



# Bulletin

## Igud Yotzei Sin

Association of Former Residents of China

September - October 2005 ♦ Vol LIII ♦ Issue No. 385 English Supplement



*Happy  
New  
Year!*

שנה  
טובה!



The opening of the exhibition "The Harbin Jews" in  
the New Synagogue on August 5, 2005.  
Mr. Du Yuxin, the Mayor of Harbin, opens the exhibition.  
The Harbin TV company interviews the Mayor.

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# IN LIEU OF FLOWERS: SOCIAL AID TO LANDSMEN

## *Dear Friends,*

Rosh Hashana is approaching, and Igud Yotzei Sin, as in previous years, continues to give additional sums of money to the recipients of monthly social aid. We do it twice a year: for Rosh Hashana and Pessah. According to our data for June 1, 2005 we grant monthly social aid to 99 needy landsmen. Mostly, they are elderly, lonely or ailing people, part of them are new immigrants from the former USSR who left China either when the Far-Eastern Railway employees were evacuated, or after the year 1946. The situation of many of our landsmen is very grave, and without IYS' assistance they would not be able to make ends meet. In recent years, the number of contributors has dwindled, both in Israel and abroad, and, therefore, the sums of money that we get for the Social Aid Fund have become considerably smaller. Nevertheless, the number of the needy remains as high as ever. Our social aid totals US\$ 100,000 per a year. Herewith we

apply to you with a request to donate to the Social Aid Fund in lieu of flowers to Rosh Hashana and to other holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, weddings and other family occasions, or any other festive dates. We will also send a proper notification to the person in whose honor the donation is given. We are aware that our contributors will derive great satisfaction from participating in the noble cause of helping our needy. Flowers wither soon but a good deed lasts long. Your help will make the days of elderly and lonely persons brighter. Please, send your donation to the following address:

Igud Yotzei Sin  
P.O.B. 29786  
Tel Aviv 61297

With friendly regards and all the best wishes for Rosh Hashana. Shana Tova!  
IYS Central Committee  
Chairman: **T. Kaufman**  
Deputy Chairman and  
Treasurer: **J. Klein**

## Visit the Website of Igud Yotzei Sin [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org)

The website contains a wealth of information on

- ❖ The chronology of events of communities with a Jewish presence in China
- ❖ Publications (transcripts of conference speeches). Valuable material for researchers plus books
- ❖ Biographies ❖ Links to other sites of interest
- ❖ The Harbin Huang Shan Cemetery
- ❖ Family search forum ❖ Photos (some rare photos published for the first time)

# The New Year 5766

By Teddy Kaufman

On October 3, all the Jews, in Israel and Diaspora, will greet the new year, the 5766th according to Jewish traditional chronology. The outgoing year was not an easy one. Not for the Israelis, nor for the Jews living outside its borders. The terrorist attacks incessantly hungered for more victims. In Europe, anti-Semitism again lifted its head, promoting hatred for Jews and Zionists.

What is our most cherished wish for the coming year? What are we praying for in these fatal days? We pray for peace. May providence send peace and tranquility – to us and to all the peoples in the world. We pray for a flourishing Israel and increased welfare for its needy. But first and foremost we pray for Aliya, because there is no future for the Jewish people without a steady inflow of Jews into Israel. As to our "landsmen Chinese front", we pray for the well-being and health of our countrymen, both in Israel and abroad, and continuation of assistance to those in dire need of it.

## 101

This is the number of our former countrymen who receive a monthly monetary allotment from Igud Yotzei Sin. There are 36 families and 29 single individuals, who regularly, on the 25th of each month, receive their allowance 14 times a year, of which two payments – on the eve of Rosh Hashana and Pesach – are double. This is to be remembered by all those who cherish their past, which binds us in friendship all these years.

## 149

This is the number of scholarships, which were given to the children, grandchildren and the great grandchildren of the original immigrants from China to help them continue their education in Israeli

universities. Throughout these years, 2500 students received such stipends from the IYS scholarship funds. This is a vital enterprise for the future generations of our youth, taking into account the high cost of academic education in Israel. We shall continue to promote it.

## 56

By now it has become a tradition to send a modest gift check to our young men and women, serving in the IDF – twice a year: on the eve of Independence Day and Rosh Hashana. In the past year we sent 56 such checks to our sons and daughters in uniform. You may have read their enthusiastic response, in our Bulletin.

## 385

You are now reading the 385th issue of the Bulletin, the mouthpiece of IYS. Its first issue appeared 52 years ago as a thin mimeographed Russian language pamphlet. In time, it grew to become a tri-lingual (Russian, Hebrew, English) 250-page quarterly with the number of pages constantly rising (English, from 32 at the beginning to 56 pages in the current issue; Hebrew, from 24 to 40, and Russian, from 120 to 140). The Bulletin and our fast growing Internet site HYPERLINK "<http://www.jewsofchina.org>" [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org) are the integral part of our contact with our landsmen all over the world. The magazine is issued in 1100 copies, 500 of which are read in Israel, and the remaining 600 in the Diaspora. It is to be noted that Bulletin is the only Russian language press organ in Israel to appear for 52 years without interruption.

## Our jubilees

Next year we shall be celebrating two jubilee dates: 55 years since the establishment of IYS and 50 years of

granting scholarships to our students. Both the dates will be commemorated in a well deserved festive manner, at a World convention of the Old China Hands on Hanukka 2006 in Tel Aviv.

## In Memoriam: Isia Magid

In the expiring year an outstanding Zionist figure passed away: our landsman Isia Magid. He was a great friend of Igud Yotzei Sin, and one of those whose philanthropy made it possible for us to do our work. Isia's departure is a great loss to his family, his many friends, his countrymen, the Zionist movement and the Hebrew University. We shall remain devoted to his memory, and hope that Isia's family will carry on the tradition of their great father and grandfather.

## Greetings and Congratulations

On the eve of Rosh Hashana we send our greetings and gratitude to the representatives and leaders of Igud Yotzei Sin abroad: Frances Greenberg in New York, Mira and Joe Mrantz in Los Angeles, Isai Kaufman in San Francisco, Stella and David Udovich in Sydney, Lilly Frank in Montreal for their devoted work for the benefit of the IYS.

Greetings and best wishes for a happy Rosh Hashana are extended to our generous contributors, first and foremost to Asya Kogan of Tokyo, Japan, and Musia and Dan Berkovich in Israel. To all of you, who help us to help our needy. To all our numerous volunteers In Bulletin, in Bet Ponve and in the leadership of our organization. And last, but not least, to all our landsmen, the Old China Hands.

To all of you, we send our heartfelt wishes for a happy Rosh Hashana, a year of peace, wellbeing and prosperity. Shana Tova, dear friends!

# People and Events

## **Asya Kogan - 80**

At the Assaf Harofe Medical Center Asya Kogan is known as "our Patron Saint". Recently she celebrated her 80th birthday, and we send her our heartiest wishes of health, happiness and satisfaction for her good deeds. "Till a hundred and twenty," as it is traditionally wished. Mrs. Kogan (nee Kachanovsky) lives in far away Tokyo. However, her heart and all her thoughts are with the people of Israel. From her early youth she was a member of Betar and her life is one long chain of care and assistance to her neighbor.

During the past decade Mrs. Kogan decided to dedicate a considerable portion of her philanthropic activity to the improvement of medical care for half a million of Israelis living in our area. It gave birth to a comprehensive project of rehabilitating the Asya Kogan Hospital within the Assaf Harofe Medical Center. She was deeply impressed by the high standard of the work done by the Center's personnel and by its medical installations and equipment and decided to do something that would create a revolutionary change for the welfare of the patients and the technology of its services.

Recently the project was finally accomplished, completely changing the professional capacity and appearance of Assaf Harofe Center, which thus became one of the leading hospitals in Israel. In this framework we established a children's hospital, gynecology, the maternity building and the complex of laboratories and institutes, the heart institute, and the new surgery and recovery halls. All were equipped with up to date instruments. It was an enormous economic effort and all

the inhabitants of the area and their leaders are grateful to Asya Kogan for her humanitarian and Zionist deed.

But this is not the end of the story. Recently the Assaf Harofe Hospital in collaboration with the municipality of Ramle opened at the initiative and funding of Mrs. Kogan a Soup Kitchen for the needy and the disabled of the area. She named the Kitchen "Asya's Dream", as it was her childhood dream to feed the many needy of her city, Harbin. Today the kitchen serves 200 hot meals daily, half of which are brought to the homes of the consumers. We eagerly await Mrs. Kogan's visit to our Medical Center and wish her many years of happiness and health.

(From the Assaf Harofe periodical, translated from the Hebrew by Emmanuel Pratt)

## **Births**

Ariel Ozer was born on March 24. He is the son of Michal (nee Schwartz) and Eli Ozer and the tenth grandson of Mary (nee Schwartz, formerly of Tientsin) and Zvi Kamyonka. Igud Yotzei Sin congratulates the Ozer and Kamyonka families and wishes them lots of happiness and health.

Photos taken at the brit milah ceremony:

Mary and Zvi Kamyonka with the newly born Ariel. Standing left to right, Zvi, Michal, Eli and Mary; sitting left to right, friends of the family, Rasha and Teddy Kaufman.

## **Births**

A third great granddaughter was recently born to Bella Chernomorsky, formerly of Harbin. The newly born is the daughter of Keren Schneider, granddaughter of Myra (nee Chernomorsky) and Avi Schneider. Igud Yotzei Sin sends best wishes to

the Schneider and Chernomorsky families.

## **Chinese F. M. visits Israel**

On June 19, Chinese Foreign Minister, Li Zhao-sing, made a two-day official visit to Israel. The Israeli Foreign Minister Silwan Shalom, entertained the guest at a banquet in the central hall of the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem. Some 70 guests from China and Israel attended the event. Present were the former Israeli ambassadors to China, Ora Namir and Moshe Ben Ya'akov, Ambassador of China to Israel, Mr Chen Yu-lun, Members of the Knesset, high ranking officials of the Chinese Embassy and journalists. Igud Yotzei Sin was represented by Teddy Kaufman.

## **Weddings**

Dalit Niv and Eiyal Barnea were married on June 23 in Bet Lid. The bride is the daughter of Shlomo (Monia, formerly of Tientsin) and Pirhiya Niv, and the granddaughter of the late Hirsch Niv (Nihamkin, formerly of Harbin and Tientsin), one of the founders of IYS and its Vice Chairman for many years.

## **Schindler Author Visits Synagogue in Shanghai**

The Australian author of the book that formed the basis for Steven Spielberg's holocaust film "Schindler's List" visited the Ohel Moishe Synagogue in what was once the Jewish Quarter of the Hongkew District yesterday. Thomas Keneally, who won the prestigious Booker Prize for "Schindler's Ark" in 1982, is in town for the 2nd Australian Writers' Forum which will be held today at the Shanghai Library. He and fellow author Hsu-Ming Teo will be the keynote speakers at the forum,

which is organized by the Australian Consulate General in Shanghai.

"Great human cataclysms like World War II produce strange bedfellows" said Keneally. "It's interesting that Jews were better treated here than they were in their own Europe. From Spinoza to Einstein, they contributed so much to European civilization. And yet Europe decided they were too dangerous to let go on breathing and some of them found breath in Shanghai. So I think it's an interesting and appropriate place to visit during the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz".

Shanghai was the last refuge open to many Jews during the early part of World War II. The city's policy of extraterritoriality allowed refugees to enter Shanghai without a passport or visa – a system that ended after Japan occupied the city. Teo enjoys a strong reputation as one of Australia's most exciting new authors. Born in Malaysia, she emigrated with her family to Australia at the age of seven. Her first book "Love and Vertigo" won the Australian Vogel Literary Award in 1999. "I really feel privileged to come to Shanghai," she said. "When I was growing up, there were almost no English novels about Asian people and culture in Australia. Now I'm happy to see that more and more works of Asian literature are coming out".

(From The Shanghai Daily News, March 5, 2005)

### **Golden Jubilee**

Varda (formerly of Tientsin) and Shalom Yoran recently celebrated the golden jubilee of their wedding. It was also Shalom's 80th birthday. Igud Yotzei Sin congratulates them and sends them best wishes.

### **Wedding**

Ayelet Weiler and David Zaga were married, on July 21 at Ein Hacarmel near Haifa. Ayelet is the daughter of Amir and Pnina Weiler, granddaughter of a veteran IYS worker, Shura Weiler, formerly of Harbin. IYS sends their

### **Shimon Peres**

#### **Vice-Premier of Israel**

To T. Kaufman: Thank you for your book "The Jews of Harbin Live on in My Heart" that you kindly sent me with your greeting. I attach great importance to your work of uniting separate pages of the past into one single whole and of publishing a book which gives a full picture of the life of the Jews in Harbin and in all of China, as well as the history of your immigration to Israel.

The short life stories that we find in the book witness to the atmosphere that reigned supreme in Harbin and give a clear idea of the way of life and the activities of the Zionist organization. All of it concerns not only your family, but is also important for the future generations.

I congratulate you on the publication of your book and I wish you and your family much good health and every success.

best wishes to the newlyweds and their families.

### **Teddy Kaufman on air**

The Community Channel of the Israel Television broadcast a 15-minute interview with Teddy Kaufman on the Jews of Harbin.

### **"The Dragons' World" in Tel-Aviv**

An art exhibition "The World of the Dragons" opened in Tel Aviv in the Eretz Israel Museum on July 20. The exhibition was brought from Peking and displays the Chinese mythological lore in all its splendor. It will last for one month. The opening ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Deputy Mayor of Tel Aviv, Nathan Wollach, and Chinese Ambassador Chen Yunlong. IYS was represented by R. and T. Kaufman, and R. Veinerman.

### **The Michaelis Memorial Fund**

Marianna Barli (nee Michaelis), formerly of Tientsin, made a generous contribution to the Igud Yotzei Sin Social Welfare fund and opened a memorial fund in the name of her parents, Gertrude and Dr. Ernst Michaelis. Igud Yotzei Sin wishes to express their gratitude to Marianna for her generosity.

### **Lucy Friedman is 90**

Lucy Friedman, formerly of Harbin and Tientsin, celebrated her 90th jubilee in July. Lucy is a member of the kibbutz Afikim in Emek Hayarden and despite her age still takes an active part in the affairs of the kibbutz. Lucy is a medical nurse and had worked at the Tientsin Jewish Hospital.

Igud Yotzei Sin sends Lucy their congratulations and a heartfelt wish for yet many happy and healthy returns of the day – "ad meah ve-esrim!").

### **Raisa Golberg-Samsonovich at Bet Ponve**

Raisa Golberg-Samsonovich of Buenos Aires visited the IYS Cultural Center, Bet Ponve. Thanks to the Bulletin she found her relative, Genia Kaufman, daughter of Musia and Pana Samsonovich. T. Kaufman informed Ms. Golberg about the biographical details of the Samsonovich family's Harbin branch and the location of their burial place in the Jewish cemetery in Harbin.

### **Guests at Bet Ponve**

Asya Dyan (nee Frumzon, formerly of Shanghai and now of Sydney) and her husband Volf visited

Bet Ponve during their vacation. Asya belongs to the well known families Frumzon and Bart of Harbin and Shanghai).

# *From Talmud Torah in Harbin to the Israel Academy of Sciences in Jerusalem Personal Reminiscences*

*By Prof. Hayim Tadmor*

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Academy of Social Sciences of Heilongjiang Province and to the Harbin Jewish Research Center for the gracious invitation, extended to me and to my wife, to participate in this first International Seminar on the History and Culture of Harbin Jews. It is a great privilege, indeed an honour, to be here today. I return with great excitement and joy to Harbin, the city where I was born and where I spent my childhood with my whole family – the only time in my life that we were all together. It is a momentous event for my family. Our son, too, has joined us to visit my father's grave. Two days ago we dedicated a tombstone on his grave, erected through the kind offices of Professor Li-Shu-Xiao.

Permit me also to convey to you the heartiest wishes of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities for the further success of the Harbin Jewish Research Center.

The topic of this paper was chosen by my friend Mr. Teddy Kaufman, and I am grateful for his help.

Let me begin with my parental origins. My parents, David Frumstein and Frieda Kaznitz, born, respectively, in Russia and in the Ukraine, were married in Russia in 1913, and their daughter Luba, my sister, was born there in 1914. After a long sojourn in Canada, my father arrived in Harbin in 1916, in the middle of the First World War, and my mother and sister came from Russia to join him here in 1921.

My father died when I was 11 years old, and so all my family traditions, even details of my father's family in America, were transmitted to me by my mother. Most memorable among them was the story of her arduous trip from the Ukraine to Harbin in 1921, amidst the Russian civil war. The trip would have taken a week or so in peaceful days, but for her it lasted nine months, rather like the epic journey of Dr. Zhivago. Thousands of people around her died of typhus, but, quite miraculously, she arrived safe and sound. I was born two years later in Harbin. Like most Jewish residents of Harbin, we lived in the Pristan area, close to the river Sungari. My father's trade was in furs, which he sold to an American firm on the West Coast. He would acquire them either locally, in Fudzezan, or by traveling far away to northern Manchuria or even to southern Siberia on the Russian side. He must have known Chinese, which was essential for his trade, in addition to Russian, German, and English, in which he was fluent. My sister was sent to the popular Komercheskoye, the Russian high school, while I was sent to a Hebrew elementary school, the Talmud Torah. Apparently, my father wanted me to have a basic knowledge of Judaism, including Hebrew, which he must have studied as a child. This point is of special interest because my father was not an observant Jew and he did not ordinarily attend the synagogue. Yet he wanted me to continue the Jewish tradition, minimal as it was in his

life. His own father, my grandfather, had left Russia in his old age to live in Palestine, where he died and was buried in Jerusalem. But my father was no Zionist, nor was my mother, carrying as she did the memories of her brothers, who were active in the Russian Revolution. My father died in the autumn of 1934, at the rather young age of 54, and is buried in the Jewish cemetery of Harbin. My sister became an ardent Zionist and joined the Betar organization, the only Zionist youth movement in Harbin at the time. She sailed to Palestine as a pioneer in 1934, a short time before my father's passing. My mother and I followed her, arriving in Palestine in November 1935.

Culturally, the Jewish community of Harbin belonged to the Russian diaspora in China, but socially our family had very little to do with the non-Jewish Russians. Our personal contacts were mainly with other Jewish families of a similar background. The Chinese authorities were very gracious and usually liberal in their behaviour towards the minorities. In the early 1920s they allowed the Jewish and Russian-speaking communities, numbering some 150,000 people, the right to continue living according to their own traditions and to enjoy full cultural autonomy. As you well know, Harbin, unlike Tienzin or Shanghai did not have a foreign concession, but the autonomous Russian-speaking community there would have looked to an observer

like a sort of concession. Naturally, negotiations with the municipality, the police, and all levels of government were conducted in Chinese. Let me now speak of the Talmud Torah. The school was established in 1921, at the peak of the wave of immigration of Russian Jews into Manchuria. It was named after Mr. Skidelski, the noted industrialist who owned the Mulian Manchurian coal mines. He and his three sons took an interest in Jewish education. They built the beautiful Talmud Torah on Konnaya Street in Harbin and also saw to its running expenses. The school existed for over thirty years, until the early 1950s. At the beginning, from 1920 to 1924, the Talmud Torah had only three classes and accepted only boys, but by the time I attended it a fourth class had been opened, and girls were accepted as well. Altogether, there were 105 graduates in the first ten years. The school offered instruction in the Russian language, mathematics (then called arithmetic), Jewish history, Russian history, geography, and English. The standard was known to be high, so that the graduates were accepted into regular Russian high schools without having to take any special exams. About 30–50% of the program was devoted to Hebrew studies, including written and oral study of Hebrew. The school celebrated the Jewish holidays and held daily morning prayers before classes began. Rabbi Levine, an old-fashioned orthodox rabbi, presided over the religious functions, but the Hebrew studies were in the hands of trained teachers. I learned my essential Hebrew in the Talmud Torah. In the highest Hebrew class I attended before our departure for Palestine, my teacher was Mr. Pineles, a literary critic from Poland who stopped in Harbin for several years on his way to Palestine. He was to become a professor of Hebrew literature at Tel Aviv University. I was 12 years old when my mother and I joined my sister and her family in

Palestine, and so I went directly into the sixth grade in elementary school. Thanks to the Harbin Talmud Torah, my transfer to school in Palestine was normal and natural, and I do not remember having any special problems with Hebrew. I seem to have known enough to communicate with teachers and classmates and to study the Bible, Hebrew songs, and literature. The only difference was the matter of pronunciation: in the Talmud Torah, Hebrew was taught in the European, Ashkenazi style, but in Palestine (later Israel) the Oriental, Sephardic pronunciation was accepted. Knowing that in advance, I had taken some private instruction before leaving Harbin from Mr. Nadel, a teacher at the Talmud Torah, to help me convert to the Sephardic pronunciation. Upon finishing elementary school in Herzliya, I entered high school in the Rechavia neighbourhood in Jerusalem; in the Russian style, the school was called the Hebrew Gymnasium. By the time I graduated in 1943 and registered as a student at the Hebrew University, I knew that I wanted to study history. Let me account for my fascination with history, which goes back to my childhood in Harbin. I can still remember the big volume on the history of the Napoleonic wars and the biographies of his marshals that I read when I was seven or eight years old. But there was another history that fascinated me: the history of China, whose classical periods, up to the Boxer rebellion, I learned from my sister's high school textbook. I recall that the Tai-Ping rebellion also made a great impression upon me. I wanted to know more about these events, but, unfortunately, I had no access to other books about them either at home or in the school library. Perhaps my early fascination with Chinese history had something to do with the eventual choice of my field of research, in ancient Near Eastern history. Ancient history, the beginnings of civilization, always had a special appeal for me.

At the university, I studied classical history – Greek and Roman – learned to read Greek and Latin, and majored in ancient Jewish history, that of the biblical period. I became more and more interested in the history of Assyria and Babylonia (now Iraq), the homeland of biblical Abraham. Already at that stage, I realized that a good knowledge of the Akkadian language and the cuneiform signs – the language and script of the ancient peoples of Assyria and Babylonia – would be essential if I was to gain proficiency in the history of the region.

My first opportunity to study Akkadian came during the period of my fellowship in London in the early 1950s, and my next stage of training was at the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, the foremost world center for the study of ancient Oriental languages and history, which at that time was headed by an American scholar of Chinese studies, Prof. Creel.

I spent three years in Chicago, studying especially with Prof. Benno Landsberger, the leading Assyriologist of our times. It was there that a shift in my priorities came about. I moved from biblical interests to purely Assyriological ones, realizing that philology – and only philology – is the mother of history. In Chicago I wrote my first papers and acquired the tools for further research.

Upon returning to Israel in 1958, I received a position teaching ancient Near Eastern history and civilizations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. This led, in 1964, to the establishment of the Department of Assyriology, which expanded over the years to become the center for the study of antiquity in Israel. It acquired an international reputation and trained most of the scholars of Assyriology who now teach that subject in various universities in Israel. In the mid-1990s, the department was again expanded to include Egyptology, and it was renamed the Department

# News from San Francisco

On July 17, 2005, the Far Eastern Society of San Francisco celebrated the new election year at the popular Chinese restaurant “Pekin”. The lunch was complimentary, to honor our members who requested the old Board of Directors to be re-elected for another year. This request was accepted. The only change was the promotion of Mr. Henry Berk to be 1st Vice President and Mr. Aron Aronovsky to be 2nd Vice President. The President, Mr. I. Kaufman, informed all those present of the achievements of our Organization for the past year and thanked the members for their cooperation. Mr. Kaufman is a very active president, achieved financial support for our Organization from different sources and deserves to be recognized as a very active collector of donations for the Social Aid Fund of Igud Yotzei Sin. On behalf of the Board of Directors, Mr. Henry Berk thanked Mr. Kaufman for his hard work and devotion to the good cause.

We also have to thank Olga Kaufman, the wife of our President, who is of great help to her husband in his charitable work. She is also known to be a specialist in baking cookies for after lunch desserts. The lunch was a very pleasant affair when friends meet friends, exchanging family news, where they will spend their vacation, and the subject of health is always there. May God bless us all and give us health to continue our friendships and help those that need help.

G. Katzeff (Hon. Secretary)

of Civilizations of the Ancient Near East.

Students from other countries, particularly from Europe and the Far East – mostly Japan – have come to study with us in Jerusalem. Now that Chinese cultural relations with Israel have become stronger, I hope that some Chinese students will also find their way to study with us.

In 1985 the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities paid me the honour of electing me as a member, and ten years later I became its Vice President. This is my last term of office, and after nine years of service, I will retire from this position in a few weeks. As Vice President of the Academy, I had the privilege over the years of entertaining delegations from China on various levels. We received in Jerusalem the delegation of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of China, the leaders of physical and chemical research. More recently, we had the pleasure of receiving the Heilongjiang scholars in social sciences, who became the founders of the Harbin Jewish Research Center. On the social side, my connections with China have been of foremost importance throughout my life. We, the few Jewish immigrants from Harbin and Tientsin, were referred to in Israel as “Chinese” and formed a close-knit group. There were not many of us – only a few score who arrived in the course of eight years, from 1932, when the first pioneers from China came to mandatory Palestine, until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. We were easily identifiable by our exotic homeland as well as by the excellent Russian that we spoke. There was no immigration from Russia in those years, so the Russian speakers from China were distinguished by their Slavonic-accented Hebrew. Some of the “Chinese” immigrants used to meet in Jerusalem at the home of my late sister. Nine years older than I, she died in 1959, at the age of 45, without ever having fully integrated

into contemporary Hebrew culture. My association with former Harbin friends was often beneficial and exemplifies the close ties among the emigrants from China, not only in Israel but worldwide, from the USA to Australia.

In some ways, the history of my family reflects socio-cultural trends characteristic of the Jews in Harbin. My father, a western businessman whose family lived in Canada and the U.S., was typical of the local middle class; secular in his behaviour and immersed in Russian culture, he dreamt of returning to his family in America and starting a new life there.

My mother, daughter of Orthodox Jewish parents in the Ukraine, was also secular and immersed in Russian culture. Emotionally, however, she was still attached to her revolutionary brothers in Russia. Given the choice, she would gladly have joined them. My sister rejected both of these contrary trends. Convinced that immigration to Palestine was the only solution for the Jews, she became an ardent Zionist.

Naturally, I was influenced by her and her friends more than by my parents, and I believed – as much as a child could – that my place was in the land of Israel. And so, on 2 November 1935, the eighteenth anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, we arrived in Palestine. It has been my home since then.

Here I come to the end of my story – a long story that spans almost three quarters of the twentieth century. Having begun here in Harbin, at the eastern end of Asia, and it ends in Jerusalem, at Asia’s furthest western horizon.

After an absence of almost 70 years, I am happy to be here again. I hope that many of you, our Chinese hosts, will have the opportunity, in the course of our cooperation and friendship, to visit Jerusalem and the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.



# Jewish Life in Shanghai 60 Years ago

Shanghai, Friday, July 20, 1945

English Supplement No. 13

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## AIR-RAID HORROR

The enemy air-raid of the city on July 18 inflicted great misery upon Jewish refugees in Hongkai. Several bombs dropped in the densely populated Designated Area killed and wounded over 100 people and rendered homeless over 500 families. Loss of property caused by fires and rumbled houses was also considerable, and we are sure that we are voicing the feeling of the entire local Jewish community in expressing deep sympathy for the victims of the bombing. By a strange intricacy of fate those selected were the less secure portion of our community, rejected in their movement, and in fact should certainly necessitate our commiseration both by word and deed to the suffering of our co-nationals.

"Our Life's" representative entered the Area shortly after the raid and was an eye-witness to the terrible havoc played by the bombs in the communal lanes and lanes inhabited by refugees. The SACRA House on East Yuhong Road, directly hit, presented a scene of utter destruction with its walls tumbled down in result of the terrific shake. The 416 Angshan Road lane, where the Jüdische Gemeinde and a number of other emigrant institutions are located, also sustained great damage, a part of the houses being completely demolished and others partly destroyed by a bomb dropped at about ten yards' distance on an empty lot.

Considerable damage was also inflicted upon other sections of the Designated Area where emigrants were rendered shelterless by bombs falling in close proximity to their houses scattered among Chinese—inhabited lanes

and a section of Kung'ing road where a whole block of Chinese shops was smashed down and there hundreds of Chinese corpses, some mutilated beyond recognition, were found scattered presenting a horrible sight. The state of the people's morale, as judged some hours after the bombing, was quite satisfactory. Naturally, considering the gravity of the inflicted loss in lives and injuries sustained, there was some panic, but due to excellent work done by the Foreign Office and the so-called "camp C. A.", first-aid was administered quickly and this proved instrumental in considerably alleviating the situation. By efficiently rendering help to emigrants and Chinese alike, members of Foreign to China have certainly proved their worth, and their services cannot be too highly commended.

The Wai'at Road Hospital, where all wounded, including some Chinese, were brought over worked on an emergency schedule, all medical forces in town being mobilized in meet this situation. The total number of dead as registered by the end of the day was 23 cases. Over 100 cases of wounded were attended to by the Hospital, 35 of which were considered grave and kept in Hospital after the first aid.

There were 5 Polish refugees killed and a number of wounded, the rest of the casualties falling upon German refugees. Dr. Felix Karlegg, head of the Foreign Pao Chia Service in the Wayside Area and former Chairman of the Jüdische Gemeinde, was among those killed during the raid. The total casualty list up to the publication of the paper includes 32 persons. Mass funeral of 17

July 19 at the Paine Road cemetery, while 5 Polish refugees were buried at the Bailed Road cemetery on the same day. Huge crowds gathered to see the dead on their last way to rest which attested to the deep impression made upon the masses by the ravage of the war.

The following measures for relieving the situation of those rendered homeless by the air-raid were put into effect by the Shanghai "Joint" Distribution Committee with the aid of Kitchen Fund:

1. The S.J.Y.A. School premises were thrown open as a temporary shelter for the victims special passes being not required for proceeding therein.
2. Each person was allowed three meals a day free from the East Seward Road Kitchen.
3. Each sufferer was paid C\$ 50.000 for personal equipment as a monetary help pending further relief.
4. All those whose houses have been demolished or damaged will be provided with rooms or helped to conduct the necessary repairs.

### "Eastjewcom Day"

With a view to supplementing funds for relief of the Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe, «Eastjewcom» arranges a special charity festival on July 28th at the Shanghai Jewish Club under the name of «Eastjewcom Day».

The monthly budget of Eastjewcom is \$100,000 — 120,000, and the Ashkenazi Community is unable to regularly contribute this amount necessary for the upkeep of some 1000 destitute refugees. It is hoped that this special festival will secure Eastjewcom's budget for a few months.

(Contributed by Joe Levoff)

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# HARBIN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

## TOUR OF JAPAN IN MARCH 1939

Peter Berton

Readers of the Bulletin might be interested in my recollections of the Harbin Symphony Orchestra's goodwill tour of Japan and Korea in March 1939. There were a number of Jewish musicians in the orchestra: the cellist Wiesenberg, violinists Gena Bomash (Principal of second violins), Izia Tepper, and myself. The concertmaster was my teacher Vladimir Davydovich Trachtenberg, a Jew who had converted (kreshchonyi Evrei). I played in the first violin section of the orchestra, and was a teenage junior at the Y.M.C.A. College. It was almost a one-month's tour, and we started with five concerts at Hibiya Hall in Tokyo, three concerts in Osaka, and one each in Nagoya, Hakata, and Nagasaki, in addition to a concert in Seoul (then known as Keijo). The long train journey started in Harbin, and we made our way all the way to Pusan (then Fusan), the southernmost port on the Korean peninsula, boarded the ferry to Shimonoseki, and on to Tokyo. There was no bullet train in those prewar days, so it was a very long journey to the Japanese capital.

In Tokyo we stayed in the Marunouchi Hotel, right next to the Tokyo Station. Not knowing a word of Japanese, I did not notice the discrepancy in the concert program, which was partly in English and partly in Japanese. For example, the program in English simply stated that it was a Grand Concert of the Harbin Symphony Orchestra, whereas the Japanese text described the event as Japan-Manchukuo Defense Against Communism Friendship Artistic Mission. Furthermore, the event was sponsored by the Greater Japan Music Association and Manshu Shimbunsha Newspaper; sanctioned by the puppet

Manchukuo Embassy in Tokyo; and backed by Japan Columbia Musical Instruments Company. In other words, it was not a normal concert tour, but one with political and commercial overtones. The first concert in Tokyo started with the national anthems of Japan and Manchukuo, followed by the funeral march from Beethoven's Eroica symphony (but only the Japanese text noted that it was in memory of Japanese soldiers who died in the so-called Manchurian Incident).

Prewar Tokyo had a number of world-class European musicians who taught at the Imperial Conservatory (most, though not all of them, were Jews who fled in the wake of the Russian revolution and Nazi persecution). Our concert tour organizers took advantage of the presence of these world-class musicians and engaged some of them as soloists and as a guest conductor. For example, the violinist Alexander Moguilewsky (who later became my teacher), in Tsarist days concertized with Sergei Rachmaninoff and was the concertmaster of the Moscow Philharmonic conducted by Serge Koussevitsky (later of Boston Symphony fame) performed the Tchaikovsky violin concerto; and Leonid Kreutzer, another famous musician, not only played Beethoven's Emperor concerto, but also conducted one entire all-Beethoven program, including the piano concerto, which he conducted from the keyboard. Of course, our guest soloists were not only European musicians but also the famous Japanese: the renowned tenor Yoshie Fujiwara and the talented young pianist Miwako Kai who performed the first Liszt concerto. We also met Prime Minister Konoye's brother Hidemaro,

a prominent musician and composer trained in Germany. He conducted his own composition Etenraku, which is in the ancient Gagaku court music style. Considering the fact that most of the orchestra musicians were Russians (we had other Europeans in the orchestra: Poles, Czechs, Jews, and one Japanese cellist), the program featured many Russian composers.

A few years ago, I was pleasantly surprised to receive a Japanese book with a strange title, loosely translated as "The Symphony Orchestra of the Royal Paradise: The Unknown History of Music in Manchuria" from the author Yuichi Iwano. This was the story of the Harbin Symphony published in the year 2000 by the "Friends of Music Company." I was particularly interested to read the section on our trip to Japan and learned some details of our visit that I had no recollection of. For example, that in Hsinking, the capital of Manchukuo we were met by the famous Japanese actress Yoshiko Yamaguchi, known as Rikoran (and later member of the upper house of the Japanese parliament); that we "prayed" in front of the Imperial Palace in Tokyo; that we marched on the Ginza with a banner displaying the characters "Concordia Anti-Communist Culture;" and stopped to take a commemorative picture in front of the Ginza Playguide ticket office. (Kyowa is a reference to Kyowa kai (Concordia Society), a Japanese sponsored organization in Manchukuo designed to promote harmony among the five nationalities: Chinese, Japanese, Manchu, Mongolians, and Koreans.) I also forgot that we gave a radio concert at the NHK studio in Tokyo; went sight-seeing in Kyoto, where we were

also filmed playing Rimsky-Korsakov's "Sheherezade"; saw the Takarazuka Girls Opera, and watched Sumo wrestling in Osaka.

Our first sold-out concert at Hibiya Hall was attended by members of the diplomatic corps and the Japanese cultural elite. By the way, in those days seats in Hibiya Hall were so narrow, that some Europeans had trouble getting in, and especially out.

Because of foreign exchange restrictions and the general political atmosphere, for a few years the Tokyoites had not heard musicians from Europe and the United States, and eagerly awaited the sixty European musicians from Harbin. Tickets were 4, 3, and 2 yen, double the price of concerts by local musicians. Our concerts were a big success with the public, but Joseph Rosenstock, the conductor of the NHK Orchestra (and of the New York City Opera after the war) was not impressed. And for good reason, because his NHK orchestra composed entirely of Japanese musicians was

bigger and more disciplined than ours, although ours had a number of outstanding first desk principals who before the Revolution had played in some of the finest orchestras in Russia. What I didn't know, was that Japanese critics were accustomed to higher standards and tore our performance to pieces. Or as Iwano puts it, "The Harbin Orchestra was like a summer bug flying into fire." One critic, listening to our radio concert, commented that he thought something was wrong with his radio, and criticised our pitch and rhythm and lack of cohesion, (that we played barabara). A Japanese conductor remarked that he would refuse if asked to conduct the orchestra. There was one critic however who disagreed noting the fine playing by our first desk soloists. I wonder, however, if some of the Japanese critics were particularly harsh on us because it gave them an opportunity to stress the superiority of the Japanese at a time when government propaganda was stridently anti-West.

Just a thought.

We were taken on sightseeing tours, such as the Big Buddha in Kamakura, a banquet at the richly-decorated Gajoen restaurant in Meguro (paid by Ayukawa's Manchurian heavy industries), and famous sights in other cities as well. We did also a little exploring on our own, most memorably the famous pleasure quarters of Yoshiwara in Tokyo, that were closed by the American Occupation authorities after the war.

The atmosphere in Tokyo was quite normal, in spite of the fact that it was almost two years after the outbreak of the so-called China Incident. While Hitler marched into and dismembered Czechoslovakia at the very time of our tour, it was a couple of months before the fierce Nomonhan battles between the Kwantung Army and the combined Soviet-Outer Mongolian forces under the command of the future Marshal Zhukov, six months before the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, and almost three years before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

## Lost Passport Returned



Zhu Peiyi shows two Jewish Passports issued in Nazi-era Germany and Austria. He bought the passports six years ago from a local flea market and hopes to return them to their owners —Zhang Jun

A Jewish woman who lost her passport while living in the city more than 50 years ago received the document back yesterday during a ceremony at the Shanghai Jewish Refugee Memorial.

Zhu Pei-yi, a local antique collector, returned Gerda Brender's passport at the memorial hall on Changyang Road, an area that used to be the city's Jewish Ghetto, in front of hoards of media members. "I owe a lot of thanks to Mr Zhu," Brender told Shanghai Daily yesterday.

Brender's parents brought her to the city from Italy in 1938,

when she was only four years old, to escape the Nazi Holocaust. They stayed in the city through 1949.

Half a century later, her passport appeared at a local flea market, when

Zhu saw it and decided to buy it.

"I just did a good deed in a natural way," said Zhu yesterday.

"I realized my wish as an old Chinese saying goes, returning the lost to its owner."

Steven Brender, Gerda Brender's son, accepted Zhu's request to help him look for the owner of another old passport he bought the same time: Manfred Lichtenstein, a male born on August 24, 1932.

Michelle Spiro, Brender's daughter, who is 50 years old, said: "Shanghai is heaven."

During the Second World War, more than 30,000 Jewish refugees fled Europe for Shanghai, where many lived in what is currently known as Hongkou District.

# A New Review of the Kasper Affair

by Sabine Breuillard

## Documents reported and published

What is the point of delving again, 70 years later, into the Kasper affair that had disturbed and agitated not only the community of Harbin, but the entire international community? Is it really necessary, even though it would appear that the final word has already been said?

Simon Kasper, son of a wealthy jeweler of Jewish origin from central Harbin, a young man on his way to a brilliant musical career after finishing his studies at the Paris Conservatorium, returned to Harbin and was kidnapped by a gang of bandits. Those are the known facts that were reported and written by the press, the historians, and the witnesses from that period. The interpretation of the facts changes, however, when the motives for this despicable crime, and the parties responsible for it, are identified.

The opening of the Kasper file in the Quay d'Orsay (French Foreign Ministry) archive to the public led me to reopen and reexamine the affair. Simon Kasper was a French citizen, and the French consulate in Harbin therefore had an interest in his fate, which explains the existence of the file. This file, which is definitely incomplete, consists mostly of dispatches sent by the French consul in Harbin, Mr. L. Reynaud, to the French foreign minister at the time in Paris. Unfortunately, the archive documents of the French consulate in Harbin have been lost, and the only surviving document relating to this incident is the above-mentioned file in the Quay d'Orsay archive. This file is the only original source from which an understanding of how the French handled the affair can be gained, and is consequently invaluable.

The Kasper affair directly concerns the French consulate in several respects.

The incident forced the consulate to scrutinize its capacities, efficiency, and most of all its political function, in the nation of Manchukuo. It is one thing to announce that a kidnapping has taken place, and begin investigating and monitoring developments. It is something else entirely to discover that the Manchukuo authorities were involved in the affair at the highest levels. An incident of this nature, had a direct involvement by the Russian fascist party been revealed, could have jeopardized the standing of Manchukuo in international public opinion. It should be noted that the Japanese government was unable to convince the League of Nations to recognize the independence of this province. An analysis of these files, some of which are printed later in this article, highlights the fascist aspects of Japanese militarism in Manchuria and the existence of Japanese anti-Semitism during WWII. I will also compare it to the anti-Semitism of the Russian fascist party in Manchuria.

### *The Course of Events*

A gang of bandits kidnapped young Simon Kasper on August 24, 1933, a routine event at that time in Manchuria. Gang rule there was then at its height, and kidnappings, both the Chinese (the notorious Honghuzi, also called the Red Beards), and by the Manchurians, were a frequent occurrence. For that reason, the event in question did not interest the local press initially, and even less so the international press. On September 30, 1933, however, four French dailies of the period, "Le Journal", "L'Echo de Paris", "Le Quotidien", and "Le Petit Parisien", published the following headline, taken from the Reuters news agency in London: "Manchuan bandits are demanding a £25,000 ransom for

a young Frenchman. They have sent half of the kidnapped youth's ear to his father". The term "Manchuan" was vague enough to avoid attributing responsibility to any particular party, and the event could therefore not be connected with Russian bandits working for the Russian fascist party. The French public simply accepted this rough report in its offhand form.

On November 24, 1933, exactly three months after the kidnapping, and following innumerable tortures and additional amputations of body parts, Simon Kasper was executed by his captors. On November 29, 1934, the police communicated the results of its investigation to the public prosecutor. To the surprise of L. Reynaud, the file, which numbered 800 pages in Russian, stated that Kasper's kidnappers were "Russian patriots". On June 15, 1936, a special court in Harbin delivered sentence on the kidnappers and murderers of Simon Kasper. Martinoff, Chandar, Kirichenko, and Zaitseff were sentenced to death, while Komissarenko and Bezrutchko were sentenced to life imprisonment at hard labor and deprivation of citizenship.

There was no possibility of appealing the verdict; the Supreme Court was charged only with ratifying it. According to Reynaud, the executions should have been carried out at most 24 hours later. He wrote the French foreign minister: "The murderers will be executed by hanging, since there is very little chance that the Supreme Court will change the sentence, or that the Emperor will submit a request for a pardon."

On July 9, 1936, the Supreme Court refused to approve the verdict of the special court in Harbin, and ordered a new trial. On January 30, 1937, the

court responsible for the new trial took advantage of a new pardon law, and freed the accused. These are the principal facts of this terrible affair.

### ***The Historical Background***

First of all, it should be noted that this incident, which initially seemed a simple and clear affair, led to a series of explosive revelations. These revelations foreshadowed the crescendo of unstoppable violence on the part of militaristic Japan before the outbreak of general war in China and the Pacific Ocean. In this complex mosaic, Manchuria was both a scene of events and a springboard. Notable is the fact that from its very outset, this affair exposed the conflict between the various police forces in Manchuria. It also illustrates the complex relations between the administrative, political, and social agencies in this province, which had just been occupied. The multiplicity of police forces caused them to interfere with each other's work, and it could not be determined, at least at first sight, which of the police forces was in control, although the Japanese regime – the concealed regime – was in fact in control. What is clear was that this regime's control of the media and the press was uncontested. This fact provides some understanding of the especially tense and dangerous atmosphere of life in Harbin.

On the other hand, the Japanese had been severely damaged by the conclusions of the Lytton report on the state of Manchuria to the League of Nations, and had withdrawn from the League on February 24, 1933. According to the testimony of Amleto Vespa, the Japanese accused the League of Nations of having been manipulated by the Jews and the Freemasons, and thereby supported the allegations of Rodzaevskij and the Nazis regarding a plot on the part of the Jews and the Freemasons to gain control of the world.

The Kaspe affair is also notable in this context; it was preceded by other kidnappings of Jews (and non-Jews also) in Manchuria, which were also

accompanied by demands for large ransoms, although not as large as in the Kaspe affair. In considering this crime, which can be grouped together with the persecution of Jews in this period, we must keep in mind the special character of anti-Semitism in Manchuria, a land where Jews from the Czarist Empire sought refuge at the beginning of the 20th century.

Count Witte, Czar Nicholas II's finance minister, tried to persuade colonists to settle along the trans-Manchurian [extension of the Trans-Siberian] railway line, without Russian support. He eventually obtained authorization from the Czar for Jewish settlement in Manchuria. Unlike the situation in the Czarist Empire, Jews could circulate freely and work without restrictions in Manchuria, provided they contributed to the development and prosperity of the region. Before the Japanese government tried to save a few of them, latent anti-Semitism existed in Japan, as evidenced by the many performances of Shakespeare's play "The Merchant of Venice". From the beginning of WWII, anti-Semitism became an integral part of extreme Japanese nationalist rhetoric, despite the existence of large Jewish communities in Kobe and Yokohama, and the fact that Sugihara Yukiko, the Japanese counterpart of Oscar Schindler, saved many Jews.

These two cases were the direct result of a political change, or to put it more exactly, the new economic strategy adopted by the Japanese towards the Jews since 1934. These incidents constitute a separate and fascinating chapter in the relations between the Japanese and the Jews during WWII. Anti-Semitism in Japan was not merely anti-Communist and anti-Comintern in character; it was also anti-liberal. For Japan, liberalism was represented by the Anglo Saxon countries and France, countries where Jewish capitalism prospered.

The kidnapers' choice of a wealthy jeweler in Harbin, who was also a Jew, was no accident; Joseph Kaspe's fortune was estimated at 800,000 yen. When Kaspe first arrived in Harbin at the

beginning of the 20th century, he began working as a used clothing merchant, and later became rich by trading in jewels, buying jewelry from Russian immigrants forced by their poverty to sell. A rumor even circulated that Kaspe had sold the crown jewels belonging to the Czar and his family, whom the Bolsheviks murdered on the night of July 16, 1918 in Yekterinburg. The new rulers of Russia were believed to have sold the jewels to Kaspe to obtain a little money, which made it very easy to portray Kaspe as a Comintern agent. Looking more closely at the matter, it can be seen that behind anti-liberalism, which took an anti-Semitic coloring at the time the Nazis rose to power, lurked a Japanese attack on English and French colonialism. The goal was to restore Asia to the Asians, or rather, to the Japanese. In 1943, Japan referred to its new empire as the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere".

The Japanese accusations that French deputy consul Albert Chambon had acted irresponsibly and exceeded his authority, referred to in the report, can therefore be interpreted above all as a warning to any foreigner wishing to delve too deeply. Behind the opposition to Chambon's right to intervene (a completely legitimate right, since Simon Kaspe was a French citizen) lay a hidden criticism of France's role and behavior in Manchuria. Chambon was singled out, even though his report was well written and courteous, and though as a deputy consul, he himself was only of secondary importance (although he played a key role in the Kaspe investigation). Although Chambon was asked to leave Manchukuo (he was assigned a position in Tianjin), the real target in the affair was France and the international community, who were warned not to interfere. The paradox in the affair was that at the same time that Japan was criticizing the international community, it was also trying to improve its international image.

Despite many hints in the various evidence and letters, there is no definite proof that the Japanese authorities commissioned the kidnapping. The  
(See page 14)

# Jews of Harbin, Undeservedly Forgotten

Until 1920, Julius Joseph Levitin was the chief municipal architect of Harbin. He was also the planner and builder of many projects for the Harbin Jewish community, including the large complex of the Jewish Gymnasium (Nagornii Prospect), the Chief Synagogue (Artilleriiskaya Street). One of his most outstanding works was the edifice of the Talmud Torah religious school (Konnaya street, 1920) as well as the Moshav Zkeinim, shelter for the aged (Artilleriiskaya Street, 1920), the Jewish High School, 1919 (now Korean High School). Eventually he left Harbin and settled in Shanghai, a fast growing city with more promising architectural opportunities.

## "Levitin's creative power"

(an excerpt from *Russian architecture in Manchuria* by S.S. Levitzky)

It was often stressed by the local press, that the North African architectural style

was very popular in Harbin at that time. Its exotic features harmonized well with the vista of the Manchurian landscape and the furnace heat of its summers, and it was in the Moorish style that Levitin liked to work the most. He fully utilized the wealth of its imaginative forms, details and décor to create some of his out of the ordinary constructions. The retrospective orientation of Levitin's structures blended well with the demands of modern times. To quote an art critic: "Levitin, according to his taste and intuition, was able to interpret elegantly the Moorish style into a modern mode of expression, without offending the eye by the high pitched tones of Oriental temperament. He succeeded to dissolve art in the functions of every-day reality." Another writer commented: "Levitin adorned the Home for the Aged with the decorative forms of Moorish taste to give the building a cheerful quality, so

distinctive from the dreary appearance of most of such institutions."

The Witkovsky photograph collection includes only one of the many Harbin "Moorish" buildings: the Chief Synagogue, built to replace the one burnt down. The edifice exists even in our time, although in an extremely altered form with not a trace of its initial grandeur. A third floor was added to the original building. However, now, being dwarfed by the adjacent modern high risers, it appears humble and insignificant. And yet, in the past it was an imposing structure, crowned by two Byzantine domes and dominating the space around it.

Eventually, Levitin left Harbin for Shanghai. He was undeservedly forgotten. However, his talent and ingenuity has left a lasting mark on the Harbin urban landscape.

(From the Russian, E. Pratt)

## From page 13

Japanese, who never relinquished control over the investigation, always observed the rules. Only by cross-referencing information, and from Chambon's report, do we learn that the investigation was actually delayed for a month, that the Russian police did nothing, and that the Japanese police refused to listen, and dragged its feet. In matters concerning organized crime, or simple hooligans affiliated with the Russian fascist party, the Japanese administration was capable of exhibiting a presentable appearance to the international community with forceful statements that the criminals had violated public order in Manchukuo, and would be punished. This made it appear that Manchukuo

was a law-abiding country. The Japanese authorities in Manchukuo portrayed the criminals as Russian patriots, and urged that their Russian patriotism was an extenuating circumstance. They took into account the sensitivity of the Russian fascist party, which it would have needed in the event of a Japanese invasion of Soviet Russia. When the Japanese entered Harbin, a mutual courtship took place between the Japanese and the Russian fascists – each side needed the other. The Japanese soldiers knew how to use the Russian fascists for their purposes. Starting on September 30, 1933, in a letter to A. Wilden, the French ambassador in Beijing, L. Reynaud repeatedly cited the "prominent role

played by the Russian fascist part in the Kaspe kidnapping," and its "close links" with the "Japanese military mission and elite, many of whom were in the Japanese secret service." This information was so diplomatically hazardous that on the note was written in pencil, "Please do not give to the family," and publication of the information was thereby prevented.

The final pardon eventually granted to the kidnappers in 1937 only highlights the development of an international situation in which the Japanese government could deflect international public opinion with casuistic arguments, without fear of protest. From this standpoint, pardoning the murderers was a collector's item.

# Beyond Mah Jongg and Won-tons

## Exploring the Jewish-Chinese Connection

by Fran M. Putney

And here comes Dec. 25. While Christians gather round their twinkling Christmas trees opening presents and devouring ham and turkey, Jews escape the disconnect they feel at this time of year with their own tradition – catching a new movie and taking comfort and refuge at their favorite Chinese restaurant. At the Mandarin House in Sandy Springs, co-owner Young Liu expects Christmas Day business to be three times higher than usual. And most of the diners are likely to be Jewish.

The Marcus Jewish Community Center's singles group will meet at the Far East Café this year for activities that include a Chinese lunch. And Mosaic, Atlanta's Jewish outdoor club, will spend Christmas Day on a hike followed by lunch at the Wok and Chops in Roswell. "It's been a tradition for many years," said Gary Vogin, the club's president.

To be sure, Jews love Chinese food, but the Jewish-Chinese connection doesn't end with fried rice and fortune cookies. Some Jewish women are mad about mah jongg, many Jewish families have adopted Chinese babies, and at least five Kosher-Chinese cookbooks can be found on Amazon.com. Perhaps that's because, in the basic philosophies of life, Jews and Chinese have a lot in common.

"Respect for home, ancestry, tradition and education – these are Jewish values and they are Chinese values," said Rabbi Marvin Tokayer of Great Neck, N.Y., an expert on Jewish-Far Eastern history. Both cultures also share a respect and reverence for their elders, says Congregation Etz Chaim Rabbi Shalom Lewis, whose

mother was born in Harbin, China, and spent her first six years there after her parents fled Russia. Still others cite the common traits of loyalty and charity. Even the similarities between the two ancient religions, Judaism and Taoism, are uncanny. According to Tokayer, a Hebrew translation of Tao founder Lao Tze's ancient text reads very much like a rabbinic text in style, wisdom and insight.

And then there are those who say Jews and Chinese share something far less profound: hoarding and buying in bulk. Writing in the John Hopkins University newsletter in March 2000, student Natalya Minkovsky observed that "Jewish recycling" in her parents' home consists of reusing everything from old wrapping paper to jelly jars. She found that "Chinese recycling" at a close friend's house was similar. As for buying in bulk, particularly with people from the "old countries", Minkovsky wrote: "Maybe this all stems from our Communist backgrounds. When something is available, you buy as much of it as you can because it is not going to be in the store for long."

There are Jews in China and there have been for centuries. While some scholars speculate that one or more of the lost tribes might have found their way to China as early as 700 BCE – around the time of the First Temple – there is archaeological evidence that Jews had certainly settled in China by the 8th century. Most were merchants who came from Persia via the Silk Road. And according to Tokayer, the oldest Hebrew manuscript on paper is about 1,300 years old and was found along the China-Tibet border.

Why did China become a safe haven for Jews? It was more a fluke of history, Tokayer says, than any sort of policy. China was so overcome by foreigners that it wasn't in control of its own government, and anyone could enter without documentation. Throughout history, Jews who came to China found the Chinese to be accepting and welcoming. Neither the Jews nor the Chinese tried to convert or change the other, and Jews usually contributed positively to the economy and culture. Historically the two have always been able to live as good neighbors. To the Chinese, "The Jews were like the sugar in the tea," Tokayer said. "It doesn't upset the tea – it enhances the tea and makes it sweeter."

(Extracts from an article in the Atlanta Jewish Times, December 20, 2002)



A Reunion at Beit-Ponve  
Former residents of Shanghai came to Beit-Ponve on May 22 for their reunion at a regular Sunday get-together. From left to right are: Yuta Friedman, Dinah Veb (Australia), Rita Landau, Rasha Kaufman, Kurt and Inga Nussbaum.

# Searching and Researching

## **Alex Pedashenko**

I am seeking a record of my birth. I was born at the Jewish Hospital in Tientsin China, on the 24th October 1941. Is there anywhere I might be able to get a record of my birth? Whom may I contact - I need contact details please. Does the Jewish Hospital still exist? Do they have a record of births?

Email: HYPERLINK "mailto:agp@acr.net.au" agp@acr.net.au  
Tel: 61 2 4471 2362

## **Annie Goldberg**

I am trying to trace my Goldberg family history and would appreciate any help you can offer. I know that they lived in Harbin in 1903/4 before coming to Australia. My great grandfathers name was Isak Goldberg and he was married to my great grandmother Annie Goldberg (I do not know her maiden name). They had a son (my grandfather) Abraham Isak Goldberg. He was born on May 1, 1904 in Harbin China. I know that my great-grandfather died sometime before 1938 but I do not know where he died. I do not know when Annie died except it was after 1938. My grandfather Abraham has also died but I do not know when or where. I think it was in Australia. Abraham was married to my grandmother Kathleen (Catherine) Goldberg (who has passed away also) They had my father Philip Alfred Goldberg, but divorced some time after he was born. (No date) Both Abraham and Kathleen (Catherine) re-married. Abraham married Irene (No maiden name) and Kathleen (Catherine) married Frank Wilson. My father (Philip) changed his surname to Wilson at some stage prior to my birth but after my elder brother was born in 1947. My father

married my mother, Ada Perry, in Perth Western Australia and they divorced after having four children. I would like to know where my great grandparents came from and family names and any other information anyone can help with. I know that the Goldberg family live in and around Caulfield in Victoria Australia. I have not made contact with any of them as yet. I know that Annie had a brother because records show that she applied to the Australian Government for him to come to Australia but I do not know the outcome or his name or where he was coming from. I have changed my surname to Goldberg after being divorced. I have posted my email address, and if anyone has any information I would love to hear from you. Thanks Annie.

Address: C/- 117 Ladywell Street Beckenham Western Australia.  
Tel. 0404332901 Email: HYPERLINK "mailto:freedom4Annie@hotmail.com" freedom4Annie@hotmail.com

## **Juergen Schneider** **German Estate Department** **S/es**

Your address was given to us by the Shanghai Jewish Center to which we were referred by Mr. Albert Dien at the Sino-Judaic Institute of Menlo Park, California. The latter organization had initially been contacted in hopes that they may be able to provide information regarding this estate matter wherein our services were enlisted by the guardian ad litem seeking assistance in locating the descendant's unknown heirs. The descendant was born Esther Budnik in Harbin on March 23, 1907 to Russian migrant parents. She was a member of the Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Communal Association.

Our request is that you give us whatever information you may have about the descendent's family. Details regarding her parents, the date of their arrival in Harbin, their previous residence, and possible information as to when they left Harbin, and where they went from there, all could be of particular interest.

The descendant is believed to have had a brother, "Tulia", who may have returned to Russia (Moscow?) shortly after World War II. If you have a record on the descendant's family, and if that record includes any information regarding that brother or other members of the family, please let us know. As of 1951, the descendant is known to have resided in New Jersey (USA). If you do not have a record on the descendant's family, perhaps you can refer us to a place where such a record might exist.

We thank you for your attention and cooperation and look forward to hearing from you.

Address:  
Hoerner Bank, Aktiengesellschaft,  
Oststrasse 77, 74072 Heilbronn,  
Germany

## **David Kerachsky**

I am writing to request information on Jews in China and more specifically on their movements in and around Shanghai. I am doing research on this for an upcoming trip to China. I was hoping perhaps you had some further information or contacts for me while I am over there. Specifically I am hoping to meet with educators/researchers with an interest in this area of other individuals with experiences. Any assistance you could provide would be greatly appreciated.

Email: HYPERLINK "mailto:



davidmk@gse.upenn.edu  
davidmk@gse.upenn.edu  
Tel: 215-898-5244

### **Gladys Raisa Samsonovich de Goldberg**

Argentina

I am now 67 years old, and I wish to know the origins of my family. My grandfather and my father were born in St. Petersburg, and in 1917, when the revolution was in the air, my grandfather decided to go to China, where he had a department store business named Samsonovich Bros. They first arrived in Harbin, where one of my aunts was born, and they lived there for about three years until he decided to sell the store which was then named Tshurin.

After this he and all the family moved to Shanghai, where they lived until about 1940. My uncle Alex Samsonovich was born in Shanghai and he now lives in Australia with my aunt, Mary Shpunte, who was born in Harbin. My uncle Shura

Samsonovich was born in 1924. My father and all the children studied in Shanghai, and my uncle in Shanghai University.

In 1937, my father went to Uruguay for business reasons. There he met and married my mother from Argentina who had gone to Uruguay for a holiday. I was born in Montevideo, but we lived in Argentina.

In 1940 my grandfather, David Samsonovich, decided to come to Argentina. A son of my grandfather's brother, Pana Samsonovich, was one of the founders of the Betar in Shanghai. There were three brothers, Aaron, David and Moses. I have photos from Pana Samsonovich who died in Israel, and I want to know if he has descendants.

In August 24 I will begin a long trip from Argentina, first to Harbin and after to Shanghai because I need to know about my family. My father died in 1979.

I want to know where I can begin to know something more about my

family in Harbin.

On July 5 I will arrive in Israel for 20 days, and all that you can do to help me would be much appreciated. This is not my first trip to Israel. I think that I have been there about 24 times.

Email: HYPERLINK

"mailto:gladysraisa@arnet.com.ar"  
gladysraisa@arnet.com.ar

Address: Coronel Diaz 2142-Piso 29  
"0", 1425 Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Tel.: 0054 11 4821 5332

### **Rose Raymen**

I am currently researching my family tree and would be interested to know if any information exists on the ships which sailed from Shanghai to Israel in 1948 and the route that was used by them. Also, do any records of the manifests still exist? My family lived in Shanghai from 1938 to 1948 when they emigrated to Israel.

Email: HYPERLINK

"mailto:rr.raymen@optusnet.com.au"  
rr.raymen@optusnet.com.au

Tel.: 08 9368 6829

# **American Far Eastern Society of Southern California**

## **Bulletin #97 (May-August 2005)**

Dear Friends and Fellow Members, We extend our deepest apology to Raissa Goldin who asked us to print her thank you to all of her friends and relatives who attended her birthday party and we overlooked to print it in our last bulletin. We also extend our apology to Mara Grossman for not printing her thank you to all her friends and relatives who recognized her birthday recently.

We had the pleasure of a visit from our old friends from Australia, Stella and David Udovitch. It was good to see them after so many years. They are both very active on behalf of

the Igud.

Congratulations to Huegette Sevilla on the marriage of her daughter. Mazal Tov! Congratulations also go out to Jack and Lea Liberman on the engagement of their grandson. Congratulations go out to Mira Mrantz on the birth of her 5th great-grandson. Mira also extends her thank you to all who remembered her birthday. Welcome home Aaron Sloustcher, looks like you had a great time in Israel.

It is with great sadness that we are announcing the loss of the following members and express our deepest condolences to the families:

Irene Rozanski who passed away recently after a prolonged illness. Irene was one of the original organizers of AMFESOSCA and very active with her late husband Jerry. We will miss her very much. Eric Gabriel who passed away just a few weeks ago. Eric was a contributor to the Igud Bulletin for many years, sharing his China experiences with us all.

Bernyce Green on the loss of her mother who died just a few weeks ago. A donation was made by Huegette Sevilla and Mira and Joe Mrantz in her memory.

# Dr. A. Kaufman, Camp Doctor

## 16 Years in the Soviet Union

### Chapter 7, Section B

One night, at a late hour after midnight, the director of the interrogations department enters the interrogation room. He was an interrogator who interrogated me at the Lubianka prison. When he noticed me he approached my current interrogator and said: "I know him..." then he turned to me and added: "You are still keeping silent, still refuse to speak?"

"I am answering all the questions truthfully. I will never lie, as they want me to do, I am being questioned days and nights, and many pages were written in my name. This is a sign that I am answering all the questions...I answer with what is known to me, and this is the truth..."

"Except for your name and family name you did not tell us anything...and you have to tell us the truth... no one asked you to lie...and if you lie – you will be thrashed. So, will you talk or not?" demanded the director.

"I told you and will continue to tell you about things that really occurred and not on what the interrogators demand that I tell, like, for instance, the confession on the spying activities of the Zionist Federation. Also the acts of sabotage that they were supposed to have carried out in the Soviet Union. This is complete nonsense, nothing of this sort ever happened and I will not sign any documents that assert this... even if the interrogator demands that".

"Listen, doctor, you do not want to admit to what your colleagues have already admitted to. You too admit to this and you will be freed immediately, there's nothing simpler for us, however, if you still retain your present attitude we will be compelled to resort to force..."

A shiver ran through my body, but I replied:



"What can I do, if you feel that it's necessary to use physical force on me, I will withstand this, too."

The director jumps up from his place and shouts:

"We do not beat people... Where you come from, Japan or China, they beat and torture the prisoners. In the Soviet Union we do not do this. Why do you make up such stories?"

"But you said "resort to force"

"In your China you have stopped understanding the Russian language..." rebukes the director. He again gets up from his place, whispers something into the ear of the interrogator, then, leaves the room.

A week later the director of the interrogations division of the M<sup>GB</sup>, himself, appears in the interrogations office. Upon his entry the interrogator springs up to attention. The director sits down on a settee near me, just the small round table stands between us.

"Well, well... I'm very well acquainted with your case. It's a pity that you don't want to help us. Are you really so hostile to the Soviet people?"

"I was never hostile to the Russian people

and I never fought against the Soviet regime. I acted only for the sake of my people, for the rebirth of our national identity"

"For the sake Zionism" emphasizes the head.

"Yes, for the sake of Zionism". The director holds onto my words:

"Isn't this the crux of the matter, I see that we found a common denominator. You are a wise person... so enough wiggling about. You must tell us everything. Your activities were most diverse and you were a Zionist leader, you are hesitant to talk about this, so are many others, but in writing they write everything. Perhaps you too would like to write? Fine with me, I'll give you paper, pen and ink, and start writing; you'll get as much paper as you want, hundred pages, two, three hundred? You can also write in your cell...I will permit that" he concludes festively.

"There is nothing to write about on hundreds of pages?"

"Write about the Zionists, on the assignments you used to receive from London, from your central committee, did they not act in the service of the English? Write about everything, everything. We know about the sabotage activities of the Zionist Youth Organizations, write about them, encourages the director.

"I cannot write about this," I answer "I cannot write about this as nothing of this sort has ever happened... it is all a lie..."

"Think again about this. You'll get as much paper as you want", he then turns to the interrogator and says: "Give him paper and he will write."

"As you say" answers the interrogator. The director leaves the room.

"The interrogator turns to me, "you heard that? Think it over. Do you know with whom you just spoke?"

This very senior officer, the director of the interrogations division, who suggested that I "write", was executed in 1953, when after Stalin's death details were uncovered on the trial of the Jewish doctors, that he interrogated those by applying "forbidden methods".

That same evening, it was our turn to go to the bath house. The bath-house is situated in the basement of the jail house and I had to drag on my back the heavy mattress and my blanket from my cell on the fifth floor all the way down to the basement, for fumigation, I nearly collapsed under the burden of this weight and had to stop several times on the way. The guard prods and hurries me, with the mattress on my back, and even kicks me with his boots. It's good that the bathe and fumigations takes place only once in twelve days.

## Chapter 7, Section C

I frequently wake up at night to the sounds of yelling. Heart rendering yells suddenly pierce the silence of the night then come sounds of moans and groans. Who is yelling? Who is crying so bitterly, people who have gone insane? Beaten and tortured?

One day I was summoned for interrogation. This time I was led to one of the rooms at the far end of the corridor. By the table sits my interrogator. I sit on the seat pointed out to me. The interrogator does not speak. I sit silently. We sit this way for half an hour, without uttering a word. Suddenly I hear a yell coming from the other side of the thin partition separating our room from the next, and sounds of beating by a leather strap or a rubber whip:

"Why are you whipping me? What do you want from me?" someone shouts, with a Georgian or Tatar accent. Then again sounds of whipping. I am overcome with fear, but I do not lose my composure and try to remain sitting as if I do not hear anything and am not upset by the sounds coming from the next room. The

interrogator is watching me from the sides of his eyes and is trying to estimate my reaction, but my face does not reveal anything. Finally he looks at me and says:

"Do you hear this? This will also be your fate" then adds "you carrion, you!"

No, I never did go through this "fate"; on me they tried more subtle methods. But nevertheless once in a while I was "honored" with some beatings. Once during an interrogation I needed to go to the toilet, the guard that accompanied me entered the toilet with me, suddenly he started shouting: "Finish!" then hit me twice with the butt of his rifle. "Why are you hitting me?" I responded angrily. "Shut up! Don't talk or I'll bury you right here, you carrion". When I returned to the interrogators office I asked him whether a guard is permitted to beat a prisoner.

"What happened?" asked the interrogator. I told him. He did not reply. "It is inconceivable" I thought to myself "that anyone, be he either senior or junior is permitted to beat a prisoner who was not sentenced to punished"

A new interrogator was assigned to me. He started from the beginning:

"Let's try the positive approach... Tell me everything, here and now, and then perhaps within several days you shall go free. Do you think that the Soviet authorities want to punish you? On the contrary, we appreciate people like you. You lived in China and Japan and where did it get you – to the prison! Here, with us you would have reached an important position... Tell us everything and you shall go free. At worst you will be sentenced to a five year term in camp. You could work there as a doctor...So, start talking" the new interrogator encourages me.

"I think that there is nothing I can add to what I told already. To invent stories and to tell lies, I do not agree. Ask me questions and I shall answer you!"

This interrogator, of Ukrainian origin, summons me every day, but for ten days did not ask me any significant question, most of the time he told me stories about

kolkhozes, and about the good conditions of the members living there, how happy they are and of the greatness of Stalin, who is loved and admired by all the peoples of the Soviet Union.

One day I was summoned by him at noon time. His first question was:

"Did you eat lunch?"

"No"

He picked up the telephone and requested that food be brought to me. At first I became alarmed and a thought passed my mind that perhaps he wants to poison me, I heard a lot about various methods of eliminating people in Soviet prisons. For himself he requested a glass of tea and for me a whole meal, soup, beef with accompaniments, bread, butter and stewed fruit.

And why a meal, suddenly? I thought to myself, is he trying to bribe me? He then places a packet of cigarettes on the table and a box of matches. "No thank you, I don't smoke".

"Take one anyway, you might feel like smoking in your cell, sometimes smoking improves the mood"

All this treatment was highly suspicious in my mind. I finished eating, the interrogator phoned and a soldier came and removed the plates and then the interrogation starts:

"From where did you know that there is religious oppression in the Soviet Union? Here is your comment on this subject"

"When did I say this" I ask incredulously.

"Doesn't matter, you said it"

"It does matter, citizen interrogator, it is important when and what I exactly said".

"I take it then that you do not want to answer this question" concludes the interrogator.

"Citizen Interrogator, you obviously are referring to things I said twenty five years ago... I request that you read to me what I said".

I remembered that some time in 1921 religious oppression did increase in the

Soviet Union and some citizens rights were revoked from ministers representing various religions. As a result a Russian journalist interviewed some public figures in Harbin, among them me, who were asked to give their opinion on this matter. I asked the interrogator to read aloud, or to show me what I said then. When the interrogator saw that I refused to answer, he extended a newspaper to me and said angrily "read!"- I read. And this is approximately what I said at that time:

It is difficult to understand how a state who has proclaimed freedom of speech, press and conscience – can persecute people for their personal opinions and beliefs.

The interrogator looked at me and asked:

"From where did you know that the Soviet Union was persecuting people for their religious beliefs?"

"Every one knew... people coming out of the Soviet Union talked about this, the press wrote..."

"In what newspapers?"

"In all the papers...The Polish papers, Yugoslavia, France, England, United States..."

"It's all a lie..." The interrogator interrupts my sentence "There was never any oppression of any religion in the Soviet Union nor the rights of any minister of any religion were ever revoked...The people themselves closed down the churches because they had no need for them anymore, but, if anyone wanted to believe in any religion or God – let him do so. If he wants to pray he can pray to his hearts content, if he's crazy enough for that... everything that was written about this is nothing but a deception and a lie...For example, take me, I live with my elderly mother, above her bed hangs a religious icon, what can I do to her? If I take this nonsense away, it will destroy her life, that's the way she was brought up, all her life she was guided by her stupid belief in God, mumbling prayers...what should I do to her, so be it, let her hang this icon of God, of the Satan, the demon its all the same" The interrogator concluded his

speech.

At the end of the interrogation the interrogator reads the protocol which he compiled and hands it to me for my signature. The protocol was written in the form of questions and answers and on every answer written the prisoner must put his signature. For the number of answers the same number of signatures must be affixed.

My answers to his question "from where did you know that the Soviet Union was persecuting people for their religious beliefs" he wrote under the question "Did you have any contact with America?"

"I never said any of these things, I protest very strongly"

"But you said that you read about the persecutions in American newspapers" he said with a cunning smile.

"I said people coming from the Soviet Union talked about this and it was also written in newspapers, Polish, French, American..."

"Aren't postal communications – a form of contact?" The interrogator asked cheekily.

"This means, citizen interrogator, that by reading an English newspaper, you are carrying on a contact with England?"

"I did not say that"

"You did not say it but this is what you wrote... I will not sign this protocol..."

I did not sign this protocol nor many others because of the words the interrogators tried to link to me, things that I never thought of saying, words, that for their own reasons they tried to associate to me. There are rumors that at times the signatures of prisoners appear on protocols without them even aware of it, that experts are being employed for this specific purpose. The MG"B interrogators receive a special bonus for extracting a confession from the prisoners for crimes that the prisoners are charged with and that is why they do everything possible to convince the prisoner to confess without using more forceful methods. The living conditions of these interrogators are very good. Their salary is high and they get a

bonus for every additional star on their uniform which they receive for night interrogations and confessions. Once, during a heart to heart revelation, the interrogator told me that in Moscow they have the best hospital in the city at their disposal. And every one of them has a summer home near the capital.

After some time I was transferred to another cell. A cell, for two people. As soon as I move into the cell my cellmate says to me: "I am very happy that you were transferred here...it was done according to my request...I was alone for two weeks, and the loneliness overcame me. I asked the interrogator to transfer somebody to my cell, but the person they transferred was an ignorant farmer, I could not stand his presence. I again requested the interrogator to transfer a cultured person to my cell with whom I could converse on literature and art. And so, yesterday the ignoramus was moved from here and you came instead of him. I am very happy"

I was suspicious of this person, perhaps he was a " brooder", and decided to be very cautious. He wanted to know who I am, where did I come from and for how long are they interrogating me. He told me his story. In 1920 he escaped from Soviet Russia. Lately he was living with his family in the American sector of Berlin. One evening he visited a theater in the Russian sector of the city. Near the theater he was arrested, jailed and within a week was flown to Moscow. It is already four months that he is confined in Lefortovo. He is being charged for espionage because in West Berlin he accidentally met a Georgian in a coffee shop who allegedly was a spy.

On the day following my transfer to his cell he was summoned by the interrogator. His interrogations are nearing completion and the interrogator says that at most he will be sentenced to a five year term.

"Very strange, only five years for espionage?" this thought passes through my brain. "Something's wrong here"

My cellmate was an educated person. Every day we speak for hours on literature, art, music and related subjects, things on

(See page 21)

# Jewish Network

by Andrew Weitzen

Those wanting to publicize events to the Jewish Community, and to increase attendance at their events, please update your calendar on [www.jewishnetwork.com](http://www.jewishnetwork.com). Get more publicity by letting the Jewish community know about the great things you are doing. Publicize your events alongside organizations like Aish HaTorah, Chabad, Israeli Consulate, Isralight, JCCs, Jewish Federations, Jewish singles, Kollels, Mosaic Jewish Outdoor Club, Synagogues and many more. Reach the people that do not already know about you. Make a connection to the large number of unaffiliated Jews. To update events yourself, go to [www.jewishnetwork.com](http://www.jewishnetwork.com) and click the Enter Event link in the upper right. Publicity for your events to Jewish communities worldwide: [publish@jewishnetwork.com](mailto:publish@jewishnetwork.com). [www.jewishnetwork.com](http://www.jewishnetwork.com).

Events calendar for your website  
If you are a Jewish portal for your local Jewish community, enhance your website with a comprehensive Jewish events calendar for all your local organizations. Using our service, you can integrate your local community's calendar into your website. Each organization in your community can have a calendar for their own website, while your website hosts the comprehensive calendar for everyone.

**From page 20**

the pinnacle of world knowledge. In the evenings we play the card game "Damka". One day my cellmate returns to the cell from his interrogation very irritated and without uttering a word climbed onto his bed and lay down, I was reading a book at that time and, of course, did not ask him what was wrong. Fifteen minutes later he turned to me and said: "I respect you very much and am very happy that you are my cellmate, but I have one request to

This is great for Jewish Federations and other Jewish organizations representing their communities.

Save yourself time and money by using our service to put your calendar on your website. You enter events once and your information is publicized on both your website and [www.jewishnetwork.com](http://www.jewishnetwork.com).

Update your events calendar on your website yourself, any time you want, without waiting for your webmaster, and publicize your information immediately.

The calendar is loaded with features and is great for individual organizations, JCCs, Federations, national and international organizations and special interest groups.

Let us know if you need a calendar for your website.

National and International Organizations

Many of your locations may already be publicizing their events on [www.jewishnetwork.com](http://www.jewishnetwork.com). Write us to make formal arrangements to publicize events for all your locations. This can greatly increase publicity for your programs everywhere.

[GeneralJewishNetwork.com](http://GeneralJewishNetwork.com)

You can email event information to [publish@jewishnetwork.com](mailto:publish@jewishnetwork.com) and we will try to enter it for you. If you have a complete schedule of events, email it to

you: Let us not discuss politics or matters concerning the Soviet Union anymore... We speak about the good and the bad on these matters, however I think it is best we do not discuss them anymore, I implore you"... he concluded emotionally.

"As far as I remember, we never discussed political matters between us nor am I too eager to talk about these matters myself".

"Yes, also about our private affairs or your specific case, it is

us in a database format (ie. excel, csv - comma delimited). This is particularly good for JCCs and school programs.

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better we do not discuss them" I understood immediately what bothered this unfortunate person, it is most probable that at his interrogation he was ordered to try to extract information from me and pass it over to them. Within a week he was called again for interrogation and was never returned to our cell. Most likely his interrogation was completed and he was transferred to another cell.

From the Hebrew by Benny Tzur.

*(to be continued)*

# The Sun

By Emmanuel Pratt

## The Sun

The sun is an embodiment of yang, the male principle. Its rising is associated with the spring when its power begins to make itself felt. It is also the symbol of Emperor.

Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty was born after his mother dreamt that the sun was entering her body. One of the older solar myths in the oracle book Guei Zang concerns Si He, Mother of Suns, who rises up in the hollow mulberry tree growing in the Valley of the Sunrise. Her emergence and disappearance cause light and darkness. According to another myth she gave birth to ten suns that threatened to scorch the earth until the heroic Hou Yi shot down nine of them. In a different version of the myth it is the god of thunder who is given the credit for destroying eight of the nine suns. In still another version, these eight were destroyed by the young god Erh Lang, who crushed them with a mountain.

The aboriginal inhabitants of Taiwan make do with two suns only, of which one was transformed into the moon. On the other hand, most of the minority peoples of South China hold on to the idea that originally there were 12 suns, ten of which were shot down by that same Erh Lang, while one of the remaining two saved her life by turning into the moon, and the other was spared to give us light and warmth.

From the way in which eclipses were explained, we can see that the sun was associated with the husband and the moon with the wife. A solar eclipse was taken as a sign that the Emperor was too much under the influence of the Empress. Lunar eclipses, on the

other hand, were explained by wives not being duly submissive to their husbands.

Even long after Chinese astronomers had identified the true reasons for both solar and lunar eclipses and could predict with some accuracy first the latter and then the former, ordinary Chinese kept beating drums and firing burning arrows into the sky in their effort to scare the monstrous Celestial Dog who was trying to swallow the sun.

In China there are distinct traces of sun and moon worship which are discernable in the rites of certain secret societies (Sect of Devil-worshippers as one example). Western sinologists attribute this to the influence of Zoroastrianism and Manicheism (a religion founded by the Persian Mani in the latter half of the third century and brought into China during the Tang dynasty. It is a mixture of Persian Zoroastrianism, Babylonian symbolism, Buddhist ethics and some superficial Christian elements.—E.P.) Among the lower classes, red color was associated with sun worship right down to Mao tze-dong, whose teachings were

compared to a 'red sun.' The power of the sun and the revolution inspired the anthem of the Chinese people: "The East is red, the sun ascends".

A picture showing the god of good luck with his hand on the sun can be interpreted as meaning: 'May you rise in rank (as an official) in as short a time as possible.'

## The Moon (Yue)

The moon is associated with the female principle (Yin), so the moon deity, Chang-e, is female. Both the West and the autumn are female, too, and the Chinese think that the moon is most beautiful in the autumn. Accordingly, the Feast of the Moon was held on the 15th day of the 8th month (in the old Chinese calendar every month began on the day of the new moon, so full moon always falls on the 15). Autumn, however, has also a more somber implication – death, and was the time when executions were carried out. And, naturally, since the Emperor was associated with the sun, the moon symbolized the Empress.

Emperor Xuan-cong of the Tang dynasty (617 – 907 N.E.) is supposed to have been taken to the moon and the beautiful fairies that live there. From them, Xuan-cong is said to have learned an unearthly melody – an episode, which in expanded form provided material for many stories and plays.

The "Moon Blossom" or "Moon Pearl" falls from time to time onto the earth and any woman who swallows it becomes pregnant. Women's feet, mutilated by binding were much admired in ancient times, and compared with the beauty of the new moon – as were the eyebrows



**Letter from a Chinese Jew  
Professor and Lieutenant  
in the Chinese Air Force**

At present I am a professor, teaching classical Chinese literature and a second lieutenant of the Chinese (Taiwanese) Air Force. I am a patriot of Free China, and by tradition I am a 101 percent Chinese. However, I am also true to the Jewish traditions: I keep kosher, and if I happen to eat out, I go to a Muslim restaurant, where no pork or other unclean food is served. In our canteen and the official banquets I eat vegetarian dishes only. I am 29, but still a bachelor, because in Taiwan I did not meet a Jewish girl. Of all the Hebrew Scriptures, I could get only a Bible in Chinese, Japanese and English. The time will come, and my old wish will be fulfilled: I shall visit Israel, the Holy Land and the Motherland of my ancestors.

With my best wishes to you and the State of Israel, I am Sh. S. Hsieh P.S. Enclosed please find my photograph, by which you may know how a Chinese Jew looks." (From Davar, January 1953, translated from the Hebrew by Emmanuel Pratt)

**PLEASE NOTE**  
Our new e-mail is:  
[igud-sin@13.net](mailto:igud-sin@13.net)

*Readers are requested  
to notify the Editor  
whether any personal  
names have been  
incorrectly spelt.*

*Thank you*



Phoenix and sun

of a beautiful woman. The full moon, on the other hand, symbolized an attractive female posterior, though the phrase "admiring the full moon" refers to homosexuality.

There are no secrets to be hidden from the "Old Man on the Moon": he has everybody's records in safe keeping, and from studying these he can tell which man will marry which woman: marriage is determined by fate, a theme, which underlies many Chinese novels.

Given the nature of the ancient Chinese calendar, it was to be expected that certain numbers: 7. 12. 13 and 28 should acquire symbolical meaning (we shall return to the subject in the chapter on Number Mysticism).

The sacrifice to the moon took place in the open air on the 15th day of the 8th month. All the fruits that were offered in the sacrifice had symbolical meaning: gourds expressed the wish that the family may always remain united, the pomegranates symbolize many children, apples – peace. The "moon cakes" were (and still are) round as the full moon.

**The Stars**

Chinese astrology is closely bound to the Chinese natural science and philosophy of which heaven earth and man are the three forces of nature, and it is man, whose task it is

to bring the other two into harmony. To the "Twelve Stellar Stations" or the "Twenty-eight Lunar Stations" there corresponded on earth 12 or 28 regions – parts of China. To the twelve stellar stations, Chinese astronomers gave names derived from the 12 branch cycle. It is to be noted that the 12 stations are not in any way related to the Zodiac of Western astronomy. Over the centuries the astrological way of thought gradually spread to virtually every area of Chinese culture. Before concluding a marriage under the old system, it was especially necessary to have horoscopes cast in order to see whether they were in harmony, and could a man born under the sign of the cock expect to live harmoniously with a woman born under the sign of the snake? Statistical investigation has shown that "favorable" and "unfavorable" combinations came up in about equal proportion. An unfavorable combination meant that the proposed marriage could be called off without the family of the rejected side feeling in any way offended.

No less an important role did the stars play in business transactions: a buyer of a plot of land or a piece of property would first hire an expert astrologer to carefully investigate whether the merchandise was favorably situated under the stars, before concluding the deal.

# Igud Yotzei Sin

## **At the IYS Presidium**

The regular meeting of the IYS Presidium took place on July 18, and was attended by: T. Kaufman, Y. Klein, R. Weinerman, J. Bein, M. Kamionka, R. Rashinsky, Z. Fainberg, J. Sandel, G. Katz, B. Bershadsky, E. Vandel, and members of Inspection Committee, M. Likhomanov and Z. Watner.

T. Kaufman submitted a comprehensive account of the work done by the IYS during 2005. Then Deputy Chairman and Treasurer Y. Klein made explanatory remarks about the budget for 2005 and balance sheet for December 31, 2004. Both were unanimously confirmed.

## **At the IYS Central Committee**

The regular meeting of the Central Committee of Igud Yotzei Sin took place on July 18. Teddy Kaufman asked the participants to rise in honor of the members of the IYS in Israel and abroad, who passed away since the last meeting eight months ago.

In Israel: Lilli Weisberger (Bomash), Mousia Shtofman (Marinsky), Sarah Morgulev, Riva Basin, Nesia Shamir-Shmerling (nee Friedman), Lea Trigubov, Jenia Rosenstein, Rosetta Rabinowitz, Katia Kotkin, Abram Zinman, Fanya Kessler.

In the Diaspora: Manya Burda (Sydney), Ernst Gefner (Indiapolis), Ruth Tichman (San Francisco), Liuba Kobritz (Sydney), Lola Ginzburg (San Francisco), Natan Stern (San Francisco), Mikhail Medavoy (Los Angeles), Rosa Gonigstock (Sydney), Valya Uline (Los Angeles), Sonia Sher (Sydney), Lusie Rosental (San Francisco), Joseph Schulhoff (New York), Ira Rojansky (Los Angeles), Rene Rivkin (Sydney), Dina Zondov (New York), Beba Singer (San Francisco), Erik Gabriel (San Diego), Israel Epstein (Peking), Sofa Gurvich (Sydney), Gregory Shanon (New York), Sandra

Hertzberg (California).

T. Kaufman delivered a comprehensive account of work done by the IYS during the year 2005: two numbers (383, 384) of the Bulletin were issued and the preparation of its Rosh Hashana number is now underway. The memorial tablets at the synagogue were renovated. A group of Chinese journalists and two TV teams from Peking and Shanghai were entertained and assisted by the IYS to produce a documentary about the former residents of China who now live in Israel.

- The number of our needy landmen, who receive regular assistance from the IYS is now 101 (68 members of families, and 33 singles).
- T. Kaufman gave six lectures on the Jews of China in Jerusalem, Nahariya, Herzliya and Tel Aviv.
- During the expiring year we received the following generous donations: From Asya Kogan - US\$21,000; Musia and Danny Berkovich - NIS20,000; Billy Belokamen - US\$5,000; D. Familian - US\$2,500; and Mariana Barley (Michaelis) - NIS5,000. We

have launched our annual pre-Rosh Hashana "In lieu of flowers" fund raising campaign.

Our weekly Sunday brunches continue to take place at Bet Ponve. The IYS Haifa branch prepares an all Israel get-together on July 26.

Deputy chairman and treasurer Yossi Klein submitted a budget for 2005. Both the account by the Chairman and the Treasurer's budget were unanimously confirmed. Y. Klein also submitted a balance sheet for December 31, 2004 whose main paragraphs are: NIS350,000 for social assistance, and NIS300,000 for scholarships. The Balance Sheet was duly confirmed.

## **Memorial Synagogue of the Jewish Communities of China**

A pre-High Holidays general cleaning of the Memorial Synagogue of the Jewish Communities of China (31 Rehov Golan, Tel Aviv) is now underway. As usual, a professional hazan was invited to conduct the services.



"Shanghai Diary" - Book Section, p.25





# Books

In a review of Holocaust literature by Meir Ronnen published on July 22, 2005 in Up Front, a weekend supplement to The Jerusalem Post, he mentions two books that reflect the lives of German and Austrian Jewish refugees in Shanghai during World War II.

## ***Vivian Jeanette Kaplan,***

Ten Green Bottles: The True Story of One Family's Journey from War-Torn Austria to the Ghettos of Shanghai (St. Martin's Press)

## ***Ursula Bacon,***

Shanghai Diary: A Young Girl's Journey from Hitler's Hate to War-Torn China (M Press, Dark Horse Books).

"Both are coming-of-age memoirs of teenage girls who, led by their parents, eventually found themselves in a survival niche in Shanghai's fetid alleys, but Bottles is actually a recreation written in the voice of Nini Karpel by a daughter born in Shanghai in 1946, but who grew up speaking Viennese German. Bacon was just 11 when she was sent to Gestapo HQ to retrieve a sack holding the battered body of her father – a release arranged by an influential gentile relative who also provided for passage to Shanghai. Her father recovered, and his indomitable cheery spirit and gift for enterprise kept his family going in Shanghai under miserable circumstances. ...

Toward the end of the war, Ursula risked her life in more ways than one by swimming the Whangpoo river, the local sewer, at night in order to help three downed US fliers reach a Chinese

resistance group".

## ***The Jews of Harbin Live on in my Heart***

By Teddy Kaufman

Teddy opens his book with the following paragraph:

"Harbin was founded in 1898 on the site of a small Chinese village. The first Jews arrived with the founding of the city, the last ones left in 1963. Hence, the story of the Jewish community in Harbin spans a period of only 65 years. One of the characteristics of the new Jewish communities was their rapid adaptation to the new environment, and the easy integration of Jews from diverse backgrounds into the community. The Jews of Harbin had arrived from different areas and had different traditions. Some were well educated, even learned, others illiterate and lacking the most basic religious knowledge. But, unlike the communities in Germany, Poland, and others in the Diaspora, who achieved integration over hundreds of years, the Harbin community came into existence almost overnight".

This book is therefore in part a trip down memory lane and in part a documentary of someone who lived most of the events described in the book. It is a story of Harbin and the Jews who lived there, the successes and tragedies that befell such as the Skidelsky and Caspé families, the selfless devotion of Dr. A. Kaufman to his community and above all the history that unfolded before his eyes and the people who were participants in the little known history of the Jews

of Harbin. To a researcher the book is a must read. To an ex-Harbiner the book will evoke memories of days gone by, and to a reader interested in a story of a corner of this world, where reason prevailed over anti-Semitism in the days of World War II, this book perhaps will bring a new perspective on the actions of Japan in those turbulent times.

Teddy Piastunovich

## ***Review***

The story of Jews in Harbin is indeed close to the heart of Teddy Kaufman, President of the Association of Former Jewish Residents of China in Israel. His father, Abraham Kaufman, a dedicated medical doctor and leader of Jewish communities in China, is still today a hero in the minds of Jewish "Old China Hands". Dr. Kaufman served as a beloved model not only to his son, Teddy, but to all Jews who had met him personally or read about him. Teddy Kaufman's book is a detailed history of the Jews in Harbin, and the changes in their fate as various rulers took over the city. It is a combination of detailed historical research and personal involvement, a source of much information for all those interested in Jewish history in China.

Harbin was founded in 1898 and Jews arrived early to settle there. By 1963, most Jews had gone but in the short period of 65 years they left an indelible mark on the city, where they played a role in the economy, professional life and culture. The Jews in Harbin came from different countries and different backgrounds. Some were religious, some not, some passionate Zionists,

some indifferent to the movement. Many Russian Jews escaping anti-Semitism and cruel pogroms had arrived with the construction of the East China Railway in 1896. At the time, it was Russia's greatest project, which ended in 1903 after 3,819 km. of rail had been laid. In Harbin, Jews were not restricted in their lives and work as they had been in Russia. They could engage freely in their professions and live without terror. In 1904, the Russo-Japanese War broke out. Among the 1,000,000 Russian soldiers were 30,000 Jews. One of them, a great Zionist, Josef Trumpeldor, was the first Jewish officer in the Russian army. He was severely wounded in the battle of Port Arthur, taken prisoner by the Japanese, and reached Harbin when he was released. Trumpeldor took this opportunity to lecture to Jewish youth in the city, where his pro-Zionist influence became very strong. The 1920s and 1930s were good times for Harbin Jews. They founded

a Jewish Bank, a Jewish High School, Zionist organizations, newspapers, a fine library, benevolent societies, and old people's home, medical clinics, a burial society and cemetery. Their Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Kiselev, was revered for his total dedication to the Jewish community.

When Japanese troops entered Manchuria in 1931, the entire picture changed. Many Japanese cooperated with White Russian Fascists who were fiercely anti-Semitic. Their paper "Nash Put" (Our Way) was a mirror reflecting Nazi hatred for Jews. In 1933, Simon Kaspé, the young son of a prominent Harbin Jewish businessman, was kidnapped for ransom and tortured to death by White Russians supported by some Japanese. The perpetrators were arrested and eventually released.

At the end of World War II, the Red Army occupied Harbin from August 17, 1945 – April 1946. Dr. Abraham Kaufman, the author's fearless father, who had suffered under Japanese

occupation, was now persecuted by the Soviets. On August 12, 1945, Dr. Kaufman was arrested. He was taken away with other prisoners in an open truck, surrounded by NKVD people. He would finally be reunited with his family only in 1961 (in Israel), having survived dreadful conditions in a Russian concentration camp.

The final pages of the book are of a more personal nature. The author speaks with love and admiration about his parents, tells the story of some other Harbin Jews, and describes the joy when the creation of the State of Israel is announced.

In the Epilogue, Kaufman says: "When I left Harbin in 1949, its population was 800,000. Since then, I visited Harbin twice (in 1992 and 1994) and found that Harbin had become a modern city whose population in 1994 had reached 8,400,000 ... We are proud to be descendants of Harbin Jews."

Rina Krasno

(From Book Nook, Points East)

## "The Jews of Harbin Live In My heart"



Igud Yotzei Sin is pleased to announce the publication of the historical account of the Jewish presence in Harbin "The Jews of Harbin Live In My Heart" by Teddy Kaufman (In Hebrew). The book is a comprehensive documentation of the life pattern of the Harbin Jews and their contribution to the economical and cultural development of the city. It also owes its unique value to the fact that the author was an associate of the activities of the "HEDO", (The Jewish Community of Harbin), and includes his personal reminiscences of the turbulent 1930's – 1940's.

Bat Ami Melnik, the Hebrew editor of the book, writes:

"Teddy Kaufman, born in Harbin in 1924, is chairman of the Igud Yotzei Sin, formerly an activist in the Harbin Jewish community, and son of one of its leaders, Dr. A. Kaufman. At the

suggestion of his close friend and deputy chairman of the IYS, Yossi Klein, also formerly of Harbin, Teddy Kaufman put his reminiscences on paper. The book unfolds before the reader a broad panorama of historical events which took place in Manchuria and the capital of its Jewish settlement, Harbin, from the downfall of the Chinese rule, through the stormy period of the Japanese occupation, and up to its self-dissipation with the emergence of the Communist regime. In his book, T. Kaufman opens a window overlooking another fascinating facet, at times tragic, at times gay and humorous, of this unique Jewish community".

The book can be obtained at the Igud Yotzei Sin offices at 13 Gruzenberg St., Tel-Aviv

Tel. 03-517-1997. Cost: NIS 40, proceeds for the IYS Social Welfare Fund.

# The New Israel's Messenger



Vol. VIII No. 1

IYS Sephardi Division

Editor: Sasson Jacoby

This is the 29th issue of The New Israel's Messenger and somewhat appropriately falls on the occasion of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. Appropriately, because while the celebration is a somber affair, it is also a day of introspection and, importantly, taking stock of the past year.

Eight years ago, the English supplement of the IYS Bulletin came under the editorship of the late Boris Bresler. In his first editorial, he pointed out the issue had a "face-lift," taking advantage of the new computer technology. He also mentioned the "important addition" of the Sephardi Division's The New Israel's Messenger which paid tribute to the publication published in Shanghai by N.E.B. Ezra in 1904. Eight years have passed and we think it is about time to take stock of our progress since then.

Headlined "A Fresh Start" in its first editorial, I wrote of the hope that our publication would resurrect the image of a neglected but not completely forgotten phase of Sephardi Jewish life in China. Whether we have succeeded in our project is still a matter for conjecture. But perhaps we can now say we have made some modest progress. A disappointing factor was the meager feedback from the former members of our Shanghai Sephardi Community still surviving throughout the world in spite of our continuous effort.

It may seem irrelevant to others that all this effort has no place in the world as it has become. But a little thought must inevitably bring one to realize that it raises more than just a degree of nostalgia and interest in our past. We began eight years ago with our first project on Rosh Hashanah, the dedication of the Sir Horace Kadoorie Memorial Grove on a slope facing Mount Tabor, The feedback of this project was enormous and raised hopes that this would continue.

These hopes were dashed but we continued our work and initiated a series of articles of the history of our Shanghai community leadership. These were men of high repute and of substance; most of them blessed with a lot of legendary financial acumen, were pioneers of a new age of commercial freedom. Our Baghdadi leaders had, after all, a



pivotal role in the economy of Shanghai, out of all proportion to the small number of its community. In the mad rush of economic boom in Shanghai between the two world wars, they were the ones who changed the face of the city with the construction of magnificent hotels and other buildings. Shanghai was only the second in the world after the U.S. to have such tall buildings.

We also included the history of others of our community, for we were concerned of sections of family history dying with successive generations. Also for example, I would like to tell the story

about an ancestor, a paternal great-grandfather who died in Baghdad at the age of 112. We were told that he was mobile, could feed himself, went to sleep one night and never woke up. My father never even mentioned his name; nothing ever was written down so I never could even trace him.

To our minds the histories of our Shanghai families brings that world of ours in Shanghai to life, and in another way, recreates it. An example of this is supplied by the history in this issue of Rachel Levy. To some of us, unfortunately, the past had faded away and this is what we are trying to oppose; we are not intent on just dying.

In our last issue we mentioned the plan for reconstruction of Shanghai's Ohel Rachel Synagogue and the drawings made of the interior including its windows, wooden, stone and iron elements. The work is slow but sure, and it must be remembered that a part of us remains there inextricably, tied to the past and to the future. Ohel Rachel is more than mortar and stone, it is an enduring monument to our history. I wrote in our first issue that it was a new beginning, but now, I maintain, it is certainly not the beginning of an end.

# The Lady of Shanghai

By Sharon Kantor

Not every person gets to meet with his childhood memories face to face, especially when they are memories from a faraway place like China. Rachel Levy, Assistant Marketing Manager of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, did. As befitting a fairy-tale, the story will begin with Once upon a time ...

Once upon a time there was a four year old girl, Rachel, who lived with her family in Shanghai, China. Her family, of distinguished Iraqi origins, lived in a four storey beautiful house, with four servants and strict British education. "I was born in Shanghai", says Rachel, "third or fourth generation in China. My parents' grandparents came there at an early age with their parents, about 150 years ago. My father had eight brothers and sisters, my mother had one sister and five brothers. Big families. My mother used to tell that when my grandmother arrived at the school in her chariot to pay tuition fees she was received like royalty, because she paid for nine pupils". Not many heard about the big Iraqi community of Shanghai. In the 19th century, Shanghai was a commercial crossroad, a cosmopolitan city. In 1845 three of the biggest and richest Jewish-British families arrived at Shanghai from Iraq: Kadourie, Sassoon and Hardoon. Many families of employees that lived full Jewish lives came with them. "It is told that the Chinese servants knew all the Jewish holidays, the rituals and the Kashrut rules and even knew the words of the Jewish prayers", Rachel recalls. "They say that the meal ending Yom Kippur was a feast, with a barbecue and all sorts of meats. They could afford it". When Jews got



Rachel (centre) with La Joy's daughter (left) and the guide (right)

married it was a 7-day celebration. The Jews, actually all the foreigners, led rich colonial lives. The Jews made sure not to assimilate and since the Jewish community was small they had to marry within the family. "My parents were first cousins. They took an uncalculated risk that by chance was successful. Their mothers were sisters. One of my aunts married an English policeman, a Christian of course, and it was very unusual. One of my father's brothers married a Jewish Russian girl, and my grandmother could not accept that he married an Ashkenazi and banned them. Even in such a cosmopolitan environment it was an exception. English education was alright, but not an Ashkenazi bride. They simply thought that they were of a much higher class, established and well educated, and here comes some Russian refugee and he marries her instead of a nice Iraqi". In 1949, after the war, when the Communists took over, the foreigners left Shanghai. Rachel's family, the Jacobs, left too. All the brothers emigrated to English speaking countries. Only Rachel's father, a Zionist, decided to come to Israel. but for the family, who was used to a comfortable colonial life, the

absorption in the young state of Israel was difficult. It also brought about miracles possible only in the local melting pot. "My parents arrived here wearing hats, my father with Charleston black and white shoes, my mother in high heels. They never had to work, spoke only English (and a little Chinese). The Jewish Agency did them a favor and sent them to Naharia where there were German Jews who spoke English and played bridge. My parents divorced a few years later, mainly due to the difficulties, and my stepfather was a German Jew. My grandmother came here two years later with her daughter, my aunt. When she arrived, she still thought she was Queen Victoria. She could not get accustomed to the period of austerity rations and they never applied to her. When we came to visit her, we saw in her house fruits that were unseen here: grapes in the winter, persimmons in the summer, omelettes made of seven eggs. All the sons who lived in England and the USA sent her packages with food and coffee so that she could maintain her lifestyle. I remember my aunt, with her fancy make-up kit, wearing gloves before putting on her nylon stockings! In 1952, this seemed like science fiction. My mother cooked

a combination of Chinese food with Jewish restrictions, because we kept kashrut. In the early 1960s my mother used to grow bean sprouts at home for personal use, long before people here knew what they were. We used to eat with chopsticks, and mother also cooked with them, they were placed near the stove. She felt more skilled with them than with a fork. When relatives came to visit, they used to reminisce and speak some Chinese between them”.

Now back to 2005. At the turn of the New Year the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) was invited for a concert tour to China. The first stop – Shanghai, a festive reception on board of a yacht with Maestro Zubin and his wife Nancy. The Chinese television reporter, after having interviewed Mr. Mehta, suddenly turns to Rachel. Even the Chinese people were excited to learn that there is a “native” in the Israeli delegation. The next morning Rachel took a Chinese tourist guide to take her to the house where she was born. At the last moment, Avi Shoshani, the Orchestra’s General Secretary, decided to join her, not knowing that he would witness the moving moments to come.

“We took a taxi and I gave the driver the address: ‘20 Yu Yuen Road’. After



Rachel and Zubin Mehta

a 20-minute drive we arrive at the still lively and colorful neighborhood and the house was still there at the corner. Usually, when one recalls things from the past, there is a tendency to exaggerate, but here it was just as I was told, a big and impressive house. At the time it used to accommodate the entire family, now each room is occupied by a Chinese family. We went inside; the staircase looked miserable, poor and strange. A Chinese gentleman told me he knew the house used to belong to Jews.

We then went out to the lane behind the house. Suddenly, from one of the rooms, out came an old Chinese lady who saw me looking at the house and said to the guide: “I know her. I used to work for this family”.

The Chinese woman of about 65 named some of the family members she remembered and said: “I am the daughter of La Joy”. Her mother was our servant and she used to play with us as kids. She still lives in the same house, which was nationalized by the Communist regime, and was not sold, so that the people who used to live there before, even servants’ children, could stay in their houses. What a coincidence! Ten minutes earlier she could have been sleeping or had the door closed or gone to the market, and would never have met me on the lane. This is simply Providence”.

Rachel, today a grandmother herself, has long forgotten to speak Chinese. It is hard to remember a language that is not used and there is no use for Chinese even with the IPO’s Marketing Department where she has been working for many years (many surely know her as the lady from Customer Service), but this trip to Shanghai with the IPO will surely be remembered by her for a long time.

Rachel (Shelley) Levy was born in Shanghai in 1944. Her parents, Aziza (nee Ezekiel) and David Jacob, were first cousins and were both Shanghai born. Rachel has two older brothers, Danny who lives in the States and Lenny who lives in Kiryat Ata, near Haifa. The family arrived in Israel in 1949 and went to live in Nahariya. Five years later her parents were divorced, and her mother then married Haim Leitner.

In 1963 Rachel married Yossi Levy-Nahum and they have four children, Alon, Michal, Tammy and David, and three grandchildren. She has been working with the IPO since 1991 as Assistant to the Marketing Director in charge of Advertising and Customer Service. She and her husband live in the Neve Zedek neighborhood of Tel Aviv within walking distance of the Mann Auditorium.

### **Correction**

We apologize for the missing by-line for the article “Ah Chan: The Compleat Food Processor” published in Bulletin #384. The article written by Sasson Jacoby.

# From the Israel's Messenger

6th January, 1935

ISRAEL'S MESSENGER

## SOCIAL AND PERSONAL



Master Aaron Rodfeld, is here seen with his grand-father Mr. Hibel Epstein, an esteemed member of our community.

We understand that Mrs. H. Gensburger has been instrumental lately in raising \$2,500 for the Hebrew Shelter House, from the local members of our community.

The greatest number of Jewish immigrants in any one month of Erez Yisrael's recent history arrived in Jerusalem during the month of October when 6,000 were admitted.

The Japanese Minister and Mrs. Akira Ariyoshi were "at home" to several hundred guests on the 17th ultimo, at their residence 79 Route Pichon, when they received members of the Diplomatic and Consular bodies, Naval and Military officers and their wives and numbers of well-known local residents. Among the guests the following were included, Mr. and Mrs. M. S. Bloch, Mr. and Mrs. N. E. B. Ezra, Miss Cecelia Ezra and Sir Victor Sassoon.

The engagement of Miss Lize Jacob, the youngest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Eckiel

Page Seven



Master Aaron, eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. B. Rodfeld, is conceded to be a bright student of the local Public school. He celebrated last month his sixth birthday.

Mr. Aubrey Hillaly sailed for Hongkong this week on a brief vacation and will return within a fortnight. Mr. Hillaly is a member of the Shanghai Stock Exchange.

An old and well-known resident of Shanghai, Mr. Shooker Moosa, passed away in San Francisco, on the 8th ultimo. The deceased left Shanghai about eight years ago for America, owing to his ill-health. He was for many years in the firm of Messrs. E. D. Sassoon and Co. and left it in 1909 when he established business on his own account. When this journal was founded in 1904, the late Mr. Moosa was one of its promoters, helping all along with his advice and facile pen. He was a man of brilliant mind, active and controversialist. He was an ardent communal worker in his days and many an institution which is flourishing to-day owes its existence to him. He was popular in local circles and his amiable disposition attracted many friends to him. He was a good Hebrew scholar and a clever writer. He is survived by his widow, four sons and four daughters, for whom deep sympathy is felt in their grievous loss. The deceased was 64 years of age.



BUDDY is five years old, and is the bonny son of Mr. and Mrs. T. Saphiere.—

The Hanucseh Ball on the 19th ultimo, at the Canidrome, given under the auspices of the local Zionist Association "Kadimah" was a great success. There was a large attendance and the excellent programme was highly enjoyed. The net proceeds will be divided between the Jewish National Fund and the B'nai B'rith Polyclinic. The former



Mr. Meyer Myers, who returned last month from his business trip in Japan.

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# CHUSAN ROAD CHATTER

Issue 385

IYS Hongkew Division

Editor: Kurt Maimann

## *From Prague to the Far East*

*By Joseph Schulhof as told to Lewish Weiner*

I was born in 1903 in Český Brod, a little old town about 20 miles east of Prague. In elementary school, I was the only Jewish student in a class of sixty. There was little Jewish education; the Jewish children in Český Brod had only one hour of religious instruction each week with the local rabbi. After finishing grade school, I began to commute between Český Brod and Prague, where I attended gymnasium. Later, I went to the German University of Prague to study engineering. Following my graduation, I got a job at the coal mines of Kladno, a town not far from Prague. This was followed by several years with a Prague engineering company. In 1929 the company sent me to Ostrava, a town in Moravia near the Polish border, to set up and manage a branch office there. It was in Ostrava that I met my wife, Sari (Charlotte). She was a native of Hungary, but was then living with her uncle in Bielsko, Poland, just across the border from Moravská, Ostrava. We were married in 1932. Four years later I was transferred back to Prague to assume an executive position at the main office of my company. It was in Prague that our son Peter was born in 1937.

Hitler occupied Prague on March 15, 1939. At first – strange though it may seem in retrospect – I was hesitant about emigrating. My wife, who

was very much afraid of what might happen to us if we stayed, was eager for us to leave Europe. I, on the other hand, was reluctant to leave; my family had lived in Czechoslovakia for hundreds of years. By the time I finally realized that we would have to go, there was hardly a place left that accepted Jewish refugees. My wife had cousins in the United States who sent us an affidavit for the American consul in Prague, guaranteeing that if we were admitted to the United States, our relatives would support us, if necessary, and not allow us to become public charges. I called at the American consulate in Prague with the affidavit to apply for U.S. immigration visas for myself, my wife and Peter. To my dismay, I was informed that while the consulate could register our applications, our quota numbers might not come up for another seven or eight years!

In the meantime, nearly every country had closed its doors to Jewish refugees. There was only one place left: Shanghai, in China. Shanghai was then an international city, open to anyone who could show that he had a minimum of \$500 (“landing money”) so that he would not become a dependent on charity.

Inquiring at a steamship company office in Prague about boat reservations, I was informed that I also needed American dollars to pay

for our passage to Shanghai. (Luckily, we would not have to pay for our son because he was under three years of age.) We were told that our “landing money” of \$500 would also have to be deposited with the steamship company in American dollars, and it was impossible to obtain American currency in the Nazi Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. I had no choice but to turn to my younger brother, Rudolph, who had already gone to the United States in May 1939, via Belgium, and was working for his wife’s father in New York. I wrote to Rudolph about our plight, requesting him to ask my wife’s cousins for assistance. These cousins contributed part of the money I needed; the rest was lent by Rudolph’s father-in-law. Rudolph deposited the money with the New York office of the Lloyd Triestino steamship company, which notified its offices in Genoa, Italy, and in Prague that the money had been received. I was now permitted to book passage on the S.S. Conte Verde, the next ship to sail from Genoa to Shanghai.

The next step was to obtain our exit permits from the Gestapo in Prague. The Gestapo would not believe that we were going to Shanghai. They assumed that we were planning to go to Palestine with one of the “illegal” Zionist transports. I received instructions to compile a detailed

inventory of all our assets and possessions, down to the last tube of toothpaste (even if the tube had already been started). I drew up the list and took it to the Oberlandesrat, which represented the German government in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Next, the Gestapo sent an “expert appraiser” to our apartment to assess the value of our possessions. He assessed everything at what he considered its full original purchase price, and he concluded that our total worth was – I seem to recall – 150,000 Czech crowns. With the appraiser’s statement, I went to the Gestapo headquarters, only to be told that before I could get exit permits for Charlotte, myself and our little boy, I would have to pay a Reichsfluchtsteuer, a tax for emigrating from the German Reich. This tax would amount to 300,000 Czech crowns, exactly double my total worth as stated by the “appraiser”. Looking back upon it now, I am amazed at the sangfroid with which I confronted the Gestapo. “I don’t have that kind of money,” I said to the Gestapo man, “and you know it, because you yourselves sent an expert to assess all my property.” “We know,” the Gestapo man replied, “but your relatives will give you the money.”

I went to my aunt, who was quite well off. She gave me the needed amount and I was able to pay the 300,000 crowns. At long last, I received the precious exit permits for Charlotte, myself and Peter. Of course, along with all other Jews, we had to surrender all our silver, jewelry and other valuables to the Germans. I was given a receipt – but I never got anything back after the war.

I picked up our exit permits and German passports from the Gestapo. The passports were made out to Joseph Israel Schulhoff and Charlotte Sarah Schulhof. Israel and Sarah were not our true names. These Hebrew names were added to all official German Reich documents issued to Jews. With our exit permits and newly-

acquired German passports, I went to the steamship company to make final arrangements for our passage to Shanghai. We were informed that our ship would sail from Genoa on May 2, 1940. I broke up our household and disposed of everything we could not take with us. Some of the things I gave to my elderly mother who would not leave. (My father had died the previous October.) Some of the things I sold for as much – or as little – as they would bring. I kept several basic items for shipment with us to Shanghai.

My oldest brother Karel, who was nine years my senior, tried until the last moment to talk us out of leaving for China. (In addition to this brother, and Rudolph, the youngest, in New York, I had another brother seven years older than I, who was married in Russia during World War I and had two children. I also had a married sister, two years younger than myself.) Now my “big brother” Karel, who had a wife and two children and owned a lighting fixtures plant in Prague, addressed himself bluntly to Charlotte. “No offense meant, Sári,” he said, pointedly using her Hungarian name, “but you are like a wandering gypsy. You were born in Hungary, then you went to live with your uncle in Poland, and now you are in Czechoslovakia. So you can’t possibly understand how we feel about pulling up stakes and going to another country. Our family has lived in this region for hundreds of years. Our roots are deep in this soil. We have shared the good times with the Czech people, so now we’ll have to share the bad times, too. You’ll see, this whole Hitler business won’t last long. You still have a nice apartment. Why not stay here and ride out the storm?”

Then turning to me, Karel said: “Consider this. You’ll be coming to a strange country with a young child and no money; you can’t speak the language; you won’t be able to compete with the cheap Chinese

labor. So you’ll end up dying in the street like a beggar. Don’t go to Shanghai.” But I did not listen to my brother.

Now that we had our passports and exit permits, I thought we were all set to leave. We had sold everything; we had vacated our apartment and were temporarily staying with my sister. On the day before our scheduled departure for Genoa, Charlotte and I did some last-minute shopping, then took a taxi to my sister’s place. On the way, I told the driver to stop in front of the steamship company’s office on Václavské NámCsti, in the center of Prague. We decided that Charlotte should remain in the taxi while I went inside to pick up our tickets. But to my dismay, the very same agent who had taken my money and made all the necessary arrangements, informed me without batting an eyelash that he had no reservations for me.

“What do you mean you have no reservations for me?” I demanded. “I paid for everything! You have my money! You yourself told me that you booked us for the passage. I’ve already broken up my household. Everything I want to take with me has already been forwarded to Genoa. I’ve disposed of everything else. I have nowhere to stay, waiting for another ship.” But the ticket agent was not impressed. “Well, that’s just too bad,” he calmly replied. “There’s no more space on the ship sailing on May 2.”

I went back outside to the taxi, where Charlotte had been waiting for me. I was as white as a sheet. I was desperate. Then I remembered that during my school days, when I was commuting between Český Brod and Prague, I had struck up an acquaintance with a man by the name of Sobotka, who took the same train as I each morning. I also remembered that Sobotka was employed in the Skoda Works, where he was in charge of travel arrangements for employees traveling abroad. So I told the taxi driver to proceed to the offices of the



Skoda Works. As luck would have it, Sobotka was there. I told him of our plight. He said not to worry; he would take care of everything. He rushed out of his office and was gone for a while. When he returned, he told me: "Go back to that steamship company. The agent apparently sold your passage to someone who gave him a 'tip'. But now I think he'll give you your tickets." So I went back to the steamship company, and to my vast relief, received our travel documents assuring us of a passage aboard the Conte Verde as scheduled.

The very next day we left Prague with a heavy heart, wondering whether and when we would ever see the city, or our loved ones, again. We traveled by train via Munich to Genoa, from where our ship was to sail the following week. We had been allowed to take with us only a minimum of clothing; for me, it was two shirts, two suits, two pairs of shoes, plus some socks and underwear. Each of us was allowed to take only the equivalent of \$5 per person in cash. When we arrived in Genoa, I realized that we didn't have any money to pay the hotel bill where we had to stay for the week before our sailing date. I sent a cable to my brother in New York, asking him to send me \$100 that would pay our hotel bill and leave us with some spending money for use aboard the ship. Since I did not know whether Rudolph would be able to help us, I sent a similar cable to my former business partner and friend, Vodák, who was then in Singapore. Also, Charlotte put in a phone call to her father in Hungary, telling him that we needed money not only for the hotel but also for little extras on the boat such as tips or a glass of lemonade. We did not know which of these three people would respond. My father-in-law informed Charlotte that a cousin of hers, who was living with her husband in Bologna, was just then visiting Hungary. She would telephone her husband in Bologna, and ask him to let us have some cash

at once.

We spent the next week in great suspense and anxiety. At the very last moment, at ten o'clock in the morning of our scheduled sailing (the boat was to leave at 12 noon), money arrived from Bologna in Italian liras, as did \$100 from New York, and another \$100 from Singapore. So Charlotte and I now had between us \$200 and some Italian liras, enough cash to pay our hotel bill and for use as spending money during the crossing and immediately upon landing in Shanghai.

After checking out from the hotel I raced to the steamship office and got our boarding passes at 11.30, just half an hour before sailing time. Then we rushed to the pier and headed for the ship. The S.S. Conte Verde was an Italian ship of 48,000 tons. Just as we boarded, I saw our big wooden packing crate being loaded aboard. I had to pay a surcharge for overweight. Luckily, we now had the money.

The purser greeted us with the news that he had no cabin for us: the ship was already fully booked. I would have to share a cabin with two men from India; Charlotte was assigned one berth in a cabin with another woman. When Charlotte requested a crib for Peter – the berths were too narrow to accommodate two persons, even if one of them was just a young child – the purser said he could not help her. But eventually he took pity on her and moved Charlotte to a larger cabin with three berths instead of two.

And so we set sail from Genoa. We traveled through the Strait of Messina to Port Said, then passed through the Suez Canal. On the shore of the canal I saw a train that had come from Palestine. We were not permitted to go ashore; the British authorities wanted to make sure that we would not try to reach Palestine.

We proceeded to Aden, Bombay, Ceylon, the northern coast of Sumatra and to Singapore. While our ship lay at anchor at Singapore, my friend

Vodák came aboard with some fruit, cereals and canned foods. "For Shanghai," he explained. Then he went with me to my cabin and took from his coat pocket some 20 gold coins, each weighing more than an ounce. "Please do me a favor," he said. "I have a brother in the United States. He's a doctor and has to study for his American license. He needs money. I can't send him any money from here. So please, when you get to Shanghai, exchange these coins for American dollars and have the money sent to my brother." Vodák also said we could keep one of the gold coins for ourselves. Then he left us. Later, we learned that he had managed to flee to Australia after the Japanese occupied Singapore.

Our ship made another stop in Manila, where the Czechoslovak consul was a Jew, a Mr. Herman. He had been able to keep his position because he had been recognized by the American authorities (those were the days before the Philippines became independent) as the representative of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London. When he learned that we, a Jewish family from Czechoslovakia were aboard the ship, he very kindly invited us to spend a few hours with him.

The next morning our ship sailed from Manila to Hong Kong and from there to Shanghai. After a boat journey of 28 days, we landed at Shanghai early in June, 1940, the day before Italy entered the war on Hitler's side and invaded France.

Since Shanghai was an international port, our ship was permitted to land without difficulties. But later, I wondered what would have happened if our Italian ship had been delayed by just one day, and the British or the French had caught us on the open sea after Italy declared war on the Allies ...

(To be continued in the next issue)  
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# At the Reunion of Landsmen in Haifa

A traditional annual reunion of landsmen, former residents of China who live in the north of Israel took place at the "Shulamit" Hotel in Haifa.  
July 2005



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# At the Reunion of Landsmen in Haifa



1. T. Kaufman speaks

2. Esther Vandell, the Chairman of the Haifa Branch, and Roni Veinerman, the Vice-President of IYS, who lives in Haifa.



3. Y. Klein shows a film about the Seminar that took place in Harbin



# Legends of the Chinese

## Jews of Kaifeng

### 10. A Mutual Discovery: Jews and Jesuits

*(continued from the previous issue)*

When East meets West, a Kaifeng Jew mistakes a Catholic priest for a coreligionist. The misunderstanding is mutual.

Three sons were born to a Jewish family in sixteenth-century Kaifeng. Two studied their religion with great diligence and brought great pride to their family when they became rabbis. The third was more interested in secular studies, and to the dismay of his family, while he could chant the scriptures, never bothered to learn the Hebrew language. In fact, he decided to pursue a career in the civil service. It is this son, however, who has become famous in Jewish history because he was responsible for the Western world's discovery of the mysterious enclave of Jews in China. His name was Ai Tien, and this is his story.

In the spring of 1605, a sixty-year-old county magistrate from one of the seven most famous families of Kaifeng Jewry set off for Peking, then the imperial capital of China. He was a distinguished-looking man (as befit his position), and his high nose and sunken eyes, which separated him from the Han Chinese, were proud above his full beard. A learned and established scholar, he held the respected title of Ju Ren, which since the Tang Dynasty had been bestowed on scholars who successfully passed the imperial examinations at the provincial level.

The journey was tedious and exhausting, since Peking was more than fifteen hundred li (about 470 miles) distant, and the vehicle

available was nothing but a mule-cart. But Ai Tien feared neither the hardship nor the ordeal, because in addition to being on a personal journey in search of promotion, he also had undertaken an important commission from the Jewish community.

Earlier he had come across a book called *Things I have Heard Tell*, about a group of religious enthusiasts from Europe and their activities in China. It made fascinating reading, because he knew that his ancestors, too, had come from the Occident, though he himself had been born and reared in China. Anything about the West interested him. But what intrigued him most was what he learned about the faith these outsiders professed. They proclaimed that there was only one God and that He was both the creator of the universe and the order-keeper of the world. The author described their faith as exotic and strange. Ai certainly understood this. Chinese culture, from its very beginning, had never had a genuinely religious sensibility, although various religions had been introduced to the country. Buddhism, for instance, had been brought to China around 300 BCE, and Taoism had developed around 200 BCE. However, both were of polytheistic origin. That was why monotheism appeared so unique to the Chinese.

Of course, Ai Tien, as a Jew, was personally familiar with the monotheistic doctrine described in the book. While Ai was very learned, by the standards of the Chinese learning of the time, he knew nothing

of Christianity. What was more, he had never even heard of it. Contemporary readers may wonder how a Jew could have been totally unfamiliar with Christianity. After all, Christianity sprang from Judaism, evolved during its early decades in the Jewish national homeland, and uses many of the same sacred writings. The answer is very simple. Ai lived in an insular world, a purely provincial setting in the central part of China. Not only had he never met a Christian, he had never met a Jew from outside his own community. But now, he thought, that would soon be rectified.

What he had learned from the book was that the foreign religious enthusiasts were white-skinned foreigners from the distant continent of Europe. They had come to China to preach the doctrine of one God: monotheism. Who could they be? He knew nothing of Christianity, and the only others besides Jews who believed in one God were the White Cap Hui Huis, as Chinese Moslems were named in his hometown, Kaifeng. But according to the book, the newcomers denied being Moslems.

As a scholar, Ai indulged in some logical speculation.

"What else could they be?" he asked himself, while reading about their activities.

"If the book is accurate," he concluded, "they must be Jews."

"What a discovery I have made!" he said to himself. "I must inform the rabbi and the congregation." When he called on the chief rabbi and told him of his finding, the rabbi

also became excited and called a congregational meeting. After much discussion, the congregants agreed with Ai's conclusion that the outsiders were Jews and, as such, must be contacted.

What wonderful information they would be able to offer. For centuries, the Kaifeng community had been isolated, out of touch with the rest of world Jewry. They had no contact of any kind with Jews beyond China's borders. As a result, certain memories of their ancient religion and its practices had dimmed. The community yearned for an opportunity to reestablish ties with other Jewish communities, especially with the mainstream of its faith, to fulfill the Lord's commandment to keep in touch with one another and strengthen their bonds of brotherhood. But up to now, they'd had no idea where to find their coreligionists and thus had been unable to fulfill this commandment. Now, if it were true that some of their brethren were right there in the imperial capital, they would be at fault if they neglected to take action. Therefore, the community decided to send a representative to the capital to meet their coreligionists and reforge the severed ties with their Western brethren.

Ai Tien was chosen. The journey was long, and travel by mule-cart was slow and tedious. Sitting in the cart, Ai enjoyed the change in pace from his hectic life and, for the first time, took the opportunity afforded by this leisure to muse on his own past and that of his community. He belonged to a well-to-do Jewish merchant family which carried one of the seven well-known surnames bestowed by the Song emperor. Ai was a name the family was very proud to bear, for the honor they had received from the emperor had its roots in Chinese culture.

When Ai began to show great intellectual ability as a small boy, his father was delighted, hoping he would become a Hebrew scholar. But

Ai showed little interest in religious education, so he was sent to a Chinese school where the curriculum was typical at the time, concentrated entirely on the Chinese classics. Children studied books by Confucian and other ancient sages all day, every day. Ai loved the challenge of the material and was quite successful, passing the imperial exams at the country level when he was only eighteen and becoming a Xiu Cai, a title given to junior scholars at the time.

Though he had won honors for his family and community, he did not end his education at that point, as most others did, but undertook additional studies. Before long he passed the imperial exams at the provincial level and earned the title Ju Ren.

With this honor, he was qualified for a career as a government official and served as county magistrate, fulfilling the old Chinese saying "Officialdom is the natural outlet for good scholars."

While Ali was successful in his career, he felt there was something missing in his life: the opportunity to study Hebrew, the language of his own people. Each time he entered the synagogue he suffered because, although he could recite many of the scriptures by heart, he was never able to read as fluently as his two younger brothers.

His knowledge of Hebrew was regrettably limited, but his acquaintance with his community history was not. He had learned much from his parents, the chief rabbi, and the stele in the synagogue. Now the moment had come for him to apply that knowledge. When he finally faced his coreligionists from distant lands, questions concerning the community would certainly be raised. Better be prepared for this, he told himself.

He began to review what he had learned:

About six hundred years earlier, his ancestors had decided (or were forced)

to immigrate to China. Fortunately, they had been welcomed by the Song emperor and allowed to settle in Kaifeng. To strengthen the sense of community and preserve their traditions, they had built a synagogue in that city in 1163. With equal opportunity and a climate conducive to business and trade, the community thrived. Before long they found that Kaifeng was not big enough for their economic development, and they began to expand their commercial activities to other cities in China. With talent and wisdom, not only had they made remarkable achievements in business, but they had also improved their social status. What was more, their young people were encouraged to take the imperial exams, a major route to professional status. Some of them had become government officials after passing the exams.

Life was good, but one aspect was unsatisfying: the complete isolation from world Jewry. In the first two hundred years after their arrival in China, the Jews of Kaifeng had been joined by a few groups of coreligionists from Persia and India and, from time to time, had heard news from Jewish sources outside of China. However, the last four hundred years had been painfully silent, as they lost contact with the outside world and became isolated in the Middle Kingdom. The community longed for news of their brethren, the conditions and ways of the life of the House of Israel in other parts of the world, and Ai's excitement grew as he neared the capital. He knew exactly the man he wanted to see and talk to: Matteo Ricci.

Ricci, in fact, was not a Jew but a Jesuit priest who had been born in Italy in 1552 and was very much involved in Catholic missionary activities. At the age of thirty, he had been sent to China. At first, he restricted his activities – or, to be more exact, was restricted by the Chinese authorities – to preaching Christianity in the Canton district of South China. For eighteen years he had worked diligently and tactfully,

earning the trust and admiration of Chinese scholars and senior officials. In 1601, he was finally granted permission to preach in Peking, the imperial capital.

As Ai hastened to meet Ricci, it never occurred to him that Ricci might actually be an exponent of some religion other than Judaism. Ai expected Ricci to be a rabbi because the book he had read mentioned his superb academic and scientific knowledge. Jewish scholars were usually rabbis. Why would this man be an exception?

On his arrival in Peking, after locating the house where Ricci lived and worked, Ai proceeded to it and handed over a letter to the doorkeeper requesting a meeting. The letter began: "Ju Ren Ai Tien requests the honor to meet with Rabbi Matteo Ricci." He had included his title because it carried weight and, he assumed, would ensure that Ricci would meet him. And while on ordinary days he wore comfortable Chinese robes, today he wore a blue and gold robe, with his blue silk Jewish cap pressed down securely on his dark hair. He wanted to be dressed appropriately when he met his fellow Jew.

Shortly after taking his letter, the doorkeeper returned accompanied by a priest in a black robe.

"Good morning, my friend," said the priest warmly.

"Good morning, sir," Ai responded.

"May I know where you are from?"

"I'm from Kaifeng."

"That's a long way away, isn't it?"

"That's right."

"May I ask what has brought you here, my friend?"

"I am here on behalf of my congregation."

The priest was surprised to hear this.

"Your congregation? Do you mean you belong to a congregation?"

"Yes sir," said Ai quietly.

"I'm here," he added before the priest could recover from his surprise, "to pay our respects to your house of worship and your congregation. I

would be happy to tell you about our congregation if you like and to learn about your congregation if I could. I would appreciate it greatly if we could discuss matters of our mutual interest, which I do believe we have."

His surprised listener could not believe his eyes and ears. Here, standing in front of him, was a Chinese-looking man who claimed to be a coreligionist. On the face of it that seemed unlikely, but the man behaved so genially and spoke so sincerely that the priest was impressed. He sensed that something important was in the offing and must be reported immediately to Father Matteo Ricci, the father superior of the mission.

"Would you please just wait a moment, I'll be right back," he said to Ai Tien as he hastily retreated into the church.

Ricci was equally surprised when he was told of Ai's arrival and his reason for requesting a meeting. And he was equally puzzled when Ai addressed him as a coreligionist. In the twenty-odd years that Ricci had spent in China, he had often been told that Christianity had first been brought to the country in the seventh century, during the Tang dynasty, by Nestorians from Western Asia and had gained a degree of acceptance in Central China, although it had more or less died out in the tenth century. Intermittently, he had heard rumors of scattered Nestorian settlements in that part of the country. He had several times tried to track them down. What could he conclude but that the visitor waiting outside his church must be one of these elusive brothers in Christ?

"If so," he said to himself, "today would be one of the greatest days in my life."

He ordered the visitor ushered in.

Was there any way Ricci could have concluded that his visitor might be a Jew? No. That was just impossible as it would have been for Ai to realize that Ricci was a Christian. Of course, Ricci knew about Jews and Judaism,

but he had never heard anything of their presence in this far-off land of China (and neither had anyone else). Under the circumstances, the meeting between Ai and Ricci began as a comedy of errors. The two men met at the gate of the chapel. When they first came face to face, Ai thought he was in a synagogue meeting its rabbi, although Ricci's appearance was quite unlike that of the Kaifeng rabbi. Ricci thought he was greeting a Chinese Christian, most likely a descendant of the defunct Nestorian community.

The recorded date of their meeting, June 24, 1605, was the festival of Saint John the Baptist. To celebrate it, Ricci's church had a painting of the Madonna and Child on one side of the altar and another of the Baptist as a young man on the other. But in Ai's eyes, the figures represented in the paintings were none other than the matriarch Rebecca and her sons Jacob and Esau. Ricci led his guest toward the altar. Before reaching it, he genuflected to the paintings on both sides as was his custom. Seeing this, Ai immediately thought of the second of the Ten Commandments:

You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them.

For a moment he did not know what to do, but on second thought, he could see no harm in paying respect to one's ancestors, especially since he was a guest in this house. Therefore, he followed suit, but he could not help asking Ricci:

"Excuse me. Is it your custom to venerate images?"

"Uh ... yes," answered the priest, not quite catching what Ai meant.

"But it is certainly not our custom," Ai told him.

"What is your custom, then?"

"We only bow to the Torah scroll which is placed on the Chair of

Moses.”

“I see.”

“Are they four of the twelve?” asked Ai when he observed the likenesses of four disciples that were displayed on the walls of the chapel. Of course, when he said “four of the twelve” he meant four of Jacob’s twelve sons, the progenitors of the tribes of Israel. But Ricci thought he was talking about the twelve apostles. Therefore he answered: “They are the spiritual sons of Christ.”

“Christ? Who is Christ?” thought Ai. He was puzzled and found it difficult to communicate with Ricci. Both men sensed that something was amiss, but they did not immediately discover the problem. Only after they had retired to Ricci’s quarters for further talk did they realize the misunderstanding.

To his great astonishment, Ricci found out that his guest was a Chinese Jew, while Ai, much to his disappointment, realized that his host was not a rabbi but a person who believed in Christ, the son of God and the Messiah, according to Ricci’s explanation. However, he did not really understand how Christ, who according to Ricci had lived more than seventeen hundred years earlier, could be considered to have been the Messiah when it was common knowledge that the Messiah would not arrive until ten thousand years later. Out of politeness, Ai remained silent.

However, their conversation did not end there. Ai wanted to tell the story of his community, for he still believed that they were adherents of the same faith. Ricci’s interest was even greater, for he hoped that through this Jew he might be able to discover Christians living in Kaifeng. And even if not, he was profoundly aware of the significance of discovering Jews living and practicing their religion in China.

He gave the order to bring in tea and refreshments. After the tea was served, he began to question Ai.

“Mr. Ai,” he addressed Ai Tien

formally, “so you are an Israelite?”

“Yes. We call ourselves Yi-ci-le-ye in Chinese.”

“How long have you been living in China?”

“According to our records, our ancestors came to China at least six hundred years ago, maybe even earlier, and we have been living in this country ever since.”

“Do you have any idea where your ancestors came from?”

“It’s said that they came from the West.”

“You don’t know the exact place?”

“No.”

“How big is your congregation?”

“Over two thousand souls. It used to be larger, but many moved to other cities for better opportunities after our city lost its status as the capital of the country.”

Ai told Ricci that there had once been Jewish communities in many parts of China, with synagogues in the cities of Ningbo, Xi’an, Canton, and Nanjing. All but the Jewish community in Kaifeng had withered away years earlier.

Having learned all this, Ricci’s interest increased and he began to ask about the synagogue.

“Do you have any Torah scrolls in your synagogue?” Ricci asked, knowing exactly what he had in mind.

“Of course. How could we not have the sacred books of Moses? As a matter of fact, we have thirteen scrolls, one for each of the tribes of our people, and the thirteenth is for Moses. And this scroll is the most precious because it is said to be the original one brought to China by our ancestors when they first came.”

Hearing this, Ricci decided to test Ai’s knowledge. He brought out a volume of the great Polyglot Bible, the complete text of both the Old and New Testaments in the original languages, in eight volumes, printed by Christopher Plantin in Antwerp.

Ricci opened the book and showed it to Ai, who immediately recognized that the language on the page was

Hebrew, although he did not know that he was looking at a popular Christian edition of the Bible and had never before seen a biblical text printed on paper. Until then he had only seen Torah scrolls handwritten by scribes.

At first Ai seemed to have some difficulty with the Hebrew text. But once he had determined the meaning of the first sentence, he went on smoothly, reciting the rest of the passage. Of course this was because he knew the Bible by heart even though his ability to read Hebrew was quite limited. For this, he apologized to Ricci, stating that he had been much involved in the study of Confucianism in his childhood, and adding that he had two brothers in Kaifeng whose knowledge of the Hebrew was much better than his.

“They will be able to read your book with ease. Because they read Hebrew so well, they are in charge of the reading of the Torah in our synagogue,” Ai said.

Now Ricci was convinced that Ai had told him the truth; he really was an Israelite (as he called himself). Ricci had never before met a Chinese who could read Hebrew and certainly had not known any who could recite the Bible from memory.

The men talked for hours, and after seeing Ai off, Ricci immediately wrote down everything he had just learned and began to prepare a special report for his superiors in Rome.

European society was stirred when Ricci’s account of the Kaifeng Jews reached Rome. Ever since then, missionaries, scholars, and historians have gone to China to seek Jews, learn their stories, and sometimes attempt to convert them. Speculation and curiosity about the history and culture of this small group of Jews have never ebbed.

And all this is due to the dramatic, historic meeting between Ai Tien and Matteo Ricci more than three centuries ago.

# Yossi Klein in Australia



1. Yossi Klein visited our honorary representatives Stella and David Udovitch. From left to right: David, Yossi, Stella.
2. Inna (Nee Zaretsky) and her husband Alex Mustafine.
3. Mary (Shpunt) and her husband Alex Samson (Samsonovich).
4. Lena Leibovich (Damelin), Yossi Klein and Vera Karlikov (Voron).
5. David Udovitch in his study - the office of Igud Yotzei Sin in Australia
6. Prof. Andrew Yakubovich and Mara Mustafine.



# JEWISH COMMUNITIES OF HARBIN AND SHANGHAI UNDER JAPANESE OCCUPATION, 1931-1945

***Paper written by Dr. Zvia Bowman of King's College, University of London and to be delivered at the Seminar on Holocaust and Nanjing Massacre, which will take place at Nanjing University, August 8 - 11, 2005.***

The aim of this paper is to examine Japanese treatment of the Jewish community in Harbin from 1931 and their treatment of the Jewish communities of Shanghai from 1937. I shall start with Harbin: 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. Under the benevolent management of General Dmitri Horvath, the General Manager of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), all minorities coexisted peacefully in Harbin and the Jews did not suffer from pogroms. 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 5, 1932 to a rousing welcome from the White Russian community.

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.

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). They were behind the

kidnapping and the grisly murder of a young pianist, Semion Kaspe, in 1933, which caused an international outcry. Semion's father, Joseph, was one of the richest Jews in Harbin. He was a jeweller and the owner of the beautiful Hotel Moderne. Young Semion was a talented piano-player, he studied music in France and had French citizenship. His father refused to pay the ransom demanded by the kidnapers, and asked the French consul to help release his son. His refusal to pay for his son's release infuriated the White Russian kidnapers, who mutilated and killed Semion. Besides Semion, another Jew named Koffman was also killed by his kidnapers. Even though Chinese judges passed a death sentence on his kidnapers, the Japanese had the Chinese judges arrested and set the kidnapers free. These and other cases of kidnapping and intimidation created an atmosphere of fear in Harbin. Since the population also faced economic difficulties, many Jews had no choice but to leave Harbin and make new lives for themselves in Tientsin, Beijing or Shanghai. Thus, the Jewish population of Harbin dropped to less than 5, 000 by 1939.

Why did the Japanese treat the Jews in such a fashion? Even though most Japanese had never met a Jew in their lives, by the 1940's, anti-Semitism had become an integral part of ultra-nationalist thought disseminated by major Japanese newspapers with the approval of the Japanese government.

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. However, the Japanese official policy of wartime anti-Semitism was not used to persecute Jews. On December 6th, 1938, the Five Ministers Conference (Goshō kaigi), 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.

This policy enabled 18, 000 Jewish refugees to enter Shanghai and 6,000 Jews passed through the Japanese port of Kobe on their way to China and other destinations. 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 was 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 Manchuko". He hoped that America would invest one hundred million dollars in the resettlement of these German Jews in Manchuria. 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 also written many articles and books on the "Jewish problem" and was considered an expert on Jews. 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, Mr 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. 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 attended the conference from Tientsin, Kobe in Japan and other cities in China. It was also attended by several well - placed 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. 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 *Evreiskaya Zizn* (Jewish Life). Encouraged by the success of the first conference, the second one took place in December 1938 and the 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. It would also register all Jews and every Jewish organisation in the Far East.

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. Thus, while Harbin's Jewish population faced economic hardships and their freedom was constricted by the Japanese occupiers, they were fairly treated as long as they collaborated with the Japanese authorities. They were not forced to live in camps or in ghettos and continued working in their jobs. They could still enjoy their social lives in the evenings and

continue employing Chinese workers and servants.

Let us now examine the situation in Shanghai, once the city was occupied by the Japanese forces in December 1937. By the late 1930's, there were from 4,000 to 8,000 Ashkenazi (European) Jews living in Shanghai. The number of Sephardic (Oriental) Jews was never large and did not exceed 1,000. Most Sephardic Jews were wealthy businessmen and landowners. The founders of the community, like members of the Sassoon and Hardoon families, arrived in Shanghai in the 19th century and amassed vast wealth from trading in South East Asia, China, India and Europe. Most of them were British citizens. In contrast, only 1% to 2% of Ashkenazi Jews were wealthy. Most were refugees from Russia, who arrived in Shanghai via Harbin. Around 60% were middle or lower class shopkeepers. Of the remaining 38% many were unemployed or partially employed. Some were Soviet citizens, but most were stateless since they did not want to take up Soviet citizenship after 1917 Revolution in Russia. When Shanghai surrendered to Japanese military forces in 1937, at first it did not affect the lives of the Jews. Moreover, nearly 20,000 German and Austrian Jews found a safe haven in Shanghai after its occupation in 1937.

In 1938, 1,374 Jewish refugees arrived in Shanghai; in 1939, 12,089 and in 1940, 1,955; but in 1941, only 33 came. Some wealthier refugees were able to rent apartments or rooms in the foreign concessions area, but most refugees were quite poor and had to settle in Hongkou area, which was heavily damaged during the recent Battle of Shanghai. The housing in this hastily rebuilt area was cheap and thus eagerly occupied by nearly 10,000 Jewish refugees. Those who were destitute had to live in crowded camps that were hastily set up in Seward Road, Ward Road, and other locations in

Shanghai. The camps housed more than 2,500 refugees who relied on aid from American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJJDC) and wealthy Shanghai businessmen like Sir Victor Sassoon. He made the first floor of his Embankment Building available to register and to house the newly arrived refugees. He also donated large sums of money to house other refugees in camps and to start their own businesses. Most of these refugees were very resourceful and soon set up Viennese cafes, restaurants, dental clinics, tailor shops, groceries, beauty parlours and repair shops in Hongkou and other area of Shanghai. Others found employment as musicians, doctors, secretaries, private tutors or shop assistants mainly in the foreign concession sectors of Shanghai. However, they were competing for housing and employment with thousands of Chinese refugees, who poured into Shanghai from the surrounding towns and villages affected by the war.

In December 1937 a puppet Shanghai Municipal Government under Mayor Fu Xiaolan was established in the Chinese parts of Shanghai. Foreign concessions remained outside Chinese and Japanese jurisdiction. While Shanghai residents' lives became more uncertain, Jews were not singled out or discriminated against. Japanese authorities regarded these refugees as industrious and cooperative and were pleased with their rebuilding of Hongkou area. The situation changed in December 1941, when Japan declared war on the United States of America. Allied nationals, including Americans, British, Belgian and Dutch citizens, were asked by Japanese Kempetai to register with them and to report on their financial worth, debts, real estate and movable goods.

After the fall of France in June 1940, Vichy government declared its neutrality, which was recognised by Japan. Thus, the French Concession in

Shanghai and its French residents did not have to report to the Japanese. By November 1942, the Japanese began internment of the enemy population in camps, starting with single men. In early 1943, the internment began to include the civilian population. They were given just ten days to pack and move to camps. They had to bring their own beds and bedding, clothes and other essentials. There were seven camps in Shanghai and Jews, who were American or British citizens, had to move to them as well. About 8,000 Allied nationals were moved into the camps by summer of 1943. Conditions in the camps were crowded, there was little food and washing facilities were minimal. Eventually, the internees were allowed to grow their own vegetables, receive food parcels from the Red Cross and they started to organize cultural and sports activities. They even opened libraries and printed their own newspapers in the camps.

Now the Japanese turned their attention to the refugees from Germany and Austria. In November 1941 the Third Reich had passed laws stripping Jews living abroad of their nationality. Thus these Shanghai Jews became stateless. Japanese authorities claimed that these stateless Jews lacked government protection and should be strictly supervised.

On February 18th, 1943, the Japanese military ordered all these stateless refugees to move to a "designated area" about half a mile long and three quarters of a mile wide in Hongkou district. Stateless refugees were ordered to move to this area by May 18th, 1943. Many had to sell their property for less than its value in order to meet the deadline. It was hard to find accommodation in the Hongkou ghetto, since it housed many thousands of Chinese refugees. Whole families had to share one room, food was meagre and sanitary conditions were appalling.

After August 10th, 1943, all exits from the ghetto had to secure a pass from a

(See page 44)

# Website Correspondence

To Joy Katzen-Guthrie  
<http://www.joyfulnoise.net/joychina1.html>  
<http://www.joyfulnoise.net/>

Hi Joy - I came across your website while beginning some research on the Jewish community in Harbin for a possible public radio news story. I have a personal interest, too, because my grandmother grew up in Harbin. I read an LA Times article last September that talked about a group of former Harbin residents who had returned, and I think were considering ongoing business and cultural ties. Do you know of continuing efforts by the former Jewish community to establish business or other relationships with the city? Or with other Chinese communities? I'm also trying to locate groups of former Harbin Jews in Los Angeles where I live. Do you have information on how to contact them? Since I'm just starting out, I'd be interested in any other information you might have. Thanks in advance for any help you can give me.  
Robin Urevich - Tel: (323) 254-1104  
- Mobile: (323) 363-7813  
Hello Robin ... Thank you for your note. Harbin is an interesting community and it certainly is an appropriate time to talk about the Jews of Harbin because there is increased interest from

the Jewish community worldwide as well as by the city of Harbin toward its Jewish history. Plans are underway to restore one of the former synagogues, and the Jewish cemetery in Harbin was restored a few years ago. Delegations of Israelis who are former residents of China return to Harbin regularly and have been part of the restoration of the cemetery as well as plans for future restoration. In addition, Harbin is home to a Jewish Research Institute within its local Heilongjiang Academy. My recommendation is that you contact Igud Yotzei Sin, the Association of Former Residents in China -- which is located in Tel Aviv -- and home to the China Jewish Friendship Society. I am sending this note to them as well. I receive a quarterly publication from Igud Yotzei Sin that provides a wealth of information regarding past Jewish history in China, present activities and goals for the future. The most recent issue featured a story about an Israeli delegation that recently returned from Harbin and future Jewish plans within the city. The email for Igud Yotzei Sin is <igud-sin@barak-online.net>. The contact with whom you would speak would be Teddy Kaufman, a former Harbin resident and President of the organization. I am sure he would be

most helpful to you in your research. Regarding Harbin Jews in Los Angeles, Mr. Kaufman may be able to offer you information from their database. I do have a large list of individuals who have expressed interest in my tours and Jewish China history, some of whom once lived in China or had family members who did. I could look through my records to locate former Harbin Jews in the L.A. area for you. You might also contact the Skirball Museum in L.A., which houses artifacts from the Kaifeng community and hosts visiting scholars on Jewish Chinese history. One of the docents of that museum, Elly Lindenbaum, traveled with me to Harbin in July 2002. Elly's email is <ELLYED@aol.com>. I would be happy to speak with you about my experiences in Harbin or show you the photographs I took of the Jewish cemetery, former Jewish Day School, Old Synagogue and New Synagogue while there, if it would be of interest to you. If you are seeking interviews with former Harbin residents, I would be happy to mention your request in my e-mail newsletter, in which I feature information on Jewish China and my website. Much success on your project and I hope you will keep me updated on how it proceeds.

## From page 43

sadistic Japanese official named Ghoya. Very often he would refuse exit passes, making it difficult for the ghetto dwellers to find employment outside the ghetto. Jewish overseers were appointed in the ghetto to keep order and to patrol its perimeters. Thus life for Jews in Allied camps and in Hongkou ghetto was equally harsh until it ended with the Japanese surrender in the summer of 1945. However, the Russian Jews were not interned and could continue

working and living freely in Shanghai. Why were they treated differently? There were several reasons for the leniency towards them:

1. Most of the Russian Jews arrived in Shanghai before 1937.
2. The neutrality pact signed by Japan and the USSR in April 1941 may have also influenced the Japanese decision to exclude the Shanghai Russians and Russian Jews.
3. In Harbin Japanese authorities

hoped to gain American investments to help them to develop Manchuria, hence they tried to befriend the Manchurian Jewish population. Even after the outbreak of the Second World War in December 1941, the Japanese still wanted Manchurian Jews to help them develop the region, causing them to encourage Jewish and Zionist activities in Harbin and other towns in China.

# The Harbin Jewry and the Saga of Assistance – 1914 - 1918

## Documents and notes

**Dr. A.I. Kaufman**

World War One broke out in August 1914. Nearly all of the Jewish Pale became a battlefield. Most of the Jewish population crowded in the cities was impoverished when its frail social system collapsed, depriving the Jews of all means of livelihood. Thousands of Jews fled from the war zone, leaving behind all their belongings, rushing from town to town, from place to place – to find nothing but privation and want. They were trapped within the borders of the Pale, afraid to enter the territory of the forbidden outside world. They lived in filthy cellars, they slept under the open skies, exposed to the heat of the day and the cold of the night, weary and desperate and ill.

It may be said with a deep sense of honor and respect for Russian Jewry that the disaster was met with profound keenness and responsibility towards their brethren. Assistance to the ill-fated refugees became the paramount cause for the Russian Jewish communities, one of them being the community of the Manchurian city of Harbin.

In October 1914 the Petrograd Jewish Committee of Assistance to War Victims was established in Russia's capital, and as soon as the news of the distress of our brethren reached Harbin, Dr. A. I. Kaufman and the chairman of the Spiritual Leadership Committee, E. Dobisov, summoned a meeting of the city's Jewish notables. On October 9 the Committee of Assistance to the Jewish War Victims was established, publishing the following appeal in the Harbin Russian press (there was no Jewish newspaper in Harbin at the time):

**"By the will of Fate the Jewish Pale**

**became an active war front. The Jewish population of many cities in the Pale is exposed to severe hardships. Thousands of families are short of food. The assistance rendered by the local communal establishments is incapable of coping with the immeasurable need. Urgently needed is large-scale social relief action. Committees of Assistance to Jewish war victims have been established in Petrograd and many other Russian cities.**

**"Considering it to be its duty to do everything possible to reduce the suffering of our brethren, The Harbin Jewish Association appeals to all the Jews of Harbin to contribute to this national Jewish effort. Let everyone respond!"**

The Committee organized the collection of contributions and measures of assistance. All the Jewish population of Harbin voluntarily committed itself to monthly fees. The city was divided into 14 neighborhoods and all Jewish homes were visited by the members of the Committee. (According to the Harbin municipal records of 1913, there were 5032 Jews -- out of the total of 43,690 Russian nationals -- living in Harbin at the time).

Harbin Jewry responded to the appeal with a rare zest. Every event held by a Jewish organization or a private person levied a fee for the benefit of the War Victims Relief Fund. School children held performances and gave their toys and books for raffle. Jewish barbers were the first to contribute one day's work a week for the benefit of the Fund. They were followed by others: employees of various commercial firms, pharmacists, and salesmen. There were just a few

large contributions, but the people en masse were all out to help. Even the penniless committed themselves to 50, 30, 20 kopeks a month. Many cases of personal generosity stirred committee members to tears.

One day a boy of seven knocked on the door of Dr. Kaufman: "When do you have your meeting?" "What meeting?" "You know, about the war. I have saved six roubles and ten kopeks. I want you to send them to the hungry Jews." Little Liova (of a poor family) saved money for a long time to make his dream (a toy train, running on "real rails") come true. But no, he didn't need toys. He would rather convert them to bread for the hungry. Such were the Jews of Harbin. They gave with all their hearts. And their hearts were large and generous.

In April 1915 Dr. Kaufman received a telegram from the chairman of the Petrograd Relief Committee, Baron Alfred Ginzburg, asking to help tens of thousands of homeless, hungry refugees. Urgent special assistance is essential. The Harbin Committee reacted instantly: a special campaign was launched, collecting 10,000 roubles.

The first war refugees began to reach Harbin in April 1915. By October they were more than 200. The Committee opened a "Shelter" for them, renting two 10-room apartments on Aptekarskaya and one on Kommercheskaya Street. Each refugee was given a bed, pillow, sheets and a blanket. The refugees were mostly from Poland, Belorus, north-western Russia, Kurlandia and Laplandia. They were artisans, tradesmen, book-keepers, teachers, rabbis, students and others.

In November, 1915 a refugee soup kitchen was opened on Samannaya street, serving hot food for the refugees and the local needy three times daily. The Committee had food supplies, medical and employment departments, while the doctors made daily visits to the refugee hostels, and services were strictly on volunteer basis. The refugees were supplied with free medicine by Jewish pharmacies.

The Committee made all efforts to find jobs for the refugees to prevent them from demoralization inevitable in the atmosphere of charity unemployment. It was a very difficult project in those days of depression. However, the Committee succeeded in partially solving this problem, and many refugees were given jobs and loans to open small workshops or businesses. The Committee's budget for 1915 was 11,000 roubles a month.

Yet the number of the refugees steadily grew, reaching 1,000 at the end of 1916. The Committee rented two large buildings to house 800 refugees. All the financial burden lay on the shoulders of the Harbin Jewish community. The other Manchurian Jewish communities (Hailar, Tzitzikar, Manzhouli), which numbered 50, 100, 150 people respectively, did their duty too, but it was not enough to relieve the Harbin community of its stress.

At the end of 1916 Dr. Kaufman received the following telegram from the Central Relief Committee: "Extreme restriction of funds forced the Committee to limit itself to a mere 100,000 roubles for the Passover supplies of the Russian Galicia and Boukovina Jewish population of 30,000 people and should cost by modest estimate 250,000 roubles. Firmly confident of the Jewish responsiveness to the needs of our destitute brethren, we appeal to the Harbin Jewish community to urgently take steps to ensure the above communities of the needed assistance."

5,000 roubles were secured within two following days. In 1917 the Zion Organization launched a one-day fund raising campaign for the benefit

of the Jewish Palestinian, Polish and Lithuanian war victims. 22,000 roubles were divided equally between the Palestinian (50%), and the Polish and the Lithuanian Jews (50%). The Harbin Jewish Relief Committee succeeded in helping the Jewish war victims. Enormous amounts of money were collected and transferred to the Central Committee even when the Harbin facilities were full to capacity. Harbin Jews joined hands in one concerted effort to help their suffering brethren.

There was also the problem of helping the refugees leave Harbin: most of them planned to go abroad and join their relatives. Some left for America through the assistance of the Committee.

Two organizations were in charge of the operations: The Jewish Relief Committee for the war victims and the Emigrants Commission, which operated the Soup Kitchen. Dr. Kaufman headed both organizations.

In May, 1917 a telegram was received from Yokohama, Japan: "The Jewish Committee in Yokohama requests the Harbin Committee to temporarily hold up the refugees who are on their way to the USA. There is no transport available till August. The people are in a disastrous situation and we are helpless to assist them." Harbin Committee had no choice but to take in the Yokohama fugitives as well.

Later the same year the Committee was obliged to make another appeal: "Today we launch a one-day collection for the benefit of the 360 refugees (from Yokohama) now in care of the Harbin Committee. The majority of these luckless people are on their way to join their relatives abroad. Their up-keep costs 11,000 roubles a month.

The Committee's means were now down to nil. Winter was approaching and the people were to be supplied with at least a minimum of clothing, food and warmth. "This is the object of today's collection. Please respond to our appeal. Let every one of you contribute. Help the Committee to give shelter to the homeless and to feed the hungry!" The appeal aroused an

extraordinary response from the Jews of Harbin: the one-day collection reached 20,587 roubles.

Things went from bad to worse. Committee's coffers were empty. No help came from abroad. The expenses of the Relief Committee and the Emigrant Commission reached 16-18 thousand roubles a month. Transportation expenses were enormous. And now, an additional 3,000 refugees were on their way, via Vladivostok and Yokohama, for a transit stay in Harbin. They expected visas and money to come from their relatives, but none arrived as yet. At the time, there were 500-600 Jews living in Japan, 300-350 of them living permanently in Yokohama. As a result it was the Harbin Jewish community that bore the burden.

During the years 1918 – 1921 Yokohama was a main transit point for Jewish migration from Russia. It was a big port with ocean steamers leaving daily for San Francisco, Seattle and Vancouver. Naturally, the city became the only Jewish emigrant center in Japan. There was a large, centrally situated and well equipped hostel for the emigrants, donated to the Yokohama Jewish community by the well known philanthropist M. Ginzburg of St. Petersburg, known (in contrast to Baron Ginzburg) as Ginzburg of Port Arthur. Refugees continued to arrive in Harbin. The Relief Committee continued to upkeep them, stretching its capability to the utmost. In May 1918 a cable was received from the Moscow Jewish Hunger Relief League (Chairman D. V. Wysotsky) stressing the disastrous situation of hundreds of thousands of Jewish families dying of hunger and suffering from typhus and other epidemic diseases. "In Warsaw alone 200,000 Jews feed in Soup Kitchens," wrote Wysotsky. The League requested Dr. Kaufman to establish a Harbin branch of the League, or, at least, launch a wide campaign in its support. The situation was aggravated by the ban of transferring money from Russia to the territories occupied by the enemy. The League sidestepped the problem

by arranging the transfers through the Copenhagen and Stockholm Jewish communities.

Dr. Kaufman then summoned a group of the more affluent Harbin Jewish businessmen and industrialists, read the telegram to them and stressed that during the past three years Harbin Jewry supported and continues to support the Jewish war victims "What can we do?" said he, "we live in a comparatively satisfactory condition. We were not deported from our homes, we did not experience the horrors of war and hunger. It is our duty to respond to the appeal of our suffering brethren."

"Since 1914 our Committee has launched in Harbin many campaigns and other operations for the benefit of the victims of this tempestuous time. It must be stressed that all the enormous amounts of money we collected, were given by the masses. They have given their money from the bottom of their

hearts, with love for their brethren. More than 80% of the money has been given by artisans, employees of commercial firms and factories, petty traders. But a lot more will be demanded of us. Today is an unfavorable time to launch a campaign or to establish a local branch of the League with regular monthly membership fees. Instead, I would suggest placing the burden on the more affluent layer of the Harbin Jewish population. We are called to collect urgently no less than 20-25 thousand roubles. I appeal to the 30-40-50 of the more well-to-do members of our community to take up this cause of saving the lives of our brothers dying of hunger, and cover this sum of 20-25 thousand within their own circle. And this is to be done immediately, within the next two or three days.

"Naturally, if this appeal is ignored, and our voice remains unheard, the members of the Committee will go

to the masses of the Jewish people: to the tailor, cobbler, watchmaker, barber, teacher, all those, who proved themselves so nobly in the past. We shall go to them, and again, as in the past, they will spare a contribution for this holy cause, out of their more than modest income!"

Right on the spot, a committee was formed and 25,000 roubles were collected within the following two days, exclusively amongst the wealthier members of the community. The Harbin Jews again proved their worth as a noble, generous community, faithful to their brother Jews.

Out of the many glorious pages of the history of the Jews of Harbin, Manchuria and the whole of China, this page is doubtlessly one of the brightest. And this is not the last page. There will be many more such pages in the future, yet unwritten and unread.

(From the Russian: Emmanuel Pratt)

## SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS OF IGUD YOTZEI SIN

*As of December 31, 2004 (in NIS)*

Fund in Memory of Ella Piastunovich	5871
Fund in Memory of Vera Domer	31451
Fund in Memory of Mosia Nirim	7250
Fund in Memory of Paul Pinsky	9850
Fund in Memory of Ania Grubner	49920
Fund in Memory of Bella Volsky	2465
Fund in Memory of Schildkraut family	3352
Fund in Memory of D. Meltser	2000
Fund in Memory of Fradkin family	1570
Fund in Memory of Alexander Maisin	42567
Fund in Memory of Ira and Isia Magid	31213
Fund in Memory of Bella Mirkin	3250
Fund in Memory of Glik family	5750
Fund in Memory of Dr. S. Prizan	5250
Fund in Memory of Iza Neder	6700
Fund in Memory of F. and K. Fridman	4250
Fund in Memory of Shlomo Lesk	3995
Fund in Memory of Aaron Yarho	700
Fund in Memory of Ralph Magid	60177

Fund in Memory of Joseph Rector	2400
Fund in the name of J. and M. Bloch	800
Fund Embassy of China in Israel	11500
The General Scholarship Fund of IYS	7998

**Total:** 301134

## SOCIAL AID FUNDS OF IGUD YOTZEI SIN

*As of December 31, 2004 (in NIS)*

Fund in Memory of Abrasha Yakobson	64558
Fund in Memory of Alexander Maisin	43340
Fund in Memory of Ralph Magid	41464
Fund in Memory of Ethel Dunn	369951
Fund in Memory of Jenia Wiener	63900
Fund in Memory of Ernst Kohn	15000
Fund in Memory of Paul Pinsky	18280

**Total:** 781013

# Letter from a Chinese Jew

*We publish this letter of a Chinese Jew (formerly of Kaifeng) to the President of Israel, Itzhak Ben Zvi, as a unique document, shedding additional light on this singular community and the yearning for its roots still thriving within its core.*

## **A name in three languages**

My name is Shmuel Stupa Hsieh, the first being the name of a Hebrew prophet, the middle, a temple pagoda (in Sanskrit) and the surname Hsieh – Chinese for "harmonizing" or "rhyming". My family is one of the leading families of the ancient community of Kaiifeng. In my father's home there are books in Hebrew, which nobody can read, to say nothing of not understanding. I am the only one in the whole of China who can.

At the age of nine I was taken by my uncle for a long journey. We visited Bergen and Oslo in Norway, Copenhagen in Denmark, Stockholm in Sweden. We were in Portugal, South Africa (including Angola), Siam, Burma, India, Persia, Iraq and Japan. Having returned to China after World War II, I settled in Shanghai. Being a Chinese nationalist, loyal to the Republic of China, called by the foreigners "Free China", I left the continent for Formosa (Taiwan) together with the retreating Chang Kai-shek forces.

Besides knowing how to read Hebrew, I know some Arabic, Ethiopian (Amhari) Hebrew, Japanese and classical literary Chinese, Korean, Malayan and Tibetan. I speak English, Portuguese, Danish, Swedish and some German. My mother tongue, however, is the Classical Mandarin. Since the Iron Curtain descended upon China, there is no news about the Jewish community of Kaifeng. I have not heard of my family for more than three years (the letter is of 1953

– E.P.) and have no idea of what befell them. Catholic missionaries, who fled from mainland China tell of atrocities perpetrated by the communists, who killed thousands and thousands of Chinese and foreigners.

## **On the Jews of China:**

The first group of Jews reached China in 621 CE. They settled in the city of Sian (Xian) where they lived for about 200 years and then migrated to Kaifeng in the adjacent province of Henan on the southern bank of the Yellow River, and, in 1370 – to Yunan, chiefly to the city of Kunming. My family consists of clans. According to our family chronicles, they left Egypt during the Great Exodus, together with Moses. With the establishment of the Israelite Kingdom, our family (114 men and women) went on to Aram Naharayim, and from there, in the second century C.E., to India and China, where they settled in Kaifeng, on the southern bank of the Yellow River.

"Nowhere in the Chinese annals is there any mention of the Jews, although Turkistan and Tibetan documents briefly refer to them. At that time, the Chinese were forbidden to leave the borders of the Celestial Empire and no foreigners were allowed to enter it. The first two Jewish groups immigrated illegally. The third wave of Jews entered China at the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The majority came from Russia, Poland and Germany and settled in the largest cities of the country. With the establishment of the State of Israel, practically all the Jews left China to settle in the ancient motherland of their ancestors, the Holy Land, the Republic of Israel.

## **"The Blue Muslims"**

The first Jewish settlers were known amongst the Chinese as "The Blue

Muslims", by the color of their caps, and the Jewish religion as "extraction of the sinews", by the traditional method of preparing kosher meat. The Jews gave their daughters in marriage to the Muslims, while the Muslims did not give theirs to the Jews because the Jews were much poorer than the Muslims (one of the erroneous statements made by the author of the letter – E.P.) There were eight Jewish clans in Kaifeng, and only seven family names (two clans had a common name, Li). One of these clans left Kaifeng and went in an unknown direction – and was lost. During the following centuries, the Kaifeng Jews lost their Jewish identity through intermarriage with the Chinese, and only the Jews of Yunnan (Vietnam – E..P.) continued to adhere to their ancestors' traditions. And yet, as time progressed, they, too, acquired Asiatic facial features.

## **How I learned Hebrew**

During World War II I lived and studied in Japan. I heard the Jewish American soldiers call the Japanese in Yiddish: "Gele mamzerim" – "Yellow bastards". This reminded me that I, too, was "yellow". But I was not a "bastard": my historic past, both Jewish and Chinese, was honorable and pure. This stimulated me to begin to learn Hebrew. But at the time it was not an easy project in Japan: I traveled throughout Japan in search of a Hebrew instruction book, and could not find one, until it dawned on me to write a letter to an Israeli English language newspaper The Jerusalem Post. The result was beyond all expectation: I was flooded by letters, books, stamps, post cards, offers to correspond and questions about the Chinese Jews. Unfortunately, it was physically impossible for me to reply to every one. I hope that in this letter they will find an answer.

(See page 49)



## CONSECRATION OF THE NEW OHEL MOSHE SYNAGOGUE

The new OHEL MOSHE in Ward Road was consecrated on the 4th ultimo, in the presence of a large gathering of seat-holders and well-wishers by RABBI M. Z. ASHKENAZI. The new edifice was purchased this year at Taels 10,000.00 but owing to lack of funds a new building could not be erected and it was decided to renovate the place and make it serviceable for the time being. Construction work was started some months ago, and it was completed just recently. The seating capacity is large enough to accommodate the worshippers during the year but certainly not sufficient to admit all the seat-holders during the High Holydays. There was much enthusiasm noticeable among the latter at the dedication ceremony and biddings were high for securing the misseotA, Mr. D. G. M. AZONOVSKY, the Hon. Treasurer of the OHEL MOSHE has secured the privilege of opening the Synagogue, his bid being the highest namely, \$250.00. All in all, over \$500.00 was raised that night which will undoubtedly help to swell the building fund, which is still short of the whole amount required to pay off for the purchase of the site and the cost of renovating the building. For the first time in the history of Ashkenazim Jewry in Shanghai, the seat-holders of the OHEL MOSHE stood on their own soil, which will do away with the problem of every now and then removing into new premises. The ceremony, however, was shorn of much of its beauty owing to the absence of the choir. No preparations were made for it although Mr. JACOB L. FRIEND, who is a willing worker and always ready to oblige would have trained the choir had he been approached by the committee to do so. This lack of foresight was freely commented upon its brilliance and impressiveness. The opening address was made by Mr. H. KAMMERLING, the acting President. He dwelt upon the that night, and referred to the work done by years. Names of those who distinguished themselves in the service of the community were mentioned, those present standing when the names of the departed were given. Mr. KAMMERLING in his address emphasized the need of having a permanent place of worship and eulogised the promptness of the committee in purchasing the new site and doing away once and for all with the Galuth-life of their congregation. He hoped that the deficiencies which faced them would be wiped out, so that they may start raising further sums for building a new modern structure to house the OHEL MOSHE in the years to come. Their community was growing and expanding every year and it behooved them to provide for their spiritual needs and not let them remain moribund. He paid a tribute to all the workers and hoped they would look upon their continued co-operation in future. Amid great applause, Mr. KAMMERLING announced a donation of Tls. 2,000.00 from Mrs. OSCAR LANDAU in memory of her husband, who was a strong supporter of the OHEL MOSHE and one of the active members thereof. The *sefir tsefir* and a lamp had been donated by Mr. I. SILBERMAN and Mrs. HENRI GENSBERGER respectively, while Mrs. MARANS had offered two silver candle-sticks in memory of her husband.

### ADDRESS BY MR. KRISHEVSKY

Mr. GERSO KRISHEVSKY delivered a powerful address congratulating Rabbi ASHKENAZI, the Committee, and the seat-holders on their great advance in securing a suitable edifice for divine services. He hoped that the congregation would continue to expand and keep constantly before them the watchwords of the *Shema* and the *Hesikah*. These two emblems go hand in hand in their Synagogues and none dare to dispute them. He hoped that all those present would realize the great significance of the occasion and rally towards their banner. Jews everywhere were peculiarly placed insofar as their religion was concerned. There was a great enthusiasm shown him during his travel in Harbin, Tientsin, Mukden and Kobe. All had flocked around him in order to hear the latest news of the renaissance in Erez Yisrael. He found willing ears to support his mission to the Far East and he felt quite pleased over the outcome. In Shanghai he hoped to lay equally a good foundation for their future work and he expected all those present to renew their enthusiasm for the cause. The new Synagogue which they were dedicating that night was a happy augury for the future.

attribute much of our survival to the latter which has been and still is our spiritual club in times of peace and sorrow. No Jew worthy of the name has faltered in his duty to provide means wherewith to build a Synagogue. It is to this day a cardinal duty to assume its burden and toil for its upkeep. An ancient Talmudic Sage taught, "Whoever builds one wall of a Synagogue, or any part thereof, though he fix but one nail for its maintenance or improvement, has done a deed of great merit." Such has been Israel's watchword in ancient times and is so to this day. Building altars for God was characteristic of our people. That is nothing new in our history. The dedication of the Ohel-Moshe to-night is a milestone in the history of your kahal of which we all may be happy and proud. It is with a genuine sense of pleasure that I bring you greetings from a sister community. From time immemorial, we have looked upon the dedication of Synagogues as a shield against assimilation, disintegration and decay. Such a solemn ceremony as we have witnessed to-night ushers in a new period of responsibility which you will have to shoulder in order to uphold all that is best and noblest in Traditional Judaism. We must try to gaze on the function with enthusiasm and with a vision that is both far-seeing and uplifting. Do not depend on the plan of others. Do not depend on what others may do and say. Depend on your own resources and revel in the thought that you have accomplished your duty through your own self-sacrificing efforts and not through any extraneous aid. Each of us must strive and make the Beth Hakeneseth the grandest institution of our life. To illustrate this I would narrate to you an amusing story. It is said a man had called upon a portrait-painter and asked him to paint his father. "But where is your father?" asked he of the brush. "Oh, he died ten years ago." "Then how can I paint him?" asked the artist. "Why," was the reply, "I have just seen the portrait of Moses. Surely if you can paint the portrait of a man who died thousands of years ago, you can more easily paint the portrait of my father who has only been dead ten years." Seeing the sort of man with whom he had to deal the artist undertook the task. When the picture was finished the newly-blessed art-patron was called in to see it. He gazed at it in silence for sometime, his eyes filling with tears, and then softly and reverently said, "So that is my father. Ah, how he is changed!"

### ADDRESS BY MR. EZRA

Mr. N. E. R. EZRA was the next to address the gathering. He spoke as follows:—

"This is a solemn night in Israel's calendar. The celebration of Solemn Assembly—*Hoshanah Rabba*—is a sacred night which has been hallowed as such from time immemorial. It affords an opportune time to dedicate the new OHEL MOSHE to the glory of the High and Lofty One. It constitutes a landmark in the history of the Ashkenazim congregation in Shanghai. It is five and twenty years since you have founded this Synagogue and led others to join you in your uplifting work. In the early days of communal life in Shanghai there were not many to help in the organization work and the task was not an easy one. Many were too much absorbed in their daily struggles for life to think of things spiritual, but there were others who struggled and battled against the tide until they succeeded in laying a good foundation for the future. It is characteristic of our people to organize *kehilloth* and provide for places of worship. "Wherever ten Jews are found," says the Talmud, "they are in duty bound to organize a Synagogue. They may compel one another so to do. On the other hand, whoever lives in a place where there is a Synagogue, and fails to join it, is not a good neighbour." Great stress was laid on sup-

attribute much of our survival to the latter which has been and still is our spiritual club in times of peace and sorrow. No Jew worthy of the name has faltered in his duty to provide means wherewith to build a Synagogue. It is to this day a cardinal duty to assume its burden and toil for its upkeep. An ancient Talmudic Sage taught, "Whoever builds one wall of a Synagogue, or any part thereof, though he fix but one nail for its maintenance or improvement, has done a deed of great merit." Such has been Israel's watchword in ancient times and is so to this day. Building altars for God was characteristic of our people. That is nothing new in our history. The dedication of the Ohel-Moshe to-night is a milestone in the history of your kahal of which we all may be happy and proud. It is with a genuine sense of pleasure that I bring you greetings from a sister community. From time immemorial, we have looked upon the dedication of Synagogues as a shield against assimilation, disintegration and decay. Such a solemn ceremony as we have witnessed to-night ushers in a new period of responsibility which you will have to shoulder in order to uphold all that is best and noblest in Traditional Judaism. We must try to gaze on the function with enthusiasm and with a vision that is both far-seeing and uplifting. Do not depend on the plan of others. Do not depend on what others may do and say. Depend on your own resources and revel in the thought that you have accomplished your duty through your own self-sacrificing efforts and not through any extraneous aid. Each of us must strive and make the Beth Hakeneseth the grandest institution of our life. To illustrate this I would narrate to you an amusing story. It is said a man had called upon a portrait-painter and asked him to paint his father. "But where is your father?" asked he of the brush. "Oh, he died ten years ago." "Then how can I paint him?" asked the artist. "Why," was the reply, "I have just seen the portrait of Moses. Surely if you can paint the portrait of a man who died thousands of years ago, you can more easily paint the portrait of my father who has only been dead ten years." Seeing the sort of man with whom he had to deal the artist undertook the task. When the picture was finished the newly-blessed art-patron was called in to see it. He gazed at it in silence for sometime, his eyes filling with tears, and then softly and reverently said, "So that is my father. Ah, how he is changed!"

"We are assembled to-night to create a picture of the future of the New OHEL MOSHE. When we have formulated a working plan for the years to come, we must live up to it in the strictest sense. I sincerely hope that there will be no occasion to repeat in the same way as did the art-patron, "Alas, how sadly our plans have changed!" On the contrary, I am hopeful that the vital message which the Synagogue has for us will inspire us to persevere with it unflinchingly and unwaveringly. We owe much to the Synagogue. It was the Synagogue which had fanned the flame of our Nationalism amidst the darkest days of our lives. Our ancient Siddur is greatly burdened with the problem of Israel's restoration. Within the four walls of the Synagogue we prayed and wept and hoped for the redemption and the end of our homelessness. The Synagogue is to this day a pledge to all Israel that the ancient greatness of our people may yet be revived and the *Shechinah* may yet return to Zion. We glory in such an institution. We vow to uphold it.

# Letters

## **Asya and Zev (Wolf) Deane**

To T. Kaufman: We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for spending the time with us at your office. Putting us in touch with the Professor in Shanghai and making us so very welcome was one of the highlights of our stay in Israel.

Reminiscing about old times, friends and relatives was something very special for both of us. Our lunch with Rasha today was very pleasant and also nostalgic.

We hope to meet again in the not too distant future either in Israel or maybe in Shanghai. Thank you once again, Warmest regards to you both.

## **Jonathan Foo**

To the IYS: I am building a Chinese website that promotes a positive understanding about Jewish people, including the history, customs, beliefs, anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and Jews in China. I want to ask your permission to use the photo of the restored synagogue in Harbin in the website. You can visit the website at [www.explorejewish.net](http://www.explorejewish.net). I have only completed the section on the Holocaust and will soon upload the section on the Jewish experience in China. Many thanks for your attention.

Email: HYPERLINK "mailto:mylawfoowc@yahoo.com.hk" mylawfoowc@yahoo.com.hk

## **Zvia Bowman**

London

To T. Kaufman: Thank you very much for sending me a copy of your book and for phoning me yesterday. I am sending you as an attachment a copy of my paper "Harbin & Shanghai Jewish Communities under Japanese Occupation, 1931-45". It is a paper I shall deliver at the forthcoming conference which will take place at Nanjing University between August 8-11 on "Nanjing Massacre and the Holocaust". I shall report to you about this conference once I get back to England on August 17th.

This paper is a bit different from the one I delivered last year in Harbin, but it is very interesting because it compares the fate of Jews in Harbin vs. Shanghai. We are leaving on our annual holiday in a few hours time, and I got erased from the computer, so if you would really want the original paper it will have to wait until after August 17. I am taking your book to read during our holiday! Have a good summer.

## **George Radbil**

Seattle, WA. USA

To T. Kaufman: It seems that I know you, yet I do not recall ever meeting you in Shanghai. According to your San Francisco brother Sy the difference in our ages must be the reason. I have just turned 88 and hope to make 89 next spring. This brief introduction has a reason. I honor my late wife's memory and extend my thanks for the Memorial Prayer to be recited in her memory. Anyone who ever knew Sonia had also the privilege of knowing her younger sister Luba. It is with great sadness that I must report her recent passing. Perhaps you might consider adding a paragraph in the Bulletin's In Memoriam column about Luba's demise. There must a lot of younger people who might remember her as their teacher in the Seymour Road Jewish School. The separate photo of five Brit officers has Luba in the center. I am sure you know all of the young men in the photo copy. I had been a contributor to the Bulletin pages when our late friend Boris Bresler acted as editor. Incidentally, Boris and I shared a desk in a Harbin pre-school (K.P. Chesnokova's) followed as classmates in "Komercheskoye" and a brief "learning English" period in Shanghai's PTH. To save you time looking up what it is that I "contributed" to the Bulletin, copies herewith for your round file. Should you care to get a closer look at who I am, please give Misha Fleishman a ring or your brother.

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# IN MEMORIAM

The memorial plaques at the Synagogue in memory of the Jewish communities in China at #31, Hagolan St.

אלהיו לנקין בר וושה נפ ג אלול תשנ"ד	אנון נגדיו בר ישראל נפ י"א בתמוז תשנ"א אסיה בת אברהם נפ ח באב תשנ"ב יוסלביץ	אלהיו רוזנסקי בר יצחק נפ ז טבת תשל"ג	יעקב בר טרי ליבשיץ נפ ו' תשרי תשל"ט
רבקה לודין נפ ל' טבת תשנ"א	רבקה חנין בת ישראל נפ ט"ז אייר תשמ"ט	שמואל בר ישראל נפ ה בשלול תשכ"ו חנה בת בן ציון נפ כ"ד ניסן תשל"ו ברסלר	גלברט וינרמן בר יעקב נפ כ"ט חשוון תשמ"ט
אליאונורה מנס בת יעקב ויינה נפ י"ד כסלו תשנ"ב	זלמן אלהיו בן שאר חכה נפ חנה בת יצחק נפ	חיים (ארגנט) בן קלמן קיו נפ כ' תמוז תשל"ד	יעקב בן דוד זוקוב נפ ג' תמוז תשמ"ד
שמואל ליברמן בן חיים נפ ב' טבת תשמ"א	עבוי הירש רודומשלסקי בר אריה דוד נפ י"א אייר תש"ך	ד"ר זליקובסקי (מנ"ח ק"ץ) נולד בפ"י ישראל-מיכאל נפ כ' אב תשל"א	רינה קרינקביץ בת יוסף ומרים נפ ט' אלול תשל"ה
יצחק ב"ר דוד בירבר נפ כ"ז כסלו תשל"ב	ישראל בר שמואל דוד נפ י"ב טבת תרפ"ה רחל בת משה יצחק נפ ג' ד' אלול תשכ"ה הלפרן	גורביץ בר-עבי בן הרשל נפ ל' שבט תשל"ג	ניסיה מדורסקי בת יצחק נפ כ"ט ניסן תשל"ד
יעקב זוסקונד בן זאב נפ ט' כסלו תשכ"ה	יעקב ב"ר ישראל נפ כ"א שבט תשל"ד נתן-נחמ בע"ר ישראל נפ ב' חשוון תשל"א הלפרן	הירש בן פנחס טופר נפ ט"ז אלול תשל"ו	ארא (אהרון) בן עבי פראגסקי נפ י"ט טבת תשל"ב
מאיר בן ישראל ברסלר	שמעון פלוטקין בן יעקב נפ ה' טבת תשמ"א	מלכה בת יוסף ברסלר נפ ט' כסלו תשל"ב	יצחק בן חנן מאיר קרול נפ כ' תמוז תשל"ו

לזכרון עולם					
אשל דן י"א אב תשנ"ג	שיפריין סופיה בת אברהם י"ג ניסן תשנ"ד	קארלובסקי מיכאל בן אברהם ג' י"ד אלול תשנ"ג	קארלובסקי שלמה (סולומון-לבה) י"ג כסלו תשנ"ג	קארלובסקי אברהם בן מיכאל י"ג י"ד תשרי לעזארה בת נחום י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
זלוטניקוב זאב בן שמעון י"ה כסלו תשנ"ג	טנדט יעקב בן גיטלין כ"ד טבת תש"ס	רבינוביץ דוד בן דוד י"ד כסלו תשל"ה	נאוורויב מיכאל בן אברהם י"ג י"ד תשנ"ג	קובץ דב בן מיכאל י"ג כסלו תשנ"ג חנה בת שלמה י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
קליאבר מיכאל ב"ר ישעיהו ג' אב תשנ"ג	רבינוביץ יוסף בן מרדכי י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	רבינוביץ רפאל בן ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד מרים בת אפרים ג' י"ד אלול תשנ"ד	קליין שמואל בן אברהם י"ג אב תשנ"ד	קובץ מרדכי בן ישראל ג' אב תשנ"ג	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
אוזיראנסקי חיים בן יחזקאל כ"ה אייר	מידקין דב בן הירש י"ב סיון תשנ"ה	דומר אלכסנדר בן אליהו א' אב תשנ"ה	דובנר חנה בת יהודה כ"ג אלול תשנ"ג	קובץ רפאל בן אריה י"ג אב תשנ"ג	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
ליבשיץ יעקב בן מרדכי י"ג חשוון תשנ"ג	בינו יצחק בן דוד כ"ג כסלו תשל"ג	לוטט פניה בת שאול כ"ג טבת תשנ"ג	מיר איסידור ג' י"ד חשוון תשנ"ג	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
ליטוין סעדיה בן זאב כ"ה כסלו תשל"א	אודלובסקי אלתר-יוסף בן עבי כ"ה אב תשנ"ה	קליבוב נחום בן מיכאל י"ג חשוון תשנ"ג	קליבוב מיכאל בן נחום י"ד אדר ב' תשנ"ג חנה בת מיכאל י"ג חשוון תשנ"ה	אודלובסקי אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
טובנאום אלחנן ב"ר משה ט' חשוון תשנ"א	לניר יעקב בן משה כ"ג כסלו תשנ"ה	נרל יחזקאל לייב בן יצחק י"ג אלול תשנ"ג	לויטין אליהו בן משה י"ג אלול תשנ"ג	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד	קובץ אריה לייב בן יוסף חנה (אלה) בת ישעיהו י"ג חשוון תשנ"ד
גורביץ דניאל בן מרדכי י"ג חשוון תשנ"ג	גורביץ ספיה בן זלמן-שלמה כ"ה אב תשנ"ה				

# IN MEMORIAM

## **Irene Rozanski**

It is with sadness that I write this obituary about my friend, Irene Rozanski. For those of you who did not know her, I would like you to know that Irene and her husband Jerry were the original organizers of the American Far Eastern Society of Southern California many years ago, and were very generous contributors to the Igud. They were very active in many ways collecting funds whenever and wherever they could. After Jerry's death and Irene's poor health she was not able to be active in our branch, but was always in touch wanting to know how much money we were able to send to Israel. For me personally, Ira was a good friend whom I have known close to 70 years, and I will miss my weekly calls to her, where we could share our "nachas" about our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. We have a long history, i.e. traveling from Shanghai to Israel on the Wooster Victory, living in Israel and then all coming to the United States and never losing touch. I will miss her and I am sure all of her close friends will do so too. May she rest in peace.

Mira Mrantz

(See earlier obituary in Bulletin #384, pp. 54-55)

## **Beba Zinger**

On May 4, Bertha (Beba) Zinger (nee Burkun), formerly of Harbin and Shanghai, passed away in San Francisco. She was 87. Beba graduated from the Harbin Commercial School and, later, from the St. John's University in Shanghai as a chemical laboratory worker. She was a long-time member of the Far Eastern Society in San Francisco and was a close friend of Igud Yotzei Sin. She had many friends who will remember her as an exceptionally kind and amicable person. May her memory be blessed.

## **Jenia Rosenstein**

Jenia Rosenstein (nee Berenstein) passed away on June 26 at the Tel Hashomer hospital, at the age of 90. Born in Minsk, Belorus, she came to Harbin from Ulan Bator, Mongolia, as a child of four. There she graduated from the Generosov High School and the Van Arnold First School of Dentistry. In 1949 the Bernsteins left Harbin for Shanghai, where Jenia married Fadya Rosenstein. In 1949 the couple came to Israel with their children, Shulamit and Baruch (Boria), and settled in Ramat Gan. Jenia worked as a dentist at the National Health Fund. From the very day of its foundation, Jenia actively participated in all the

IYS activities and served as a member of its Presidium for many years. She was also a member of the Israel-China Friendship Society and the Tel Aviv branch of WIZO. She was a born community worker. It is difficult to imagine our Sunday brunches with Jenia's seat empty. She was buried at the Ramat Hasharon cemetery on June 27. Relatives and her many friends attended the ceremony. Her son, Baruch, recited the Kaddish. A wreath of flowers was placed on her grave by Teddy Kaufman. She is survived by her son Baruch, her sister, Rachel Rabkin, three grandchildren and five great grandchildren. May her memory be blessed.



Jenia Rosenstein

## **David Eskin (1907-2005)**

One of my early recollections of my father is at a railway station, saying farewell to my mother, Betty, and me boarding the train to Harbin for our summer holidays to visit my grandparents, aunt, uncle and cousins, the Shneiders. We would take with us what seemed volumes of 'producti', tins of butter and other foodstuffs. It seemed to me that there may have been shortages in Harbin, but I was never sure. My father always stayed behind in Shanghai working at his small textile importing business, which he started

up after many years working for Alex Henderson & Co. His office was in the Hongkong Shanghai Bank building on the Bund, which I visited from time to time, and watched him and his employee cutting lengths of fabric from large rolls, and ironing on labels of origin, usually 'Made in England'. To our home in Cosmopolitan Apartments on Seymour Road, he would bring tins of butter and cheese imported from New Zealand and Australia, and I would marvel at such places, which seemed to be in another world. My father believed in the work ethic,

always toiling to ensure a comfortable life for his family in Shanghai, but also supporting his parents, sister and brothers in Russia, where he regularly sent clothing and food parcels.

David was born in Snovk, near Gomel, Ukraine, the eldest of four children. Much later he would tell me of his travels as a child, barely in his teens, to other regions to buy staples such as salt to bring back for his father's barter business. He attended high school and when he was only seventeen his uncles Max and George, who had emigrated to Harbin, brought him out to join them and work in their department store, Eskin Bros. It was there that he met and later married my mother, Betty Sarajinsky, who worked as a cashier, as did her sister, Liza. Later on, looking to his future, my father followed many ambitious young men south to Shanghai which was fast developing as an international trading post. In Shanghai, my parents moved into an apartment on the third floor of Cosmopolitan Apartments. I was born in 1936. Dr. Glass was contracted as our family 'medico'. I cannot remember my father ever not being at work. When I was taken to his office, he would let me sit at big round tables for lunch with the Chinese employees, and with much hilarity they taught me to use chopsticks. During the War years, being Russian subjects, we were left in relative peace by the Japanese. We did not suffer the internment experienced by our English and European neighbors. In 1948 my father resisted my pleas to travel to the newly formed State of Israel where many young men with whom I was friendly at Betar were heading. Soon after, I recall sitting with my parents on our verandah facing Hardoon Gardens, and hearing distant thunder of guns as Mao's forces approached Shanghai. My father, one of the last great optimists, believed that the communists were a passing phase, like the Japanese and the Americans before them. Only when we were asked to attend the Russian Consulate over the Garden



David Eskin with his great-grandson Lauren (4 years old)

Bridge, and were 'invited' to emigrate to the USSR, my father realized things were getting serious. My uncle and aunt, Milia and Sara Sarajinsky, had emigrated to Sydney, Australia in 1951 and made efforts to sponsor us. At the same time my father contacted cousins in Canada, the Heligmans, asking for their help. No Western country wanted refugees from communist countries. McCarthyism was rife and it was not until 1953 that we received visas, both from Australia and Canada. Securing exit visas was another hurdle. I was allowed to go to Hong Kong where I lived with friends for a year before coming to Sydney. My parents finally arrived in 1956 and with my uncle's help, we settled at Bronte Beach.

David, who had a reasonable command of English, found a job with James Hardie Refrigeration at Rosebery only a few days after arriving. He worked shifts and overtime and resumed sending parcels to his parents in Moscow. With hard earned savings and good luck with a modest lottery win, my father opened a retail business in George Street called Cathay Disposals, where he joined other 'China hands' in the army and navy surplus industry. There he would be found from 8.00 am till 6 pm daily and on Sundays he would work on accounts at home, by then a house in Rose Bay. My dear mother was

always at his side, somehow balancing being a yiddishe mama and a full time shop-keeper.

When, in the early 80s my father's eyesight began to fail, he slowly and reluctantly liquidated his business and retired. He found much pleasure in his three grandchildren and fostered on them everything a loving grandparent could imagine. He never recovered from the pain of losing his beloved Betty in 1991 but the steady arrival of great grandchildren did help him in his lonely existence at home where he chose to remain. In 1999 his increasing physical problems meant a move to a nursing home. He entertained the nursing staff there with his fascinating stories of his early life in Russia and China. His mind and memory never failed him. He enjoyed constant visits from our family and our Rabbi and Rebbetzin, whose grandparents also came from Gomel, and with whom he had a special bond.

He died just a few weeks short of his 98th birthday and is survived by ten great grandchildren, three grandchildren and their partners, his sister Tsilia in Israel, cousins in America, and Ruth and myself. My father was a man who led a life of integrity, labor, love of family and respect for everyone he knew: a hard act to follow.

**Morris Eskin**

## **Luba Marsh (Marohovsky)** **1920 - 2005**

In great sorrow I am obliged to report our dear Luba's leaving us having lost her valiant battle with persistent cancer. For the past four years she has gone through every procedure known to doctors that held this vicious malady at bay. In the end, having lost her strength, she surrendered with grace just like everything she had done during her lifetime. She will be sorely missed by our family as well as by all she had known.

May her soul rest in peace and we shall remember all the wonderful years she spent with us.

George Radbil (brother-in-law)



Luba Marsh

## **Rosetta Rabinovich**

On May 20, Rosetta Rabinovich, formerly of Shanghai, a veteran member of Igud Yotzei Sin, passed away at Tel Hashomer Hospital. She was 95.

From the establishment of IYS, Rosetta was an active member of its Central Committee, the Tel-Aviv Committee and the Women's Auxiliary at Bet Ponve. She was a born community worker, and for decades was busy with one project or another. In Shanghai, too, she was also very active, especially in helping the European refugees. Rosetta's home was always open to relatives and friends. For the past few years she was ill, and cared for by her daughter, Isabel.

Rosetta was survived by a large family: daughter Isabel, son Bobby and his wife Michal, five grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren. Her funeral took place on

May 23 at the Yarkon cemetery attended by many friends from Israel and Shanghai. She was eulogized by her granddaughter Keren, and her son Bobby recited Kaddish. May her memory be blessed.

(See earlier obituary in Bulletin #384, p. 55)

## **Rosetta**

There was only one Rosetta and she was my mother. A woman of wit, humor, understanding, strength, passion – a force to be reckoned with. She possessed all those qualities and more – much more. She was my friend, my sister, my confidante. There was only 17 years between us, “telepathy” was our middle name, we were that close.

Her children worshipped her, her Filipino caregiver idolized her. Her home was an ‘open house’, her friends were ‘ageless’ – the young and the old. They all knew Rosetta. She loved having company – her welcome was warm, very warm. She enjoyed life to the fullest, and made us feel so very happy, yes, we were proud of her.

She was a devoted wife to my late father, Gavriel (Gava), a companion to me, a loving grandmother to my children, a friend and story-teller to her great grandchildren. She fascinated us with her ‘travels’ from Russia to China and finally – Israel. She was remarkable.

The end was near – she knew it and we felt it.

She used to love sitting outside on the balcony watching the people and the traffic go by. There was a certain open van that often passed under our window, the driver yelling at the top of his voice (Alta Zahen – Alta Zahen) – a ‘collector’ of various ‘objects’ of interest. Mama always used to smile. On this particular day she said to me: “Tell him ‘Dochinka’ – soon, very soon”.

A week later, on a Friday night, at the age of 95, she passed away.

You are forever in our hearts.

**Isabel**

## **Sonia Semberg**

Sonia Semberg passed away in Netanya on June 17. She was a member of Igud Yotzei Sin from the day it was established.

May her memory be blessed.

## **Liova Brunner**

Arie (Liova) Brunner, formerly of Harbin, passed away in Moshav Amikam on July 21. He was 86.

Liova was buried on July 22 at the Amikam cemetery. The ceremony was attended by his family, numerous friends and members of the Moshav. Liova's brother, Isia, recited Kaddish. The deceased was eulogized by Amikam's Rabbi Mordechai Weizman, one of his daughters, Ilana Segal and granddaughter, Liron Herschkowitz. Teddy Kaufman spoke for Igud Yotzei Sin, of which Liova was a prominent member from the day it was founded. He placed a wreath of flowers on the grave in the name of the Igud. Liova is survived by his wife, Luba (nee Kondakova), brother, three daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren. Liova was born and spent his formative years in Harbin. He belonged to a patriarchal, traditional Jewish family, where he received his Zionist education. He went to the Talmud Torah, and later on to the First Commercial School, where the majority of the Harbin Jewish youth received their education, learning Jewish history and tradition. At an early age Liova joined the Betar movement which formed his Zionist credo and determined his future way of life. In 1950 the Brunner family came to Israel. Here, Liova and his wife Luba joined the group of the founders of the Harbin Betar Moshav Amikam in Western Shomron. Those were difficult days of classical pioneering, a way of life to which none of the new settlers were accustomed. Liova was an active member of the Igud from the day of its foundation. He was co-opted to its Central Committee and appointed as the Igud's honorary representative in Amikam. To his very last days, he regularly attended daily services of the Amikam synagogue. He will be remembered as a good, honest man who had many friends and no enemies, and was honored by all. We share the grief and the loss of Liova's wife, Luba, his daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren, and hope that his memory, which remains in the hearts of those who knew him, may partially comfort them in their sorrow.

**T. Kaufman**

# Israel Epstein, Prominent Chinese Communist, Dies at 90

By Douglas Martin

Israel Epstein, a journalist, author and propagandist for China, whose passion for Communism was fueled in long interviews with Mao in the 1940s and was not dimmed by imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution, died at a hospital in Beijing. He was 90. His death was announced by the official New China News Agency.

Mr. Epstein edited *China Today*, and English-language Chinese newsmagazine, translated the sayings and writings of Mao and Deng Xiaoping, and advised the Chinese government on how to polish its overseas image. He became a Chinese citizen, joined the Communist Party, and served on official government and party committees. He and perhaps a dozen other aging foreign-born residents of Beijing were sometimes seen as the last true believers in a revolution that has sometimes seemed blurred by time's passage and China's embrace of free markets and consumerism.

In 1996, *The Observer*, the London newspaper, said: "Perhaps the most loyal Communists in the country today are foreigners, veteran fellow travelers from a vanished era of idealism". Mr. Epstein hung Mao's portrait on his bedroom wall; knew the American journalist Edgar Snow well enough to help edit his books; was a protégé of the widow of Sun Yat-sen, the founder of China's first republic; and was able to say the five years he spent in prison on false charges during the Cultural Revolution had helped improve him by shrinking his ego. For decades China's top leaders visited him on his birthdays.

"My basic ideas have not changed," he told *The Observer*. "I see no reason to change them".

Israel Epstein was born on April 20, 1915, in Warsaw, then under Russian

control. His father was imprisoned by the Czarist authorities for leading a labor uprising, and his mother was once exiled to Siberia. "The earliest influence on me came from my socialist parents," Mr. Epstein said in an interview with *China Daily* in 2003.

After the outbreak of World War I, his father was sent by his company to Japan to develop business in the Pacific region. As the German army approached Warsaw, his mother, with him in her arms, fled the city and traveled east to be reunited with her husband. After experiencing anti-Jewish sentiment in several places, they settled in Tianjin in North China. He was then two years old.

Mr. Epstein began his career as a journalist at 15, working for the Tianjin-based *Peking and Tientsin Times*, an English-language newspaper. He covered China's struggle against Japanese invaders for United Press and other Western news organizations. In 1941, a short item in *The New York Times* reported that he had been killed, but it later turned out that he had faked his death to divert the Japanese who were hunting him. He anonymously submerged into a Japanese internment camp for a while.

Mr. Epstein became acquainted with Mr. Snow after his editor assigned him to review one of Mr. Snow's books, and Mr. Snow showed him his classic "Red Star Over China" before it was published. Mr. Snow reciprocated by reading Mr. Epstein's unpublished works.

In Hong Kong, Mr. Epstein worked with Soong Ching Ling, Sun Yat-sen's widow, whom he had met in left-wing political activities in the 1930's. She arranged for him to visit Mao, Zhou Enlai and their revolutionary comrades at their base in China's northwest in 1944, and Mr.

Epstein said his conversations with Mao had changed his life.

In 1944, Mr. Epstein visited Britain, then spent the next five years in the United State, where he published "The Unfinished Revolution in China" to good reviews. Other books he wrote were first published in Chinese and included "From Opium War to Liberation" in 1954, "Tibet Transformed" in 1983, and "Woman in World History: Soong Ching Ling" in 1993. In 1951, Ms. Soong invited him to return to China to edit *China Reconstructs*, later renamed *China Today*. He was editor in chief until his retirement at 70, and then editor emeritus.

His five years in prison during the Cultural Revolution on charges of plotting against Zhou, ended in 1973 with a personal apology from Zhou and a restoration of his exalted position. His prominence in China was suggested by the annual talks Mao had with him. Deng attended Mr. Epstein's retirement reception in 1985. On April 17, the Chinese president, Hu Jintao, visited him and praised his "special contributions" to China.

Mr. Epstein's first wife, Elsie Fairfax-Cholmeley, died in 1984. He is survived by his wife, Wan Bi, two children and two stepchildren. He will be buried at the Babaoshan Cemetery for Revolutionaries.

(From *The New York Times*, June 2, 2005)

## Related Titles:

*Round Eyes in the Middle Kingdom:* Filmmaker Ronald Levaco, born in China of Russian Jewish parents returns to the country of his birth after 45 years to discover what happened to Israel Epstein, his father's best friend who decided to stay.

# From The Album of The Past



**The Shanghai Jewish School football team in 1939 when it took 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the school league.  
From row (left to right): M. Levy, I. Plotkin, A. Cohen, L. Altshuler, I. Laevsky  
Back row (left to right): Mr Kahana (headmaster), M. Isaacs, E. Jacob, J. Mansseh,  
P. Gordon, J. Jacob, B. Miller**

## **IGUD YOTZEI SIN BULLETIN – English Supplement – ISSN 0793-8365**

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(from the by-laws of the Association)

In publishing the Bulletin the IYS IN Israel aims to meet the following needs:

1. To promote a sense of community among the former Jewish residents in China.
2. To maintain a channel of communication for the members of the above community
3. To assist in collecting, preserving and publishing historical materials dealing with the life of the above community.
4. To assist IYS in meeting its goals, particularly those dealing with social assistance and educational stipends to members of the above community living in Israel.