

## 中國-猶太學院

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- 1) To promote friendship and understanding between the Chinese and Jewish peoples and to encourage and develop their cooperation in matters of mutual historical and cultural interest.
- 2) To assist the descendants of the ancient Jewish community of the city of Kaifeng, Henan province, in their efforts to preserve and maintain the artifacts and documents they have inherited from their forebears, as well as in their efforts to reconstruct the history of their community.
- 3) To support the establishment and maintenance of a Judaica section in the Kaifeng Municipal Museum.
- 4) To promote and assist the study and research of the history of early Jewish travel in China and in the rise and fall of the various Jewish communities that were established in China over the past millennia.
- 5) To publish general information and scholarly materials dealing with all aspects of the Chinese-Jewish experience.
- 6) To serve as a briefing and information center for those interested in Sino-Judaica, and for travelers to Kaifeng and other centers of Jewish interest in China.
- 7) To cooperate with other groups whose interests lie in Sinitic and Judaic matters.

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# Points East

## 中國-猶太學院

Vol. 21 No. 2  
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A Publication of the Sino-Judaic Institute

### SHANGHAI REUNION 2006

by Audrey Friedman Marcus

Although I am not a Shanghailander, I made the decision many months ago to attend the 2006 Shanghai Reunion in Shanghai. As the widow of Fred Marcus, a former refugee who spent ten years in Shanghai, I felt drawn both to the site and to the participants. Moreover, I hoped to learn more about my husband's experiences and perhaps meet several persons who had known him. Nevertheless, I went with some degree of trepidation about being somewhat of an outsider. This turned out not to be the case, as I was welcomed in a very warm and friendly manner. Many participants were of the second and third generations of former European refugees in Shanghai, who were eager to learn more about their family history. Two 15-year-old girls were the youngest in attendance, and Dr. Bruno Keith, at 95, was the oldest by quite a few years.

I arrived late in the day on April 25<sup>th</sup> and was taken with other members of our group to the lovely Regent International East Asia Hotel in the former French Concession. Reunion activities began the next morning. We first visited the Center of Jewish Studies Shanghai where we were graciously welcomed by Professor Pan Guang, Dean of CJSS. It was a revelation to learn of the Center's remarkable work and of the rapid changes occurring in Shanghai.

CJSS is one of the oldest and best known Jewish centers in China. Its activities include research, Hebrew classes for both adults and children, publication of books that have been translated into many languages, scholarly lectures by such luminaries as Adin Steinsalz, international seminars on Jews in Shanghai and Jews in Asia, hosting delegations from groups such as the ADL and distinguished visitors such as Lord Lawrence Kadoorie, exhibits on topics including the Holocaust and Israel's social, economic, and political life. There are ambitious future plans for the production of a movie, as well as the teaching of Yiddish.

Dr. Zhang Zhongli, Honorary Dean of CJSS and former president of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, also welcomed us, and spoke in fascinating detail about modern Shanghai. In refugee days, Shanghai was a city of eight million; today there are 17 million residents. Throughout the reunion, we were urged to return to Shanghai in 2010 for the World Exposition.

The next welcome was from Rene Wildorff, president of the Rickshaw Reunion group and one of the organizers of the 2006 reunion. Whenever Shanghai refugees get together, he stated, "we remember our bond with the Chinese people and how we were

### PESACH IN SHANDONG?!

by Efrat Urbach, Jinan, China

[About the author: Efrat Urbach-Schramm was born in Israel to American immigrant parents and grew up in Jerusalem. Her studies at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, in southern Israel, were interrupted by husband Noam's posting to the Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies at Shandong University, China, as a Hebrew teacher. While living in Jinan for the past year she has been working to complete her studies in the behavioral sciences, while also teaching English and kneidlach-forming, and raising their son, Yishai, who will turn two in July.

Noam is overseeing a project to build a full-fledged academic Judaic library for the Center. If you are interested in donating books to the Center, please contact Noam at [JudaicStudies@yahoo.com](mailto:JudaicStudies@yahoo.com) or visit: [www.cjs.sdu.edu.cn/](http://www.cjs.sdu.edu.cn/)

The Seder table was all set and the guests started arriving. First came Adina, who had helped with the *kneidlach* earlier in the afternoon. She was followed by Gila, Liora, Yona, Binyamin, Esti, Keshet, and Eden. Yuda came too. Your typical family Seder? Not for us, at least.

Although our guests this year respectfully followed the reading of the *haggadah* and waited patiently until dinner was finally served, they had never celebrated Pesach before; probably they never will again, either. For these Chinese students this was a once in a Jinan-time opportunity. In fact, "Yuda" is Prof. Fu Youde, head of the Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies in Shandong University, and the rest are students of religious studies whose major is Judaism.

It's quite odd being the only Jewish family (as opposed to the several single Jews, among them Prof. Avrum Ehrlich, who teaches Talmud and Tanach at the Center) in a city like Jinan, with its population of nearly 6 million, not to mention the particularities of being Orthodox in China. Our home is *kosher*, Shabbat-observant and (mostly) Hebrew-speaking—a combination that requires a rather lengthy and complicated explanation in these parts. Just try explaining the fact that we will not work on Saturdays and you're confronted with bewildered stares. Add to this the fact that we eat the meat of only a few animals, completely separated from dairy products, and only when slaughtered by a skilled butcher flown in from Australia and then shipped to us from Beijing, and you're come very close to refuting the popular local myth that Jews are "*hen congming*" (very clever).

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## SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	213
China	16
Israel	14
Canada	9
England	9
Hong Kong	5
Australia	3
Japan	3
France	1
Germany	1
Indonesia	1
Italy	1
South Africa	1
Switzerland	1
Taiwan	1
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>279</b>

## FROM THE EDITOR

It is springtime in Seattle and today is particularly glorious. Sunny and warm, low humidity—it's a taste of what summer is over here. (The question is why is Seattle better known for its wintry rain than its summer sun.)

This issue of *Points East* is as glorious as this spring day, blossoming with articles about recent conferences in Shanghai and Sarasota; tantalizing with a tale about Pesach in Shandong.

Our next issue, by the way, will focus on the diversity of the contemporary Jewish-East Asian experience from many angles. If you have something to write on this topic, be sure to send it in by September.

Anson Laytner

## "The Jews of Kaifeng"

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## Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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## FINANCIAL REPORT AVAILABLE

SJI members interested in receiving a copy of the annual financial report should send a self-addressed envelope to: Shelton Ehrlich, Treasurer of the Sino-Judaic Institute, 755 Northampton, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

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## Points East

In the wake of these incidents, the relationship between Israel and China has shifted away from military cooperation and toward technological and financial partnerships. Xu said that the Israeli consulate in Shanghai now announces on an almost weekly basis new agreements worth more than \$100 million for Israeli investments in China, joint venture projects, new factories and other economic development projects...

Xu said that critical Chinese media coverage of the second intifada has had a negative effect on the image in China of Jews and Israel (the two are often conflated, he explained). However, according to Xu, Israel and Israeli leaders still have a great deal of support in China. He noted that in the wake of Ariel Sharon's decision to break with the Likud, online polls in China showed 90% support for the leader, who was praised as "great hero" and a "real man."

Though China ceased to view Jews as victims after the formation of the State of Israel, Xu said that most Chinese continue to have a positive view of Jews, though not always an accurate one. Many Chinese wish to emulate the success of Jews in the realms of science, technology, business and finance. Some even see the power of American Jewish lobbying groups as a model for their own efforts to influence American policy.

Xu said he hopes that, in turn, the major Jewish organizations will recognize the long-term importance of establishing contacts in Chinese society beyond the government level, particularly in reaching out to Chinese scholars. "If you have a better foundation, you can stand any kind of shocks," he said. "I hope people in empowered positions realize it."

## In Chinese Company: Some Notes on a Sino-Judaic Image

by Michael Alderton

While researching the fabulously interesting military history of Major-General Morris Abraham Cohen (1889 – 1970), I have come across a photograph, taken in Canada during 1915, that shows Cohen as a 26 year-old soldier seated in the middle of a company of rather earnest looking Chinese Canadian infantrymen.

The entire company is smartly turned out in regulation issue British army uniforms, but ones devoid of any insignia. Each man in this group photograph holds a military-type rifle, except for Cohen and a fellow officer who sport swagger sticks in their stead.

These hopeful Great War volunteers are members of Dr. Sun Yat-sen's representative organization in Canada, and the drilling and musketry that they received from Cohen in Canada had been much the same as the basic military training that Cohen had himself received, some ten years earlier, from his drill master at the Hayes School for Jewish Boys near London.

This 1915 photograph was taken relatively early in Cohen's long, varied, and distinguished military career, and the next military group photograph I have seen him in was taken a year later in 1916. Here he is seated, still with swagger stick at hand, but now in the midst of a group of severe looking Canadian army sergeants who had been charged with the task of training volunteer soldiers for active service on the Western Front during the Great War of 1914 – 1918.

Late in 1922, Cohen's somewhat unorthodox military career took an interesting turn when he left Canada for Canton to serve under Dr. Sun Yat-sen as Adjutant-General at the General Headquarters of the Generalissimo of the Republic of China. For most of 1923, Cohen served in the field and took part in battles that at times seriously threatened to overrun Dr Sun's Canton headquarters.

Following Dr. Sun's death in 1925, this legendary Jewish warrior continued to serve in the Chinese military as a brigadier-general before being further promoted to the rank of major-general in April 1935.

## "hasifria"—A Resource for East Asian Jews

by Ronn Bechler

My wife, Maxine, and I have started a business selling children's Israeli products to Jewish communities throughout Asia, in particular to communities such as those in China and elsewhere.

It all started with an overseas trip and a chance purchase of an Israeli children's dvd for our young daughter. After that, life was never the same again. Her friends came over, danced, sang and laughed and then pleaded with their parents to have their own copy. There was nowhere to buy this or similar products locally.

hasifria, "the library", was established largely to cater for children's Hebrew / Jewish education and entertainment. At hasifria, you can purchase dvd's, cd's, toys/games, books, wall art, dishes and other interesting things. Whether you are in Australia, New Zealand or Asia, hasifria.com.au is always open.

We have been able to bring together a unique collection of quality products. Most items are sourced from Israel with an emphasis on Hebrew, and Israeli and Jewish culture.

With new products constantly added to our site, we offer a diverse array of educational and entertainment products to select from.

Whether you are buying for a newborn, toddler or school-aged child, we have everything from beautiful alef-bet wall hangings, books and fun plates, to the latest in Israeli children's music and dvd's.

In order not to leave you out, we also currently stock a small number of products (which will grow over time) aimed at grown ups with an interest in Hebrew.

We trust you will enjoy your hasifria experience.

Some recent articles about us... *Instilling a love of Israel at an early age*, Australian Jewish News (Victoria) 22/12/2005

*New "library" spells fun for kids*, The Maccabean (Western Australia) 16/12/2005

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other ORT trained refugees, got a job with the U.S. forces as a mechanic, earning \$200 per month. But, by 1949, the Army withdrew from Shanghai and the Communists took over. The struggle to survive had taken its toll on the Goldmans, and Robert's parents divorced. When the family left Shanghai with the majority of refugees, Noah stayed behind and refused to let Robert leave with his mother. The two remained in Shanghai for 10 more sad, difficult years.

Noah wasn't the only ORT-trained Goldman. When Robert was 10, he also enrolled in an ORT program. Along with his life-long friend Freddie, Robert attended school during the day, then Talmud Torah for Hebrew studies and then a special ORT program for kids in the late afternoon. The children participated in activities with one catch—in order to play games (including ping pong), they had to learn carpentry and make the components themselves.

Robert kept silent about his Shanghai experience for years. When he finally opened up, his recollections were quite sad: His family had disintegrated and his father had grown mentally unstable. By 1958, when the pair left Shanghai for England, Noah was physically and emotionally frail, and Robert was his caretaker. In 1960, Robert emigrated to America under his mother's sponsorship.

Robert's experience in Shanghai made him value family above all. He and I became pen-pals when he was an American G.I. stationed in Germany and I was a student at Danbury State College. Robert spoke six languages and had traveled the world, and I had gotten only as far as Pennsylvania for my graduate work. But he wanted a nice, educated Jewish girl and a normal family. We felt *besheit*. We were married for 27 good years and had two wonderful children. He was great with people and had a successful career in the international airfreight business...With all that he lived through, Robert did more in his 54 years than many people do in 100.

Faith Goldman may be reached at [faithnamdlog@aol.com](mailto:faithnamdlog@aol.com)

## Chinese Scholar of Judaic Studies Urges Closer Ties

by Anthony Weiss

excerpted from *The Forward*, 19 February 2006

In the same week that China handed Israel a major diplomatic victory by agreeing to allow the issue of Iran's nuclear weapons program to be reported to the United Nations Security Council for possible sanctions, China's leading scholar of Judaic studies urged Jews and Jewish organizations to seek a stronger relationship with China.

Xu Xin, one of China's first scholars of Judaic studies and founder of the Center for Jewish Studies at Nanjing University, said that while the notion of stronger ties between Jews and China has been discussed and praised, he has seen little activity. "We need people to endorse programs," he told the *Forward*. "They should take action."...

Xu has been pushing for efforts to capitalize on the growing points of agreement between China and Israel. Shalom Salmon Wald's 2004 strategy paper, titled "China and the Jewish People," drew heavily on Xu's expertise. The Jewish People Policy Planning Institute, a think tank established by the Jewish Agency for Israel, commissioned the paper.

The document urged the world's Jewish communities to cultivate an independent relationship with China as Jews, separate from American and Israeli interests. The paper makes a number of policy recommendations, including a permanent delegation in China representing world Jewry, greater distribution of Jewish materials through books, television and the Internet and greater support for Jewish scholarship in China.

Xu endorsed the findings of the paper, particularly the call for greater support for such Judaic studies programs as his own. Xu said that while some Jewish organizations, including the American Jewish Congress, had cultivated contacts with government officials, they had done little to promote Jewish studies in China. "Political policy can be changed at any time, for any event," Xu said. Scholarly efforts, he added, would "lay a better foundation" for Chinese-Jewish relations"....

...the Chinese had little awareness of the Jews as a group until the 19th century, when the country was forcibly opened to Western influences. At that point the Chinese began to develop a positive image of Jews. They viewed the Jews as a minority that was, like China, oppressed by the Western powers but that had nonetheless registered great achievements as intellectuals, a minority that wielded impressive economic and financial power.

In the early 20th century, as China sought to modernize, various Chinese intellectuals turned to the Jews for inspiration. Many Chinese writers pointed to Yiddish literature as a model for the development of a vernacular, and Sun Yat-sen, modern China's nationalist hero, praised the Zionist movement as an exemplar of a popular quest for independence. In 1920, Sun wrote to the Shanghai Zionist Association in support of the Balfour Declaration.

China's contact with Jews persisted through World War II, as the cities of Shanghai, Harbin and Tianjin became home to thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe. Contact with the Jewish world largely ceased after the Communist Party took control of the country in 1949. However, interest in Jews was revived following the visit of Henry Kissinger, then assistant to President Nixon for national security affairs, in 1971; and the 1978 visit of Treasury Secretary Michael Blumenthal, who had been a refugee in Shanghai during World War II. China has historically favored Arab countries over Israel in the Middle East. But Beijing and Jerusalem still have managed to develop an extensive and, at times, mutually beneficial relationship.

Israel formally recognized the People's Republic of China in 1950, though China did not extend full diplomatic recognition to Israel until 1992 - a move that Xu suggests was an attempt by China to improve its international image in the wake of the Tiananmen Square Massacre. Starting in the early 1990s, Israel began supplying military weapons and technology to China for more than a decade. Then, in 2000, the United States blocked Israel from selling Phalcon radar equipment to China. Israeli-American tensions over China flared up again in 2004, when Washington pressured Jerusalem not to return Harpy attack drones that China had sent to Israel for upgrading...

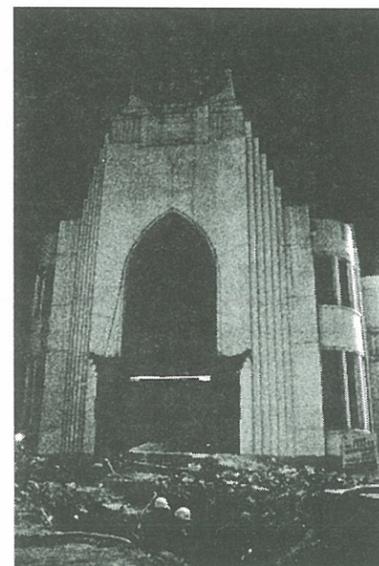
## TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor,

I have read The Sino-Judaic Institute web site with great interest. I worked in China as a U.S. Diplomat for 12 years in total beginning in 1987. Currently, I am in the private sector and have a company in Shanghai. As a Commercial Counselor at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing, I developed a special interest in the old buildings in Tianjin's former foreign concessions and tried to learn something of their history and the stories of the people who built such a colorful international city. I am now writing a book titled "Exploring Old Tianjin" which is intended as guidebook for the off-the-beaten-track tourist who wants to understand Tianjin's fascinating past.

As you know, Tianjin was the site of the third largest Jewish Community in China. At one time, there were several hundred Jews in Tianjin who established a Jewish Club, a Jewish School, a Jewish Hospital, a Jewish Cemetery and build a synagogue in 1939. I am sorry to say that of all these significant contributions to Tianjin's development, today, the shell of the Tianjin Synagogue is the only physical remnant of the former Jewish community.

I attach a picture I took of the Tianjin Synagogue during the construction of the



Tianjin subway in 2004. You can see how perilously close it came to be completely destroyed. Today, it is just an empty, abandoned shell stripped of its past glory. Most people in Tianjin have no idea what this building is even though it still looks very much like a synagogue to the Western eye...

Although I am not Jewish myself, I do hope that the last remnant of the former Tianjin Jewish society can be preserved. Might any of your colleagues be interested in working on this issue? Minimally, I would hope that a bilingual plaque could be placed on it identifying it as a historical landmark.

Thank you for your consideration.

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To the Editor,

I must thank you for facilitating communication between people that might otherwise not be in touch with one another. By mentioning my article in "Points East" I had several very nice letters, including one from Albert Yee who told me about his book, and especially the chapter which he has on Jews and Chinese. The book arrived only today and I still have to read it.

I also am grateful for the reference to the article about Shanghai's White Russians in the recent issue. I would not have thought of looking at "History Today". It is a popular article, but not bad. However, you might want to print a correction in the next issue, the author is Fraser Newham, and not as stated.

I am presently translating Yiddish poetry that a number of Yiddish poets from Poland wrote in Shanghai during WWII. Marvelous stuff. I am adding a bit of prose from a diary, also written in Shanghai in Yiddish during those years. The whole thing will be finished off with translations from German poetry and a mess of unpublished letters sent by parents from Shanghai to their son who was here on a kibbutz.

Best wishes,

Prof. Irene Eber  
Jerusalem, Israel

To the Editor,

Rabbi Shmuel Ben-Shalom Divekar, former Hazzan of the Kurla Bene Israel Prayer Hall and now a trained and qualified Rabbi in Israel, Director Binyan Israel Institute, POB 5866, Jerusalem, Israel, is planning to bring out a Book of Psalms in Hebrew, English and Marathi. Rabbi Shmuel Ben-Shalom Divekar needs us to be partners in making this happen in a variety of ways: Dedication, Sponsorship, Donations, etc. If you are interested in joining in this holy work, you can write directly to Rabbi Shmuel Ben-Shalom Divekar at his address or by calling him at 054-7409055 or 054-7284322. Such a Tehillim (Book of Psalms) will be very useful to all of us and, needless to say, first of a kind.

Erna & Sam Daniel  
New York City

To the Editor,  
I am working on a cross cultural study on Judaism and Confucianism, and I am looking for any papers or information about papers written by scholars comparing the Torah and the Classics. Please contact me at: [marciash@earthlink.net](mailto:marciash@earthlink.net).

Thanks,  
Marcia Shainock

## IN THE FIELD

- **Sino-Judaic Institute Baby Born**

May Cha and Josh Singer, our volunteer web-masters, are pleased to announce the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Mylee Cha Singer, who surprised them two weeks early on Monday, April 24 at 7:45 a.m. weighing in at 6 lbs, 7 ozs and measuring 19 inches. Mother, baby and dad are all doing very well, but we've been warned not to expect any web wizardry until later this summer. Mazal tov to the new family!

- **American Jewish Committee Hosts Panel on Jewish/Asia-Pacific Relations**

At its Centennial Annual Meeting held in the first week of May in Washington D.C., the American Jewish Committee convened an Asia-Pacific Panel. Dr. Salomon Wald gave a talk based on his booklet "China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era". Participant Seth Garz, now an intern with SJI, wrote: "It was exciting to see individuals from different geographies and ages proactively seeking to learn and share information about what will inevitably become an essential issue in the future of the Jewish people - the relationship with China." Rabbi Anson Laytner, editor of Points East, who by day directs the Seattle Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, has been authorized by the Board of SJI to initiate a conversation with National AJC about how the two organizations might work cooperatively together.

- **Old China Hands 2006 Grand World Wide Reunion**

Old China Hands first Stateside Grand World Wide Reunion since the year 2000 reunion held at Phoenix, AZ, will held at the Red Lion Hotel at Convention Center, Portland, Oregon, September 10th to 13th, 2006.

The program will feature presentations by Prof. Bob Gohstand, Project Director of the OCH Archive at the California State University at Northridge (CSUN), CA, and an OCH'er himself, as well as by Rena Krasno, Board Member of the Sino-Judaic Institute, author, authority, and lecturer, Tess Johnston and W. Patrick Cranley, co-founders

of the Shanghai Historic House Association, both well-known experts on history of Shanghai and other old Treaty Ports in the 20th Century and to-date, and Greg Leck researcher of life of westerners in China since the 1920's, with emphasis on Japanese internment of Allied Civilians during WWII years, throughout China. There will also be affinity group meetings by cities, schools, camps and clubs while in China, for renewal of acquaintances of more intimate groups; other, yet to be defined activities, are still being developed.

A significant feature of this reunion will be the oral recording of individual personal histories, spoken in your own voice for posterity. A team of trained interviewers from the History Department at CSUN, will conduct these audio interviews at the reunion, in quiet, private environments, for recording and storage at the CSUN Archive, as basis for future studies and research. Here's an opportunity for every participant to let his or her experiences and thoughts make a potential impact on the future!

Registration Fee is US \$240.00 per person. This includes all events at the Hotel, as well as the welcoming reception, 3 dinners, 3 breakfasts, and afternoon snacks and refreshments, and all organizational costs. The specially negotiated room rate for this reunion is US\$88.88 per room per night, including tax. For additional detail and Registration forms, please contact Ed Immergluck, Co-organizer, by phone at 541-754-0808, or by fax at 541-754-2626, or by e-mail at immer0808@msn.com, or postal mail at: 2215 NW 13th Street, Corvallis, OR 97330.

- **Conference on Harbin Held**

The People's Government of Heilongjiang Province convened a conference entitled "The International Forum on the History and Culture of Harbin Jews," June 16 to June 20, 2006. The schedule included: visits to historic relics, the former synagogue, hospital commerce club and hotel, the Harbin Jewish cemetery as well as the

presentation of papers and reports. The focus is research on history and culture of Harbin Jews, enhancement of communication and mutual understanding, improvement of cooperation in fields of culture, technology, tourism and trade between Heilongjiang province and the Jewish community. The conference is sponsored by the People's Government of Heilongjiang Province, co-organized by the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences with the cooperation of the Israel China Friendship Society and the Association of the Former Residents of China in Israel.

- **Shanghai Holocaust Resource Now Available**

The Library of Congress has digitized the Polish Record Book on Jews arriving in Shanghai. The URL for it is: <http://www.locgov/rr/european/polref/polrefindex.html>. The story behind this bit of news is that the book was acquired during a visit on November 6, 1992 by Jonathan Goldstein, Chiara Betta, Paul Stone, and Marcia Ristaino to the Polish Consulate General in Shanghai. Tess Johnston of the U.S. Consulate arranged the visit for the four visiting scholars studying the Jewish presence in Shanghai during the twentieth century. The Polish Consul General, Jozef Soltysiewicz, related to the group that he had discovered the 200 page tome in a trunk in the Consulate basement. They noted that the hand written data in the Log listing Polish citizens arriving in Shanghai was similar in content and scope to U.S. census data. Responding to their strong interest in the Log for use by Jewish scholars, the Consul General requested and received permission to have the log copied. This was done at the Shanghai Municipal Library. Afterwards, one copy, occupying one suitcase, eventually became a valuable resource for Jewish studies at the U.S. Holocaust Museum and the U.S. Library of Congress.

- **Gottschalk to Keynote Nanjing Judaic Studies Center Dedication**

Prof. Xu Xin has announced that during his recent trip to the U.S., (his

ies that were mowed down as the city grew.

Rabbi Greenberg is leading the movement to return the synagogue, which is listed by the World Monuments Fund as one of the globe's 100 most endangered sites. The building is open to the faithful just four times a year for major holidays...The Israeli Consulate is negotiating with government officials for a memorial to house the more than 80 Jewish tombstones that Bar-Gal has recovered in the past four years.

"We have every kind of reason for coming here," said Greenberg.

### Going Back to My Birthplace

by Ellen Chaim Kracko

I was born in 1947 Shanghai, but "my story" actually begins in November 1938, Berlin, Germany, before I was born. My family is Jewish, having lived in Germany for generations. Kristalnacht happened in November 1938...

After several unsuccessful attempts to leave Berlin, my father and an aunt found themselves at a travel agent's office of The Norddeutscher Lloyd Line, trying to book passage to anywhere in the world, but nothing was available. As if the hand of G-d came down to touch them, at that precise moment, the phone rang. The travel agent took the call, spoke a few seconds, hung up and said that he had just had a cancellation to, of all places, Shanghai, China. Sixteen tickets were available—cash only—take it or leave it. No visas were necessary, no quotas to meet, no sponsorships necessary, no extra paperwork to fill out. In other words, no restrictions. After a quick family pow-wow, the decision was made to take the tickets. This was the only refuge available to them in 1939: Shanghai, China.

My parents were married on February 23, 1939, and four weeks later, on March 21, 1939, sixteen members of my family—parents, both sets of grandparents, aunt and uncle, assorted cousins—left Nazi Germany from the port in Bremen. They traveled on a German ocean liner, "The Gneisenau", a cruise ship, if you will. It was, as my mother says to this day—a one-way cruise.

On April 24, I will be traveling with my 87-year-old mother to join more than 110

other former "Shanghaianders" for an unforgettable "Last Look at Shanghai" reunion. This time she will be traveling with an American passport...There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about how fortunate my family was to have found a safe haven in Shanghai, China. They were the lucky ones...

Yet, all I know is that I will be returning to the place where I was born in 1947. I feel a great pull and a great tug at my heart whenever Shanghai is mentioned. To the people of 1939 Shanghai, I say "thank you." You opened your doors to a strange people, you let these refugees in, you let them live among you, and for that I am grateful. If you hadn't done all that, who knows what might have happened to my parents. I might not be here writing about it. I get goose bumps just thinking about it.

### Shanghai Redemption

by Faith Goldman as told to Sara Nuss-Galles  
 excerpted from and first reported in *The Reporter*, Fall 2005, 55:1, the magazine of Women's American ORT ([www.waort.org](http://www.waort.org))

Six years after Hitler's ascension to power in 1933, Noah Goldman, my later husband's father, finally accepted that it was time to leave Berlin, since life for Jews had become intolerable. Little did the once-proud German know he would be taking his family to China.

Being a resourceful 40-something entrepreneur—he owned a movie house and Berlin's first dry cleaner—Noah bribed a Gestapo agent he knew to secure the passports that would ultimately save his family's life. Over two harrowing days he purchased seven visas, including ones for Thea, his young wife, Gerhard, her son, and for Thea's parents and their family.

At the time, Shanghai, China was one of the only ports open to Jews. So that's how my husband, Robert, happened to be born there. Although I knew that life was difficult for his family, he spoke little of his 18 years growing up there. After Robert passed away in 1994, I began doing research to piece together his past...

While his family crossed to Bangkok and then Shanghai by ship, Noah flew on KLM Airlines with his prized dry-cleaning ma-

chine. Ironically, Shanghai was bereft of luxury goods and Noah's machine was never used. When the finely-attired refugees arrived at port Shanghai, reality hit hard. Many were overwhelmed by the war-torn city that lay before them: It was poor, overcrowded and disease-ridden. Opportunities of middle-class professionals simply didn't exist...

Robert and his mother and brother lucked into a tiny room, while the rest of his family lived elsewhere. There was no water or plumbing, and the waste was collected daily to fertilize the rice paddies. The soup kitchens run by Jewish groups saved many a family from hunger. And yet, among so large a population of Jews, only two births occurred in 1939, and 65 in 1940, including that of my husband, Robert. As the war escalated, the refugees also endured air raids and bombings.

But they were not completely abandoned. ORT, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the Joint Distribution Committee and wealthy Jewish families helped establish a processing area where the Goldmans and others received food, medicine, clothing and housing. Then, in 1941, Chaim Rozenbes, an ORT worker from Poland, opened the ORT training program in Shanghai. Rozenbes realized that these refugees lacked practical skills, and that they needed to learn trades to regain self-sufficiency. Many Jewish men resisted even though the classes were free. For them, manual labor simply meant further debasement.

Noah, who was older and upset at leaving Germany, grew paranoid and angry at his life and refused to learn a new trade. But in 1944, he relented and enrolled in an ORT program. He trained as an auto mechanic, and was once again supporting his family. The ORT center, at 475 Jansen Road, taught machine knitting, mechanics, carpentry and even gardening.

ORT Shanghai trained some 50 students in 1942 and 400 to 500 in 1944 to 1945. No one knows why the numbers are not higher—perhaps because, with the war raging, funding was erratic. Still, ORT's programs were a saving grace for so many, providing skills and a means to earn a living after the war took everything they had.

When the war ended and the American Army arrived, Noah, along with many

else that can make our research and the story of the "Shanghaianders" from Hamburg a little more visible.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> See especially the corresponding book *Exil Shanghai 1938-1947. Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration*. (Schriftenreihe des Aktiven Museums Berlin.) Teetz 2000 which does not only contain 13 essays on several aspects of Jewish life in Shanghai but also provides the complete list from 24.8.1944 of the Dee Lay Jao Police district in Shanghai which contains the names, addresses and country of origin of nearly 14,800 foreigners living in Shanghai at that time.

<sup>2</sup> Percentage distribution according to the micro-census of Hamburg Jewish Emigrants destinations: USA 27.1%, Great Britain 15.8%, Palestine 13.2, Netherland 8.5, Shanghai 3.2 %.

<sup>3</sup> See especially the corresponding book *Exil Shanghai 1938-1947. Jüdisches Leben in der Emigration*. (Schriftenreihe des Aktiven Museums Berlin.) Teetz 2000 which does not only contain 13 essays on several aspects of Jewish life in Shanghai but also provides the complete list from 24.8.1944 of the Dee Lay Jao Police district in Shanghai which contains the names, addresses and country of origin of nearly 14,800 foreigners living in Shanghai at that time.

#### Return to Shanghai

by Yvonne Daniel  
excerpted from a Sermon Presented at Beth El Congregation, Baltimore, MD, 13 May 2006

Many of you here today are aware that I recently returned from a trip to China.

So what, you may say. I'm certain there are many of you here today who have made this trip. My trip, however, was a bit unique. My husband Rene and I went to only one city – Shanghai. From 1937-1948, 20,000 Jews lived in Shanghai. My family was among them and I was born there. This trip was my homecoming.

This trip was known as the "Rickshaw Reunion" and those of us who attended were of various ages...This was the opportunity I had waited for – to return with others who had shared this same experience.

Our trip began with a visit to the "Center of Jewish Studies in Shanghai" which was established in 1988 and is led by Pan Guang, a man who has a deep interest, understanding and respect for the Jewish people. His center is the most influential research institution on Jewish and Israeli

studies in China. The center is responsible for several dozen Chinese students taking courses in Israel with China paying their airfare and Israel picking up the rest of the expenses. They have sponsored international conferences and exhibits on Jews, on the Holocaust, and on Israel. They are also sponsoring the teaching of Hebrew to Chinese school children and some students are even learning Jewish songs. As we arrived at this center, we were welcomed with these words, translated into English "We welcome you to your old home. We always remember you and welcome you. This is your home as well as our home"...

From the park, we walked to the Ohel Moshe shul where we met Dvir Bar-Gal, an Israeli who is making an effort to recover headstones from the 3 Jewish cemeteries that were destroyed and no longer exist. He hopes to build a memorial with the goal of saving, restoring and documenting this piece of Jewish history in Shanghai. I personally am hoping he recovers the headstone of my brother Peter Heumann who died in Shanghai in 1943 at 13 months of age...

Aside from our purchases, we came home with many special memories. We now have friends in other parts of the world – friends that seem more like family. We have a fuller understanding and appreciation of the sacrifices made by our parents and we are forever indebted to the Chinese people for giving us shelter and letting us live peacefully among them.

I have tried to give you a taste of our trip. I have emphasized the Jewish aspects, which were also the highlights. I wish for you to each take away with you today the knowledge of this piece of Jewish history and the understanding that at a time in the world when so few were there for the Jewish people, this city of Shanghai, in this foreign land, served as a safe haven for so many. For this we should all be grateful.

#### Jewish Shanghai Rises Again

by Kathleen E. McLaughlin  
excerpted from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 March 2006

Shanghai — When David Ohana, his parents and two sisters moved to Shanghai from Paris five years ago, they were among the few Jews in what had once been a thriving Jewish community. The Friday Sabbath, held in the hotel room of Sha-

lom Greenberg, an Israeli-born rabbi, attracted maybe a half-dozen families.

Today, an estimated 1,000 Jews live in Shanghai, and Greenberg's congregation now occupies a three-story villa on the western edge of the city. During major holidays, the bustling Shanghai Jewish Center attracts more than 300 worshippers. Parents send their children to its school and camp, while an average of 15 diners a day enjoy the city's only kosher restaurant...

To Ohana, who was 14 when he came to Shanghai, the city represents what it has for so many Jews before him — freedom from anti-Semitism, which Ohana said he grew up with in his native France.

"It's like the Chinese people don't even understand ... hatred based on religion," said Ohana, now a 20-year-old business student.

Even though the Chinese government is cautious about all religious activity — for Chinese citizens the practice of Judaism is illegal — it allows non-Chinese Jews to observe their faith in relative peace.

"The Chinese people have made a decision to welcome back foreigners. They have to understand that some of these foreigners are going to be Jewish," said Greenberg, whose younger brother, Avraham, recently arrived from New York to help establish a second Jewish center on the eastern side of Shanghai.

In addition to foreign Jews who come to Shanghai to work, teach or study Mandarin, an estimated 50,000 Jewish tourists arrive annually to see the European-inspired buildings and tenement homes of the old Jewish ghetto, according to the Jewish center and tour agencies...

Recognizing its tourist value, Shanghai officials have announced plans to build a shopping and entertainment complex in the old ghetto that celebrates the Shanghai Jews' story. Ruan Yisan, an urban planning professor at Tongji University who is leading the project, said it will restore some key spots in the old district, while building some new ones, including replicas of famed Jewish businesses.

The resurgent Jewish community is also working to recapture its cultural heritage, including the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, and gravestones from four Jewish cemeter-

10th!), in addition to visiting colleges, universities, and numerous organizations, he was able to secure the talents of Dr. Alfred Gottschalk, Chancellor Emeritus of Hebrew Union College, as keynote speaker for the formal dedication of new Glazer Center for Judaic Studies at Nanjing University on November 21, 2006. Everyone is invited to Nanjing for the dedication!

#### • Read in Harbin

Traveling student Isaac Stone Fish reports in the NewVoices March/April 2006 issue that in a bookstore in Harbin, he found a book written in Chinese called "The Wit and Wisdom of the Jews, published in 2002 by the Harbin Press. The orange cover " shows a blank-faced Jewish man struggling on a seesaw against the world, which outweighs him...Chapters include 'Wisdom on Money,' Wisdom on Leading Life,' and 'The Humor of Human Existence.' The last chapter offers anecdotes of Albert Einstein, Heinrich Heine, and Henry Kissinger, as well as of the allegedly Jewish personalities Pablo Picasso and Nelson Rockefeller."

#### • Translating Japanese into Hebrew

The Israel-Japan Friendship Association has produced a seminar series on translating Japanese literature to Hebrew. The meetings will be conducted by Shunit Shahal-Porat of the East Asian studies departments at both Tel Aviv and Hebrew universities. Shahal-Porat has translated Banana Yoshimoto's "The Kitchen," "The Lake," by Yasunari Kawabata and others.

Shahal-Porat, an expert on Japanese language and comics, will address the group on the role of translators in importing culture, and on the influence translations have on readers' perceptions of the original language. Other sessions in the series will feature other translators, including Doron Cohen, who has translated several books by Haruki Murakami. "Not enough attention is paid to the importance of translations. Through the lens of the translator, Israeli readers are treated to a peek into the bright world of Japan.

These culture importers work diligently to publicize Japanese culture and have tremendous influence on the way Israelis perceive and relate to Japanese culture," he said.

#### • The End of an Indian Era

Nadira, the great Indian movie star, died in Mumbai on February 8 at age 74. Nadira was born Farhat (Florence) Ezikiel in 1932 into a well-to-do Baghdadi family. She was discovered in her late teens, in 1952, and given the lead role in "Aan". She began a star overnight. Her next film, Shree 420, added to her luster. Her career spanned almost 50 years, 60 movies and countless television appearances.

Jews figured prominently in early Bollywood. Nadira was the last of her line, but she was preceded by others, including Firoza Begum, born Susan Solomon, who was very popular in the 1920s and 30s. Another was Ruby Meyers, known as Sulochana, and also Pramila, Romala (Rachel Hayam Cohen) and Aaron Joshua.

Ruby Meyers founded her own studio, Rubi Pics, in the 1930s. Joseph David wrote the screenplay for the first Indian talkie in 1931. Lastly, there was Ezra Mir, better known as Edwin Myers, the first head of the government's India Film Division.

#### • Indian Jews on the Internet

Curious about the Jews of India? Start at [www.haruth.com/AsianIndia.html](http://www.haruth.com/AsianIndia.html), an Internet portal that contains links to several dozen websites and also <http://adaniel.tripod.com/jews.htm>.

#### • Bnei Menashe Haggadah Published

The Bnei Menashe of northeastern India, who claim descent from a lost tribe of Israel, have added reason to celebrate this Passover thanks to a Haggadah published by the Shavei Israel organization ([www.shavei.org](http://www.shavei.org)). The new *Haggadah* contains a transliteration of the traditional text recounting the Jewish people's Exodus from Egypt, along with explanatory notes in the Mizo and Thadou-Kuki languages - two of the main dialects spoken by many Bnei Menashe.

#### Shanghai Reunion 2006

(continued from page 1)

made to feel safe. We also recall our Chinese friends and neighbors," he continued, "who were ill-treated by the Japanese. And now that the older generation has passed on, it is up to us to pass on the information about our wartime experiences." Since the first reunion in 1980, attended by 1,000 people, there have been eight other reunions. Thanks to Rene, there is also an excellent website, [www.rickshaw.org](http://www.rickshaw.org).

Professor Pan presented a certificate to Rene to honor him for his contribution to the CJSS. He then told us of the effort to preserve a part of Hongkew (now Hong Kou) as a historical area. The Shanghai and Beijing governments support this effort, and an attempt is being made to involve UNESCO in the process.

After the session, we had an opportunity to speak with students and to look at some of the publications of the Center, including new editions of the very informative books *Jews in China* and *Jews in Shanghai*.

During the long bus ride to the Vegetery, a vegetarian Buddhist restaurant, we were able to see firsthand some of the remarkable changes in Shanghai. The architecture is spectacular, each building unique, and most feature an unusual or whimsical embellishment at the top. As always, the city is crowded and lively, but now in addition to cars and bicycles, there are also thousands of mini-bikes. Modern pedestrian overpasses with escalators aid the traffic flow. The Bund, with its elegant colonial edifices, remains impressive, despite being dwarfed by the new tall buildings. The former Avenue Joffre in the French Concession is still lined with its lovely sycamore trees, and there one can find just about every American and European designer shop. Attractive young women are ubiquitous in their designer jeans, studded T-shirts, and spike heels. We passed the unusual opera house and the municipal building and the People's Square, all on the site of the old Race Course.

At the banquet that evening, Professor Pan Guang and two other Chinese speakers gave welcoming addresses in Chinese, which were translated into English. The first was Mr. Liu Lunxian, Chairman of

Shanghai City Congress and Representative of the Mayor of Shanghai. He was followed by Ambassador Liang Yufan, former Chinese Ambassador to the United Nations, who grew up in Shanghai, graduated from St. Johns University, and represented the old friends of Jewish residents in Shanghai.

Several Shanghailanders also spoke, including Stephen Lange, who gave a moving testament to the Shanghai experience that saved his father; and Gary Matzdorff, who showed one of the actual signs, familiar to former refugees, that read, "Stateless Refugees Are Prohibited to Pass Here Without Permission." (In a later conversation, I discovered that Gary Matzdorff had known my husband in Shanghai. Unfortunately, he was the only one in attendance who did.)

Faith Goldman, widow of Shanghaileander Robert Goldman, who remained in Shanghai with his father until 1958, gave a picture frame with mementos of Robert to Professor Pan...

The next day, Thursday, was the highlight of the trip for everyone. We set off by bus at 8:45 a.m. The first stop was the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, established in 1920 by the Baghdadi community, and endowed by Sir Jacob Elias Sassoon in memory of his wife Rachel. Renovated by the government in 1998, it is an imposing structure with a lovely sanctuary and an Ark that once held 30 Torah scrolls. Today the building houses the Shanghai Education Bureau and a comprehensive exhibit on Jews in Shanghai. Before leaving, we walked to the nearby former Shanghai Jewish School (formerly also known as the Seymour Road School), now an office building. Many of those in the group had attended school there. On our way to lunch, we stopped a few minutes at the former Hardoon Gardens, where a massive 1955 structure built with help from the Soviet Union rises like a huge wedding cake. It is currently used for exhibitions. Next up: A Millionaire's Fair!

After a Chinese lunch, we drove through Pudong. In 1996 when I was last in Shanghai, there were enormous building sites and cranes, but few completed buildings. Now, buildings, the tallest of which is the Grand Hyatt Hotel, measuring 88 stories.

Upon arriving in Hong Kou, the excitement on the bus was palpable. The guide

was besieged with questions: Is this Wayside Road? Is that the hospital? Isn't that where the Seward Road Heim used to be? We were driven directly to the Ocean Hotel, where a welcome sign greeted our group. Upstairs was an even bigger welcome sign and a large room set up conference style with rows of tables and chairs. The theme from "Schindler's List" was playing as dozens of reporters and photographers swarmed around. A number of former Chinese neighbors of Jewish refugees were present. Upon the arrival of 87-year-old Mr. Wang Faliang, who lived among the refugees and who has for many years greeted visitors at Ohel Moishe Synagogue, there was pandemonium. Former refugees rushed to hug him, cameras flashed in their faces, and the noise level escalated to a roar.

We were greeted by four dignitaries who spoke in Chinese with a translator: Ms. Song Yan, representative of the Mayor of Hong Kou; Mr. Ci Hong, Vice Mayor of Hong Kou government; Professor Pan Guang; and the aforementioned Mr. Wang Faliang, representing the old Chinese neighbors during wartime. The speakers addressed the history of the Jews in Shanghai, their courage in adapting, their accomplishments, and their good relations with their Chinese neighbors.

From the hotel, we walked to the Huo Shan Park (formerly Wayside Park) where the "Schindler's List" theme was again heard once again. There we saw a plaque in English, Chinese, and Hebrew describing the presence of the wartime Jewish community, and also a huge poster with a replica of a petition to UNESCO urging them to preserve a part of Hong Kou as a historical area within the planned urban renewal. Rene Wildorff made a plea for the realization of this hope, and requested us all to sign the large petition laid out on a nearby table. There wasn't a dry eye in the group as we each wrote our names with the felt markers provided. I signed my husband Fred's name in addition to my own.

It was a short walk from the park to the Ohel Moishe Synagogue, built by the Shanghai Russian Jewish community. We visited the small museum on the third floor dedicated to the Jewish experience in Shanghai, which was much improved since my last visit. On the second floor there was an interesting display of Jewish tombstones discovered and saved by an

## Points East

Israeli journalist and tour guide, Dvir Bar-Gal. Dvir told us of finding 85 tombstones since he began his search five years ago. He mentioned the help he received for his project from the Sino-Judaic Institute, and showed a video of crews removing stones from outlying villages where they had been used as paving or parts of walls. The first floor contained an art exhibit. Participants were impatient to rediscover familiar sights and set off on their personal, emotional searches.

On Friday, most of the group went by bus to Souzhou to see the beautiful gardens there and to visit a silk factory. I chose instead to spend the day on my own. After a visit to the Shanghai Museum, I took a taxi to the Lungwha pagoda and temple, which Fred had visited a number of times and wrote about in his diaries. (In the 1940s, Lungwha was also the site of one of a Japanese internment camp and a military airfield.) A huge fair was taking place featuring a large number of booths selling everything imaginable, including Chinese herbs and Tibetan jewelry and even kitchen goods, and much inviting food for sale that I forced myself to resist. I was the only Caucasian among thousands of Chinese, but felt completely comfortable the entire time.

That evening, a number of us from our group went to the Shanghai Jewish Center, which is under the auspices of Chabad, for services and dinner. We were welcomed warmly by Rabbi Shalom Greenberg and were surprised to learn that today there are over 1,000 Jews living in Shanghai. After the service and *Kiddush*, we were served a hearty Shabbat meal and joined in the lively singing of *zemirot* (Shabbat songs).

On Saturday, I spoke to many people about what the reunion meant to them. Helen Scannell told me how important a discovery the trip had been for her husband Peter, who was in Shanghai until age seven and had seldom mentioned all those years. He was deeply moved to find that the place where he had lived 60 years ago remained exactly as he remembered it. The reunion gave him a new perspective on the refugee experience.

Ellen Kracko, who was born in Shanghai in 1947, was the youngest of the 13 babies born there who were present at the reunion. She accompanied her mother, Ruth Chaim, who also found the reunion

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to the facsimile of the Shanghai emigrants address book of 1939, which was reprinted by Tess Johnston at the Old China Handpress in 1995 and which is now sold at the Old China Reading Room and at the Ohel Moshe Synagogue on Ward Road, we were able to walk the Hongkew district tracing the emigrants from Hamburg.

The emigrants address book of Shanghai from 1939 mentions 102 persons who came originally from Hamburg. Of course these entries do not include wives and children and it does not catch all those refugees who came to Shanghai later than autumn 1939. But these names, in connection with the Japanese lists of the Hongkew-Census annexed to Sonja Mühlberger's book *Exil-Shanghai*, made it possible to find and photograph some places where Jewish refugees from Hamburg had lived at the Hongkew district. Although it seems as if very little has changed in most lanes and houses in the Hongkew area, these photographs do only show the locations as they are today and do give only a vague impression how emigrants' life in the first half of the 1940s had been.

The Municipal Archive of Shanghai provides a range of collections concerning the living conditions at Hongkew as long as the situation there touched the responsibility of the municipal government. This mainly concerns the health situation of the emigrants. The unaccustomed climate in Shanghai and the poor food situation caused a lot of diseases like typhoid fever which had to be dealt with. To be able to build and keep hospitals, the Jewish community needed not only authorization but support. These documents display—like articles in the daily papers of that time—the general situation of emigrants in Shanghai but they very seldom deal with the situation of individuals.

It is one side of research to locate people in records like the emigration files in Hamburg, the emigrants address book, or the lists of the Hongkew-Census. But as Audrey Friedmann Marcus explained in connection with the translation of her husband's diaries very intensively in *Points East*, November 2005, personal experiences, stories that are told, letters that are written, postcards or tickets that are kept for memories do often tell a much more direct story which makes history much more authentic and tangible.

So in order to back up the information from official documents and lists it is quite important, especially at an exhibition — to be able to tell the stories of those people who made the experiences of a life far from home, in a country with a totally different culture. That is why we had to find another source which might provide information about single members of the Jewish community and — hopefully — possibly something about persons who came originally from Hamburg.

At the Shanghai Library we were able to get a copy of the Shanghai Jewish Chronicle (1943-1944) — the only German-speaking Jewish paper in Shanghai — that we searched for traces of Hamburgers. Among the commercial and private advertisements which illustrate what people did for a living in Shanghai we found evidence of some Hamburgers living in Shanghai. So amongst others we found the announcement of Susanie Segalowicz' and Theodor Gerson's affiance in March 1943.

Theodor Gerson, who formerly lived in Hamburg, Paulinentallee 6, had left Hamburg for Shanghai in March 1939. Later the couple moved to the United States where they lived until Theodor Gerson's death in 1995. The marriage, established during hard times, lasted more than 50 years. But those vividly traces were rare. So we returned to Hamburg and tried to find more.

Many contacts led to valuable results. E.g. we got in contact with Elisabeth Atkinson, now living in Great Britain, whose own family had left Germany already in 1933 and went to Palestine. She had given an interview at the "Werkstatt der Erinnerung" (workshop of memory) in Hamburg in the 1990s in which she mentioned her uncle, Harry Lipstadt, who had become arrested by the Nazis for so-called "Rassenschande" (racial defilement) and who had, after his release, to leave the country immediately. Elisabeth Atkinson not only remembered her uncle very well but was in possession of letters he had written to his relatives during his arrest and later from his journey and life in Shanghai. These letters are an example for the ups and downs, the unpredictability of those who had to leave everything behind and start a new life in a different world.

Harry Lipstadt himself had already planned his emigration before he was arrested and had managed to get an affidavit. After his release the affidavit was out of date and so he could only get a ticket for the "Giulio Cesare", a ship of Lloyd Triestino, which brought him without a visa to Shanghai in August 1939. There he managed to build up a corporation dealing with real estates at first but it declined after the outbreak of the Asia War in December 1941. The restaurant "Harry's Snack Room" which he and his business partner Harry Todtenkopf had opened in 1942 in the city centre at Nanking Road near the Bunt was very successful but had to be given up after the proclamation of the Japanese in February 1943 which made all stateless refugees move with residence and business into an assigned area, the ghetto of Hongkew. Both saw little sense in building up a new restaurant in this very poor district and so they tried to bring up a coal business which they ran until both left Shanghai, Harry Todtenkopf and his family at first for Chile and Harry Lipstadt for the USA.

These letters describe one possible outcome of an emigrant's life in Shanghai during war time. Others might be similar or totally different. All of them should be known.

One of the many persons we got in contact with is Rena Krasno who was recommended to us by Tess Johnston during our stay in Shanghai. After we had explained our project in an e-mail Rena encouraged us to describe our approach in an essay for *Points East*.

Every single piece we found at the newspapers or we recognized and photographed while searching apartments in Hongkew and every piece that was given to us by relatives of former Hamburg Jews — like the letters of Harry Lipstadt — forms one more piece of the puzzle of the history of the Hamburg Jews who fled to Shanghai and later went on to the United States or Australia or Palestine/Israel or where ever else.

Therefore we would be very glad for every contact to former Hamburgers or their descendants who are now spread all over the world. We are desperately looking for sources like reports, diaries, letters, photographs, tickets of the emigrants theatre in Shanghai, passports, posters of events that took place in Hongkew or anything

In 2005, after completing the official conversion process, Shlomo and Dina visit Kaifeng, where he fulfills his dream of teaching other Jewish descendants about Judaism...

This truly international story is told using interviews and footage of a type that is extremely difficult to shoot in China. The film will affect how Jews and non-Jews everywhere perceive the "lost" Jewish communities all over the world and raise questions about what constitutes the global Jewish identity.

#### Funding Needed

Now that filming is near completion, Urbach's film is ready for the post-production stage. This will require one or more angels to help defray expenses, estimated at US\$130,000. They are also seeking appropriate partners for distribution and/or broadcast. Your support is most appreciated!

#### About the Director

Noam Urbach has completed an M.A. in East Asian Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His thesis focused on recent developments related to the Kaifeng Jews. Urbach directed and photographed the documentary short "Sorry, Selichot," broadcast on Israel's Channel One in 2004. He currently lives with his wife and son in Jinan, China, where he studies and teaches Hebrew and Jewish Studies at Shandong University. [See article, pg. 1.]

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### From Hamburg to Shanghai – A Journey to Liberty and the Unknown

by Claudia Thorn and Sybille Baumbach

[About the authors: Claudia Thorn studied History, Politics and Economics in Hamburg and Dublin and has published on a variety of subjects relating to 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Hamburg. Sybille Baumbach studied History, Literature and Politics in Hamburg and is an academic staff member of the Institute for the History of German Jewry and of the Research Office for Contemporary History in Hamburg (FZH). She has published on topics relating to German-Jewish history in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both are members of the Soci-

ety for Hamburg History and the Hamburg Society for Jewish Genealogy and in 2003 formed "DokuSearch" to do research on various topics.]

2006 is a special date for the relations between Hamburg and Shanghai. The two harbour-cities became sister cities in 1986. Both will present several special events to honour the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the growing relationship during the last 20 years. But long before the cities became sisters Shanghai had already played a certain and very important role to a lot of German and Austrian Jewish citizens who fled from the Nazi terror, as well to those who had there home in Hamburg.

The Cultural Department of the City of Hamburg therefore formed the idea of participating in all those anniversary activities not only with a view on the present and future but especially with a retrospect into a time which turned a huge part of the Hamburg citizens into undesirables who were desperately seeking a place to go.

The importance of Shanghai during Nazi area became most famous as "port of last resort" for Jewish refugees who after the so called "Kristallnacht" fled from Germany and Austria. While in 1939 most countries had already closed their gates for Jewish refugees Shanghai still offered the opportunity to enter without a visa. In Germany it was especially the work of Sonia Mühlberger—born as a child of Berlin refugees in Shanghai—who in cooperation with others initiated the exhibition "Exil Shanghai—Jewish Life in Emigration (1938-1947) at the Aktives Museum in Berlin<sup>1</sup> and made Shanghai known as the last place where Jews from all over Europe found resort to a broader public.

Therefore the idea was to set up an exhibition at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Hamburg and concentrate of the destiny of former Hamburg citizens who went to Shanghai and to show aspects of their life over in Asia.

Until then only the discovery of Jens Huckeriede, a maker of documentaries who is working for the project as well, had brought to public that James Wolf, a member of the very popular Hamburg comedian trio the "Gebrüder Wolf" at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, had to leave Hamburg after his mother had managed to get him released of the concentration

camp Sachsenhausen, where the Nazis had arrested him. In July 1939, he emigrated to Shanghai where he made a living as a repairman of typewriters until his emigration to the United States, where he lived in New York and later in San Diego.

But where to find other refugees who came from Hamburg to Shanghai?

Our first steps led us to the Hamburg State Archive. There was especially one collection of interest: the collection of the so-called "Oberfinanzpräsident" (tax department files). It contains ca. 8,300 files of emigrants who left Germany during the Nazi era. A micro census of these files done by Sybille Baumbach brought the awareness of Shanghai as the fifth important place to which Hamburg Jews fled. 27% went directly to the United States, followed by nearly 16% who fled to Great Britain. About 13% went to Palestine and 8.5% to the Netherlands—where a lot of the emigrants appallingly got arrested by the Nazis after they had attacked the Netherlands. After the Netherlands and widely before France, Shanghai was the destination of around 3% of the Hamburg Jews who fled from the country.<sup>2</sup>

We searched the files and found about 260 Hamburg Jews who declared Shanghai as their destination of emigration. These files only contain papers and documents concerning the emigration and expatriation of the applicants. Only if an emigrant had left family behind and asked for special belongings to be sent abroad after he had left Germany, one can find a hint if the person who had declared Shanghai as destination in the file had actually got there. But in most cases the files do not contain any documents concerning the life of the refugees after they had left Germany.

In a next step we had to match the list of names which we extracted from the files with other sources of Chinese or Shanghai origin. This was quite important to get evidence.

In November 2005 we went to Shanghai for further research. There we met Prof. Pan Guang from the Center of Jewish Studies in Shanghai and his assistant Mr. Zhou for exchange of information on emigrants at the Hongkew district and Jewish life during wartime and Japanese occupation.

Due to their help and guidance and thanks

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very interesting and moving. Ellen stated, "This is history – I wouldn't miss it. We need to pass this on to people. It's important." For Ellen, the high point was the ceremony in the park.

Norman Shelton spoke of the bond between Shanghailanders. "Even if we don't see each other for decades," he said, "when we do, the relationship is promptly reestablished. What Professor Pan Guang and other Chinese academics and government officials are doing to commemorate the history of the refugees in Shanghai is truly mind-boggling."

The best part of the reunion for Vera Sasson was "seeing where we came from, surrounded by Shanghailanders who had shared the experience." Evelyn Pike Rubin, author and lecturer, was with her two daughters and her son. She enjoyed the service and dinner at Chabad so much that she went back the next day. The visit to Hong Kou was another significant moment. For her daughter Sheryl Lerner, in Shanghai for the first time, the reunion "tied everything together, just like the making of silk at the silk factory."

Peter and Lesley Witting of Australia had attended most other reunions. However, this reunion was of particular significance as two of their three daughters, Helen Witting and Naomi Lemmon, as well as Peter's sister, Marion Segal, were able to be with them. Together they took a sentimental walk of about 20-25 minutes in Hong Kou from the Ward Road Heim where Peter and his family had picked up their daily meal from the soup kitchen to where they had lived on Tongshan Road, corner Dalny Road.

Emily Lange, one of the two youngest attendees, came with her father, Stephen, who wanted her to see the place where his father, Bob, Emily's grandfather (who was unable to attend) had found refuge. The best part for her was the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, because that's where her grandpa became a Bar Mitzvah. Coincidentally, Emily's own Bat Mitzvah is to take place soon after her return home to Pennsylvania.

In the afternoon, I was privileged to go with Faith Goldman, her son Sgt. Samuel Goldman, and Fredy Seidel on a tour of Hong Kou with Dvir Bar-Gal. We visited the apartment where Robert Goldman had lived for ten years, and were warmly wel-

comed by the Chinese family now lodged there. The elderly mama hugged us and patted us and served us bananas, tea, and cupcakes. Her son remembered playing with Robert as a child. How fortunate to be able to find this place, scheduled for demolition very soon.

We think we found the Ward Road Heim, where my husband and his father, Semmy, stayed upon their arrival in Shanghai, and the location of the Ward Road Hospital where Semmy died in 1944. The next stop was 818 Chusan Road, where Fredy Seidel and numerous other refugees lived. We were able to see on many doors the outline of the mezuzot affixed there in refugee times. The lanes were much as they had been in the 1940s – small, crowded, and not too clean. Fredy walked right to his old apartment. We had some friendly exchanges with residents, and school children tried out their English on us. When we asked, "How are you?" we were surprised at their prompt reply, "Fine, thank you."

Dvir took me to a lovely park, which was the site of the Columbia Road Cemetery where Fred's father was buried. Fred and I had spent many hours looking for it unsuccessfully on a previous trip. I followed Dvir's suggestion that I take a stone with me from the site, since I could not place a stone on the grave.

The final event was the Farewell Banquet, marked by great camaraderie and a western-style dinner. Brief speeches were given by Rene Wildorff and Leah Garrick, who was a part of the Sephardic community, and Evelyn Pike Rubin. Gary Matzdorff presented Rene with a commemorative book signed by all the participants. Fredy Seidel's suggestion that a scholarship fund be established for Hong Kou youths to enable them to attend university was met with much enthusiasm. The large Australian contingent took a photo together and regaled us with a spirited version of their national anthem, "Advance Australia Fair." The evening – and the reunion – concluded with fond farewells and much picture taking.

The next morning, many made their way to the glitzy new airport in Pudong for the return trip home. Others joined one of the four extensions offered by Lotus Tours: to Hangchow, to Beijing and Xian, to Chungqing and a two-day cruise on the Yangtze River, or to Guilin and Hong

Kong. Whatever their destination, all left the Reunion with memories to last a lifetime and enormous affection for fellow Shanghailanders and for Shanghai, their city of refuge.

#### Pesach in Shandong?!

(continued from page 1)

Unlike many religious Westerners who come here ostensibly to teach English but really to preach the Gospel, we came to China with no hidden agenda. As members of a religion famed for its non-proselytizing philosophy, we have no religious duties vis-à-vis our "heathen" neighbors. We have no reason or wish to convert any Chinese soul to our rather peculiar way of life. On the contrary, our tradition consistently tries to dissuade potential converts from joining. But because we came to Jinan under the auspices of a Judaic studies center, we can't help the urge to share our cultural world and customs and to introduce some of our Jewish and Israeli traditions. The question is which ones.

We started out ten months ago, by inviting people over to our humble Shabbat meals. We served a dinner including *kiddush* wine and homemade *challah*, *tehina*, and soup with *kneidlach* (dumplings). The rest of the meal could have been part of any Chinese dinner. We usually explained that for us Shabbat – from sundown on Friday until starlight on Saturday – is a day of rest, which we spend eating the food we prepared on Friday and arguing politics with family and guests. We warned first-timers to be sure and write down our address, because we do not answer the phone after sundown to give directions to lost guests.

When Sukkot arrived we built a *sukkah* (booth) downstairs in the courtyard and invited our very curious and friendly neighbors and students at the center to the "open sukkah" we hosted on Shabbat afternoon. Our neighbors had played guessing games all week, trying to figure out what we were up to, and had reached the conclusion that our apartment was too small for the number of guests we were planning to invite for our holiday. We explained that our forefathers had fled a life of slavery in Egypt and spent 40 years in the desert on their way to our homeland, Israel, and in that in memory of this we eat in temporary dwellings for a week

every year during the fall. I don't know if this explanation seemed more reasonable to them, but they assured us we were always welcome in their country.

Hanukkah passed unnoticed – our *hanukkiyah* (Hanukkah candelabrum), perched on the refrigerator in the kitchen, didn't attract much attention; and Purim was even less visible. But when Pesach crept up, we felt that a *seder* for ourselves and the other few Jews in town was not enough. We definitely did not, however, anticipate that the affair would mushroom into 23 people sitting on the floor (not enough chairs!) around the *seder* plate.

We got so caught up with the technical preparations (our first independent Pesach as a married couple) that we forgot to prepare on a deeper level. We arranged all the necessary equipment, dishes and foods, but ended up sitting down with 21 pairs of eyes focused on the four *haggadot*, and 21 sets of ears waiting for words of wisdom to come pouring from our mouths.

We turned to each other in Hebrew and asked: now what? How should we guide them through this long and somewhat tedious evening? And why, after all, did we bother? We could just have had them over for another Shabbat meal. Even for many Jews the Orthodox *seder* itself represents a worse torture than slavery in Egypt. How will we feel if we see they are bored, uncomfortable or embarrassed? Almost instinctively, we realized that it was our mission to turn this into an evening that conveyed the powerful message connecting us all.

The holiday of Passover, we told them, is a celebration of our ancestors' escape from slavery to freedom, and as such it symbolizes the importance of redemption from oppression of any kind – both spiritual and physical, as in dark times of history, or the symbolic oppression by ideas, drives and personal constraints. Any Chinese, Pole or American can identify with this yearning.

We drink four glasses of wine, lean to our left and have someone else wash our hands, these being ancient Middle-Eastern and Greek customs of free human beings. We retell the story of the exodus, elaborated by the commentary of our sages, so that our children will learn about the circumstances of the consolidation of

the Jews as a nation and religion and value our ancient traditions no matter where we reside. We encourage them to ask questions and actively participate in the ceremony that is geared mainly towards their education, by leaving ourselves open to blackmail in return for the *afikoman*, and through the promise of fun songs at the end of the long night. Finally we pray for a return, this time next year, to the rebuilt Jerusalem – in both the material and spiritual senses.

As we read the *hagaddah* in Hebrew, frequently stopping to translate and quiz the students on their understanding of the text, most of this came across. The participants were awed by the length, of course, and wondered how the children of Israel manage to integrate the *matza*, *maror* and endless reading with the idea of freedom. But it seems that our guests understood our motivation for spending the most important family event of the year stressing the importance of liberty and the freedom to live as Jews and to keep our traditions wherever we are. Even though they were themselves anything but religious, we believe they could appreciate this. Perhaps it even helped them understand our seemingly absurd insistence not to work on what is the most profitable day of the week for foreigners.

There were some minor failures though. The *charoset* wasn't a great success. After all, who wants to *nosh* on something made to resemble mortar? The *ku-gua* (bitter cucumber) that served as our *maror* was also left mostly untouched, even though the Chinese consider it to be a very healthy vegetable. The *kiddush* wine made it through the four glasses, leaving us with more than an adequate supply for the rest of our stay in Jinan. But the *matza*, to our great surprise, was a real hit. Maybe we should consider importing it to the Chinese market. That would surely make us very rich, proving at least that the second popular Chinese myth about the Jews is true.

You must be wondering who stole the *afikoman*. Well, it wasn't our son, who fell fast asleep not long after adamantly refusing to sing *Ma Nishtana*. It was Liora, who asked for nothing in return, not even an A+ in her Hebrew class. It was getting quite late and the students had to beat their 11 o'clock curfew. But they stuck it out until the fourth cup and the singing of "Le'shana ha ba'a bi-Yerushalayim"...Next year in Shandong?

## Good Things in Small Packages: The Sarasota Mini-Conference

by Jonathan Goldstein

In the course of the last twenty years major Sino-Judaic conferences have been held in Antwerp, Hangzhou, Hong Kong, Minneapolis, Munich, Shanghai, and elsewhere. An August 1992 conference organized by this author brought 157 participants to Harvard, including six from the People's Republic of China. On March 16, 2006, in a variation on the theme of major scholarly conferences, Dr. Alfonz Lengyel, an archaeologist living in Sarasota, Florida, brought together international scholars and local enthusiasts for a small regional conference on "Jewish Diasporas in China." It was an exemplary regional education effort that could be replicated elsewhere.

### Genesis of the Symposium

Dr. Lengyel, who is non-Jewish, is the American director of the Sino-American Field School of Archaeology. Every summer he takes students from the United States and other countries to China for an archaeological practicum. He became interested in Sino-Judaic history while working at Shanghai's Fudan University and Xi'an's Jiaotong University. He participated in last fall's International Convention of Asian Studies in Shanghai, where Professor Pan Guang organized a panel on "Jewish Diasporas in Asia." At that time Dr. Lengyel met Professor Fu Youde of Jinan University in Shandong province, this author, and other historians and religious studies specialists. Upon his return to Sarasota, Dr. Lengyel interested Flanzer Jewish Community Center Cultural Arts Director Jon Meyer in including an afternoon-and-evening program on the Jewish experience in China in the center's weeklong "Kallah" adult education program. Funding was procured from the University of South Florida and a private donor, Dr. Helga Wall-Apelt. The Flanzer Center provided space in its atrium for a concurrent photographic exhibit on "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Settlement in Harbin, China."

The afternoon and evening sessions each attracted about seventy community members. Additionally, six Chinese came to Sarasota from Harbin, made videos of the symposium, and distributed DVD's from a 2004 seminar on Harbin Jewish history that had been held in their city.

## BOOK NOOK

***My China Eye: Memoirs of a Jew and a Journalist***, by Israel Epstein. Long River Press. San Francisco, 2005.

reviewed by Rena Krasno

Epstein's memoirs span over 80 years throughout which his energy, desire to learn, and courage never falter. He wrote *My China Eye: Memoirs of a Jew and a Journalist* at the age of 90, his faculties apparently undiminished.

Epy, as his friends called him, was born in 1915 in Warsaw to parents who were passionately engaged in the Socialist Jewish Labor Alliance (Bund). This political leaning influenced Epstein his entire life.

Epstein's memoirs fascinated me from its very first sentences, which state: "In the West the compass is said to point North. To the Chinese, who invented it, it is the 'South pointing needle'. This dual view does not affect its ability to guide in all directions, but it does draw attention to the relativity of spaces and the concept of multiple polarities." And Epstein continues further: "(The) thoughtful Chinese word for crisis is 'danger-opportunity', reflecting the dual nature of the concept and hinting at the potential to develop in either direction. As in real life."...

Epstein sympathized with the Chinese communist movement and admired Soong Ching-ling (Mrs. Sun Yat-Sen) for her unfailing support of the 1911 Revolution objectives, her fight against foreign control and feudal 'warlordism'. His first personal meeting with her was in Guangzhou (Canton) on September 18, 1938, the anniversary of Japan's seizure of North East China. At night, tens of thousands of civilians paraded with torches, a demonstration of defiance and courage. And, as Epstein states: "With them in the front rank marched Soong Ching-ling in calm determination." Later, Epstein and Mrs. Sun Yat-Sen met numerous times. Ultimately she requested him to write her biography to be published after her death.

Epstein was in Hong Kong when the Japanese conquered the island. He was captured and sent to the infamous Stanley Camp. Soon, he started making escape plans with some other prisoners. Their objective was Daya Bay and the

Guangdong East River Gorilla Column. They managed to find a boat with extra room for one more person and decided to ask Morris (Two-Gun) Cohen - who had also been imprisoned - to join them in their effort to escape. The reason for this offer was appreciation for Two-Gun's loyalty to Sun Yat-sen and his devotion to Soong Ching-ling. Besides, Cohen had been severely tortured by the Gendarmerie and was in danger of dying, should this treatment be repeated. Morris refused to participate in the escape plan, saying that he was too old, sick and weak. Fortunately for him, a short time later, the Japanese allowed him to return to Canada in an exchange of internees mediated by the Red Cross...

Their escape was successful and Epstein later traveled to England, the United States, India and Poland from where he returned to China in 1951...[As] the Cultural Revolution gained force and was eventually taken over by the Gang of Four, both Epstein and his wife were arrested on March 18, 1968. They were compelled to leave behind their two children with their devoted Chinese housekeeper. Epstein remained in prison for 5 years, mostly in solitary confinement. In his cell, he exercised doing dry-land swimming, reflected about books that had influenced him, tried for weeks to remember how to extract a square root and solve other mathematical problems, hummed songs and melodies and told himself Jewish jokes as quietly as possible, since the guards reminded him that laughter, like singing and weeping, were forbidden frivolities and regarded as efforts to avoid thinking of one's crimes.

Slowly, things began to change. In 1972, Epstein's son and daughter, now in their teens, were allowed to visit their parents, who were incarcerated in two different prisons. Finally, Zhou Enlai intervened on their behalf...Epstein and his wife were released from prison in January 1973.

In 1985 Epstein had a television meeting with Deng Xiao-ping. Deng asked how many years he had in prison, and when he replied "almost five", Deng replied: "Less than me, I had six." Deng then lit Epstein's cigarette and they smoked together. The next day, Epstein got a call

from Deng Yingchao, Zhou Enlai's wife (herself a functionary in the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party) reprimanding him and Deng Xiao-Ping for "setting a bad example for our youth, smoking on television."

All his life, in spite of painful difficulties and obstacles, Epstein remained loyal to China, a country he deeply loved and for which he was prepared to make any sacrifice.

### Film

***Kaifeng, Jerusalem: A Documentary by Noam Urbach***  
Synopsis

*Kaifeng, Jerusalem*, a full-length documentary filmed over six years in Israel and China, follows the descendants of the Chinese Jewish community in the ancient capital city of Kaifeng on their quest to recover their Jewish heritage. It examines the community's odd political situation, in which both China and Israel—each for its own reasons—refuse to recognize them as Jews.

The film focuses on the Jin family of Kaifeng—Shlomo, Dina, and their daughter Shalva—who managed to leave China for Israel in 1999, with the assistance of a Christian Zionist group. With no official status in Israel, but with dogged persistence and a unique brand of Jewish identity, the Jins try to communicate their extraordinary circumstances to the Israeli establishment and to educate the authorities as well as the public. The family endures many trials and tribulations. At one point Shlomo is even picked up by the police as an illegal migrant worker.

Insisting that they are already proper Jews, the family at first refuses to "convert." Later, however, they go through the entire process, accepting that Kaifeng Jews must retrieve their Jewish background if they want to rejoin the Jewish people and make aliyah. As Shlomo becomes more devout, he clings on to his original mission—to open the gates for the rest of the Kaifeng Jews.

to Russia rather than remain in Harbin.

In the 1920s Lily Klebanoff-Blake's grandfather, father, and uncle Isai ran a musical instrument shop in Harbin. The business prospered and the grandfather traveled annually to Germany to purchase musical instruments. The family were secular Jews. After the Soviets sold the Chinese Eastern Railroad to the Japanese in 1936, Uncle Isai Klebanoff decided to return to Russia proper, which seemed at the time to offer distinct musical opportunities. Isai attended the Leningrad conservatory, played on the Soviet radio orchestra, and, not long thereafter, was shot by the Soviet Secret Police, the NKVD, on the trumped-up charge that he was head of a Japanese spy ring based in Harbin. Lily Klebanoff-Blake has ferreted out numerous documents pertaining to her uncle's grisly murder. These documents affirm his innocence and profile the paranoia that gripped Russia in the midst of the Stalin era.

Mara Moustafine's maternal grandfather Zaretsky came to Harbin and then to Hailar, where he became agent for the Singer sewing machine company. Her maternal grandmother arrived from Minsk. On her father's side the family were Central Asians. On her mother's side they were secular Jews. In 1936, many of Mara Moustafine's Zaretsky relatives, like Isai Klebanoff, returned to USSR. Many were executed as Japanese spies. Moustafine has ferreted out some 400 pages of secret police files, some bearing the signature of Soviet Chief Prosecutor Andrei Vishinsky, authorizing these grisly murders of innocent Soviet citizens.<sup>8</sup>

The Klebanoffs and Zaretskys were just two cases of thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish Manchurian residents of Russian origin who were purged, exiled to Siberia, or shot. When we think about these crimes, and the fate of other Harbin Jews who became victims to Hitler and Stalin, the meaning of Harbin as a city of refuge, and of Russian-Jewish culture, emerges powerfully. Last year, in perhaps the fullest expression of that sentiment, Dr. Avraham Kaufman's son Teddy, the president of the Tel Aviv-based Association of Former Harbin Jews, and Harbin Academy of Social Sciences Professor, Qu Wei, collaborated on a volume which bore the title "The Homesick Feeling of the Harbin Jews."<sup>9</sup> The title encapsulates the sentiments of many Jews who lived in this city for sixty years. The title says it all.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Boris Bresler, "Harbin's Jewish Community, 1898-1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity" in Jonathan Goldstein, ed. *The Jews of China, Vol. I, Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, [Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1999], p. 200.

<sup>2</sup> "Sixty Years a Circus Proprietor," *The Israelight*, [Singapore] Vol. I, no. 2 [June 1934], pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> Harbin: Defus M. Levitin, 5686 [1925 or 1926], reprinted Brooklyn, N.Y.: Katz Bookbinding, 1981].

<sup>4</sup> Harbin: *Evreiskaia Zhizn'*, 1941.

<sup>5</sup> Israel Epstein, "On Being a Jew in China: A Personal Memoir," in Goldstein, ed. *The Jews of China, Vol. II: A Sourcebook and Resource Guide*, [Armonk, NY and London: M. E. Sharpe, 2000], pp. 85-97. On the problems Chinese Jews had trying to enter the United States, the most sought-after destination for refugees even prewar, see Ernest Heppner, *Shanghai Refugee*, [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993], pp. 172-74.

The problem for refugees generally, and especially for those originally from Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Poland, was that a national quota system made for long delays. As a result, many refugees returned home, especially to Austria, or chose Canada or Israel as springboards for eventual migration to the United States. For a general account of the repatriation of Jews from China to the USSR and to what would become the German Democratic Republic [DDR], see Goldstein, "The Republic of China and Israel" in Goldstein, *China and Israel, 1948-1998*, [Westport, Conn. and London: Praeger, 1999], p. 13.

The departure of Jews from China had begun almost immediately upon the surrender of Japan to the Republic of China and its allies in August 1945. At first it was only a trickle. Among the first to go were those ideologically committed individuals who had always viewed China only as a port in a storm. At one extreme, those emigrants included the ultra-Orthodox students and faculty of the Mirrer Yeshiva, who left Poland and Lithuania in the summer of 1940 and found haven in Shanghai. At an opposite ideological extreme, in July 1947 a contingent of the left-leaning Association of Democratic Germans in Shanghai (Gemeinschaft der Demokratischen Deutschen in Shanghai) repatriated to Germany aboard the U. S. troop carrier *Marine Lynx*. The new Jerusalem for many of those anti-Fascists would be the German Democratic Republic. The Association (Gemeinschaft), while clearly anti-Fascist, included a wide range of political views and made up only part of a much larger group of Germans repatriated from China in 1945-47. The total group included many individuals who went back for family or other personal reasons,

for example, one partner was not Jewish and still had family in Germany, an elderly person did not wish to try starting over in another country, or an individual felt especially strong ties to the German language and culture. Additionally, several dozen Jewish families who were longtime residents of China were among some 5,000 to 8,000 Russians who repatriated to the USSR between 1945 and 1948 for ideological and economic reasons.

On Jews who repatriated to Germany and Austria, see Telegram: JOINTCO, Shanghai, to JOINTDISCO, New York, July 24, 1947, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York; "Association of Refugees from Germany," in Ossie Lewin, ed., *Almanac Shanghai 1946/47* (Shanghai: Shanghai Echo, 1947), p. 81; Georg Armbruster, "15,000 appellien an die Welt," in *Leben Im Wartesaal: Exil In Shanghai 1938-1947*, [Berlin: Judisches Museum in Stadtmuseum Berlin, 1997], pp. 74-77; and Sonja Muehlberger, "From Shanghai to Berlin," *Points East* [Menlo Park, CA] Vol. 13, no. 2 (July 1998), pp. 1-11. On China's Russian Jews returning to the USSR, see Sam Ginsbourg, *My First Sixty Years in China* (Beijing: New World Press, 1982), p.199; Yaakov Liberman, *My China*, [Jerusalem and Hewlett, NY: Gefen, 1998], pp. 57, 95-97, 151-65, and Isador A. Magid, "I Was There," in Goldstein, *China*, pp. 41-45.

<sup>6</sup> Goldstein, Jonathan. "Chinese Jews Return to Harbin, See a Bright Future." *China Research Center Newsletter*, [Kennesaw, Georgia] 3 [October 2004], pp. 2-3; <http://www.chinacenter.net/News/NewsOct04/News-10-04.htm>. Alternate versions in *Points East*, Vol. 19, no. 3 [November 2004], pp. 1, 7; *The Shofar*, [Chattanooga, TN] 18, no. 2 [October 2004], p. 11; *Israel-China Voice of Friendship*, [Tel Aviv], no. 50 [November-December, 2004], p. 5; *The Forward*, [New York], September 24, 2004, pp. 1, 6; *Bulletin of Igud Yotsei Sin* [Tel Aviv] 51, no. 382 [November-December 2004], pp. 7, 9; *The Carroll Star News*, [Carrollton, Ga.], September 19, 2004, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Israel Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage*, [London: Valentine Mitchell, 1956], pp. 203-04.

<sup>8</sup> Lily Klebanoff-Blake and Mara Moustafine delivered papers at the "Seminar on the History and Culture of the Harbin Jews," Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences, Harbin, September 1, 2004. Dr. Moustafine's was entitled "My Family and Its City: Fifty Years in Harbin." It is available on the Igud Yotzei Sin website [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org). See also: Qu Wei and Teddy Kaufman, eds., *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews: A Paper Collection from the International Seminar on the History and Culture of Jews in Harbin*, [Harbin, China: Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences, 2005].

<sup>9</sup> Qu and Kaufman, *The Homesick*.

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##### The Program

Apart from introductory and concluding comments by Dr. Lengyel and Jon Meyer, there were three full-length presentations at the afternoon session...Professor Goldstein gave an historical overview of the origins of Jewish settlement in Manchuria and the evolution of Jewish cultural institutions in Harbin. [See Goldstein's lecture on p. 10.] Next, University of Southern California Emeritus Professor of International Relations Peter Berton gave a highly personalized account of growing up in Harbin...He personalized Professor Goldstein's historical account, describing the economic opportunities which lured his family from Bialystok, Poland to Manchuria, and the cultural life that Russian-speaking Jews found there. Berton is an accomplished violinist and made special note of the rich musical life of the city. He passed around to the audience a concert program from a tour of Manchuria, Korea, and Japan which he made in the late 1930s with the Harbin Symphony Orchestra. Unbeknownst to Berton at that time, the Japanese government was using this orchestral tour for broader propaganda purposes, to justify their colonial presence in Manchuria, Korea and China.

The final speaker was Professor Fu Youde, who gave the audience a taste of the new scholarship about Jews and Judaism that is evolving in China. Twenty years ago there was only one place in China where Judaic studies was taught: the Protestant theological seminary in Nanjing. There Hebrew was taught, but only as a Biblical language. Today, a new generation of Judaic studies scholars, many of them Western-trained, teach Jewish history and theology as well as modern and Biblical Hebrew. There are well-established programs in universities in Beijing, Harbin, Nanjing, and Shanghai as well as in Kaifeng, the site of China's oldest Jewish community. Professor Fu, who studied Hebrew at the Oxford [U.K.] Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, is the director of the most recent Judaic studies program to be established in China: the Center for Judaic and Inter-Faith Studies, appropriately located in Jinan, Shandong Province, the birthplace of Confucius. At Sarasota Professor Fu gave a whirlwind history of Reform Judaism in Germany and the United States. He argued that a streamlined, syncretic faith like Reform Judaism could serve as a model for compromise and accommodation for other ideologies in both China and the West.

**The Importance of Educational Outreach**  
The presentations were followed by a lively discussion about the Sino-Judaic experience, Holocaust issues, and contemporary Sino-Israeli relations. One member of the audience remarked later on the high caliber of speakers and presentations for a non-academic event...Both Professor Goldstein's and Professor Berton's talks have been posted on the website of the Igud Yotzei Sin, the Tel-Aviv-based Association of Former Jewish Residents of China. A Power Point presentation about the exhibition "The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Settlement in Harbin, China" can be purchased for \$12.00 including postage from Director Jon Meyer, Flanzer Jewish Community Center, 582 McIntosh Road, Sarasota FL 34232 USA, TEL: 941-378-5568, Ext.231; or email: [culture@flanzerjcc.com](mailto:culture@flanzerjcc.com). Apart from that broader outreach, the Sarasota meeting is significant in that it demonstrated how a low-budget Sino-Judaic seminar could be efficiently organized for the benefit of an enthusiastic constituency, in this case, the Jewish community of Southwest Florida.

The Sino-Judaic Institute is a non-profit organization that seeks to enhance knowledge and understanding of Jews and Judaism in China. To further that goal, SJI continually offers its support to the newly emerging Jewish Studies centers at universities in China. Building up their library holdings is an important element in their development and SJI collects and ships such materials to the centers in China without cost to the donors. For information call 650-323-1769, e-mail [aldien@stanford.edu](mailto:aldien@stanford.edu) or go to the SJI website, [www.sino-judaic.org](http://www.sino-judaic.org). One such appeal for library materials is attached below.



## Shandong University, China Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies

at the School of Philosophy and Social Science

The Center for Judaic and Inter-religious Studies at the Shandong University is seeking to build up its Judaic Studies library, in order to enable its scholars and students access to study and research topics in the broad fields of Jewish studies and culture. The Center of Judaic Studies at Shandong University has been designated by the Chinese Education Department as one of 100 prestigious key research institutes. Founded and headed by the dean of the school of philosophy, Prof. Fu Youde, and with the recent appointment of Prof. M. Avrum Ehrlich, the Center is pioneering the development of Judaic scholarship in China.

Books on Jewish law, philosophy, history, culture etc. will be most welcomed and much valued. We will be glad to receive donations of new, old, used, and even damaged books. The most desirable language is English, yet basic texts in Hebrew, Yiddish and other languages are also useful.

Be a partner in a unique project to promote Chinese scholarship in Judaic studies and cultivate a meaningful Sino-Judaic cultural and intellectual exchange.

For more information, please contact Noam Urbach, the China Judaic Library Project Coordinator, at: [Judaic\\_Studies@yahoo.com](mailto:Judaic_Studies@yahoo.com), Tel: +86-531-88377560, or website: <http://www.cjs.sdu.edu.cn>

## From Rabbi Kisilev to Ehud Ohlmert: A Brief History of the Cultural Life of the Harbin Jews

by Jonathan Goldstein\*

[Dr. Jonathan Goldstein is a Professor of East Asian History at the University of West Georgia, Carrollton GA. His books include *The Jews of China* [2 Vols., 1999 and 2000] and *China and Israel* [1999]. This paper was written and delivered while he was on sabbatical at the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies during the spring of 2006. He is grateful for the textual criticism of Professor Peter Berton. This paper was presented at the conference "Jewish Communities of China," Flanzer Center, Sarasota, Florida, March 17, 2006.]

I would like to begin my talk on the Harbin Jews with a photograph from the Cape Town Maritime Museum of the ship WOOSTER VICTORY at the Cape Town docks in the late 1940s. The large number of people whom you see congregated along the rails of this ship are all Jews from China en route to Israel. A large proportion of them, including Yaakov Liberman, the unofficial "commander" of this voyage, were originally from Harbin. Theirs was an organized exodus, or *aliyah*, similar to that of Jews of Iran, Iraq, Libya, Morocco, Yemen, and many other places to the Land of Israel.

This photograph evokes two historical questions which I would like to deal with today. First, what were the particular characteristics of Harbin that enabled a Jewish community to thrive there for much of the sixty year period between 1898 and 1958? Second, and with particular reference to this photograph, how did these Harbin Jews develop a strong commitment to Zionism which motivated a handful of them to immigrate to the Land of Israel in the early 1930s and large numbers to make *aliyah* upon the rebirth of the Jewish State in 1948?

With respect to the first question, the basic condition underlying the history of the Harbin Jews was that in the period 1898-1958 the Jewish community underwent almost non-stop wars and other traumas. The late Boris Bresler, who was both a former Harbin resident and arguably the community's most prolific historian, notes two world wars and two revolutions involving civil wars [the Russian from 1917

to 1920 and the Chinese from 1946 to 1949]; two major local wars [the Russo-Japanese from 1904 to 1905 and the Sino-Japanese from 1937 to 1945]; the Chinese Revolution of 1911; two local conflicts [the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929 and the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1931]. If that weren't enough, the Harbin Jewish community lived under five different political authorities: Czarist Russia from 1898 to 1917; the local Chinese warlord Zhang Zuolin from 1917 to 1931; Imperial Japan and then its puppet state of Manchukuo between 1931 and 1945; and, since 1945, the Soviet Red Army, the Chinese People's Liberation Army, and the People's Republic of China.<sup>1</sup>

Despite these upheavals the Jewish community of Harbin grew from zero individuals in 1898 to a high point of about 13,000 in 1931. It then began a precipitous decline. Most Jews left by 1950. In 1982, when Bresler visited, the community consisted of one elderly resident, Anna Agre, who literally kept many of the Jewish communal records under her bed.

Despite these trials and tribulations, for much of its sixty year existence the Harbin Jewish community experienced a rich economic, cultural and intellectual life. Today you are going to hear the particulars of that history, from Professor Alfonse Lengyel and most importantly from Professor Peter Berton, who was both a witness to many of these events and is a published historian of them. I will mention the success stories of Frank Isako, Rabbi Aharon Kisilev, Dr. Abram Yosifovich Kaufman, and members of the Ohlmert family, including the acting Prime Minister of the State of Israel. I will describe the ideological spectrum of the Jews of Harbin, which ranged from the ultra Orthodox Agudat Yisroel to the secular faiths of Third International Communism and Maoism. I will mention the terrible tragedy which befell those members of Harbin's Klebanoff and Moustafine/Zaretsky families who chose to return to the Soviet Union. There is a stark contrast between the fate of those returnees and the life of their kinfolk who remained in Harbin. Perhaps most importantly, I will make some suggestions as to why, amid war and adversity, a great Jewish cultural and intellectual flowering took place.

The most fundamental factor which explains the flourishing of Jewry and Juda-

ism in Harbin is the fact that the city was and is a railroad hub, constructed in 1898 by Czarist Russia on land leased from China. It was located at a point on the Sungari, or Songhua, River where the railroad intersected with extensive river traffic. There was and is massive transshipment trade, warehousing, and related commercial activity in which Jews and other entrepreneurial immigrants partook. Most significantly from the point of view of Jewish history, Harbin both was and was not part of Russia. It was a railway zone where Jews enjoyed residential permission plus an array of economic, political, and cultural freedoms unavailable in Czarist Russia proper. Despite wars, revolutions and upheavals, these fundamental rights remained when the railroad zone was sold to Japan in 1936 and continued thereafter. Legalities within the railway zone were not unlike those in the United States' Panama Canal Zone, established just three years after the Russians got their leasehold in Harbin. There is evidence that President Teddy Roosevelt, who was very well informed about East Asia, studied the Harbin Railway Zone as a model for his Panama Canal Zone.

In this relatively unrestricted environment, Harbin Jews exchanged goods and services with their kinsman in European Russia, China, Japan, Korea, and America as well as with ethnic Russians, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, and native Siberian peoples. In businesses ranging from the export of furs to maritime insurance to the management of hotels, they developed ethnic commercial networking with their co-religionists both within China and overseas.

They had arrived in Harbin at a particularly fortunate moment in time. They enjoyed the "boom town" experience that accompanied frontier expansion. Moreover, like boom towns such as San Francisco in the American West, Harbin did not remain a cultural backwater. It quickly developed into a sophisticated city, nurtured by the wealth of its new entrepreneurs.

Several examples can be cited of Jewish participation in this cultural naissance. One profession near and dear to the hearts of many of you here in Sarasota is that of the circus. Harbin's Jewish circus proprietor was Franz Izako. He was born in European Russia in 1871 into a multi-generational circus family, similar to those

memorialized in Sarasota's circus museum. After the Russian Revolution of 1917 he and his family lost everything: animals, tents, vehicles, actors. However, they knew about the opportunities in Harbin. They crossed Siberia, reached the city "almost penniless," and rebuilt their circus. In the late nineteen twenties, as Frank Izako and his troupe were traveling to Shanghai and Singapore, they were attacked by bandits and his mother lost her life. He reached Malaya and stayed there with his circus until 1930. The last records we have of Frank Isako are from 1934, when he intended to go to Palestine from Singapore and donate his Harbin menagerie "as the beginning of a Zoological Park in Jerusalem." I don't know if that happened but intend to follow up the career of Harbin circus impresario Frank Izako on my next research trip to Jerusalem.<sup>2</sup>

The Jews in Harbin had notable cultural achievements over and beyond Frank Izako's circus. In the early twentieth century Moshe Levitin established a Hebrew, Yiddish and Russian publishing company. It brought out the Hebrew and Russian-language tractates of Harbin's long-serving Rabbi Aharon Moshe Kisilev [1866-1949], who had embraced the pre-Herzlian religious Zionism of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever while he was a student at the Volozhin Yeshiva. Rabbi Kisilev was author of, *Mishbere Yam: Sheelot U-Teshuvot Be-Arbaah Helke Shulkan Arukh* [Hebrew: The Waves of the Sea: Responsa on the Four Parts of 'The Set Table'].<sup>3</sup> Kisilev was also a prolific author of secular tracts, notably *Natsionalizm I Evreistvo: Stat'i, Lektsii, I Doklady* [Russian: Nationalism and the Jewish People: Articles, Lectures and Reports] and *Imre Shefer* [Hebrew: "Good words" or "Beautiful sayings"], a collection of sermons published posthumously in Tel Aviv in 1951 with an introduction from Israel's Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi Isaac Herzog<sup>4</sup>. It was under Kisilev's influence, from 1913 to 1949, that Harbin Jews became overwhelmingly Zionist.

Yet another exemplar of Jewish intellectual life in Harbin was hospital director Abram Yosifovich Kaufman, who lived from 1886 to 1971. Unable to study medicine in Russia because of a severe quota system, both Kaufman and his first wife matriculated in medicine in Switzerland. Kaufman then became a doctor in Admiral Kolchak's Siberian army during the Russian Civil War and finally settled

in Harbin after the triumph of the Bolsheviks. He was the director of Harbin's Jewish Hospital and effectively the secular counterpart to Rabbi Kisilev. Because of Dr. Kaufman's extraordinary leadership qualities, I dedicated my 1999 book *The Jews of China* to him as well as to his Baghdadi counterpart in Shanghai, Nissim Elias Benjamin Ezra [1883-1936].

Under the overall communal leadership of Kisilev and Kaufman, twelve Russian-language Jewish periodicals were published in Harbin, including *Evreiskaia Zhizn'* [Jewish life] and *Gadegel* [the Cyrillic rendition of the Hebrew "hade-gel," meaning "the flag," and specifically the blue-and-white Zionist flag]. The very freedoms that allowed those publications to flourish also enabled the left-leaning Yiddish-language newspaper *Der Vayter Mizrekh* [The Far East], edited by Meir Mendelevich Birman, to appear. The city hosted a variety of political movements ranging from the anti-Zionist Jewish Workers' Bund of Lazer Epstein to the general Herzlian Zionism of Kaufmann to the ultra-religiosity of the non-Zionist Agudat Israel. There was also a largely clandestine Communist Party in which many Jews were active, notably Lazar Epstein's son Israel Epstein, who later becomes a member of the People's Republic of China's National People's Consultative Congress, a largely advisory and ceremonial body. There were about a hundred Jewish Communists who repatriated to the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic in the period 1945-49.<sup>5</sup>

Harbin was also the East Asian entry point for Vladimir Zev Jabotinsky's Zionist Revisionist movement, which counted among its adherents the aforementioned Yaakov Lieberman and the firebrand activist Judith Ben Eliezer, née Hasser. On the Revisionists, I would refer everyone to my article "Chinese Jews Return to Harbin, See a Bright Future," a copy of which was distributed at the beginning of this session.<sup>6</sup> Arguably the most famous Revisionist family to come from Harbin was that of Motya, also known as Mordechai or Motti, Ohlmert, the father of the ex-Jerusalem mayor and acting Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Ohlmert. Motya Ohlmert was among the first Harbin Jews to emigrate to Palestine 'to till the land' in the early 1930s. In the summer of 2004 then Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Ohlmert and a number of Jews

of Harbin origin returned to the city. Ohlmert and his brother, an attaché at the Israeli Embassy in Beijing, were much-photographed reciting the Jewish prayer for the dead at their grandfather's tomb in the Harbin Jewish cemetery. They had recently ordered a new gravestone to be erected there.

Even Harbin's two major Jewish sports organizations reflected the community's intellectual diversity: Maccabi for the General Zionists and Betar for the Revisionists. These two groups would occasionally cooperate to combat the virulent anti-Semitism of the openly Fascist White Russian organizations which also thrived in Harbin's relatively unrestricted political climate. There were shouting matches and occasional scuffles between these groups. In a celebrated incident in 1933, in a botched ransom attempt, White Russian thugs kidnapped and murdered the Jewish musician Simeon Kaspe, son of the owner of Harbin's Hotel Moderne.

Perhaps the fullest description of Harbin's intellectual vitality appears in Zionist fundraiser Israel Cohen's account of 1920-21, when he also visited Singapore and Manila. Cohen contrasted Harbin's vitality with the relatively blasé Jewish intellectual life of Singapore and Manila. He wrote that Harbin's "vigorous Jewish consciousness" manifested itself in

a struggle of parties, in which the Right, Centre, Left, and Extreme Left were always engaged. There were ceaseless public discussions, especially on Saturday night, between the rival adherents of Zionism pure and simple, Zionism without Orthodoxy, Orthodoxy without Zionism, Zionism with Socialism, Socialism without Zionism, Hebraism in Manchuria, and Yiddishism in Palestine...I soon realized that there were...hundreds of Jews in Harbin who were eager to go to Palestine...There was therefore no need for me to gain converts: my task was confined to spreading information and obtaining donations from a relatively small group.<sup>7</sup>

Arguably the strongest testimony to the freedoms enjoyed by Harbin Jews comes not from the reports of sympathetic individuals like Israel Cohen. Rather, we have the accounts of Lily Klebanoff-Blake and Mara Moustafine about the horrendous experiences of their kinfolk who returned