week.

It was reported earlier this week that China had agreed to allow Israel to open an academic liaison office in Peking, which would also deal informally with economic projects and business issues.

## CHINESE TRADE TEAM ARRIVES IN ISRAEL ON PRIVATE VISIT

Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 19 & 20 (JTA)—Persistent reports that Israel and the People's Republic of China are moving toward some form of commercial contact, with possibly more significant relations in the offing, have been vigorously denied by both governments.

But they gained credence with the arrival here Wednesday of an unofficial Chinese trade delegation on a five-day private visit.

It is the first Communist Chinese delegation of any sort to come to Israel openly, using Chinese passports. The seven-member team is headed by Lo Chi Min, a Chinese with Belgian citizenship who has extensive ties with Peking.

The host is an Israeli businessman, Aviv Hirshenbein, who is the local representative of the ITC Investing and Trading Co., which is headed by Lo. ITC is half-owned by the Chinese government.

Although the delegation is not sponsored by any government, it apparently has permission from Peking to discuss business and trade prospects with Israelis. It is said to be interested chiefly in medical and electronic equipment and computers.

The Chinese government has been making great efforts to downplay the visit, and the Israelis are also stressing its unofficial nature.

Nevertheless, both countries seem to be treading softly toward some form of commercial contact, with the possibility of more significant relations in the offing.

## SJI CHINA TRIP PROPOSED

The Sino-Judaic is contemplating sponsoring a tour to China some time in 1989. Those interested in joining such a tour please write to the SJI at 3197 Louis Road, Palo Alto. The tour will visit Kaifeng among other cities.

## VANCOUVER FILM MAKER DIRECTS DOCUMENTARY ON THE JEWS OF CHINA

by David Ferman

Reprinted from *The Vancouver Jewish Bulletin*  
Sept. 1, 1988

Gary Bush, a Vancouver film maker, has stumbled upon the most extraordinary story he may ever tell, that of a now near-extinct people; the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng. It is a project that Bush sees as "pre-ordained," and listening to his discoveries it is hard to disagree.

In 1983 when Bush was in China directing a film for UNICEF on children's health, he visited the grave of Madame Sun Yat Sen.

"I wandered around the cemetery and saw graves with European Jewish-sounding names on them. My host said that there had been a large Jewish community in Shanghai before World War II. Then he told me there have been Jews in China for as long as 2,000 years. That really surprised me," says Bush, still looking astonished.

He has been thinking and working about a film on the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng ever since.

Then 18 months after the discovery in the cemetery, Bush received a startling letter that pushed the project from fascination to personal odyssey. Bush's cousin wrote that her great-great-grandfather was a Kaifeng Jew.

"Tell me more, I said."

He learned that his aunt, through marriage, still had faint memories as a five-year-old living in Odessa.

"She remembered her great-grandfather being a Kaifeng Jew. He wore a pigtail and a Chinese costume. She remembers he was very kind and took her for walks," Bush recalls, his eyes travelling to a distant time and place.

Bush's family eventually emigrated from Russia to Canada while the Chinese branch of the family

moved back to China and was never heard from again.

"Learning this inspired me more. It was mind-boggling to learn. I'm starting to believe the film was preordained."

Bush, 36, indeed seems the right man to make this film. He has directed a number of documentaries on China, one of which, on Madame Sun Yat Sen (*The Children of Soong Ching Ling*) earned him a variety of awards including an Academy 'award of merit.'

*Soong Ching Ling* has been seen by more than 100 million Chinese and importantly, gained Bush a good rapport with the Chinese.

"This new film will be about Jewish survival. It will also take a personal look at the Jin family and where the community is going now."

What the film will not be is an A-Z history of Chinese Jews, he stresses.

"I know I have enough material for a six-hour series, but this is a one hour documentary."

"The Kaifeng Jews want to learn more about their Jewish heritage. They want a Jewish exhibit in the local museum or a place to house their artifacts. More and more Chinese historians are paying attention to this Sino-Judaic link," says Bush, who sees his film as something of a rescue project.

"In a way, this is a rescue film," Bush says. "There is a small Chinese community that is trying to reaffirm its Jewish heritage after all these years. It would be terrific to have a document of that rebirth."

Although he thinks his film could go a long way in aiding a possible rebirth of the Kaifeng community, Bush says in the end any comeback will have to come from the descendants of Kaifeng Jews.

"For that spark to be rekindled it will take someone like Qu Yinan to go back there and teach. The only way it would be acceptable for them to learn their own history would be from a Chinese Jew." Otherwise, he says, the Kaifeng Jews would get a distorted view of their history through Western eyes.

"They are very proud of being both Jewish and of being Chinese. That is what is so amazing," says Bush. He even met an elderly man

## CHINESE PROFESSOR VISITS HEBREW UNIVERSITY

(continued from page 1)

but for the constructive exchange of views about our ongoing tasks: How to bring knowledge of Jews and Judaism to the Chinese public, and how to increase understanding of China and Chinese society in Israel.

## SECOND ACCOUNT

### CHINESE PROFESSOR VISITS HEBREW UNIVERSITY

reprinted from

Chicago-JUF News Sept. 1988

When you talk about Jews and Israel to the Chinese, it's like talking, well, Chinese.

That's because Israel, to the Chinese, is "an alien and mysterious country, even more so than the countries of the Western Hemisphere," said a visiting Chinese scholar during a recent talk at the Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University.

What little the Chinese do know about Israel and Zionism is of negative nature, said Xu Xin, who is deputy chairman of the English Department at Nanjing University in China and who has taught a course there in American-Jewish literature. Zionists are said to be people who only wanted to take lands away from the Arabs. "We learned that Israel was the running dog of the Western imperialist powers," he said.

Xu, who was in Israel on his way back to China after having spent two years at Chicago State University, said that in more recent years, he feels that relations between China and Israel have taken a turn for the better. At Nanjing University, he said, there have been 10 students since 1986 studying Hebrew and Jewish culture and history. Some Chinese scholars

have also recently published papers about the history of Jews in China, he added.

Xu said he became interested in the works of American Jewish authors such as Saul Bellow, Isaac Bashevis-Singer, Philip Roth and Bernard Malamud when the reading and teaching of Western literature became permitted again following the Chinese cultural revolution. Through the works of these authors, some of which have been translated into Chinese, Xu said he learned of and became fascinated by the phenomenon of the Jews' survival through 2,000 years of diaspora despite abuse and persecution. He also was intrigued, he said, by the character of the shlemiel in Jewish-American literature, for which he said there is a parallel concept in Chinese culture.

Despite his reading of the fictional works of American Jewish authors, Xu acknowledged that, like other Chinese, he knew little factually about Jews or Judaism, since practically no literature exists on the subject in China. Thus, he admitted that it was only during the period he spent in Chicago that he learned that Hebrew is still a spoken language.

Xu said that he felt that he wanted to come to Israel before he returned to China, and this was arranged for him through the Israeli consulate in Chicago and the embassy in Washington. While in Jerusalem he visited the Yad Vashem museum and said that he was shocked by what he saw there and now understood better why the Jews wanted their own country.

### ISRAEL TO OPEN OFFICE IN PEKING, IN LATEST SIGN OF IMPROVED TIES

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, Oct. 12 (JTA) — Israel and the People's Republic of China are approaching bilateral relations. But there is some distance to be traveled before diplomatic ties can be viewed as imminent.

Nevertheless, China has agreed to allow Israel to open an academic

liaison office in Peking. And on Sunday, a contract was signed to allow the Peking Opera to perform next May in Israel.

The liaison office also will deal, informally, with bilateral business issues and the coordination of economic projects by governmental-linked companies in both countries.

The agreement has yet to be formalized. It is still unclear whether the Israeli academic representative will live in Peking on a permanent or temporary basis.

The Chinese are proceeding with considerable reserve. Foreign Minister Qian Qichen asked Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres last month that "no news of bilateral relations between the countries be made public," the Jerusalem Post reported.

The two met in New York, where they attended the opening of the 43rd session of the United Nations General Assembly.

### REPORTS OF INCREASED TIES BETWEEN ISRAEL AND CHINA

By Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Oct. 13 (JTA)—Signs have proliferated in recent days that Israel and the People's Republic of China are moving toward trade agreements and other forms of cooperation, though formal diplomatic relations still seem beyond the horizon.

According to Haaretz, the director general of the Foreign Ministry, Avraham Tamir, made a secret visit to Peking this year and reached an agreement with Chinese officials to expand economic ties and proceed toward diplomatic relations.

Tamir admitted "there have been contacts," but refused to comment on his reported trip.

The Chinese government has denied there are any plans for expanded relations with Israel.

To some China-watchers, the denial may signify just the opposite.

The Haaretz report said a representative of an Israeli coal company will leave for Peking within a week to discuss buying coal from China.

The Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure recently received a proposal to buy oil from that country, and passed it on to an Israeli fuel company, Haaretz said.

To the Editor:

Please note the following corrections and additions to Gabow's article on the artifacts of the Chinese Jews, in the last issue of **Points East**.

- 1) There is also a Torah case in Los Angeles, at the Skirball Museum:
- 2) See my "Mandarins, Jews and Missionaries," p. 386, n. 20, for Kaifeng mss. in Manchester and Toronto.
- 3) The Sotheby Torah Scroll consists of the first 12 skins of Genesis—not the entire book.
- 4) There is also a Stone Laver from the Kaifeng Synagogue in the Episcopalian Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

Michael Pollak  
Dallas, Texas

Dear President Gabow,

As you know, we held a Conference on Jews and Judaism in Hangchow from August 18th to August 22nd, 1988. Twenty-eight scholars from Shanghai, Beijing, Sian and Hangchow attended and submitted treatises on the following topics:

1. The Nature of the Jewish People.
2. Judaic Culture.
3. The Relations of Jews to other peoples.
4. The Background of Zionism.
5. Chinese Jews and Jews around the world.
6. Jewish Assimilation.

All of us agree that the study of Judaic Culture is a weak point in our country. Judaic Culture has greatly contributed to the development of both Eastern and Western Culture.

The Jews never suffered discrimination in our country either in the past or present. Confucian ethics did not permit the persecution of minorities. In this respect Confucianism appears similar to Judaic ethics, and may be a factor to explain the assimilation of the Jews in China. However this factor will be studied further by our scholars.

We have established a Shanghai Judaic Studies Association (SJSA) and will engage in research on Judaic culture. We will collect Bibliographies and make contact with Jewish groups around the world.

The Secretary of SJSA, Mr. Jin, advised me of your letter to him, and he has already placed a reply in the mail.

The SJSA is not subject to the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, though I represent our Institute in SJSA. Our Institute still hopes to keep in contact with your

Institute and achieve the aims we personally discussed in Shanghai.

Sincerely,  
Gong Fang Zhan  
Director, Institute of Religious Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

### JUDAIC STUDIES CENTER INAUGURATED IN SHANGHAI

The first Judaic Studies Center in China has been established in Shanghai under the presidency of Professor Zhu Weile according to an announcement from Jin Yinzhong, vice secretary general of the Shanghai International Relations Studies Society.

The center is an outgrowth of a seminar on Jewish history and culture held last August in Liu Zhang, Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

The seminar was sponsored by the Shanghai International Relations Studies Society.

Dr. Zhao Fusan, vice president of the prestigious Academy of Social Sciences, was elected honorary president of the Judaic Studies Society. He will serve as a resource facility to the society.

The Sino-Judaic institute and the Jewish Historical Society of Hong Kong extended greetings and best wishes for the success of their sessions.

The text of of Jin's letter to Dennis Leventhal of the Historical Society follows:

Dear Mr. Leventhal,

During August 18-22, 1988, the Asian-African Studies of Shanghai International Relations Studies Society (SIRSS) held a Seminar on Jewish History and Culture in Liu Zhuang, Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. It interested a lot of scholars and departments both at home and abroad. Your letter of congratulations to President Zhang Chungli has been transmitted to us by Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. We take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation of your cordial greetings.

SIRSS, a nongovernmental, academic research organization, is not part of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. It was founded in 1957 and now has more than 500 members. It often makes studies of some important international issues. The study of Jewish history

and culture is the component part of the whole research project.

Suggested by the parties concerned, SIRSS decided to formally found the Judaic Studies of Shanghai International Relations Studies Society, the abbreviated form: Shanghai Judaic Studies (SJS). Professor Zhu Weile is appointed the president, Dr. Zhao Fusan vice-president of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the honorary president, Mr. Tang Peijie, Chen Hefeng and Pan Guang, vice presidents, and Mr. Jin Yinzhong, secretary general. It is temporarily located in R.247 N.7 Alley 622, Huai hai Zhong Lu, Shanghai. SJS will establish extensive contact with Jewish organizations in the world and create conditions to set up material depository and research centre for Jewish history and culture. SJS thinks that there were 17,000 Jews in Shanghai during the World War II. It is necessary to build a Judaic research centre independently in Shanghai. It will provide convenience to both local and visiting experts on Judaism. SJS will try its best to collect all kinds of materials about the Jews who lived in Shanghai, and compile and print their reminiscences so as to offer scientific achievements in the research.

Now being revised, the edition of the collected papers won't be published until December. We will be very interested if the edition is able to be published in Hong Kong at the same time. If such proves possible, we hope that you may consult with the editors Mr. Zhu Weile and Mr. Jin Yinzhong.

Please extend thanks to Prof. Israel Gutman for his friendly congratulation.

Sincerely Yours  
Jin Yinzhong  
Vice Secretary General  
Shanghai International Relations Studies Society

### LOEWENTHAL BIBLIOGRAPHY FUND

We appreciate the generous contribution from Lillian and Leo Loewenthal and Faye Kaplan in memory of their late Aunt, Leah Dworkin.

Support is still needed for this important project. When you receive your copy, please consider an extra contribution to subsidize this work.

## BRINGING HEBREW TO THE CHINESE

by Greer Fay Cashaman

Reprinted from  
*Jerusalem Post*  
Sept. 9, 1988

Emmanuel Pratt is producing a Chinese-Hebrew dictionary. He believes it to be the first of its kind. "If I thought that anyone had done it before me, I wouldn't be doing it myself," he says.

Born in Russia and raised in China, Pratt has lived in Israel for the past 40 years. He came here via Damascus during the War of Liberation, immediately joined the IDF and served in the Negev.

Pratt estimated that about 5,000 Jews came from China to Israel. Jews originally went to China from two main directions. A few hundred Iraqi and Persian Jews came with the British in the early 1840s, in the aftermath of the Opium Wars, and settled primarily in the south.

Russian Jews came in the 1890s, when the Russians received a concession to build the Chinese Eastern Railway. Where it crossed Manchuria's largest river, the Sungari, a city named Haerbing was built on the site of what had once been a small Chinese village. The Europeans called it Harbin. The architecture, life-style and language were totally transplanted. The largest and most influential Jewish community in the area, about 12,000 souls, was in Harbin.

The son of a wealthy fur and commodities trader, Pratt was born in Vladivostok in 1921. Following the Bolshevik rise to power, many Jews and other White Russians migrated to Harbin from the eastern part of Russia, leaving all their wealth behind. Among them were Lev Davidovitch Pirutinsky and his wife, Rivka, who left with their infant son, Emmanuel.

Although he worked hard as a trader, Lev Davidovitch never regained his fortune. In 1932, there was a clamp-down on foreign trade in Manchuria, and many Europeans, especially Jews, moved to Tientsin and Shanghai, Emmanuel Pirutinsky (he chose his Hebrew surname after settling in Israel) went to the Tientsin Jewish school. It was a secular school in which the lang-

uages of instruction were Russian and English, with compulsory lessons in Chinese.

Most Jewish settlers in China, he recalls, were so busy with communal and Zionist aspirations "that we somehow missed out completely on Chinese culture, and entirely missed our Chinese 'opportunity,' which I regret till today." Pratt himself did travel extensively throughout China, but he did not imbibe as much culture as, he now thinks, he would have liked.

A few years ago, he enrolled at the Hebrew University, intent on rediscovering some of his Chinese past. Concentrating on language and history, he was greatly encouraged by Yuri Grause, a friend from Harbin, who had lectured extensively on Chinese classical language and philosophy at the Hebrew University and Tel Aviv University.

Studying with Grause, Pratt's grasp of Chinese returned to him much faster than he had imagined it would, and he decided to compile a Chinese-Hebrew dictionary. For the past two years he has devoted himself almost exclusively to this project.

Each word is entered on a separate card. The Hebrew is typed in. The Chinese is lettered by hand. Pratt eschews a computer, "Chinese is clearer to me than computer language," he explains.

Pratt emphasizes that he isn't just translating from Chinese to Hebrew, but also trying to convey something of Chinese culture.

## YIDDISH AND THE CHINESE LITERARY REVOLUTION

Jacob Glatstein

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JACOB GLATSTEIN was one of the major Yiddish poets of the 20th century. An edition of his selected poetry was published in 1987 by the Jewish Publication Society. The above is an excerpt from Glatstein's *In Der Velt Mityiddish*, published by the Atran Foundation in New York in 1972.

We were astonished to read that Sholem Aleichem was recently translated into Chinese. Actually, his short story "Rabcheck" and five other stories had first been translated into Chinese 40 years

earlier, in the 1920's. Nor was this an isolated event. Sholem Aleichem had other writer colleagues—novelists, essayists, and dramatists—who also had the good fortune to be translated into Chinese.

Years before China's political upheaval and the division into two Chinas, a literary revolution was taking place there. The quarterly *Judaism* has published a noteworthy article<sup>1</sup> by Irene Eber, a historian of the Far East. Eber had been working on a biography of Dr. Hu Shih (1891-1962), considered the "father" of modern China's literary revolt.<sup>2</sup> In the early stages of her work on Dr. Hu Shih's "intellectual history," as she calls it, Eber discovered documents which were of enormous—one might even say revolutionary—interest to students of Yiddish language and literature. The *Judaism* article gives us substantive evidence of the important role played by Yiddish in the literary revolution of the Chinese intellectuals.

Incredible as it sounds, China during the Twenties of this century displayed more than a superficial interest in the Yiddish language and literature. Yiddish became a pathfinder, looked upon as guide and inspiration. At that period, Chinese writers were intensifying their revolt against classically written Chinese. They had begun to write in the simple spoken popular language of the Chinese people. When these revolutionaries in Chinese literature became aware that the Jews had a living spoken language, Yiddish, which existed side by side with classical literary Hebrew, and which had already developed into a literature, they immediately took this Jewish "revolution" as a model for themselves.

We now see Chinese critics becoming Yiddish experts, thoroughly versed in the modern cultural movement of the Jewish people, extending from the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, to the *Insikhists* (Introspectionists, a group of 20th-century Yiddish poets). Not only did the Chinese know about the *Insikhist* movement—in itself an extraordinary fact—they even mentioned some of the group by name. They correctly identified A. Leyeless (1889-?), pseudonym of Aaron Glanz, one of the three founders of the school, and also mentioned a

certain Gonrioh. The latter seems to be an error in transcription. One must remember that Eber discovered this Jewish-Chinese treasure in the Chinese language—and that it is no easy task to transcribe from Chinese. Gonrioh is almost certainly the poet Gurriah, who contributed to the journal *In Sikh* for a short period. The well-informed Chinese critic was even aware that Leyeless wrote his poems under the influence of the French symbolists.

This intense interest in Yiddish lasted only eight years, from 1920 to 1928, but during these eight years Yiddish literature caused a veritable sensation in the intellectual revolutionary circles of the Chinese people.

Many articles appeared about Yiddish writers, who then became famous in China. The most popular writer among these intellectuals was David Pinski [known for his one-act plays concerned with social justice]. A second well-known name was Leon Korbin. Special essays and articles were written about both of them, dealing specifically with their contribution: "Yiddish Literature and David Pinski," and "Yiddish Literature and Leon Kobrin."

Chinese intellectuals immediately identified with these representatives of a minority people, and with the literature of a persecuted people who will not lose hope or abandon their ideals. The Chinese were also strongly drawn to the theme of the Jewish proletariat, the Jewish worker struggling for a better life. However, more than anything else, they saw in the young Yiddish literature an affinity to themselves and their own literary revolution.

The greatest expert in Yiddish language and literature was Sheng Yenping, better known by the pseudonym *Mao-Tun*. He was recently purged, a victim of Mao Tse Tung's new cultural revolution, whose cultural "ambassadors" were the violent young guards.<sup>3</sup> Old Mao-Tun was related to the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, his "mechooten"<sup>4</sup> I believe; Mao-Tun's son is married to Menuhin's daughter.

Sheng was one of the first Chinese to discover that Yiddish is the living spoken language of the Jewish people and that it has pass-

ed through developmental stages similar to those of the spoken language of the Chinese people. Sheng Yenping wrote a great deal about Yiddish literature beginning with the struggle against Yiddish during the Haskalah. Yiddish literature, with names like Sholem Aleichem and I.L. Peretz, was for Sheng sufficient proof that a literary revolution can succeed.

Sheng had a high opinion of Morris Rosenfeld (1862-1923), the great poet of the early 20th-century laboring masses. He was also impressed with Simeon Samuel Frug (1860-1916), especially with his nature poems. He quoted Abraham Cahan (editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*) in his critique of *Der Yunge* (a poetic movement from 191-1925). Sheng was well acquainted with and understood the value of such writers as Mordecai Spector, Peretz Hirshbein, Abraham Goldfaden, David Frishman, Sholem Asch, David Pinski, and Leon Korbin.

But when it came to translation from Yiddish literature, Pinski was certainly the most famous name. Five writers had been translated into Chinese by that time, Pinski, Asch, Sholem Aleichem, Peretz, and Zalmen Vendorf.

Chinese writers in their articles showed a broad familiarity with Yiddish literature. Nevertheless, they had access to a relatively small number of Yiddish writers because all Chinese translations of Yiddish literature were made from other languages, for the most part from English. Two stories by Sholem Aleichem and one of Peretz were even translated from Esperanto. We have Irene Eber's testimony that these translated stories not only read well but were also faithful to the original.

In 1920 the first translation from Yiddish was a story by Pinski. This story immediately stirred such great excitement in Chinese literary circles that, when it was followed by a period of silence on the Yiddish front, one of the Chinese writers complained, with some exaggeration, that "while the whole world is now studying Yiddish literature, China has only one Yiddish story." But very soon a plethora of translations from Yiddish appeared. Pinski seized the Chinese translators' market with five stories and three dramas;

several of Peretz's stories were translated by Lu-Yen; six stories of Aleichem were also translated.

Perhaps these were the same stories which recently appeared in a new Chinese edition. Included in the Sholem Aleichem collection was the short story "Gymnasia," which undoubtedly appeared very exotic to Chinese readers. The translator included a glossary at the end of each translated story, rendering definitions into Chinese of such difficult words as *goy*, *reba*, *zitashiva*, *torah*, and other Jewish cultural concepts and idioms.

Incidentally, we learn from Eber's article in *Judaism* that, during this same period, translations appeared from Yiddish into Japanese and that a great number of translations were also included in well-known Japanese anthologies.

After 1928 no translations from Yiddish literature were found in China, until the recent news of a Sholem Aleichem translation. The Chinese intellectuals were by then involved in their political revolution and the "beacon" for their great leap forward was quite a different Jew, one not at all connected with Yiddish literature—Karl Marx.

But this chapter—Yiddish in China in the 1920's—rings out like a great epic poem. While a nation of hundreds of millions of people took the leading Yiddish writers as models and incentive for their own literary revolution, we, the Yiddish writers in the West, believed ourselves to be the loneliest writers in the world.

Translated from the Yiddish by  
DORIS VIDAVER and BARRY SCHECHTER

<sup>1</sup> Irene Eber, "Yiddish Literature and the Literary Revolution in Modern China," *Judaism*, Vol. 16, #1, Winter 1967, pp. 42-59.

<sup>2</sup> The intellectual revolution, aimed at modernizing all aspects of Chinese life, included literary reforms: "the substitution of spoken Chinese for written Chinese which had become rigid, artificial, and incapable of creative expression." *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Eber mentions that "Mao Tun was arrested around 1967 on 'political-ideological charges'; his writings on Yiddish literature no doubt playing a part in his condemnation as 'a capitalist-influenced decadent.'"

<sup>4</sup> Yiddish word meaning a son-in-law's or daughter-in-law's father.