



Points East

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

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Jews in China Cope with Coronavirus

By Miriam Groner

Excerpted from *The New York Jewish Week/Times of Israel*, 9 March 2020. <https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/in-coronavirus-stricken-china-jews-adopt-new-hi-tech-ways-to-worship-for-purim/>

Since the outbreak started at the beginning of the calendar year, the Liberal Chinese Jewish communities have held modified Sabbath services and Hebrew school, using Zoom video conferencing technology and WeChat, an app owned and operated by the Chinese government that has been described as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram and Venmo all rolled into one. The communities had used it in the past for updates, but now it's become the lifeline for community members, many of whom are now stranded out of country.

As the global pandemic has spread, grounding airlines, sending global financial markets plummeting and closing schools, synagogues and now yeshivas, Jewish life in China has all but shut down.

Speaking with The Times of Israel...China's Jewish multi-denominational community leaders describe a country on lockdown, with precious few Jews currently on hand out of the 10,000 who usually live there. Many Jewish families had been traveling over the Chinese New Year at the end of January as news of the outbreak spread. Facing certain quarantine, and with schools across the country closed, most stayed abroad.

Given the members' different time zones, this can be a challenge. Members of Kehilat Shanghai are now spread around South Asia, the United States, Europe, Brazil, South Africa and Australia.

"We've found that sometimes sending a video lesson or message can be more effective because then people can watch it on their own time in whatever time zone they are in and comment on the group chat as opposed to tuning in at a specific moment," Julia Ulman [coordinator of Kehilat Shanghai] said. "We've been encouraging people to send in their Shabbat messages from around the world... We're finding many different ways to feel connected and use the fact that we are a community not just a synagogue. We are a community, no matter what is going on and where we are."

"It's a very sad situation," Rabbi Shalom Greenberg [of Chabad Shanghai] said over the phone from Shanghai. "All the schools and universities are closed, so 99 percent of the families didn't stay here. They left. You can't keep your kids at home in four walls for such a long time." Greenberg says there are typically 2,000 Jewish people in Shanghai and he hosts 50 to 100 people every week at his Chabad center for Shabbat services and meals. Since the virus outbreak, he's barely had 10.

...Even with most of his community still not back in China, Greenberg organized a mask drive and distributed thousands of masks and aid kits to Jews and non-Jews in Shanghai's Hongkou District. The area is home to a large number of elderly citizens who have had a hard time accessing the limited quantities of supplies at the city's distribution centers. Volunteers from the Jewish War Refugee Museum helped Greenberg deliver them directly to people's homes so they wouldn't have to line up in the cold.

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The US Campaign to Derail China-Israel Relations

By Anson Laytner

Seeking to counter China's growing influence on the world stage, its technological advances, and desperate to deflect attention from its own COVID-19 failures at home, the US government and its proxies appear to have launched an anti-China media campaign designed to accomplish both these aims. Chinese-Israeli relations have become both a flashpoint and a target.

Echoing themes from his mid-May visit to Israel, Secretary of State Pompeo told the American Jewish Committee's Global Forum in June that "standing up to the Chinese Communist Party is a growing challenge to the United States, to Israel, indeed to all free people," because "Beijing's opaque military buildup, reckless indifference to its internal obligations, and disinformation campaigns endanger us all." Sounding like a resurrected John Foster Dulles, he called on AJC attendees to "be alert to the Chinese Communist Party's threat to our way of life. Standing against bad actors is at the core of America's values."

This was not the first occasion that America had told Israel (sometimes via American Jews) what to do. The first time came shortly after the establishment of the PRC. Although Israel was the first Middle Eastern country to recognize the PRC, American threats before and during the Korean War forced Israel to cool its ardor for China. Then, in 2000, the US compelled Israel to cancel the sale of its Falcon aircraft to China. Now, Israel is being pressured to join on the American side of President Trump's confrontation with China. Already back in October 2019, Israel's security cabinet decided to establish a mechanism to monitor Chinese and other foreign investments, following pressure from the United States. While China's rebuilding of the port of Haifa continues, much to America's displeasure, Israel did recently reverse itself regarding Chinese involvement in the construction of a major desalination plant.

Speaking in Jerusalem during his May visit, Pompeo had blamed China for bearing responsibility for spread of COVID-19 and accused it of problematic trade practices. State Department officials said a main topic of discussion was Washington's concerns over Israel's expanding trade relationship with China, which the Trump administration believes is a back door way for China to obtain intelligence on US military capacities around the world. During that same visit, he also told public broadcaster Kan that Chinese participation in Israeli infrastructure and communications systems could jeopardize U.S. cooperation.

In response, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated "some political forces in the US are taking China-US relations hostage and pushing our two countries to the brink of a new Cold War" while its embassy in Israel added "We trust that the Jewish friends are not only able to defeat the coronavirus but also the 'political virus,' and choose the course of action that best serves its interests" noting as well that "China's investment in Israel only accounts for 0.4 percent of China's investment across the world and 3% of the foreign investment flow into Israel." What is left unsaid is the fact that, by breaking Israeli-Chinese economic links, the US is damaging and

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SJI MEMBERSHIP

Country	Total
United States	136
Canada	6
China	15
Israel	11
England	6
Australia	2
Japan	2
Germany	2
Greece	1
Singapore	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
Total:	184

FROM THE EDITOR

Pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong, the spread of the coronavirus around the world, stay-at-home orders and social distancing, economic collapse and mass unemployment, police killings of African Americans, massive anti-police brutality rallies in numerous countries—it's been a wild few months since our last issue!

I'd like to comment on them all but I lack the expertise, the space and the energy.

What energy I do have has been directed to the research and writing of the lead article "The US Campaign to Derail China-Israel Relations," which takes the Trump Administration and its Jewish allies to task for pressuring Israel on its ties with China. As more than one colleague pointed out to me, "This has been going on since 1949." I rarely feature my own writings in *Points East*, but this time I felt it was important to highlight this perennial problem.

This issue carries another great interview with a former Shanghai-lander by Kevin Ostoyich, a fascinating article about the Kadoories, stories about the catastrophic 1642 flood in Kaifeng, Trumpeldor in China, a typically incisive letter from Jordan Paper, and other intriguing items.

Also featured in this issue are book reviews of Steve Hochstadt's new volume *A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai* and Vera Schwarcz's *In the Crook of the Rock—Jewish Refuge in a World Gone Mad: The Chaya Leah Walkin Story*.

Stay healthy! Stay safe!

Anson Laytner

Points East

Anson Laytner, Editor

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In the Field

Chinese Donate COVID-19 Medical Supplies to Israel

A plane laden with medical aid from China touched down at Ben-Gurion Airport on April 6th, with much of the 20 tons of cargo donated by former tourists and academic exchange alumni who have fond memories of Israel. Additional flights coming to Israel with medical goods from China would also be carrying donations, alongside goods that Israel is buying.

According to the Defense Ministry, which organized the shipment, there were more than 900,000 surgical masks, half a million protective suits for medical teams and other "critical equipment" on the flight that landed Monday morning.

At Bar Ilan University's Azrieli Faculty of Medicine in the northern city of Safed, there was excitement that packages of protective suits, face shields, eye goggles, N95 masks and surgical masks will soon arrive on the flight — sent by Chinese alumni of the university. Supplies of protective gear were running so low there that some doctors and staff were sent home because they couldn't be kept safe. Now, they will return to the faculty.

"There are so many Chinese people who want to help Israel," said Betty Xi, a visiting scholar at Beijing University and a graduate of Israel's Bar-Ilan University. She raised \$10,000 in 72 hours, mostly from people who have become academics after postdoctoral fellowships in Israel. "We have such good memories of being at Bar-Ilan in Israel and were so deeply influenced by the spirit of the university, so we really wanted to do something for the university," she said by telephone from Beijing.

China's Ambassador to Israel Dies

China's ambassador to Israel, Du Wei, 57, was found dead at his official residence in the coastal town of Herzliya on 17 May 2020.

Du was married and had one son but his family members were not with him in Israel.

He had arrived in Israel on 15 February to take up his posting, and immediately spent two weeks in quarantine due to coronavirus regulations. He was unable to present his credentials to President Reuven Rivlin in person due to the pandemic.

Du, who was born in Shandong Province, was a professional diplomat who previously served in Ukraine.

Coronavirus scuttles China tour for Yiddish 'Fiddler on the Roof'

The Yiddish production of "Fiddler on the Roof" was scheduled to tour China this spring but has apparently fallen victim to coronavirus. On January 13th, cast members were informed via email of a three-city tour that would have taken place from April 13th to May 10th. But according to Zalmen Mlotek, artistic director of the National Yiddish Theater Folksbiene, four days later the tour was cancelled. Mlotek called the cancellation of the China tour "a major disappointment for everybody. The hope is that one day, please God, this virus will end and things will be back to normal in China and we'll be able to do it."

Sonja Mühlberger featured in Xinhua video

Sonja Mühlberger, a SJI International Advisory Board member, was featured in a Xinhua video feature commemorating the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II by focusing on three children whose lives in China were shaped by that conflict. Sonja, who was born and raised in Shanghai, was one of them. Below are two links to this ten-minute video:

http://german.xinhuanet.com/2020-05/08/c_139041032.htm?from=single-message

http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2020-05/08/c_139040404.htm

"The Singer of Shanghai" Premieres

SJI Board member Dr. Kevin Ostoyich's graduate students in the Valparaiso University Arts and Entertainment Administration program have written and produced a new radio play titled "The Singer of Shanghai."

Ida Abraham, mother of former Shanghai Jewish refugee Harry Abraham is the central focus for the production and her Singer sewing machine is used as a symbol to connect her past to our present. The real twist is that former Shanghai Jewish refugees joined as members of the cast as did SJI Board member Danny Spungen.

Directed by Dr. Kari-Anne Innes, the radio theatre play is available on YouTube at the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltmM5qqL-hl>

Got News for "In the Field"? Send it to Laytner@msn.com

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor:

The lead article in the last issue of *Points East*, "Kaifeng Jewish Community Suffers New Suppression," was most interesting, but I was bothered by the tone, exemplified by the first sentence: "Since Xi Jinping took power, the repression of religion has been increasingly vigorous." I have found that Xi Jinping rather has been promoting religion, particularly Chinese Religion, but also others long established in China, such as working out a ground-breaking agreement with the Vatican, solving a dispute going back several centuries. Hence, I looked into the journal from which the article was taken, *Bitter Winter*.

Seemingly an academic journal, *Bitter Winter* is entirely oriented towards extreme anti-Chinese journalism, closely following the propaganda line of the U.S. attacks on China with regard to human rights. I could not find a single positive article with regard to China. It appears to promote the Church of the Almighty God, a Chinese offshoot of Christianity, denied as being Christian by established Christian churches, and repressed in China as a dangerous cult. Some of the very recent articles and editorials are bizarre, including declaring that the government is not only doing nothing about the corona virus — the building of new hospitals in Wuhan is a hoax (in spite of news videos of the hospitals) — and China is deliberating spreading the virus to allow for organ harvesting! The author of the article in *Points East* is a prolific writer of anti-Chinese government articles, often several in a single issue; one can only wonder as to which organization is funding him or her.

The situation of the Kaifeng Jews is fairly well described in the article. The community unfortunately has fallen under the prohibitions of the new Regulation on Religion, which was not designed with regard to Judaism whatsoever. The Regulation is clearly aimed at three particular issues: 1) the so-called "house churches" — Protestant churches, usually Pentecostal and supported by American churches, which refuse to register with the government — different from most Protestant Churches in China, which are supported by the government and abide by Chinese laws; 2) spreading Salafism, which seeks to de-Sinicize Chinese Islam, which has long been Sinicized as was Chinese Judaism, and Arabianize it,

supported by Arab money; and 3) support by Islamic terrorist organizations for Uighur terrorism by training Uighurs in Afghanistan and by funds from certain Central Asian Turkish speaking countries (the Uighurs are a Turkic people). Hence, the regulations prohibit religious organizations receiving or benefiting from foreign funds, members of religions being trained in religion (or terrorism) outside of China, and foreign missionaries.

The Chinese government has made abundantly clear that the Regulation on Religion is not concerned with religion per se, but with sedition, terrorism, and colonialist attempts by foreign entities to convert those of Chinese culture to a foreign culture. As members of the Sino-Judaic Institute (SJI) well know, they and other Jewish organizations (as well as pretend Jewish organizations) have been carrying out activities that in retrospect violate every aspect of the new regulation, and that brought the “crack-down” on the Kaifeng Jewish community.

The present government under Xi Jinping is strongly encouraging a revitalization of Chinese culture, including religion. Foreign influence on religion is understood as a remnant of colonialism and more important, given that regime change throughout Chinese history was almost always due to religio-political movements, all foreign influence on religion in China is understood as sedition. Hence, promoting Ashkenazi (northeast European) Judaism as a substitute for Chinese Judaism, itself based on Mizrahi Judaism, as well as Ashkenazi culture to replace the Chinese culture of the Chinese descendants of the Kaifeng synagogue community, is looked upon askance. Any further activities in these regards can only lead to potentially severe consequences for the Kaifeng community, especially as the local government seems to administer the new regulations harshly beyond the stipulations of the new Regulation, perhaps hoping to curry favor with the central government. This may explain why when I was last in Kaifeng to give a talk on the Kaifeng Jews at the School of Jewish Studies of Henan University, I was not informed of the time and place of the talk, thus subtly in Chinese fashion cancelling my presentation. (Just previous on that same trip, I had lectured in Beijing on the same subject with the full support, including financial, of Chinese academics and academic institutions.)

SJI members are not subject to Chinese laws and regulations so long as they remain outside of China, but the Chinese descendants of the Kaifeng synagogue community are, and it is they who will suffer the consequences if SJI disregards the new regulation on religion. Those brought out of China to be trained in Judaism sponsored by SJI are now likely to be arrested as soon as they return. I have cautioned SJI before about the potential consequences of their activities in Kaifeng, even though meaning well, of course, and my predictions unfortunately came to pass. I hope in the future SJI will seriously consider the potential disastrous consequences for the people they mean to help.

The situation is made more difficult because in the early formation of the list of five recognized religions over a half-century ago (five being the common number for Chinese lists), Judaism was left off the list, and thus is not a licit religion. The list was of religions then viably present in China rather than those of the past, and Chinese Judaism had been defunct for a century when the list was formulated. As well, few Chinese are aware of the presence of Judaism in Chinese history. When I lectured on the topic at Beijing Normal University and the Institute of World Religions at Academia Sinica (Beijing), virtually all the scholars in attendance had been unaware of that presence. SJI and others have funded the study of Judaism in Chinese universities and Chinese scholars to study Judaism, including Chinese Judaism. Yet have any of these scholars made efforts towards the recognition of Judaism in China or greater awareness of the history of Chinese Judaism?

A further factor regarding lack of recognition and thus legitimacy is that Israel, with the Ultra-Orthodox given the right by the government to determine Jewish identity, does not recognize the descendants of the Kaifeng synagogue community as Jews. Thus, the Chinese government might assume that recognizing Chinese Judaism could lead to diplomatic problems with Israel. In any case, if Jews do not recognize the Kaifeng Jews as Jews, why would one expect China to do so?

For those who are interested in the question of religious freedom in China and the new regulation on religion, these are discussed in depth in the chapter “Freedom of Religion” in my new book, *Chinese Religion and Familism* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Jordan Paper

A Jewish Dynasty in a Changing China

By Jonathan Kaufman

Excerpted from the *Wall Street Journal*, 30 May 2020

Since 1880, when an Iraqi Jewish refugee named Elly Kadoorie arrived in Hong Kong, China has gone through a series of revolutions—from domination by Western powers to independence, from Nationalist to Communist rule, from colonialism to capitalism to communism. Through it all, the Kadoorie family has been a barometer of the country’s openness to the world, rising to become the richest Western family in China. Leaders have been seeking their advice for generations, drawn by their combination of business skills and political acumen. Now, as China cracks down on dissent in Hong Kong and defiant protesters again take to the streets, the problem facing the family—like other companies and governments seeking to deal with a more repressive and nationalistic regime—is whether China will continue to welcome them.

The Kadoories built their first fortune in Shanghai between the world wars, when the city became a global crossroads. When the communists took over in 1949 and expelled foreigners, they lost almost everything, fleeing to British-ruled Hong Kong to make a new start. Over the next 25 years they grew richer than ever, amassing an \$18 billion portfolio that includes China Light and Power, which provides electricity to 80% of Hong Kong’s residents, and the luxury Peninsula hotel chain.

When the People’s Republic began to open up in 1972, after President Nixon’s visit, one of the first calls the communist leadership made was to the Kadoories, seeking their help in building a nuclear power plant. The Kadoories, who remain British citizens, became one of the country’s biggest foreign investors, returning to Shanghai triumphantly to build a new Peninsula Hotel. Today they meet regularly with top Chinese leaders, including Xi Jinping.

It has been a steep ascent since Elly Kadoorie landed in Hong Kong at the age of 18. He had been recruited to work for a major trading firm owned by the Sassoons, another Jewish family that had come to China from Baghdad 35 years earlier, just after the Opium Wars. But Elly soon struck out on his own, steering clear of opium, one of the main commodities the Sassoons transported between India and China. Instead he invested in hotels, land and utilities, building the infrastructure for the growing city of Shanghai as it became the “Paris of the East.” In time he built the grandest mansion in the city—43 rooms for just three people—and entertained celebrities like Charles Lindbergh. The Kadoories’ hotels hosted the world’s elites, including the wedding of Chiang Kai-shek...

During World War II, the elderly Elly Kadoorie was imprisoned in a Japanese camp, and he died in captivity in 1944. Soon after the war ended, the Chinese communists swept through Shanghai, seizing the family’s buildings and art collection. Most Westerners in China, including the Sassoons, fled to Europe, Australia or

the Americas. But Elly's grown sons, Lawrence and Horace, stayed close by, moving to the family's hotel in Hong Kong. "If we sit down and worry, not only will no progress be made but everything will get worse," Lawrence wrote to Horace in 1946. "If we go ahead optimistically, and in the belief that Hong Kong has a great future before it...we shall recover our losses and progress." Hong Kong, Lawrence declared, "may become another Shanghai."

He turned out to be spectacularly correct. Over the next 70 years, through the Cold War and China's economic rise, the Kadoories rebuilt their fortune in Hong Kong. They also concluded that businessmen of their father's generation, isolated and wealthy, had been blind to the rise of communism and paid a terrible price. "The best protection against Communism is to provide living conditions that are better than those in China proper," Lawrence declared. The Kadoories poured millions into helping displaced Chinese farmers and refugees set up small farms in Hong Kong. Research supported by the Kadoories led to the breeding of a new strain of pig that provided more meat for the city's booming population. The Jewish Kadoories, the Chinese farmers joked, "know everything about the pig except the way it tastes."

At the same time, the Kadoories were convinced that one day China would open up again. They maintained covert ties with the mainland and never publicly criticized the communist regime. The strategy paid off in 1978, when the Kadoories were welcomed back by Deng Xiaoping and invested a billion dollars in China's first nuclear plant. Later they helped to keep Hong Kong calm as the British negotiated its handover to China, which took place in 1997. "You have always been a friend to China," an aide to Xi Jinping told Michael Kadoorie, grandson of Elly and the current head of the family.

Michael Kadoorie still believes that Hong Kong's business community must work with China. Last summer, as the city was racked by increasingly violent anti-China demonstrations, he wrote a full-page advertisement that ran in local English and Chinese newspapers. "It is disheartening to see what has overtaken the city recently," he wrote. "I do not support violence nor do I believe this should be the way to resolve conflicts." Instead, he pleaded, China must "find solutions in mutual respect, understanding and open dialogue."

It's a familiar dilemma for the Kadoories. Whenever China has been open and engaged with the world—in Shanghai in the 1920s and 1930s, in Hong Kong under British rule, and in mainland China after 1978—the family has prospered. Their success is a testament to China's ability to absorb foreign influences and benefit from foreign investment. But as the country turns more assertive and nationalistic, the tightrope the Kadoories walk is growing thinner.

Jonathan Kaufman is director of the School of Journalism at Northeastern University. This essay is adapted from his new book The Last Kings of Shanghai: The Rival Jewish Dynasties That Helped Create Modern China (Viking, 2020).

A Second Sugihara Discovered

Japanese original by Hiroyuki Tanaka

Reprinted from *The Mainichi* 28 May, 2020 <https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20200528/p2a/00m/0na/012000c1/3>

New evidence has emerged showing that during World War II, Japan's acting consul-general in Vladivostok in the then Soviet Union issued transit visas for Jews escaping persecution from Nazi Germany to pass through Japan.

Records showing that Saburo Nei (1902-1992) had granted the visas were known to have been kept in Russia, but now for the first time the existence of one of the actual documents has been confirmed. Another Japanese diplomat, Chiune Sugihara (1900-86), is known internationally for having helped Jews in Lithuania during wartime. But a person connected to the new findings said, "We want many people to know that there were Japanese diplomats other than Mr. Sugihara who saved Jewish people."

The visa was found by Akira Kitade, 76, a freelance writer living in Tokyo who has written books on Jewish refugees. While pursuing leads on survivors' stories he learned that Polish Jew Simon Korentajer had been to Japan on travel documents issued by Nei. Korentajer's grandchild Kim Hydorn, 53, who resides in the United States, sent him pictures of the visa.

The visa was issued on Feb. 28, 1941, and permits travel to the U.S. via the ports of Tsuruga in Fukui Prefecture on the Sea of Japan and Yokohama, which lies on the Pacific side of the country, in Kanagawa Prefecture south of Tokyo. Nei's signature and the consulate in Vladivostok's official seal are also included. It was printed on a separate document to his passport.

According to Kitade, Korentajer was born in Warsaw, and escaped from Poland to Lithuania with his family after it was invaded by Nazi Germany in September 1939. In early February 1941, the U.S. Embassy in Moscow rejected their application for visas to enter the United States. They then traveled via the Trans-Siberian Railway across the Soviet Union to Vladivostok on the country's eastern coast.

At the time, the Japanese government would not grant transit visas to people without permission to reach their final destination, but it appears that Nei made an independent decision to issue them. In March 1941, Korentajer and his family set foot on Japanese soil by entering from Tsuruga. They then traveled from Kobe, in the western prefecture of Hyogo, to Shanghai. They finally reached the U.S. after the war in August 1947, when they

arrived in San Francisco.

Until now, it hadn't been known that Nei had issued visas. But recent joint research by professor Yakov Zinberg at Kokushikan University and in Russia found records in the state archives of its Ministry of Foreign Affairs showing that on March 3, 1941, Nei told an official stationed in Vladivostok for the Soviet Union's People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that he had "issued a set number of transit visas without permission from Tokyo." He reportedly said he felt sorry for the many refugees staying in the area, so he granted the documents. Professor Zinberg said, "The visa that's been found now is an important document in support of the written records found on the Soviet side."

Acting consul-general Chiune Sugihara also issued many visas between July and August 1940. He did so on humanitarian grounds, and his actions were in opposition to the policies of the Japanese government at the time. But Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was put in a difficult position due to the conditions of Sugihara's issued visas for refugees to Japan being insufficient, and demanded the Japanese Embassy in the Soviet Union re-examine the documents in March 1941. However, when questions were put to Nei about them, he sent back a telegram saying he was "unamused" by the query.

After the war, Nei reportedly never talked about having issued the visas, or about the diplomatic climate at the time. But in 2016 an appreciation society for him was established in the city of Miyazaki, the capital of the southwestern prefecture of the same name and the area he grew up in.

Efforts to bring recognition to his achievements are continuing. Kitade said, "I want to see light shed on Nei, whose presence has been hidden in the shadow of Sugihara."

Saburo Nei was born in the village of Hirose, now part of the city of Miyazaki, in 1902. He studied abroad with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1921, and learned Russian at the Nichiro Kyokai Gakko school for Japanese and Russian cooperation, now Harbin University, in what was then occupied Manchuria and is now northeastern China. Chiune Sugihara was two terms above him at the school. As a diplomat, Nei was stationed in the Soviet Union and in Iran, and from December 1940 took up the post of acting consul-general at the consulate in Vladivostok. After the war he resigned from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and joined the Immigration Services Agency of Japan. He went on to serve as the head of the regional immigration bureaus in Kagoshima and Nagoya.

Coronavirus, continued from page 1

Now there are 13 Chabad centers across China including three in Shanghai alone, and Reform progressive communities in Beijing and Shanghai. There's also an Israeli Sephardic synagogue in Shanghai. It's estimated that 10,000 Jews live in China year-round, a smattering among China's staggering 1.4 billion people, but it swells during tourist season and throughout the year for business: An afternoon prayer service at the mega Canton manufacturing fair which takes place a few times a year in Guangzhou regularly has over 500 people.

In Beijing and Shanghai, the two main communities operate independently but there is some overlap among congregants and programming. "We're one community, we just pray separately on Friday night," Dini Freundlich said, speaking of Beijing's Jewish population. [Freundlich is co-director of the Chabad center in Beijing with her husband Rabbi Shimon Freundlich, which operates a Hebrew school, a trilingual day school for 60 kids, a kosher restaurant, a synagogue and Jewish holiday programs.]

Members of the Reform communities in Beijing and Shanghai also describe a close-knit, unified group, despite its transient nature. "It's just this wonderful community made up of people from all different backgrounds who aren't necessarily involved in the Jewish community in their hometowns, but here they discover what their Judaism is," said Leon Fenster, an artist from Britain who often led services at Kehillat Beijing during his six-year stint in China's capital.

There are around 730 people across the Kehillat Beijing and Kehilat Shanghai WeChat groups, many of whom, like Fenster, now live outside of the country.

China's Jewish community members were effusive about the country's welcoming environment, saying that anti-Semitism is practically unheard of. "It makes Chinese history stand out," Fenster said. "We just don't think about it. There's absolutely no history of anti-Semitism."

Dan Krassenstein, 56, a supply chain specialist who lived in Shanghai for 15 years agreed. "There [in China] Jews are treated like long-lost brothers and with a lot of respect. The Chinese and Jews share a lot of similar values in terms of respect for family and our elders, and therefore [they] afford Jews and Israelis a lot of respect."

Slowly, some young professionals have started returning to China. Hannah Maia Frishberg, 26, is a resident at the Shanghai Moishe House where she helps organize events for young Jewish professionals. She was previously the community coordinator at Kehilat Shanghai and now works in the development department at NYU Shanghai.

Since returning to Shanghai...Frishberg says life is slowly creeping back to normal. Still,

she says, there are temperature and mask checks everywhere as well as complex regulations around eating out and package deliveries, including how far tables must be apart at restaurants. Most apartment complexes, including hers, have no-guest policies. "Getting together has taken on a new joy," Frishberg said.

Miriam Groner is the digital director and an occasional writer at The Jewish Media Group.

Philippines' WWII Rescue of Jews Featured in New Film

By Rich Tenorio

Excerpted from *Times of Israel* 20 February 2020

In the late 1930s, Philippines president Manuel Quezon welcomed over 1,200 Jews from Germany and Austria into an unlikely haven in the Pacific archipelago. With his Open Doors policy, even as most nations closed their doors to Jewish refugees, these Jews — who came to be known as "Manilaners" — escaped Hitler's growing menace and reached the Philippine capital...

The little-known rescue was commemorated on January 27, International Holocaust Remembrance Day, at the United Nations in New York, as well as at the Philippine embassy's recently inaugurated cultural center in Tel Aviv, the Balai Quezon.

A new feature film, "Quezon's Game," may help cement the initiative's place in history. Tel Aviv attendees got a sneak-peek at clips from the film, which is directed by Philippine-based Jewish filmmaker Matthew Rosen, who was on hand for the showing. They also saw the 2020 documentary, "The Last Manilaners," directed by Nico Hernandez. Guests at the UN watched clips from a 2012 documentary by Filipino filmmaker Noel Izon, "An Open Door: Jewish Rescue in the Philippines."

The films build upon past remembrance efforts, such as Manilaner Frank Ephraim's book, "Escape to Manila."

The genesis of "Quezon's Game" came when filmmaker Rosen, a UK native who relocated to the Philippines in the 1980s, noticed that his Filipina wife, Lorena Rosen, knew the words to "Hava Nagila" and that local children could sing it, but none knew its origins. This prompted him to make some inquiries at a local Manila synagogue and its museum beginning in 2009.

"I thought the story was amazing," Rosen said, but "what was more amazing than that story" was how "nobody knew [about it], not even my wife or most Filipinos." Asked why there was hardly any recollection, he replied, "It's an excellent question. I have

no answer. It's why I felt I had to make [the film]."

"Quezon's Game" was recently screened in the US after having garnered 25 international film festival awards. Matthew and Lorena Rosen co-wrote the original script. Their son, Dean Rosen, collaborated with Janice Y. Perez to turn it into a screenplay. Dean Rosen also composed the original music, which incorporates songs written by concentration camp victims. Several Manilaners...share reflections during the credits.

"One of the most common [reactions to the film] by rabbis and Jewish communities is, 'I had no idea,'" said Rosen, who with "Quezon's Game" made his feature film directorial debut. "For me, it makes me feel more necessary to do [this], to tell the Jewish community that the Philippines stuck out a helping hand when they really needed it"...

In real life, Rosen said, Quezon befriended five brothers from a Jewish cigar manufacturing family, the Frieders. In the film, one of the brothers, Alex Frieder, learns in a telegram that the Germans are making death camps for Jews. He urges Quezon to offer a haven for Jews wishing to flee Europe.

Quezon requests thousands of visas from the US government, but he faces anti-Semitism in the State Department... Quezon faced internal opposition to his refugee plan within the Philippines. "The people were friendly, the politicians were worried," NY-based rescued Jew Ralph Preiss told *The Times of Israel*. "Quezon had to do this at his own political disadvantage. The opposition party certainly was against it."

Quezon's health also hindered his ability; he was battling a relapse of the tuberculosis that would eventually kill him while convalescing at Saranac Lake, New York, in 1944 — two years before Philippine independence following World War II...

According to [Philippine ambassador to Israel] Imperial, the real-life Quezon wanted to bring tens of thousands of Jews to the Philippines and permanently settle them on the island of Mindanao... "Unfortunately, the Americans rejected the idea," he said, adding that a compromise figure of 10,000 was reached — 1,000 visas over 10 years — but the Japanese invasion of the Philippines brought the program to "an abrupt end"...

Rosen lists the number [saved] as 1,226: 1,200 off the boat and 26 refugees from Shanghai before the Japanese invasion. But he estimated that "nearly 100 more [found] their own way here, escaped on their own."

"He put them on his land," Rosen said, referring to part of the presidential home in Marikina. "He actually [saved] a few more than [Oskar] Schindler."

Campaign, *continued from page 1*

punishing Israel, not China, because what is macro-economical for Israel is micro-economical for China.

About the same time, I received by mail, unsolicited, a copy of *The Epoch Times*, featuring a special report “How the Chinese Communist Party Endangered the World.” Buried inside the issue, which purports to document how the CCP was using COVID-19 to pursue its global ambitions, was the fact that the paper is published by American practitioners of Falun Gong, whose enmity of the Chinese government is well-known.

As I considered this coincidental timing, the Jewish online magazine *Tablet* published, on 18 May and again on 24 May, a screed entitled “China’s Plan to Win Control of the Global Order” by Tanner Greer, identified only as a “journalist and researcher.” Upon investigation, I found out that Greer often writes for the *National Review*, the *Weekly Standard* and the *American Conservative*, which would have provided important contextual information for his rant.

On 2 June, writing for the *JTA*, Ron Kampeas, its Washington D.C. correspondent, described how, under President Trump, the United States was putting pressure on Israel, along with many of its allies, to limit Chinese investment in the country as part of his trade war with China. To highlight the dangers posed to Israel, Kampeas only cited conservative writers, virtually ignoring other sources who might have balanced his assessment.

Looking into the sources Kampeas cited led me to the Hudson Institute, a conservative think-tank based in Washington D.C. In recent times, it has published over 200 articles that deal with US-China-Israeli relations in greater or lesser degree including “The Impasse Obstructing U.S.-Israel Relations, and How to Remedy It” by Arthur Herman (which was also featured, with a more inflammatory headline, in the right-leaning online Jewish publication *Mosaic*), and “The China Factor in U.S.-Israel Relations” and “The Chinese Challenge to the U.S.-Israel Relationship” by Douglas Feith. Herman is a senior fellow at the Institute and author of nine books. He is also a frequent contributor to *Commentary*, *Mosaic*, *National Review*, the *New York Post*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. Feith, also a senior fellow, served as under secretary of defense for policy from July 2001 to August 2005 under President Bush I. His writings have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Commentary*, *New Republic*, and elsewhere.

Although Herman, Feith and others associated with Hudson are legitimate, albeit politically conservative, scholars, it is clear to me that there is a concerted campaign to discredit China-Israel ties in the eyes of Americans in general, and Jews and Israelis in particular, as part of the US government’s

multi-front campaign against China.

The Trump administration’s recently published “United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China,” adopts a much harder line against China and its ruling Communist Party, painting them as America’s enemy. The document argues that “Beijing will attempt to convert OBOR projects [its Belt and Road Initiative] into undue political influence and military access. Beijing uses a combination of threat and inducement to pressure governments, elites, corporations, think tanks, and others – often in an opaque manner – to toe the CCP line and censor free expression.” Put another way, American economic and political dominance is threatened by Chinese advances and Washington will bully foreign “governments, elites, corporations, think tanks, and others” to toe its own line, citing freedom of expression as its concern.

An example of this “long-term strategic competition” is the increasing US pressure on its allies not to install Chinese fifth generation (5G) communications infrastructure, along with the possibility of punitive measures against those who ignore such warnings.

Although I am not blind to the Chinese government’s faults with regards to religious freedom, its treatment of minorities and its human rights abuses, and although America does have legitimate commercial concerns, we owe it to ourselves not to fall prey to American anti-China rhetoric, neither on the issue of Chinese-Israeli relations nor on the subject of the Kaifeng Jewish descendants. (For an example of the latter, see the articles on religion in China by Lela Gilbert, Adjunct Fellow, Center for Religious Freedom at the Hudson Institute.)

One way we can immunize ourselves against this “political virus” is by reading more balanced approaches to the issue of US-China-Israeli relations. As opposed to hearing from the Trump administration and its Jewish-American proxies, read articles by those thinkers who strive to find more nuanced ways to navigate US-China tensions. For publications that still tilt to an American perspective, consider *Investment in Israeli Technology and Infrastructure: Security Implications for Israel and the United States*, by Shira Efron, Karen Schwindt, Emily Haskel, published by the Rand Corporation and *Foreign Involvement in Strategic Infrastructures Requires Clear Guidelines*, by Galia Lavi and Shira Efron, published by the Institute for National Security Studies at Tel Aviv University. Shalom Salomon Wald’s fine paper, *China’s Rise, US Opposition, and the Implications for Israel*, published by the Jewish People Policy Institute, is less concerned with placating American interests and stakes out a solid, moderate position with Israel’s best interests in mind. The writings of Yitzhak Shichor and Dale Alluf also offer balanced, Israel-centric perspectives.

I cede the next-to-last word to Carice Witte,

the founder and director of SIGNAL, the Sino-Israel Global Network & Academic Leadership, who in an interview with *Times of Israel* on 20 May 2020 offered the following pragmatic advice: “People talk about the US pressing allies to choose. Pick a side. Israel already has a side. There is no choosing here. And China knows it. China realizes that the joint US-Israel development of military technology and the US financial backing for military equipment as well as the US veto in the UN Security Council are things that China will not be providing.” Nonetheless, she adds, “Israel and China want to continue to do business together.” In other words, the relationship will continue to flourish because of mutual interest.

The question, to my mind, is how much pressure from Washington can Israel tolerate before it acquiesces, particularly when the Trump Administration seems hell-bent on giving Israel everything it wants territorially.

From Germany to Shanghai to San Francisco

By Kevin Ostoyich

Excerpted from the *American Institute for Contemporary German Studies*, Johns Hopkins University, 20 November 2019 www.aicgs.org

Clean Breaks

Rudy Nothenberg likes clean breaks. His experience as a Jewish refugee in Shanghai started to recede into the past the day he left the city for the United States. He states matter-of-factly, “It was a new life, and I was looking forward and began to live it.” Rudy arrived in San Francisco as a headstrong, independent sixteen-year-old. He managed to keep the break with Shanghai clean for close to seventy years. Then something happened. A man full of anti-Semitic hatred walked into the Tree of Life Congregation in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and started shooting. Among the victims that day was the belief that what was past was past, and what is present is present. That clean, temporal break had become unbroken.

In the aftermath of the Pittsburgh shooting, Rudy found himself thinking much more about his German past and, specifically, about his mother. He started to think about what his mother would have thought if she had heard that something so heinous—something so reminiscent of the Nazi past—had come to pass in the American present. Rudy found himself sitting in front of his computer, plugging his mother’s name—Jeannette Nothenberg—into Google. He did not find much, but as he continued to search, he eventually found the name Kurt Nothenberg—his father. The name appeared in an article with the title “Back on Straw.” The article chronicled a little-known story within a larger, but still, little-known story. It was about 106 refugees, who were spurned by the United States and sent to Bremen, Germany, in 1950. These refugees had landed in San Francisco from Shanghai, China, where they had found

haven from the Holocaust with some 16,000 to 18,000 others.

Rudy, having rarely spoken to anyone about his now unbroken past, decided to contact the historian of the "Back on Straw" piece and tell his story. The following is Rudy's unbroken past, and the message it conveys informs our present and future.

Indefatigable

Rudy (Rudolf) Nothenberg was born in Schweidnitz, Germany (present-day Widnica, Poland) near Breslau (present-day Wrocław, Poland) to Kurt and Jeannette (née Cohn) on October 12, 1932... Although he does not have many memories of Germany, he does know that his father took him to the 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin.

Two years later, Breslau—like countless cities and towns throughout Germany—was a site of Kristallnacht. [Rudy's father] was rounded up with other Jews and sent to Buchenwald. At the time, Jews could be released from concentration camps on the condition that they leave Germany immediately upon release. Jeannette learned that Jews could flee to Shanghai and worked on making the necessary arrangements in order to get Kurt released and the family out of the country. Kurt remained incarcerated in Buchenwald for one month and six days, being released on either December 14 or 15, 1938. During his time in the concentration camp, Kurt contracted lung disease. This perhaps was the beginning of his struggle with tuberculosis. Rudy remembers his father being hardly recognizable when he returned from Buchenwald...

Kurt, Jeannette, and Rudy left Germany by train to Genoa and journeyed to Shanghai on the Conte Biancamano. Rudy remembers the Conte Biancamano in very positive terms... Ever resourceful, ever indefatigable—the word Rudy believes best describes his mother—Jeannette set out to start learning English and shorthand during the journey in preparation for the new life in Shanghai.

Rudy distinctly remembers arriving in Shanghai: "It was pandemonium on the docks, the overdressed refugees being beset by coolies, rickshaw drivers, and beggars. Ultimately we, along with whatever luggage we had brought, were loaded on the back of some trucks provided by one of the various Jewish Relief Committees and taken to a processing center." The family immediately found shelter at one of the Heime, the cramped barracks-style housing for the most impoverished refugees. After staying only a few days at the Heim, they moved to an apartment in the run-down Hongkew district.

At some point that winter, Jeannette started working for one of the many relief organizations in the city, and her pay served as the primary means of support for the family. Kurt tried "to establish a business selling bolts of imported fine wool to the many tailors serving the international community—there was no 'off-the-rack' clothing then. This was a business that he attempted to continue throughout the war years and after." Overall,

Kurt was not very successful. Rudy remembers Jeannette being the main force in the family. Regarding Kurt, Rudy reflects, "my impressions, fair or not, are that as the son of and at least until 1939, under the control of, a domineering father, he was a weak, and certainly in comparison to my mother, ineffectual man." For a time, the family all did piece-work in their apartment, "taking medicinal tablets that came in bulk and hand counting them out to refill into smaller retail size containers."...

In Shanghai, Rudy attended the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School (also known as the Kadoorie School after its main benefactor, Horace Kadoorie). Kadoorie was a wealthy Sephardic Jewish businessman. The Sephardic Jewish community had established itself in Shanghai during the latter half of the nineteenth century and used their considerable wealth to help the Jewish refugees from Europe who entered Shanghai in great numbers in the late 1930s. Rudy explains that the school was in a U-shape, and was based on the British system of forms. English was the language of instruction. Rudy remembers at a certain point being forced to learn Japanese as well. Students started the first form at one end of the U, and, over the years, made their way to the other end...

He remembers when the USS Wake was commandeered by the Japanese and the British ship HMS Peterel was scuttled in the harbor at the Bund on the morning of December 8, 1941. "The Pacific war began for us some two months after I turned nine and ended two months before I would turn thirteen and, as callous as it may sound, did not initially seem to much change life as I experienced and remember it." The war did have a definite effect on Rudy's parents, however: It halted Kurt's wool business and made the relief work for Jeannette more difficult. Rudy remembers, though, that for a while the Japanese occupation forces "left us pretty much alone." On February 18, 1943, this changed: The Japanese occupation forces proclaimed that all stateless refugees who had entered the city after January 1, 1937, had to move into a Designated Area within the Hongkew section of the city within a few months. The proclamation applied to the Nothenberg family. Although the apartment they were living in was in Hongkew, it was outside of the Designated Area. Thus, they had to move.

With the setting up of the Designated Area, the movement of the Jewish refugees was restricted and only refugees who had been granted a pass from the sadistic Japanese official Kanoh Ghoia could exit what has become known as the "Shanghai Ghetto." Rudy remembers this being particularly difficult and traumatic for his father. During the time the Designated Area was in effect, resources became increasingly scarce. The family did not go hungry, but struggled with the cold: "I remember and can still almost feel [...] the inability to keep warm in the bitter winters—I still hate being cold which I always associate with poverty." Money was definitely in scant supply in the Designated Area, and Rudy remembers he and the other children scavenging for anything containing lead, such as

old toothpaste tubes, to be melted down and sold as bars to the Japanese.

The family took shelter as the Americans started bombing the outskirts of the city in 1944. Rudy recalls "being delighted each time there was a loud explosion indicating a target being hit." He also remembers the Japanese anti-aircraft batteries and how one time after an air raid he found that a 5-inch piece of flak shrapnel had burst through the window and was lying on his bed. Like most refugees, Rudy remembers when, on July 17, 1945, the Americans accidentally bombed the Designated Area. He also remembers hearing later that a "super bomb" had been dropped on Japan.

Food was a problem for the family: "It was difficult. My mother worked and had an income which provided for us the opportunity to live not in a Heim, but in a rental unit. [...] Nobody ever starved. I don't think there was a great deal of variety in the menu." He describes the cooking: "You had a five-gallon can, which was lined with clay, and you put paper and wood underneath it." Given that Rudy had picked up enough of the patois to communicate, he did most of the shopping...

Troop 13

Most of Rudy's memories of Shanghai are of the time after the war. He remembers the subsequent arrival of American sailors in Shanghai. "I remember spending a lot of time on the wharves with the American victory ships and admiring the sailors—the Navy guys—who sort of adopted this bunch of wild kids, [these] Europeans [whom] they found incomprehensively in China." He says he and the other kids had "free run of those ships. And we came home with all kinds of food, stuff we had never seen and didn't even know existed: Spam, canned butter, and God knows what." He remembers that, for years after the end of the war, the food that was given to them by the Americans constituted a considerable amount of their subsistence.

Rudy became the editor-in-chief of the Shanghai Jewish Youth Association School's newspaper. He says it was easy to be the "editor-in-chief" because there were no other editors. He joined both the Boy Scouts and the Zionist youth movement known as the Betar in 1946. Of the latter, he recalls, "I think I joined 'Betar' more out of loneliness than conviction and I must have dropped out rather quickly. Other than a group photograph that I still have, I don't remember any activities in which I may have participated." The Boy Scouts was a different story. He participated in the Scouts with both enthusiasm and enjoyment. The Scouts in Shanghai was based on the British model. He took to the discipline of the Scouts, and eventually became a King Scout.

One of the benefits of the Scouts was that it allowed Rudy to get out of the city and to a recreational camp in the countryside. Many recreational activities organized by the Scouts took place in Pudong—today a major commercial center with skyscrapers, but at the time vast farmland. The Scouts became the main focus of Rudy's social and recreational life. He fondly remembers his troop leader, Eric Bertraum.

He even reconnected with Bergrau in San Francisco soon after arriving in the United States, but then lost track of him until he saw his obituary many years later...

While in Shanghai, Kurt became increasingly sick with tuberculosis. Jeannette continued to work for the Jewish relief organization until the end of the war, when she started working for the U.S. Armed Forces Educational Service. After this she took a job with the American firm William Hunt & Co., which represented manufacturers exporting primarily machine tools, and competed for contracts in China. In 1948, Rudy got a job with the company as well. His job consisted mainly in providing catalogues and manuals that were submitted with contract bids.

Separate Journeys

The family's hopes to leave Shanghai for the United States were hampered by Kurt's tuberculosis. In 1949, it was decided that Max [Rudy's grandfather] and Rudy would leave for the United States and Jeannette would stay behind with Kurt. Grandfather and grandson journeyed to the United States on the troop transporter USS General M. C. Meigs; they arrived in March of 1949. Rudy clearly remembers "passing under the Golden Gate Bridge and seeing the city for the first time; all whites and pastels set against the green hills—love at first sight." While in Shanghai, Rudy's grandfather had felt it beneath him to learn English. Thus, it fell to Rudy to make arrangements upon arrival in San Francisco. As Rudy remembers it: "He was supposed to take care of me. I think I took care of him more than he took care of me." Shortly after arriving, Max became immersed in a refugee community and found a girlfriend. At that point, grandfather and grandson went their separate ways. In the ensuing years, Max Nothenberg became religiously devout, married the girlfriend in San Francisco, and then when she died, he wed for a third time. Rudy had little to do with his grandfather and does not remember when he died. Rudy sums up his relationship with the only grandparent he ever knew succinctly: "I was living my own selfish life, and he was living his own selfish life."

In order to enter the United States, Rudy had been sponsored by a farmer in Iowa; thus, Rudy was supposed to leave San Francisco for the Hawkeye State. This was simply not something the headstrong sixteen-year-old was going to do. After splitting from his grandfather, Rudy spent the next few months sharing a room on Baker Street with a schoolmate friend from Shanghai named Ted. Despite the company, Rudy remembers being lonely. He was a lonely and headstrong sixteen-year-old. He remembers searching "help wanted" ads and, due to his lack of resources, remembers making free "tomato soup" from hot water and catsup at the cafeteria in the Flood Building.

About eight to nine months after he had landed, his mother arrived in San Francisco. Ted and Rudy parted ways, and Rudy and Jeannette moved into third-floor rooms in a Victorian house on Fulton Street.

Jeannette had had to leave Kurt in Shanghai; he was not permitted to come to the United States due to his tuberculosis. Eventually, Kurt was one of the 106 refugees granted special permission to leave Shanghai due to the fall of China to communism. The group arrived in San Francisco in the spring of 1950. Kurt, along with the other refugees, was immediately put on a bus to the Oakland Train Depot, where they boarded a train that sent them across the country to New York. Rudy describes how father and the other refugees were "herded around like prisoners." Jeannette had gone to the train station and thus got to see him briefly on the platform.

When Kurt and the other refugees arrived in New York, they were shipped to Ellis Island, where they had to await word of whether they would be permitted to stay in the country. The press caught wind of the plight of the 106 refugees and various members of the U.S. Congress started to advocate that they be allowed to stay in the country. On May 26, 1950, a resolution was drafted in the U.S. Senate, which stated in part, "That, in the administration of the immigration laws, certain Shanghai displaced persons, whose names are listed on the attached schedule A who arrived in the United States on May 23, 1950, shall be allowed to remain in the United States until the close of the second session of the Eighty-first Congress to permit a determination as to their eligibility for visas under such displaced-persons legislation as shall at that time be in effect."

Ultimately, the attempts to win admittance for the 106 refugees failed. On June 19, 1950, Chairman Emanuel Celler of the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. House of Representatives sent a letter to Ernst G. Elguther and Dr. Hugo Lewinsohn, who were acting as the leaders of the group of the Shanghai Jewish refugees on Ellis Island. In the letter Celler claimed that he had done everything he could do and would continue to do so but noted that their case was "a very intricate one, and it can be necessary that the refugees be transferred to some country to await admission into the United States. Of this, however, you can be sure—that any such transfer will be a temporary one which will result in final entrance into the United States under the Displaced Persons Act recently signed by the President." Celler noted that he had spoken with President Truman about the Shanghai Group and that the President was "most sympathetic" to their plight. The next day the Shanghai Group received a cable from U.S. Senator Herbert H. Lehman as they waited on Ellis Island:

I UNDERSTAND YOU ARE ENROUTE TO IRO CAMPS IN GERMANY. I KNOW THE TENSIONS TO WHICH YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED AND THE SUFFERINGS YOU HAVE ENDURED IN PAST YEARS. ARRANGEMENTS HAVE BEEN MADE FOR THOSE WHO ARE ELIGIBLE UNDER OUR LAWS TO RETURN TO THE UNITED STATES AFTER PROPER SCREENING. MEANWHILE YOU WILL BE CARED FOR BY IRO AND U S VOLUNTARY AGENCIES.

Kurt Nothenberg and the other Shanghai refugees were placed on the General Sturgis and sent across the Atlantic to Germany. They landed in Bremerhaven on July 1, 1950. They were then transported to the Free Hanseatic City of Bremen.

In Bremen the members of the Shanghai Group were housed in a transport depot with minimal furnishings. Their arrival in Germany had been arranged by President Harry Truman and Chancellor Konrad Adenauer; the destination of Bremen had been agreed upon by Adenauer and the Bremen mayor, Wilhelm Kaisen. Originally, it was thought the Shanghai Jews would stay in Bremen no longer than three months, and, according to the arrangement, the Free Hansa City of Bremen would handle 30 percent of the costs of accommodating the Shanghai Group and the Federal Republic of Germany would pick up the remaining 70 percent. Those initial three months came and went, as did many months more; as they waited and waited, the Jewish refugees in Bremen started to ask awkward questions about restitution payments; moreover, the issue of the Shanghai Jews started to travel through a bureaucratic maze, with various agencies within the Bremen government and federal government denying responsibility.

On July 1, 1951, a year after the General Sturgis had arrived in Bremerhaven with the Shanghai Group of 106 refugees, 19 of the refugees once again boarded the General Sturgis to return to the United States... Kurt Nothenberg, still battling tuberculosis, was not on the ship.

Rudy remembers the extent to which his mother was consumed by the quest to get her husband back to the United States. "If there was anything that could have been done, or should have been done, or might have been done, or would be remotely possible to get done, she would have been involved." He laughs and says that his mother was "a determined woman."

Eventually, Jeannette was able to get the National Jewish Hospital in Denver to accept Kurt as a patient. With this acceptance, Kurt was finally allowed to make the journey to the United States, the country he and his family had wanted to go to immediately after his release from Buchenwald back in December 1938. Now, some fourteen years later, the paper walls had finally come down for Kurt Nothenberg.

Kurt went directly to Denver and was admitted into the hospital, where he underwent many surgeries on his weakened lungs. Jeannette was employed in San Francisco and did not move to Denver. Rudy estimates that his father was in Denver for a year or more. During this time, Rudy made one visit to his father in the hospital. Although he had not seen his father in years, the thing that sticks out most about the visit is that it occasioned Rudy's first flight on an airplane. He remembers little else. As Rudy thinks back, he admits being a somewhat callous youth at the time, and says, "It was not a highly emotional

reunion. If it were, I probably would remember it more."

After Kurt was released from the National Jewish Hospital, he moved from Denver to San Francisco. Kurt and Jeannette then lived together in San Francisco for another eight or nine years. At first, Kurt tried to establish a business selling imported quality gloves, but ultimately his health did not permit him to do so. Jeannette continued to work and Rudy believes his parents were happy despite his father being very frail and being bedridden with an oxygen tank for the last few years. Rudy sums up his father's fate simply: "He was never healthy again." Kurt Nothenberg passed away in 1961.

Rudy had moved out on his own by the time his father arrived from Denver. Above all else, he remembers his transition to life in the United States as being a lonely one. He says, "I was very lonely until I found a something to belong to, or get involved with...He went to the Jewish Community Relations Board, which helped arrange interviews with Jewish companies. Through this route he landed a job working for the wholesale grocery and liquor distilling company Haas Brothers. He worked there moving up until he was recruited by a competitor known as Tiedemann & McMorran.

Rudy started to get involved in politics shortly after arriving in the United States. "My first awareness of politics was in the warehouse... where I was doing inventory for Haas Brothers, where the union was involved in the senatorial campaign of Nixon vs. Helen Gahagan Douglas." This would have been in 1950. He then became interested in Adlai Stevenson and volunteered for his 1952 presidential campaign. It was through his political volunteer work that Rudy met and fell in love with Laura Woods.

In April 1951, Rudy joined the National Guard. Rudy claims that he did so in order to avoid being drafted. He quickly moved up the ranks to Sergeant First Class. After receiving three deferments, he was drafted into the U.S. Army in March 1954. After completing his basic training, Rudy and Laura were married on June 1. Rudy then served in the Army until March 18, 1956. He believes he was very fortunate to have been stationed at the Presidio in San Francisco. This allowed him to work on a part-time basis at Tiedemann & McMorran. He enjoyed serving and believes his participation in the Boy Scouts had provided him excellent preparation for the Army.

While serving in the military, Rudy became a citizen of the United States of America. The naturalization process had been sped up on account of his service to his new country.

Starting in 1959 he attended night classes at Golden Gate College, and in November 1963 he passed the Certified Public Accountant Examination. In 1965 he was asked to teach classes at the College and for the next twenty-two years did so as an adjunct professor. With respect to politics, Philip Burton became Rudy's mentor, and Rudy immersed himself in the Young Democrats movement. Rudy busied himself running campaigns at local, regional, and then senatorial and presidential level.

His work in politics picked up considerably in 1964, when he ran the successful state legislature campaign for Willie L. Brown and then accompanied Brown to Sacramento. Rudy and Brown forged a very close relationship; the two even, at one time, shared a desk while working together in the office of the attorney and civil rights activist Terry Francios.

One of Rudy's proudest accomplishments in his many years working with Brown was the successful introduction and passage of the Consenting Adult Sex Bill (Assembly Bill 489), which took many years from its initial introduction in the California State Legislature until it came into effect as law. In 1966, Rudy was appointed as a State Inheritance Tax Appraiser and briefly worked in this capacity. He then walked into the hornet's nest of racial tension and student-administration battles at San Francisco State College (now University). There Rudy served as the Executive Director of the San Francisco State College Foundation, which, in addition to managing the student fees, ran the Campus Bookstore, cafeteria, and on-campus dorms. Rudy witnessed sit-ins, police beatings of students, and a revolving door of administrative turnover. From 1970 to 1974, he served as Chief of Staff of the California Assembly Ways & Means Committee. He then was asked to assist George Moscone's campaign for San Francisco mayor in 1975. After the successful campaign, Rudy served as Deputy Mayor for Mayor Moscone. In this capacity, Rudy supervised the budget for the city. In November 1978 it was Rudy who found Moscone after he had been shot by ex-San Francisco Supervisor Dan White. Rudy stayed on to work for Dianne Feinstein, who became mayor in the aftermath of the assassination. Rudy continued to work as Deputy Mayor under Feinstein until 1983. Rudy has maintained an intimate friendship with Feinstein and her husband, Richard C. Blum, for many decades.

Over the years, Rudy served in various administrative roles in San Francisco, including General Manager of the San Francisco Public Utilities, Chief Administrative Officer of the City and County of San Francisco, Head of the Economic Development team for Mayor Willie L. Brown, and President of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Commission...

Rudy has not talked about Shanghai often. He was completely unaware of the Rickshaw Reunions that brought together Shanghailanders from across the United States. He finally found out about them about ten years ago but has never attended one. He was asked to speak a couple of times during local screenings of a documentary on Shanghai. The topic was not even discussed much in his own household. He did write a memoir—the first volume in 2007 and the second volume in 2014—for his daughters, Micah and Shirim, his grandchildren, Eli and Kalina, and his second wife, Margo. Nevertheless, he wrote at the beginning of the first volume, "Even this effort is not entirely voluntary—a response to the importuning of those about whom I care deeply." He says this is due in part to his being by nature a

private person. Nevertheless, he also has felt uncomfortable with how the history has been portrayed, particularly with those who he believes seem to want to make the history of Shanghai into a "great tragic drama and expect ashes and sack cloth and tears...I empathize and sympathize with the tragedy of my parents [...] and what they lost. But to me, you take a kid and you put a kid in a circumstance, and that's their world and their experience, and they don't know what the hell they're missing if they're missing anything. Do I regret it? Not for a moment. Would I have liked to have grown up in Germany? Not for a moment. I am happy with my life. I lived there, and I don't dwell in it. I don't think it as a tragedy. I don't pass it along as a tragedy. I don't talk about it as a tragedy. Even if anybody wants it to be." Upon reflection though, he adds, "On the other hand, it was a tragedy for my parents. People who came there as adults and lost everything, and shattered whatever beliefs they might have had about the society in which they lived."...

Roots and Diamonds

Despite serving in the U.S. Army and having been naturalized in 1955, Rudy had a lingering sense of insecurity. For, as he explains, once one is a refugee, it is difficult to ever feel fully rooted anywhere. One way this feeling of insecurity manifested itself was in Rudy's purchasing diamonds. He felt the portable wealth would stand him in good stead were he to have to leave the country on short notice. Rudy kept his diamonds until 1982. He found out, though, that regardless of whether he had the diamonds or not, the refugee feeling of insecurity was always there. Although the feeling has diminished over the years, it is not totally gone, the roots are never perfectly rooted...

So, aside from lingering feelings of insecurity, it seemed that Rudy Nothenberg had managed very well to keep the past in its place and live life in the present and for the future. But then Pittsburgh happened. He explains, "It was after the attack on the synagogue in Pittsburgh, and [...] both [my wife] Margo and I thought of my mother. I thought 'what a horrible thing it would have been for her to see this happening—a recurrence of this kind of hatred and violence.'"...

The Pittsburgh shooting jolted Rudy, and yet, he did not find it all that surprising. His years of fighting political battles for social justice had taught him about the darkness that lurks even within this country of refuge: "Was I surprised at the extent of anti-Semitism here and the anger that has been released by the Trump administration? No. I'm not surprised. I'm not surprised. I think you can tear that scab of civility away [...] and generate hatred and anger in this country very, very easy. It's got a history. Not so much for Jews, but certainly for blacks and people of color and minorities generally. So, I'm not surprised that there is this reservoir of hatred and anger. But what I think is so frightening about it is that it is being encouraged by the national administration for the first time since a hundred years."

Rudy hopes that young people will learn his history, the history of the Shanghai Jewish refugees, and the wider history of the Holocaust. He feels “it is absolutely imperative that people understand the history of this country and the history of the world as they move into their adult life. I would encourage them [...] to be aware of their own history and the history of their own country and try to learn from that and avoid allowing the same kinds of hatreds and bitterness and anger to become common in this country as it has done so disastrously in Germany and other countries and is becoming again disastrously so in Hungary and Poland. And if you know your history, you can’t let it be repeated. People who allow that to be repeated in their public life are people who don’t know their history.” He believes it is important to study “the history of the event, but only as a model for what should not be happening, what government should not be allowed to do to their people or people who are trying to become their people. You can talk about the ‘wall’ [at the U.S.-Mexico border] and you can talk about the fact that the ‘wall’ existed for all the Jews in Europe in the thirties. It’s the same sentiment. There’s history there, and we can’t let it be repeated.”...

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Trumpeldor Reappears

[SJ] International Advisory Board member Jonathan Goldstein’s English-language article “Uphill Political Struggle: Joseph Trumpeldor in Japan and Manchuria, 1904-1906,” which appeared in *Israel Affairs* (London) 24, no. 1 (February 2018), pp. 150-66, has just been published in Hebrew in *Ha-Ummah* (The Nation)(Tel Aviv) 218 (April 2020), pp. 70-80. The following is a précis of the article. Ed.]

Russian-Jewish army officer Joseph Trumpeldor (1880-1920) was arguably the most celebrated Jewish military hero of the first half of the twentieth-century. He lost his left arm in the battle of Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05 and underwent a year-long Japanese imprisonment in camps at Hamadera and Takaishi, near Osaka. Under the regulations of the Hague Convention of 1899, the conditions in Japanese POW camps were not harsh. Censored correspondence was permitted, prisoners received allowances, and there

was no forced labor. Soldiers who had been under constant fire during the siege of Port Arthur were able to recover from wounds and build themselves up physically. Trumpeldor was provided with an artificial arm, and given the opportunity for political activism.

The Japanese policy of segregating Jewish (and other) prisoners from ethnic Russians worked to Trumpeldor’s advantage as he deepened his understanding of Zionism and sought to promote that ideology. As a senior officer, he attempted to propagate his new-found faith among 1739 Jewish prisoners. He established a Zionist society with approximately 125 members and published a rump Russian/Yiddish newspaper with a weekly circulation of about 300 copies. While evidence of his success among his own men is fragmentary and problematic, he established a precedent for Zionist activism by officers and chaplains in the interwar years and during and shortly after World War II.

In 1905-06, en route back to European Russia, Trumpeldor visited the Manchurian city of Harbin and attempted to impart Zionism to the local Russian-Jewish population, also with limited success. As with his fellow soldiers in the Hamadera and Takaishi camps, most Jewish Kharbintzy were adherents of traditional non-Zionist Orthodox Judaism. Some were non-Zionist socially-inclined adherents of *Der Algemeyner Yiddisher Arbeter Bund in Lite, Polyn, un Russland* (=The General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, usually referred to as “The Bund”). Others favored the emergent *Folkspartei*, which championed Jewish cultural autonomy within Yiddish-speaking Eastern Europe. Situated in the privileged atmosphere of Russia’s “colony in China,” these Jews did not wish to immigrate to Palestine.

Trumpeldor’s personal commitment to Zionism received its fullest expression in 1912 when he emigrated to Kibbutz Degania in Ottoman Palestine and, in 1920, died in defense of the Tel Hai farming community. His career inspired the Zionist movement named after him, *Brit Trumpeldor*. Abbreviated *BETAR*, it influenced leaders of the Jewish exodus from China in 1948-49. By then Mao’s Communist revolution portended only peril and dislocation. The very places which Jews considered safe havens during Trumpeldor’s earlier visit, notably Harbin and the other Manchurian railway cities, became insecure. Viewing Trumpeldor as only partially successful in his early Zionist efforts in Japan and Manchuria may somewhat tarnish the myth of the one-armed soldier and pioneering farmer. The inclusion of the Japanese and Manchurian dimensions of Trumpeldor’s uphill political struggle situates this hero within a far more realistic, and less Eurocentric, context.

BOOK NOOK

A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai, edited by Steve Hochstadt. *Touro University Press* (distributed by Academic Studies Press), 2019 | 256 pp.

ISBN: 9781644691311 | \$109.00 | Hardcover

Reviewed by Beverly Friend

The next best thing to attending a conference on a fascinating topic lies in reading the papers presented there. ***A Century of Jewish Life in Shanghai*** is a compilation of such conference papers presented over three days in Shanghai in June 2015. The work in its entirety offers not only historical content, but intellectually stimulating hypotheses and conclusions. It is a valuable contribution both for scholars and anyone interested in Jewish history in China.

Manli Ho, daughter of Dr. Feng Shan Ho—who saved many Jews from the Shoah while he was Chinese Consul General in Vienna 1938-40—was the featured speaker. She was joined by distinguished scholars who included Dan Ben-Canaan, Jonathan Goldstein, Xu Xin, and Steve Hochstadt—editor of this volume. In addition, former refugees and others who had lived in Shanghai before World War II spoke.

Following Hochstadt’s introduction discussing the historical number of Jews residing in Shanghai at any given time, a comparison with other cities, and their importance, the volume is divided into three sections: Shanghai before the War, Shanghai and the Holocaust, and Looking back on Shanghai.

Shanghai before the War

In the first section, Masie Meyer examines the recollections of Baghdadi Jews while Anne Atkinson and Liliane Willens focus on Russian migrations.

Looking at the history of the first Jews to live in Shanghai, in *Shanghai Remembered: Recollections of Shanghai’s Baghdadi Jews*, Meyer begins by defining the Baghdadi as Arab-speaking Jews from Baghdad, Basra, and other places in the Ottoman Empire, Cairo, and Egypt, and non-Arabic speaking Jews from Persia and Afghanistan. Then she follows their economic successes, keen sense of community, socioeconomic differences, affinity to the British, and relationship to the Chinese—often lacing and enhancing the history with anecdotal material.

In a similar vein, Atkinson’s contribution springs from her own personal history, relating the story of the *Burak Family: The Migration of a Russian Jewish Family Through the First Half of the Twentieth Century*. She details the family’s initial subjugation and limitations as to economic activities, commercial occupations, and the constant fear of pogroms, travelling through many hardships until reaching Shanghai in 1920. Even after reaching there, the story continues to be an absorbing one of meeting and conquering

adversity.

Willen's essay goes into greater detail in *Russian Jews in Shanghai 1920-1950; New Life as Shanghaianders*, setting her family's story in the midst of political and social upheavals in a time that she describes as a "very chaotic era in China, a country beset by civil wars and a brutal enemy occupation."

Shanghai during the Holocaust

While materials about Jewish history in Shanghai during the Holocaust fill bookcases, this section provides both overviews and insights. There is something new to discover in nearly every chapter.

In the opening sentence of *Desperate Hopes, Shattered Dreams: The 1937 Manila Voyage of the "Gneisenau"* and the Fate of European Jewry, Jonathan Goldstein sets the tone for what follows: "This chapter is as much about the hopes, expectations, and disappointments of Jews fleeing Hitler as it is about historical events."

Manli Ho's essay logically continues this theme with *Diplomatic Rescue: Shanghai as a Means of Escape and Refuge*. Now, there is a ray of hope in all the darkness as she tells her father's story and quotes his compassionate message: "On seeing the Jews so doomed, it is only natural to feel deep compassion and from a humanitarian standpoint, to be impelled to help them."

The next essay, by Lotte Marcus, has an intriguing title: *305/13 Kungping Road*. This was the address of her family's single room in *Hongkou* where they lived from 1943-1947, in a building with one toilet and bathroom for 10 people. This memoir of their life in Shanghai is filled with the details of daily life and concludes with the family's gratitude to Dr. Feng Shan Ho who issued their visas.

Survival in Shanghai 1939-1947 by Evelyn Pike Rubin is another poignant, detailed story of family life and hardship filled similar memories: no cold running water and no heat, living with three other families in a four-room, one-toilet house. As Pike notes: they were "indeed fortunate to have survived in Shanghai."

There is so much to learn, and Steve Hochstadt has been studying survivors for many years. He explains What I learned from Shanghai Refugees in his essay of that title — gleaning information from personal stories, memoirs, diaries, letters, documents, and conversations. While he cites that his biggest lesson was not to generalize, he reveals his own generalization that it is hard to **become** a refugee. His entire essay attests to this!

Up to this point, the volume deals with Western perceptions. Now there is a change of pace as Xu Xin examines *Chinese Responses to the Holocaust: Chinese Attitudes toward Jewish refugees in the late 1930's and early 1940's*. First, he sets up a historical background where China knew very little of the Jews (and this included knowing little of the Holocaust). As they became aware, there

were both official and unofficial responses — mostly surprising proposals for settlement of the Jews — which he discusses in great detail.

Looking Back at Shanghai

To quote Dan Ben-Canaan in *Imagined Geographies, Imagined Identities, Imagined Global Histories*, his purpose is to examine "stories of people's movements from one place to another and on to another in an attempt to apply a better understanding to the study of identity and its relation to space and time, especially the ways identity, geography and memory may intersect and change." His research and fascinating conclusions, drawn from recollections, written memories diaries and publications, center on Harbin as well as Shanghai.

The book closes with *Ephemeral Memories, Eternal Traumas and Evolving Classifications: Shanghai Jewish Refugees and Debates about Defining a Holocaust Survivor*, by Gabrielle Abram. Here, she makes the salient point that "The Shanghai-Jewish Refugees are some of the last Holocaust victims to have their suffering formally acknowledged and their identities declared to be those of Holocaust survivors both by peers and in their own self-reflections. She concludes that "if a 'Shanghai survivor' classification were to be established on a national and international level, it could lead to a new kind of Holocaust survivor, survivors without a tattoo, and a new kind of Holocaust education."

While the entire book is worthwhile, I found the last section — on looking back — the most interesting. For me, it broke new ground, going beyond history to draw some remarkably interesting conclusions.

About the Editor:

Steve Hochstadt taught history at Illinois College 2006-2016, after teaching at Bates College in Maine for 27 years. His grandparents escaped from Vienna to Shanghai in 1939, and his research focuses on the Holocaust. His book *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich*, based on interviews with former refugees, is being translated into Chinese.

Points within Unity: The Agency and Dignity of Chaya Leah Walkin

In the Crook of the Rock—Jewish Refuge in a World Gone Mad: The Chaya Leah Walkin Story by Vera Schwarcz. *Academic Studies Press*, 2018. SBN: 9781618117854 (hb) / 9781618117861 (pb) Pages: 340 pp.; 18 illus. From US\$34

Reviewed by Kevin Ostoyich

Writing about individuals is not always easy for academics. Vera Schwarcz acknowledges this in her book, *In the Crook of the Rock—Jewish Refuge in a World Gone Mad: The Chaya Leah Walkin Story*, and explains that her own journey in writing the book involved reevaluating her role as a scholar—particularly with respect to objectivity. Knowing that she could never fully enter the subjective realm of Chaya Leah Walkin's ex-

perience, she still wanted to hear Chaya Leah's voice like the dove in the crook of the rock—a metaphor from the *Shir Ha'Shirim* (Song of Songs) that provides the title of the work. As Schwarcz listened, she realized that the *Shir Ha'Shirim* could help her to hear Chaya Leah's voice—her agency—and convey the story and meaning of her history to others. Regarding the *Shir Ha'Shirim*, Schwarcz writes,

In this ancient love poem, I found a fount of metaphors that helped to illuminate my work as the interlocutor of Chaya Leah's story. Initially, I had not expected a narrative of Jewish survival to have such a fruitful dialogue with a series of songs focused upon the passionate relationship between a man and a woman—a relationship that, according to rabbinical commentaries, also mirrors the devotion between the Jewish people and the divine. Over time, however, I have found that the verses of this poem were uniquely well suited for every step in my writing about the Walkin family. (xxix).

Although she wants to tell Chaya Leah's story, Schwarcz is conscious that the resulting book is hers; she points out that this is not an act of ventriloquism on her part. Schwarcz provides the frame, the historical context, and ultimately the analysis. As she explains, "Anchored by the words of *Shir Ha'Shirim*, I tried to tread delicately into Chaya Leah Walkin's world. All along, I had to remind myself that this is a history more complex than I can possibly fathom today. How can I come close and stay respectfully distant at the same time?" (xxxii). In effect, the book lies somewhere between what Schwarcz calls the "host perspective" and the "guest perspective." Schwarcz uses her training to locate, hear, and preserve the history and then convey the narrative and meaning to others. Her approach—like that of Judith Miller in *One by One: Facing the Holocaust*—is an important one, given that the historians' guild tends to privilege abstraction, statistics, and generalization over narrative, intimacy, and agency.

For Schwarcz, the effort to locate and convey the agency of voice is of utmost importance with respect to the history of the Shanghai Jewish refugees. The history has been gaining increasing attention and has taken on symbolic meaning within present-day relations between China and Israel. Schwarcz is highly critical of the way in which the history is commemorated at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, which opened in 2007, as well as, in the popular art exhibition titled "Love Without Boundaries," which conveyed a narrative of victimized Jews being saved by the Chinese. Schwarcz cautions against the official history which she deems (after a passage in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*) to be part of the "Hullabaloo of History." (285). She believes that the overly symbolic representation of faceless Jews in this official history drowns the voices of agency of

Shanghai Jewish refugees. Rather than adding to this cacophony, Schwarcz decides to listen to the voice of the dove and paint the history of individuals who were united by a deeper meaning in a manner that is intentionally modeled after the technique of the pointillist artist, Georges Seurat.

What then are the individual brushstrokes? What is the unified whole? They are, respectively, the narrative of an individual refugee and the larger tradition of Torah-observant Judaism, of which Chaya Leah and her family are a part.

Chaya Leah Walkin was born in 1934 in Pohost, Poland near Pinsk. She was the eldest child of Rav Shmuel David Walkin and Tzivia Walkin (née Socharow). Prior to having to flee Poland, Shmuel David Walkin served as a rabbi in Pohost, Troki, and Lukatch and the family grew with the birth of Chaya Leah's sister Esther and brother Moshe Yoel. The family was deeply rooted in a tradition of Torah observance and scholarship. Shmuel David Walkin was the son of the rabbi of Pinsk, Aharon Walkin. Rabbi Aharon Walkin was a highly skilled Talmud scholar who was known as the Bais Aharon on account of a book he had written with this title. Tzivia Walkin's father, Avrohom Socharow was the rabbi of Trabe. Moreover, both Shmuel David and Tzivia had interacted with and were influenced by the greatest of the scholars, Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan Ha Kohen, better known as the Chofetz Chaim after his famous book by that name.

After the outbreak of the Second World War, Germany and the Soviet Union carved up Poland. Jews in Poland looked to the city of Vilna in Lithuania as a possible place of refuge. Resisting the common tendency to portray refugees as powerless victims, Schwarcz focuses on the inner strength of the family as they fled Poland. It was the family's roots in their Jewish tradition, which Schwarcz refers to as a "fortress of silver" that provided the inner strength to maintain dignity and selfhood in "a world gone mad." According to Schwarcz this was true for Tzivia and Shmuel David at the beginning of the journey all the way through to Chaya Leah's work "to rebuild Jewish life with new walls and new doors on foreign shores." (23).

Shmuel David Walkin made it to Lithuania first, and then Tzivia eventually was able to make it across the border with her children on their third attempt. In Vilna, the family acquired one of the now-famous Sugihara visas, with which they traveled through the Soviet Union on the Trans-Siberian Railroad and eventually made their way by boat to Tsuruga, Japan. In Tsuruga, they, like other Jewish refugees, were helped by Setsuko Kotsuji. The family then sojourned in Kobe, Japan before having to move to Shanghai.

In Shanghai, the family lived in a house on

Liaoyang Road and assisted other refugees. Shmuel David continued to devote his life to Torah scholarship and even worked to have his father's most famous work reprinted in Shanghai. As Chaya Leah looks back upon her time in Shanghai, it was the dedication to such Torah learning that nourished their lives:

Our grandfather's *sefer* was published in Shanghai to be used by the *bochrim* of the yeshiva. We did not have enough money for much, but we spent our money on bare necessities to nourish our body and to nourish our souls. The *seforim* were our souls. The Torah our guide to living, a blueprint for life. We shared our food to nourish the body. We shared our *seforim* to nourish the soul. Simple. We made life simple and meaningful. That was the key to our survival. Achdus. A community. A group of friends with the same goals. One helping another. One loving the other unconditionally. (128).

Life in Shanghai during the war was difficult, but Schwarcz emphasizes that despite the hardships, the family maintained a life of dignity. After the war, Tzivia gave birth to a boy, whom they named Chaim after Shmuel David's brother who had been killed in the Shoah. The family first attempted to leave for Palestine; however, Shmuel David Walkin came down with dysentery. After he recovered, they left Shanghai on July 5, 1946, and traveled on the USS General Meigs to the United States. Schwarcz writes that "The Walkin family had survived not only as refugees but also as believers." (206).

Schwarcz continues the narrative beyond Shanghai. She writes,

As in the verses of Shir Ha'Shirim, hope had been born anew out of the ashes of war. The "apple tree" had sprouted new branches and more rugged roots in China. Faith in Jewish destiny was strengthened as these carriers of the Torah tradition started out toward America's new shores. There, they would build upon the foundation cast by previous generations. There, they would honor the memory of their murdered kin along with the promise of renewal gained during the hardships of Shanghai. (207).

The Walkin family arrived in San Francisco and eventually made it to New York. There they received assistance from Jewish relief organizations and rejoined the community of Torah scholars. Schwarz explains that Rabbi Walkin "started a small synagogue in Brooklyn, it was the Shanghai refugees who were his first congregants and his most devoted friends." (217). Tzivia Walkin gave birth to a daughter, Rachel. Tzivia became ill due to a spinal injection she had received during the labor. Consequently, as the eldest child, Chaya Leah had to take on more duties in the house and look after her siblings. (Incidentally, the two Walkin sons eventually became rabbis, and the three Walkin daughters married rabbis.)

Chaya Leah attended Central Yeshiva High School. Shmuel David would only let Chaya Leah attend college if she first went to the Bais Yaakov advanced seminary. Her plans for earning a college degree were sidetracked until much, much later in life (eventually earning a B.A. from Mundelein College). Instead she got married to Michael Small on February 23, 1953. First, they lived in Lakewood, New Jersey but then moved to Chicago in 1955. Michael and Chaya Leah had five children in six years. They set out to build a Torah-observant community. Michael became the rabbi of Congregation *Poalie Zedeck* in Chicago. Together Michael and Chaya Leah worked to establish a thriving Torah-observant Jewish community in the city. Schwarcz explains that decades after having arrived in Chicago, Chaya Leah looks back on great success:

She knows fully well that she is part of the root system that accounts for this enduring vigor. She also understands that her own hard labors in the vineyard of righteousness were a source of nechama, of comfort for an entire generation after the Holocaust. Chaya Leah's toils were a way of thanking the Master of the Universe for all the good that came her way not only in China but in Chicago's seemingly barren land as well. (262).

In 2011, Michael Small passed away. In 2007 and 2014, Chaya Leah traveled back to Shanghai. Schwarcz notes that when Chaya Leah and members of her family went in 2014, the visit received a great deal of press in China and the emphasis in the coverage was of Jews thanking China for their survival in Shanghai. Closer to home, Chaya Leah has worked to spread awareness about the Holocaust.

After decades of lying under the radar, the history of the Shanghai Jews has gained considerable attention in recent years. There are many memoirs and the number of scholarly works continues to grow. Most accounts, however, have been about the experiences of German and Austrian Jews who fled to Shanghai. Chaya Leah's experience is that of the smaller group of Polish Jews who journeyed through Vilna, received Sugihara visas, took the Trans-Siberian Railroad through the Soviet Union, landed in Tsuruga, Japan, sojourned in Kobe, Japan, and then eventually were shipped to Shanghai by the Japanese.

One of the many highlights of the book is how Schwarcz couples her scholarship to flesh out the details of Chaya Small's recollections of the journey to Shanghai. Particularly informative are Schwarcz's treatments of the Japanese context to Chaya Leah's childhood memories. Chaya Leah's family obtained a Sugihara visa. Schwarcz provides details of Sugihara's actions. As the narrative continues in Tsuruga and Kobe, Schwarcz provides information on the lesser known—but also extremely helpful—Setsuko Kotsuji. Kotsuji, a Jap-

anese Hebraist who established Tokyo University's department of Jewish studies, borrowed money from his brother-in-law and smoothed things with officials to help prolong the period Jews could stay in Kobe. (Kotsuji eventually converted to Judaism and took on the name Avraham ben Avraham.)

Ultimately, given the framing of Chaya Leah's story within the long Jewish history stretching back centuries and drawing structure from the *Shir Ha'Shirim*, the work tends to transcend that of traditional history and reaches into the realm of religious poetry. It is in this intimate space that Schwarcz finds the meeting between the host perspective and the guest perspective. Within the text of *Shir Ha'Shirim* Schwarcz can understand how Chaya Leah, herself, understands the history of her family's journey. Schwarcz writes,

The words of *Shir Ha'Shirim* help us enter this bewildering time with an extra measure of empathy. In a world of diminishing options, the shepherdess is told to follow in the footsteps of the flock. In effect, she must find security where the winds of fate take her. Instead of direct reassurance and guidance, her beloved sends the tender kids toward the tents of other shepherds. On this very precarious path, she is to find her strength, refine her goals. And she does, much like Chaya Leah Walkin who felt that a benevolent, even if unseen, hand was guiding the family during the darkest hours of the war in Shanghai. (80-82).

By listening to Chaya Leah and the words of the *Shir Ha'Shirim*, Schwarcz comes to understand that for Chaya Leah the providential and the human agent are unified:

Instead of simply asserting that it was Divine Providence that accomplished the Mirror [Yeshiva] 'miracle,' [Chaya Leah] tries to fathom more deeply the source and consequences of human action. Like the Sugihara visas, this salvation too depended on doing something that was not the norm. In Chaya Leah's view, it is through human actions that providence is revealed most concretely and most interestingly. (126).

Although the *Shir Ha'Shirim* framework and the poetic intimacy allows for Chaya Leah's voice to be heard clearly, I see two problems. First, the framework of the narrative tends to instrumentalize the actions of non-Jews and generalize the experiences of German and Austrian Jewish refugees who appear on the margins. The German and Austrian Jews are often referred to as if they were all secular or non-observant, living in Heime, and "fighting" for food. For example, Schwarcz writes, "The Walkin family was privileged to have milk and butter brought to them. German refugees living in their more crowded heims had to go out and fight for these precious goods." (105.) It is important that the attempt to emphasize the agency and dignity one group not work to undermine or diminish the agency and dignity of other groups. A passage such as "For the Walkins and their rabbinical colleagues, the Torah prohibition

against eating insects took on more dramatic, more vivid proportions in Shanghai. Other refugees whose hunger was more acute could dispense with checking every grain of rice. They, too, however, shared the understanding that one had to boil every vegetable for the sake of survival" does not leave an incredibly positive impression of the "other refugees." (105). (One need only listen to Betty Grebenschikoff reminisce while in her own Shanghai apartment in the documentary *Shanghai Ghetto* [Man and Mann, 2002] to realize that German refugees were no less concerned about insects and consuming them.) It should be said here, though, that Schwarcz does incorporate the experiences of individual German refugees into the narrative and seems to want to break down the barriers that have tended to divide the Polish and German refugees.

The second problem is that by embedding the story in the deep Jewish tradition, the pressure seems to be on Schwarz to find religious meaning in every detail of the narrative. Chaya Leah's own writings are rather unadorned and speak simple truths. However, the *Shir Ha'Shirim* frame that Schwarcz employs seems to compel her to provide religious commentary at every turn; thus, the book quite takes on a dual narrative structure—with Chaya Leah writings presented first followed then by Schwarz's commentary. At times, Chaya Leah's words would have been sufficient and the search for religious meaning seems strained. An example of this is when Chaya Leah writes of her younger brother having a tapeworm. The family found out that bananas could help and Shmuel David Walkin was able to procure a banana for his son. After providing Chaya Leah's text regarding the banana story, Schwarcz writes,

Like the biblical Jews who traveled in the desert who made do with manna day in and day out, this Jewish child was trained early on to accept with gratitude what was, as it was. In their wanderings through the desert, some Jews had complained about the manna because it was always the same—day in and day out. For Chaya Leah and her family, knowing fully well the predicament of scarcity among Jewish refugees in Shanghai, the one-pot meal was ample enough. (106).

The two shortcomings listed above are issues of emphasis and are considerably outweighed by the magnitude of Schwarz's achievement. She has listened to the voice "In the Crook of the Rock" and has helped to convey Chaya Leah's message. Schwarz does something quite rare in a scholarly work: She actively embraces historical intimacy. In stepping out from the safety of academic objectivity to hear, understand, and convey Chaya Leah's story she makes herself vulnerable in a world that has gone mad. But it is precisely this vulnerability which allows Schwarz to communicate the story, which is as honest as it is intimate.

In the "Crook of the Rock" we hear the voices

of both Vera Schwarcz and Chaya Leah. The guest and the host tell of how refugees could maintain their dignity within a long, unified tradition of Torah-observant Judaism. We who listen to their voices hear a truly unique and beautiful story that captures individual points within a larger unity.

Kevin Ostoyich is Professor of History at Valparaiso University and a member of SJI's Managing Board.

Epitaph Of No Words

By Jeanine Hack

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Emil and Martha Galliner delayed leaving Nazi Germany until more than three years after Kristallnacht. When they eventually made the heart-rending decision to go, it meant leaving their oldest daughter Hanna behind. Emil and Martha's around-the-world journey lasted from 1938 – 1960. They would never return to Germany, even when they heard of Hanna's untimely death only thirty-five days after their departure.

The book details Emil and Martha Galliner's struggles as they fled Nazi Germany traveling on the Trans-Siberian Railway through the USSR, sailing to Shanghai, where they lived under Japanese occupation, the United States of America, before moving to Windhoek, South West Africa (Namibia) and finally to Johannesburg, South Africa.

Their story established through affidavits, postcards, poetry and photographs records their trauma in the most direct voice. Their letters and postcards show a constant unsettledness, reflected in their ongoing pursuit of reparations. We feel their dislocation through their trail of documents, endeavoring to reclaim their dignity, pride and independence. In trying to achieve this, they circumnavigated the globe as displaced persons for nineteen years.

To represent Emil and Martha as truthfully as possible, the author, their maternal great-granddaughter, used their own historical accounts of 1951 and 1953 in which they outline their lives. Their story, established through affidavits, postcards, poetry and photographs, records their trauma in the most direct voice.

The Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden

By Hongyu Wang

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In the mountainous New Territories of Hong Kong, amidst sub-tropical forests and narrow pathways, there is a clear terrain that

looks for all the world like hillside farmland. In fact it used to be. The land was rented from the government for one dollar a month until almost the end of the British era. It is now a botanic garden.

The concepts of microfinance and social business were popularised by Bangladeshi banker to the poor, Muhammad Yunus, who became a household name worldwide, taking centre stage as an expert on the best way to raise those living at the long-forgotten bottom of the poverty pyramid up, so they could stand strong on their own two feet and become people who could help themselves.

Yunus often spoke about why simple hand-out charity wouldn't sustain people in the long run and what the poor truly needed was a vehicle, or kick start, on the self-sustaining path toward subsistence and a better livelihood.

Microcredit aims to offer such a hand-up partnership and the social business concept aims to sustain the endeavour for the long run.

But before Yunus ventured into his first experiment in 1974 in the newly independent, famine-stricken Bangladesh, by handing the equivalent of US\$27 (\$209.25) to 42 villagers out of his own pocket, microcredit had already become an established operation in Hong Kong.

It had already been championed by two brothers whose name the botanic garden bears to this day—Lawrence (1899 to 1993) and Horace (1902 to 1995) Kadoorie.

The sons of the Baghdad-born Jewish entrepreneur, Elly Kadoorie (1865 to 1944), took serious note of the huge influx of refugees fleeing into Hong Kong from mainland China in the late 1940s and early 1950s, at the same time as they themselves were packing up their belongings in Shanghai to seek safety in the then-British colony.

But unlike the Kadoories, many of the refugees had been subsistence farmers from the southern provinces, the majority of them arriving with nothing and heading to the indigenous villages in the New Territories or outlying islands.

The Kadoories believed that giving the lives of the refugee farmers some stability demanded a multi-pronged approach, as their needs varied considerably.

Supplying subsistence needs could be done through charity, but the next step, sustainability, was a more difficult challenge.

The subsistence life achieved through charity had to be built upon and developed, and the two brothers saw the way forward as being microfinance.

In 1951, the Kadoorie brothers approached the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to make a rocky, barren hillside at Cheung Sheung, Sai Kung, available

to 14 refugee farmers, who would settle there, farm the land and make ends meet themselves.

The project went ahead with the free provision of pigs, as well as concrete to build the sties and an interest-free micro-loan to market their pork in the urban areas.

This was the beginning of the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association, which remained active in Hong Kong until 1970. It provided a wide range of assistance to people, from public works and construction, to animal and crop husbandry.

All was achieved with interest-free micro-loans to put the essential infrastructure for marketing produce from both land and sea in place.

In the eyes of the brothers, the principle of micro-loan repayment was special training in the personal discipline people need to realistically take responsibility for their own lives beyond the hand-out stage.

In 1955, the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association and the government jointly set up a revolving micro-loan fund, named the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Loan Fund, to manage the fast growing micro-loan business.

The governor-appointed legislature passed an ordinance incorporating the fund in the same year. The fund was to include the contributions coming from both the Kadoorie brothers and the government, and a governor-appointed committee to manage the fund was set up as well.

The first chairperson was the then-director of the Agricultural, Fisheries and Forestry Department, William J. Blackie, a New Zealand-born British imperial serviceman, who later authored the book, *Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association 1951 to 1971*.

From 1955 to 1970, a total of \$23,445,994.64 was loaned to 51,990 people with a mere

\$59,935.93 in bad debts that had to be written off. Out of the overall total, \$14,443,552 went to livestock feed.

In 1953 Blackie's department established a small station on the slopes of what today is the botanic garden, to observe seasonal effects on crops at higher elevation and research the possibilities of extending planting land into such an environment.

The Kadoorie brothers approached Blackie to assist with this work in order to train the farmers in crop experimentation on the station land, which was eventually rented to the Kadoories at one Hong Kong dollar a month in 1956.

This saw the opening of the Kadoorie Experimental and Extension Farm, or as it was more popularly known, the Kadoorie Farm.

Since then, the farm has been a distribution centre for assistance from the Kadoorie Ag-

ricultural Aid Association, a laboratory for cropping and breeding at different elevations and a farm management training centre.

But almost as soon as the Kadoories had institutionalised the microfinance operations, farming began to decline in Hong Kong, amidst rapid industrialisation and urbanisation.

By the early 1970s, crop cultivation and poultry rearing had all but disappeared from the colony. As a result, the association's active aid programme had basically stopped by 1970, but 321,000 farmers in 1,218 villages had been served.

The Kadoorie brothers then turned their eyes toward Nepal.

Historically, Nepali Gurkhas were recruited as soldiers by the British armed forces and in the post-war era, some of them were stationed in Hong Kong. When they eventually retired from the army, many of them were sent back home to Nepal to farm.

But from 1968 until 1986, over 5,000 of them received professional training in farming at the Kadoorie Farm before they left Hong Kong.

It was an ideal location, because the mountainous terrain and slopes of the area closely resemble the environment the Gurkhas were returning to in Nepal.

In addition, the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association directly assisted British-run agricultural centres at two locations in Nepal by providing seeds, livestock and fertiliser, all transported by the Royal Air Force from Hong Kong to Nepal.

On top of the help given to the ex-soldier Gurkhas, the Kadoories paid close attention to local community needs in Nepal, mainly in the area of the provision of clean, running water.

The two brothers, who shared the same bank accounts all through life, decided to set up a Kadoorie Charitable Foundation with their family fortune.

However, although they lived to be more than 90, they left this world before their dream was fulfilled, dying before it was finally established in 1997.

In 1995, new legislation transformed the Kadoorie Farm into a botanic garden, which still exists today, but with the new mission of preserving rare species.

It is a place where visitors, scientists and advocates for environmental protection can study the rarities and great variety of nature.

Hongyu Wang is a Hong Kong-based trader and exhibition specialist, and author of *Grameen in Kosovo*. Statistics provided by the Hong Kong Heritage Project and Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden.

[For more information about the KFBG, go to <https://www.kfbg.org/eng/kaaa-stories.aspx>]

Ancient Flood in Kaifeng Killed 300,000

By Ashley Cowie

Excerpted from <https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/yellow-river-flood-0013382> 6 March 2020

A new paper provides evidence that a historic Yellow River flood in China killed an estimated 300,000 people, suggesting the city of Kaifeng was to killer floods, what Pompeii was to mega-volcanoes.

The Chinese city of Kaifeng was a former imperial capital and a new study published in the journal Scientific Reports provides geological and archaeological evidence supporting old literary accounts found in historical documents, that a catastrophic flood in 1642 AD destroyed the inner city and "entombed its inhabitants" within several meters of silt and clay.

Dr. Michael Storozum is a Doctor of Philosophy at Shanghai's Fudan University Institute of Archaeological Science and, as lead author of the new research paper, he said this flood was particularly "catastrophic" because the city's defensive walls had partially collapsed during a military siege which caused the floodwaters to become trapped inside.

Kaifeng is located on the southern bank of China's Yellow River's in the modern central Henan province and in antiquity it was one of the world's largest cities serving as an imperial capital for several Chinese dynasties . The Yellow River is known to have flooded more than a thousand times in the past 2,000 years causing some of the deadliest flood disasters in recorded history, having claimed an estimated million lives. And over the past 3,000 years, while the Yellow River has flooded Kaifeng city around 40 times, according to the new paper, the 1642 AD event was

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"perhaps the most devastating of them all".

In a Newsweek article about the new study, Xu Xin and Rivka Gonen, authors of the book *The Jews of Kaifeng, China: History, Culture, and Religion*, said that for six months Kaifeng had been resisting a rebel siege on its outer defensive walls and the governor fatefully ordered that the waters of the Yellow River be "unleashed in hopes of destroying the rebel army". The walls were subsequently broken apart but rather than washing away the rebels the raging dirty waters

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penetrated the low-lying city taking the number of inhabitants from 378,000, to only "a few score thousand" (60,000) survivors.

Storozum and colleagues explain in their paper that the constant influx of floodwater entering the city created a "deadly mix of mud and urban debris" that they say significantly amplified the destructive power of the flooding Yellow River, causing it to cut through and tear apart everything caught up in its wrath. What this 17th century flood event at Kaifeng tells the scientists is that "urban resilience is not static" but varies in accordance with the magnitude and type of natural hazard, the built landscape, as well as the city's social institutions, said the authors.

It's not only historic floods that the researcher's new investigations shine light on, for similar events are predicted to occur in our modern world in which "climate change is expected to cause an increase in extreme weather around the globe," wrote the scientists. And they also pointed out that as global temperatures continue to rise, which increases the frequency of extremities of floods, studying this one historic event provided an important reminder that unexpected events have happened in the past "and will likely happen again".

According to a recent report on the science platform First Street, flooding is a natural process that greatly benefits the environment by, "abating erosion, protecting habitat, cultivating biological productivity" which leads to groundwater recharge. However, high frequency and excessive flooding conversely damage ecosystems, natural habitats, and entire communities, as was experienced over the last month in the UK and other places around the globe...

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