

evidence of any dispute" among Shanghai Baghdadis on the opium issue, sentiment consistent with that of most other foreign traders, with the notable exception of the small dissenting minority mentioned above [p. 67]. She makes an important contribution by documenting the unanimity of the Baghdadi community in support of the opium trade.

Meyer, who is herself from the Baghdadi community of Calcutta, takes the side of her brethren in the ongoing debate over whether they contributed 'enough' to ease the plight of approximately 18,000 largely penniless Jewish refugees from Hitler who thronged into Shanghai between 1938 and 1941. In this respect she differs from Shanghai refugee and historian Ernest Heppner, originally from Breslau, who asks provocatively "whether more could have been done by some of the resident Jews and their leaders." If financial aid had not come from "a few individuals" as well as from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, "would the Jewish residents who were not interned in Japanese POW camps and not living in the ghetto have considered themselves their brothers' keepers and helped to feed all their hungry brethren?" [Quotations are from this author's *The Jews of China: A Sourcebook and Research Guide* (2000)]. Meyer concedes, citing Joan Roland, that by 1938 many Shanghai Baghdadis had become the "Rothschilds of the East" [p. 32]. She then cites numerous examples of Baghdadi charity toward German and Austrian immigrants, concluding "whether or not the Shanghai Sephardim could have done more for the refugees is a moot point...In their own estimation, at that time, they believed they had acquitted themselves creditably." [pp. 216-17]. The debate over aid in Shanghai is a microcosm of the broader debate over who could have done what to stop Hitler, the ultimate cause of the refugees' misery. These arguments will doubtless continue as long as there are survivors of refugees and of those who tried to help them. Meyer has made a valuable contribution in recording the viewpoint of Shanghai Baghdadis on this issue.

Over and beyond Meyer's willingness to tackle controversial issues head-on, other commendable features of her book are the vignettes about the efforts of the Shanghai Baghdadis to reach out to the indigenous Chinese Jews of Kaifeng; occupational histories of the doctors, lawyers, and rabbis of the community; and descriptions of

Hebrew and secular schools, charities, clubs, cemeteries, real estate transactions, lawsuits, kidnappings, publications, entertainment facilities, synagogues, women's associations, sports teams, and cadets in the British-organized Shanghai Volunteer Corps.

There are a few points which Meyer and University Press of America might wish to consider revising in a second edition of this monograph. She writes that "the philanthropy of the opium merchants was legendary. In Canton, for example, the American firm Olyphant and Co. financed virtually an entire mission." [p. 63]. Olyphant, as noted above, was perhaps the most significant foreign trading company on the China coast that scrupulously abstained from the opium trade, on moral grounds. While at an early stage in the book Meyer mentions Baghdad's long-serving [1859-1909] ecclesiastical authority Hacham Yoseph Hayim, she does not involve him in her discussion of Shanghai Zionism [pp. 171-90]. She sees that phenomenon as largely the creation of N.E.B. Ezra between 1903 and 1936, when Ezra led the Shanghai Zionist Association [SZA] and edited *Israel's Messenger*. However, prior to Ezra, Hayyim was a powerful force inculcating pre-Herzlian Zionism among Baghdadis in India, Burma, the Straits Settlements, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and elsewhere. He urged his brethren to visit and settle the Land of Israel long before Herzl's establishment of the World Zionist Organization [WZO] in 1896, with which the SZA affiliated, and even before the founding of the WZO's predecessor organizations, Hovevei Zion and BILU. [See David Sassoon, *History of the Jews in Baghdad* (1949)]. In attempting to explain the Chinese Government's removal of Shanghai Jewish graves to new locations, Meyer writes: "At the time of the Cultural Revolution's Great Leap Forward, urban development in Shanghai obligated the Chinese authorities to consider the transfer of all foreign cemeteries outside the city limits." [p. 230]. The generally accepted beginning date for the Great Leap Forward is 1958. It lasted perhaps until 1960. The generally accepted dates for the Cultural Revolution are 1966-76. [Fairbank and Edwin O. Reischauer, *China* (1989), pp.506-09, 519; Graham Hutchings, *Modern China* (2001), pp. 90-93, 164-66]. It is unclear what Meyer means by "the Cultural Revolution's Great Leap Forward." Finally, citing *Israel's Messenger* as her source, Meyer states that "Hardoon was probably the only West-

erner interested in promoting Chinese technology and preserving China's rich cultural heritage." [p. 22]. There are ten foreign members of China's National People's Consultative Congress, five of them of Jewish origin, who might dispute that generalization.

While Meyer is generally consistent in her use of *pinyin* romanization of Chinese, which is fast becoming universal, the title of her book uses "Whangpoo" rather than the *pinyin* "Huangpu." Her use of the romanization "Szechuen," p. 176, is puzzling. She is also inconsistent in her use of "*The Israel Messenger*," p. 25, and "*Israel's Messenger*," p. 26. Historian Jacques Downs is misspelled "Downes" on p. 263. Israel Cohen was not "general secretary the Jewish Agency" but of the Jewish Agency [p. 26].

Apart from these mechanical matters, which can be corrected in a second edition, Meyer and University Press of America can be praised for producing a stimulating and informative monograph on Shanghai's Baghdadis.

Conference Announcement International Symposium on Judaism ~ To be held in China

An International Symposium—"Judaism and Society"—will offer an interdisciplinary forum uniting scholars, research fellows and teachers in the study of Judaism. Organized by the Center for Jewish Studies and Department of Religious Studies at Nanjing University, with the approval of the Chinese authorities, the Symposium will be held in Nanjing, from October 10-15, 2004.

To submit a paper, please send an abstract of not more than 400 words to the symposium secretary at the address below. **The deadline is March 31, 2004.**

For more information, contact:
Email: Xuxin49@jlonline.com
Mail: Prof. Xu Xin, Center for Jewish Studies, Department of Religious Studies, Nanjing University, Nanjing, 210093, China, Fax: 0086-25-2283598

(see insert for more details
and conference form)



Vol. 19 No. 1
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Points East

中國-猶太學院

A Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

WITH GERMAN PRESIDENT JOHANNES RAU IN HONGKEW

by Pan Guang

In the afternoon of September 14, 2003, German President Johannes Rau and the First Lady of the Germany made a "Return to History" tour to the former Hongkew (now Hongkou) Ghetto in Shanghai. It is known to all that before and during World War II, Hongkou was a heaven for some 20,000 Jews who sought refuge from Hitler's Germany and German occupied areas. Therefore, German President's visit to Hongkou is of great significance. Entrusted by Shanghai Mayor, I had the great honour of accompanying President & Mrs. Rau's tour.

The First Lady in Ohel Moshe Synagogue

Just past 5.00 pm, Christina Rau arrived in the former Ohel Moshe Synagogue (now The Museum for Jewish Refugees in Shanghai) at the Changyang Road. We found communication easy with each other as the First Lady can speak English very well. At the very beginning, I accompanied her to visit former synagogue's service hall on the first floor where everything had been rehabilitated to its original appearance. Beside the hall lies an exhibition room displaying paintings and calligraphies, photos and scripture in memory of holocaust victims in Shanghai. During her tour, she made professional comments frequently on exhibited articles, as she was well versed in plastic arts molding. Then we came to the photo exhibition of Jewish refugees in Shanghai on the third floor, which displayed (the story of those) Jews who sought refuge in Shanghai, especially in Hongkou District, where they shared weal and woe with the Chinese people during wartime. When looking at these pictures, the First Lady wore an imposing expression, while she frequently raised questions, such as: "How could Jewish refugees be accustomed to the lives in Hongkou?" "How about their relationship with Chinese people?" Having opened windows, she looked into the distant old dwellings on Zhoushan Road, Changyang Road and Huoshan Road, and told the German ladies who accompanied her that this was the home of Jewish refugees from the Central Europe including Germany. After that, we came to the restored sleeping garret on the fourth floor, where interior decoration is 1930s' style and all furniture had been used by the refugees and collected recently from the Chinese residents in Hongkou. Having placed themselves in this ten square meter room, the German guests seemed to have returned back to the war period 60 years ago.

Meeting the President

Just at that time when I accompanied the First Lady to go downstairs, the President's motorcade arrived at the gate of the Ohel Moses Synagogue. We witnessed a high-spirited president alight from his car though he had already experienced his busiest

CHINESE POLICY TOWARDS JUDAISM

by Xu Xin, Nanjing University

Paper presented at the International Symposium on "Youtai-Presence and Perception of Jews and Judaism in China" held at Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, September 19-23 2003. Printed with permission.

As China is the only country in the Oriental world in which Jews have continually lived for over 1,000 years, "Chinese Judaism"—referring to the religious belief and practices of those Jews who had lived or are now living in China—is unique. Within this long history, a significant distinction must be made. Jews who came before modern times, before 1840, became part of Chinese society almost without distinct features; those who arrived since 1840 have remained aliens. Chinese policy, especially since 1950s, treats them separately. This paper attempts to address the issue from a historical perspective, with a special consideration to the Jews of Kaifeng during the last 50 years.

Policy towards Jews and their religious practice in history

During their 1,000 year residency, what, if any, has been official policy of China towards the Jews and their religious practices? Examining historical sources before the 20th century—although documents related directly to this issue are rare!—a liberal policy of "respecting their religion and changing not their customs and traditions" was carried out by Chinese governments in principle. This policy, applying towards all ethnic groups and their faiths, equally covers Jews and Judaism. Accordingly, the dynasties or the governments have instituted lenient policies towards the Jews, permitting them to live within the country and to practice normal religious activities, including erecting synagogues.

That policy was well reflected in the case of Kaifeng Jews. The Kaifeng Jewish stele records that the Song dynasty emperor gave permission for Jews to live in the then capital of China and to follow their own traditions and customs.²

Grants of land by officials of different dynasties for the building or rebuilding of the synagogue further illustrate the respect of the Chinese towards Jews and Judaism. There is a presumption that in 1163 special permission was requested and granted to construct a unique building for the synagogue in Kaifeng. Presumably, the same kind of permission was requested and granted each time the synagogue was destroyed, either by fire or by flood. The reconstruction of the synagogue in 1421 was under the direct sponsorship of the prince of Zhou, who was the younger brother of Ming emperor Chen Zu. The Imperial Cash Office subsidized the project. The 1489 inscription records confirm this.

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SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	238
China	16
Israel	12
Canada	8
England	8
Hong Kong	5
Japan	5
Australia	4
Switzerland	2
France	1
Germany	1
Indonesia	1
Italy	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
TOTAL:	304

FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to *Points East*, volume 19! Leading off this new volume is a fine essay by Xu Xin on Chinese governmental attitudes towards Jews and Judaism in China. Once again, he has managed, through access to materials unavailable to others (at least outside of China), to break new ground on the subject of the Kaifeng Jews, shedding light on Communist policy and practice of the past half-century or so. Yasher koach, Xu Xin!

I have only one quibble with his presentation of recent history. The ambiguous Communist policy on the Kaifeng Jews and on their contact with foreign Jews led to their having a period of prolonged isolation, roughly from the time of Pokora's and Goldman's visits in 1957 to those of Mosby and others in the 1980s. From the time that I lived in China in 1973-74, and for about the next decade, Kaifeng was a closed city to foreigners and the continued existence of the Kaifeng Jews was denied. Later, for those eventually able to get there, visits were restricted to a few approved individuals and monitored by local party officials. This history, minor though it may be in the long-term, is glossed over by Xu Xin as his survey winds down to the present and happier times.

And, as we observe the Chinese New Year, let us note and be thankful that the situation in China has improved so markedly from the days of the Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four. Here is to: "Long live good relations and cooperative work between the Chinese and Jewish peoples"—sounds good enough to be on a "big character poster" (*da zi bao*) of old.

Anson Laytner

Correction ~

Vol. 18, No. 3, Nov. 2003 *Points East* Book Nook (Last paragraph, starting on page 11 to page 12)

Title: *Shanghai Youtai jishibao yanjiu*
"The social role and historical significance of the SJC is that it served as 1) a concentrated incarnation of nationality in the Jewish segregated area and a banner of national rejuvenation; 2) a mass media representative for autonomy of the refugees in the segregated area; 3) a window for people in the Jewish segregated area to know about world information; 4) a major component of the economic life in the segregated area; and 5) a monument expressing and recording the strong surviving confidence and will of the Jewish people to survive."

Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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BOOK NOOK

Maisie J. Meyer. *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Jewish Life in Shanghai*. Lanham, Maryland, New York and Oxford: University Press of America, 2003. xviii, 331 pp. Paperback \$68.00, ISBN 0-7618-2489-8. reviewed by Jonathan Goldstein reprinted from China Review International with permission.

Maisie J. Meyer and University Press of America are to be congratulated for bringing out a new book on the Baghdadi Jewish community of Shanghai which provides an overall history of the community from its founding in the mid-nineteenth century until its dissolution after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949. The book's particular strength is that it deals head-on with three controversial issues: the question of whether Baghdadis should be classified as Sephardim [Hebrew: "Spaniards"], technically Jews who left the Iberian peninsula in 1492/3 and retained medieval Spanish or Portuguese as their household tongue in varied places of exile; the role of Jews in the importation of Indian opium, a severely debilitating narcotic drug, into China; and the hotly-debated question of whether Shanghai's Baghdadis "did enough" to help the German and Austrian refugees from Hitler who poured into Shanghai beginning in 1938.

Meyer states that the ancestors of most Baghdadi Jews did not transit through the Iberian peninsula and that their household language was Judeo-Arabic, not Spanish or Portuguese. She cites a history of unbroken Jewish residence in Mesopotamia as far back as 598 B.C. "when Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, conquered the kingdom of Judah and transported Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon." [pp. 29-30] She points out that when the Spanish consul in Shanghai published Spanish King Alfonso XIII's decree of December 1924 permitting Sephardi Jews to become Spanish subjects once again, only four Shanghai Baghdadi Jews with their families, out of a population of nearly 1,000, claimed such lineage and took advantage of this protection. She notes that David Sassoon was erroneously referred to as a descendant of the Ibn Shoshan family, which emigrated from Toledo to Baghdad in the twelfth century. [p.37]. As

the title of her book suggests, she nevertheless categorizes the Shanghai Baghdadi community as Sephardi, arguing that they shared some theological similarities, and a variety of Hebrew pronunciation, with the Jews of medieval Iberia. She also argues that usage determines correctness, noting that the term Sephardi has become a widespread if inaccurate description of Baghdadis and many other Oriental Jewish communities. On this point Meyer differs from Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah of Calcutta/Philadelphia as well as this author, who continue to see the terms "Baghdadi" and "Babylonian" as more accurate references for Jews who emanated from Mesopotamia/Iraq.

With respect to the opium question, the late John K. Fairbank maintained in his book *China Watch* [1987] that "the opium trade from India to China was the longest-continued systematic international crime of modern times." While vast fortunes were made in that trade in the nineteenth century, including the bases of the first four million dollar American fortunes [of John Jacob Astor, Elias Hasket Derby, Stephen Girard, and Joseph Peabody], there always was a small minority of China traders who vigorously denounced it. William Wood and Peter Dobell described the commerce as "pernicious." Nathan Dunn called it "illicit" and refrained from the business on moral grounds. [See my *Philadelphia and the China Trade* (1978), pp. 50-51]. Most vocal among the abstainers was New York's D. W. C. Olyphant, who characterized the opium trade as "an evil of the deepest dye" and was nicknamed "holy Joe" by the pushers. In a classic defense of a dishonorable profession, John Murray Forbes, of Russell and Co., wrote of Olyphant: "Protect me from all the halloving influence of holy Joe—his ships are commanded by J-C—officered by Angels & manned by Saints...Happy thrice happy is the ship even consigned to them." [Forbes to Augustine Heard, August 28, 1832, Heard Papers, Harvard Business School, Boston, Mass.] Opium merchant and U.S. Guangzhou Consul Benjamin Wilcocks castigated a ship captain who refused an offer of employment with the words "When a Captain stipulates for the particular articles which he will take on my ship, why let him go you know where for a cargo." [Wilcocks to John Latimer,

April 26, 1829, Latimer Papers, Library of Congress].

Intense contemporaneous criticism forced the moral issue on opium dealers. They could not plead ignorance about the drug's baneful character. Indeed, participation in the opium business was arguably the central moral issue facing American, British, and other foreigners trading in South China between 1784 and 1844. It remained a major issue of conscience for decades thereafter. Some scholars have found major diplomatic, not to mention sociological, consequences of mercantile participation in the opium trade, notably Jacques M. Downs in *The Golden Ghetto: The American Community at Canton and the Shaping of American China Policy* [1997] and the aforementioned John Fairbank. On the other hand, it is unclear, from two recent studies by Thomas N. Layton, if the author is even aware of the heated contemporaneous debate about the propriety of the trade [Voyage of the 'Frolic': *New England Merchants and the Opium Trade* (1997) and *Gifts from the Celestial Kingdom: A Shipwrecked Cargo for God Rush California* (2002)].

Meyer's study of Baghdadi Jewish merchants who made the basis of their fortunes in the opium trade is welcome in that she confronts the moral issue head-on and advances the discourse pioneered by Fairbank and Downs. She builds on the scholarship of Joan Roland, Chiara Betta, Stanley Jackson, and others to delineate the Baghdadis' involvement in the exportation of Indian opium to China, beginning with David Sassoon's arrival in Bombay in 1833. Sassoon's second son Elias opened branches of the family firm in Guangzhou in 1844 and in Hong Kong and Shanghai in 1845. Meyer delineates how other Baghdadi families followed the Sassoon example and, from a base in Shanghai, won fortunes in the trade: Abraham, Benjamin, Elias, Ezra, Hardoon, Kadoorie, Raphael, Silas, Solomon, and Toeg. According to Meyer, these merchants "justified and continued this business despite growing adverse public opinion" from the time of the legalization of the trade in 1858 up through the Sino-British Ten Years Agreement of 1907, which provided for the gradual prohibition of imported opium by 1917 [pp. 58, 67]. Meyer concludes that "there is no

There was also a Japanese Yiddishist. One day, the Rabbi heard a knock at his door, and when he opened it, a young Japanese standing outside said uncertainly: "Ihr redt Yiddish?" The Rabbi replied in the affirmative, upon which the Japanese started to cry and told his story. The visitor said that when he was a student he had considered studying Greek, Aramaic, or Hebrew only to find the fields already overcrowded. Finally he hit upon the idea of learning Yiddish. There was no place in Japan that specialized in Yiddish, so he ordered books and records from the United States and studied intensively by himself. Until he knocked on the Rabbi's door, he had, in fact, never spoken to anybody in Yiddish! For months thereafter, he visited the Rabbi to speak Yiddish with him and often one could hear duets such as "Oif dem pripitchik" or "A Yiddishe Mame" emanating from the Rabbi's home.

A distinguished Japanese Jew was Avraham Kosuji, who went from Buddhism to Christianity to Judaism. Kosuji became interested in Judaism while posted in Shanghai with the Japanese Army during World War II. He had tried to help the Shanghai Jewish Community in his capacity as a high-ranking official. After the War, Kosuji converted to Judaism and forged a close relationship with the Tokyo Jewish Community. When he died, he was buried with honors in Jerusalem on Har HaZeitim (Mount of Olives). President Chaim Herzog attended his funeral.

Unlike many other major cities around the world, Tokyo had really only two identifiable Jewish landmarks: the Jewish Community Center and the Israeli Consulate. Later an Embassy was opened. Thus the Jewish Community Center became the focus of Jewish life in the capital. Throughout my years in Japan, I had the opportunity to meet Japanese who were Yiddishists, Japanese converts or would-be converts to Judaism, members of the early Israeli Government - Dayan, Dagan, Sapir, Golda Meyer, Weiszman, Herzog. Rav Goren, then Chaplain of the Israeli Defense Army, also visited, as well as great musicians among whom were Barenboim, Stern, Perlman, opera singers (former cantors) like Richard Tucker and Jan Pierce, Israeli singer Shoshana Damari, movie actors like Edward G. Robinson - who asked for a *minyán* because it was his father's *yarzeit*, artists like Mane Katz and politicians like Kissinger and Ed Koch, Mayor of New York.

Whatever you may have read or heard, there are no great masses of Japanese Jews. There are several fundamentalist Christian sects well versed in the Old Testament, who are very friendly to Jews and Israel. They often visit Israel, study there and speak Hebrew. Some occasionally wear *kippot*, but they do not claim to be Jewish, nor do they want to be. A big sect is the Makuyas. They visit the Jewish Community Center in Tokyo quite regularly. You can be sure to see them on Simchat Torah when they come to Shul with their own (kosher) Sefer Torah and dance and sing as much as anyone else.

From Kaifeng to Toronto via ROM

by Sheldon Kirshner
excerpted from the *Canadian Jewish News*, 29/01/04

The rare artifacts of an exotic and extinct Jewish community in Kaifeng, China, are scattered far and wide in museums and universities around the world. "All that's left of this community are these objects," said Sara Irwin, the Far Eastern collection manager at the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM) in Toronto.

The ROM has 11 of these prized Chinese Jewish artifacts, which range from a striking lacquered Torah case to a weathered limestone bowl. The remaining items can be found at such far-flung institutions as the Municipal Museum in Kaifeng, Oxford University in Britain, Hebrew Union College, and the New York Public Library in the United States.

The ROM's Chinese Jewish collection - the only one of its kind in Canada - is expected to be showcased at its Asian galleries when they reopen next December. Currently, the artifacts are in storage during the museum's major renovation project. "There is hope that some of the artifacts will be displayed again," Irwin said. "We'll try our level best to have a representation of Kaifeng Jews at the museum."

Bought by Bishop William Charles White, a Canadian Anglican missionary who lived in China from 1897 to 1934 and who died in 1960, they were originally housed in Kaifeng's only synagogue...ROM acquired the artifacts between 1920 and 1931, long after Bishop White purchased them. "This was not tomb robbery," observed Irwin. "These were all commercial transactions,

bought and paid for with money." The Jews who sold the artifacts were impoverished, much like China itself during this turbulent era of war, floods and famine.

Bishop White, who had a deep interest in China's history and culture, never forgot his encounters with the Jews of Kaifeng. He wrote a book about them, and in 1942, the University of Toronto published *Chinese Jews*, now out of print. The ROM's collection of Chinese Jewish artifacts is eclectic. It includes:

- Ink rubbings of a 15th century stone stele [which] commemorate the rebuilding of the synagogue in 1489. The actual stele, which once stood in the courtyard of the synagogue, is in China's possession. According to Irwin, the inscription on the stele is the earliest evidence that the Kaifeng community - "discovered" by the Jesuits in the 17th century - actually existed.

- Gray limestone bowls and a drain mouth, decorated with lotus leaf reliefs, which were used in ceremonial hand-washing. Sandstone basins, with relief figures of vines and lotus flowers, also for hand-washing.

- A black, cloud-shaped slate chime stone, inscribed with four Chinese characters meaning "Jade chime stone of spiritual brightness," which was rung to summon people to prayer.

- A Ming dynasty-era wooden Torah case that is covered with a fine fabric, coated with a few layers of what is now a reddish-brown lacquer, and is gilded.

- Three leaves from the Book of Genesis and a leaf from a new year's prayer, both hand-written in Hebrew on thick Chinese paper.

The ROM displayed these artifacts in a temporary exhibition titled "Precious Legacy" in the early 1980s. During the 1970s, the artifacts were on long-term loan to Toronto's Holy Blossom Temple, and in 1984, they were sent to the Museum of the Diaspora in Tel Aviv.

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For information contact: The Sino-Judaic Institute, 232 Lexington Drive., Menlo Park, CA 94025

With German President Johannes Rau in Hongkew

(continued from page 1)

activities. Accompanied by the Vice Mayor of Shanghai, Mr. Jiang Sixian, President Rau came to the main hall and sat down. Then the leader of Hongkou District made a brief introduction to the new development in Hongkou. After him, I described the story about Jewish refugees in Hongkou. This was formal diplomatic activity, different from the reception of the First Lady, so my introduction was given in Chinese and then translated into German, although President could speak English fluently. Because of limited time, I quickened the speed of my introduction, while the Chief German Interpreter of Chinese, F.M. Dr. Yangrong, translated my words into German. The President and all German VIPs listened attentively to my introduction while frequently nodding their heads.

Due to the time limitation, I could not make more of an introduction. Luckily, my book entitled *Jews in China*, which made detailed description of how Jews sought refuge in Shanghai, had just been translated into German, and I was greatly honored to present my book to the President. On hearing this, President Rau stood up to receive my book, shake my hand, and express his hearty thanks...Later he wrote a moving inscription in the guestbook.

A Conversation in their Car

Next the President went to Huoshan Park located at Huoshan Road to pay his respects to Monument in Memory of Jewish Refugees in Shanghai. The President and First Lady warmly invited me to go with them in their deluxe car. The First Lady said, "we can talk more in the car, because of time shortage today". When our car was passing through the former Jewish settlement along the Zhoushan Road, I told the President that Mr. Michael Blumenthal had lived in No 59. The President replied that "He is a good friend of mine, now he is Director of Jewish Museum in Berlin." [Blumenthal escaped to Shanghai from Berlin with his family when he was 8 years old in 1939, and spent the most arduous years of war in Hongkou, and then migrated to the US. During the Carter Administration, 1977-81, he was Secretary of Finance (1977-79). In 1999, he was named by the German government as Director of the Berlin Jewish Museum.]

The topic of our conversation turned to Berlin Holocaust Museum. President Rau said that there were divergent views over the construction of the Berlin Holocaust Museum but that the majority of German people supported the construction of this Museum, which demonstrated their determination of never forgetting the history. I mentioned to the President that I would be going to Germany to participate an international conference on the Jews of China and the President said he knew about the conference and would send a congratulatory message. As expected, at the opening ceremony of the conference, held at University of Mainz in Gernersheim, the conference chair, Prof. Peter Kupfer, read out the letter of congratulations in which President Rau mentioned his visit to Hongkou and pointed out the significance of research projects on Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

In Front of the Monument

When our car arrived at the Huoshan Park, I accompanied President Rau to the Monument for Jewish Refugees in Shanghai and gave a brief introduction of the history of the ghetto... noting that Huoshan Park was located in the heart of this "Designated Area for Stateless Refugees". In April 1994, in order to commemorate this unforgettable history, the Shanghai Municipal Government and Hongkou District Government built this monument. On hearing my remarks, the President's face wore a solemn and respectful expression. He stated that we must never forget the Nazis' crimes, marched forward two steps, and stood very straight in front of the Monument for two minutes.

Taking History as a Mirror

After the tour, President Rau and the First Lady were full of zest to meet with the masses outside of the Huoshan Park. While shaking hands with them, President Rau shouted "Thank you! Thank you!" In my opinion, he not only was thanking them for the enthusiastic welcome to the German guests extended by Hongkou people, but also for the great assistance given by them to the Central European Jewish refugees during wartime.

This reminded me of an inscription written by German Chancellor Gerhard Schroder when I had the honor of escorting him for his visit to Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Shanghai in November 1999. He wrote in the distinguished visitor's book:

"A poet once wrote 'death is an envoy coming from Germany'. We know that many persecutees found a haven in Shanghai. We never forget this history. Today, we are here to show our appreciation and praise to those who provided every possible relief for the persecutees." Now, President Rau again showed clearly to the whole world with his own behavior that German people will imprint these historical lessons in their minds from generation to generation, like Chinese always say: "taking history as a mirror."

Chinese Policy Towards Judaism

(continued from page 1)

In 1461, a flood destroyed the synagogue completely except for its foundation. After the floodwaters subsided, the Jews of Kaifeng, headed by Ai Qin, petitioned the provincial commissioner, requesting a decree confirming the right of the community to rebuild the demolished synagogue on the original site of the ancient one. The permission was soon granted, and Kaifeng Jewry was able to reconstruct the house of worship, which was dedicated in 1489.

The best expression of that policy is perhaps a horizontal, inscribed plaque granted by a Qing emperor, as well as vertical plaques and scrolls with couplets given them by local officials for the dedication of the newly completed synagogue that replaced the one destroyed in the Yellow River flood of 1642.³

The local government once enacted a regulation that "strangers and carriers of pork cannot pass near the synagogue."⁴ This shows that the Jews of Kaifeng had absolute freedom of religion and that their customs were respected. No equivalent period in the entire history of the other historical Diasporas show Jews enjoying similar respect.

In the Republican period (1912-1949), the fact that a large number of Jews (more than 40,000 in total) from Europe arrived and lived in China indirectly proved that Chinese authorities carried out a very positive policy towards Jews and their religion. Jews received permission to stay, to establish organizations, and to build synagogues. The Chinese government issued a number of statements to endorse Zionism, which should be viewed as Chinese policy

towards Jews, as Judaism and Zionism are directly related. For instance, in 1920, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the founding father of the Republic of China, wrote a letter to N.E.B. Ezra, then secretary of the Shanghai Zionist Association, to express his support for the Jewish national cause. His letter says: "I have read your letter and copy of Israel's Messenger with much interest and wish to assure you of my sympathy for this movement which is one of the greatest movements of the present time. All lovers of democracy cannot help but support the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation which has contributed so much to the civilization of the world and which rightly deserves an honorable place in the family of nations."⁵

During World War II, the Chinese government was particularly sympathetic to the plight of Jews in Europe and took an action to assist them by proposing a plan to set up a settlement in Southwest China to replace those who were suffering in German occupied countries in Europe in 1939. According to the plan, the Chinese government would offer Jewish refugees the same rights of residence, work and governmental protection as Chinese citizens.

The plan was proposed after a series of 1938 events spurred the victimization of helpless Jews: the annexation of Austria to the Reich in March, the fruitless Evian Conference on Jewish Refugees in July, Crystal Night in November, and the attempt on the life of Secretary of the Legation von Rath in Paris, which resulted in massive persecution on German Jews, unleashing furies raged without bounds and restraint all over Germany and Austria.⁶

Although the program was never implemented, due to the complicated situation of WWII, the very idea shows that Chinese were sympathetic to the Jewish situation and tried to assist in time of need.

Under the Communist Rule

After the Communists took over power of the country in 1949, the Chinese government, especially the local governments of the cities where Jews lived, instituted a very liberal policy toward the Jewish religion, permitting the Jews to maintain their synagogues and to carry on their regular activities. The Jewish religion was recognized at that time by the government as one of the approved religions in such cities as Shanghai, Tianjin, and Harbin. For

instance, the Shanghai New Synagogue remained open, and Jewish rituals were continuously observed until it was closed in 1956 because the number of Jews had decreased. The Harbin Synagogue remained open until mid-1960s. Facts prove that Judaism practiced by those alien Jews before their departure was well respected by the Communist government though it was not on the list of officially recognized religions in contemporary China.

While there were almost no alien Jews living in China from mid-1960s to the end of 1970s, and the formal practice of Judaism ceased, the relationship does not end here. China, which underwent dramatic changes since 1979, thanks to her reform and "Open Door Policy," sought foreign investments and to establish ties with the rest of the World, especially with the Western countries. This revived the Jewish presence in China. Nowadays a significant number of Jews live in cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. With more and more Jews arriving to work, invest, study, and live in China, the practice of Judaism once again becomes visible in Chinese society.

For instance, in 1980s, Jews who came to Beijing from North America to pursue careers in business, journalism, diplomacy, or for academic study, started to celebrate Jewish holidays such as Passover. Twenty-five Jews showed up at the Seder of 1980. In the 1990's, the Beijing Jewish Community took shape as more Jews live, work, or study there. In 1995, Friday night services began to be held regularly every week at the Capital Club of Beijing. Sabbath prayer books and a Sefer Torah were donated to the community, which enabled them to celebrate all major holidays. On both the High Holy Days and the Passover Seder, the community can expect to have 200 present to share the joyous occasions. Other important landmarks for the community include its first *bar mitzvah* in 1996 and its first *b'rit millah* in 1997. This community is headed by Roberta Lipson and Elyse Silverberg, two Jewish businesswomen, and is affiliated with the Progressive movement of Judaism.

In 2001, a new development took place in the practice of Judaism in Beijing. Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, from the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, came and settled in the city. His mission is to build and lead the center of Chabad-Lubavitch of Beijing, an Orthodox (Chasidic) congregation.

Jews also began to return to Shanghai in the 1980's, attracted by China's open-door policy. As Shanghai became more and more cosmopolitan, Jewish presence in the city became more visible. In the mid-1990s, they organized and established the contemporary Shanghai Jewish Community. Shortly after, in August 1998, Rabbi Shalom Greenberg from Chabad-Lubavitch in New York arrived in Shanghai to serve this community. His commitment has infused new life into the growing Jewish community. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, President of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation from New York, donated a Sefer Torah to the community in 1998. Now the size of the community reaches a few hundred. Regular Shabbat services and kosher meals have been implemented in Shanghai. Jewish education also started. Child and adult education classes, bar and bat mitzvah training and social brunches are conducted. On the first day of Rosh Hashanah, in September 1999, a Jewish New Year service was held at the Ohel Rachel Synagogue for the first time since 1952 when the synagogue was closed. It is highly possible that the Ohel Rachel Synagogue may become a permanent house of worship for the Jews in Shanghai in the near future.

The Jewish experience in China merits its good reputation because China never persecuted them. The Chinese government realized that it is highly necessary to create a positive cultural environment for those foreigners if China wants to keep and attract them. This kind of cultural environment includes respect for religion.

Special consideration and respect have consistently been shown to Jewish religious requirements by the authorities. In 1993, to mark the historic visit of Israeli President Chaim Herzog to China after China and Israel established full diplomatic relations, the Shanghai government turned the original building of the Ohel Moses Synagogue (which had been used by Jewish refugees during World War II) into a museum. It is now open and receives visitors by the thousands annually.

In 1998, the Shanghai government spent over \$60,000 to restore the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, which was first constructed in 1920, as a historic site. Permission to use the building for Jewish holiday celebrations is frequently granted.

Reminiscences of Jewish Life in Tokyo

by Bernard Valier-Grossman

[In Tokyo, in 1953, we were a small group of Jewish young people all aged under 30, who met regularly on Friday nights and Jewish holydays at the home of Lombie and Max Landau. Our hosts were hospitable religious Jews, at whose house in Gotanda we spent many happy hours. The youngest among us, Bernie Valier, was in his early 20's. Valier was born in Paris in 1932. From 1940-45, during the Nazi domination, he travelled with his mother and sister from one place to another in France. In 1940, his father was arrested by the French on behalf of the Germans, sent to a camp in France for over a year, and finally transported to Auschwitz, where he perished in 1942.]

After the War, in 1951, Valier emigrated to Canada with his sister and mother. At the end of 1953, he was transferred to Tokyo by a firm dealing in metals, in the capacity of Assistant Manager. There, Valier soon became an active member of the Jewish Community Center, and in later years was for some time Vice President of Religious Affairs. Eventually, he opened his own office in Tokyo, moved to London and for the following 40 years alternated between running his business in Tokyo and living in Montreal, London and Johannesburg. For the past 20 years, Valier has resided in London, but still visits Tokyo from time to time. He has just returned from there after participating in the Jewish Community's 50th Anniversary Celebration of its post-World War II re-establishment.

This is a special article he kindly prepared for Points East, upon my request. (Rena Krasno)]

When I was just 21 years old in 1953, my employers at an international trading company in Montreal, asked me if I would be prepared to go for 6 months to their Tokyo branch, to assist the very busy Canadian branch Manager.

I knew very little about Japan, but having found out that Tokyo had a Jewish Community, I blindly agreed to the deal. My flight by DC4 took over 24 hours. In Tokyo, I was lodged at the Marunouchi Hotel, one of the very few pre-war buildings

left standing after intensive American bombardment. My room was on the 8th floor and, that very first night, one of the strongest earthquakes in decades rattled the city. The hotel shook so hard that I fell out of bed.

In spite of this inauspicious beginning, fortunately for me, the manager of the Tokyo branch, and the boss of my company did a good job at persuading me to stay. The 6 months developed, over a 40-year period, into a total residence in Japan of 17 years.

The Jewish Community was actually miles away from the hotel but, before the first Shabbat, I found out that 'civilians' like me were welcome at a U.S. military camp located at only a 15-20 minutes' walk from my hotel. Good news for me, since I don't ride on Shabbat.

So come Friday afternoon, I left the hotel in good time and arrived early at the camp. I stated my business at the gate and was directed to a 'Quonset' hut, where the services were to take place. There, to my surprise and shock I saw standing on a kind of altar/bimah...a large cross! I beat a hasty retreat, convinced that I had misunderstood the directions, only to bump at the entrance into the Jewish Chaplain. Pointing at the cross and with disbelief in my voice, I queried: "Is THIS the Synagogue?" He did not reply, but simply motioned me to follow him. He then pressed on a switch on the wall and, to my amazement, the cross slowly sank into the altar and a Magen David rose out of it! The Quonset hut was a multi-denominational prayer hall.

Within a few weeks, I moved to a room closer to the newly re-established civilian Jewish Community. Its Board and most of its members consisted, at the time, of Russian Jews. The seniors were "White Russians" who had fled the "Red" Revolution, while most of the younger people had been born in China. After the Communist regime took over China, they fled once again and a number settled in Japan, where they could live a life closest to what they had known in China. Only a few were Orthodox Jews, but they all had 'Jewish souls' and a strong sense of responsibility to their community.

The need for a Jewish Community Center became acute and by March 1953, a large Center was established with a *mikvah*

(ritual bath), a small kosher kitchen (and a large *treif* (non-kosher) one!), and Sunday school for children. Services were held only on Friday night and Shabbat, on holy days, or upon request for a *yahrzeit* (anniversary of death) or a special occasion. At first, U.S. Army Chaplains served as spiritual leaders, but later rabbis were 'imported' from America, Israel or England. At the time, there were many shortages in Tokyo, few places to go to, and the Jewish Community Center played a very important social role, a place where Jews met for Sunday brunch, birthday celebrations, Hanukah Balls, Purim Balls as well as matzo balls!

My first Pesach, however, was a tough one. I had joined the Communal Seder, been invited to a private one the second night, but for the rest of the holiday, I basically ate *matzot* and bananas, not having any facilities in my room, no Pesach dishes nor supplies.

Many of the old-timers were fascinating characters. Old Mr. Dorfman had been a fur trader in his youth. He lived in Ulan Bator (Outer Mongolia) and travelled all week throughout the countryside, "But on Shabbat I always came back to Ulan Bator to the kosher boarding house where I lived for years".

Old Mr. Dinaburg had been for decades the head of the catering department of the Trans-Siberian Railway and used to travel up and down from Moscow to Vladivostok inspecting the "Buffet" at the various stops.

Old Mr. Kurliansky had lived in Japan since 1907. He had been a cabin boy in the Imperial Russian Navy, was torpedoed by the Japanese during the Russo-Japanese War, taken prisoner and, when he was finally released, decided to remain in Japan. He became a wheelwright and, in order to store his wheels and carts, bought a large piece of land in Yokohama. Fifty years later, this became prime property worth millions.

Non-Jewish visitors were also welcome. Once I was present at a Seder when Emperor Hirohito's brother - who was interested in Judaism - was a guest and asked 'Ma Nishtana?' in Hebrew. The Israeli Consul, Mr. Linton, replied in excellent Japanese! It must be remembered that there was no Israeli Embassy at the time in Japan.

common area of inhabitation. They have completely mixed and mingled with the majority Han population, in terms of their political, economical and cultural life, neither do they possess any distinctive traits in any other aspect. All this indicates that it is not an issue to treat them as one distinctive ethnic group, as they are not a Jewish nation in themselves.

Secondly, aside from the Kaifeng Jewry, there is stateless Jewish population in Shanghai. Jewish presence in some other large and mid-sized cities are also possible, however scarce it might be. It is an intricate issue. It could cause other problems and put us in a passive position politically if we acknowledge the Jews of Kaifeng. Therefore, your request of acknowledging Kaifeng Jewry as a separate nationality is improper based solely on the historical archival evidence you found. You have only seen the minor inessential differences between the Kaifeng Jews and their Han counterpart, and fail to see their commonality and the fact that they're essentially the same. (The publication found in *People's Daily* during National Day celebration time last year regarding "a Jewish nationality" was provided by the Central Ethnic Affairs Committee.) Kaifeng Jewry should be treated as a part of the Han Nationality.

The major issue is that we should take the initiative to be more caring to them in various activities, and educate the local Han population not to discriminate against or insult them. This will help gradually ease away the differences they might psychologically or emotionally feel exists between them and the Han.

The United Front of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China June 8, 1953

¹ There exist a few documents in Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) referring Mongols' policy towards Jews. For details, please refer to Donald D. Leslie, *The Survival of the Chinese Jews*, E. J. Brill, 1972, pp. 11-16.

² The 1489 stele records "the three-points covenants" made by Chinese emperor with the Kaifeng Jews: "Become part of Chinese, honor and preserve the customs of your ancestors, and remain and hand them down in Kaifeng."

³ To read the full text of it, please refer to William C. White, *Chinese Jews*, pt. II.

⁴ White, *Chinese Jews*, pt. I, p.80.

⁵ Sun Yat-Sen, "To N.E.B. Ezra," *The Collected Works of Sun Yat-Sen*, Zhonghua Shujia Publishing House, 1985, Vol. 5, pp. 256-57.

⁶ "Chungking National Government Programme for the Placement on the Jews in China," *Republican Archives*, No. 3, 1993, pp. 17-21. Also refer to Xu Xin, "Sun Fo's Plan to Establish A Jewish Settlement in China During World War II Revealed," *Points East*, March, 2001, Vol. 16, No. 1, p. 1, pp.7-8.

⁷ It is believed that the highest number of the Kaifeng Jewish community is about 5,000 before the Yellow River flood of 1642. The population dropped down to 1,000 or less in the 19th century at most.

⁸ Traditionally speaking, Chinese use the word "minority" to refer to all other non-Han ethnic groups as they are all small in number to compare with the majority—Han people. In fact, the word "Chinese" refers to "Han" originally. Another word which is very much used is "nationality" to refer which ethnic group one belong to.

⁹ The other two are "Implementing Programme for Regional National Autonomy" and "Resolution on Measures of Setting Up Local national Democratic United Government."

¹⁰ "Questions and Answers about China's National Minorities," *New World Press*, 1985, p.144.

¹¹ A power mechanism in Central China set up by the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The whole country was then divided into several regions to be governed by the bureau that was higher in political structure in China than provincial government.

¹² The number rose to 55 in 1960s and the standard number is 56 now.

¹³ "People's Daily," Oct. 17, 1952, p.1.

¹⁴ An office set up by the Chinese government in charge of affairs of multi-party and multi-ethnic groups in general.

¹⁵ That telegraph is not available to this author but we could figure out the main point from the reply document, which repeats the request. The date of the telegraph is April 3, 1953.

¹⁶ Obviously, this refers to Jewish refugees from Central Europe and still stayed in Shanghai though the majority had left after World War II.

¹⁷ It should be pointed out that not every word, especially those corrections, is legible as far as the copy I have is concerned.

¹⁸ Michael Pollak, *Mandarins, Jews, and Missionaries*, pp. 248-49.

¹⁹ Michael Pollak, *Mandarins, Jews, and Missionaries*, p. xiv.

²⁰ This document is not available to this author but its purpose was repeated in the reply.

²¹ The document is entitled as "Reply for the Issue on the Kaifeng Jews" and is marked as

No. (2) 401.

²² Pollak lists a number of such visits. For details, please refer to *Mandarins, Jews, and Missionaries*, p. xix.

Jerold Gotel Lectures at Henan University, Kaifeng

by Dr. Zhang Qianhong

Between 5th and 7th November 2003, Mr. Jerold Gotel, Director of Overseas Projects and Senior Lecturer in Jewish History at the London Jewish Cultural Centre, gave three lectures, two concerning the Holocaust and the third on Judaism, at Henan University, Kaifeng, China.

In his first two lectures, Mr. Gotel described the war against the Jews and the various factors that led to the Holocaust. He also looked at the historiography of the Holocaust. In his lecture on Judaism and Jewish life, he examined the relationship between Jewish religion and culture. More than 700 students attended these excellent lectures, and there were many questions and interesting discussions.

The series of lectures was organized by Dr. Zhang Qianhong, Director of the Institute of Jewish Studies at Henan University. The Institute was founded in 2001 to promote the study of Judaism in China. As the honorary professor of the Institute, Mr. Jerold Gotel donated nearly 500 English books on Jewish topics to the Shalom Library, which was set up at the Institute with the help of many overseas friends and organisations.

KOSHER SHOMER SHABBAT TOUR JUNE 2004

A Kosher Shomer Shabbat Tour of Beijing, Xi'an, Shanghai, Suzhou and Hong Kong is scheduled for a group of 6 travelers from June 20 through July 4th with a Hong Kong extension to July 8th following. This group is open to additional travelers up to a maximum of twenty. Absolute reservation deadline is April 20th, but we need to hear from you as soon as possible if you desire to join this group, as the price will drop to a lower category with just 4 more travelers. Glatt kosher meals provided by Chabad of China and JCC of Hong Kong. See the itinerary and details at <http://www.joyfulnoise.net/JoyChina213.html>

Many buildings that relate to the Jewish life still exist in Shanghai. The political implications of choosing and renovating original synagogues are very clear: the Chinese government understands that having sites for religious services is the core part of Jewish life.

In Harbin, the Jewish cemetery with 876 graves—the best-preserved Jewish cemetery in Mainland China—is well taken care of by Chinese authorities. In fall of 1996, at the expense of the Chinese government, a new fence and gate were completed to better protect the cemetery. Now the city government is taking additional steps to preserve the heritage handed down by the Harbin Jewish community since it began at the end of the 19th century.

Though foreign priests are not allowed to conduct religious services in China by Chinese law in general, permission has been granted to those Chabad-Lubavitch rabbis to conduct the practice of Judaism in China as Chinese government understands the uniqueness of Judaism. This move can well be viewed as the respect for Judaism and the Jewish people, and may also exist because the Jews do not seek converts.

Issue of the Kaifeng Jews since 1950

When we discuss Chinese policy towards Judaism, the issue most people are concerned about and interested in, yet the most puzzling and complicated, seems to be related to the Kaifeng Jews. History shows that these Jews, arriving 1,000 years ago, always lived according to their own way and at their own wishes, either as observant or as assimilated Jews. Although the relations between the Kaifeng Jewry and Chinese governments were good, as we discussed earlier, we have not found any policy specifically directed at them. Nobody interfered with them and no specific policy was implemented for a long time as they were so small in number when set against the vast number of Chinese and could easily be completely overlooked.⁷ Why, then, did things change during the last 50 years?

Moreover, the Chinese government took a very liberal policy towards Judaism as non-Chinese Jews practice it. Why did a different policy seem to exist towards Kaifeng Jews, their identity, and their religious activities during the last 50 years? Why did the government pay so much at-

tention to them? A few available documents now seem to shed some light on the issue.

Over time, Jews in Kaifeng did not lose their sense of identity even when their community ceased to formally exist. Today, they are not much distinctive in customs and traditions from other Chinese. While not practicing traditional rites, they still remember their ancestry and insist on their Jewish roots when talking about their identity. For instance, during the 1952 census conducted by the government, many classified themselves as "Jew" when filling the census forms. As a result, their residence registration booklet and ID card (issued in 1980s) marked them as "Jew" in the catalog of nationality. The government, at least at the local level, accepted their claim and never challenged their Jewish identity when they recorded it.

The situation started to change and identity became an issue because of political considerations rather than anything else after the 1952 census. A good intention developed into an unexpected problem.

After getting rid of most of the Kuomintang's remaining forces and with the end of the Korean War, the Chinese government started to pay more attention to the stability of the country and the unity of all ethnic groups within Chinese territory⁸. In August 1952, the Central government of China issued three related resolutions to strengthen this unity by establishing autonomies and protecting the equal rights of all ethnic groups. One of these was the "Resolution on Ensuring That All Minority Groups That Live in China Enjoy Equal National Rights."⁹ The spirit of the resolution is to ensure that all minorities with the requisites for exercising regional national autonomy, irrespective of the size of their populations, are permitted to establish their own autonomous areas and that in the case of those small nationalities lacking the requisites for establishing autonomous areas or living in mixed communities or in a scattered state across the country, they enjoy national equality all the same. According to the resolution, any small (referring population) nationalities are given representation at the National People's Congress, each having at least one deputy.

In order to fulfill this goal, the Chinese government undertook the task of ethnic

identification, as there had existed no document to determine and clarify which were individual nationalities and which were areas inhabited by a given nationality. Until all of this was clarified, it would be very difficult to ensure the rights of minorities involved in political equality by being given fair representation in the Chinese political structure.

Accordingly, the government put forward a set of traits requisite to constitute a separate ethnic group. These included a common language, an area of inhabitation, a unique set of customs, attitudes and beliefs, and traditional means of livelihood.¹⁰ Difficult as it turned out to be, the government organized special investigation groups made up of ethnologists, linguists, historians, and other specialists to assist the local government concerned. Any ethnic group had first to be judged by all those traits before it could be officially recognized. It is because of this set of criterion that the Kaifeng Jews were not qualified for the government recognition.

It might be argued that the Chinese government was doing something impossible: to identify each and every ethnic group by one set of criterion, as there are always exceptions. However, nobody could challenge the government's sincerity and good intentions.

The theme for that year's celebration of National Day, which was one of the biggest events in Chinese political life, was also the unity of all nationalities. Local governments across the country were asked to pick up representatives from each and every ethnic group living in their region and send them to Beijing, the capital of the country, to participate the National Day celebration and to show the whole world that China was giving equal rights to all.

Accordingly, the Bureau of Central South¹¹ and Kaifeng Municipal Government, when making their selection, chose two Jewish descendants in Kaifeng: Ai Fenming, who became a communist and worked in an Air force unit in Kaifeng, and Shi Fenying, who worked in the Foreign Affairs Office of the Henan Province. The reason that those two Jewish descendants were chosen was that the local governments were aware of the existence of Jews in the city and wanted to ensure equal rights for any ethnic group living in their region,

ing Jews. Those two Jewish descendants were introduced as Jews while in Beijing and were well received during the celebration. They participated in all activities for the National Day celebrations including the state banquet hosted by Premier Zhou Enlai on October 16. The People's Daily, the major newspaper run by the Central Committee of the Communist Party, cited Jews as one of 46 ethnic groups¹² that participated the banquet¹³, an indication that the Kaifeng Jews were considered as a separate ethnic group. Seeing this, one may feel that Jews in Kaifeng were lucky in New China. They were honored simply because they were Jews. In fact, the Kaifeng Jews had never before received such an honor, although they had been in China for nearly 1,000 years. As no Jews elsewhere had ever enjoyed the same honor, it seemed that their identity was not a problem at all.

In April 1953, the United Front¹⁴ of the Bureau of Central South sent a policy-seeking telegraph to the Central United Front in Beijing to ask if it was appropriate for them to recognize the Kaifeng Jews as an ethnic group.¹⁵ It is not clear why the issue arose at this time. Was it because of the claim by the Kaifeng Jews or simply because of the requirement of the process the local government took in ethnic identification in the region? However, one thing is clear: it would have been impossible to discuss the issue had there been no such movement of ethnic identification in the country.

In any case, this move actually raised the issue of the political status of the Kaifeng Jews for the first time perhaps in history and led to a far-reaching Chinese policy towards Kaifeng Jews. According to the policy relating to ethnic issues at the time, Kaifeng Jews would have had representation or held a seat in political mechanism of the city as well as in the country automatically had they been recognized as a separate ethnic group. This was obviously a serious matter, and instructions from the Central government were necessary. The Central Unity Front of the Communist Party of China sent an official written reply to the United Front of the Bureau of Central South on June 8, 1953, in a period of two months, which sets the tone for the issue until now and has had a profound impact.

This document, no doubt written in the spirit of ethnic identification, stated that

Jews who are scattered in Kaifeng "have no direct connections economic wise. They don't have a common language of their own and a common area of inhabitation. They have completely mixed and mingled with the majority Han population, in terms of their political, economical and cultural life, neither do they possess any distinctive traits in any other aspect. " Therefore, "it is not an issue to treat them as one distinctive ethnic group, as they are not a Jewish nation in themselves."

However, at the same time, the document admits that this is an intricate issue because aside from Kaifeng there are Jews in other Chinese cities too (it mentions specifically that there are stateless Jews in Shanghai¹⁶). It points out that the move "could cause other problems and put us in a passive position politically." We have no idea what "other problems" might be and why the Chinese government believes that they might be "put in a passive position politically" as nothing specific is mentioned in the document. However, the expression "in a passive position politically" means a very serious issue in political usage in China and it is used here to warn that the local government should do everything possible to avoid that consequence from happening by all means.

The conclusion is that "your request of acknowledging Kaifeng Jewry as a separate nationality is improper. Kaifeng Jewry should be treated as a part of the Han Nationality."

Nevertheless, the document stresses that the importance lies in that "we should take the initiative to be more caring to them in various activities, and educate the local Han population not to discriminate against or insult them. This will help gradually ease away the differences they might psychologically or emotionally feel exists between them and the Han."

The document is hand written with many corrections¹⁷. For instance, originally, the document states that, in order to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding and problems, it is better not to say anything if we recognize them or not, but to keep the above principle in the mind of leaders. However, those words are crossed out before the document was sent out. The document also showed that top Chinese leaders such as Chairman Mao, Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping

read and approved it. It is highly possible that some of corrections were made by one of them. Because of that, it becomes something untouchable. The principle drawn up in it, though strictly dealing with the issue of ethnic identification originally, became the guideline in all issues concerning the Kaifeng Jews in years to come.

Clearly, this document is written strictly in the spirit of the policy set up for ethnic identification. No discrimination against the Kaifeng Jews whatsoever is found in it. It would have been a totally different story had the Kaifeng Jews then lived in the way their ancestry had lived before the 19th century, maintaining an observant Jewish *kehillah*, having a temple of their own, following Jewish calendar and *kashrut*, and using Hebrew prayer—in other words, had they not assimilated.

This policy had no evident direct effect on the everyday life of the Kaifeng Jews though it put an end to the possibility that the Kaifeng Jewry could be acknowledged as a separate ethnic group for good. They lived the same way as before. Interestingly enough, the Chinese government still encouraged some arrangements for foreign people to go to Kaifeng to meet them, which indicated that the government was still thinking that they were "Jews" even after their failure to grant them ethnic status. For instance, Timoteus Pokora, a Czech sinologist, and Rene Goldman, a Canadian, visited Kaifeng Jews in 1957.¹⁸ However, the issue seemed to die down in the following 20 years when China became a more and more isolated society from the rest of the world.

China underwent many changes in her policies both in domestic and international affairs after she adopted the open-door policy in late 1970s. In January 1980, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China arranged that four Canadians, an American journalist by the name of Aline Mosby, and Chinese reporters made a special trip to Kaifeng with a sole goal of meeting Kaifeng Jews for the first time after the Culture Revolution.

What made them undertake such a visit? According to Mosby, she learned on good authority that not all vestiges of Judaism had yet disappeared from Kaifeng. Thus, she made a request to the Chinese government and permission was granted.¹⁹ After the visit, the westerners wrote and published articles about the current situa-

tion of the Kaifeng Jews, which re-raised the issue both internationally and domestically. When the local government learned about it, they predicted that more and more foreigners might visit Kaifeng Jews under this open-door policy, and that they should prepare themselves for this new situation. Therefore, the Unity Front of Henan Province, which was then in charge of such an affairs, raised the issue of the status of the Kaifeng Jews once again by sending a report to the office of the Central Unity Front in March 1980.²⁰ In the report, they asked two fundamental questions: 1) if the Kaifeng Jews should be treated as a minority group, and 2) what points need attention when they deal with the issue of the Kaifeng Jews and what kind of policy should be adopted in foreign affairs related to the Kaifeng Jews.

Why did they do this? Were they unaware of the previous policy? I do not think so. The 1953 document from Beijing should be there. Were they intentionally seeking for a new policy? This is highly possible, especially if we took into consideration the situation in China at the end of 1970's and beginning of 1980's, when people in every line tried to seek new policies in order to make changes. However, no one knows the definite answer.

The Central Unity Front responded to their questions on May 8, 1980.²¹ Obviously, the Central office was not ready for changes. First, the document quotes the policy made in the document of 1953 and says that, according to the information they had, Kaifeng Jews did not seek recognition as a minority people after 1953 and that, except for a few elderly, the majority of Kaifeng Jews did not have that desire. Moreover, most of the young and middle-aged people were indifferent. Therefore, based on this situation, the document says that "we believe, as it was not necessary in the past, it is not necessary now for us to recognize Kaifeng Jewry as an ethnic group. However, when we deal with them, we should give consideration to the customs they still keep, help them to solve possible problems they may have, and more important, do not discriminate against them." The document suggests at the end that "some appropriate arrangements be made for representative figures among them," a typical method to deal with ethnic group or political issues in China.

We do not know the reaction of the local

government. However, an increasing number of people from the West came visited China. Many of them were Jewish and put Kaifeng on their itinerary in hope to meet some of the Kaifeng Jews.²²

As expected, the local authorities in charge of receiving those visitors needed a specific guideline to deal with the new situation. As a result, another document dealing directly with the policy towards the Kaifeng Jews was produced on July 2, 1984. This time, they set up a three points protocol as the guidelines and reported it to the top authorities in Beijing. The document is written by the Foreign Affairs Office of Henan provincial government, the office in charge of those issues. The following is the full text of the three points laid out in the document by the office:

1. Stick to the principle of denying Kaifeng Jewry as an ethnic group of its own. Various periodicals and newspapers should carry objective reports both domestically and internationally. Recognize the fact of historical migration, but put emphasis on the freedom and happiness that they have today. Use the terminology "descendants of Kaifeng Jews" when we address them without implying any country or ethnic group in order to avoid any unnecessary controversy.

Be lenient to foreign scholars and tourists with the request of visiting Kaifeng synagogue relics, stone tablets and meeting with Jewish descendants. The Kaifeng Foreign Affairs Office will be in charge of their visits politically.

2. From the standpoint of historical materialism, we may consider opening the original site of Kaifeng synagogue and stone tablets to the public. Kaifeng municipal museum could keep historical files of Kaifeng Jewry in one of its exhibit rooms for viewing. Related introduction could also be made in books and paintings for publicity abroad and in tourist brochures.

3. Regarding donations made to Kaifeng by Jewish persons from other countries, acceptance could be considered if the donor has no political intentions, and is only doing it out of kindness for renovating historical sites, museums or other welfare purposes. If the donor's purpose is religiously oriented or implying "a Jewish nation," the donation should be turned down with grace.

As we can see here, this document shifts

its emphasis on issues other than ethnic identification though the principle is kept. It puts forward a set of guidelines for tourist issues: what can be done and what can't be done when receiving foreign visitors. From the function of the office that drafted the document, those naturally are their major concerns.

Obviously, the document is highly politically oriented and raises two fundamental issues related to the Kaifeng Jews:

1) Addressing them as "descendants" in order to deny the Kaifeng Jews' connection with the Jewish people and Israel as a Jewish state, because they believed this would be controversial; and

2) Making the Jewish religion taboo and anything related to Judaism not acceptable, even donations.

We have no idea what the response from the top was. However, what was ascertained is that this document provided a guideline for dealing with foreign visitors to the city. Those who are familiar with the Kaifeng issue or who have been to Kaifeng would feel the policy works even now.

For 1,000 years Jews lived and worked—and thrived—in China, but big changes have occurred during the last 50 years. After a hiatus when many Jews left following the end of World War II, the Jewish presence now increases. Western Jews, enjoying the new Open Door Policy, settle in major cities bringing their customs and religious practices. Descendants of the Kaifeng Jews show a renewed interest in their heritage with the arrival of co-religionists as tourists, and new links are being established between them and Israel. On both fronts, all bodes well for a continued, mutually advantageous relationship between our peoples.

Appendix

The full text of the 1953 document

The United Front of the Bureau of Central South:

The telegraph dated Apr 3rd regarding the Kaifeng Jewry is received.

Judging from your telegraph, the Jews scattered in Kaifeng have no direct connections economic wise, they don't have a common language of their own and a