



# Points East

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

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## The Hochstadt Family's Shanghai Story

By Steve Hochstadt

[This essay accompanies the exhibit "Little Vienna in Shanghai" that was shown at the Jewish Museum Vienna: <http://www.jmw.at/en/exhibitions/little-vienna-shanghai>]

I first encountered Shanghai refugees in my grandparents' homes on a hospital grounds in small-town New Jersey. Shanghai was not a conversational topic in their home or mine, although evidences of Shanghai were everywhere. Prominently displayed in their house were a view of Shanghai on the living room wall and countless figurines of wood, ceramic, and jade. In my own home, I particularly liked a laughing, seated wooden Buddha in our dining room.

I knew only the outlines of Josef and Amalia Hochstädt's stories, told in their Viennese accents as a short series of facts about their previous lives, or gleaned from photographs proudly displayed.

Josef served as a young medical officer in the Kaiser's army. Later his gynecological practice in Vienna supported a luxurious and cultured life. Amalia played piano, her brother Egon Peretz played violin, and some members of the Vienna Philharmonic came over to join them. When the Nazis took over and latent Viennese antisemitism exploded, they were unusually successful in rescuing their family. My father, Ernst Hochstädt, who had become Ernest Hochstadt by the time I arrived much later, left before Kristallnacht through Italy to Portugal, and sailed to the US. Amalia and Josef managed to get their 13-year-old daughter on the Kindertransport to England, and then they sailed to Shanghai on one of Lloyd Triestino's ships, which was run by the family of Amalia's good friend.

I only heard scraps of stories about their life in Shanghai, but I was surrounded by clues, especially at their house. Not only my grandmother's recipes, but also the furniture, the dishes, the sculptures, and the silver had come around the world from Vienna, along with fine Chinese art objects. As a Jewish child, I knew that my family's escape from the Holocaust had been remarkably smooth. I sensed early that their modest life in New Jersey, where my 60-year-old grandfather had managed to find a position as a gynecologist at a tuberculosis and mental health clinic, represented severe social decline. I thought the small colony of Viennese doctors there was a remarkable coincidence.

(continued on page 6)

## Russian, Chinese and Japanese Perceptions of Harbin Jewish Community, 1898 – 1945

By Zvia Bowman

Why did the Jews migrate to Harbin? Did they blend in with the Russians or were they assimilated by the Chinese, like the Jews in Kaifeng? How were they perceived by the Russians and the Chinese? After the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931-32, how were they perceived by the Japanese and how did they fare under the occupation?

Jews migrated to Manchuria to escape repression and violent pogroms that they suffered in Tsarist Russia. Starting with just a few Jews in 1898, by the 1920's the community numbered more than 13,000 people. They built synagogues, Jewish schools, a Jewish hospital, and a home for the aged and established many charitable organisations. It was a vibrant community that helped its own, staged plays and concerts and published its own newspapers. They were a minority among a larger Russian community, which numbered 124,000 by 1921. The Russians themselves were a minority among a large Chinese community, which numbered more than 300,000 by 1921. All three co-existed in Harbin - a town that was built by Russians and looked Russian, yet was established in the wilderness of northeast China - Manchuria.

### History of Jewish Settlement

The first Jewish settlers arrived in Manchuria in the wake of the building of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) in 1898-99. While no Jews were allowed to be employees of the railway<sup>1</sup>, they supplied the Russian engineers with building materials for the railroad, goods and food. In 1903 their numbers grew to five hundred. The Jews decided that the time was ripe to establish an official Harbin Jewish community. They invited their first Rabbi, Shevel Levin, who served as Rabbi of Omsk and Chita in Russia, to head it.

The community called itself the "Jewish Prayer House" and its aim was to satisfy the religious needs of the Jewish population. The Rabbi had to officiate at births, marriages and deaths and to supervise the ritual slaughter of cattle and chicken. A prayer house and the secretariat of the community were established on no.6 Artilleriskaya Street, which was bought with an adjoining plot of land by the community. The burial society, or "Chevra Kadisha", was established in the same year and from then on all Jewish burials were conducted in an orderly fashion in the Jewish cemetery.<sup>2</sup>

(continued on page 8)

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**Featured Articles:**

- The Hochstadt Family’s Shanghai Story ..... 1**
- Russian, Chinese and Japanese Perceptions of Harbin Jewish Community, 1898 – 1945 ..... 1**
- In Memoriam Donald Daniel Leslie, 1922 – 1920 ..... 3**

**Articles:**

- From the Editor.....2
- To the Editor.....4
- In the Field.....4
- American Jewish Organizations Condemn Uighur Oppression..... 4
- Letter by Sun Yat-sen Supporting Zionism Rediscovered ..... 5
- Israeli Security System Debuts in China .....5
- Amazing Detective Work . Reunites Survivor Best Friends ..... 7
- A Tokyo synagogue gets a new rabbi ..... 11
- Jewish Life in Taiwan ..... 12

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United States	136
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Japan	2
Germany	2
Greece	1
Singapore	1
South Africa	1
Taiwan	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>184</b>

**FROM THE EDITOR**

As people and nations increasingly are being asked to choose sides in the ongoing disputes between China and the USA – a problem that I personally had hoped to see dissipate after Trump departed from office – I worry about us “ants” standing on the ground between the two tussling “elephants”.

As one small international organization, SJI has striven to juggle three balls at once: our respect and admiration for all that China has accomplished, our concern for the Kaifeng Jewish community’s survival during the current suppression, and our desire not to be used as a pawn by those forces in America who are promoting an anti-China agenda. Our first priority remains to assist the Kaifeng community and this guides everything else. We must always ask ourselves: How are the Kaifeng Jews best helped? Is what we propose to do the best way to accomplish our long-term goals?

In this issue, we have an article that documents the struggle of American Jewish organizations to balance their relationships with China and their desire to express concern about China’s treatment of its Uighur minority. Is China engaging in cultural genocide or is it defending itself against Muslim extremists and/or Uighur separatists? Can these organizations – should they – dare they – take a stand that challenges what China is doing and risk all the years they have invested in building constructive relationships in China? Equally significant is the question regarding the intended audience of a public statement of condemnation: Is it aimed at the American Jewish community, the general American public or the Biden Administration? Is it to assuage our conscience or is it really meant to be addressed to China? And if the latter, if its purpose is to encourage China to change its policies, is a public statement the most effective means to that end?

Similarly, Israel, like everyone else, is being asked to choose sides. On the one hand it has a flourishing relationship with China but on the other hand it is indebted and beholden to the USA. What ought it do? Dr. Shalom Salomon Wald of the Israel-based Jewish People’s Policy Planning Institute has written: “It is not wise for Israel to openly join the fight between the two giants now. Israel has to do what it needs to do to protect its interests on both sides, keep a low profile, avoid dramatic decisions and wait as long as it takes.”

That is sage advice for us all to heed as we are drawn to wade into troubled waters. It’s best not to even stick our toes in it.

Anson Laytner

**Points East**

Anson Laytner, Editor

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## In Memoriam Donald Daniel Leslie, 1922 – 1920



With the world focused on COVID-19, the death in April 2020 of Prof. Donald Daniel Leslie almost passed unnoticed.

Leslie, considered one of the foremost scholars of Islam in China and of the Chinese Jews, was born on July 1, 1922, in Tottenham, London and had his bar mitzvah in Brighton. At 14, he discovered Dostoevsky and became a dedicated socialist and atheist.

During World War II, he served six months in Belgium and Holland. When the war with Germany ended, he volunteered to learn Japanese and went to Kure, near Hiroshima, as an interpreter/translator in the Intelligence Corps. After 4½ years in the army, he returned to England and obtained a scholarship to study Chinese at SOAS, University of London. He then spent 5 years at Cambridge University, obtaining a Diploma in Chinese in 1951, and an M.Lit. in Chinese Studies in 1954.

Moving to Israel, he eventually became a Research Fellow of Chinese Studies at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem in 1958. His first published book was a translation, with Amatsia Porath, of the Analects of Confucius into Hebrew. It received a prize from Tel Aviv Municipality and a French version was also published.

In 1954 he had met his future wife, Helga Selz, a Kindertransport participant, in London, and met up with her again in Israel. They married in 1958 and had three children: Michal, Gial and Jonathan.

Needing a doctorate in order to obtain a permanent position, he spent two years at the Sorbonne, University of Paris, obtaining the degree of *Docteur d'Université* (très honorable) in 1962. Moving to Canberra, Australia, he got a post at the Australian National University (ANU) in Far Eastern History as a Research Fellow, then Fellow, in East Asia History.

While at the ANU, Donald and his family spent a year in Kyoto University as a research fellow, and then 6 months at Tel Aviv University. In 1970, Donald was appointed Associate Professor of Philosophy at Tel Aviv University. Just before the Yom

Kippur War in 1973, Donald resigned his post and the family returned to Canberra where he served as Senior Lecturer in the History Department of the Canberra College of Advanced Education (later the University of Canberra). After 15 years he retired, but continued research and writing as Visiting Fellow at the ANU for 13 more years.

Considered one of the leaders in the field of study of Islam in China and the Kaifeng Jews, he published 20 books and a large number of monographs and articles in English, French and Hebrew. These include *The Survival of the Chinese Jews* (Brill, 1972); with Joseph Dehergne, *Juifs de Chine* (Institutum Historicum, 1980); *Islamic literature in Chinese, late Ming and early Ch'ing* (Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1981); *The Chinese-Hebrew Memorial Book of the Jewish Community of K'aifeng* (Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1984); *Islam in Traditional China: A Short History to 1800* (Canberra College of Advanced Education, 1986); *Jews and Judaism in Traditional China: A Comprehensive Bibliography* (Monumenta Serica Institute, 1998); and *Islam in Traditional China: A Bibliographical Guide* (Monumenta Serica Institute, 2006).

He was very proud to have had two books – one on the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng, the other on the Hui Muslims in China – translated into Chinese and published in China. His book *Juifs de Chine*, with Father Joseph Dehergne, received a prize from the *Académie Française*.

Leslie noted that had his wife Helga not died a few years before him he might never otherwise have died!

### Donald Leslie: Some Personal Reminiscences

By Wendy Abraham

The first thing everyone thinks about when hearing his name, of course, are his amazing scholarly achievements. But beyond that, he was a real character. One time when he stayed over my little apartment in New York (I forgot what he was in New York for, but he never had money for a serious hotel), the biggest takeaway was that he was non-stop, incessant chatter starting at 5 a.m., about the funniest things. It was exhausting, but quite a discovery.

He shocked the hell out of me over dinner at a Chinese restaurant near Columbia University one night, when he told me he actually can't speak Chinese. Like, at all. He could read and do research in classical Chinese and a million other languages, but he never learned (or even cared to learn) how to speak Chinese. So I ended up ordering dinner for us.

The first – and only – time he went to Kaifeng was on one of my tours in the 90s. Just like his inability to speak Chinese, his never having been to Kaifeng seemed likewise mystifying.

He loved helping young scholars and just loved being around young people in general. The image of a scholar buried in books for

decades just didn't apply to him. One time, after he had just given a guest lecture at Columbia, one of the most famous scholars of Chinese history had planned a special lunch for him right afterwards, which included other academic luminaries from Columbia and beyond. As he started leading Donald in the direction of the special lunch, Donald suddenly swirled around and in a loud voice blurted out "Come on and join us!" I froze. It was the most awkward, terrifying moment for me as a grad student, because it wasn't until then that I was brought back to the reality of how special a scholar Donald was. It never would have occurred to him that I should be accepted as anything but a friend, no matter in whose company we were. In one of my rare displays of emotional intelligence, I instinctively knew that the hosting professor would have been mortified to have had me as a sudden lunch guest along with his other esteemed colleagues, so I politely, but awkwardly, declined.

After I had spent several years already doing research for my dissertation on the Chinese Jews, he calmly (and seriously) noted that it should take another six years or so to finish the initial research. I think that was when I decided to leave academia.

He told me that for all these decades he did his formidable research only during the usual 9-5 workday. Unlike just about every other scholar, Donald told me he only did his research and writing during the usual eight-hour workday. The rest of his time was spent being with and focusing on his family. Unbelievable, given how prolific a researcher and scholar he was.

I've saved all the letters he wrote me over the course of a decade or so. His handwriting was atrocious. It took a long time before I could even write back the first time because I could barely decipher the return address on the envelope.

Donald was the one scholar who felt more like a father to me – or at least the fun uncle of the family. I don't know when it was that I lost touch with him, but I regret not trying to locate him again sooner.

### And In Others' Words

Donald Leslie was a great scholar. His two books on the history of the Kaifeng Jews and of Islam in China remain the best available. Jordan Paper

His trip in China with me was most memorable as we were together in almost weeks. His scholarly achievements have influenced and inspired more than a generation of Chinese who are in the field of the study of the Kaifeng Jewry. Xu Xin

I remember Donald's humanity, generosity and readiness to help whenever he could help. Shalom Wald

H-Judaic is saddened to learn, belatedly, of the passing of Prof. Donald D. Leslie (1922-2020), pioneering scholar of the Chinese Jewish community, who also wrote about Islam in China and other aspects of China's relationship with world religions. Shalom Berger



## To the Editor

Just to let other SJI members know that, as a way of promoting our organization, I always save the most recent issue of POINTS EAST to give to friends, colleagues or just leave it at various Jewish institutions in the hope that someone will pick it up/read it/join SJI. Since all back issues are viewable online there is no reason for anyone to hold on to older issues – thereby, a simple and no-cost way we can promote our organization.

Sincerely,

Mark B. Sommer, Teaneck, NJ

## In the Field

### • Zvia Shickman Bowman Joins SJI International Advisory Board

Until her retirement, Dr. Zvia Shickman Bowman was lecturer of Chinese at King's College, Modern Language Centre, University of London. She also taught Business Chinese at London Business School and Chinese language and literature at SOAS, University of London. She was born in Beijing and her family was the last Jewish family to leave China during the Cultural Revolution. They settled in Israel where her parents taught at Hebrew University. Dr. Bowman received her PhD from the University of Toronto in Chinese literature. She is author of "The Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898 – 1931," which appeared in Jonathan Goldstein, ed. *The Jews in China*, and of "Unwilling Collaborators: The Jewish Community of Harbin under the Japanese Occupation 1931- 1945," which was published in Roman Malek, ed. *Jews in China: From Kaifeng... to Shanghai*.

### • Xu Xin Named Global Engagement Ambassador

Prof. Xu Xin resumed tenure of the Diane and Guilford Glazer Chair of Jewish and Israel Studies and received a formal Letter of Appointment from the President of Nanjing University, selecting him as a Global Engagement Ambassador, a position newly created by Nanjing University. The goal of this position is to push forward the global collaborations between Nanjing University and other educational institutions around the world. The recipients are expert scholars in specific regions of the world, and ambassadors will represent the president to expand the University's influence and establish collaborative and exchange programs around the world.

### • Song Lihong's Appointments

Because of the pandemic, Prof. Song Lihong, Deputy Director of The Glazer In-

stitute, has been serving remotely as a Visiting Scholar at the Harvard-Yenching Institute for 2020-2021 academic year. In addition, Song was invited to join the editorial board of the *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* (UK), and serves as a research fellow (2020-2023) for the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy (ISGAP), a New York based think-tank.

### • Faculty Promotion

Dr. Meng Zhenhua (Jeremiah), Associate Professor and the Director of the Center for Israel Studies at Nanjing University, has been promoted to full professor. He also won a 2020 Research grant from the National Social Science Fund in China. This grant supports his proposal entitled "Studies on the Inheritance and Innovation of the Hebrew Religion in the Achaemenid Period."

### • Born of 'Two Peoples, Two Traditions'

Rabbi Jacqueline Mates-Muchin, the first Chinese-American rabbi and the senior rabbi at Temple Sinai in Oakland, CA feels very lucky to be a part of two peoples and two long-standing traditions but she pushes back against the expectation by non-Asian Jews that her Jewish practice must be warped because she is Chinese. "People think that I must have a Chinese twist on every Jewish tradition, as if we eat fortune cookies instead of hamantaschen," she said. "It would be as bizarre [to me] to blow the shofar on Chinese New Year as it would be to light firecrackers on Rosh Hashanah. Bringing all of myself doesn't mean that the tradition as it stands has changed. There are aspects to those traditions that are handed down and separate, even as it all resides unified within me." Even so, she said she's often felt "on the margins" of the communities she is a part of and, once she became a rabbi, that experience inspired her to create a space where people feel they truly belong and can be grounded.

### • Tokyo Gets New Liberal Rabbi

Andrew Scheer has replaced Rabbi David Kunin, who was Tokyo's Jewish Community of Japan's spiritual leader from 2013 until July 2020. Scheer first encountered the JCJ after graduating from New York University with a bachelor's degree in Jewish history in 2008 and came to Japan to teach English for a year. Scheer eventually returned to America and graduated from the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah rabbinical school in 2015. When he heard Kunin would be departing Tokyo, he jumped at the chance to return to a place he had already been a part of. Scheer interviewed remotely for the position and returned to Japan as rabbi but, since he arrived during a strict pandemic quarantine, he had to stay in his apartment for two weeks.

## American Jewish Organizations Condemn Uighur Oppression

*Compiled from various sources, including JTA*

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs (JCPA), the main policy umbrella for U.S. Jewish groups, resolved to protest what it called China's "genocide" of its Muslim Uighur minority.

"The Jewish community should call upon the CCP to end the genocide and exploitation of the Uighurs, as well as halt the oppression of other ethnic and religious minorities living within its borders," the JCPA, which brings together most national groups and virtually every local Jewish community relations council, said in a resolution at its two-day annual conference held virtually in April.

The resolutions are significant because they undergo a slow deliberative process bringing in all of the JCPA constituents and are the closest the national U.S. Jewish community has to consensus opinions. Its resolutions frequently anticipate the direction of American Jewish activism.

The one on the Uighurs represents a recent surge in Jewish community activity on behalf of the Muslim minority in China. In recent months, attention to the Uighur cause has deepened, with new reports about how China's government has interned members of the Turkic Muslim minority in "reeducation" camps. The government said the move is meant to combat terrorism. Reports, denied by the government, say the captive Uighurs are pressured to abandon their culture and have been forced into labor, and that women have been sterilized. The JCPA resolution calls on constituent groups to speak out against the genocide and work with other communities "to create a grassroots atrocity prevention movement."

Many Jewish groups, including the Union for Reform Judaism, the American Jewish Committee, the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly, the Anti-Defamation League and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, have already issued statements and taken policy positions as an early step, and a community effort organized by the Indianapolis JCRC is emerging as a model.

Now Jewish organizers in the United States are hoping to galvanize Amer-

ican Jews in the same way through a major Jewish advocacy campaign on a par with the Save Darfur campaign of the 2000s. That campaign helped bring about a peace process that culminated last year in an agreement between Sudan and the Darfur rebel groups. But even as they ramp up their activity on the issue, the organizers say they recognize that going up against China is potentially a more fraught endeavor for American Jews.

“Anytime that one deals with a government that has an important relationship with Israel and with the United States, one needs to weigh the pluses and minuses of criticism,” said Jason Isaacson, the chief policy and political affairs officer for the American Jewish Committee. “There are times when the demands of conscience require kind of a reassessment of that balance, but we have never wanted to behave in a way that would prevent continued contact for mutual interest.”

Isaacson acknowledged the risks of taking on a major power, particularly for an organization like his. “You also recognize that we’re an organization that has a long-standing relationship with China, we have an Asia Pacific Institute that has maintained a high level of contact in Beijing and through consulates and the embassy and the U.N. mission in New York,” he said. “So we take our diplomatic contact very seriously and we recognize that this is a government that we want to remain in contact with, but terrible abuses are being committed and they need to be addressed.”

Among its actions, the American Jewish Committee welcomed the Trump administration [and later the Biden administration] designation last year of the anti-Uighur persecution as a genocide, and it backs legislation under consideration in Congress that would ban the entry into the United States of goods believed to be manufactured in Uighur labor camps, and that would elevate the refugee status of Uighurs. The two pieces of legislation, with bipartisan support, have become the focus of Jewish community lobbying...

At this stage, national action is focusing on educating Jewish communities, said Tammy Gilden, the associate director for policy at the Jewish Council for Public Affairs. But that will transition soon to activism. “We received this deluge of requests for a more public lengthy or more in-depth conversation on the issue,” she said...

## Letter by Sun Yat-sen Supporting Zionism Rediscovered

[This article is excerpted from <https://blog.nli.org.il/en/sun-yat-sen/>, 02 October 2021, in “The Librarians,” the official online publication of the National Library of Israel.]

A century-old letter supporting Zionism from Chinese leader Dr. Sun Yat-sen recently surfaced at the National Library of Israel.

Sun was the first provisional president of the Republic of China, established in 1912 prior to the Chinese Civil War and Communist Revolution. His support of Zionism is well-documented and the letter’s text was previously known. In the letter, Sun said: “All lovers of Democracy cannot help but support whole-heartedly and welcome with enthusiasm the movement to restore your wonderful and historic nation.” Known as the father of the Chinese nation, Sun called Zionism “one of the greatest movements of the present time.”

Sun’s words were written in a 1920 letter he sent to N.E.B. Ezra, a prominent Shanghai Zionist publisher and author. The letter’s recipient was a Jewish scholar, writer, publisher and activist who was born in Lahore (modern-day Pakistan) and who lived most of his life in Shanghai. In addition to founding the Shanghai Zionist Association, he edited its mouthpiece, Israel’s Messenger, for decades.

According to Prof. Gao Bei, an expert on Jewish-Chinese relations in early 20th-century Shanghai, “It is very exciting that this original letter from Sun Yat-sen to N.E.B. Ezra has been unearthed. It is one of the seminal documents that illuminate the Chinese Nationalist government’s early support for the Zionist cause.”

The letter has surfaced as part of a major National Library of Israel initiative, supported by the Leir Foundation, to review and describe millions of items in its archival collections, including personal papers, photographs, and documents from many of the 20th century’s most prominent figures. The initiative is part of the National Library’s current renewal, which includes the 2022 opening of its new landmark campus adjacent to the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) in Jerusalem.

The original signed copy was only now rediscovered, more than a century after it was written. Recently reviewed internal National Library documentation indicates that the letter has been in its collections since at least 1938, but was never included in the public catalog available to external scholars until now.

How exactly the letter got to the Library remains a mystery, though according to NLI archivist Rachel Misrati, “N.E.B. Ezra passed away in 1936. The fact that the letter arrived in 1938 at latest indicates that – like many Zionist figures of the period – Ezra himself may have bequeathed it to the Library, or perhaps someone came across it after his death and sent it to us after determining that the National Library was its rightful home.”

## Israeli Security System Debuts in China

Excerpted from [anosh.org](https://www.anosh.org)

When Rabbi Dovi Henig, the Chabad shaliach (emissary) to Chengdu, China, returned home after a four-week trip to Israel with his family, he and his family were totally exhausted. They had left China, escaping a pandemic. Now it was time to return home to continue their work for the Jewish community living in Chengdu.

It was a very long and arduous trip. At last, they arrived at the complex in which their Chinese home is situated, with all their suitcases. But the police blocked them. The police would not let them into their home.

The police told them, that all the homes in the complex were ransacked by thugs, many valuables stolen, and the police must enter their home first, to examine the crime scene, and conduct an investigation before they can enter. The police came with their equipment, and entered the home of the Chabad rabbi. Yet they were shocked. The home was untouched. All was in order. Obviously, the burglars skipped over this home. Great. The police left and the family returned to their home.

Two weeks later, the police chief phoned the rabbi and asks him to come to his office. “Remember what happened?” “Well, we found them. We managed to catch all of them. Our first question to them was: Why didn’t you break into the rabbi’s house\_

They answered: All the other homes had alarm systems that we learned how to neutralize through WIFI. But the Rabbi’s house had a security system we were not familiar with; we did not know how to shut it off. So we did not touch his home. But we did take pictures of his alarm system, so we can study it and figure out how to manipulate it for next time...

The burglars took out phones and showed the photo of the rabbi’s security system: it was the mezuzah on his door.

So now the police chief of Chengdu turns to the Chabad shaliach and says: “Wow! Can you tell me where did you acquire this security system for your home, which all the usual suspects and ordinary tricks cannot neutralize?” And he continued: “Ah! I am sure this technology was made in Israel. You guys make the best stuff. Can you please help me get my hands on this new Israeli alarm system?!”

The Rabbi smiled and said: Indeed. Made in Israel, 3330 years ago! The Mezuzah security system.



## Shanghai Story, continued from page 1

Under normal circumstances, I would have learned a lot about my grandparents and the whole Hochstädt-Peretz family in my own home. But there are no normal circumstances in refugees' families. In my case, the sad circumstance was my father's relationship with his parents. It was always clear to me that he was gleeful at age 18 to land in America, far from his own family. A few days after he arrived in 1938 with virtually nothing, he visited the very distant relative of Amalia who had supplied the financial sponsorship for my father's visa. There he thanked the man and encountered his 16-year-old tomboy niece, who played with her cousin there all the time. My mother Lenore. By the time my father could visit his parents in Shanghai in 1946, they had been married for 4 years. Despite that, my grandparents expressed to my father their concern that his marriage to a girl of the lower middle class was preventing him from pursuing further education, so he could be a doctor. My aunt, who had been brought to Shanghai from England after my grandparents settled in, was decidedly snooty to my mother, a characteristic demeanor that she maintained her whole life.

Those slights to my mother were fateful, but they fit into an amusing refugee story. At some point, my mother's parents, both employed in New York's clothing industry, said something like, "What? You're going to marry that penniless refugee?" The social derogation suffered by nearly all refugees leads inevitably to difficult social situations. The amusing part is that they didn't really care at all and heartily accepted my father into their family.

So my father did not regale me with Hochstädt family history. He was a dutiful son, taking our family to see his parents in New Jersey regularly from Long Island where we lived, later flying the whole family out to Santa Monica in southern California after they moved there, and eventually moving with my mother to within miles of their apartment.

My father represents to me one typical refugee reaction to uprooting: he became American. Unlike virtually every other German-speaking refugee I have met, he spoke English with no accent. He learned to love baseball and he

spoke to his parents in English.

My serious study of the Shanghai refugees began informally with Amalia after Josef had died, not yet an historical project, but a family history project, in the early 1980s. She talked happily in front of my tape recorder and told stories which amazed me. I interviewed her again in 1987.

As I learned how much fun it was to talk with people about Shanghai and their whole lives of survival, I found out by chance that a group of former Shanghai Jews, some refugees, some not, were going to have a Seder reunion in Shanghai in 1989. That spring was a fateful year for China and for me, as I decided to make the Shanghai refugees a personal project. I saw the early stages of the protests that led eventually to the Tiananmen Square massacre and met people who changed the direction of my historical career.

Over the next ten years, I interviewed 100 former Shanghai Jews, nearly all German-speaking refugees, who lived in Vienna, Berlin, Israel, and the US. I wrote two books based on those interviews, one German, one English, and many smaller pieces. I met the other scholars across the world who shared my passion. But I never wrote about my grandparents.

My initial impression that becoming a refugee in China was easier on my grandparents than on others became the realization that Amalia and Josef did not share any of the characteristic experiences of other refugees: being made penniless by Nazi bureaucracy; giving up their last possessions in order to leave; scrounging for survival in Shanghai; being forced into the Designated Area in 1943; desperately trying to find a way out of China after 1945. Instead they brought my grandfather's office and their dining room furniture with them to Shanghai, lived in an 8-room apartment in the International Settlement, had a cook who learned to prepare Viennese dishes, and were inscribed on a list of mostly doctors who got Japanese permission to avoid the Designated Area. In my efforts to establish a rapport with the former refugees with whom I talked, I did not discuss the very different and relatively privileged life of my grandparents.



*Amalia and Josef Hochstaedt in Shanghai*

Amalia and Josef employed resources well beyond what most Jews could expend. They got their children and themselves onto the best lists. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum says, "By 1938, you could expect to wait for at least two years for a visa," yet they managed to procure one for my father. The Kindertransport was designed to rescue especially impoverished children or those with a parent in a camp, but they found a place for their daughter. Only about 1% of refugees were officially allowed by the Japanese to remain outside of the Designated Area.

Their resources included determination. While they were allowed to remain in central Shanghai, they had to give up their apartment to a Korean man working with the Japanese. An Indian gentleman, who must have been a patient of my grandfather, allowed them to move into his compound, which included an office so my grandfather could continue his practice. When the War was over, Amalia went to see the Korean and told him they wanted their apartment back. He initially refused, but Amalia said that her son, my father, in the US Army was coming soon and would deal with him forcefully. He left and they moved back into their comfortable lives. They stayed until 1949, in no hurry to get out of decolonizing Shanghai until the Red Army approached.

That's what my grandmother told me. My aunt told me that the story was

not true, that her mother didn't have the bravery for such a negotiation. Again the difficult internal dynamics of my family got in the way of fully understanding their refugee experiences.

I was nearly 40 years old when I interviewed Amalia. Reading the transcript is embarrassing now. I knew much too little about the Shanghai refugees to ask good questions. I had not yet learned to jot down names and places that might be confusing later. I interrupted too much. My grandparents seemed to have led a charmed life at every stage.

When I first became aware of my grandparents' personalities, my grandfather was already 70, was not very talkative, and expressed opinions as facts. I was not prepared for story after story of how people with important connections made things happen for my grandparents in Vienna and Shanghai, including the Japanese man who got them on the short list to remain in central Shanghai.

Not everything, however, turned out as they wanted. While Jews in Vienna after the Anschluss desperately sought escape routes, Amalia arranged for a very distant relation in New York to vouch for my father and for a job for Ernst in Washington with a well-connected lawyer. Instead of following his fortune, my father followed his heart, married my mother, got a job in the clothing industry, and earned a scathing letter from Josef. Amalia and Josef were remarkably successful refugees, but not such good parents.

They represent a second type of refugee, like many who became refugees as adults. They retained many of the attitudes they had developed in Vienna. Wherever they lived, they sought out other Viennese Jews. They saved as much as they could from their former lives. But much was lost forever. There was a piano in my grandparents' homes, but I never saw my grandmother play it.

As this exhibit at the Jewish Museum shows, it is still possible to hear new stories from Shanghai refugees. I believe there is no more important Shanghai document than an interview transcript. Taken together, interviews with former refugees will write the history of their unique experiences. There are limitations,

however. The great majority of the first-hand narratives in memoirs and interviews have been given by people whose childhoods in Europe ended suddenly with their trip to Shanghai. Even the few older interview partners tend to begin their stories with their departure from a life in Europe which appears rosy in comparison with what came after.

My own family's story suffers from that disruption. My grandfather's sister, Rosa Hochstädt, a dentist in Graz, did not go to Shanghai. She was arrested and sent to Theresienstadt in 1942 and to Auschwitz in 1944, where she was murdered. My grandparents never talked about her. Why? Why didn't she go to Shanghai, too? Did she also suffer from the discordant Hochstädt family dynamics? Was there guilt about her death?

Most survivors keep the most difficult parts of their Holocaust stories to themselves. Former Shanghai refugees are no exception. In my interviews, they talked easily about hygienic deficiencies of Shanghai, the prevalence of disease, the abuses of the Japanese, and the insufficiency of food. Although few of them had ever been formally interviewed, those stories had been rehearsed before. The immense family tragedies that form the foundation of every refugee's life and may have never been told, might erupt unexpectedly with bursts of emotion, revealing hidden personal truths. More likely, they don't surface in interviews at all. My grandmother may have explained why Rosa was never mentioned, when she said, "But you forget about, you, you don't want to remember this kind of things."

Now everyone who can answer those questions is dead. Interviews and this exhibit can recover a great deal about the Jewish experience of surviving the Holocaust. But some people were lost completely and their stories will never be told.

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## Amazing Detective Work Reunites Survivor Best Friends

By Matt Lebovic

Excerpted from the *Times of Israel*, 14 February 2021

When they parted ways in 1939, two Jewish girls from Berlin promised to keep in touch. One family fled to Chile, while the other made its way to the United States via Shanghai.

Eighty-two years after the nine-year old girls said goodbye in a German schoolyard, Ana María Wahrenberg and Betty Grebenschikoff connected with each other again on Zoom. The unexpected reunion was facilitated by Holocaust testimony indexer Ita Gordon, whose sharp memory linked the women.

"In her [USC Shoah Foundation] testimony, Betty said she had been actively searching for her long-lost friend for her entire life; she even specifically mentions Ana María's name in the hopes that this will help her find her best childhood friend," said Rachael Cerrotti, who works as a creative producer for the foundation...After hearing Wahrenberg speak at a virtual Kristallnacht event, Gordon made the connection between Grebenschikoff's testimony—given to the foundation 24 years ago—and Wahrenberg.

"What followed was a series of phone calls between USC Shoah Foundation and the Museo Interactivo Judío de Chile, where Ana María has long been involved in a range of activities," said Cerrotti.

"We needed to be absolutely certain that we were correct in believing that these two women were childhood friends," said Cerrotti. "Ita Gordon's research proved to be done impeccably well and soon enough we connected with Betty and looped in the Florida Holocaust Museum, where Betty is a regular speaker," said Cerrotti.

After more than 80 years of believing the other had perished in the Holocaust, the women connected virtually in November. The Zoom gathering concluded with members of both families lifting glasses for a champagne toast l'chaim. "It was so natural for them," said Lucas Kirschman, one of Grebenschikoff's seven grandchildren. "They picked back up and they were talking about random stuff, like no big deal..."



## From Berlin, continued from page 1

While the community was established in 1903, the general manager of the CER, General Dmitrii Horvath, approved its communal regulations only in 1909. It was considered a spiritual community without any judicial rights.<sup>3</sup>

While the committee that was set up during the war terminated its activities in 1908, the Jewish Ladies' Charitable Society became a prominent institution, which existed for many years.

In 1906 – 1908 there were more than three thousand Jews in Harbin. Not all of them came from Siberia – many came from Southern Russian cities like Odessa and Kiev and the Pale of Settlement.<sup>4</sup>

What attracted those Jews to distant Manchuria and the frontier town of Harbin? Why did they undertake the long and perilous journey across Russia and Siberia in order to settle down in Harbin? Many left their parents, brothers and sisters, friends and neighbours behind in order to settle down in a wild country full of an alien Chinese population.

Most of them were attracted by the freedom and unlimited opportunities that Harbin offered them. Their position in Manchuria was indeed better than that of most Jews in Russia.

The situation of the Russian Jews is vividly described by Mary Schaeffer Conray:

The majority of Jews, amounting to about 6 million or about 5 percent of the population in the early twentieth century, lived in the western border regions of the empire. This area, commonly called the Pale of Settlement, had been brought into the Empire in the late 18th century through Catherine the Great's partitions of Poland–Lithuania.

Jews in early 20th century Russia were subject to various limitations: a decree of 1882 had forbidden them to live outside towns or larger villages and cancelled the right of Jewish soldiers to remain outside the pale after their military service was finished, as they had done from 1867. In 1891 large numbers of Jewish merchants and artisans were expelled from Moscow. Jewish merchants of the First Guild - the organisation of wealthiest merchants - were allowed to settle outside the Pale, but a law of 1899 required them to obtain individual consent from the Minister of Internal Affairs. In 1891, Jews were also barred from participating in municipal self-government.

Jews were further restricted in their choice of occupation. A decree of 1882 limited the number of Jewish doctors or orderlies in the medical corps to 5 percent and a decree of 1899 required all Jews - wishing admittance to the Bar to receive permission

from the Minister of Justice; permission was not always given. Civilian Jewish physicians had difficulty practising and Jewish attendance at secondary schools and university was limited. A decree of 1897 established a quota for Jews of 3 percent for schools in St. Petersburg and Moscow, 5 percent for schools in other cities outside the Pale, and 10 percent for schools within the Pale.

Perhaps more reprehensible than these quotas, which at least were commensurate with the proportion of Jews in Russian society, were the periodical pogroms, often supported by local officials or ignored by them.<sup>5</sup>

Peter Stolypin, Russian Minister of Internal Affairs and Chairman of Tsar Nicholas II's Council of Ministers from 1906 to 1911—when Stolypin was assassinated—introduced a reform bill in 1906. It offered a meagre increase of Jewish rights, but they were still confined in residence largely to the Pale and were forbidden to buy land within the Pale.<sup>6</sup>

While in Russia Jews were considered second-class citizens, in Manchuria they were equal to Russians. When the Russian Finance Minister, Sergei Iulievich Witte, who strongly supported the building of CER, visited Manchuria in 1902, he was very disappointed both by the small number of the Russian settlers in Manchuria and by their poor quality. The settlers came from the poorest classes, many lost their way on the journey or became very sick. There was also a large criminal element among them. Witte became convinced that they had to be concentrated in the more important settlements and that no government aid should be given to them, in order that "only the best would come".<sup>7</sup>

The plans to settle colonies of Cossacks and dissenting religious sects like the Dukhobors, Mennonites and Old Believers in Manchuria had all failed. Conscious of the fact that the minorities like the Jews, Poles, Armenians, Tartars and Georgians were all discriminated against in Russia proper and looking for better life elsewhere, the authorities did not discourage them from settling in Manchuria.

Witte and the Prince Vladimir Kokovtsov, who was the Finance Minister after Witte from 1904 to 1914, encouraged them to settle in Manchuria in order to speed up its development.

When attacked by some high-ranking Tsarist officials in St. Petersburg and in Manchuria for his philo-Semitic policies, Kokovtsov replied in the following letter from 1911:

On the other hand whatever your opinion from a governmental point of view of the Jewish element, it is necessary in all fair-

ness to recognize the enormous significance of the Jews for Manchuria, where their energetic commercial activity in the course of these last years has solidly established grain exports and guaranteed their (the exports) future.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, Kokovtsov expressed his deep conviction that any curtailment of Jewish rights in the CER zone would have a very unfavourable effect on the Russian position in Manchuria.<sup>9</sup>

Khorvat also regarded Jewish settlement in Manchuria in a positive light. Moreover, 2/3 of the Jews who settled in Manchuria, came from Russified backgrounds and spoke Russian at home. Hence, it was easier for them to settle in Manchuria, which was free from official anti-Semitic policies but was permeated with Russian culture.<sup>10</sup>

The Jewish community also had the most balanced male - female ratio among Harbin's ethnic minorities. In 1913 there were 91.5 women for every 100 men, signifying the trend for the Jewish men to bring their families with them.<sup>11</sup>

Since 1898 the CER appropriated huge areas along the line in Kirin and Heilongjiang. When the Chinese government opposed this, an agreement signed in 1907 reduced the quantity of the lands to about 500 square miles. As soon as it was signed, the Russian CER authorities launched a comprehensive program to create municipalities around various population centres and stations of the line. Already in 1906, foundations had been laid for the principal cities along the railway line, to supplement the general administration in the railway zone by the CER.<sup>12</sup>

Jews played an important part on the Harbin Stock Exchange, which was founded in 1907, and the municipal assembly elected in 1908. According to David Woolf:

Seven of the thirty-two original members of the exchange who were still involved in 1910 (22 percent) and ten of the forty men who were elected as representatives by the 1,696 voters in February 1908 (25 percent) were clearly Jewish. A few weeks later, these forty men selected four of their number to serve on the municipal council, an executive organ. Two of the four were Jewish.<sup>13</sup>

They were Evsei Isaevich Dobisov and Isaac Solomonovich Fride.<sup>14</sup>

In 1909, Stolypin raised the quota of Jewish students allowed in state secondary schools to 5 percent in the capital, to 15 percent in the Pale of Settlement, and to 10 percent elsewhere. These restrictions were extended to private schools. In Harbin, the picture was different. 15 percent of pupils in the commercial high schools founded and funded by the CER in Harbin



were Jewish. The percentage of Jews in private schools was 25 percent. In other words, all Jewish youngsters who qualified could pursue a secondary education in Harbin.<sup>15</sup>

We must not think that Harbin Jews encountered no anti-Semitism whatsoever. After Russia's shameful defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05, Jews were singled out as scapegoats and a wave of pogroms swept Russia. Many Jews were killed, Jewish houses and businesses were looted and burnt down. Some Russian officers in Harbin wanted to instigate pogroms against the Jews there as well, but, fortunately, the Rear Commander Nadarov prevented them from happening.

From its foundation in 1898 until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, no pogroms took place in Harbin. The Jewish population flourished under the tolerant administration of Khorvat.

Before 1917 there were 5,000 Jews, 40,000 Russians and 170,000 Chinese in Harbin. During the years of the Russian Civil War (1918-1924) the White Russian population tripled to 124,000. By 1921, the Jewish population grew to 13,000 - 15,000 and the Chinese population increased to over 315,000.<sup>16</sup>

On an individual level, Jews did make Russian friends and there was some intermarriage between Jews and Russians in Harbin.

What did the Jews feel towards the Chinese population and how did they interact with it?

From reading the memoirs of ex-Harbin Jewish residents and in conversations with them, it is clear that there was no real interaction between the Jews and the Chinese. Except for a few words or phrases, the Jews did not bother learning any Chinese, nor did they venture into the Chinese quarters of Harbin. The Chinese were often "invisible" and the only ones to come in contact with foreigners were servants, cooks, employees or rickshaw pullers. Many household servants spoke some Russian and some even knew a few Yiddish phrases. Schoolchildren had Russian or foreign classmates and were not likely to have Chinese ones. Some wealthier families sent their children to British or French high schools.<sup>17</sup>

Until 1917, Harbin and the land all along the CER line were under Russian administration. After the 1917 Revolution extraterritorial rights were renounced for all Russians by the new Soviet regime. The Russians and the Jews came under Chinese administration and had to adapt to the new situation. However, culturally they continued to speak, read and edu-

cate their children in Russian. Intermarriage between Jews and Chinese was virtually unheard of.

Most Chinese could not distinguish between Russians and Jews - all foreigners were labelled "dabizi waiguo guizi" - "big nosed foreign devils". However, the Jews did not encounter any targeted anti-Semitism from the Chinese.

Many Chinese intellectuals, who came into contact with Western ideas from the middle of the 19th century onwards, also encountered anti Semitic writings and arguments. These Chinese felt both curious and envious of the Jews. On the one hand, Jews were accused of killing Christ and dominating the world's financial markets; on the other hand, they were expelled from their own country and were perpetual wanderers. After reading Shakespeare's Merchant of Venice, many Chinese felt that Jews were greedy usurers. Thus the wealthy Shanghai Baghdadi Jew, Silas Hardoon (1851 - 1931) was depicted in many Chinese novels as a parsimonious Jew, very sly and mean. His Eurasian wife was also portrayed as a money-grasping woman. There is latent anti-Semitism in his portrayal despite the fact that Hardoon endowed Chinese schools and gave money to Chinese charities.<sup>18</sup> These stories and novels about Hardoon continued to be written long after his death, which shows that Chinese prejudices against him carried on unchanged under the Communist regime.

The prominent anthropologist, Wu Zelin, who has studied Kaifeng Jews, felt for many years that the Jews were despicable, pitiable, admirable and enviable at the same time.<sup>19</sup> His views were shared by many other intellectuals in the 1920s and 1930s.

Chinese intellectuals also asked themselves: Why should the Jews, not the Chinese, be the dominant culture of the world? Why should Judaism, not Confucianism, have been widely accepted as the guiding moral principle of human society?<sup>20</sup>

Some intellectuals, like Jiang Guanyun, who translated a German book which claimed that "the Mosaic law was not the oldest law code in the world and the Hebrew culture was not the most superior one in the world."<sup>21</sup> Others attempted to prove that Chinese culture was still superior to the Jewish one. Thus for the historian Wang Tao "the assimilation of the Jewish community (of Kaifeng) in China was a powerful proof that Chinese culture was far superior to Jewish culture; therefore, it was still more superior to Western culture. Thus, opening the door to the West would not destroy the superior Chinese culture"<sup>22</sup>

The reformer and writer Liang Qi-chao considered the Jews the most powerful and influential group among the immigrants in

America and admired their survival as a race. Therefore, the Chinese should learn from the Jews and in the future control the world economy and global politics.<sup>23</sup> The founder of the Republic of China, Dr. Sun Yat-sen, thought that nationalism was the cause of the rise and fall of any race. He praised Zionism, because he thought that the nationalistic spirit of Zionism held the Jewish race together.

During the Japanese occupation of China in the 1930s, Jews were depicted not as a race but as victims of racial discrimination. Just as the Japanese were oppressing the Chinese, the Jews were also oppressed for centuries. All the oppressed peoples should unite and liberate the human race as a whole.<sup>24</sup> However, it is doubtful if any of these books and articles expressing Chinese attitudes towards the Jews were read by the Chinese in Manchuria or by its virtual ruler, the warlord Zhang Zuo-lin.

The situation of the Jews in Harbin deteriorated rapidly with the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931. Units of the Kwantung Army entered Harbin on February 5th 1932 to a rousing welcome from the White Russian community.<sup>25</sup>

The Chinese population was both fearful and resentful, while Dr Abraham Kaufman, the leader of the Jewish community in Harbin, extended a cautious welcome to the Japanese forces. Within a few short weeks, the whole population of Harbin started fearing the occupiers. The Japanese military regarded their posting in Manchuria as a good opportunity to enrich themselves. Local shop owners had to pay a huge amount in protection fees and the Japanese also set up gambling houses, opium dens and brothels in all the major cities. Factories were constructed all over Manchuria to produce morphine, cocaine, and heroin.

The American reporter Edgar Snow visited Harbin in 1934 and wrote this report about it:

Harbin, once delightful, (is) today notorious as a place of living death, the worst governed city in Manchukuo.

Probably in no other city of the world is life so precarious. Harbin residents, including the 100,000 White and Red Russians, who here bend to the law of the yellow man, risk their lives if they go unarmed anywhere, even in daylight. Hold-ups, robberies, murders, kidnappings are common occurrences.

Some of the worst criminals are White Russians. Destitute, broken in spirit, unwilling to return to Russia under the Bolsheviks, unable to earn a living in China under the Japanese, they turn to crime, nourished on a diet of drugs, which are sold openly in shops infesting the city...

In Harbin alone there are more than 2,000 licensed shops for the sale of opium, heroin and morphine.<sup>26</sup>

Harbin was controlled by nine different law-enforcement agencies, among them the Tokumu Kikan (Special Services Agency); the military gendarmerie or Kempei, the Harbin Municipal Police and the Harbin Criminal Police. Members of all these agencies used their position to intimidate the local population and to enrich themselves. They hired White Russian, Chinese and Korean thugs to kidnap wealthy citizens for ransom. Some of the White Russians, motivated by their hatred of the "Red Bolsheviks and the zhidi (Yids)", formed the Russian Fascist Party in 1925 in Harbin. Modelling themselves on the Italian Fascists, these Russian Fascists wore a black uniform and an armband with a black swastika. Their leader, Konstantin Rodzaevsky, and his friends published their anti-Semitic and anti-Soviet views in a newspaper called Nash Put (Our Path).<sup>27</sup>

They were behind the kidnapping and the grisly murder of a young [Jewish] pianist, Semion Kaspe, in 1933, which caused an international outcry. Even though Chinese judges passed a death sentence on his kidnappers, the Japanese had the Chinese judges arrested and set the kidnappers free. The atmosphere of fear and the economic difficulties caused the Jewish population of Harbin to drop to less than 5,000 by 1939.<sup>28</sup>

Why did the Japanese threaten the Jews in such a fashion? Most Japanese had never met a Jew in their lives and were not Christians.

Yet, to quote David Goodman: "By the 1940's, anti-Semitism had become an integral part of ultranationalist thought actively disseminated and promoted by Japan's major newspapers with the approval of the Japanese government. It reached every corner of the country."<sup>29</sup>

Many Japanese believed that Japan and Germany were engaged in a single struggle against a common Jewish enemy and Japan must expel Jewish influence from Asia. The Japanese government was exploiting anti-Semitism at home to enforce ideological conformity. The Jews were mentioned in the same breath as the British and American enemies and all three had to be crushed by Japan. Some Japanese officers, who fought alongside the White Russian forces of General Kolchak in Siberia in 1919, were influenced by the anti-Semitism of the White Russians. They read *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* – an anti-Semitic book that described a Jewish plot to dominate the world – and took it at its face value.

However, the Japanese official policy of wartime anti-Semitism was not used to persecute Jews. On December 6th 1938, the Five Ministers Conference (Gosho kai-gi), consisting of the Prime Minister, foreign minister, and the ministers of the army, navy and treasury, adopted the following three principles towards the Jews:

1. Jews living in Japan, Manchuria, and China are to be treated fairly and in the same manner as other foreign nationals. No special effort to expel them is to be made.
2. Jews entering Japan, Manchuria, and China are to be dealt with on the basis of existing immigration policies pertaining to other foreigners.
3. No special effort to attract Jews to Japan, Manchuria, or China is to be made. However, exceptions may be made for businessmen and technicians for utility value for Japan.<sup>30</sup>

This policy enabled 18,000 Jewish refugees to enter Shanghai and six thousand Jews passed through the Japanese port of Kobe on their way to China and other destinations.<sup>31</sup> The Japanese population of Kobe treated these refugees well, and some even brought them presents.

The Japanese rulers of Manchuria (its Manchurian Emperor Pu-yi was appointed by the Japanese and a puppet in their hands) realised that Japan would need huge investments to develop the region. At first they tried to attract European and American investors. Europe was soon engulfed in the Second World War, while America was in the grip of the Great Depression and also strongly disapproved of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.

Nevertheless, the founder of Nissan Industries, Ayukawa Gisuke, wrote an article entitled "A Plan to Invite Fifty Thousand Jews to Manchukuo." He hoped that America would invest one hundred million dollars in the resettlement of these German Jews in Manchuria.<sup>32</sup>

While his article was received with interest, his plan could not succeed if the Jews kept leaving Manchuria and taking their capital with them. In order to persuade them to stay on, Colonel Yasue Norihiro was appointed as the chief liaison officer of the Japanese military forces in Manchuria. Colonel Yasue had been interested in the Jewish question for years and even toured Palestine in 1927. He had written many articles and books on the "Jewish problem" and all echo *The Protocols*, which he took for a genuine book.

He at once started calming the volatile atmosphere in Harbin by reining in the anti-Semitic activities of the Russian Nazis and by befriending the leaders of the Jewish community.

According to Dr. Kaufman's son, Teddy Kaufman, Colonel Yasue became a frequent guest at Dr. Kaufman's house. Speaking fluent Russian, he would often stay for supper and discuss for hours the fate of the Jewish people, the future of Palestine and the future of the Jews in China. It seems that a genuine friendship soon developed between these two men.<sup>33</sup>

In 1934 the Far Eastern Jewish Council was established as the representative body of the Jews. It held the First Conference of Jewish Communities in the Far East in December 1937. Japan was winning its war against China at the time and seven hundred Harbin Jews as well as Jewish representatives from Tianjin, Kobe in Japan and other cities in China attended the conference. It was also attended by several wellplaced Japanese officials, the most senior being General Higuchi, Chief of the Special Service (Intelligence). The Jewish leaders pledged their loyalty to Japan and Manchukuo and publicly thanked Japan for treating the Jews equally while other countries were persecuting them. The Jewish delegates concluded the conference with a resolution that they would cooperate with Japan and Manchukuo in building a new order in Asia.<sup>34</sup> The Japanese obviously controlled and manipulated the Jewish leaders in Manchuria.

Soon after the conference finished, prominent Jews started writing articles in praise of the Japanese occupation of China in the Jewish newspaper *Evrejskaya Zizn* (Jewish Life). Encouraged by the success of the first conference, a second one took place in December 1938 and a third in December 1939. All three conferences were well attended by the Jewish representatives of Harbin and Japanese military personnel. Its resolutions were sent to every major Jewish organisation worldwide and were of great propaganda value to the Japanese.

A decision was reached after the first conference that all the Jewish communities in China would be combined into a single overall autonomous association. It would cover all religious problems, educational, cultural, social and economic activities and support orphanages and care for refugees from Central Europe and register all Jews and every Jewish organisation in the Far East.<sup>35</sup>

In 1937 Dr. Kaufman was awarded a medal by the Manchukuo government for his public activities and in May 1939 he was invited to visit Japan for sightseeing and talks with senior officials.<sup>36</sup> Dr. Kaufman held talks with General Higuchi at the Army Ministry and with officials from the Foreign Ministry.

Dr. Kaufman and other leaders of the community continued collaborating with the Japanese until the latter surrendered to the Soviet Army in 1945. Dr. Kaufman and



other prominent members of the community were arrested by the Soviets. They were all taken to the Soviet Union, charged with being Japanese collaborators and accused of spying against the Soviet Union. Many of them perished in the labour camps but Dr. Kaufman survived as a camp doctor. Released in 1956, he spent five years in internal exile before he was allowed to join his family in Israel.

Dr. Kaufman and other community leaders were unwilling collaborators with the Japanese. Most of them were stateless who could not blend in with either the Russian or Chinese communities. Most of them yearned to leave China for Palestine or the West once the war was over. Grateful for their safe harbour in China, the Jews of Manchuria nevertheless realised that China was another way station on their two thousand year migration in search of a place they could call a permanent home.

Until her retirement, Dr. Zvia Shickman Bowman was lecturer of Chinese at King's College, Modern Language Centre, University of London. She also taught Business Chinese at London Business School and Chinese language and literature at SOAS, University of London. She was born in Beijing and her family was the last Jewish family to leave China during the Cultural Revolution. Her email is: zvia.bowman@btinternet.com

#### Notes

1. David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station, the Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914*. (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1999), p.104.
2. Since all land in Harbin belonged to the administration of the CER, I assume that all plots of land were purchased from it.
3. See Teddy Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin Live on in My Heart*, Tel Aviv, 2006, p.27.
4. See the weekly *Evrieskaya Zhizn* (Jewish Life), no.1-2, 14.1.1938.
5. Mary Schaeffer Conroy, *Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin*. (Boulder Colorado, Westview Press, 1976), pp.48-49.
7. See R. Quedsted, "Matey" Imperialists?: The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria: 1895-1917 (Hong Kong, University of Hong Kong Press, 1982), pp.102-103.
8. Quoted in D. Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, p.108.
9. *Ibid.* p.108.
10. *Ibid.* p.194.
11. *Ibid.* p.194.
12. Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East*, (New York, 1962), p.42.
13. Wolff, p.100.
14. See *Evreiskaya Zizii*, no.50, December 1927.
15. Wolff, p.101.
16. Joshua A Fogel, *The Japanese and the Jews: A Comparative Analysis of Their Communities in Harbin, 1898-1930*. (Unpublished paper, 2000).
17. Alexander Menquez, "Growing up Jewish in Manchuria in the 1930s", p.76-79; Israel Epstein, "On Being a Jew in China", in Jonathan Goldstein, ed., *The Jews of China*, (New York and London, M.E. Sharpe, 2000) vol.2, pp.88-89.
18. Chiara Batta, "Myth and Memory" in Roman Malek, ed., *From Kaifeng to Shanghai, Jews in China*, (Germany, Monumenta Serica, 2000), p.397.
19. Wu Zelin, "An Ethnic Historian Looks at China's Jews", Sidney Shapiro, ed., *Jews in Old China*,

- (New York, Hippocrene Books, 1984), pp.160-161.
20. See Zhou Xun, "Youtai: A History of the 'Jew' in Modern China", in Malek, *From Kaifeng*, p.621.
  22. *Ibid.*, p.622.
  23. *Ibid.*, p.625.
  24. *Ibid.*, p.631.
  25. See John J Stephen, *The Russian Fascists, Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (London, 1975) p.61.
  26. Edgar Snow, "Japan Builds a New Colony", *Saturday Evening Post*, 206 (February 24, 1934), pp.81, 84.
  27. Stephen, op.cit., pp.60-80.
  28. Dicker, op.cit., p.42.
  29. David Goodman, *Jews in the Chinese Mind*, (New York, Free Press, 1995) p.109.
  30. Goodman, op.cit., p.111.
  31. David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews* (New York, Yeshiva University Press, 1976).
  32. Marvin Tokayer and Marty Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*, (New York and London, 1979), p.52.
  33. Zvia Bowman, "Unwilling Collaborators: The Jewish Community of Harbin Under the Japanese Occupation 1931-1945" in Malek, op.cit., pp.324.
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  35. Dicker, op.cit., p.48.
  36. See the interview with Dr. A. Kaufman, May 1967, Document no. 03/3168, *Yad Vashem Archives*, Jerusalem.

## A Tokyo synagogue gets a new rabbi

By Oren Oppenheim

Excerpted from the *Forward* 6 May 2021

...Japan has relatively few formal Jewish institutions. These include the Jewish Community of Japan (JCJ) synagogue in Tokyo; as well as Jewish life centers in Tokyo, Kyoto, Takayama, and Osaka that are run by rabbis from the Chabad movement, a Hasidic sect heavily involved in Jewish outreach. (One of those rabbis, Binyomin Edery, was given the title of Chief Rabbi of Japan by the Japanese government in 2015.)

There is also a historic Jewish community with a synagogue in the city of Kobe, run in partnership with a Chabad emissary there, as well as a more informal community of Jewish families stationed on American military bases in Japan.

The JCJ synagogue is located in the Shibuya City ward of Tokyo. It is near the famous Shibuya crossing, a bustling intersection surrounded by towering skyscrapers and a kaleidoscope of colorful advertisements. But the synagogue itself is located on a narrow street lined with gray concrete edifices that seem to blend in with each other. Its façade is decorated with interlinked triangles and hexagons that form a repeating pattern of six-pointed Stars of David. Below the mosaic of stars there's a bronze sign with another Jewish star, and—in English, Hebrew, and Japanese—the words "Jewish Community of Japan."

Today, the JCJ holds egalitarian Shabbat prayer services—where men and women can sit together—as well as Shabbat meals and other programming. Its current building opened in 2009 at the same site that the congregation was founded upon in 1953, and features a Kosher

kitchen, a ritual bath used for Jewish purification rituals, a Judaica library, and lecture spaces.

The congregation attending the JCJ has many expatriates. The Shul board's former president, Philip Rosenfeld, said by phone that he estimates that the membership's expatriate demographics are around 85% American, 10% European, and 5% Israeli. Many members have a Japanese spouse, some of whom have converted to Judaism. The community became more of a mix of foreigners and Japanese nationals particularly after the devastation of 2011, and the subsequent mass exodus of expatriates from Japan...

By necessity, the JCJ is a tight-knit community. "If you live in the United States, if you live in New York, live in Chicago, you walk outside your door, and you have a large, vibrant Jewish community. Anyone living in those cities, they have... the visible signs of Jewish life in the community," Philip Rosenfeld said. Synagogues, Kosher restaurants, and Jewish schools abound. "In Japan, you walk outside your door," and other than the Chabad centers and the JCJ, "there is no Jewish community."

[Andrew] Scheer replaced Rabbi David Kunin, who was The JCJ's spiritual leader from 2013 until July 2020 when he took a pulpit in Syracuse, New York. Scheer first encountered the JCJ after graduating from New York University with a bachelor's degree in Jewish history in 2008. He came to Japan to teach English for a year.

He taught at a private pre-K in a rural town about two hours away from Tokyo. It wasn't a given that people would know what he meant when he spoke about being Jewish. "When I lived in the countryside, I had to teach my Japanese coworkers the Japanese word for 'Jew,'" Scheer said. (That's "yudayajin.") "They weren't familiar with the concept. And that's not so crazy, right? There's not so many of us."

Scheer eventually returned stateside and graduated from the Yeshivat Chovevei Torah rabbinical school in 2015. He then spent time as a chaplain in the Army Reserves, and he also worked for three years as a clergy member in the Rikers Island jail in New York City. He later worked as a chaplain for Veterans Affairs and New York City hospitals.

When he heard Kunin would be departing Tokyo, he jumped at the chance to return to a place he had already been a part of. Scheer interviewed remotely for the position, and returned to Japan as rabbi...Scheer arrived during a strict pandemic quarantine and stayed in his apartment for two weeks...He didn't exactly feel like he was back in Japan just yet, he said, but he did feel like part of the Jewish community there.

"My inbox would say that I'm a part of the community," he laughed. "My WhatsApp would say that I'm part of the community. My Zoom history would say that I'm part of the community."

The synagogue held its first in-person Sunday school on March 7—a sign of a community coming back to life. "Even just seeing the kids," said Scheer, "that was very enlivening."

Oren Oppenheim is a student at the University of Chicago.

## Jewish Life in Taiwan

By Gabe Friedman

Excerpted from JTA, 24 March 2021

British Jewish artist Leon Fenster loved his adopted city [of Beijing] so much that he designed a Passover Haggadah with it as the theme. So when he left the Chinese capital for Taiwan in early 2020 at the outset of the pandemic, he made a vow: Next year in Beijing, again.

A year later, Fenster is still in Taiwan and has no plans to leave. Unlike virtually all Jews the world over, he spent the year getting involved in a robust, in-person Jewish community.

He now leads Shabbat services most weeks for the Taiwan Jewish Community group, a government-recognized organization for local Jews, playing bongos and singing. This week, he plans to join the community's Passover seder. So many people have registered to attend that organizers say their rented commercial space, formerly home to a travel agency, may not be able to hold them all.

The seder will be a lot like the community's Purim party: packed, unmasked and with shared food. That's because of Taiwan's remarkable success at containing COVID-19... The country of 23.5 million has had around 1,000 total COVID cases and just 10 deaths, and there are no restrictions on gatherings...

The fact that life has gone on with little interruption in Taiwan has proven to be a boost for the Taiwan Jewish Community, the country's main Jewish group outside of a local outpost of the Hasidic Chabad Lubavitch movement.

The pluralistic organization includes about 200 families, a mix of university students abroad, businesspeople, diplomats and other international expats. On

top of that, friends and family and local non-Jews come to the group's buzzed-about events, mostly meals and prayer services, to learn about Jewish culture and food. Ben Schwall, president of the Taiwan Jewish Community, estimates that 10% of party attendees are devout Christians, many from the country's large evangelical and pro-Israel population.

Taiwan's sterling performance during the pandemic has kept some students and families who would have normally returned to universities and homes elsewhere, including Fenster. Others, attracted by the country's sense of normalcy, moved to Taiwan for the first time over the last year...

Services are also taking a different tone with the involvement of Fenster, an architect who grew up in London and moved to Beijing in 2015. Schwall says Fenster has invigorated the community's services, especially for families and their children, with his cantorial skills – making him a worthy inheritor of the tradition set by the community's longtime rabbi, Ephraim Ferdinand Einhorn, who is now 102.

Einhorn – who was born in Vienna, educated in Europe and ordained in London – is a direct tie to Taiwan's Jewish past. Following a defense treaty in the 1950s between the U.S. and Taiwan, American military and government workers arrived. In subsequent decades, more international business flowed into the country, bringing a small number of Jewish businessmen with it. The Jewish community functioned in small spaces in the Taipei suburbs until the 1970s, when Nixon's rapprochement with China put the U.S. relationship with Taiwan up in the air.

But even as American government infrastructure faded – the U.S. does not have an official embassy in Taiwan, in a nod to China's claim to the island under a

complex "one country, two systems" of government – several Jewish families decided to stay, and the Taiwan Jewish Community registered with the government as an official group in 1977.

Einhorn moved to Taiwan for business in 1975 and began running a minyan, or prayer group, of businessmen that met in a Taipei hotel. His group merged with the Jewish Community in the 1990s, when Taiwan's economy shifted from some of its traditional industries, such as garment and shoe manufacturing. He ran services for decades until health problems required him to stop, but he continues to attend services and events.

Over time, the community has also been a haven for a few Taiwanese converts to Judaism, such as Zoy Chang, who joined in 2005 and converted in 2012. She noted that Taiwanese people, like many East Asians, have a positive stereotype of Jews as "very smart and very rich"...

A notable member of the community is Don Shapiro, the uncle of former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro, who has lived in Taiwan for over 50 years. At 77, Shapiro has become the community's unofficial historian, writing a short chronicle of the community (<https://taiwan-jewishcommunity.org/history>), which he chaired in the 1980s and 90s...

Shapiro said he stayed after retiring as a journalist for Time magazine and The New York Times because of the positive experiences he had, including as a Jew in the country. "People in Taiwan are some of the nicest people in the world," he said. "And they really respect their foreign guests."

Gabe Friedman is JTA's Deputy Managing Editor. Prior to joining JTA, Friedman was an arts and culture fellow at the Forward. He is a graduate of the University of Chicago.

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