



# Points East

THE SINO-JUDAIC INSTITUTE 中國猶太研究院 מכון סיני יהודי

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## 4 June 1989: I Was There

By Karen Minden

### Background

Karen Minden's fascination with China began in her undergraduate years at York University in Toronto, where she joined the first Chinese language class offered at the university. After completing an M.A. in Asian Studies at Berkeley, she joined the first Canada-China student exchange fellowship in 1973-4, studying at the Beijing Language Institute (now the Beijing Language and Culture University).

Her interest in the development of health care led to dissertation research on the transfer of Western Medicine to China. A post-doc followed the trajectory of pre-1949 Chinese medical and dental graduates of the West China Union University, a missionary school founded in Chengdu in the early 1900s. Her book, *Bamboo Stone, Evolution of a Chinese Medical Elite*, followed their careers until 1989. It was first published by University of Toronto Press in 1994. The Chinese translation was published in 2016, an astounding development in the recognition of a story that was suppressed in China for decades.

Karen travelled to China in May 1989 to attend a Pacific Economic Cooperation (PECC) meeting with then Minister of Science and Technology Song Jian. As co-chair of the multilateral PECC Science and Technology Task Force, she and the members of the Task Force entered the front doors of the Great Hall of the People to attend the meeting. Two hours later, the group was hastily ushered out the back door as Tiananmen Square was by then filled with peaceful demonstrators on the eve of Gorbachev's visit to China.

Karen's parents arrived that evening in Beijing to travel with her to Chengdu, where she was planning to put the finishing touches on her manuscript *Bamboo Stone*. The book was almost ready for publication, and she wanted to share the final draft with her Chinese colleagues and mentors who were the subject of the book. After returning to Canada, and learning of the massacre at Tiananmen and the subsequent crackdown on university students and professors across the country, she delayed publi-

### Help Make History: Contribute to the Denise Yeh Bresler Kaifeng Scholarship Fund

As a memorial to board member Denise Bresler, who had long been active in helping to educate the Kaifeng Jewish community, the Sino Judaic Institute has created a scholarship in her memory.

This autumn, SJI has recruited a Kaifeng Jewish descendant to study intensive Jewish studies and English as a second language abroad before returning home as an informal teacher at family home gatherings. Money is needed for travel, room and board, study materials, and tuition. We need to raise US \$10,000.

Your contribution for this historic undertaking will have an impact, whether you donate \$5, \$50, \$500 or \$5,000. Every little bit helps towards our initial goal of \$10,000. We launch this program in the autumn of 2019, so the need is urgent.

Please contribute by sending a check, made out to the Sino-Judaic Institute with a note for its purpose, to Prof. Steve Hochstadt, 1252 West College Avenue, Jacksonville, IL 62650. Donations can be made online via PayPal at [www.sino-judaic.org](http://www.sino-judaic.org).

Thank you!

## In Memoriam: Irene Eber

Irene Eber, née Geminder, was born in 1929 in Halle, Germany and died on 10 April 2019 in Jerusalem. An eminent Israeli Sinologist, she was the Louis Frieberg Professor of East Asian Studies (emeritus) at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Senior Fellow of the Harry S. Truman Research Institute. A beloved teacher, she was the author of some 13 books and over 50 articles, including *Chinese and Jews: Encounters Between Cultures*; *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China*; *The Jewish Bishop and the Chinese Bible: S.I.J. Schereschewsky (1831–1906)*; *Bible in Modern China: The Literary and Intellectual Impact*; *Confucianism, the Dynamics of Tradition*; pioneering studies of Yiddish literature influence in China and various essays on the sinification of the Kaifeng Jews. Her book, *The Choice - Poland, 1939-1945*, is a psychological analysis of coping with the destructive forces that engulfed her young life in wartime Europe.

### In Her Own Words

By Irene Eber z"l

My peripatetic life began at the age of nine when my family, consisting of my parents and elder sister, was deported from Germany to Poland. It was October 28, 1938. Without money or possessions (we had not been told that we were being sent to Poland) we arrived in Mielec, the small town of my father's family. In Mielec we made our home as best we could until March 9, 1942, when all of the Mielec Jews were deported east by the Germans, to await their death in the Sobibor death camp.

But we did not remain long there. Smuggled back to Radomysl Wielki, we were again deported in the summer of 1942 only to confront a final deportation some months later. I escaped from the ghetto, now a work camp, by digging my way out from under the fence, which surrounded the camp. My aim was to search for a Polish family who would hide me. Finding indeed such a heroic family - hiding a Jew was punishable by death - the wandering life ceased temporarily until late fall 1944, when the Russian army arrived. Miraculously reunited with my mother and sister in 1945 after the end of World War II, the three of us went to Germany in search of surviving family.

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Review of A History of the Kaifeng Israelites by Tiberiu Weisz (Outskirts Press 2018)

## SJI MEMBERSHIP

<u>Country</u>	<u>Total</u>
United States	146
Canada	8
China	17
Israel	16
England	7
Australia	4
Japan	2
Germany	2
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
Total:	204

## FROM THE EDITOR

For some months I have been collecting articles on Israel-China economic relations to use in Points East. Now, as I write these words, the trade war between the USA and China is intensifying, mostly the result of President Trump's desire to upend the status quo and, not coincidentally, as America lines up pro and con, I've noticed an upswing of critical articles in our fields of interest.

The Hudson Institute, a politically conservative, American think tank based in Washington, D.C. has been at the forefront of this activity, with one expert belatedly "exposing" the Chinese government's suppression of the Jewish community in Kaifeng (now entering its fourth year, by the way) and, more importantly, several others writing cautionary articles warning how Israel's embrace of China might upset its relationship with the U.S.A.

This is not to say that these essays are without merit, but I have to wonder about this spate of anti-Chinese materials and I had to question my own willingness to publish any of them in Points East. On the one hand, the articles do raise legitimate concerns; on the other hand I don't want the Sino-Judaic Institute and Points East to become an American pawn in the on-going—and apparently growing—conflict between the U.S. and China. In the end, I have decided to use one of the Hudson Institute's articles along with this disclaimer: Points East is open to diverse perspectives and the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of SJI or Points East.

This issue also features a tribute to yet another giant in our field who died recently, Irene Eber, a remarkable woman and a great scholar. I was happy to have known her and pleased to be able to include one of her groundbreaking essays in our book *The Chinese Jews of Kaifeng*. Her scholarship remains but her insightful perspectives now are lost to us. May her memory be for a blessing.

To end on a happier note: Prof. Eber's passing led several of us to wonder, yet again, about the whereabouts of Prof. Donald Leslie, another great scholar in our field. Although rumored several times to have died, thanks to the investigative work of our Israeli colleague Noam Urbach, Prof. Leslie, also a nonagenarian, has been found alive and well, and living in Sydney, Australia, having been relocated there by his daughter. Ad me'ah v'esreem, Prof. Leslie, to 120 years!

Anson Laytner

## Points East

Anson Laytner, Editor

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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: Steve Hochstadt, Treasurer of the Sino-Judaic Institute, 1252 W. College Ave., Jacksonville IL 62650 USA.

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## Bequest Request

Please consider putting the Sino-Judaic Institute in your will.

## Letters to the Editor

### Help on Tianjin Research

My name is Lara Wolfe and I read Chinese Studies at Cambridge University. I am currently doing my year abroad at Peking University and am beginning to research the Jewish community in Tianjin between the 1920s and 1940s for my undergraduate dissertation.

If you were a member of the Jewish community in Tianjin during this period or know someone who was I would be very grateful if you could contact me at [larawolfe@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:larawolfe@hotmail.co.uk). Alternatively, if you know of any good archives, sources or researchers that you think might be of help I would also appreciate a short email.

Many thanks,

Lara Wolfe

## In the Field

Welcome to Yonatan Menashe

Yonatan Menashe has accepted an invitation to join SJJ's International Advisory Board. He is a Reform Jewish Singaporean national who was born in Malaysia where there was once a small mainly Baghdadi Jewish community on the island of Penang. The community never numbered more than 150 at its peak although a Jewish cemetery remains as an enduring legacy the island once hosted a community of Mizrahi Jews. The Jews of the Far East, mainly Baghdadi in origin, had followed in the wake of the British empire and established communities in the coastal cities of Bombay, Calcutta, Rangoon, Penang, Singapore and Hong Kong. Most of the educated Jews of the Far East had become fluent in English although likely spoke other languages like their native Arabic and adopted Malay, the lingua franca of the Indo-Malayan archipelago.

Yonatan's great-grandfather Yehezkiel was one of the founding members of the Penang community. Yonatan is the only one in his family line who has stepped into the Land of Israel, having first done so in 2004 after becoming a Singapore citizen, realising the dream of his great-grandfather who had written about the coming restoration of the Land in his memoirs in the 1920s.

Yonatan received his schooling in Malaysia and university education in Australia where he graduated with advanced degrees in engineering and business. He has been based in Singapore since 2000. He worked in management consulting and senior level positions in the banking & finance industry for 15 years before embarking on a corporate career. As a descendant of a small Jewish community

that has now largely vanished, Yonatan is acutely aware of the need to nurture the Jewish spark in "lost" Jews who wish to reconnect with their Jewish brethren, recognizing the challenge that Jewish descendants often face in their quests to reconnect. Accordingly, Yonatan has an interest in connecting with "lost" Jewish communities of the Far East including China.

## China and Israel: An Overview

By Shai Kivity

*Excerpted from Harvard Kennedy School Review, 26 December 2018 <http://ksr.hkspublications.org/2018/12/26/israel-china-foreign-policy/>*

A tectonic movement in the nature of international relations has arrived, with most of the West ignoring it – the rise of China. As China's GDP has recently surpassed the United States', making it the strongest country in the world from an economic standpoint, the US has woken up to find itself attempting to avoid the Thucydides trap – when an incumbent power goes to war against a rising power to try and contain the change. It is now scrambling towards a new global strategy. In the best US think tanks, great diplomatic minds are trying to figure out a strategy to deal with the matter.

For Israel to build its geopolitical power in the century to come, it must also create a comprehensive strategy towards China, and leverage its innovative culture to support the fifth Jewish wave of immigration to China – the technology immigration wave. Israel, a small country in the Middle East, constantly under security threats, must not let the waves of change go unnoticed, as large waves can cause even the strongest of ships to sink.

In order to understand modern day Israel, we must go back to its founding father, David Ben Gurion, who devised a coherent national security strategy, still in effect today. The modern state of Israel has four pillars of national defense: (1) a strong army, disproportionate to the country's population size; (2) reliance on a friendly superpower for support in foreign policy; (3) the Jewish Diaspora as a tool to support the Jewish people in the land of Israel – culturally, economically and diplomatically; and (4) nuclear deterrence maintained by ambiguity regarding Israel's nuclear capabilities.

As a small country that has always relied on the support of a superpower as one of its pillars of national security, Israel must adapt to the change in the foreign policy orientation of the US. The US, over time, will increasingly focus on Asia to compete against the rise of China. It has

already started losing its strategic focus in the Middle East.

It is safe to presume that in the Middle East, the player that gains China's support will gain the upper hand. As China will become the world's largest and most dominant player by 2040, two of the four pillars are losing their importance in the changing international arena – the reliance on the US as a superpower, and the support of Jews in the Diaspora. If not attended to, Israel will lose its strategic advantages.

The US has been unequivocally the biggest supporter of Israel in the world stage until today. Its support is based on more than just a realist alignment of interest. Being the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel has identified deep similarities with the US in culture and values, projecting "soft power" between the two. Declining support from the US will lead one of the two pillars to crumble. As for the second pillar, the Jewish Diaspora will become less impactful as China rises. Six million Jews live in the US, while less than several thousand live in China, and only about 1,500 live in Beijing, China's capital. The Jewish culture and values are not as embedded into China's institutional structure, economy, and culture...

Bringing the Jewish-Chinese historical connection to light is an essential mission to maintain Israel's security in the 21st century. But to bring these two nations of very similar culture and self-perception closer, Israel must also work on the third pillar of national security: actively building the Jewish Diaspora in China. Israel must create a robust and large Jewish-Israeli Diaspora in China. And it just so happens that we are now facing the fifth wave of Jewish immigration to China.

What is it that Israel has to offer to start the alignment? The currency of the future – innovation. A currency that China knows it is lacking, and that Israel is rich in. Through relocating tech companies and opening joint R&D centers in China, Israel can foster the fifth wave of Jewish immigration. Yet such a task is not trivial, as the US, Israel's dearest friend in the international community, is in a strategic competition with China. Managing such a relationship is a complex one, but the International arena is not a "winner takes all" game. If China is able to rise peacefully, countries may not need to choose between China and the US. Israel, if prepared correctly, can be the bridge that connects the US and China, a bridge between the East and the West.

*Shai A. Kivity is an Israeli MPA-MBA dual-degree student at the Harvard Kennedy School and the Wharton School. He lived in Beijing before becoming a student at Harvard and speaks five languages, including Arabic and Mandarin.*

## Tiananmen

(continued from page 1)

cation of the book, fearing it might endanger her friends in China. It was not until she heard from one of her contacts in Chengdu two years later, in 1992, that they agreed to meet in Shanghai to review the entire manuscript, and ensure that it was safe to publish the story of the pre-1949 graduates of the medical school, their trials and tribulations, and their contribution to modern medicine and dentistry in the People's Republic of China.

### REMEMBERING TIANANMEN

It seems like a lifetime ago that my parents and I somehow managed to get to the airport in Beijing, amid thousands of peaceful protestors. They included students, professors, police officers, trucks with Kentucky Fried Chicken banners on one side, and democracy posters on the other...Our driver had to carry our suitcases several blocks because he could not get his car near the Jianguo Hotel. We followed on foot until we got to his car. He told us that his brother was in the military, and that apparently troops were amassing around Beijing.

The atmosphere was a combination of hopeful and ominous. Once we arrived in Chengdu, several hours later, we learned that martial law had been declared. All was quiet in that far west city, but a senior history professor at Sichuan University told us that there would be blood. That student protests for democracy always ended in blood, and he warned his students not to march.

A few days later, I awoke to the sound of loud chanting. Miles away, in the heart of Chengdu, thousands of demonstrators were marching in support of the students in Tiananmen Square. To me, the sound evoked memories of moments in China's history when the regime - Imperial, Republican, or Communist - turned the people against foreigners to deflect attention from the government. By this point, my gut, not to mention my frantic husband back in Canada, knew it was time to leave.

We managed to secure a flight from Chengdu, even though most flights had been grounded in favour of military transfers to Beijing, and we arrived in Shanghai, which was also in chaos. With one hour's notice, and with help from the staff at Canadian Airlines in Shanghai and in Canada, coordinated by my husband who was waiting anxiously at home with two young children, we got on the last domestic flight out of Shanghai, and arrived safely in Japan.

Arriving back in Canada on June 3rd, we were horrified to see the news about the crackdown on students in Tiananmen. I

had been walking among them a week earlier. The atmosphere was so hopeful and for a brief moment, it seemed possible that there would be a shift in China's political culture as it opened to the world. Thirty years later, the country is prosperous and the government is as repressive as ever. I no longer look forward with any confidence in my predictions about what might develop in China. Looking backward into millennia of Chinese history and political culture is perhaps the most relevant source to imagine the future.

Today I think about the human spirit and its yearning for freedom, and think about the young students whose hopes and lives were crushed thirty years ago. The memory of them is as fresh as ever.

*Karen Minden, C.M., PhD, has a career spanning both Asia Pacific, and adolescent mental health. She was founding CEO of Pine River Institute, which offers an innovative treatment program to adolescents struggling with mental health and addiction. Her earlier career included senior executive positions in national foundations including the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada (VP Research). Formerly professor of management and political science, Karen has a PhD from York University, and an MA in Asian Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. Her publications include books and articles on health care development in China, management of technology in the Pacific Rim, Pacific Rim science and technology networks, and adolescent mental health and addiction. Dr. Minden was appointed to the Order of Canada in 2010, for her contributions to addiction treatment programs for adolescents in Ontario, and for building closer economic partnerships between Canada and the Asia Pacific region. She received the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. She currently serves as an advisor to several mental health initiatives. She may be reached at [kpminden@gmail.com](mailto:kpminden@gmail.com).*

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### Irene Eber

(continued from page 1)

felt, I would discover the world of learning and study closed suddenly in 1938. There followed years of work and reading and the nearly miraculous revelation: I found China with its long history of great thinkers and culture. Pomona College in Claremont, California offered me a scholarship. Professor Chen Shouyi opened door after door on unknown riches in another world. A Bachelor's degree, earned *summa cum laude*, followed. Then a Master's degree and the clear goal of a Ph.D. in Chinese studies at Claremont University.

These years of learning and thinking, of

marriage, two wonderful children, were also years of a journey. A very different kind of journey in a land I loved and made increasingly my own. Throughout I did not forget my father, murdered by the Germans, and I often thought about what it was he would have me do. The answer was clearly given by Confucius: to share with others what one has learned.

Finally, in Jerusalem I taught at the Hebrew University for nearly thirty years. My present pursuit of intercultural studies is carried out more intensively in recent times. It is aimed at understanding how two such different cultures, Chinese and Jewish together with its lost Yiddish culture, can nonetheless communicate with one another.

### Irene Eber's Path

By Renée Levine Melammed

Excerpted from *The Jerusalem Post*, 18 July 2013

Hidden away in an apartment in a lovely residential setup for those she calls the "old folks" is a fragile looking professor emeritus from the Hebrew University. Unbeknownst to most of her neighbors, she is an internationally renowned scholar of Chinese literature and history as well as an expert on the Chinese and Shanghai Jewish communities. Prof. Irene Eber has managed to create a niche for herself in the most unexpected places.

Born in Germany but sent with her family in 1938 to Mielec, Poland, she was barely a teenager when the Nazi deportations began. Her Bais Yaakov education was interrupted, but her love of learning would lead her on unexpected paths. At first, the family hid in an attic and avoided being deported to Auschwitz from the Debica ghetto. Irene then defied her father, choosing to flee; she dug her way under a fence and took a train to Mielec, where she expected to find refuge. One Polish "friend" sicked a dog on her, another threw her out, but eventually a Polish refugee family took her in. Her hiding place was atop a chicken coop, where she remained for nearly two years, picking the lice from her head as she awaited her daily meal.

When the war ended, Irene was convinced that she was the only Jew left on earth and had decided to join a convent. Unbeknownst to her, her father, realizing that he could not remain where he was, went to another work camp, only to arrive at precisely the wrong time, while the workers were away; as a result, he was shot on the spot. Her mother, an experienced typist, was sent to Oskar Schindler's camp when the labor camps were liquidated and worked in his office. Consequently, Irene's sister Lore was put on the list by her mother, and the two survived the camps. At the end of the war, Lore was instructed to look

for her younger sister and, upon locating her, Irene was stunned by the apparition that appeared before her.

The three reunited women went to Germany, where Irene had very unpleasant experiences in several DP camps. She was offered a chance to work on a kibbutz in Palestine, but was unwilling to forgo attaining an education. She was anxious to make up for lost time and to find a way to study once more. Thus, she opted to go to New York, where she took a job, signed up for night school, learned English quickly and to this day, writes magnificently in her acquired language.

This refugee not only managed to acquire a bachelor's degree, but after moving to California earned her doctorate, mastering Chinese along the way. Eventually, the young Dr. Eber arrived in Israel and brought up two lovely children, Jonathan and Miriam, as she made her way in the academic world. She taught in the one-year program, dazzling huge classes of 90 to 100 students with her knowledge of Asian religions and bringing the literature and culture of traditional China to life for them.

Eber joined the Truman Center on Mount Scopus and served as chair of the department of East Asian Studies a number of times. Before anyone knew who Schindler was, she was going to the Mount of Olives annually to commemorate the day of his death, for she was one of the few people at the time who knew who he had been.

A scholar, she published numerous books and articles on topics related to China, often comparing or tying them to Judaism... She has also served as an academic adviser to Beit Hatfutsot, for the display portraying the Jewish community of Kaifeng.

When looking at her, one would think that a breeze could knock her over. Nevertheless, this incredibly tenacious woman has managed to maneuver from country to country, never ceasing to use her imagination and to find fascinating topics to research and publish...

*Renée Levine Melammed is a professor of Jewish history at the Schechter Institute and the academic editor of Nashim.*

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## An Analysis of Chinese-Israeli Relations

By Arthur Herman

*Excerpted from [www.Mosaicmagazine.com](http://www.Mosaicmagazine.com), 5 November 2018*

In March 2017, President Xi Jinping of China hosted two important visitors from

the Middle East. The first was King Salman of Saudi Arabia, whose country's oil supplies are crucial to China's energy and economic outlook. The second was Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Unlike Saudi Arabia—or Iran, or Iraq—Israel is one Middle Eastern country with no oil to offer China. Nor does it count China among the many customers for Israeli arms exports; to that prospectively lucrative arrangement, a 2005 dispute with the United States closed the door. Nor is there a large expatriate Chinese population in Israel clamoring for good relations with Beijing. Nor, in China itself, is there a Jewish community of any size whose interests an Israeli prime minister might deem a fit topic to bring up with his Chinese counterpart.

Nonetheless, Netanyahu's appearance in Beijing was more than a courtesy call, or an opportunity to discuss with an interested third party the changing shape of Israel-Arab relations (in which, coincidentally, the growing thaw between Jerusalem and Riyadh was playing a prime role). Instead, the visit was a ratifying event in one of the fastest-growing and most remarkable economic and political partnerships of the past two decades.

In a joint statement after the visit, Netanyahu and Xi pledged increased cooperation in areas including "air-pollution control, waste management, environmental monitoring, water conservation and purification, as well as high-tech fields." The statement also announced plans to create "a global technology center" and other joint projects in the area of innovation, with a standing invitation to Chinese companies to join in a variety of infrastructure projects within Israel itself. For his part, Netanyahu also expressed interest in Israel's joining China's massive multi-billion-dollar One Belt One Road project, and in signing a free-trade agreement between the two countries.

Strikingly, the joint statement said very little about the usual Middle East political issues—this, despite China's recent announcement of its by no means Israel-friendly "Four-Point Peace Plan" between Israel and the Palestinians. Instead, Netanyahu cordially encouraged China's quest "to assume its rightful place...on the world stage," adding that, for this effort, "We are your perfect junior partner...I believe this is a marriage made in heaven."

There is certainly no denying that, in terms of trade and investment alone, the burgeoning economic partnership between Israel and China has at least the potential of transforming not only Israel itself but also Israel's position vis-à-vis the rest of the Middle East—and most notably vis-à-vis Iran, which happens to be Beijing's other key partner in the region. Inevitably, it could also have an impact on Israel's relations with the United States.

But is this a marriage made in heaven? Or is it something else?

Weighing the answer to that question involves probing beneath the two countries' currently successful dynamic of trade and commercial transactions to their respective geopolitical agendas. When it comes to Israel, the acknowledged junior partner, it also requires examining whether and how the relationship with China could become a dependency. Such a change might please Beijing, but it would impose on Israeli national security a new kind of vulnerability, one very different from the challenges it has faced successfully in the past.

### I. Israel Turns toward China

China and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992, under the respective leadership of Deng Xiaoping and Yitzhak Rabin. But the growth of Chinese investment in Israel and the expansion of Israeli business in China are products of the last decade and especially of the last few years. In 2016, for example, China's annual direct investment in Israel almost tripled from the previous year to \$16 billion. During Netanyahu's March visit last year, the two countries signed no fewer than ten bilateral business agreements amounting to a total value of \$25 billion. At this rate, China could soon overtake the U.S. as the number-one source of overseas investment in Israel.

From Israel's point of view, a turn toward China made good economic sense. At a point when the U.S. and Europe were still recovering from the 2008 financial crisis and growing at a snail's pace, and when Europe's relationship with the Jewish state was becoming increasingly tainted by anti-Semitism, Asia in general and China in particular looked like safe bets for trade.

... Annual trade between the two countries has now surpassed \$11 billion, a small figure when compared with China's trade with the United States or Europe but fully 200 times larger than it was at the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. (In the same period, American trade with China grew only twenty times larger.) Chinese investment money has also moved aggressively into Israeli markets, from food technology and environmental and health products to computers and lasers.

The first major corporate foray of this kind was the 2014 acquisition of Tnuva, the largest Israeli dairy company, by China's Bright Foods, followed four years later by the purchase of Ahava, maker of Dead Sea cosmetics, by the Chinese conglomerate Fosun.

But nothing attracts China's attention like Israel's high-tech sector. The wave began in early 2010 with Yifang Digital buying up Pegasus Technologies, which devel-

ops and sells a digital pen for computers. Since 2014, Israeli companies snapped up by Chinese investors include Travel-Fusion, Natali HealthCare Solutions, and Alma Lasers. Meanwhile, Chinese Internet leviathans like Alibaba, Baidu, and Tencent Holdings are trolling for Israeli start-ups that can help them build new technologies to compete with Google and Apple.

The flow of Chinese venture capital shows no signs of letting up. To help bring Israeli and Chinese companies together, a number of joint business events are now held regularly, and the mutual interest in research has also spilled over into academic cooperation.

Last May, Alibaba's founder and CEO Jack Ma and 35 other Chinese executives visited Israel with an eye (according to Israeli media) of setting up a major Alibaba research hub in the country. In 2014, Tel Aviv University announced that it would partner with Tsinghua University in Beijing to build the CIN Research Center with a focus on biotech, solar, water, and environmental technology. Two years later, the University of Haifa announced plans to build a joint laboratory at East China Normal University in Shanghai to research ecology, data, biomedicine, and neurobiology; all funding was provided by the Chinese government. In December 2017, an arrangement between Haifa's Technion and Shantou University in southern China, funded by a \$130-million grant from the Li Ka-shing Foundation and further bolstered by local public monies in China, came to fruition with the opening in Shantou of a joint campus for technological research.

On the Israeli side, academic interest in Chinese culture and civilization has burgeoned via Asian-studies programs at the University of Haifa, Bar Ilan University, and Tel Hai College. Chinese government-funded Confucius Institutes—one of the major conduits of pro-Beijing information and propaganda around the world—now operate at both the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv University...

## II. Deeper than Business

Indeed, the China-Israel relationship runs much deeper than business. China has taken on a staggering number of infrastructure projects around the world in recent years, and Israel is one of its important venues.

"This is an historic moment," Prime Minister Netanyahu announced a year ago as he and Chinese executives laid the cornerstone of a new multi-million-dollar seaport at Ashdod being built by a Beijing-based harbor-construction firm. At \$3 billion, this is one of the biggest overseas investment projects in Israel, ever—and also one of the biggest for the Chinese company, China Harbor Engineering.

Ashdod on the Mediterranean coast is the destination of fully 90 percent of Israel's international maritime traffic. Officials claim the new harbor will expand Israel's ability to meet growing demand—including, it seems, from Chinese vessels stopping in Israel. For the Ashdod project also forms part of the vast overseas-development plan unveiled by Xi at the Boao Forum for Asia in March: the Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road. The plan, according to the Chinese news agency Xinhua, "is expected to change the world political and economic landscape through development of countries along the route, most of which are eager for fresh growth."

For Israel, one of those presumably eager countries, Beijing has very special plans. It sees the Jewish state as an important link in the even larger China-dominated trading chain mentioned earlier: the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) extending from the Indian Ocean and central Asia across the Middle East and thence to Europe. Xi hopes that OBOR will generate \$2.5 trillion in trade for China over the next decade, with Ashdod serving as a crucial port of destination for seaborne trade with Europe.

As a partner in construction projects, China brings big advantages: large pools of available capital, shorter set-up time, and faster construction of plant and infrastructure projects, often carried out by Chinese workforces brought in for the purpose. In Israel alone, according to a report by Israel's Institute for National Security Studies, "China is involved in . . . digging the Carmel tunnels in Haifa, laying the light rail in Tel Aviv, and expanding [both] the Ashdod and Haifa seaports"—and is also entering the residential construction industry.

One outstanding example of Chinese capital helping to meet Israeli needs while also serving larger Chinese interests is Beijing's involvement in the so-called "Red-Med" project, a 300-kilometer rail line linking the port city of Ashkelon, just fifteen miles south of Ashdod, to the Red Sea. The Israeli government, which has deemed "Red-Med" economically essential to the country's future, responded enthusiastically to China's offer to provide experienced labor and an approximately \$2-billion investment. From China's perspective, however, "Red-Med" forms only one node, albeit an important one, in the network of high-speed rail lines it intends to build across Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East as well as in China itself.

In short, OBOR subsumes Israel-based infrastructure projects like the Haifa and Ashdod port constructions and Red-Med within an ambitious trans-Asian strategy to pursue three key resources for China's future greatness: petrochemicals, consumer markets, and advanced technology.

Oil and gas imports by China from the Middle East—including, some Israelis hope, from Israel's own recently discovered offshore natural-gas reserves—fulfill the need for the first resource. As for consumer markets in the Middle East itself, countries with large populations like Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt are seen as targets for China's export industries in everything from consumer goods and electronics to weapons systems.

Where Israel occupies a unique place is in the pursuit of the third resource: advanced technology that can help spur China's economic growth while also serving its defense and security needs thanks to the elementary fact that commercial technologies—from solid-state sensors to high-end electronic components and advanced lasers—are as essential to military affairs as is any technology usually deemed strictly military in nature.

Petrochemicals, consumer markets, and advanced technology: each "plays a role in a broader policy set down in Beijing," noted the China and Middle East expert Sam Chester in an interview with *Diplomat* magazine this past August. And China clearly views Israel as an element in that broader policy—a policy that takes advantage of the great-power vacuum left by the U.S.'s declining interest in the Middle East as a whole.

Right now, unlike Russia in Syria, Beijing has tried largely to steer clear of involvement in regional conflicts—let alone acting as mediator or honest broker. But in Xi's words, "A peaceful, stable, and developing Middle East meets the common interests of all parties including China and Israel." To that end, collaborative Sino-Israeli efforts also include counterterrorism and anti-piracy operations, as well as economic support for Arab countries. Beijing looks to Jerusalem to provide advanced technologies in agriculture and manufacturing to secure the industrialization and social stability of the region—once again in the context of OBOR's larger goal of making China the dominant player in the global economic scene. Meanwhile, closer involvement with China seems to offer Israel the promise of enhanced security for its own regional activities...

## IV. The Risks for Israel

It is abundantly clear what China wants from its growing ties with Israel: high-tech leverage and a strong geopolitical presence in the Middle East. The remaining question is what Israel wants, and what, for better or for worse, is involved in getting it.

Israel wants capital, clearly, and a booming market for export sales—especially as a hedge against the threatened (if so far unlikely) possibility of European divestment. No less clearly, Israel has strategic considerations in mind, many of them connected with the dangerously chaotic

aftereffects of the withdrawal of American power from the region. But Israel is also very much aware of the risks that loom in its embrace of Beijing.

One obvious risk has to do with China's continuing relationship with Iran, from its dependence on Iranian oil and on the Iranian strategic presence in the vital Hormuz Straits, to its ongoing support for Iran's development of ballistic missiles, to its long history of enabling Iran's nuclear program. At the same time, Israeli officials believe (or hope) that they can influence Beijing to restrain Iran's missile programs and curtail Tehran's support for terrorist groups in the region...

But it remains to be seen how much influence Israel actually can wield. Certainly its relationship with China hasn't led to any significant change of Beijing's lock-step hostility to Israel's management of the Palestinian issue. (With India, by contrast, Israel has had greater success on this front.) Although Netanyahu has voiced the expectation that closer ties would lead to a friendlier China in the UN, so far that hasn't materialized, either...

How things turn out will depend not only on how Israel handles the challenge but also on the reaction of the U.S., Israel's most powerful ally and partner.

In addition to the strategic challenges posed by China's growing presence in Israel itself, including in the ports of Ashdod and Haifa, American policy-makers are haunted by the possibility that, ban or no ban on defense sales, Israeli technology will ultimately find its way into the hands of the Chinese military...

Today, Israel is making a high-risk bet that it can walk the tightrope between its alliance with the U.S. and China's ambitions, and maintain warm and lucrative relations with both. But that bet could end badly...

*Arthur Herman is a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute and the author, most recently, of 1917: Lenin, Wilson, and the Birth of the New World Disorder (Harper-Collins, 2017).*

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## China, Israel, and the United States: Triangular Pressures

*The Jewish People Policy Institute, www.jpji.org.il*

On December 31, 2018, JPPI Senior Fellow Dr. Shalom Wald, joined by JPPI's co-chair, Ambassador Dennis Ross, and JPPI Senior Fellows Ambassador Avi Gil and Brigadier General (Res.) Michael Herzog, to discuss China – Israel relations, and their implications for US – Israel relations, in light of recent tensions between Washington and Beijing.

### Dr. Shalom Wald's Presentation:

- China – Israel relations began to be influenced by US – China relations during the Korean War, and especially so as China grew into an economic and strategic rival to the US in the 2000s, and when Israel sought to export advanced arms and technologies to China. The US objected, including to arms that did not have American components.

- Israel is the only country asked to sign a protocol according to which it has to submit all tech exports to China to US oversight. This could limit its exports to China of dual use technologies. This has proven to be a source of tension between Jerusalem and Washington, as it is increasingly difficult to discern which technologies have dual use applications.

- This has often been viewed by Israel as the price to pay for its strategic alliance with the United States, which is more important than economic relations with China. Israel further pays for this acquiescence through American companies taking advantage of this agreement to quash Israeli competition in Chinese markets.

- As Chinese investments in Israeli technology and infrastructure continue to grow, they could become a serious point of contention between Israel and the US, with voices in the American and Israeli media already voicing criticism of Israel.

- These criticisms and tensions will only increase as the geopolitical and economic rivalry between the US and China increases. Conversely, Israel benefits from any reduction in tensions between the two countries. Dr. Wald noted a reportedly positive conversation that took place this past week between President Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping. He observed a behavior pattern whereby Trump uses menacing rhetoric against his rivals, then manages to negotiate and reach some sort of middle ground through personal outreach, much as he did with North Korea.

- According to Dr. Wald, Chinese investments and interest in the Israeli economy have grown steadily in recent years. According to The Economist's China Going Global Investment Index Rating, Israel jumped from 31st place in 2013, to 17th in 2015 and 11th in 2017, a number that understates China's interest in Israel as Israel is one of the few countries outside of China's traditional orbit ranked so highly on this list. It is important to recognize that China views all economic activity as geostrategic, and such activity is coordinated by the regime with a long-term strategy in mind. Dr. Wald added that the Chinese have an admiration for the Jewish people's contribution to creativity and science, and sometimes that they do not differentiate between Israel and non-Israeli Jews.

- According to Dr. Wald, the conflict be-

tween Israel and the Arabs does not really interest China nor does the Palestinian issue. The Chinese are primarily interested in Israel as America's closest ally in the Middle East, and also due to its technological innovation, and in Iran as America's most resolute enemy and also as a nearby energy supplier.

- Dr. Wald noted articles in the American media invoking the slur of "double loyalty": Israel betraying America. The various articles reviewed focused on three main issues: 1) Israel's technological exports will increase China's military and economic power against the US; 2) Israel risks allowing its national infrastructure to fall under Chinese control; 3) Israel will inadvertently allow China to spy on the US navy, as it docks occasionally in Haifa port. It seems that Israel is being judged more harshly than other countries with similar Chinese infrastructure projects, perhaps since it is an emotional issue in American politics and since it is arguably more dependent on America than most other allies.

- Dr. Wald noted a nativist trend in Israel regarding potential Chinese investment and claims that Western companies would not stir the same public sentiments. Indeed, Israel has blocked a number of deals offered by China, such as the acquisition of a major Israeli pension fund.

- Dr. Wald offered three main policy recommendations for Israeli leaders:

1. Israeli must demonstrate to the US that strong Israel – China ties are not adversarial or counter to American interests. On the contrary, these can also serve US interests. This should be Israel's top priority.

2. Israel must invest more in long term planning, and policy coordination regarding China than it currently does. Related to this is the lack of experts in Israel on China, although there is an excellent Israeli NGO strengthening links with Chinese think tanks and universities and a few other experts. That is, while China invests considerable resources in understanding Israel and any country in which it invests.

3. Israel should consider what more it can ask and get from China beyond investments, such as an active and stabilizing role in Middle East affairs. One example offered would be to assist in the reconstruction (and oversight) of Gaza. However, he suggested Israeli leaders, in their meetings with Chinese officials, stop "lecturing" them on the threat of Iran or other such regional issues, as they are not concerned with these.

Remarks by Ambassador Ross:

- The US sees China as a rising and increasingly determined power, no longer regional but global, seeking to challenge American dominance. This development has a psychological effect in the US across

the whole political spectrum.

- Amb. Ross recommended Israel fully take this consideration into account when making decisions involving China, and also clarify to American counterparts that it understands the US' sensitivity in this regard.
- This does not mean Israel has to cease economic cooperation with China however, just to be far more cognizant of and sensitive to this matter. Israel must convince the US that its strong relations with China might be helpful in producing more stabilizing Chinese behavior in the Middle East – something is an American interest.
- Amb. Ross noted that Israel could affect China's thinking by explaining actions by Iran that could provoke Israeli military responses, precisely because Chinese economic interests in the region are threatened by conflict. He noted that the threat of an Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear program was instrumental in convincing the Chinese to back sanctions on Iran. Israel itself can make this point to affect Chinese Middle East policy.
- In regard to the lack of expertise in Israel, Amb. Ross noted the extent of business-people with expertise on China and knowledge of the Chinese, with whom the government should consult.
- Amb. Ross found Dr. Wald's idea for Chinese investment and involvement in Gaza interesting but was dubious and asked what the Chinese would have to gain from such activity. Dr. Wald offered that it could raise Chinese prestige internationally.

Remarks by Ambassador Gil:

- Amb. Gil inquired as to potential for tensions and even military escalation between the US and China in the coming year. He noted the prospects for economic stagnation in China, which could lead to internal dissent, and suggested a scenario in which Beijing seeks to divert attention from domestic troubles by stoking nationalist issues, such as taking aggressive action against American allies in the South China Sea. What would the Trump administration do in such a scenario?
- In response, Dr. Wald noted that Western observers have, since the end of the Mao era, in regular intervals predicted severe economic troubles for China, maybe it will be true this time, maybe not. Dr. Wald did not foresee a military conflict, as the two countries are far too interconnected economically to allow the situation to deteriorate to a military conflict. He further added that such a conflict would not be domestically popular in China. The Chinese do not hate America. In any case, the Chinese, he noted, have always proven adept at compromising in order to navigate and reduce tensions and conflict with the US.

Remarks by Brigadier General (res.) Herzog:

- Israel is in danger of being "squeezed between the two giants", both politically and economically. On the one hand, the US is Israel's closest and most important strategic ally. On the other hand, China is a global power important to Israel's economy. He shared that recently, a senior figure in Washington conveyed a stern warning to him that Israel does not seem to comprehend the extent to which it is upsetting the United States by courting certain Chinese infrastructure investments and urged Israeli caution.
- Gen. Herzog commended the Israeli government's recent decision to establish a mechanism that will view such major foreign investments through a national security and geopolitical lens, and not solely through an economic one. Israel cannot risk its relations with the United States, thus it must navigate such relations cautiously. Herzog calls it essential for Israel to set up a "de-conflicting mechanism" with the United States on China-related policy issues. He agreed with Dr. Wald that there are no real China experts in Israeli decision-making circles.
- It is interesting to follow Chinese reactions to American sanctions on Iran. Thus, while politically China objects to such economic pressure, major state-owned companies pulled their major infrastructure (energy sector) projects out of Iran so as to comply with the US sanctions.
- Regarding US fears that China would use its port operation to spy on the 6th Fleet, he noted that such a threat is overblown. Israel will anyway address security concerns out of its own interest and China could just as easily spy on the US ships from a building overlooking the port, as well as anywhere else the fleet docks (particularly its main Mediterranean port, Naples).
- Gen. Herzog concurred with Amb. Ross vis-a-vis a potential role for China in Gaza and expressed similar skepticism.

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## BOOK NOOK

### Review of *A History of the Kaifeng Israelites* by Tiberiu Weisz (Outskirts Press 2018)

*By Jordan Paper*

After reading Quenton Brand's review two issues ago, I wrote a letter to the editor [of Points East] to supplement Brand's finding of problems with the text. The editor shared my comments with Weisz who quite validly made the point that my comments were based on the review, rather than his actual book. Hence, I withdrew the letter, and at Weisz's prompting, am writing this review based on reading his book.

Weisz apparently claims to be able to read literary Chinese better than all other Chinese and Western Sinologists and understand the history of the Chinese Jews better than such reliable experts as Donald Leslie. His revised history is based on unique translations of Chinese texts, finding errors in translations by James Legge and Bishop White. The missionary Legge's translations were made in the late 19th century. They were useful when no others were available but have long been out of date. White made a major contribution to the study of the Kaifeng Jews by gathering in a publication most of the works written by the Jesuits, as well as publishing the Chinese texts of the stelae and all other relevant material. I could not have done my work without his contribution. But being a Christian missionary, his understanding of Jewish writing is often skewed.

Weisz finds difficulties in reading original Chinese sources, a serious problem is having to read major texts in simplified logographs, trying to rediscover the original forms (p. v). I found this odd, since all the versions I use are in the traditional mode; I wouldn't even know where to find such texts in simplified script. He also finds problems with the Chinese-English dictionary he has used: Mathews'. But Mathews' dictionary is useless for literary Chinese; rather the standard Chinese-English dictionary which includes literary usages is that of Giles; even more important in this regard is Couvreur's *Dictionnaire classique de la langue chinoise*. Weisz proudly points to his use of the early 20th century Cihai (p. 86), although there is no mention of the parallel Ciyuan, and most important, there is no reference to the more recent major encyclopedic dictionary, the 10 volume *Zhong Wen Da Cidian* (1973), which has replaced all previous ones.

The book begins with a unique retranslation of a common word in early Chinese texts, a retranslation so momentous that it completely changes not only Chinese and Jewish history but world history in general, as he finds that Confucius claimed to



be Jewish, and the Chinese Classics and Chinese Religion are based on the Torah! Thus, traditional Chinese culture is essentially Jewish and at least a significant portion of the Chinese people must be of Jewish descent. For if Confucius was Jewish, so would a number of the other aristocratic Chinese of his time. Thus, the Kong and other clans, presently constituting millions of Chinese are Jewish, and the present number of those in Kaifeng claiming such descent is but a drop in the proverbial bucket; there would be far more people of Jewish descent in China than in Israel!

In the mid-19th century, presumably a Protestant missionary created a term for Jews: *youtai* 猶太, the logographs chosen because their modern pronunciation approximates *Yudah* (Judah) – presumably a Christian missionary because the radical for the logograph *you* means “dog”, an insult in Chinese culture; there are many alternate logographs with the same pronunciation. Moreover, the binomial expression has a second modern dictionary meaning of “a stingy person.” Typical of Weisz’s “scholarship,” he reads the modern meaning into the distant past: *you* 猶 which in early Chinese texts indicates the relationship of like objects he retranslates with the modern meaning of *Jew*, or as Weisz translates, “Israelite” But this meaning only applies to the binomial compound, *youtai ren* not *you* alone. The term never meant “Israelite”, and the Chinese Jews in the past never called themselves *youtai ren* (person). Moreover, Weisz knows that he is being deliberately anachronistic because he writes, “Not until the early 20th century CE was the character *you* designated to emulate the term ‘Jews’ in Chinese” (p. 5). Actually, the term *youtai ren* seems first to appear in a Chinese text in the *Dao Guang* period (1821-1851).

Weisz’s anachronistic use further demonstrates ignorance of Chinese historical linguistics. Chinese pronunciation of the logographs has changed radically over the years, as has the pronunciation of Chinese (and all spoken languages) in general. For example, if Tang dynasty poetry is read with the modern pronunciation, it does not sound like poetry, because the rhymes fail, as does the rhythm, the tonal scheme then being different from modern Chinese. According to *Karlgren’s Grammatica Sinica Recensa* (1957), three thousand years ago, the time-frame of Weisz’s new fictitious translations, *you* was pronounced \*zjōg [phonetic symbols]. This sound is nothing like the modern pronunciation and could not conceivably be used to stand for *Yudah* and mean “Jew”. Besides, according to the research of Daniel Boyarin (*Judaism: The Genealogy of a Modern Notion* [2019]), the terms “Jew” and “Judaism” were created during the Medieval period of Europe and certainly did not exist 2500 or more years ago.

Thus, Weisz translates a line in the *Analects of Confucius* (XII, 13) as “Confucius said: I must not present my case in litigation. I am an Israelite.” The eminent late scholar of Chinese philosophy, D. C. Lau translated the line: “In hearing litigation, I am no different from any other man” (*Confucius: The Analects* [1979], and the contemporary scholars of Chinese philosophy, Ames and Rosemont, Jr. (*The Analects of Confucius* [1998]) translate the line: “In hearing cases, I am the same as anyone.” Both are understanding the meaning of *you* in the line as Sinologists normally do.

Weisz further posits that the term he anachronistically and mistakenly translates as *Israelite* is found even earlier in the *Shi*, created centuries before the *Analects*. The *Shi* is a collection of songs and odes from the early Zhou period; many are love songs or ritual odes. Even if there were a few *Israelites* in early China, would they have been so present in the popular mind, that they would have been reflected in popular songs and odes for ancestral rituals? Jews are well known in present-day America, yet are they specifically mentioned in popular love songs?

Weisz continues his unusual understanding of early Chinese history with the statement that *Mencius* “spent twenty years ‘beyond the borders’ in the Western regions, where he encountered a tribe that he called *xizi*, ‘Son/s of the West’” (p. 23), who Weisz assumes are Jews. The mistakes are multiple. First, there is nothing in Chinese texts to suggest *Mencius* traveled outside of China. Second, he posits that the *Mencius* is difficult to read (p. 25, ft. 30 & 31), whereas, the text is the easiest Zhou dynasty text to read, because it consists of simple arguments often presented as dialogue. Third, he doesn’t know that *Xizi* is another name for *Xi Shi*, the most famous beauty of the period, on the order of *Helen of Troy* or *Cleopatra*. Hence, D. C. Lau (*Mengzi* 1970) translates the line discussed by Weisz (IV. B. 25) as “*Mencius* said: If the beauty *Hsi Shih*....” Last, Weisz implies that he reads the standard commentaries of texts he retranslates, which is standard procedure. But if he had, he could not have made this major error.

Similarly, Weisz posits that the mythic *Laozi* (“The Old Master”) traveled “to Jerusalem in King Solomon’s times (ca. 960 BCE)” (p. 23), as the “*Daodejing* (ch.80) described the kingdom of Solomon” (p.225). But the scholarly consensus is that the *Daodejing* was edited into its present form in the 3rd century BCE. I could go on enumerating the many gross errors regarding early China to be found in Weisz’s book, such as there being a god in the *Israelite* sense, but to do so would lead to a book considerably larger than the book being reviewed.

In discussing the supposed *Israelite* experience in China during the later Tang dynas-

ty, Weisz again exercises his most fertile imagination in creating a major persecution of Jews in the 10th century with the burning of synagogues and the *Israelites* fleeing China in fear of their lives. Perhaps Weisz has confused 10th century China with late 15th century Portugal and Spain, because the assertion is absurd. In the mid-10th century, due to Buddhist institutions becoming economically stronger than the state and thus threatening its stability, there was a crackdown on the economic aspects only of Buddhist institutions; there was no persecution of of Buddhists, let alone those of other religious traditions. Of course, this had nothing to do with Judaism, which in any case, was not present in China, except perhaps in coastal cities, at that time. This suppression is discussed on p. 97 of my *The Theology of the Chinese Jews, 1000-1850* (2012) and in more detail in my forthcoming *Chinese Religion and Familism*. The major scholarly source for this historical event is *Gernet’s Les Aspects économiques du bouddhisme dans la société chinoise du Ve au Xe siècle* (1956).

Weisz began his career of overturning the scholarly understanding of Judaism in China by claiming in his first book on the Kaifeng Jews that a logograph on one of the stelae had been mistranslated, which in turn led to a “misguided idea” (p. 85) of how long Jews had resided in Chinese capitals. He applied a modern understanding of the meaning of *gui*, “return” which White and others had translated as “come.” Thus, for Weisz, the Jews were invited to return to China from which they had fled persecution centuries early. “The impact of this mistranslation was so critical that it change the tone and context of the Confucian Inscription of (sic) 1489 inscription” (p. 85). But at the time the stela was written, in imperial rescripts the logograph meant “to come bearing tribute.” It has been speculated that the tribute brought was cotton, since Jewish merchant ships carrying cargo from Basra to China stopped in India, where cotton was common, to reprovision and await favorable winds, and perhaps picked up cotton to trade in China. International trade at that time was disguised as tribute; gifts of equal worth were given in return.

Those brought up in Chinese culture well know that one cannot simply transfer one’s skills in reading modern Chinese to reading literary Chinese, which calls for a different set of skills. In my own case, in my first three graduate years at the University of Chicago, I intensively studied literary Chinese under H.G. Creel and Edward Kracke. Throughout that time my mind was focused day and night on learning the logographs and translating texts from different periods. I then went to the University of Wisconsin for a further four years to study for a year Buddhist Chinese

and then returned to the study of literary Chinese with a series of visiting professors, including D.C. Lau and Wang Ling, formerly Joseph Needham's researcher. As well, I studied classical Chinese linguistics with Edwin Pulleyblank. During that time, I lived in Taiwan for a year, where I spent most of my time with those of the last generation to have had a traditional education, becoming very close friends with several.

My first publication was in a German publication of a translation of an erotic literary Chinese short story that Hans Frankel had most kindly placed instead of his own. The core of my dissertation, an annotated translation and reconstruction of a 3rd century philosophical text, along with memorials to the throne and poetry by the same scholar-official, was the first T'oung-Pao Monograph to be found worthy of publication in six years, chosen without my knowledge by its editors, Jacques Gernet and E. Zürcher, the most eminent French Sinologists at that time. That publication made my reputation. In all, I spent seven years as a full-time graduate student learning literary Chinese, plus a further four years researching and writing my dissertation, while functioning as an assistant professor.

Simply approaching these texts with only knowledge of modern Chinese will not suffice. I always compare my translations with those of established scholars, all of whom had spent years learning their craft, when they are available. If my own differs in substance, I need to know why, to ascertain that my different reading is plausible. Had Weisz looked at Lau's translation of the Mencius, readily available in a Penguin paperback, he might have realized he had made the common error of beginners in reading literary Chinese, one I often made, by translating over a name; thus, he imagined the name of a tribe rather than perceiving the name of a famous historical figure being used as an example of a beautiful person for the purpose of Mencius's argument.

Weisz's books are self-published presumably because they could not pass the peer review required by scholarly presses. Yet because his books provide far more interesting histories than do those based on scholarly research they have captured the popular imagination, as seen, for example, in Wikipedia articles. This parallels Gresham's law that "Bad money drives out good." American popular culture tends to disdain scientific studies ("false news"), such as research on climate change or the value of vaccinations, preferring opposite views that suite conservative and other prejudices but are often dangerous. Those of us who have devoted our lives to scholarship feel obligated, frustrating as at times it may be, to only publish what our peers consider reasonable. All of my

dozen books and a hundred or so articles in scholarly journals and anthologies have been peer reviewed. For those who understand this, there is confidence that peer-reviewed publications are at least plausible, although not necessarily correct or reflecting a consensus.

I feel we have a moral obligation to counter outlandish understandings if we are convinced that they embody anti-scholarly ideas that can be proven false. And this is what I am attempting to do in this review. If there is not a realistic understanding of the history of the Chinese Jews, understanding that fits correctly read Chinese historical texts, than attempts to gain present-day recognition are seriously handicapped. I greatly enjoy fantasy fiction, but I do not confuse it with reality.

*Jordan Paper is Professor Emeritus, Humanities (East Asian & Religious Studies Programs) at York University in Toronto, Fellow at the Centre for Studies in Religion & Society and an Adjunct Professor, Indigenous Governance Program & Pacific and Asian Studies at the University of Victoria in British Columbia, Canada. He may be reached at jpaper@yorku.ca.*

### Briefly Noted:

#### **Chinos y Judios: Puentes y encuentros entre dos civilizaciones milenarias**

*(Chinese and Jews: Bridges and Encounters between Two Ancient Civilizations)*

by Gustavo Perednik (Uruguay: Universidad ORT 2018)

#### **From the back cover:**

About twenty years ago, I invited Gustavo Perednik to lecture at Nanjing University when the first Judaic Studies Center of academic China had just been created. Over time it flourished and became an active beacon of Jewish-Chinese understanding. Gustavo's lectures were greatly appreciated by the students, and in the following years their audiences increased in China as well as in Israel and other countries. In this book the educator's wisdom is combined successfully with the experience of one is personally committed to the construction of bridges between the Chinese and Jewish peoples. The author penetrates history and literature, faith and culture, and the result is a comprehensive panorama of the common denominators between Chinese and Jews. This century made us witnesses of a growing friendship between our two nations and this book, in examining the many places that unite them, constitutes in itself a valuable bridge, one that we undoubtedly celebrate.

*Xu Xin, Professor and Director of the Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies and Israel at Nanjing University and President of the National Chinese Institute for Jewish Studies*

### About the author:

*Gustavo Perednik, born 1956, is an Argentinian-born Israeli author and educator.*

*Perednik graduated from the University of Buenos Aires and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (cum laude), and completed his Doctorate in Philosophy in New York. He studied Humanities at the Universities of La Sorbonne (France), San Marcos (Peru) and Uppsala (Sweden). He was distinguished as an outstanding professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where he ran the four-year, preparatory, and freshman programs. He has academically represented ORT Uruguay University in universities in China, the United States and Russia. In Uruguay, he has taught at several universities, and has been a visiting professor at ORT Uruguay University for three decades. Perednik has published twenty books, several of them internationally awarded and translated into various languages. For more than a decade, Perednik has been a member of the International Advisory Board of the Sino-Judaic Institute. He resides with his family on the outskirts of Jerusalem.*

### The Story of Bert Reiner

By Kevin Ostoyich

*Excerpted from American Institute for Contemporary German Studies, 20 June 2018*

...The Reiners were from Dresden, Germany, and like approximately 20,000 other Jewish refugees, they had fled to Shanghai to escape the clutches of Hitler's Nazi regime. Bert's paternal grandfather owned a department store in the city called "Kaufhaus Reiner." Bert's father, Horst, who had been born in Dresden, worked in his father's department store for a while. He graduated from the university and then went on to work in the import/export business, primarily in pharmaceuticals and chemicals used in the perfume industry... Bert was born in Dresden in 1937. Horst had wanted to name the boy after his best friend, Norbert Strier. Trudy objected given the Jewish tradition of naming children only after people who had passed away. Horst insisted, however, and won out in the end.

During the following year, the persecution of the Jews in Germany reached a new level. On Kristallnacht of November 9-10, 1938, Jewish-owned businesses, residences, and synagogues were vandalized and destroyed. Horst's best friend, Norbert Strier, who had been to Shanghai before and thought it a good haven, suggested that they all go to Shanghai (which was the only port not requiring a visa). At first, Horst declined, feeling Germany was his rightful home. Ultimately, after Kristallnacht, he came to the realization that it would be best for the family to leave, and he entrusted Strier with all his money to invest in behalf of the Reiner family.

The family purchased a forty-foot wood container called a "Lift" in order to hold all their furniture and belongings. As with other Jews who were fleeing the country, the Reiners were only allowed to leave Germany with 10 Marks per person. In order to try to save the family's jewelry from the Nazis, Trudy gave it all to the packer of the lift to hide in the furniture before it was shipped. This would have to be done under strict Nazi scrutiny, and Trudy did not know if the man would actually do this, or keep the jewelry for himself, or turn them in to the Nazis.

The family left Germany from Bremerhaven on the Norddeutscher Lloyd luxury liner, SS Potsdam, in March 1939. While on board Potsdam, on March 6, 1939, they received the following notice from Captain O. Prehn: "I respectfully request that our non-Aryan German passengers only use the swimming pool and the sports facilities between the hours of 10 a.m. and 3 p.m." The ship traveled to Genoa, Italy, through the Suez Canal, and then stopped in Kobe, Japan. The Reiners contemplated staying in Kobe, Japan, where there were a number of Jews, but decided to continue on to Hong Kong and ultimately Shanghai.

Upon arriving in Shanghai, they moved into a house in the French Concession, which was the nicest neighborhood in the city. Unfortunately, Horst contracted spinal meningitis soon thereafter, and was not expected to survive. Trudy thus found herself with a toddler, a gravely ill husband, and in a foreign land where she did not know the language. She went to Norbert Strier to ask about their money entrusted to him, and learned that it was all gone. Making matters worse, not a trace of the jewelry she had requested to have hidden in the Reiner furniture could be found. Fortunately, Horst survived the bout with meningitis. Nevertheless, Horst and Trudy resolved never to speak to Norbert Strier ever again. From then on there was only to be one Bert in their lives.

Aboard ship, Horst had become acquainted with a Fritz Wolf, and later a Mr. Fleischmann. Fleischmann was already established in China and lived most of the time in Harbin, Manchuria. Together, the three men created an import/export company called Fleischmann Impex Company. In the period before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and seized control of Shanghai, Horst conducted business on behalf of the company. But the war put a freeze on the import/export trade and the company lay dormant as a result. Horst then shifted his focus to helping Jewish organizations secure money and food for the Kitchen Fund, upon which many refugees depended for sustenance.

The Reiners continued to live comfortably in the French Concession until the Japanese issued a proclamation which stipulated that all stateless refugees who had entered after

January 1, 1937, had to move into a Designated Area (the Ghetto) in Hongkew. Fortunately, Horst's business partner, Fleischmann, owned a villa in Hongkew, and the Reiners were able to move there. Fleischmann's house was divided among four families. The Wolfs and the Reiners lived on the first floor and two Polish Jewish refugee families lived on the second floor. Bert recalls, "Even though it was a little more crowded than a single-family [dwelling], we lived in luxury in comparison to where all the other refugees did, with hundreds of families per room in a 'Heim'." Most other refugees were crammed into abysmal living quarters within the Ghetto.

The family employed "amahs" (servants) throughout their entire time they lived in Shanghai. The amahs served as nannies for Bert. Bert notes "as far as having an amah: The cost of having Chinese servants was very, very low cost; so having an amah wasn't a big deal." Both of Bert's parents were very busy in Shanghai. While living in the Ghetto, Trudy cooked for those who were less fortunate in a charity kitchen. Although their living arrangements were better than those of most refugees, they were not without problems and worries. Horst was not able to work; thus, they did not have any income. Given they had brought from Germany a lot of furniture and personal belongings (including crystal, silverware, and china), they started to sell their possessions and live off the proceeds. Although they employed amahs, Trudy always did her own cooking...

Conditions in the Ghetto were rather bleak and the future uncertain. Bert notes that while in Shanghai, his mother had an abortion. He explains, "You didn't want to bear and bring up children under these conditions." He adds, "most of my mother's friends either had one child or no children."

Horst often needed to go outside of the Ghetto and thus needed to get a pass. Sometimes he got it, sometimes he did not. Overall, however, he did not encounter too many problems. Perhaps this was due to Horst's diminutive stature. Kanoh Ghoya, (the unstable and often sadistic Japanese official who oversaw the distribution of the passes), was an extremely short man and did not take kindly to tall men, often slapping and humiliating them.

Bert remembers Ghoya coming to his school. There was a Purim play in which Ghoya sat next to Bert and his parents. Bert notes that "Ghoya, like many Japanese, loved kids. I was maybe five years old, and Ghoya jokingly said, 'Would you like a cigarette?' and he held over a cigarette, and I pushed the cigarette out of his hand, and I said, 'No, you lousy Jap!' And my father held his breath. He thought this was the end of our lives. And Ghoya just laughed it off. As tough and cruel as he was, he was still kind to children."

The school where this transpired was the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School, which was also known as the Kadoorie School after its Sephardic Jewish benefactor, Sir Horace Kadoorie. Bert attended this school while living in the Ghetto. After the war he attended the Shanghai Jewish School. He remembers the quality of instruction at both schools being high. He says he did well in both schools and has a report card that indicates that he was first in his class but also reprimands him for talking too much. When it came to schoolwork, Horst was always a great help to him. Bert did not participate very much in sports but did play soccer and swam, his father having taught him the latter. Bert also liked to box. He beams when showing off the small silver cup he was awarded for his fists on February 29, 1948. Bert did not attend a separate Hebrew school, but Hebrew was part of the curriculum of both the schools he attended.

Bert describes his parents as not having been very religious. Horst came from a family in which his father was Jewish, but his mother was not. Although Trudy had come from a particularly religious household, she herself was not. Bert remembers how when they lived in the Fleischmann Villa, the two Polish Jewish families on the second floor were Orthodox and kept kosher, whereas on the first floor the Reiner family did not. The Reiners did observe holidays, but they did not attend synagogue on a regular basis...

Bert does not remember many interactions with Japanese soldiers. These soldiers patrolled the area but so, too, did the Jewish self-policing force that was set up known as the Pao Chia. Horst served in the Pao Chia. Bert does not remember there being many problems. In fact, he remembers crime having been kept in check until after the war was over: "It became rampant after the Japanese left. We had a lot of robberies and murders, which didn't happen during the war years. The Japanese really controlled and enforced the people of all nationalities." Bert remembers only being with other German, Austrian, and Polish Jews. After the war he did have more interaction with Russian Jews. Bert's best friend was a Russian immigrant. His friend's father actually had a car with a driver (which was very unusual). They picked Bert up every morning and drove him to school. Bert does not remember any interactions with the British, Americans, French, Italians, or others...

Overall, Bert believes life after the war was good in Shanghai. The family moved into a nice fourteen-story apartment house back into the French Concession, Horst resumed work in the import/export business with Europe and the United States, and Bert started to attend the Shanghai Jewish School. Bert remembers that at this time, "Living was very comfortable." But it would not last.

The Communists were closing in. When the Communists took over the country on October 1, 1949, Horst and Trudy decided it was time to leave. But Bert was far from happy about this. Although in the years after the war friends had started to leave Shanghai, there were still friends around, and Bert did not want to leave them. Leave them he would. The family applied for a visa to the United States. Given they had family sponsors and the quota was high for Germans wanting to enter the United States, the Reiners did not have difficulty securing the visa.

The family left Shanghai on October 29, 1949, on the troop transporter, the USS General W. H. Gordon. Bert slept in the hold of the overcrowded ship with 300 men in triple bunks. He proceeded to get seasick for 18 of the 19 days of the voyage. He also had a serious accident in which he hit his head on the steel deck floor and lost consciousness. All things told, it was not a pleasant voyage for the twelve-year-old. They arrived in San Francisco, where they stayed for three weeks. Then they took a train to New York City. For the first three months they lived in Manhattan and then moved to Queens. Bert remembers this being a difficult time: He had just left his friends in Shanghai, had then just started to make new friends in Manhattan, and then had to start over again in Queens.

At school, Bert was put into a class that corresponded with his age (twelve). Nevertheless, the level of instruction in Shanghai had been so high that he felt that he was much more advanced than his classmates...Bert eventually attended Brooklyn Technical High School (Brooklyn Tech) and thus had to commute via subway each day from Queens. He did not participate in sports or other activities, focusing instead on his studies. Overall, he believes he received an excellent education at Brooklyn Tech.

Trudy spoke primarily German and had spoken almost no English before coming to the United States. After they arrived, Horst anglicized his name to Horace and enticed Trudy to learn English. Despite the discrepancy in their English skills, the transition to American life was easier for Trudy than Horace. Horace was simply overqualified and thus found it difficult to find a job. He eventually took a course to become a stockbroker. Unfortunately, he died shortly thereafter from cancer, at age fifty. Trudy, on the other hand, lived a long, good life in the United States, passing away on her 102nd birthday.

Bert remembers learning about the horrors of the Holocaust through the newspaper *Aufbau* in New York: "People read the newspaper continuously to find out who survived and who didn't, and it was a continuous shock. It was hard to believe.

Throughout the war we had no idea what was going on in Europe. [My parents] were always very concerned. And it took a long time to find out what really happened." Trudy had come from a family of six children. She had had a brother who had passed away but whose death was not related to the Holocaust. Another brother had a wife with family living in the United States and moved there. One of her sisters moved to New York with her husband. Another sister was a Zionist and moved to Israel. Trudy's father and her youngest sister stayed in Germany and were ultimately killed in a concentration camp in Austria. It was not until a few years ago, when Bert visited Yad Vashem that he was able to find out where and when his grandfather and aunt were killed.

Horst's mother, sister, and brother-in-law stayed in Dresden and survived the war. Horst's mother was Lutheran but converted to Judaism, but when the war started she converted back to Christianity and was thus able to survive. Horst's father, on the other hand, was Jewish and was sent first to Sachsenhausen and then Theresienstadt concentration camps. He survived the war and came to the United States. Unfortunately, he died six months before Bert and his parents arrived here. It was not until well after the war had ended that Bert's father was able to communicate with his mother and sister. He went to visit them once in East Germany, but was not happy to be back in Germany and never spoke much about the subject...

After graduating from Brooklyn Tech, Bert went to college at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, where he met his wife, Sandy. He started his career at Sikorsky Aircraft, which was not an enjoyable experience. He then took a job at a company called Soundscriber. He wanted to work with plastics, so it was suggested that he should work at a toy company. He decided to do so, and over the next few decades he worked for three toy companies in succession: A.C. Gilbert, Ideal Toy, and Coleco Industries, Inc. Since March 1988, he has served as the president of his own company, Reiner Associates, which does consulting work for the toy industry.

Bert says that for many decades he did not talk much about Shanghai and his experiences there, "partly because I didn't think people were really that interested. Many people didn't even know where Shanghai was." He says he also had not spoken with many other former refugees about this history. This is simply due to the fact that he does not know many of them. Although there have been many reunions of "Shanghaianders" over the years, he says he was not contacted about any of them. He is sorry to have missed them and would very much like to attend such a reunion in the future.

In 2009 he created a DVD about his

Shanghai experience titled *My Shanghai Memoirs*. He says, "It was primarily for our children and grandchildren so that they would understand about my experience."...Bert researched the topic for about a year before making the film. He started reading many of the memoirs that have been written by survivors and he watched some of the documentaries, including the film *Shanghai Ghetto*, which was produced by Dana Janklowicz-Mann and Amir Mann in 2002. While conducting his research, Bert was struck by how each person's story was unique: "Well, it's interesting. Every book that I've read has told the story from a different angle."

As he talks about making his film, it becomes clear that the inspiration had come from his best friend, his father. Not too long after the Reiners arrived in the United States, Bert turned thirteen years old. As Bert prepared for his Bar Mitzvah, his father worked every night compiling a book of memorabilia for his son. In addition to including various items and photographs, Horace wrote his thoughts on every page. When Bert completed his Bar Mitzvah, Horace presented him with the book and a bicycle: "At thirteen years old that book held no interest to me. It was only the bicycle. That bike had rusted and is long gone; but that book I still cherish."

With his DVD, Bert has given his children and grandchildren something infinitely more valuable than any bicycle. The message he wishes to convey to his children, grandchildren, and others, is that Shanghai was a great haven during the Holocaust. He says, "It was one of the few success stories that came out of the Holocaust." He considers himself a Holocaust survivor, but says that his experience in no way compares to those people who had remained in Europe. He says if his father had not had the "fortitude and foresight of going and leaving the country—which must have been very difficult," they most likely would not have survived.

Bert also believes there is an important message to be found in the story of the packer whom Trudy had entrusted with the family's jewelry. When she so desperately needed her jewels, with Horst stricken with meningitis and the family's money squandered by Norbert Strier, Trudy could not find them. They thought the packer must have kept the jewels for himself. Two years later, however, when Horst and Trudy were hosting a dinner at their apartment, the lights went out. They had to call an electrician and "as he was taking the chandelier apart, there was every piece of jewelry in the arms of the chandelier, not a thing was missing." When thinking about the packer who had done this despite being a complete stranger, Bert says, "Here this guy risked his life by doing what he did for us, so he was, you know, a good

German." When confronted with the history of the Holocaust and the Second World War, it is important to remember that there were numerous such stories of successful escape because of the goodness of such individuals.

*Currently, Bert and Sandy split their time between homes in Connecticut and Las Vegas...He says, "I appreciate America more than most American-born Americans."...*

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## Mao's Jews

By Paul Ross

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On Oct. 1, 1967, China's National Day, Sidney Rittenberg had reached the pinnacle of his revolutionary career. It was the 18th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, and Rittenberg was seated on a reviewing stand less than fifty feet from Mao Zedong, overlooking a sea of thousands who had crowded into Tiananmen Square to mark the occasion.

Rittenberg was one of the very few foreign nationals who had remained in China after the communists came to power in 1949 and one of an even smaller number who had managed to work their way into Mao's inner circle, serving the communist leadership as valued advisers, trusted emissaries and even revolutionary leaders.

In addition to Rittenberg, there was Austrian, Jakob Rosenfeld, commanding officer of the Communist 4th Army's medical unit; Israel Epstein from Poland, a journalist who served as the Chinese government's head of international public relations; and London-born David Crook, dean of the Beijing Foreign Languages University.

Although their backgrounds were varied and their motivations for coming to China diverse, these doctors, writers and educators had one thing in common — all of them were Jewish.

The story of how thousands of Jews fled Europe, took refuge in Shanghai, and eventually built schools, synagogues and businesses there is one that is well known. This often-told story eventually ends with the departure of all the Jews from China when the communists take over in 1949,

a clean and satisfying end to a moving chronicle that leaves no ends loose or questions unanswered.

But in fact, not all those Jews left. Many stayed, and of those who did, a handful lived out dramatic lives that provide a rare glimpse into the early years of Communist China.

A backbreaking job treating skunk skins in a windowless building at the heart of Manhattan's Garment District was certainly not the most obvious or auspicious first step on a path that would eventually lead David Crook to China and into the highest echelons of China's Foreign Service. His mother, matron of a middle-class Jewish family living in the outskirts of London, originally had much greater aspirations for him. After all, he had shown early promise as a student and had done well enough on his exams to get accepted to Oxford. But before he could even set foot in a classroom, the family business collapsed, a traumatic event that brought his budding academic career to a premature end and dashed his mother's dreams. Faced with limited prospects and a shortage of funds, Crook eventually accepted an offer of employment, undoubtedly an opportunity of last resort, from a distant relative who was a furrier in New York.

To be sure, tanning skunk pelts for Garment District furriers was a far cry from rubbing shoulders with Oxford dons, but, as harsh an experience as this may have been, it did afford the young Crook a keen insight into the conditions of the working class and an appreciation for its plight. It was a transformative experience that would redefine his view of the world and determine the course his future would take.

Like Crook, Rittenberg early in life developed an appreciation for the challenges and conditions faced by the American worker, although there was nothing in his background to suggest that he would have any affiliation with miners, bricklayers and pipefitters, much less end up playing a central role in the Chinese Revolution.

Scion of a wealthy family that was a pillar of the close-knit Jewish community of Charleston, S.C., Rittenberg grew up in privileged circumstances worlds away from the factory workers and day laborers whose cause he would come to champion. Like Crook, Rittenberg excelled as a student and, although he did well enough to secure admission to Princeton, he too would never set foot on campus.

However, Rittenberg's failure to take advantage of higher education at one of the world's most prestigious academic institutions was not the consequence of a reversal in family fortune, but the result of a conscious decision to reject an institution whose values, Rittenberg reasoned, were not aligned with his own. Rittenberg con-

cluded that the academic environment provided by an elitist university whose students represented a privileged social class would not suit someone who was an active participant in labor strikes, had joined the Communist Party, and had even spent time behind bars as a consequence of his actions.

Given Rittenberg's age and circumstances, one might be tempted to dismiss such an unorthodox decision as an act of youthful rebellion, but as Rittenberg's life unfolded, this inclination toward contrarian positions and strict adherence to principle emerged as a consistent character trait that surfaced at critical junctures and guided his most important decisions.

This admixture of unabashed idealism and commitment to the socially disenfranchised informed a worldview that Crook and Rittenberg shared and that would ultimately bring them to China and sustain them in their darkest days.

Rittenberg's initial engagement with China was purely coincidental. Shortly after his conscription into the U.S. Army at the outset World War II, Rittenberg learned that his first tour of duty would, ironically, be in a classroom learning Chinese, a language he knew nothing about. Teaching new recruits Chinese was a tactical element of the Army's broader efforts to build up the resources that would help strengthen its position in a country whose political landscape was shifting and whose strategic value was increasing. Much to his surprise, Rittenberg found that he enjoyed learning the language and soon reached a level of proficiency that qualified him for posting to China and assignment to a unit that was operating on the ground in Shanghai.

The China Rittenberg encountered on arrival in 1943 was in turmoil after years of economic instability, occupation by foreign powers and the looming threat of civil war. He was particularly struck by the abject poverty and dire circumstances that the average Chinese lived. His involvement in relief organizations brought him to the attention of the Communist underground. They sent an agent to approach him with an offer: Join the Communist revolutionaries and serve as a liaison to the representatives of foreign countries, especially the U.S. Rittenberg accepted the offer on the spot, but with one condition — that he be allowed to join the Chinese Communist Party.

The path that Crook followed to China was equally coincidental, but much more circuitous. Recuperating in a Madrid hospital from injuries he had sustained while fighting in the Spanish Civil War, Crook came across a copy of the newly published, "Red Star Over China," American journalist Edgar Snow's classic account of the Communist movement in China

Crook, who had become an avowed

Marxist, came to Spain to fight in support of those on the left. While there, he was recruited by the Comintern, ostensibly to spy on suspected Trotskyites. Inspired by his reading of Snow's book, Crook decided that his destiny lay in China. To get there, he proposed to his Comintern handlers that they send him to Shanghai, a vantage point from which, he suggested, he would be able to keep an eye on a number of prominent Trotskyists who had gravitated to the city and report on their activities. It didn't take long for Crook to succumb to Shanghai's various diversions and, much to the KGB's dismay, was soon paying more attention to handicaps at the racetracks than to the task of spying and intelligence gathering. When Trotsky was assassinated in 1940, the KGB finally decided it no longer had need of Crook's services and terminated its relationship with him. After some time casting around for other opportunities of employment, Crook eventually drifted into teaching English and was introduced to a member of the Communist movement through an acquaintance.

In contrast to Rittenberg and Crook, who came to China because they were attracted by the prospect of adventure and driven by a sense of mission, Rosenfeld and Epstein came to China to escape deteriorating conditions in their home countries and to avoid being engulfed by a wave of oppression that was sweeping across Eastern Europe and putting their lives at risk.

Rosenfeld, who graduated from the University of Vienna's prestigious medical school, had no sooner set himself up in practice and embarked on a promising career as an obstetrician than Nazi Germany annexed Austria and promptly set about ridding the country of its Jewish population. Like many other Jewish professionals in Vienna, Rosenfeld was forced to shutter his practice and was eventually sent to a labor camp outside the city, his fate irrevocably sealed. In less than a year, though, Rosenfeld would walk out of the camp with a visa in hand that granted him passage to China and asylum in Shanghai. As miraculous as this turn of events may be, and as vague the circumstances surrounding them, it is plausible to assume that Rosenfeld had the good fortune to come to the attention of Ho Feng Shan, the consul general of the Chinese Consulate in Vienna who single-handedly saved the lives of hundreds of Austrian Jews by exploiting poorly enforced regulations (in cities such as Shanghai, whose systems and infrastructures had been undermined by years of turmoil) to issue so-called "asylum" visas that gave them shelter in China.

Like Shanghai, the city of Harbin at the heart of Manchuria China's vast northeast region, was in a state of upheaval. Extension of the Trans-Siberian Railway at the turn of the 20th century had fueled Harbin's rapid evolution from a remote trading

outpost to a full-fledged transport hub and commercial center of strategic value to the Chinese, Russians and Japanese, who by 1930s, were engaged in a tug-of-war over its control. The resulting unrest and dislocation that resulted distorted many of the usual legal rules, political conventions and social norms or dissolved them outright. This combination of factors — a transport hub with poorly enforced regulations — made Harbin an increasingly accessible and therefore attractive destination for revolutionaries, opportunists and refugees.

It was under these circumstances that Epstein's family came to Harbin in the belief that it would serve them as a haven from the increasingly violent pogroms that were threatening Jewish communities across Poland. A brief encounter with the city's chaotic urban landscape and the denizens that inhabited it — the American consul who roamed the streets in broad daylight with a drawn pistol in hand, the Japanese film studio director who doubled as a spy with an impressive murder record, and Chinese warlords whose tendency was to shoot first and ask questions later — made it clear to Epstein's parents that Harbin was a city of questionable safety and certainly no place to raise a young family. In short order, they moved to the city of Tianjin, a bustling port, that today lies just an hour's train ride southeast of China's capital, Beijing.

In Tianjin, Epstein received an education in British schools. At a young age, he became interested in journalism, an interest that deepened as he entered his teenage years. By the age of 15, he was freelancing for United Press. He eventually dropped out of school so that he could devote himself full time to reporting on the dramatic events that were unfolding across northern China. Perhaps because of his own firsthand experience with oppression and social upheaval, Epstein, like Crook and Rittenberg, was very sympathetic to the plight of the poor Chinese he encountered, a sympathy that had been cultivated and reinforced by his father, Herman, who admonished the young Israel not to forget the plight that the Jews had suffered.

Epstein's journalistic talent and the sympathy he expressed in his writing for the Chinese people, attracted the attention of Song Qingling, Sun Yat-Sen's widow, who took him under her wing. Song Qingling was a visionary who recognized that China's success in getting the support it needed would depend on the strength of its image overseas, and set about finding ways to enhance that image.

Epstein was one of those ways. She enabled him to launch broad-based publicity campaigns targeted at audiences in the U.S. and Europe by leveraging her network of influential contacts and access to significant financial resources. Establishment of the monthly pictorial *China Today* with Epstein as editor-in-chief was an

outgrowth of these efforts. As the country became more and more distant from the West, the publication effectively became (and remained) Communist China's voice to the outside world.

On the eve of the Communist takeover in 1949, Rosenfeld had achieved the rank of officer in the Communist military, a post he had secured largely by making himself indispensable as a leader and doctor who not only dressed the wounds and eased the suffering of the rank-and-file soldiers but, more importantly, attended personally to the needs of senior revolutionary officers who would later occupy prominent posts in the government of the new People's Republic of China. Given his standing, Rosenfeld was well-positioned to enjoy the fruits of victory and the rewards for everything he and his Chinese comrades had struggled for. Yet, ironically, even before the revolution reached its victorious conclusion, the "Big-Nose Medical Saint," as he was known by the troops, decided to return home to Vienna. Now that the war was over, Rosenfeld was convinced that Austria was on the road to recovery and that he would eventually be able to revive his livelihood. He also had learned that his sister was still alive and he was eager to be reunited with her.

On the eve of the Communist victory, Crook was also serving on the front lines in northeastern China, applying his teaching experience to the education of young leaders on the battlefield who would come to occupy senior posts in China's Diplomatic Corps and laying the groundwork for the establishment that would become China's Foreign Languages Institute. Crook distinguished himself and gained the trust of the Communist leadership through the degree of his self-sacrifice and, as a party member, willingness to subject himself to self-criticism and abnegation that was as harsh if not harsher than what his Chinese colleagues endured.

Known to the Chinese as "Li Dunbai," Rittenberg proved his revolutionary mettle and demonstrated his zeal by struggling side-by-side with Mao, Zhou Enlai and other Communist revolutionaries on an arduous 500-mile journey to the refuge of caves in remote Yan'an that would become known as the "Long March."

Like the other revolutionaries, Rittenberg lived a spartan life in Yan'an and followed a routine that was well-circumscribed: By day, he was an adviser to Mao, providing insights into American policy and drafting official correspondence to President Harry Truman and other American government officials on Mao's behalf. By night, he was an active participant in the impromptu dances the revolutionaries organized, an activity that enabled him to forge bonds and deepen relationships with influential members of the communist movement that would play a consequential role in his life in China. One such acquaintance was

Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, an actress who, in Rittenberg's estimation, was a lot better at dancing than she was at acting. Rittenberg also served as an occasional translator for the Laurel and Hardy movies that Mao, Zhou Enlai and the other revolutionaries were so fond of watching on Friday evenings after dinner.

The next 30 years that Rittenberg would spend in China had all the arc and sweep of a classic Greek tragedy: The hubris of the young revolutionary eager to make history who is catapulted into the very center of a movement that would change the lives of millions, the reversal of fortune that would lead to a fall from grace, and finally enlightenment, a change from ignorance to awareness.

In the early 1960s, on the eve of a decade of upheaval that would come to be known as the Great People's Cultural Revolution, Rittenberg was working in the foreign affairs office of the Central Broadcasting Bureau, a powerful organization whose strategic importance would place it on the leading edge of the revolution. Rittenberg, true to his nature, took an active role in the Cultural Revolution at its earliest stages. His engagement in mobilizing workers, organizing revolutionary study sessions and other related activities catapulted him into a position of revolutionary leader.

The following excerpt from a speech he delivered to audiences across the country — from peasants in small villages to students in auditoriums and workers in stadiums — brought him to national prominence and turned him into a celebrity:

When I was a young man growing up in America, I worked alongside steelworkers and miners. I joined the American Communist Party. So I have experienced at firsthand how capitalism exploits workers. The life of a worker in the U.S. is a tough and painful one. China should avoid going down the path of capitalism at all costs.

His spectacular revolutionary career reached its apex with the bold takeover of Central Broadcasting Bureau that he engineered as the leader of a radical faction.

Emboldened by his power and success, he increasingly used his speaking platform and stature to bring the revolutionary commitment of others into question and point out contradictions in their behavior, a tactic that ended the careers of not a few innocent citizens and brought misery to their families.

One of the targets of Rittenberg's defamatory speeches was Jiang Qing, who for Rittenberg would always be the B actress and dance companion he knew from Yan'an and, in any event, hardly a threat to someone such as him, who wielded so much power and influence. This turned out to be a severe miscalculation that would ultimately lead to his downfall. Since Yan'an, Jiang Qing, perhaps proving that she was a worthy actress after all, had succeeded in

transforming herself into the "White-Boned Demon," ringleader of the notorious Gang of Four and the object of fear and loathing. In a matter of weeks after delivering his stinging criticism of the woman many had come to see as an object of fear and loathing — hence her nickname — Rittenberg found himself in solitary confinement behind the walls of Qincheng Prison, a correctional facility on the outskirts of Beijing that was less forbidding than Alcatraz, perhaps, but no less notorious.

For most of the counter-revolutionaries, professors and artists who ended up there, being sent to Qincheng Prison was a fate worse than death. For Rittenberg, the time in Qincheng was a period for reflection and contemplation. The regimen of prison life, the long periods of inactivity and the pervasive silence was, Rittenberg reasoned, an existence that was not much different than that of "a monk in a monastery," and he kept himself occupied with activities that would keep his mind active and his spirit engaged. "Comrade Li Dunbai," noted the prison's chief warden, "reads the [People's Daily] from beginning to end every day without fail."

Despite their status as party members, sacrifice on the front lines and impeccable record of service to the state and the party, Crook and Epstein also were imprisoned in Qincheng Prison at the height of the Cultural Revolution, victims of irrational fears of foreign influence, intrigue and spying. This was a fate that befell a good number of foreigners.

However, like most of the other foreigners who were imprisoned, Crook and Epstein were released in 1973 and invited to an official state dinner, where they received an official apology from Zhou Enlai. Only Rittenberg was missing. Asked by one of those present at the dinner about Rittenberg's absence, Zhou Enlai responded gravely: "Li Dunbai has committed severe crimes against the state and its citizens. Because of this, he will remain in prison."

Rittenberg's term in prison would last nearly six more years, and upon his release in 1979, he emerged a much wiser and more humble person. After admissions of error and wrongdoing, he was finally pardoned. The official government statement exonerating him read:

Comrade Li Dunbai has worked for the benefit of the Chinese people since 1945 and made great contributions to the Chinese revolution.

In 1980, Rittenberg, approaching his 60th birthday, decided that he was finished with China and returned to the place where his odyssey had started, Charleston, S.C. There he took a job as a teacher in a local community college, intending to lead a quiet and unassuming life. Although he thought he was finished with China, China, it seemed, had not quite finished with him.

As China began to liberalize and institute economic reforms in the 1980s, large American firms began to take an interest in the potential market opportunities such a huge country offered. But since China had been closed for so many years, the Chinese lacked the insights and experience needed to be successful.

Thanks to his extensive knowledge of China and, even more importantly, his familiarity with officials at the very highest levels of the Chinese government — many of whom he had been comrades-in-arms with in the caves of Yan'an — Rittenberg became the go-to adviser for any U.S. company seriously considering entry into the Chinese market. Intel, Levis and Microsoft, to name just a few, knocked on his door. The man who once rejected capitalism for the communist ideal would now grow wealthy serving capitalism in a communist country.

Rittenberg, Crook, Epstein and Rosenfeld each approached China in a unique way and each played a distinctly different role during the time he spent in the country, but in the end, it is what they have in common that provides the greatest insight into their personalities and their motivations. In addition to being Jewish, they all joined the Chinese Communist Party, became Chinese citizens, and, most intriguingly, all lived to be more than 90 years old. Whether there is any connection between their longevity and their engagement with China is open to speculation, but what is certain is that their experiences and contributions generated one of the more unique and interesting perspectives on the great transformation of China in the 20th century.

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## Freeing Shanghai's Jews

*Excerpted from The Jews of Singapore by Joan Bieder, (Singapore: Suntree Media, 2007).*

[David Marshall (1908-1995) was a Jewish communal leader, famed criminal defense lawyer, and leftist politician, who was Singapore's first Chief Minister, just prior to Singapore's acquiring independence.]

In Sept. 1956, after David Marshall resigned as Chief Minister (of Singapore), he accepted an invitation to visit China from the People's Institute of Foreign Affairs. During his trip, Marshall had a conversation with Communist Chinese leader Zhou Enlai, in which he unexpectedly won an important victory for an embattled group of Jews living in China. He had gone to China hoping to persuade Zhou Enlai to issue a communiqué urging Singapore's Chinese residents to become citizens of

Singapore. Although 75 percent of Singapore's people were Chinese, the British had made it both hard and humiliating for them to qualify for citizenship by requiring that they take an oral examination in English as part of the process. Each time they took the test, the British "slapped them down with words they did not understand," Marshall told author Tudor Parfitt. Their proud reaction was to stop trying and reject citizenship in British Singapore out of hand. With the British on their way out Marshall wanted Zhou Enlai to urge the Chinese to reconsider and give their allegiance to the new city-state.

Before he began his five-week tour of China and Japan, Marshall received a letter from 90 year-old R.D. Abraham, head of the Council of Jewish Community (CJC) in Shanghai, that kept track of Jews in China. Abraham, whose ancestors had come to Shanghai to work for the Sassoon enterprises in the 1850s, had heard on a BBC broadcast that Singapore's former Chief Minister was coming to China. He wrote Marshall describing the plight of some 543 Jewish residents of China, most of them Russian citizens, who were bureaucratically blocked from leaving the country. They were living in reduced circumstances, pawns in the civil war between the Chinese communists and the nationalists.

An article by Josef and Lynn Silverstein in The China Quarterly described the difficult situation. At the beginning of World War II, an estimated 26,000 to 36,000 Jews were living in China, according to the Encyclopedia Judaica. After the war ended, most of them either returned to their former homelands or made new lives in Israel, Australia, Canada or the United States. Of the remaining 543 Jewish residents, 207 living in Harbin, 105 in Tientsin and the rest in Shanghai. Most wanted to immigrate to Israel and had already received entry visas from the new State, Abraham said.

But because the Chinese government consistently denied their requests for exit visas, they faced an uncertain future. It was not clear why the requests were denied—there had been virtually no anti-Semitism in China, and Israel had formally recognized the People's Republic. Abraham speculated that it might be because 400 of the remaining Jews were classified as Russian citizens, and the Communist Chinese government might be sensitive about issuing Israeli visas that could be taken as an insult to Russia's communist government.

When Marshall arrived in Shanghai on 22 September, he met Abraham, an Orthodox Jewish realtor and Chinese art expert. Abraham had once lived in splendour in a large home with extensive gardens and a large collection of antique jade—until the jade was declared part of the national treasury by the government. It sat in the Shanghai Museum, while Abraham lived in greatly reduced circumstances. When Abraham took Marshall to the Shanghai Jewish Shelter, he met family and family eager to leave Shanghai, and listed to their tales of helplessness, deprivation and poverty.

"It is an inhuman thing that after depriving them of their assets and driving them to living in a charity shelter, the Chinese government refused them exit visas to go to Israel or Australia," Marshall wrote to his brother. After speaking at a synagogue where children sang Israel's national anthem "Hatikvah" he wrote, "I was very impressed by their dignity in distress."

Moved by what he saw and heard in Shanghai, Marshall spoke with officials about China's remaining Jews, and the director of the Foreign Affairs Bureau, Liang Yufan agreed to help obtain exit visas.

But the real turning point came on 9 October, during Marshall's personal meeting with Premier Zhou Enlai about Singapore's

Chinese residents. Zhou welcomed Marshall's description of Singapore's future and agreed to issue a communiqué encouraging its Chinese residents to become citizens—with one reservation. As Marshall recalled the meeting to author Tudor Parfitt, Zhou told Marshall the Chinese had an ancient tradition. When they were old and ready to die, they wanted to "Bury their bones in their ancestral country," and he wanted a clause allowing this right to return inserted in his communiqué.

A light went on in Marshall's head. Boldly seizing the opportunity, he replied that he was moved to hear the Premier talk about a tradition which was so close to that of the Jewish people, "who for millennia have wanted to go at the close of their life to be buried in the Land of Israel."

"And I am reminded," he said pointedly to the Premier, "that at this very moment there are 500 tragic souls in Shanghai, whose only wish is to be able to leave China, which they are being prevented from doing, to go and await their end in Israel." Zhou agreed to look into the matter. "Within a month," Marshall later told Parfitt, "those Jews were allowed to emigrate. I'm very proud of that."

On 24 October, Abraham wrote to Marshall in Singapore that the Soviet government had changed its policy towards Jews in China, and China was now permitting them to leave. He himself hoped to leave in the next few weeks.

Marshall's last letter from China's Jewish community came in March 1957 from A. M. Begg, a former clerk of the Council of Jewish Community, which said that he had arrived in Hong Kong. "The situation in China has eased, not only for Jews but for all Soviet citizens," he said, and it was generally assumed, "that your personal intervention in Peking...has been the decisive factor in breaking the impasse."

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