

of the film is devoted to Epstein's life, because "Eppy and my dad lived in such different Chinas. I needed . . . to reconcile our unforgettable dream life in the concessions with the other China, the China we round eyes were willing to ignore and leave and Eppy wasn't."

It is unclear what conclusions Ronald has drawn about social activism based on the glimpse into Chinese life given to him by his amah and by his comparison of the careers of his father and Epstein. Epstein suffered greatly in the Cultural Revolution but remains unbittered toward China. Is Ronald therefore more or less committed as an activist? Is he, like the Soviet Communists, disdainful of Maoism as "a socialist revolution gone awry?" Has he rejected socialism altogether? Since the viewer is left in the dark as to why Ronald became disenchanted with aspects of social activism in the 1960s, it is even harder to discern what he has learned by his more recent investigation of family history.

While this beautifully photographed documentary may have great sentimental significance for the Levaco family, it has limited utility in the social science classroom. The viewer is teased and then left guessing as to the resolution of Ronald's personal quest. Epstein's story, including his imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution, has been told elsewhere. His piece, *On Being A Jew in China*, delineates the cultural richness, diversity, and pathos of Jewish life in pre-revolutionary China: the Yiddish newspaper in Harbin for which his father wrote; the multiple ideologies within the Jewish community, ranging from Epstein's Bolshevism to varieties of Zionism and religiosity; the ever-present danger of anti-Semitism emanating from Czarist Russian sympathizers in Tianjin, Shanghai and the Manchurian railway cities. The Epsteins, and presumably the Levacos, were present in China during the notorious anti-Semitic kidnapping and murder of the Russian-Jewish pianist Simon Kaspé in Harbin in the 1930s and the Hailar pogrom of 1945. yet these aspects of Chinese Jewish life do not appear in Ronald Levaco's account, wherein the only images we have of Jews in China are as rich capitalists or revolutionaries. Epstein's much more comprehensive portrait was presented in 1992 as a lecture at Harvard University. It was published in Israel in 1995 in the *Bulletin of the Igud Yotzei Sin* and in my book, *The Jews of*

China, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Publishers, 1999).

Most importantly from a pedagogical point of view, the complex historical questions of the Chinese Cultural Revolution, for Marxists and non-Marxists, for Westerners and Chinese, as suggested above, are only glossed over in this film. Those questions are analyzed in the extensive and readily available publications of Roderick MacFarquhar, Stuart Schram, Merle Goldman, Christina Gilmartin, and others. Those four scholars in particular have made those issues their life work.

**Dr. Jonathan Goldstein is Professor of History (East Asia) at the State University of West Georgia, Carrollton, Georgia. His books include: America Views China (1991) and The Jews of China and China and Israel, 1948-1998 (both 1999).*

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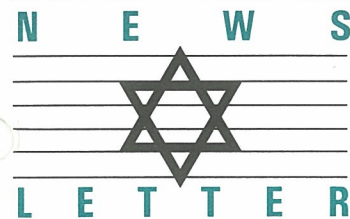
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Points East

中國-猶太學院

Vol. 15 No. 2
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MENASHE'S CHILDREN COME HOME

by Wendy Elliman
reprinted from *Hadassah Magazine*,
October 1999

"But it doesn't matter whether people make the way home easy or hard, because God helps us," she says in her calm and gentle manner. "We're a patient people. We've waited almost 3,000 years; we can wait a few years longer."

Thangsom is part of a new immigrant community in Israel that now numbers 340. They are known as Bnei Menashe, or Shinlung, names acquired at different stages of their long journey. The first signifies their belief that they're descended from the Israelite tribe. According to their tradition they lived as part of the Hebrew nation till the days of the First Temple, when they fled east from the Assyrian conquerors of 744 B.C.E. and, 400 years later, farther east still from the armies of Alexander the Great, through Tibet and into China. Believing they were the only Jews left, they lived quietly under the Chinese until the Middle Ages.

Late in the thirteenth century they were threatened once again – by the conversion to Christianity. They fled south to Indochina, where they acquired their second name. For two generations they found refuge in a remote valley of caves; Shinlung means cave dwellers. The Chinese eventually found them, seized their holy parchment (which they believe was the Torah) and drove them into today's Thailand and Burma. From here many migrated into the north Indian provinces of Mizoram and Manipur, where it is estimated 1.25 million to 4 million live today. There are 10,000 actively Jewish Bnei Menashe in 13 towns. Of this number 3,500 have formally converted to Orthodox Judaism.

"We never felt we belonged in India," asserts Ruth Thangsom, 25, Esther's sister. The family comes from Manipur and their features, like those of other Bnei Menashe, are Mongolian. "We felt lost. We don't look like Indians, we don't think like them or identify with them. We were sojourners. We always knew we belonged to the land and people of Israel. In college, when I was studying for my B.A. in English literature, I used to think: What I want more than anything is to be in Israel, where I can live according to the Torah and the *mitzvot*."

"I grew up with a longing to be Jewish and to come to Israel," says Esther, a psychologist who is studying social work. "I used to tell my friends at boarding school in New Delhi: 'I'm not Indian. It's a geographical and political mistake that I'm here. One day, I'll live in Israel.'"

(continued on page 7)



by Marcia Miller
"As vast as the sky
As spacious as the sea"

ACTS OF CONSCIENCE MORE ON FENG SHAN HO

by Carl Nolte
excerpted from *The San Francisco Chronicle*,
23 March 2000

For nearly 25 years, Feng Shan Ho lived the quiet life of a retired gentleman in San Francisco's Richmond District.

Neighbors would see him often, out walking nearly every day with his wife. They knew he was a pleasant old man, active in his church. Some people knew he was a retired diplomat, and that explained his courtly manner.

What they did not know was that he was a hero, one of a handful of diplomats who had risked their careers in the darkest days of Nazi Germany to save Jews from the Holocaust.

Now, Feng Shan Ho, the nearly forgotten diplomat, is being honored with an exhibition at San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El. Next month, he will be one of 75 men honored at the United Nations for issuing exit visas, transit visas and other documents that saved thousands of Jews from murder at the hands of the Nazis.

These men are called "Righteous Diplomats" and their work "Visas for Life." There is a strong tradition in the Jewish faith of keeping memory alive and honoring righteous people, said Eric Saul, the director of the Visas for Life project, which seeks out and recognizes these people.

"This old man we saw on the street, out walking, was one of the great heroes," Saul said. "History wouldn't permit us to forget him. It wouldn't let us let him go."

Ho was a modest man who attained the great old age of 96 in relative obscurity. Not until his death in 1997 and a couple of lines in his obituary did anyone learn about how he had saved thousands of lives when he was China's consul general in Vienna from 1938 to 1940.

Ho felt that calling attention to good deeds somehow diminished them. "He thought if you do something good and talk about it, it could not be that good," his daughter, Manli Ho, recalled the other day.

Feng Shan Ho was one of those eyewitnesses to history, born in Hunan province in 1901 in the twilight of the old imperial China, orphaned as a child and taken in by Norwegian Lutheran mis-

(continued on page 8)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Featured Articles

Menashe's Children Come Home	1
Acts of Conscience	1

Letter to the Editor

Articles

Water	3
Draft Proposal	4
China's Newest Jewish Museum	5
Operation Flying Dragon	9
The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center	9
Shanghai's Jewish Transplants	10
North Korea's Jewish Tutor	11
The Role of Portuguese Jews	11
The Crome Family's Experiences in Japan	13
Leon Ilutovich	14
Maria Paasche	15

Book Nook

Video Corner

SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	311
Israel	14
China	12
England	11
Canada	6
Hong Kong	5
Australia	5
Germany	3
Taiwan	2
Japan	2
Indonesia	1
Italy	1
South Africa	1
Switzerland	1

TOTAL: 375

FROM THE EDITOR

Little did I know when I ran a brief article on Ho Feng Shan in our last issue that I was dealing with a newly discovered "Righteous Gentile."

In this issue, we are featuring a much more in-depth article on this fascinating man, a Chinese diplomat who had studied in Germany during the early Nazi period, actually met Hitler, and yet chose to help Jewish refugees. By his deeds, he joins Zwartendijk and Sugihara as one of the few in the world's diplomatic corps who put saving human lives ahead of their countries' political agendas. Like Sugihara and Zwartendijk, it seems that Ho was also a very modest man. Perhaps that is the mark of a true hero?

But Ho's story also raises interesting questions. To what degree did his being raised by missionaries affect his willingness to help Jews escape Europe? Many years later, after serving in the KMT's diplomatic corps for several decades, he apparently had a falling out with the government in Taiwan and chose to spend his remaining years in San Francisco. The article does not specify the cause. Was it a matter of principle or something more mundane? Was his choice of San Francisco a matter of simple preference or a form of self-exile? Ho's story clearly begs for more study.

This issue also offers one of the last pieces that Boris Bresler ever wrote. Prof. Bresler died earlier this year and perhaps it is fitting that his article looks to the future of cooperative Sino-Judaic research. Our next issue will feature a tribute to this activist and scholar in our field.

Anson Laytner

Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

Points East is published by the Sino-Judaic Institute, a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. The opinions and views expressed by the contributors and editor are their own and do not necessarily express the viewpoints and positions of the Sino-Judaic Institute.

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Deadlines for submitting material to be included in these issues are January 15th, May 15th and September 15th.

FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE

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Points East

by writing to Professor Nina Haeems, c/o Vacha Trust, 5 Bhavana, S.V. Road, Opp. Golden Tobacco, Vile Parle West, Mumbai 400 056.

Professor Nina Haeems is coming out with the book, *Rebecca Reuben 1889-1957*. If you are interested in purchasing a copy make your personal check for \$18 out to the Vacha Trust and mail to: Professor Nina Haeems, Vacha Trust, 5 Bhavana, S.V. Road, Opp. Golden Tobacco, Vile Parle West, Mumbai 400 056. Ask for the book, *Rebecca Reuben 1889-1957*.

Quest For The Lost Tribes. This video shows the Bene Israel, their Eliahu Hanavi ceremony, the Jews in Manipur, China, and other Lost Tribes. This video is available for \$29.95 from A&E, POB 2284, South Burlington, VT 05406; telephone 1-800-423-1212.

Desi: South Asians in New York. This video shows some of us in New York. You could get it as a gift by becoming a member of Channel 13, 356 West 58th Street, New York, NY 10019; telephone 212-560-2888.

Lost Tribes of Israel. This video shows Tudor Parfitt and Neil Bradman doing genetic testing on the Lemba Tribe of South Africa. This video costs \$19.95. It is available from WGBH, POB 2284, South Burlington, VT 05407; telephone 1-800-255-9424.

... Pan Guang:

We published two new books on Jewish Studies recently in Chinese.

1. *The Revitalization of the Jewish People (Yutai Minzu Fuxing zhilu)* by Pan Guang, Yu Jianhua and Wang Jian. Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 1998, 333 pages. Price: RMB 22:00; Postage: USD 4:00 for seairmail; USD 8:00 for airmail. ISBN 7-80618-432-5/k.270.

2. *The Jewish Civilization (Yutai Wenming)* by Pan Guang, Chen Chaonan and Yu Jianhua. Chinese Social Sciences Press, 1999, 394 pages. Price: RMB 25:00; Postage: USD 4:00 for seairmail; USD 8:00 for airmail. ISBN 7-5004-2592-9/k.432

Contact: Center of Jewish Studies Shanghai (CJSS); Fax: 86-21-53510041; e-mail: gpan@scrap.stc.sh.cn

Briefly Noted:

Jewish Exile in India: 1933-1945. Edited by Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt. New Delhi, Manohar. 195 pp. Price not stated. It was less "exile" than "refuge" – a relatively unexplored and less-well-known

chapter of the escape from the Nazis just before and during World War II to an India governed by a not-too-sympathetic Britain requiring visas and treating Jewish refugees with German or Austrian passports as "enemy aliens." The sources of the articles and information in this book include papers presented at symposia at Nehru University in New Delhi in March 1985.

Unlike the open port of Shanghai, wartime home for more than 17,000 German, Austrian and Polish Jews through the Japanese post-Pearl Harbor occupation, who were designated "stateless" (in a well-documented experience), the few hundred Jewish refugees allowed a haven in India were regarded as "subjects" of the Nazi-dominated areas they fled.

This book is highly detailed in its survey of this less-known aspect of Jewish refuge from the Nazis and thus a "valuable" source of research and information of interest to historians of the period and even the general reader interested in it.

Jews of Cochin-India by Joshua Benjamin. Published in 1999. To get this 35 page booklet, consider making a donation to the Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi. Please make your personal check out to the Jewish Welfare Association, New Delhi and mail to: Mr. Joshua Benjamin, A-7 Nirman Vihar, New Delhi 110 092, India.

The Reform Jewish Movement in India. by Ezra Moses. Cost per publication (includes shipping, handling and postage) is \$6.50 in US funds. Please make check out to the order of Ezra Moses and mail to: Ezra Moses at 3303 Don Mills Road, Suite 1201, Toronto, ON M2J 4T6 Canada. This is a brief history of the only Reform/Liberal Jewish congregation in India, which was established in 1925.

The history tells of the formative years of the congregation and the difficulties and obstacles it faced in its infancy, despite which it never gave up hope. The movement was strengthened with the visits of rabbis from abroad, especially with encouragement from the World Union for Progressive Judaism. However, India's political Hindu-Muslim riots resulted in a fire in January 1993, which destroyed the sanctuary and all the sacred books, documents, etc.

The congregation, which continues to be a vibrant community, is now attempting to rebuild. Therefore, the author hopes to

donate a reasonably large share of the receipts from the sale of this book to the Jewish Religious Union, Bombay, India.

VIDEO CORNER

Review of Round Eyes in the Middle Kingdom. A film by Ronald Levaco. Distributed by First Run/Icarus Films, 153 Waverly Place, New York, NY 10014; 212-727-1711. 1995. VHS Video. 52 minutes. Color and black-and-white footage plus black-and-white still shots. \$390 for educational institutions plus \$10 shipping cost within the continental United States.

by Jonathan Goldstein*
reprinted with permission from *Education About Asia*, Spring 2000

Ronald Levaco, a member of the Department of Cinema at San Francisco State University, spent over six years producing his autobiographical film, *Round Eyes in the Middle Kingdom*. He has assimilated his father Ben's extraordinary black-and-white movies and still shots of pre-Revolutionary China with historical footage and with interviews Ronald made in the 1990s with Israel Epstein. "Eppy," Ben's boyhood friend in Tianjin, became a revolutionary and remained in China in 1949 when the Levacos emigrated to the United States.

From beginning to end, the film is as much about immigration to the United States as it is about China. The Levaco family originated in Russia. According to Ronald, his father "saw China as a refuge on his way to the United States." Ben found employment in Tianjin with a Chicago-based firm. The family lived in opulence in the foreign concessions while awaiting their American passage, a voyage delayed until 1949 by the Japanese invasion of China.

The Levacos ultimately reach Chicago. Ronald matriculates at an unnamed American college where he becomes involved in "the protests of the sixties." He tells the viewer that "those of us who struggled against the administration for reforms identified ourselves with revolutionaries. But I wasn't able to submit to the rigid leadership even of the student movement I worked in and supported. Instead, I threaded my own path through a California college strike." As part of his quest to define his American social consciousness, he then examines his Chinese roots. Much

BOOK NOOK

The Jews of China: Volume One: Historical and Comparative Perspectives. Edited and with an introduction by Jonathan Goldstein. Armonk (New York): M.E. Sharpe Inc. 1998. xxiv, 308 pp. (B&W photos.) US\$69.95, cloth, ISBN 0-7656-0103-6; US\$29.95, paper, ISBN 0-7656-0104-4.

by Margo S. Gewurtz
reprinted from *Pacific Affairs* 73:1,
Spring 2000

Few ethno-religious minorities have received so much attention, so disproportionate to the size of the community, as China's Jews. Some of this writing, as the essays by Michael Pollak and Wendy Abraham reveal, had less to do with the Jews themselves and more with Christian proselytizing purposes. What distinguishes the current volume, the result of a conference held at Harvard in 1992, is its geographic and comparative scope. Both China and its various Jewish communities are seen as part of a larger Eurasian economic world linking Kaifeng and Damascus, Harbin and Nagasaki, Bombay and Shanghai. Such globalization yields intriguing insights into the issues of acculturation, assimilation, anti-Semitism and economic utility that are the analytic focus of the study and amply justify yet another work on this seemingly exotic topic.

The papers are grouped in various sub-categories, but there are really only two main subdivisions reflecting two distinct but overlapping historical cycles of migration: the Kaifeng cycle from the late Tang period to the late Qing when the Kaifeng synagogue was finally lost, and the cycle of migration beginning in the late 17th century of Ashkenazi and Baghdadi Jews who came as traders or refugees. This latter cycle, beginning with Arabic speaking Jews from Baghdad via India involved in the China trade of tea, silks and opium, came to include European Jews fleeing Tsarist pogroms, the Bolshevik revolution and the Nazis, and ended in the early 1950s with the Communist ascension to power. Because of the overwhelming importance of Shanghai to both those groups, six of the nineteen essays are devoted to aspects of Shanghai Jewish life.

A theme common to many of the essays is acculturation, seen as Judaism enriched by

the host culture or sometimes enriching it. For the Kaifeng cycle, comparison is made with older Bene Israel and Cochin communities in India, whereas in the modern period there is explicit comparison with the Baghdadi Jews and an implicit comparison with the larger Jewish diaspora. For both Kaifeng and Cochin Jews, the hospitable host cultures allowed coexistence without total assimilation. Irene Eber's seminal piece argues for a sinification of Jewish identity through adoption of the Chinese lineage system and self-identification as a sect or "jiao." The importance of lineage, and caste in India, for preservation of identity is reinforced by Nancy Steinhardt's discussion of Kaifeng synagogue space as a "monument of legitimacy and power" (p. 15). Eber's idea of a Confucian-Judaic syncretism is further elaborated in Andrew Plaks's thoughtful elaboration of what he calls "the substantive accommodation . . . to the Confucian intellectual environment" (p. 46). In his examination of such issues as the term for God (Tian), Torah as the Dao of Heaven, the ethical dimensions of "mitzvot" and "li," and ancestor veneration, Plaks goes further than Eber in showing not merely accommodation but intellectual compatibility between Judaism and neo-Confucianism. Certainly, all the authors in this section argue for a strengthening of Jewish identity even as Jewish learning disappeared. Even Holocaust survivors gained a heightened sense of Jewishness from their time in China.

The essays on the modern period describe the very great contribution of the Jews to China's economic development, especially in Shanghai, but their impact on Chinese culture was more limited. Chiara Betta's essay on Hardoon's interests and devotion to Buddhism shows him as the exception, for which his Eurasian wife was mainly responsible. But the impact of refugee musicians on the introduction of Western music and training of Chinese students was very significant, and this was two-sided as several Jewish musicians developed a deep interest in Chinese music. Generally, however, nineteenth-century Jews became part of treaty port culture, and Holocaust refugees had virtually no contact with Chinese culture. Vera Schwarcz's moving essay on these survivor memories relates to her interest in a comparison between Jewish and

Confucian concepts of memory. Such a comparison takes us back to the Kaifeng Jews' assertions on their steles of similarities between the Chinese traditions and their own, an issue most developed by Plaks but touched on briefly by others. I would hope that this theme can be developed in future studies as the cultures of the two oldest continuing text-based civilizations of the world deserve such an extended comparison.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM . . .

. . . Sam & Erna Daniel

The following materials may interest you:

Volume 3 of the Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies contains the following interesting articles:

- a) *Shingley in Cochin Jewish Memory and in Eyewitness Accounts* by Arthur M. Lesley.
- b) *Religious Observances of Bene Israel: Persistence and Refashioning of Tradition* by Joan G. Roland.
- c) *Abraham, the Easterners, and India: Jewish Interpretation of Genesis 25:6* by Richard G. Marks.
- d) *Limit and its Discontents: The Arising of Desire as Discussed by Patanjali and Isaac Luria* by Lyone S. Fine
- e) *India and Israel: From Conflict to Convergence of Interests* by Dinesh Kumar
- f) *India and the Holocaust: Perceptions of the Indian National Congress* by P.R. Kumaraswamy.
- g) *Bibliography about Indian Jewry, Part 2*. Publications from 1998. Compiled by Nathan Katz and Frank Joseph Shulman.
- h) *Holocaust Refugees and the Maharaja of Jamnagar* by His Highness Shatrushalyasinji

If you would like to get Volume 3 of this excellent journal, make your check for \$15 out to **The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies** and mail it to: The Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies, c/o Prof. Braj Mohan Sinha, Department of Religious Studies, University of Saskatchewan, 9 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 5A5. Be sure to request Vol. 3 of the Journal. This is a yearly publication that costs \$15 per year.

An occasional communication, **On Being Jewish, Indian & Women** can be ordered

Water

by Joseph P. Weber

The room was icy cold when I took my bath. Bath? Since there was no tub or shower in our home I had to sponge myself down with lukewarm water from a small basin. It was during one of the eight bitter winters my parents, sister, and I endured in Shanghai between 1939-47, after escaping Nazi persecution in our native Austria.

As World War II continued on its inexorable bloody way we, along with 20,000 fellow refugees, had to suffer through many shortages, such as water and electricity. The single faucet in our 3-family home was turned on only sporadically. Tap water was never safe to drink without boiling it first thoroughly and all fruits and vegetables had to be disinfected with great care. Even after observing all possible precautions, my sister, Magda, and I came down with a severe case of amoebic dysentery shortly after our arrival.

After the war's end in August 1945 the situation eased up a bit. I met and courted my future wife, Tessie, a member of the Ballet Russe of Shanghai (although she was born in Berlin), and we set our wedding date for February 1947. In the house where she lived with her folks, an attic room because available and we gladly grabbed it since even the tiniest rooms at that time were extremely hard to come by. We had to pay US \$100.00 "key money" – about all the money we had managed to save.

Our wedding was well attended by family and friends. About a thousand people filled the synagogue, thanks to the popularity of father-in-law Dr. Gustav Silbermann, a much-adored family doctor. I wore my first tuxedo – borrowed – and Tessie looked the proper bride in a long, white bridal gown – also borrowed. Before we moved into our cozy attic room we had to scrape a thick layer of grime off the wood floor with the only tool we had – the top of a tin can.

The 3-story building had – wonder of wonders – a bathtub! In order to use it, however, we had to pre-arrange the time with the other tenants. When the big day arrived I climbed down three steep flights of stairs in order to buy hot water, a common cus-

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

An editorial in the March 2000 issue of *Points East* proposed that "a single entity" be formed in China "that would deal with the Kaifeng Jews, the Shanghai/Harbin/Tianxin experience, China-Israel relations, publications, higher education, and other matters." The editorial further suggested that it would be "easier for our Chinese friends if they could communicate through one central address" instead of the present multiplicity of groups outside of China "that seek to do similar things."

Your editorial was provocative, but in my view your proposal for the establishment of a "single entity" in China is far off the mark. I suspect that if change along the line of greater attention and resources devoted to Jewish affairs does come in China, it will come out of a diversity of efforts in many different settings. A larger centralized institution, by contrast, is more likely to labor under typical lethargy. Worse, its potential initiatives could more easily be monitored and constrained or throttled by hostile interests within the central government.

For somewhat different reasons but even more strongly than for China I reject your suggestion that a "central address," in the sense of organizational unification, would be desirable on the western end. Our present multiplicity of organizations reflects a real diversity of interests, concerns, and objectives. Except in the most superficial sense we do not "seek to do similar things." On the contrary, our main goals, our specific clienteles, and our methods of operation vary greatly.

The variety of our institutional linkages is a source of great strength and flexibil-

ity. Moreover, organizations such as the Council on the Jewish Experience in Shanghai (CJES) or Igud Yotzei Sin (IYS) provide a link to groups of persons with special kinds of experience. Many of these people might view a larger central body with indifference or suspicion.

On the western side, and probably in China as well, the preferable approach to your call for ease and certainty of contact will be found through consistent openness and a strong desire to cooperate in everyday practice. As one minor example: a recent exchange between CJES and the Sino-Judaic Institute regarding some research proposals was prompted by an article that had been published in an earlier issue of *Points East*. The ease and speed with which we were able to obtain and share information to shape potential cooperation in research shows how productive this direction can be if systematically pursued.

As you say, "mutually supportive organizations" are very much to be desired. However, your diagnosis of "factionalism" is wrong and misleading, and likely to send us off in the wrong direction altogether. Let's be open with one another, let's look actively for ways to cooperate, and let's take full advantage of modern communications technology – particularly via the internet – to carry out our diverse programs.

Ralph B. Hirsch, Executive Director
Council on the Jewish Experience
In Shanghai (CJES)
3500 Race Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104 USA
hirsch@igc.org

tom at the time in China. There were special open-fronted shops selling hot water out of large kettles that were kept building all day long. Payment was made by previously purchased foot-long bamboo sticks with Chinese characters burned into them. I stood in line among the natives, waiting my turn at that busy place and had to make several trips carrying two buckets up those steep stairs to fill the chipped cast-iron tub. Finally, a proper bath – just heavenly!

Alas, after fixing up our attic room with used furniture and curtains, we had to keep

moving once again. Since our application to immigrate to the US had not yet been granted and the Communists were closing in on Shanghai, we traveled on to Bolivia. Here we spent the next five years before finally being allowed to enter the USA in 1952 to start a new life in our fourth and final homeland.

To drink tap water without having to boil it and to take a daily bath at any time I please is, to me, something I will never take for granted as long as I live.

Draft Proposal for An East Asian Jewish Heritage Preservation Fund

by Boris Bresler

[Editor's Note: This draft proposal was made by the author shortly before his untimely death. SJJ plans to work with other organizations and institutions to explore this idea further, albeit without Bresler's leadership & expertise.]

1. Background

During the hundred-year period of about 1850-1950 a number of Jewish communities were established in China, Eastern Siberia and Japan. Some of these existed only a decade, almost all less than a hundred years. In spite of this brief existence, their history is remarkable for the variety of cultural and social patterns, for the variety of political environments, and for the significant contributions of these Jewish communities (at least in China and Siberia) made to the economic development of the region.

Scholarly interest in these Jewish communities is a relatively recent phenomenon. During the last decade a number of books, articles, and films, based on anecdotal accounts of isolated historical events, were produced in the West and in China. Most of them suffer from lack of context as well as containing errors of omission or commission.

One of the problems faced by individuals writing about these diverse communities is inaccessibility of archival and authentic materials. Whatever materials exist are widely scattered and relatively few scholarly papers or books about these communities have been published. Harbin Jewish community archives, held in the Heilongjiang (China) provincial archives, are closed to the public. Tientsin Jewish community archives are at the Central Archive for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (the only Jewish community archive salvaged from China in mid-1940s), and the archives of the rest of the China Jewish communities (except Hongkong) apparently have been lost.

Scattered archival materials exist in Russia (Khabarovsk BREM Archives, Vladivostok, and elsewhere), Japan (Foreign office and Manchukuo archives, Jewish Community of Japan in Tokyo, others), Israel (IYS – Association of Former Residents in China ar-

chives, Central Archives for Jewish History, among others), USA (YIVO, Hoover, others), Hongkong (Jewish Heritage Society of Hongkong), and in public institutions and private hands elsewhere. There are a number of unpublished memoirs – some in Russian and some in English, and there are a number of articles published in various newsletters and landsmanschaft publications containing (for the most part) unverified recollections, often reflecting fading memories and subjective interpretations of events.

A further problem encountered by persons interested in the history of Jews in the region is the parochial nature of the available material. Thus the historical publications of the Jewish refugee community in Shanghai (perhaps the most widely recorded in various memoirs and films) is viewed as an isolated episode of Jewish presence in China. The published materials on the Russian Jewish communities in Harbin and Shanghai (perhaps the least documented in archives and memoirs) often view these communities as separate from the Jewish communities elsewhere, as well as from other ethnic Jewish communities in China, such as the Baghdadi community (the first contemporary Jewish community in East Asia), or the refugee community (mostly German and Austrian, the largest in number but one whose stay in China was the shortest).

During the past 50 years (and particularly during the past two decades) a number of efforts to capture portions of this heritage have been initiated. The more important among these are: the collection of materials at the IYS in Israel and the publication of occasional articles in the *IYS Bulletin*; books and films about the experiences of the refugee community in Shanghai; organization of the Sino-Judaic Institute in Menlo Park, California and material published in its newsletter; convocation of the Conference on Jewish Diasporas in China in Harvard in 1992, and the publication of its proceedings (*Jews of China*) in 1999; recent establishment of the Council On The Jewish Experience in Shanghai, China; the publications of the Jewish Heritage Society in Hongkong; and the programs of Jewish studies in the West and in China (Shanghai and Nanjing).

To a greater or lesser extent all of these projects (except Hongkong project) suffer from two main defects: episodic nature of the published materials, and reliance on unverified, anecdotal sources. Much of this

Points East

is due to the absence of a comprehensive view of the continuity of East Asian Jewish experience, as well as lack of funds for supporting the search for and the collection, preservation and dissemination of authoritative materials dealing with this heritage.

Over the past 15-20 years a number of projects have been conceived, but none of these materialized because of difficulties in obtaining financial support. This experience clearly shows that the greatest obstacle to generating and disseminating an accurate reflection of the rich historical mosaic of the Jewish experience in East Asia is lack of financial support for activities directed towards collection, preservation, research, and publication of authentic materials.

A fund for preservation of East Asian Jewish heritage is proposed in the following sections. This fund will not duplicate or compete with any other activities which are presently being carried out by other groups or organizations interested in any part of this heritage. Rather, it will be committed to supporting other ongoing and new projects, particularly those will fill the gaps in the overall Jewish East Asian experience.

2. Excerpts from the Articles of Incorporation

- a. The name of this corporation shall be – **The Fund for Preservation of East Asian Jewish Heritage.**
- b. The Corporation shall be a nonprofit public benefit corporation and shall not benefit private gain of any person.
- c. The specific purposes for which this corporation shall be organized are: **to support activities directed towards collection, preservation, research, publication and dissemination of materials related to the East Asian Jewish Heritage as further defined in the corporation bylaws.**

3. Potential Projects

Some examples of projects which might be supported by the EAJH Fund are listed below. They have been selected on the basis of their current viability and/or importance.

- a. The Institute for Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has some 30-plus oral histories/interviews collected by Kranzler in 1970s and Eber in 1980s and later. Most of these are in English, some are in Hebrew, and include interviews with E. Domar, F. Gershevich, T. Kaufman, S. Jacoby, and others whose

Points East

occasionally helped with collecting clothes for refugees or working in the kitchen supplying them with meals. Both my parents were completely involved in the fight for the survival of an increasing number of European Jewish refugees. My father, publisher and editor of the Russian language paper, *Nasha Zhizn (Our Life)* invited many to our home, among whom a young man with fiery red and lively, intelligent eyes, Leon Ilutovich. My father always highly praised his gifts as orator, analyzer of current events and deep understanding of Zionist and Jewish affairs.

Leon Ilutovich was born in 1914 in Odessa, Russia, and studied Law in Warsaw, Poland. In his early youth, Ilutovich became very active in pre-war Poland's strong Zionist movement and, by 1939, had attained national prominence as Secretary to the Political Representation of Polish Jewry, and Secretary General of the Organization of General Zionists in Poland. Fleeing Europe through Lithuania, and via Japan, Ilutovich reached Shanghai where he quickly gained recognition for his brilliant mind and dedicated Zionism. In 1940, he was appointed Jewish Agency representative to the Far East and, later, Secretary of the Far Eastern office of the Jewish Agency.

When the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. decided to prepare an exhibit in May 2000 entitled *Flight and Rescue* on Polish refugees in Shanghai, they approached Rebeka Ilutovich, Leon's widow, requesting material on her husband's experiences in Vilna, Kobe and Shanghai, to which she graciously complied. Recently, she mailed me a detailed list of all the papers she had sent the Museum when she learned that I had been invited to attend the opening of the exhibit in Washington D.C. Among them are copies of *Our Life*, various newspaper clippings, programs of cultural activities held in the Shanghai Jewish Club, translation of a handwritten transit visa for Curacao issued in Lithuania, certificate of the Polish Relief Committee in Kobe (Japan), a certificate issued by the World Jewish Congress in China, and numerous other historic documents of particular interest to those doing research on Polish Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

After the war, Leon Ilutovich's activities were almost too long to enumerate. He was a leading force in the Zionist Organization of America, the American Zionist Federa-

tion, the World Zionist Organization, the Federation of Polish Jews of the United States, the World Federation of Polish Jews, founder of the World Union of General Zionists, and member of many other organizations devoted to Jewish causes. He published numerous articles in different languages in the Zionist press and throughout the world.

On February 15, 1997, Leon Ilutovich died of a massive heart attack. He was 82 years old.

Maria Paasche

by Rena Krasno

In 1935, a young couple, Maria and John Paasche, arrived in Tokyo from Germany. After having been interrogated several times by the Gestapo, John decided it was time to leave his homeland. Besides, his father Hans, a navy captain turned pacifist, had been a pallbearer at the funeral of Rosa Luxemboug – a socialist leader in the 1920s – who had been murdered by right-wing German officers. John Paasche chose Japan because of his knowledge of Oriental languages, which he took up when the faculty of Law became closed to Jews in Germany.

In Japan, Maria and John Paasche lived in constant fear of the local Nazi German community. According to their son, Gottfried, his mother always tried to prepare her children for imprisonment urging them to memorize poems. "You've got to learn things by heart," she would insist, "You may need it when you go to prison." When the children asked why this should happen, their mother would not reply. Nor could they understand why their family appeared to be under suspicion by the Japanese authorities. Japanese policemen would constantly stand in front of their house.

What was Maria Paasche's secret? Her father and brothers had conspired to kill Adolf Hitler. Maria too was deeply involved in anti-Nazi activities. As a young girl, when Prague was still a free city, she had helped Jews escape from Nazi Germany by driving them there on the back of her motorcycle.

Maria was the daughter of General Kurt von

Hammerstein, Commander-in-Chief of the German army from 1930-1934. His nickname was "Red General," because of his sympathy for trade unions and his many Russian friends when Russia and Germany were allies. Von Hammerstein had made several unsuccessful attempts to lure Hitler to his headquarters and kill him. He knew from intelligence reports when Jews were in imminent danger and would advise his daughter, who would then disseminate warnings. Because of the General's high qualifications as an officer, the Von Hammersteins continued living in military housing, but the authorities were suspicious and they were constantly watched. When Maria married Paasche, the ceremony was held in a private apartment and her father did not attend.

The newlyweds left for Palestine, but when a serious typhoid epidemic broke out, they returned to Germany and from there sailed to Japan.

In 1943 General von Hammerstein died of cancer shortly after his sons participated in a failed coup attempt. When the young men fled, Maria's mother and her two youngest siblings were sent to a concentration camp to force them to disclose their hiding place. They never gave up the secret. The three were freed by Allied forces when the war ended. The family survived the war. Maria and John Paasche eventually immigrated to the United States, where Maria died in San Francisco last January 21. She was 90 years old.

Maria and John Paasche's son, Gottfried, learned about his mother's extraordinary past only recently when he applied to have her admitted to the Jewish Home for the Aged in San Francisco. To his regret, his mother had told him very little about her extraordinary life. According to him, "She never lost her fear of naming names."

A documentary about Maria Paasche was completed last year. Its title, *Silent Courage: Maria von Hammerstein and her Battle Against Nazism.* The film was sponsored by B'nai B'rith and the German government. It has not been released yet. Gottfried Paasche is now in Germany trying to uncover more details about his heroic mother.

refugees in Shanghai's Honkew 'ghetto' was a kind of compromise solution.

Meisinger was condemned at the Nuremberg trial as a war criminal. He was eventually executed for his role as 'butcher of Warsaw.'

The following is translation of an article by a German eyewitness.]

My parents went in 1937 to Japan, where my father Werner Crome became foreign correspondent for a number of German newspapers. My sister and I remained with relatives in Germany and in 1940 we traveled via Siberia to the Far East. I remember very clearly conditions in Japan when we arrived, which were so different from those in Germany at the time. Indeed, for my sister and me Japan appeared to be a land of great plenty.

The situation changed drastically in 1944 when the Japanese government ordered all foreign women and children to live outside of Tokyo in the countryside. We were sent to Sengokuhara – small houses, hot in summer, drafty and cold in winter, but lovely landscape. Everyone was poor, even the farmers hardly had enough to eat.

The preceding year, however, a dark cloud had settled over our family since my father was arrested in June 1943 by the *Kempetai* (military police). This development was the culmination of events that had occurred three years earlier. My father, a journalist, was told by very reliable sources that Police Attache Joseph Meisinger of the German Embassy, was responsible for the death of hundreds of German emigrants – mainly communists, social democrats and Jews – who had found refuge in the Far East. Meisinger had arranged for his victims either to be murdered locally, or to be shipped to Tokyo which they never reached since they mysteriously disappeared overboard. These crimes were found objectionable even by the Japanese police, but they could take no measures to stop Meisinger since he was under *Kempetai* protection.

When my father learned of these facts, he was indignant and contacted Admiral Canaris' military security. However, the SS had infiltrated Canaris' organization, who informed Meisinger about my father.

Finally, it was the Sorge* spy case that doomed my father. In order to avoid blame

for the Sorge fiasco, Meisinger insisted that Sorge was innocent. My father, however, knew the Japanese had a complete dossier proving Sorge's guilt and therefore decided together with his friend, Ivar Lissner, to inform Canaris and the German Foreign Ministry about Meisinger's efforts to conceal the facts. Meisinger had to fight to retain his post. He now had serious reason to act against my father and Lissner. This led to their arrest in 1943. The *Kempetai* took strong measures to undermine Soviet espionage and, after three months, forced my father to sign a confession. These events exerted great psychological pressure on my mother and me.

The German Omori School was transferred in 1944 to the Golf Hotel in Sengokuhara. Education was in the hands of Director Hachmeister and the teaching staff. The rest of daily life was supervised by the HJ (*Hitlerjugend* – Hitler Youth). This was a remarkable combination that left his mark on most students.

On April 20, 1945, HJ 'Fuehrer' Spahn made a speech in which he declared that Germany would win the war. Three weeks later the world collapsed for all of us.

In spite of these changes, our life at school went on, so that my class could take its *Abitur* (matriculation) examinations in winter 1945-46. Since the German state no longer existed, our diplomas were signed by the teachers with a request that they be legally recognized.

In June 1945 a cable arrived from the *Kempetai* instructing us to come to Yokohama to pick up my father. We found out that he had been transferred to a hospital and we were asked to take care of him since there were no nurses. When he was carried out of the jail he weighed 89 lbs. and was so weak he could hardly speak. We managed to free him in the middle of the night and to bring him to Tokyo by taxi. There, a German doctor diagnosed him with pneumonia, among other things, operated on him urgently and thus saved his life.

The only reason that we remained unharmed was because – as we later found out – even the *Kempetai* had found no material proving my father's guilt and were convinced of his innocence. After the end of the war my father was nursed with the best of care, but never fully recovered.

In 1946, when I worked as a ski teacher in Akakura, I met a U.S. officer in the hotel for military R. and R. (rest and recreation). He was responsible for German repatriation and I asked him to strike me off the list since I had decided to go to the U.S. to further my studies. Thus it happened that I remained in Japan while my parents and siblings were sent back to Germany in June 1947 aboard the USS General Black.

I worked as night editor for the United Press in Tokyo and went in 1952 to study in Berkeley. My father returned to Japan in 1955 to take up once again his beloved profession as journalist.

**Richard Sorge was a Soviet spy whose cover was that of a German journalist. A brilliant intellectual, he became fully trusted and admired by German Ambassador Ott and other members of the Embassy, supplying them with excellent reports on the situation in Japan which they forwarded to Berlin. He was finally unmasked by the Japanese, arrested and executed.*

Leon Ilutovich A Great Zionist in Shanghai

by Rena Krasno

Some weeks ago, I received a brochure published by the Central Zionist Archives, listing all the Leon Ilutovich documentation in their archives. On the inside cover was a short hand-written dedication from Ilutovich's widow stating: "To Rena, friend of Leon." Later, a letter followed in which she wrote. "You are one of the few persons that I know, that knew Leon in Shanghai." Indeed, Ilutovich had been a frequent visitor in my parents' home.

When Polish refugees fleeing the Holocaust started arriving in Shanghai in the late 1930s, many came to our apartment. Unlike German and Austrian refugees, many of whom spoke only German, and with whom my parents could not communicate, most Polish refugees spoke my parents' mother tongue Russian or at least managed to make themselves understood in that language. When they gathered at our dinner table many lively, passionate discussions were held on a range of serious current problems: fascism, Japanese occupation of Shanghai, lack of funds to support thousands of Jewish refugees, survival of Jewish culture, education of refugee children, fight against undernourishment, cholera and typhoid epidemics. I was still a school girl, busy with my studies and other teen-age concerns, and only

observations are of extreme interest and importance. Many of these interviews are 30-40 pages long, and are open only to readers at the Institute (no reproduction is allowed by terms imposed by Eber). Professor Mendelsohn, Director of the Institute, has agreed to preparing and publishing (by the Hebrew University) an annotated catalog of the interviews. He estimated that such a project would cost \$3,000-5,000.

b. To expand both the interest in the EAJH (East Asian Jewish Heritage) and to broaden the network of individuals who may aid in the collection and dissemination of materials relevant to the EAJH – a website should be established on the internet. A domain for this purpose (see www.eastasiajew.org.il) has been established – and the next step should be to design the appropriate pages. One of the first priorities might be to begin building a database of pertinent materials wherever they might be – Hoover, YIVO, Magnes, IYS, Archive for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, the Baghdadi Center in Israel, or wherever. The design of the page should be implemented by a group best qualified to do so and would be implemented under contract with the Fund. The cost of such a project over the first year might be \$5,000, with additional funds as the project develops.

c. With funds on hand, negotiations for obtaining a microfilm copy of the Harbin Jewish Archive can begin in earnest. In the latest communication, Mel Thatcher of the Genealogical Society of Utah (read the Mormon collection) wrote that he has been negotiating with the China State Archives Bureau since early 1980s, and with the Heilingjian Archives since 1994, reviving these again last year, and that so far the response has been lukewarm at best. He noted that when they have a positive reply, they will begin looking for partners for funding the project. Other sources (via Hongkong) suggest that at one time a figure of \$50,000 was mentioned by the Heilongjiang Archive – but that Thatcher thought that a much smaller sum might be agreed upon. Independent arrangements for microfilming the extensive archive might be even more expensive than sharing the cost with the Mormons. However, it is not unreasonable to allocate some \$15,000-20,000 for the project and to have that money ready as soon as possible. Even the Mormons, knowing that a ready part-

ner is in the wings, might put the project on the front burner.

d. At the present time the several Jewish periodicals, (in Russian, English, and German – also in Yiddish) are available mostly in Israel. Recently the Hebrew University microfilmed the *Israel's Messenger* published in Shanghai (1904-1939); also a facsimile of one German publication has been made available recently. It is proposed that the following be microfilmed and copies made available to one or more centers in the US, as well as other centers of Jewish Studies abroad: *Evereyskaya Zhizn*, *Der Vayter Mizroh*, *Hadegel*, *Nasha Zhizn*, *Tagar*, and the *Bulletin of the IYS*. This project could be carried out partly by IYS, partly by others who have complete collections of these publications. The cost of such microfilming could run into \$10,000-20,000.

e. There are a number of manuscripts which, upon appropriate editing, would be ready for publication as books or occasional publications – for example the memoirs of Dr. Kaufman (now in a poorly edited Russian manuscript), memoir of Z. Agran (Agranovsky), who was Secretary of HEDO sometime in 1946 – 50s, (available in unedited Russian text), a memoir of Robert Lury, a fascinating story of the extended Lury family in the Maritime Provinces, and Robert's experiences in Manchuria, Japan, and USA (unedited English text). Publication of these books, possibly in combination with other memoirs, will require subsidies (particularly if the Russian is to be translated into English – all of which would require about \$10,000-15,000 per manuscript. The total for these projects – as a minimum – would require about \$30,000.

f. A special conference at a scholarly institution, with funds for publication of the papers to be presented at such a conference set aside in advance, would be an effective way to stimulate preparation of scholarly material. This project would require a minimum of \$30,000, and probably more.

g. Magnes Museum in Berkeley has initiated a project of collection and preservation of materials relevant to EAJH. To encourage such an undertaking an initial grant of about \$3,000 would go a long way. However, even more important would be a project of a museum exhibit, either in conjunction with The Diaspora Museum in Israel (which has all the material ready) or another museum that has sufficient

material. Funding such an exhibit at Magnes might require something on the order of \$10,000.

These seven projects cited as examples are only the beginning. All of them need "money in the bank" now in order to go forward. Some can be productive almost immediately (see a, b, & c above); others might just need the ready cash to initiate.

China's Newest Jewish Museum

by Mark Cohen

There are Jewish pleasures that can make a trip to China seem almost "homey." There are indeed specific Jewish tours available to China. However, the most recent development, a new Jewish museum in Kaifeng, is in some ways the oddest and most interesting, because it is largely autonomous, and much more about China's perception of the Jews than of what Jews expect of China.

Kaifeng, China was the capital of the Song Dynasty prior to the Mongol invasion. Situated in Henan Province, it is in the thick of the Chinese plains. I visited there in mid-May, when the garlic was being harvested and the land was being prepared for the wheat plantings. It is a shadow of its former self. The one three-star hotel is, simply, a "dive." It is better to stay in Zhengzhou, about 90 minutes away, where there is a newly-opened Holiday Inn. The food is passable in town – with perhaps the best restaurant being the "Number One Restaurant" which specializes in Song Dynasty dumplings. There is a mock-McDonald's. Dumplings at the Number One were, indeed, quite delicious. Numerous Moslem restaurants also offer a pork-free cuisine, typically focusing on mutton. The airport in Zhengzhou – roughly half way between Shanghai and Beijing, is quite new and refreshingly modern. There are frequent flights from most major cities to Zhengzhou each week.

Kaifeng is still quite conscious of its history. It no longer even qualifies as a provincial capital, which Zhengzhou now fulfills. It is near several major rail junctions, but is largely a backwater town, notwithstanding several important and well-pre-

served Song dynasty and imperial buildings. As a former national capital, it has a diverse ethnic community. Approximately one sixth of its population is Moslem. There is also a large Manchurian influence and, of course, there is a remnant of the ancient Jewish population that had settled there in the Song dynasty, after emigrating over the Silk Route from Judaeo-Persian societies.

For me, a highlight of a visit to Kaifeng is to visit the statue of the former governor of the Province, General Feng Yuxiang. General Feng was a patriot who briefly lived in New York City, where he befriended my wife's family, and was also associated with Israel Epstein, who was living in New York at the time.

The Kaifeng Municipal Museum has little to offer on this history. A sad, acid-rain washed stone stele, which was the decree of the Song emperor welcoming the Jews to settle in Kaifeng, sits inside. Thankfully there were rubbings done many years ago that have preserved the text. The Torah scrolls, ritual objects, communal histories, etc., have been stolen, sold to museums and collectors, or destroyed in floods. The ancient synagogue site, which sits in a large section of the Moslem quarter, is a municipal hospital. There is not even a marker to indicate its 1000 year history as a schul. The community itself has long intermarried. Although many view themselves as Jewish, as their fathers were of Jewish descent, they are in most cases far removed from tradition. Christian missionaries and churches in the region – which are becoming re-energized – have also sought to convert this lost and largely impoverished community, sometimes offering money for their conversion.

At a time where society is undergoing rapid changes, and old ideologies are under attack, the missionaries are also likely to have some success.

The most stunning new tourist attraction in Kaifeng, however, is the "Riverside Park of the Qingming Festival." Based on a well-known painting from the Song dynasty which depicted city life on the eve of the Mongol invasion, this expansive park covers 337,000 square meters. Situated at the northwestern corner of the city, it vividly recreates bridges, streets, shops, canals,

docks, teahouses, wineshops, pawnshops, and local crafts, foods and folk customs of the Song Dynasty. Individuals dressed in period costume, or performing period theatre and crafts, are located throughout the Park. The entrance fee is a reasonable 30 Yuan – about \$4.00 US, and is well worth the price. Non-Chinese speakers will need a guide, however. Mr. Liang Pingan, a former diplomat who will shortly be pursuing an MA in Jewish Studies in Shanghai, is currently acting as a guide in Kaifeng with the China International Travel Service.

At the rear of the complex are three small buildings, run by "Moses Wang," a descendant (as his business card shows) of Kaifeng's original Jewish settlers. Moses Wang is one of the "Seven Surname, Eight Families" that settled in Kaifeng. One family, the "Gao" family, may have been Kohanim. Two other families, oddly enough, are named "jin" and "shi" or "gold" and "stone." Moses is also a Chinese martial arts instructor and a member of the local city council. Moses wears a long black beard and a hat, and is frequently mistaken for being Moslem.

The Chinese language brochure for the park indicates Moses Wang's museum's location on the map, but the English language materials are not as helpful. Moses has done an impressive job of gathering documentation and material, including donations, from Chinese sources and overseas friends, for this project. A large part of the display of China's Jewish history was donated by the Sino-Judaic Institute. These materials depict China's Jewish life. Moses enlisted a prominent painter to create a painting of which it must have been like for Jews to first arrive in Kaifeng, which is the first striking exhibit one sees on entering the main hall of the exhibition area. The exhibitions compare quite favorably with other display areas in the Park, which are mostly pictures with captions, and guides. His materials are also thankfully bilingual – unlike many of the other park exhibits.

A young woman who serves as a guide through the complex, is reading Xu Xin's, "Encyclopedia Judaica" to better understand the history she is trying to introduce. Nearby are replicas of tricolored Tang dynasty porcelains showing Semitic figures. Other materials show the history and life

in Kaifeng. Moses also can arrange for hand-made yarmulkes as souvenirs, and can sell them in large quantities to visitors, contemplating a simcha. There is nothing to explain contemporary Jewish life. An exhibit or interactive display on Jewish contributions to science, for example, might serve to attract more Chinese exhibitors and promote a better image of the Jewish people.

If Moses has the free time, he will take you out to look at the cemeteries where Jews are being buried once again. As Jews recently obtained permission to be buried and not cremated, he is justifiably proud of this change. He is also willing to allow you to meet some of the other members of the community, although he prefers if people have been "introduced" by mutual friends beforehand. There are a number of children in the community, and he is anxious to increase contacts with other Jews.

The exhibit is an impressive effort, which shows what one man can accomplish in today's China. On my recent trip to Kaifeng, I explained to him that I believe that prejudice is a "contagious disease," frequently spread by missionaries, and that his small museum was like a "vaccination" for this disease. Moses, in a certain sense, is not merely helping to preserve China's historical past, but its spiritual tradition of tolerance, and to prevent the introduction of prejudice.

The museum successfully introduces Chinese people to a small and somewhat neglected part of their own history – a remarkable history of tolerance and mutual respect. Being located in the Chinese heartland – away from the fast growing cities of Beijing and Shanghai, or the bustle of Hong Kong, we each owe him a debt of gratitude. I encourage anyone who is Jewish and visiting China to go to Kaifeng and meet "Moses" themselves.

[Mark Cohen is a Washington, DC lawyer with an active practice in China, and is a board member of the Sino-Judaic Institute. Mr. Cohen is also the President of Preserving Tolerance, Inc., a non-profit corporation engaging in historic preservation in order to promote religious and ethnic tolerance.]

Points East

Points East

ous Asian nations, which are otherwise only briefly mentioned in pathetically few resources.

Many other Portuguese Marranos who served in the Asian arm of the Portuguese empire simply vanished into history with hardly any identification as to their Jewish heritage. The Inquisition in Goa and the subsequent *auto da fe* served to remind many Portuguese Marranos that even in far away Asia, it was not safe to expose one's Jewish roots.

In the first few centuries, Portuguese women came to Asia in extremely small numbers. The superstition that women's presence on a galleon was a bad omen prevented many captains from taking on any Portuguese women on Asia-bound galleons. Most Portuguese Marranos married local converted Christian ladies, including Southern Indian, Malaccan, Strait Chinese, Thai, Nagasaki Japanese, and Macao Chinese. In the Marrano or Converso tradition, as in the Jewish tradition, it was the maternal link that established the Jewish identity. Only the mother would pass on the secrets of the Jewish roots to the children. Consequently, since the Asian spouses of the Portuguese Marranos were not Jewish, the Marrano heritage was not kept alive.

It is certain that the Portuguese Marranos who came to Asia were mostly highly educated professionals, scholars, or master craftsmen. Regardless of the role that the Portuguese Marranos played in Asia, they were better equipped with their education and skills, but also they were better psychologically and spiritually prepared than some of their compatriots. Learning from the experience of a hostile and insecure climate at home in Portugal, they tended to be more tolerant and flexible to the native Asians, and more appreciative of the native Asian cultures. The overwhelming majority of the Portuguese Marranos who departed for Asia never returned to Portugal. They died on foreign soil far away from home, leaving only their contributions to their resident country and often vanished into yonder with hardly any traces remaining. If they were not associated with the Jesuits, who were known to keep detail account of their devotees, their life stories would disappear into obscurity.

When no historical accounts are available, it is possible that the Portuguese surnames can provide some traces of the descendants

of the Portuguese Marranos in Asia. Traditionally in Portugal, names of fruits, trees, mountains and professions reflect a Jewish heritage, much like the Steins (Epstein, Einstein, Goldstein), and Rosen (Rosenberg, Rosenbaum, Rosenblatt) in the German language. Portuguese surnames surfaced in Asia such as Pereira (little pears), Figueira (little figs), Rocha (rock), Fonseca, Cavalho, Castro, Nunes, Pinto (chick), Mendes, and Montalto. These are without doubt strongly reserved for Portuguese Marranos. Others names like da Costa (from the coast), da Silva (from the forest) and Dias are the most common names in the Portuguese speaking countries, but because of intermarriage they include more Christians than people with Jewish heritage. (There are other Portuguese surnames known to be distinctly Portuguese Marrano ones, but they rarely surfaced in Asia.)

Many of the Portuguese strongholds in Asia like Malacca, Tenarte, Flores, Amboina, Banda, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) were overrun by the Dutch in the 17th century, with the exception of Portuguese India and Macao. The Inquisition and the *auto da fe* in Portuguese India probably compelled Portuguese Marranos to move to other Portuguese strongholds. Macao, being the last Portuguese colony to be relinquished and more tolerant to different religions, seemed a more viable haven for Portuguese Marranos and their descendants. At the height of the silk for silver trade and the Macao-Manila-Acapulco trade, Macao's citizens became enormously rich. Portuguese bachelors from other Portuguese Asian strongholds were tempted to become suitors to women of the many Macanese and resident Nagasaki Japanese merchant families. Among them probably were Portuguese Marranos bachelors too. After the mid 17th century, Macao went into a steep decline in its commercial activities. The notorious coolie trade and the Opium Trade rekindled the once vibrant commercial activities, when Indo-Portuguese families, Timorese, and descendants of other Luso-Asians trickled into Macao. Soon after, the neighboring rival Hong Kong and the fabulous Shanghai stole the limelight from Macao, and attracted away many sons of Portuguese Asians, among them the descendants of Portuguese Marranos.

Having only a fraction of any of European maritime nation's physical size and population, Portugal reached Asia's rich Spice

Islands ahead of England, France and Holland and held on to them for about a century. This remarkable achievement may well be attributed to the absorption of the enormous talents and skills of Spanish Jews who took refuge in Portugal as well as to the existing Portuguese Jewish community.

The gruesome horror of the anti-Semitic riot of Portugal in 1506, and the long period of Portugal's Inquisition that followed, prompted the departure of many Portuguese Marranos. Unspecified number of Portuguese Marranos followed their compatriots to Asia and contributed their efforts in building and maintaining the widely scattered Portuguese strongholds. The extent of Portuguese influence in Asia was far more widespread than it has been acknowledged and it certainly may be attributed to the involvement of the many Marranos who sought safety in Asia.

Perhaps only by examining the Portuguese surnames that surface in Asia, surnames that traditionally were possessed by Portuguese Marranos and cross-referencing these with the extent of the Portuguese influence in Asia, could one possibly extrapolate a tentative idea of the Portuguese Marrano legacy in Asia.

The Crome Family's Experiences in Japan

trans. by Rena Krasno

[Note by Rena Krasno: There are many organizations of Old China Hands throughout the world, some of which publish newsletters. One written in Russian reaches me regularly from Ekaterinburg. It is entitled: *Ruskie v Kitae (Russians in China)*, and is published by the Ekaterinburg Association of Russians in China. The other from Germany is entitled: *Studienwek Deutsches Leben in Ostasien e. V. (StuDeO)*. I read these newsletters thoroughly, searching for articles that may be of interest to Points East readers. Thus it is that in the latest StuDeO newsletter, I found a story relating to Joseph Meisinger which I translated. Meisinger, Hitler's personal envoy, was sent on assignment to the German Embassy in Tokyo. He was a much feared Gestapo agent. It is said he put great pressure on the Japanese to 'get rid' of Jews both in Japan and in areas occupied by Japanese forces. Although the Japanese did not carry out these wishes, it is possible that the segregation of European Jewish

Archipelago (Flores, Amboina, Tenarte, Banda), and Macao. Rather than face an unfriendly and discriminatory environment at home, many Marranos would answer the call to settle in the Asian theater of the Portuguese colonies.

Ironically, while Vasco da Gama's discovery of a route to India (1497-98) has attracted tremendous attention in history books, little did foreign historians know that the vital information about the second leg of Vasco da Gama's voyage to India was provided by a Portuguese Jew, Pedro Covilham. Pedro Covilham's fluency in the Arabic language and his profound understanding of the Islamic culture provided a perfect cover for his real mission as special agent of the Portuguese Royal Court. His valuable information about the trading routes from coast of Persia, India and Aden to East Africa provided the encouragement for Vasco da Gama to sail upward from Cape of Good Hope along the East African coast at a time when no other relevant information was available.

In Portuguese India, the highly skilled and professional Portuguese Marranos made their mark in improving local medical treatment and education. Since the Jesuits ran most of the medical services and educational institutes in Portuguese India, many Portuguese Marranos would join their services. Some even became Jesuits themselves, surprising both the Jewish and Gentile worlds.

Portugal itself never recovered from the exodus of its highly skilled Jewish Physicians. To further deplete her dwindling number of medical talents, the young and able Marranos of Portugal went to serve in the Portuguese empire in Asia. Among them were several notable physicians and medical talents.

One of the gems was a Portuguese Jewish physician, Garcia de Orta, who departed his beloved Portugal and made an illustrious career as a professor of medicine in tropical Goa. His profound knowledge of medicine was a gigantic asset and greatly improved the medical services of Goa. The horrifying acts of Inquisition in Goa, no less severe than the Inquisition in Portugal, ultimately dishonored Garcia de Orta.

Among the least known as a *Portuguese Marrano in Asia*, Luis de Almeida was truly a champion of the human race. He transcended the barriers of race, religion, and

the lure of material wealth, to achieve the genuine nature of a universal child. His achievements were awesome and his life story remains extremely fascinating.

Luis de Almeida was born to a Portuguese Marrano family. After completing his medical studies in Lisbon (most of the distinguished Portuguese Jewish physicians were graduates of the Coimbra's school of medicine), he went to Macao, in the far-flung corner of the Portuguese empire, at a most opportune moment. At the time, the imperial Chinese court banned all visits of Japanese vessels to the Chinese coast because of ravaging raids by Japanese pirates called Waco. The Chinese coastal authority also forbade the Chinese merchant marine from visiting Japan, which in turn created a crisis in the supply of the highly sought after Chinese silk and porcelain in Japan. The Portuguese took full advantage of the situation by ferrying silk from China to Japan in their galleons. Luis teamed up with Duarte da Gama and made tremendous profit in the "silver for silk" trade. His appreciation of the Jesuit missionary work in Japan and his sense of philanthropy culminated in his decision to enter into the service of the Society of Jesus. Some historians suggested that Luis' motive in becoming a Christian was commercial. This is simply erroneous nonsense. He simultaneously joined as a Jesuit missionary to Japan and donated his enormous wealth to the Jesuits missionaries. Through his advocacy, the Jesuit authority in Macao wisely invested his donation in the Macao-Japan "silver for silk" trade.

Luis de Almeida's contribution to medical knowledge in the 16th century Japan was phenomenal. His pioneering work in introducing Western medicine to Japan was instrumental in allowing it to flourish there. He founded a hospital for the poor in Funai, which was a landmark in the history of medicine in Japan. Luis's introduction of European surgery and his patient instruction to his assistants in the hospital had far-reaching implications; and his appreciation and understanding of Chinese herbs, which he imported, created a successful blending of Eastern and Western medicine. He also was responsible for arranging the financing of the Funai hospital as well as for soliciting funds from the Portuguese traders to improve the service there.

As a Jesuit missionary, he was equally successful and accomplished. In 1562, de

Almeida arrived on a Portuguese nau (galleon) in Yokosuka to negotiate an agreement with the local Daimyo (the military and administrative chief of the region), Omura Sumitada. In the summer of the following year, 1563, after receiving instruction from Luis, Sumitada became the first Daimyo to be baptized a Christian, together with twenty of his nobles. In 1576, again as a result of the labors of Luis de Almeida, the Daimyos of Arima and Amakusa were also baptized.

It was also partially due to the effort of Luis that Nagasaki became the long time trading post of the Portuguese in Japan until they were expelled.

Another Portuguese Marrano who, like Luis de Almeida, became a Jesuit with a distinguished career in Asia was Henry Henriquez. He was born of Marrano parents and graduated in law from the university in Coimbra. Like many other Portuguese Jews before his time, Father Henry was multilingual and was a strong advocate and pioneer in using the native Southern Indian dialect of Tamil in missionary work. In the early days of Portuguese India, the Roman Catholic clergy stationed in Goa were unwilling to promote converted native Christian Tamils to the priesthood. The Roman Catholic authority had little interest in the native language and culture. Years later, the Jesuits spearheaded the learning of native language and culture as part of the training curriculum for novice Jesuits and also led the way in promoting native Tamils as clergy. Father Henry made himself an early model for all other missionaries to follow suit. Through his patient labor and study of Tamil language and culture, he illuminated the need to respect and treasure them. It is an understatement to describe Father Henry as fluent in the Tamil language: he was a Tamil scholar. The first Catholic book in Tamil was produced almost entirely as the result of his effort.

One of the most colorful Portuguese figures in Asia was Fernan Mendes Pinto, who was also reported to be a Marrano. He traveled widely in Asia, sailing the coasts of South China, Japan, Malacca, and the numerous islands of Malay-Indonesia Archipelago. His highly acclaimed book *Peregrinacao* (Peregrination) told of many adventurous stories in South-East Asia. Some of his stories may be sketchy but they provide a vivid description of the lives, political conditions, and cultures of numer-

Menashe's Children (continued from page 1)

"I've wanted to come to Israel ever since my midteens when I (found out about) Israel," says Shmuel Joram, 38, a draftsman who grew up in Mizoram. Like so many Bnei Menashe he speaks quietly and respectfully, but with determination and conviction.

Today Joram, the Thangsom sisters and their brother Yitzhak, 30, an economist, all live in Jerusalem. They have been formally converted to Judaism and are citizens. If they don't yet feel Israeli, they have a strong sense of having found their place. "In my heart, I resented undergoing conversion when I feel so utterly Jewish," says Yitzhak with controlled dignity. "But as our path back to our roots was through Christianity, I accept it was necessary."

After the loss of their precious parchment, they nursed a tradition that one day a white man would come to return their holy books. When a Reverend Pettigrew arrived in India from Britain in 1813, ablaze with Baptist fervor and copies of the Christian Bible, the Bnei Menashe believed the prophecy had been fulfilled. Large parts of the book, from Adam and Eve to the Exodus from Egypt, echoed their oral tradition. Within a decade, the whole community was Christian.

"Our grandfather was orphaned young and raised by missionaries," says Yitzhak. "That's how our family became Christian. Our father reversed it. He was a deeply religious man who sought the truth. I remember him giving me a *siddur* and telling me: Judaism is the true faith."

The way back was shown by a community member who came to be regarded as a modern-day prophet.

"His name was Challa Mala," explains Joram. "In the 1950's, he had a vision that the Bnei Menashe were Israelites. His vision ignited the community. They stopped working and began preparing to return to Israel, expecting daily the appearance of the Messiah. A delegation was sent to the Israeli consulate in Calcutta."

This first attempt to return collapsed quickly in the face of opposition from local Indian authorities and Jewish leaders. But a connection had been forged and the Bnei Menashe stayed in touch with Jew-

ish communities in Calcutta and Bombay 600 miles away. Members like the elder Thangsom embraced their Judaism.

"When you find the truth it hits your heart," Joram says. "I remember my father weeping because he had found the true faith."

In the 1970's a group of educated middle-class Bnei Menashe made a formal decision to return to Judaism. They built synagogues, took on Sabbath observance and *brit mila*. It was shortly after this that Rabbi Eliyahu Avihail first heard of them; one of the many letters they wrote asking for help in coming to Israel was passed along to him.

"I was interested, of course," Avihail says. After several attempts he obtained permission to go into Manipur and Mizoram, an area closed because of a border conflict. He also met community representatives in Calcutta and managed to bring two of them to study in Israeli *yeshivot*, so they could return to India as Jewish leaders.

"The more I got to know the community, the more certain I became that their tradition was true and they were indeed descended from the tribe of Menashe," says Avihail. "Their customs are very close to prerabbinical Judaism. They have songs thousands of years old, with words from the Bible. One is: 'Let us go to Zion!' even though they didn't even know what Zion was. They give their children names unknown in the surrounding Indian community, such as Apram, Yakov, Sinai and Shilo. Among their customs are white garments for the *kohen*, an altar and animal sacrifices. The *kohen* will not speak God's name. They have a garment that resembles blue and white *tzitzit*. The eating of blood is prohibited. They have laws of family purity and follow a lunar calendar. Corpses are seen as impure.

"All this is too close to be coincidence – and too far to have been recently brought to them. These are ancient customs, corrupted over time."

In their scrolls there were strange stories about Adam and Eve, the Flood, Avihail points out. "The Tower of Babel, for example, was built to wage war on God, Who turned the stones to poison, whereupon the builders forgot their language and were dispersed."

Avihail began his long struggle on their

behalf. "In 1988 we made a symbolic beginning, converting 24 in Calcutta," he says, "But then as now Israel's interior ministry reaction was: Do you want to submerge Israel with these people? But I persisted, and ended up pleading the case before the Supreme Court. It found in my favor and in 1989 I brought over the first group and settled them in Kfar Etzion."

Avihail's aim is to bring the 10,000 or so Bnei Menashe who are today practicing, if not yet converted, Jews. With every incoming group, however, he faces a major struggle. "In 1993 I brought [some] with the help of the Christian Embassy in Jerusalem, which paid for the plane," he says. "Days before they were due, a scare story was leaked to the Hebrew press that 'untouchables' were about to flood the country. This delayed their *aliya* by seven months – and they'd already sold their homes and businesses. I turned to the Lubavitcher *rebbe*, who was then very sick. 'Should I be doing this?' I asked him. 'Yes!' he said. 'Bring them to Israel!'"

"Israel's Chief Rabbinate has been good to us," says Yitzhak. "They insist on a full Orthodox conversion [*bet din* and *mikve*] but I think they go easier on us than on other converts by not making us wait months before being called to the *bet din*. They recognize our genuine faith. The absorption ministry has also been helpful and is giving [us] temporary resident status so we can live in absorption centers while we study Hebrew and Judaism.

"But the interior ministry is very different. They delayed granting us citizenship for almost a year after the *bet din* converted us. Their tactics included streams of questions about our conversion, like: How did you step into the *mikve*? They insisted each of us produce a full genealogical tree. It was only when we threatened to go to the Supreme Court that they gave us our citizenship papers."

Today the Bnei Menashe are scattered throughout the country; they have settled in and are doing well. Some are in higher education, others run small businesses, many live on settlements – Kiryat Arba, Ofra, Beit El, Eilon Moreh and Gush Katif. Most are politically right wing ("We all want peace," says Esther), all are ready to serve in the army, and all, without exception, are religiously observant.

Some are married to English-speakers from

the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States (Yehoshua Wertheime of Boston, for example, has married into the community); others have married Jews from other Indian communities (like Elisheva Ganteh who married Yehuda Ben Eliyahu, originally from Cochin); but most, like the Thangsoms and Joram, hope to marry within their own community.

"We didn't know all these people in India, but we feel very close," says Ruth. "There's always somewhere to go on Shabbat and festivals and we share one another's weddings and bar mitzvas. There are already sabra Bnei Menashe in the community."

The Thangsoms and Joram are still living and studying in the Nahalat Zvi yeshiva, where they prepared for conversion. "It's home to us," Joram says. "The *rosh yeshiva* [yeshiva head] totally accepts us 'raw' from India. He carries the spark of holiness within him. I'm planning to stay on for another year. Then I'll think about my career and how to earn money and settle down."

Ruth, too, wants to continue her Jewish studies. "Without learning you miss out on what it takes to be a Jew," she says. "Every Jew needs to find his own path, but you can't find it without knowledge." After full-time study, she'd like to teach.

"You have to be educated in your faith," says Esther. "We'd be missing the point of being in Israel if we didn't know how to connect with God. Being in Israel is not enough. The soul is important, too."

For the remaining Bnei Menashe in India who are interested in living a Jewish life, moving to Israel would be more than enough for the moment. Many enjoy comfortable middle class lives, but their hearts are in their ancestral land. They also faced danger 18 months ago, when their communities in Manipur were attacked by neighbors from the Naya tribe. Two synagogues were burned and several people were killed.

But this isn't why the Bnei Menashe want to come. "They want to live in Israel for the same reasons that we do," says Joram, "the same reasons that any Jew wants to live in his own land. Because it's ours. Because it's home."

Acts of Conscience

(continued from page 1)

sionaries and raised with a sense of obligation for the gifts he had been given.

He was a scholar, educated at the College of Yale in China, with a Ph.D. from a German university. In 1935, he entered the Chinese diplomatic service, and in 1938, he was posted as consul general in Vienna.

Ho had seen the rise of the Nazis in his graduate days in Munich, and he saw Adolf Hitler ride in triumph through Vienna in March, 1938, saw the huge cheering crowds, met Hitler himself at a reception for the diplomatic corps. All Vienna was at Hitler's feet, but Ho was appalled. Vienna had the third-largest Jewish community in Europe, and once in power the Nazis unleashed what the historian William Shirer called an "orgy of sadism." Thousands were arrested and sent to Mauthausen, the new concentration camp on the Danube. What happened those springs days "was worse than anything I had seen in Germany" Shirer wrote.

Most of the world looked away. It was not their problem. But Ho, who was in the heart of the maelstrom, felt he had to do something.

"There were American religious and charitable organizations which were urgently trying to save the Jews. I secretly kept in close contact with these organizations."

In 1938, the Nazis had not yet come to their "final solution for the Jewish question" – mass murder. Instead, they wanted Jews to emigrate.

The terms: emigrant Jews had to sell all they had, turn the money over to the Gestapo and obtain an entry visa to another country.

But visas were hard to come by for penniless refugees.

Some Jews were turned down by as many as 50 consulates in Vienna. One of the would-be émigrés, a 17-year-old named Eric Goldstaub, went in desperation to the Chinese consulate, where Ho issues 20 visas for Goldstaub's family.

Soon, the word was out: People lined the streets to get Chinese visas, all issued by Ho and all good for entry at Shanghai.

Ho issued a visa for Fiedler, his wife, Berta, and 18 relatives, and they went to China. Harry Fiedler, their son, wrote, "Had they not received this visa, they would have perished in Nazi concentration camps, as did my mother's aunt and uncle."

Ho saved thousands of people, including the mother and father of Israel Singer, the head of the World Jewish Congress.

Ho called the process a "liberal policy," but the Chinese government disapproved, and Ho was ordered to stop. Ho ignored the order.

There were hundreds of foreign diplomats in the Third Reich in those days, and most of them viewed the Nazi regime with distaste. But they did nothing to help the Jews. Why did Ho act?

"If you knew my dad, you wouldn't ask," Manli Ho said. "It was the natural thing for him to do. He saw the persecution of the Jews, and he thought it would be natural for any person to feel compassion."

In 1940, Ho left Vienna. He had a long career in the diplomatic service. He served in Egypt, presenting his credentials to King Farouk, to Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, the first king of Saudi Arabia, to Ethiopia's Haile Selassie, the Lion of Judah. Ho also served in Mexico, Bolovia, and Colombia.

He saw the rise and fall of Hitler, the rise and fall of communism. He spoke five languages. He lived, as the old curse puts it, in interesting times.

Finally, Ho had some kind of falling out with his government, by then in exile in Taiwan, and he was dismissed from the service. He thought it wise to retire to San Francisco. He never received a pension.

He wrote a memoir, *Forty Years of Diplomatic Life*, 713 pages long. He used only 70 Chinese characters to tell of his days saving Jews in Vienna.

"Sometimes," Saud said. "Goodness is harder to explain than evil."

He believes that the Chinese government does not want to be seen as favoring Jews. Judaism is not one of the five officially recognized religions, although the community has applied for official status.

Additionally, Beijing requires that only non-Chinese residents take part in the Jewish community's activities.

"As long as we are here for the Jewish people, that's fine," the rabbi said. "But as soon as we open our doors to the Chinese people, they will close our doors."

Still, the rabbi is optimistic. "We are working on getting the Ohel Rachel synagogue back. Now we are hoping that they will allow us to use it at least 20 times in the next year."

The Jewish community was given use of Ohel Rachel for the first night of Passover this year. A group of Auschwitz survivors attended the service, reminding congregants that although Shanghai showed compassion for Jews during the war, many other Jews were not as lucky.

Henry Levine, the Jewish U.S. consul-general in Shanghai, has been very helpful to the community, members say.

And most Jews in Shanghai understand that things take time in their temporary home.

"It is China. It's their country," said Axelrod. "They can set the rules, and we have to accommodate them. And I think we're doing a reasonably good job."

North Korea's Jewish Tutor

by Frank Ching

excerpted from the Far East Economic Review, 15 June, 2000

North Korea has captured international attention in recent months with its gradual opening-up to the outside world, including a summit meeting with President Kim Dae Jung of South Korea. But the story of a little-publicized programme operated by an American law professor that's designed to prepare Pyongyang for economic and commercial dealings with foreign countries shows a different side of North Korea and suggests that it has been thinking of reaching out to the rest of the world for some time.

The Role of Portuguese Jews and their Descendants in Asia

by Alfred Luk

The significance of the year 1492 was dominated by Christopher Columbus's epic voyage to the New Hemisphere. The infamous Spanish Inquisition was also launched in the same year but has been denied attention and exposure on the same scale. Also directly related to Ferdinand and Isabella, the chief architects of both historical events of 1492, was the expulsion of the Portuguese Jews in 1497.

Although it received far less attention than it deserved, nonetheless it has had a phenomenal effect in shaping Portugal's history and on her former colonies in Asia. Amid the humiliation and bitterness of the expulsion, the descendants of the Portuguese Jews carved out distinguished careers in Asia. Over time, their descendants assimilated in with other Luso-Asians or into the mainstream local Asian population without the least knowledge of their Jewish heritage.

The exuberant and enormously prosperous Jewish community of Portugal produced many of the country's best physicians, alchemists, mathematicians, astronomers, cartographers, royal advisers, financiers, technicians and linguists as well as master craftsmen in metal works, leather works, and jewelry. In 1497, the Portuguese ruler, King Manoel, reversed his policy on Jews living in his kingdom in order to marry a Spanish princess. Although some of the Jews were able to flee, most of the Jewish population was forced to convert to Christianity, and they were known as Marranos (this term originated in Spain), Conversos, or Cristao Novo (New Christians).

The Marranos of Portugal were constantly monitored by their compatriots for the slightest signs of lapses into Judaism or even non-participation in the Roman Catholic faith. The atmosphere facing the young and able Marranos of Portugal was harsh, hostile and insecure. When the discovery route to India was established, the vastly expanded overseas territories of Portugal desperately needed young men to fill the galleons and the remote Asian strongholds in far away places like Goa, Damao, Diu, Cohim (all previously Portuguese India), Hormuz (Iran), Oman, Ceylon, Timor, Malacca, various islands in the Indonesian

Operation Flying Dragon: The Vancouver Connection

by Daniel Fromowitz

reprinted from Zachor, #4, Sept. 1999

By the time the last train left for Toronto, Edmond "Bud" Lando, Myer Brown and the other good-hearted members of Vancouver's Operation Flying Dragon team were exhausted. Another two groups were expected in the next few days, and the Vancouverites needed their rest.

It had all started eleven days earlier, on May 10th, 1949, when Canadian Jewish Congress offices in Montreal alerted local Congress Chairperson Bud Lando of the imminent arrival of Jewish refugees from Shanghai. Civil war was being waged in China, and with the Communists controlling large portions of the country, foreigners were looking for a way out. While of course the reasons for leaving a soon-to-be Communist China were radically different from the reasons for leaving Nazi Europe, the inability to hold on to businesses and their relatively new found lives was enough to convince Jews – and most foreigners – to flee Shanghai. Many fled to Australia and Israel, and some ventured back to Europe. Others looked to North America. It was to meet this need that *Operation Flying Dragon* took flight.

Initiated by the Joint Distribution Committee (the "Joint"), *Operation Flying Dragon* received much assistance from Canadian Jewish Congress. The plan was to fly the Jews from China to Seattle, and then bus them up to Vancouver. It was expected that between 200-300 Jews would arrive in Vancouver. The refugees would have six month visas for Canada, staying in Vancouver for a short time before heading east. Once in eastern Canada, many were expected to apply for residency in the United States, under the established quota for 1949.

In response to the call, Lando immediately convened a meeting of his executive. With the first group slated to arrive in three days, Vancouver's Jewish community had little time to mobilize. Myer Brown put together a women's committee to provide transportation and food to the sure-to-be-weary travelers. S.H. Rosen was appointed housing chairman, Cantor Gartner, of reception and Nathan Nemetz, public relations.

However, Vancouver's Jewish community would have to wait. Originally scheduled

to arrive on Friday, May 13th, the first batch of refugees was delayed and did not touch down until a week later, on Paine Airfield near Everett, Washington. Meeting the planes were Heinz Frank, Western Regional Director of Congress, and Lou Zimmerman, Executive Director of the Vancouver Jewish Administrative Organization. Unable to stay on American soil without transit visas, the group of 89, having just completed a 36-hour flight through Japan and the Aleutians, boarded three buses and headed for the Canadian border.

Canadian immigration, having been notified by CJC officials ahead of time, bolstered their staff in an effort to expedite the "landing" process. Even with the increased personnel, it was three hours later when the last person had been checked through and approved for entry.

When the first group reached the Jewish Community Centre at Eleventh and Oak, it was well into the early hours of Saturday. A warm meal awaited them, and as the Jewish Western Bulletin notes, "the ample justice they did to the food was evidence of the hardships they had undergone." Following the feast, the travelers were shuttled to hotels for some much needed rest.

After a tour of the city the following afternoon, the group, minus four who would stay in Vancouver, was taken to the train station, to be sent off to Montreal and Toronto respectively. Heinz Frank and Bud Lando has been hard at work on this next phase of the Shanghaianders' journey.

Despite the enormity of the task, Vancouver's *Operation Flying Dragon* team had done its job – and done it well. The same combination of tenacity and compassion would again be displayed by the Vancouverites for the next two groups of refugees fleeing Shanghai.

Operation Flying Dragon may not be one of the more well known rescues or airlifts. Yet it must not be forgotten what it meant to those leaving Shanghai, to be cared for and received so warmly. As one refugee noted to a Vancouver Sun reporter at the time, "We are so thankful for everything – most of all for the handshake and welcome smiles we get from all you Canadians." Indeed, *Operation Flying Dragon* is a moment in history of which Vancouver's Jewish community can be proud.

The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center

by Rena Krasno

Mr. Mordechai Ben-Porat is celebrated in Israel for his heroic contribution in helping persecuted Iraqi Jews flee to Israel after the establishment of the State. Eventually, he became a Member of Knesset and played an important political role. Later, he headed the Council of Or Yehuda, a town located some ten minutes from Ben Gurion airport. In the 1970's Mordechai Ben-Porat proposed to found a Babylonian Jewish Heritage Center in Or Yehuda, an idea which was fortunately adopted. The cornerstone of the center was laid in 1973, the academic commission began its research in 1977 and the museum was open to the public in 1988.

I first met Mr. Ben-Porat and visited the museum last year. Mr. Ben-Porat has the dedicated and enthusiastic personality of a man pursuing his dream: an ever-growing center reflecting events in the history and culture of Babylonian Jews during the past 2,500 years. He personally escorted me through the alley (koocha), a reconstruction of one of the side streets in the Jewish Quarter of Baghdad at the beginning of the 20th century. Here typical houses with overhanging balconies were reproduced as well as workshops, arts and crafts, cloth and spice shops, and a Jewish coffee house. Scenes showing customs and traditions of the Jews of Baghdad could be seen through the windows.

We visited the magnificent Great Synagogue (Slat – li-Kbighi) reconstructed in an area about an eighth of its original size.

A fascinating section is dedicated to the *aliyah* of Iraqi Jews, a tent in one of the *maabarot* (temporary reception centers), a *sochnut* bed, and primitive implements for cooking.

Mr. Ben-Porat told me that a second story was being added to the Museum to include the story of Iraqi Jews in the Diaspora. This immediately brought my thoughts to Iraqi Jews in Shanghai, many of whom had contributed so much to Jewish life and to the development of the city. In fact, it was the Sassoon family that had sowed the seeds of the first Jewish community in Shanghai in the middle of the 19th century. I discussed the possibility of devoting space in the second floor to Shanghai Iraqi Jews, and suggested constructing a model of the

Ohel Rachel Synagogue based on all the information in the possession of the Tueg family.

After my return to the United States, I corresponded with Mr. Ben-Porat and we discussed the matter further. I also received several calls from him and started gathering material. I contacted my friend Tess Johnston in Shanghai for photographs of Ohel Rachel and the visit of Hillary Clinton and Madeleine Albright. As usual, Tess agreed at once. At the same time, Professor Pan Guang sent me a short film of the visit. Armed with all this material I returned once again this year to visit Mr. Ben-Porat. Rebecca Tueg came from Haifa to participate in our meeting. It is my sincere hope that some of our plans will materialize and the Shanghai Iraqi community will eventually be properly represented in the remarkable Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center.

Shanghai's Jewish Transplants

by Miriam Widman,
Jewish Telegraphic Agency
excerpted from *The Jewish Bulletin*,
9 June 2000

Gus Axelrod and Stuart Magloff sit together with their families on a recent Sunday and eat lox and bagels.

It's hardly a remarkable event, except for its location: Shanghai.

China's bustling financial center, home to about 13 million, is also a temporary home to about 200 Jews. Most, like Axelrod and Magloff, are business people who came here for career opportunities.

Michael Goldman, a financial comptroller from Philadelphia who has lived in China for nine years, explains. "In China a person can take on a bigger role with more responsibility at an earlier point in his career than he could in the United States."

Magloff, the director of operations for Johnson & Johnson, had wondered if it would be possible to continue to raise his children Jewish in an environment that is as decidedly non-Jewish as China's.

But Magloff's family, like many other Jewish families here, is more observant in Shanghai than in the United States. Being in a foreign environment, it seems, provides more reason to connect to something familiar, like the Jewish community.

Some find the lack of anti-Semitism quite refreshing.

"I find it easier to be Jewish here than in any other place we've ever lived," said Magloff's wife, Carol, who grew up in south Texas. "I killed Jesus. Me, personally, that's how I grew up." She doesn't feel the same anti-Semitism in Shanghai.

The result of this newfound connection is a flurry of Jewish activities. There's a toddlers' group, a youth group, b'nai mitzvah and adult education classes, and informal get-togethers. A preschool is set to open next year.

The community got a big boost in 1998 with the arrival of Rabbi Shalom Greenberg. The 28-year-old Chabad rabbi was born in Israel and educated in New York.

The city's current Jewish community has no particular connection to Shanghai's Jewish past – except for one link.

Albert Sassoon, a New York-based clothing manufacturer, is distantly related to the Iraqi Sassoon family prominent in Shanghai in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Sassoon, an Orthodox Jew, has generously contributed to the community and has even donated office space for the rabbi.

Eating kosher can be a real challenge. "It's not difficult, it's just expensive." Said Greenberg, noting he pays \$6 a pound for kosher chicken, and high import fees.

"Actually things are easier now," he said. When he first came to Shanghai two years ago, the rabbi had to travel to Hong Kong or the States for kosher products.

"People in Customs, they thought I'm nuts," he said. "When they asked me what is in the box and I said chicken, they couldn't believe me. Why would you bring a chicken to Shanghai? You know Shanghai is full of chickens."

But not kosher chickens – at least until recently.

Bruce Feuer, a Reform Jew from Atlanta, manages the development where the five-star Portman Ritz Carlton hotel is located. Feuer, who is president of the Jewish Community of Shanghai, introduced the rabbi

to the hotel's executive chef, Christopher Christie, a Protestant from Canada who is not as unlikely a kosher specialist as it may first appear.

"Growing up in Winnipeg, there was a very large Jewish community, and we opened up a kosher kitchen because the demand was there," he said.

Christie has donated a section in one of his enormous commercial freezers for the rabbi's kosher meat, which he supplies with orders that take 10 days to arrive.

Christie also helped with the community's seder, attended by 130 guests, and organized what community members believe to be China's first postwar bat mitzvah.

A key challenge to Shanghai Jews involves the Chinese authorities. Shanghai had several places of worship during the 1930s and 1940s, when Jewish refugees from Europe lived there.

But today, Jews pray mostly in an activity room in the Shanghai Centre, operated by Seacliff Ltd., of which Feuer is the general manager.

There is a synagogue – Ohel Rachel – but it looks more like a museum than a place of worship.

The synagogue was cleaned up before President Clinton's visit two years ago, but the Jewish community only has access to it on rare occasions.

Last year marked the first time the Jewish community in Shanghai was able to use it. The Chinese government opened it for only one day, so members could worship there on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, but not the second, and not on Yom Kippur.

Ohel Rachel was re-opened for a Chanukah party last year. But when Steve Fieldman, a lawyer and professor teaching in Shanghai, wanted his bat mitzvah-aged daughter and family to celebrate in the synagogue, he was turned down. Instead, the bat mitzvah was held at the Ritz.

"Dealing with the Chinese authorities on this issue is not a legal issue, it's a political issue," said Fieldman, a member of Temple Israel in Orlando, Fla.