

# Bulletin

## Igud Yotzei Sin

Association of Former Residents of China

June - July 2005 ♦ Vol LII ♦ Issue No. 384

English Supplement



**“Tientsin Jews gathered around the Synagogue celebrating the establishment of the State of Israel”**

**Ink drawing by Lu Zhide, a Chinese painter from Shanghai. From an album devoted to the life of Jews in China. Exhibitions of Lu’s paintings have been held in Harbin, Shanghai and Vienna.**

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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)

# THEMES OF THE DAY

T. Kaufman

## Now it is Tientsin's turn

There existed fourteen Jewish communities in contemporary China during the 19th -20th centuries, three of which were centered in Shanghai: Sephardic, Ashkenazi (mostly of Russian origin), and the "Yiddische Gemeinde", the community of the refugees from Nazi Europe. Seven Jewish communities thrived in the Northeastern Provinces (Manchuria): in Harbin, the town of Manchuria (Manzhouli), Tzitzikar, Hailar, Handaohetgzu, Mukden (Shenyang) and Dairen (Dalian). Four other communities were situated in Tientsin (Tianjin), Peking (Beijing), Tzingdao and Hankou. The three Jewish communities (in Shanghai, Harbin and Tientsin) were the major centers of the Jewish presence in China: they had all the highly developed attributes of the Jewish social, national, religious and charity functions.

After the cessation of the activity of the Tientsin Jewish community in 1958, and of the Jewish communities in Harbin and Shanghai, in 1963, there was no contact between Jews and China, until the establishment of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel and PRC, in 1992. However, since 1992 until now a number of gigantic steps were taken in the direction of reestablishment of our past in China.

Let us begin with Shanghai. There the synagogue Ohel Rahel was partially reconstructed, a museum was established in the former synagogue of Ohel Moshe in the Hongkew area; in 1994 a monument was erected in memory of the 20,000 European refugees who found shelter in Shanghai. A Centre of Research

of the Jewish Past in Shanghai and Judaism at large was inaugurated at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences by Prof. Pan Guang. In 1994 an international seminar on the history of the Jewish presence took place in Shanghai and several books and two photo albums on the subject were published. An exhibition dedicated to the Jewish past in the city functions on a permanent basis, and more than a hundred tombstones were discovered recently in the suburbs of the city.

The reestablishment of the past of the Harbin Jewish community was launched in 1992. The Harbin Jewish cemetery, the only one which survived the "cultural revolution", was thoroughly repaired; the two main synagogues were also repaired and reconstructed; a Centre of Research of the History of Harbin Jews was established at the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences; a permanent exhibition displays more than 400 photographs and documents dedicated to the Jewish presence in the city. An album of photographs on the same subject was issued by the CRJP (Center of Research of the Jewish Past in Harbin); and, last, but not least, an international seminar on the history of the Harbin Jews took place in the city in September, 2004 with the participation of over 100 ex-Harbiners, now living in Israel and the Diaspora. The plan to launch in 2006 a traveling exhibition in four cities in the US is now under way.

All the above events were organized with the active participation and, partly, on the initiative of Israel-China Friendship Association and the Igud Yotzei Sin in Israel. The plans

for the future include setting up of the Jewish Center in the premises of the Harbin "New Synagogue" and further efforts to open the Archives of the Harbin Jewish Association (now in the possession of the Harbin municipality) for international research of the history of Jews in Northeastern China.

During its 51 years of existence, a lot was done by the IYS mouthpiece, the Bulletin in promoting the knowledge of the Jewish presence in modern China: it carried articles, memoirs and documents in Russian, Hebrew and English by eyewitnesses, journalists and historians, and in 2004 a regularly up-dated Internet Website [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org) was established.

During the past 13 years, since the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and China, five Chinese delegations visited Israel in the framework of the Chinese Association of Friendship with foreign countries and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. During the same period of time, three Israeli delegations visited China. The Harbin delegation brought a gift for the Igud Yotzei Sin and the Diaspora Museum (Bet Tefutzot): exact replicas of the two Harbin (the New and the Old) synagogues. Two exhibitions were initiated by the IYS and Bet Hatefutzot: "The Jews of China" and "The life of Dr. Jacob Rosenfeld".

All this was done regarding the Jewish communities of Harbin and Shanghai. The third by size was the Jewish community of Tientsin with a population never exceeding 2500. Despite its size, it was an exemplary community, which had entered

significant pages into the history of the Jews of China.

The Jews began to settle in Tientsin in 1904 and quickly grew to become a well organized community, which had all the attributes of a major Jewish community of European standards: a synagogue, a cultural center (Club Kunst), Jewish School, Jewish Hospital, Home for the Aged, a Zionist youth organization, Betar, it engaged a rabbi who was in charge of all the religious activities. There were all the religious attributes: cemetery, mikvah, shehita, and a matzot bakery. The Tientsin Hebrew Association (THA) registered births, deaths, and marriages.

During the Japanese occupation of Tientsin, the Jewish community passed through a dark period. The Japanese authorities established a White Russian militant "Anticomunist Committee" headed by a notorious Cossack esaul (captain), Eulampii Pastukhin. Owing to the fact that the vast majority of the Tientsin Jews were stateless Russian emigrants, the Committee exerted heavy pressure on them to join its ranks and pay exorbitant "membership fees", which met with a heavy resistance by the Jews. The newly appointed "Bureau of the Jewish Emigrants" often bypassed Pastukhin's directives and appealed (in most cases successfully) directly to the Japanese authorities.

The Tientsin Jewish community produced prominent social figures, headed by I. Gershevich, its founder, and, many years later, the first president of the Far Eastern Association in New York. The last president of the Tientsin Hebrew Association was Liova Piastunovich, and its members included Rabbi Levin, Abba Izgur, one of the most prominent educators in China, Zelig Belokamen, Moisei Todrin, Ilya Fligil, Mikhail Kliaver, Vladimir Zlotnikov and Lev Pirutinsky. There were many others who contributed to the development and welfare of the community, like the generous Moisei

Trigubov, who paid for the building of the community synagogue and the home for the aged.

One of the notable old Tientsin hands is Israel Epstein, a journalist, an author and a first rank political activist. His father, Lazar Epstein, had been one of the leaders of the "Bund" party in Harbin and Tientsin and, later, the founder of "Dalevzib", the Far Eastern Information Bureau and the Far Eastern Association in New York.

What has been done for the preservation of the memory of the Tientsin community? To tell the truth, very little: a number of articles were published on the history of the Tientsin Jewish community. There is also a comprehensive Tientsin link on our Internet website. This, evidently, is not enough. The magnitude of the community and its importance in the history of the Jewish presence in contemporary China call for much more. Recently an initiative to fill the deficiency began to move and gain momentum.

About three years ago, the former ambassador to China, Wan Chen-yi, told us that a Tientsin journalist, Ms. Anna Song, wants to write a book on the history of the Tientsin Jewish community, and asked if we could supply her with some background material, which we have gladly done. The book was written and published. Ms. Song was invited to the international seminar in Harbin in 2004, where she delivered a comprehensive paper on the history of the Tientsin Jews. She was also helped by our compatriot Shmuel Miller to publish an album of photographs on the chronology of the Tientsin Jewish community. The first step of the reestablishment of the Jewish past in the city was taken.

What are the further steps to be made in this direction?

1) to establish a Center of study of the history of the Tientsin Jewish community in the framework of the Tientsin Academy of Social Sciences,

on the Shanghai, Harbin Kaifeng and Nanking patterns;

2) to repair the Tientsin synagogue, and establish there a Center of research of the history of the Jews of Tientsin;

3) to organize a permanent exhibition of photographs reflecting Jewish presence in the city;

4) to publish list of names of the former Tientsin residents, now living in Israel and the Diaspora;

5) to arrange for a world meet of the former Tientsin residents in Bet Ponve and produce a video record of it;

6) to organize a seminar on the history of the Jewish presence in Tientsin, to be held in that city some time in 2006.

All these are important not only for us, but also for the city, which recently celebrated its 600th anniversary, and of which they were a part.

The Jews of Tientsin made a significant contribution to the economy of the city. Even today, former Tientsin residents, Emmanuel Gil and Shmuel Miller, maintain commercial contacts with the city. The latter has already done a lot towards reconstructing our history in Tientsin, and there is still much work left for him to do in conjunction with IYS. During my third visit to Tientsin in 2004, where I met with the municipal authorities and the representatives of the Chinese Association of Friendship with Foreign Countries, I was impressed that the Chinese side would cooperate to reestablish the Jewish past in the city.

With such cooperation of our friends in Tientsin and Peking, and having access to the archives of the former Tientsin Hebrew Association, now in care of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Igud Yotzei Sin will be able to fulfill its duty towards our past, with the assistance of The Israel-China Friendship Association, our compatriots in Israel, Australia and the US.

# People and Events

## **Chinese Jews on ITV**

During January 2005, twice a week, Israel Television (Channel 25) screened films about the Jews in China, including an interview with Teddy Kaufman about the Jews in the contemporary China, and with Teddy Piastunovich about the Jews of Kaifeng. Shi Lei, one of the 40 remnants of the Kaifeng Jewish community, took part in the interview.

## **The Gesher Theater**

The Gesher Theater will take "Adam Resurrected" to Shanghai in October to participate in the China Shanghai International Arts Festival. Organizers saw a video of the show and wrote to invite Gesher saying: "This year is the 60th anniversary of World War II, so it is meaningful to have a theatrical program on this theme." The play, by Alexander Tcherbinsky and directed by Yevgeny Arye, is performed in a circus tent and presents the Holocaust as a cynical revue through the eyes of Adam Stein, for whom such a depiction is the only way of confronting his past. The tent will be sent up in Hongkou Park in an area of Shanghai that was a haven for thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi persecution in the '30s and '40's.

## **Diplomatic Circle**

When Labor leader Shimon Peres, in his capacity as honorary president of the Council for the Promotion of Israel-China Relations, hosted a luncheon in honor of Tang Jiaxuan, state councillor of the People's Republic of China, during the latter's official visit to Israel and the Palestinian Authority, it was not simple a matter of noblesse oblige. The two have known each other for several years. They met in

Beijing at Tang's invitation when Tang was foreign minister and Peres was minister for regional cooperation, and again when Peres was foreign minister.

Peres invited Tang to visit Israel, but after the Phalcon fiasco in 2000, China stopped sending high-ranking officials to Israel. Tang is the highest-ranking Chinese official to visit Israel in the past four years. At the start of the luncheon, Zev Sufott, Israel's first ambassador to China, and the co-founder together with the late Shoul Eisenberg of the Council for the Promotion of Israel-China Relations, welcomed the guest of honor in Chinese. A beaming Tang clapped his hands in delight, as did members of his entourage. Tang praised Eisenberg's role in the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries. Eisenberg, who had substantial business interests in China, was the first honorary president of the council, which continues to receive financial support from his son Erwin, a factor that Tang did not neglect to mention.

Among those present at the luncheon were Chinese Ambassador Chen Yonglong, Israel's current ambassador to China Yehodaya Haim and former ambassadors to China Ora Namir and Moshe Ben-Ya'acov. Moshe Arens, a former foreign minister and defense minister, was also present. As defense minister in 1992, Arens was the last Israeli minister to pay a secret visit to China. "Three weeks later," he told The Jerusalem Post, "we established diplomatic relations."

At a luncheon hosted by Foreign Minister Silvan Shalom, it was Chief of Protocol Yitzhak Eldan who greeted the guests in Chinese. Unlike Sufott, who speaks the language fluently, Eldan knows only a few words,

and was coached by his Chinese colleagues on a need-to-know basis. (From The Jerusalem Post, January 7, 2005)

## **Lecture on the Jews of China**

On April 10 Teddy Kaufman lectured in the Herzliya WIZO club, on the Jews of China.

His 90-minute lecture gave a comprehensive account of the history of the Jewish presence in modern China and the friendly attitude of the Chinese people towards the Jews. He also acquainted the listeners with the work done in Israel by the Israel-China Friendship Association and answered numerous questions by the audience.

## **Peking Journalists visit Bet Ponve**

Journalists Xiao Yang and Chu Peng of the "Beijing Youth Daily" visited Bet Ponve on April 7. They are now on a fortnight visit to Israel at the invitation of the Israeli embassy in Peking.

In Bet Ponve Teddy Kaufman, Yossi Klein, Roni Weirnerman and Teddy Piastunovich acquainted the guests with the history of the Igud Yotzei Sin and the Israel-China Friendship Association and provided them with material on the work being done by the two organizations and the history of the Jewish presence in modern China.

# Stella and David Udovitch -

honorary representatives of IYS in Australia at a Reception at Beit-Ponve



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1. T. Kaufman opens the get-together with a welcoming speech; on his left is Dodia Udovitch.
2. Yossi Klein greets the guests: on his left Stella Udovitch and Teddy , on his right is Bob Freiman.
3. Stella Udovitch speaks and gives thanks for the reception.
- 4-5-6. Guests at Beit-Ponve

# AT BEIT-PONVE



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1. Journalists from Beijing and the hosts (left to right): R. Veinerman, T. Kaufman, Y. Klein, T. Piastunovich and D. Gootman
2. A well-known artist Ruth Shani (of Honkew, Shanghai) and her husband Izzy Shani
3. Landsmen from Honkew, Shanghai (Left to right): Inga Nissbaum, Juta Friedman, Rita Landau and Kurt Nussbaum
4. Actor and singer Alspector sings
5. Aaron Sloushcher of San Francisco and David Gootman
6. A guest from Finland, Mrs. Margaret Egerhult, and Lily Khoroshi

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## *Palestinian Role in the Peace Process - Challenges and Obstacles*

*By Abraham Fradkin*

The elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council which are to take place in July 2005 are of crucial importance to Chairman Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and the Palestinian Authority. Prior to the elections, Abbas has to enact the necessary reforms in his security apparatus, unite the various factions of the Fatah movement and find a common ground for the old guard of Fatah and its younger generation. At present, one is aware of the state of anarchy and the growing lawlessness in the territories as no one seems to control the various factions due to

the splintered state of the security apparatus.

Another major concern for Abbas pertains to the growing popularity of Hamas. According to the results of recent local elections in the Gaza Strip, Hamas has gained control of nine of the twelve municipal councils. At recent elections Hamas also captured the majority of seats on the student councils at the Palestinian Polytechnic College in Hebron and at the University of Hebron.

In spite of the popularity of Hamas, it is estimated that Mahmoud Abbas will win the majority of seats on the

Legislative Council. Immediately following these elections it is up to Abbas to overcome the crucial hurdle of disarming the military wings of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, as well as some factions of his own Fatah movement. The implementation of the abovementioned steps is essential to avoid the derailment of the Road Map. With the support of the majority of Palestinians, Mahmoud Abbas may succeed in his endeavor to surmount all the obstacles in order to implement the primary stipulation of the Road Map and move the peace process forward.

## *Teddy Kaufman lectures at the Hebrew University*

On May 20, Teddy Kaufman gave an hour long lecture on "China and the Jews" at the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, during a seminar on the history of the world's Jewish communities and anti-Semitism. It was attended by the research personnel of the Vidal Sassoon International Research Center of Antisemitism. Prof. Robert Wistreich, Director of the Center, introduced the lecturer, stressing his efforts in strengthening the ties between

Israel and China.

Teddy acquainted the audience with the overall history of the Jewish presence in contemporary China, the Israel-China and the Jewish-Chinese relationship. The last part of the lecture was dedicated to the Harbin Jewish community. Teddy answered numerous questions by the researchers.

In the second part of the event a short paper on the Jews of Kaifeng was delivered in English by Prof.

Zhang Qiang-hong, Director of Judaica Studies at the Henan University in Kaifeng.

The seminar was attended by more than 30 participants and guests, our former Chinese compatriots, Prof. Haim and Miriam Tadmor, Nehama Elran and Rasha Kaufman.

Prof. Wistreich thanked Teddy for the comprehensive lecture, "which opened a window on the life of the Jews in the far away China."

# Jewish Life in Shanghai 60 Years Ago

Shanghai, Friday, August 3, 1945

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## AN HONOURED DEBT

The calamity of July 17 with all of its suffering, chiefly by the Chinese and a refugee population of Shanghai's northeastern area, proved the first instance of Jewish refugees—China's first guests for more than a decade—could reciprocate with acts of heroism for the Italy offered them here. Nationalism made them homeless and no country in the world offer them a home.

The Foreign Pao-Chia Corps, being under stress and strain in an emergency calling for exertion of all their powers, not only done their duty in numerous instances extended themselves in acts of courage and sacrifice when rendering help to Chinese and foreigners. So noteworthy was their to the Chinese civilians that as specially commended by Lo Chun-Chiang, Secretary General of the Shanghai Municipality, during his tour of the devastated area following the bombing.

This official recognition their services went hand in hand with public demonstration of attitude, and we know of numerous cases when relatives of Jewish citizens made their contributions in money and kind to see relief funds as a token recognition of humanitarian aid rendered by the refugees. This newly established relationship with the Chinese community, grown out of the refugees' ability to prove "friends indeed and therefore friends" should be fully appreciated.

It is a well-known fact that in circumstances more often than beyond their control, refugees have not been able to give their full productive contribution to the Shanghai community and that this has given rise to a belief that no good

was to be expected from them in any field of social service. This reputation is now dispelled. At a test on that fateful day, July 17, in havoc and danger, death and narrow escape, Jewish emigrants displayed not only discipline and organization but humanism in the best sense of the word. They proved themselves worthy citizens conscious of their civil obligations to the community at large. And by doing so they paid their first instalment of the debt to the hospitable country that had given them refuge for no other motives except humane.

Time and again we have heard opinions to the effect that the peculiar tragedy of the Shanghai emigration lies in its uprootedness from the life and the people among whom they live. Little or nothing, however, has been done to bridge this gap. In the field of culture good work has been done by the Asia Seminar, some contacts have been made by artists and musicians. Social and business relationship, however, have not been fostered, and few if any emigrants display interest for the life of the teeming millions around them who in turn are completely ignorant or hold a perverse opinion of what Jewish emigrants are like.

It is indeed difficult to estimate what immense good could be derived by both parties from closer intercourse. On one side there are cultural traditions, training and discipline, on the other thirst for knowledge, receptiveness, and unlimited goodwill.

Emigrants need more contact with the environment in which they live. They need more opportunities for proving their gratitude and sympathy to this generous country—opportunities not in war only but also in peace. A. G.

## Ashkenazi Jewish Organisations File Memorandum with the Shanghai Stateless Refugee Bureau

Following the tragic consequences of the July 17 air-raid on Hongkew, a Memorandum drawn by chief Ashkenazi Jewish social organizations was filed with the Director of the Shanghai Stateless Refugee Bureau. The Memorandum contains a petition to permit the refugees free movement from the Designated

Area. The psychological effect of such a permission would be most beneficial, the petitioners said. The Memorandum was presented to the Director of the Stateless Refugee Bureau by special delegation headed by the Chairman of the Shanghai Ashkenazi Jewish Community.

## What Labour Party Promised Before It Came to Power

In connection with the Labour Party's overwhelming victory in British Parliament it is useful to remember what promises it had made in connection with Palestine before coming to power.

Dr. Hugh Dalton, President of the Board of Trade, made the Labour Party's pronouncement on foreign policy on May 22.

Dealing with Palestine, Dr. Dalton strongly opposed the present policy of Churchill's

Government. "The Labour Party he said, "considers it morally wrong and politically undesirable that any Jew wanting to go to Palestine should be prevented from doing so. Jewish emigration into Palestine should be freely encouraged and assisted."

"We want close agreement between the United States, Russia and Britain in getting common support for a happy and prosperous free Jewish State in Palestine," said Dr. Dalton.

## Jerusalem Municipality Replaced by British Commission

Lisbon, July 13, Central Press:

A temporary Commission of five British Government officials has been appointed to maintain essential municipal services in Jerusalem after an official announcement that the Municipal Council of Jerusalem seems to have ceased to exist.

In a letter to the Councilors informing them of the Government's step, Commissioner J. Pollock referred to a proposal made by High Commissioner Lord Gort in March that the mayoralty should be held in

rotation by a Moslem, a Jew or a Christian, which was not accepted by the Moslems and Jew. Pollock's letter added: "It is a matter of deep regret that the people of Jerusalem have been unable to demonstrate their political maturity by finding a solution for their difficulties amongst themselves and so have forced on the city a form of administration by a commission, the adoption of which is certainly not welcomed by the Government."

## 100,000 Additional Certificates For Palestine Demanded by London Conference

Stockholm, July 13, Central Press:

Regent Emir Abdul Ilah of Iraq, who is at present in London, answering the question of a Reuter's correspondent as to

certificates for Jews to enter Palestine, said:

"The position of all Arab States is that they would oppose this demand as being contrary to the White Paper which the

Local Jewish Residents' Loan Committee Expands Work

(Contributed by Joe Levoff)

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# Dr. A. Kaufman, Camp Doctor - 16 Years in the Soviet Union

## Chapter 6, Section E

During the following weeks I reminded them several times about the requested meeting with M, and each time they said "OK, OK we'll arrange the meeting", but the meeting never took place. Who knows in what circumstances they extracted this declaration from the unfortunate M.

One day I was summoned for interrogation in the early hours of the morning. When I came to the interrogator he told me to follow him to the director of the interrogation department. We marched along the long corridor of the MGB. We hardly made twenty steps when out of one of the crevices of the corridor a person, whom I had met many times previously in Harbin, stepped out for a short moment and looked at me. When he saw me he quickly stepped back into the crevice from where he came. It seemed strange to me to see a person walking alone along the corridors of the MGB without any guards. It immediately became clear to me the work this person was doing, both here and in Harbin. They hid him in the crevice to confirm my identity as he knew me from Harbin where he had participated in all my lectures and Jewish meetings. I am not interested in meeting this Soviet agent. We entered the office of the director of interrogations. The director is sitting by his desk; he too carries the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. By the window sits a young woman, a typist. The interrogator presents me to the director.

"I know, I know him," says the director "Are you Russian?"

"I am Jewish"

"Yes, yes, I know, but you are of Russian extraction, you were born in Russia, no? Where were you born?"

"In the Chernigov province."

"That is to say, in the Ukraine... I am from the Ukraine too," says the director with false happiness. "Why don't you want to tell us anything? You are a gold mine to



us, a gold mine... you know a lot about Zionist activities, their cooperation with the United States and Britain. You also know Japanese politics! So why do you refuse to help us and tell us all that you know? Aren't you a Russian, like me; aren't the white houses of the Ukraine dear to you, the sky of the Ukraine, the Dnieper river... isn't this your motherland!"

My reply to the heart rendering appeal of this "Cheka'ist" was:

"I know nothing about all the things you mentioned. I am being accused of events that never happened and you want me to sign my name to these lies."

The director interrupted my words:

"Don't lie! Are you looking for a stick?"

I repeat what I said previously, that all that they are accusing me of and demanding that I confess to are nothing but lies and fabrications.

"Let's not speak about the past... Tell me about yourself and your Zionist activities. You are a Zionist, aren't you?"

"Yes I am a Zionist..."

"And not just a someone coming from the ranks, but a Zionist leader," says the director emphatically. "Tell me what tasks were you assigned by London."

"London did not assign me any tasks and not to anyone else," I reply in the same emphatic manner.

"Isn't Weizman in London?"

"I don't know where he is nor do I see

what he has to do with this matter. The Zionist Federation does not interfere in the politics of any country; its sole activity and interests are problems pertaining to Jewish national affairs".

"But Zionism is banned in the Soviet Union, didn't you know that?"

"I know that Zionists are hounded and jailed in the Soviet Union, but what has this to do with me? I was a Zionist before the Soviet Union was established, before Bolshevism; I never was in the Soviet Union nor worked there. So what are my crimes or sins in that I worked for the good of my people?"

"So, I see, you don't want to tell us anything", concludes the director.

"Please ask me questions, and I will tell you all I know. I never was involved in any secret activity".

"Look," says the director with a serious expression on his face "When a petty thief or a burglar is stubborn and does not confess to his crimes, we beat him a little then he confesses. We will not have to use this method with a person like you. Hopefully we will quickly find a mutual understanding... But I must say you are not a patriot, you do not want to give us any help...what should we do? Don't blame us but only yourself. I just want you to know that stronger people than you succumbed and confessed, and you too will eventually succumb to us," concluded the director. During all this time the typist clicked away on her typewriter recording every word.

My interrogator escorted me back to his room, then I was returned to my cell. From the threats made to me by the director of interrogations I understood that my prison conditions would very soon turn for the worse. And indeed, so they were, very swiftly.

On the next day I was summoned to my interrogator. His first question was:

"Did you ever see our underground train?"

"No, I was driven several times across Moscow, but each time on the 'Black Raven'..."

"There is no underground train like ours in the whole world...but you won't see it very soon... and the fault is yours, we tried to persuade you to talk in a positive manner but you are stubborn. Now your existence will be bitter!"

On saying these words he left the room and immediately another officer entered and told me cheerfully: "Your case is now in my hands. My name is Major N. You are being transferred to a military prison. The conditions there are not as good as here with us. But you yourself, by your behavior and your refusal to confess to your crimes against the Soviet Union, caused this to happen...me, you will not easily lead

astray... I am an old CHEKA'ist"

That's the way he introduced himself to me. He then telephoned and called in a guard to accompany me back to my cell.

At nine-thirty in the evening, lights out time when all the prisoners must enter their bunks. In the Lubyanka prison there is a regulation requiring the prisoners to keep their hands on the blanket and never under it. When a guard sees a prisoner covering his hands by the blanket he immediately starts knocking on the door or even enters the cell and wakes the guilty prisoner and demands that he keep his hands "according to the regulations".

I was lying in my bunk, and could not fall asleep, pondering what's in store for me in the other prison where I am to be transferred. There are many prisons in Moscow; some of them, as I heard from other prisoners who experienced them,

have a most brutal regime. One prison particularly, known for its infamy, situated in one of the former monastery buildings and has an especially cruel regime. Who knows, perhaps I will be transferred there too, or perhaps to an even worse place. The new interrogator said – to a "military prison".

That night I did not shut an eyelid. At two o'clock after midnight the cell door opens, an officer enters calls out my name and orders:

"Collect your gear!"

I was led out of the cell, to a "Black Raven" and shuttled again through the streets of Moscow. We arrive, enter, I immediately recognize the place – I was returned to Lefortovo prison.

## Chapter 7, Section A

It was March 1947. I was imprisoned in a cell holding a single person. Cells of this type are said to be intended for "very important" prisoners. The cell is small. Just below the ceiling, on the wall facing outside, is a small barred hatch. All, in accordance with "regulations". A cot is attached to one of the walls, by the opposite wall stands a small table. In a corner is a sink with a faucet and next to it stands a toilet bowl. A cell with all the "conveniences..." The Lefortovo prison has a toilet bowl in every cell, in this way they avoid having to take the prisoners to toilets outside of the cell. There are no chairs and one can sit only on the bed.

During my transfer process to this prison they took my eyeglasses away from me. One day without saying a word they just took the glasses off my nose. The next morning I told one of the guards that without my glasses I cannot see anything. He wrote this down, on the next day I repeated my request, the guard remarked:

"Your interrogator must confirm in writing or at least by telephone that you are permitted to get your glasses back. Remind him of this when you see him the next time"

That same evening I was summoned for

interrogation. I asked the interrogator to give the necessary instructions for my glasses to be returned to me.

"What! You have not received the eyeglasses yet?" he asked with an incredulous look on his face.

"They are waiting for your instructions either in writing or by telephone."

"Alright I will instruct the guard."

"Thank you," I replied, believing that the glasses would actually be returned to me. But several days passed and the glasses were still not returned. Every day I reminded the guard of this, but the answer was the same: He needs the interrogators instructions while the interrogator promises to give the necessary instructions. After a week I told the interrogator that I still did not receive the glasses and the lack of them is most difficult for me. "They have not returned your glasses yet? Such inefficiency!" the interrogator replies in a mocking tone.

I understood that they are molesting me so I stopped talking about this matter anymore. Two weeks have gone by and I still have not received the eyeglasses. During one of the interrogations, the interrogator hands me the protocol of this session for my signature.

"I see nothing without my eyeglasses and

I cannot read this paper."

He reaches into his drawer and hands me a pair of eyeglasses.

"These are my eyeglasses!" I shouted happily. I read the protocol, then without taking off the eyeglasses said to the interrogator:

"My answers to your questions were not recorded correctly... I did not say any of these words."

The interrogator approached me, took the glasses and returned them to the drawer of his table.

Once in two weeks we can take a book from the prison library. A cart carrying several tens of books stops in front of every cell and the prisoner can choose one book out of it. I chose the book "Brides Fair" to read. I took the book with the hope that one of these days my eyeglasses will be returned to me. However to my disappointment I changed books every two weeks without ever reading any of them.

Only after 42 days were the eyeglasses returned to me. I was overjoyed that I could read books again. I read days on end without stopping. Among the books were some that I found most interesting especially books of classical Russian and foreign literature.

In May 1947 I was called for a night interrogation for the first time. At nine thirty in the evening, I climbed up to my cot, undressed myself and fell asleep. About half an hour later I was awakened: "Attention!" and led by the guard to interrogation. The interrogator is sitting by his table. The room is shrouded in semidarkness. I sit in my regular place by the round table in the corner of the room. The interrogator is silent, rummaging through papers on the table, sometimes taking a book and reading something. The clock in the corridor chimes midnight. He does not utter a word. At two o'clock he gets up and goes to the corridor and brings himself a cup of tea. Then again reads something from the book, at times he throws a glance at me. Suddenly I hear him bang his hand on his table and with a berating tone he shouts: "No sleeping!" I do not respond, he shouts again, "No sleeping!"

"I'm not sleeping..."

In this way I passed the night, a night with no words spoken. At six in the morning I was returned to my cell. I quickly undressed and lay down. I barely fell asleep when the prison guard started knocking on the door:

"Wake up call! Get up!"

"I did not sleep the whole night"

"I said get up!" yells the guard threateningly. I get up and dress. My

need for sleep is overwhelming I sit on my cot and doze. Again a loud knock on the door "No sleeping"

I rub my eyes; rinse my face with cold water. Breakfast is brought – Indigestible gruel and a weak cup of tea, I eat sitting on the bed as there is no other place to sit, then I begin to doze again, another knock on the door: "No sleeping!" after several minutes a sergeant enters the cell and severely reprimands me: "Don't you understand that it is forbidden to sleep during the day?" He lifted my cot and folded it against the wall. I sat on the toilet bowl. The guard knocks on the door: "Where are you?" he cannot see me through the aperture on the door and forbids me to sit on the toilet bowl. I have to stand, leaning on the edge of the table, suddenly my legs give way and I slide to the floor. "It is forbidden to sit on the floor! Get up" the guard yells through the door opening. The rest of the day I spend standing on my feet. I did not eat anything. At nine thirty in the evening, lights out. The cot is put down, thank God. I immediately lie down and cover myself with the grey, rough, prickly prison blanket. I fall into a slumber. Half an hour later they wake me up: "Attention! Get up". Again I'm led to the interrogator. I hoped that this interrogation will end at midnight, but it again lasted up to six in the morning. I

passed eighteen nights like this, eighteen sleepless nights and in the mornings my cot is folded against the wall. This is one of the harshest tortures implemented by the Soviets in their prisons, While, every morning, when I am brought for interrogation, the interrogator asks me viciously: "Well, how do you feel?"

"Excellent!" I answer in a bold voice. The "excellent" infuriates the interrogator.

One night – during the period of the torturous nights, this one was the eleventh night, after I answered my usual response to his questions, he came to my table looked at me with blood-shot and eyes asked with fury "Will you talk, or not?"

"What about?"

"About everything, if not you will rot in prison...talk!" He then showered a torrent of curses over me. I remain silent. He came nearer to me with clenched fists. Automatically in self-protection I jumped from my chair and cringed against the wall.

The interrogator stepped back and shouts loudly: "What are you jumping for? Do you really think that I will lift a hand on a piece of scum like you?"

From the Hebrew by Benny Tzur

(to be continued)

# A Yiddish Specialist in China

By Dan Bloom

TAIPEI, Taiwan, May 26 (JTA) — S.H. Chang is a Yiddish specialist at Wenzao Ursuline College of Languages in Taiwan. She may be one of a kind — after all, you don't find many Chinese academics in Taiwan studying and writing about Yiddish. A soft-spoken Taiwanese woman in her early 30s who has written about and researched the Yiddish language — she speaks it as well — Chang is one of the few Yiddish philologists in the Chinese-speaking world. She heads the department of German at Aiwan College in the subtropical, southern part of Taiwan, an island nation of 23

million Buddhists and Taoists.

"When I set about learning Yiddish, I was merely opening up a new door for myself," the professor says.

With a doctorate from Germany's Trier University under her belt, Chang has gained world renown as an expert in German and Jewish literature, delivering academic papers around the world. In addition, she has become a Jewish historian for the Chinese and Taiwanese people, as well as a philologist of German and Yiddish. Chang admitted in a recent telephone interview with JTA that learning

Yiddish did not come easily at first, though she said that the fact that the "language of Jewish exiles" contains around many German morphemes made it easier, since she already had mastered German as a university student in Taiwan and Europe. In addition, she speaks Chinese, Taiwanese and English.

Chang plans to write a book for the reading public in Taiwan, explaining the nuances of Yiddishkeit and the history of the Jewish Diaspora — and the meaning of such words as kvell, chutzpah and nachas, she said.

# PURIM AT THE S.J.S. 1948

By Sas Jacoby

During our Purim celebrations this year, it came to my mind that among my personal and somewhat haphazard archive was a replicate of a publication entitled *Hakol*, the masthead of which bore a Magen David with the statement, "This periodical is the combined effort of the Shanghai Jewish School" dated April, 1948. This was three years after the end of World War II when Shanghai's International Settlement and French Concession reverted to Chinese rule and a year before the Communists conquered the city, putting an end to the life of the foreign communities. Despite the diminishing numbers of foreigners there, including those of our Baghdadi members, credit must be given to those who organized the Purim celebration despite the dying days of our community. The scenes described in the publication (printed in broadsheet, no less) must undoubtedly be indelibly fixed in every detail in the memories of those who are still with us. They were held under the most unusual, and perhaps even inconceivable, circumstances of that time.

The foreword, headed S.J.S. Celebrates Purim had this to say: The Shanghai Jewish School celebrated Purim in a grand way with a performance for the school on March 25, another for invited guests on March 28, and a Purim Fancy Dress Ball on the evening of April 3. The school performance was followed by a distribution of much appreciated surprise bags.....Previously there had been endless rehearsals, which caused quite disturbance in our regular studies and school activities, and a general dress rehearsal, during which everything seemed to go wrong....but both the school and public performance proved an unprecedented success.

Then followed under several headings describing the program. As the curtain rose the announcer was described as "our stunning Meefa Goldberg." There were Hebrew songs and dances by pupils from Forms III, IV & V, directed by Miss

Abraham. Dorothy Steiner recited a poem in Hebrew; Rasha (Segerman) entered and sang a Hebrew song.

The Purim Spiel produced by Mr. Radet was excellent; Meefa Goldberg as Esther, G. Sonnenberg was the King, A Mirochnik was Mordecai. Under the headline "The Princess and the Woodcutter," were the actors Bella Segerman as the princess, Sonny Saul as the woodcutter, the King was Solly Vershovsky, Seema Abraham as the Queen, Albert Levy as the Yellow Prince.

The Purim Fancy Dress Ball was held at the school hall on April 3, organized by Mr. Grebenchikoff and Upper VI pupils. Music was provided by a three-man band, led by Mr. Fromberg, father of Nisan of Lower VI. Guests turned up in fancy dress, evening gowns and dinner jackets. Songs were performed by Molly Hyndman, and Jack Arzooni, uncle of Gloria and Joe. Best costumes were by Anna Shapiro as a Persian Princess; Peter Engler as a Chinese cook; Abe Toeg as a newspaper boy clad in silken newsprint; Rasha Segerman as a Snowdrop (Boy! Did she look cute.) It was midnight when the party broke up two o'clock when we went to bed.

Under the title HAKOL OFF THE PRESS. Friday morning, everyone was excited wondering what it would be like, how it would look. Later on, it was noted that though the magazine was good there is still room for improvement. It was amazing to note that the tone throughout was optimistic as though life in the community was going on forever, even though under the headline, Welcome and Farewell, there were lists of not only newcomers to the school but of those who were leaving for other shores.

New Pupils were listed as Flora Toeg (VI Upper); Rebecca Toeg (Lower); Abe Toeg (Form IV); Aslan Toeg (II Upper). Departures were listed as Jenny Shafferman (VI Upper); Mazo Klajman (VI Lower); from Form IV were Michael Shafferman.

Eva Schoenberg. Elias Itkis, Ben Nano. Robert Gohstand; From Form III were Sarah Elbaum, Harry Klajman. The destinations of those who left were given, with the rather pathetic "Our best wishes accompany our school-mates to America, Australia, or wherever they go." Two others were given special attention: "Ben Nano is gone, too. He had a beautiful voice and was an excellent comrade form IV now looks sadly depleted. Elias Itkis was an excellent piano player and we shall genuinely miss him."

On a happier note was a boxed item in bold print headed May Queen: At an election held on April 5th Bella Shmulevsky of 6 Upper was chosen S.J.S. May Queen. Runners-up were Rasha Segerman and A. Shapiro. According to our definition, the May Queen is the most lovable girl in school – and it was a hard choice this year. Said a connoisseur from Form 3, "They are all lovable."

On the last Page 8 was poking fun at the teachers: Mrs Memelsdorf: "What is the meaning of this noise?" Mr. Holland: "Straighten those shoulders." Mr. Kahan: "I say, Go out." Miss Abraham: "I will not have this noise." Mr. Da Costa: "Again we have to start from the beginning." Mr. Velichansky: "...actually it is proved that the world is globular." Mr. Gerchevitch: "You have no sense of proportion." Mrs Pecaric: "Excuse my American slang."

Note: Going through the entire issue of *Hakol* took some time, but it was really enjoyable. I have yet to know when the last issue was published. An acknowledgement appeared on the last page as follows: HAKOL wishes to thank OUR LIFE and TAGAR for blocks put at its disposal and the WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS and KEREN KAYEMETH for valuable material. Special thanks for photos appearing in this issue to the ORY, ROSS-STUDIO and Dorothy Manasseh. Then was the list of editors of the issue, numbering no less than 24. – S.J.

# Jews in Northeast of China

By Wang Xi-liang, Department of History, Heilongjiang Social Science Academy, China

Manchuria lies in the northeast region of China. Although the history of the contact between Manchuria and the Jews was brief, their relations were very profound. As one part of the go-east power of Tsarist Russia, the Jews were the forerunners for the development of Manchuria. The first Jews that went to Manchuria were those that came when the Tsarist government set about constructing the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Tsarist government made deliberate use of Jewish talent in the construction of the railway and the development of Manchuria's economy. On the other hand, the Jews fully realized that if they went to a new place that did not constrain their rights and which did not have laws that suppressed them, they could live free, peaceful and happy lives. For this reason, those Jews in the south of Russia who wanted to do business in Manchuria decided on settling in Harbin, and more Jews then poured into the Manchuria continuously. In general, this process can be divided into the following historical phases:

1. Jews went to Manchuria to construct the railway, and some of the officers and men of the railway garrison force remained in the Manchuria after being released from military service.
2. Officers and men who took part in the Russo-Japanese War remained in Manchuria after the war. When the Russian Revolution broke out, Jews in Russia were plundered and butchered, and many Jews went into exile in Manchuria to escape persecution. According to the statistics, by about 1908 there were more than six thousand Jews in Northern Manchuria.
3. During the First World War, many

Jewish youngsters went to the Manchuria to evade military service.

4. The Russian Revolution in 1917 and continual civil strife caused a high tide of Jews going streaming into Manchuria. By about 1922, there were more than 11,000 Jews in the Manchuria.

Most of these Jews settled down in Harbin, in the north of Manchuria, and even took it as the base camp of their activities. At first, they obtained the support of the railway authority and were engaged in the contract for the railway construction to provide Russian railway constructors and Chinese coolies. Later, they began to take a hand in commerce and finance business. They were also engaged in smuggling at the China-Soviet border, and in running brothels and gambling houses. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out, they accumulated wealth by providing various goods and materials to the army and the local people. They consolidated their economic position gradually and established social charitable groups, schools, libraries, churches, newspapers, professional and financial organizations and other communal facilities which served their own people. Later, their economic power expanded further by proposing to establish the Harbin Exchange Committee. Among the members of the first term executive council, eight were Jews, and only five were of other nationalities. Besides this, the Jews always held the position of president of the committee.

Most of the Jews going to the Manchuria to evade the 1917 Russian Revolution were the wealthy and the intellectuals. Their coming

invigorated Jewish enterprises, and energized social and cultural life. We can say that the most prosperous time for the Jews in Manchuria was Soviet power infiltrated to the north of Manchuria. Surprisingly enough, the Jews adapted themselves to the current political situation and ingeniously established relations with the Soviet Union, so that between 1922 and 1923, the power of the Jews in Manchuria reached its peak. That the Russia-Asia Bank was greatly influenced by the Jews of the Far East is a fact that cannot be denied. Those holding the managerial positions in the bank were almost all Jews, and it was a public secret that their activities were fully supported by the Soviets. Soviet power in Manchuria in 1923 allowed them set up an exclusive investment financial organization – the Far East Bank. Until the bank was closed, the Jews always occupied leading positions in the management department. In the exclusive Soviet-run enterprises that opened later, such as Wusuli railway sub-branch, the Soviet merchant marine, the state-operated insurance department, the grain export combination, etc., the Jews were also the key members. In 1924, the Soviets recognized the Republic of China (1912-1949) according to the Beijing & Fengtian Agreement. With the support of the Jews, China obtained the same right to manage the Chinese Eastern Railway together with the Soviets. Those holding important positions in the Soviet management of the railway were also Jews. Furthermore, some of the Soviet consuls were Jews. It was seen that, in consideration of Jewish power in Manchuria, and by establishing close relations with them, the Soviet guaranteed that their

policies towards Manchuria could be executed smoothly.

Mutual support between Soviet agencies and Jewish power in Manchuria not only benefited the infiltration of the Soviet power but also made use of the Jews more efficiently. In 1926, the facilities and enterprises of the Jews in Manchuria were prosperous. Many large enterprises, such as the grain and lumber businesses, were all controlled by the Jews, and their social power also reached a peak. But in 1927, the power of the Jews in Manchuria receded when the Russia-Asia Bank became bankrupt. The operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway worsened. In 1929, because of the dispute between China and the Soviet Union, Soviet influence on the Chinese Eastern Railway weakened. All these were main reasons for the decline of Jewish power. By 1931, the number Jews in Manchuria decreased to less than 5000.

The Sept. 18, 1931 incident changed the situation again, and it was the starting point of the decline of the activities of the Jews in Manchuria. After the Chinese Eastern Railway was sold to Manchuria, the new state instituted a national economy control policy, and the proud commercial activities and spectacular techniques of the Jews were restrained. Thousands of Jews left Manchuria and went to the U.S., the Soviet Union or the interior of our country. Only about 3,300 remained.

To sum up, the Jews in Manchuria, as part of the go-east power of the Tsarist Russia, were first engaged in the economic development of the Manchuria. After the decline of Tsarist Russia, they made contact with the Soviet authorities with surprising flexibility and their powers expanded. Later, with the decline of Soviet power and the great change in the situation, such as the Sept. 18, 1931 incident, their position was reduced.

It is necessary to mention here

that although they were in adverse circumstances, in proportion to the population they owned much capital and they would continue to act firmly and tenaciously both inside and outside Manchuria. Since their international connections were strong, and they were in close contact with their people abroad, their potential energy could not be overlooked. What is most conspicuous among Jewish economic activities is their commerce, and the fur business was almost monopolized by them as is well known to all.

What is more necessary to mention is that Jews were distributed all over the world, and the Jews in Manchuria kept close contact with each other. The Jews in Harbin had a closely knit organization and the Far East Jewish Nationality Central Agreement Council took Harbin as its main headquarters, governing the Jews in Japan, China and the Far East, among which, 80—90% were of Ashkenazi origin and kept contact with Jewish organizations in different places of the world.

The most famous Jew in Manchuria was Doctor A.I. Kaufman, president of the Harbin Jewish hospital. He enjoyed a great reputation as an excellent director of the Jews of Ashkenaz. He was also the president of the Far East Jewish Nationality Central Agreement Council. Next to Kaufman was L.G. Tsykman, called the “granulated sugar king” of northern Manchuria, who was the vice president of the northern Manchuria sugar company; Skidelsky who ran the Muling coal mine; Okun who operated real estat; Kaspe who ran the “Moderne” etc. They were all millionaires. There were others, such as Kabarlin who was engaged in specialties export, Chukilman who ran “Mars” (sweets & pastry factory) and E.S. Kaufman who ran the Far East Russian Journal Rays of Sunlight, etc. and were all conspicuous Jewish celebrities.

The following are the lists of the

distribution of the Jews in Manchuria and their professions according to the latest statistics:

### ***I. Population of the Jews in Manchuria and Northeast State***

Harbin	2800 persons
Dalian	170 persons
Fengtian	100 persons
Haila'er	130 persons
Qiqiha'er	50 persons
Others	50 persons
Total	3300 persons

### ***II. Professions***

Commerce	40%
Service	30%
Officers	15%
Free professions	10%
Others	5%

### ***III. Nationalities***

No nationality	70%
Foreign nationality	30%

### ***IV. Jews going to the Manchuria to seek asylum from Middle and Eastern Europe***

Immigrate to Harbin	160 persons
Immigrate to other places	40 persons
Total	200 persons

### ***Notes:***

This paper was translated from certain chapters of the book East Asia and Jewish Problem written by a Japanese published by the Japanese Central Public Opinion Press in August 1941. The author investigated the Jews in Northeast China and Japan, so the book had some material and reference value. However, readers should pay attention to the erroneous opinions in this book.

The Sept. 18, 1931 incident refers to Chinese Eastern Road incident.

The new state refers to the puppet government of Manchuria.

*Harbin - so many sounds concur in one accord.  
Harbin - so many thoughts converge on this one word.*

# HARBIN

## 1945 - 1952

*By Galya Katz (Volobrinsky)-Gaotzi Li, Mechanical Engineer*

Harbin – my city, the first one I remember. I lived there. I grew there. I ripened there. I studied there, and all my achievements I owe to her.

It was a fountainhead of culture and art, of trade and industry, of initiative and venture and inspiration. A fusion of Confucius and Marx. A pledge of life, full of content and exuberance...

It stands there more than a hundred years – a crossroad of a mighty waterway and a long road forged in steel. It brought prosperity to China's North Eastern frontier, a fruit of Russian genius and the endless diligence and grit of a hardy Chinese jiang. The swing of its progress continues to grow and expand beyond the horizon of the future.

I spent my formative 25 years in Harbin. My life was saturated with vibrant emotions and ever new experiences -- at times joyous, at times grim, but always quivering and pulsating.

Then came August, 1945. It was a turning point – for me and for the whole of North Eastern China.

### *An historic note*

1. 08.08.1945 USSR declares war on Japan and enters NE China. Immediately work begins on broadening the gauge of the Chinese railway tracks to the USSR specifications.
2. 11.08.1945 Commander-in-chief of the Chinese forces, Zhu-de, signs a counter offensive order.
3. 09 – 17.08.1945 The Japanese

Guang-dong army routed.

4. 14.08.1945 Agreement reached on the Chinese Chang-chun Railway.
5. 02.09.1945 Japan capitulates.
6. Liberation of NE China (Manchuria) from the 13-year-long Japanese occupation (1932 – 1945).
7. Renewal of exploitation of the Chinese Chang-chun Railway.

### *The end of the Japanese occupation*

During the Japanese occupation, especially as of 1938, we, the Soviet citizens, were deprived of the right to study and work. Students were expelled from schools, even conservatories. We were held in complete isolation.

With the end of the Japanese occupation in the second half of August, 1945, all the doors flung open. My father, Dr. M.S. Volobrinsky and two other physicians were released from the Japanese prison. By miracle they were not shot or exterminated by typhus inoculation, as was widely practised in the Japanese prisons. My sister and I were at last enabled to study and work.

### *I begin to work for the Chinese Chang-chun Railway*

On October 2, 1945 I began to work for the Chinese Chang-chun Railway Administration. After having passed written and oral examinations by a

special translations committee, I was assigned to serve at the Commercial Department as a Russian-Chinese-Russian secretary-interpreter. Such examinations were held annually and were compulsory for all the translators.

The CCR dealt with the following tasks and projects:

1. Reconstruction and maintenance of the railway tracks, bridges, etc., damaged during the fighting;
2. Building up of the CCR employees personnel;
  - a. engineer-specialists from USSR;
  - b. local railway specialists and other employees and workers;
  - c. Chinese specialists and employees.
3. Preparatory courses for the ever insufficient Chinese employees.
4. Continuous functioning of the railway
5. Promotion of the production and profit rates of the railway and its economy.

This was a history-forging period, of which I was not a passive observer, but an active participant. I became a sort of a link between the Soviet and the Chinese Administrations, and the Soviet specialists and their Chinese counterparts.

### *The resurrection of the Harbin Polytechnic Institute (HPI)*

In December 1945 the famous Harbin Polytechnic Institute was reopened for all those who wanted

to receive engineering and technical higher education. The following departments were opened: building-engineering; electromechanical; economic (transport); sinology (economic); mining and chemical engineering, which were later transferred to Dalnii (Dalyan).

The top-level programs were tailored to train the future employees of the Railway administration and other strategic engineering and industrial enterprises of the country. The HPI was initially headed by the colonel of the Engineering Corps, Ojigov, and, subsequently, lieutenant colonel Sedykh. The head of the tutoring department was Professor Grigorovich.

My sister, Irina Moiseyevna Volobrinisky, was appointed to head the personnel department, which immediately began to mobilize the tutoring contingent of the HPI. The instructors were all of the top-level old generation professors, who taught at the HPI since it was first established in the 1920's, until 1935, when the Japanese authorities closed it for the foreign presence. Now, with the Japanese being out, many hundreds (over 2000) of new students, mostly Russians, but also Chinese, Jews and other nationalities, filled the classrooms of all the faculties.

The tutoring was in Russian. Those, who did not know the language entered the preparatory faculty, established especially for their adaptation, learned the rudiments of the Russian language and other subjects and then were transferred to their regular studies. Most of them graduated from the HPI holding engineering degrees of various profiles.

Simultaneously with the engineering faculty, the Eastern-Economic faculty was established, where Chinese language and other sinology disciplines were taught. Here, many instructors were old-time Chinese residents, amongst them first-rank Chinese and Russian sinologists and

economists. Study of the Chinese language was compulsory.

### ***The Chinese Preparatory Faculty***

Thousands of Chinese students studied at the Preparatory Faculty established for those whose knowledge of the Russian language was insufficient for effective studies. Gradually the Institute absorbed more and more Chinese students, who, after having graduated from the Preparatory faculty, continued with their studies at the regular engineering faculties. My sister combined her work as the Personnel Department Director with teaching engineering drafting and drawing at the preparatory faculty. I enclose here copies of the warm letters of gratitude, sent to her by many Chinese students on various occasions (holidays, birthdays, etc.), thanking her for her relentless efforts to help them. I treasure these letters to this very day.

### ***My Studies at the HPI***

I began my studies in the mechanical faculty of the HPI in 1945. As I have already related, my studies were combined with my working in the Chinese Chang-chun Railway administration in the capacity of a secretary-interpreter. Those were long days of work and stress (from 7.30 to 14.30), and studying at the evening courses of the HPI (from 15.00 to 21.00).

It was not at all easy, but we worked and studied enthusiastically and one completed the other. In such a way we could support and even upkeep our families. Our spirits were high and we looked into the future with assuredness characteristic of the young.

The HPI was housed in a beautiful building on the Pravlenskaya Street corner Sadovaya, close to the CCR offices and the "Jelsob" (The Railway Assembly Hall, which also included a prestigious club and a spacious concert hall).

The campus territory accommodated

administration premises, workshops and laboratories. Our classrooms were spacious and full of light, sufficient to accommodate a large number of students. Un failing presence of the students was compulsory. Were a student to miss two lectures, he was strictly reprimanded by the director of the Institute and warned that his third absence may mean his expulsion from the Institute. Coming late for studies was also accountable and registered.

As studies progressed, a part of the students dropped off: some left the Institute by choice, some were expelled for missing lessons or falling behind. At the end of my first academic year our class lost half of its students (9 out of 19). Not everyone could go through 14-15 hours of strained work, in addition to kilometers of walking (no money for tram tickets) to and from work and the Institute, especially on slippery sidewalks, late in the evening, during the freezing Harbin winters.

The curriculum was immense. To successfully graduate from our faculty one had to pass at least 60 major examinations during the four years of studies (see attachments). I also feel it my pleasant duty to attach a list of our splendid professors, especially those, who taught me at the mechanical faculty.

As a result of belligerent activities in Manchuria, many thousands of kilometers of railway track were destroyed or damaged. During the combined Soviet-Chinese management of the Chinese Chang-chun Railway during the 1945 – 1952 period enormous rehabilitation work was done along the 455 kms. of the main route of the CCR: 191 kms of automatic blocking facilities. 2,600 cargo carriages were built or repaired. Additional 5150 cargo carriages, 943 passenger carriages, 517 locomotives were built or repaired and 153,000 sq. m. of living area were rehabilitated. (O.B. Borisov, B.G Goloskov: "Soviet-

Chinese Relationship", published by "Mysl", 1977).

In the meantime, the ever growing Chinese civil war violence could not but reflect on the work of the CCR.

In May, 1948 all Soviet specialists were ordered to temporarily leave CCR and to return to the USSR. The head of the Commercial Services, engineer-major Zaharchenko insisted that I, too, should temporarily leave for Russia. Evidently he knew what he was talking about: after their departure a number of interpreters were shot by the Kuomintang. It was only by miracle that I escaped.

### **My work in CCR as an economist**

In 1949 I was transferred to the Economics Department of the CCR: goods circulation, tariffs, rates, monthly index, price increases, amortization of the railway stock (inventory), etc. There were also some senior workers, veterans of the former KVJD (Chinese Eastern Railway). Gradually, more and more Chinese employees appeared in our offices. They were very diligent, quick-to-grasp and ardent to master the new profession, which they have at an amazingly short period of time. I was given an additional task to come to work three times a week one hour earlier (at 6.30 a.m.) to teach the new employees (in Chinese) the rudiments of the locomotive functioning, platforms for coal loading, etc., as well as economics.

At the time there were very few Chinese specialists. It was necessary to teach thousands of people for their work on the railroad and other professions. There were thousands of instructors and technical workers. During the first two years since the establishment of the China People's Republic, 12 Russian Language Institutes were established where five thousand students were taught ("The People's China", vol. 4 # 1-8, p. 19) The Russian language was taught in all the Preparatory faculties of all the universities, and in all the schools

throughout the NEChina, Peking, and other cities.

The organization of the education system was especially significant at the central and secondary courses and in the HPI, which reopened in 1945. Subsequently, many thousands of Chinese qualified engineers and technologists became the backbone of the Chinese labor class the North East. Russian specialists also helped to restore many industrial enterprises which serviced the CCR. From 1949 many young engineers and students (numerous Jews included) actively participated in this undertaking.

In 1950, after graduating from the HPI, the young engineers were given an opportunity to begin practising their profession. They had no problem to find work. The country was in dire need of technicians, be it at the CCR, or at its auxiliary and other industrial bodies in all parts of China.

### **My work in the Economic Planning Department of the CCR**

The HPI supplied the graduated young engineers with a list of possible employment possibilities within and outside the framework of the CCR. Most of us coveted employment at the economic planning department, the heart and the brain of the Railway Administration. But alas! we were many, and there was only one vacancy.

A competition was arranged. We were supposed to prepare a plan for transport of the cargo flow of the main cargoes (soya beans, grain, coal, timber and iron ore) along and across the CCR network. One had to know birthplaces and mining centers of the different kinds of coal (anthracite, bituminous, etc) in the North Eastern provinces, related to their targets (heating, processing, etc.), location of the metallurgical works, chemical industry, etc.

I won the competition, perhaps because of my knowledge of the Chinese language.

My subsequent work at the Economic-planning Department of the CCR was highly interesting and thrilling. All work of the CCR was done based on the research performed by our department: calculation of the number of locomotives, carriages, fuel and manpower needed daily for transportation of given amount of cargo. I received annual bonuses, prizes and awards, as well as management citations (by the CCR General manager, Grunichev and his deputy, Song Li-gan), which qualified advancement. This, naturally, only increased the zeal for additional effort.

### **Harbin - the city of engineers**

We are grateful to our alma mater, Harbin Politechnic Institute. We are grateful to our outstanding professors and lecturers for their instilling in our hearts love for the precision sciences, for their patiently bringing us up to become good, knowledgeable engineers. We are grateful to our HPI for acquiring good professions which enabled us to be well off and live a life full of content, satisfaction and creativity.

The engineer creates. He builds the world. He is called to improve things, to discover things, and make them perfect. He comes to a desert, and the desert comes to life. Now it is covered with a network of roads and railways. New cities are built, new gardens are planted, new tillage is furrowed by tractors. Life becomes beautiful.

I, as well as other engineers graduated from the HPI, were lucky to participate in the building of the New, Free China, and, later, in the creation of the Resurrected Israel. We proudly bear the banner of the HPI wherever we happen to live.

### **The HPI engineers' contribution in the up-building of Israel**

It took Israel no longer than half a century to transform from an arid

desert into a flourishing, highly developed, advanced country, capable to share its experience in many scientific and technological areas with other countries. Here, too, our Harbin engineers can be credited with no small portion of achievement.

Below is an incomplete list of outstanding engineers, graduated from HPI: Leonfried Heiman, Calman Slutzker, Meir Lozar (Losser), who transformed a backward railway of the then tiny land, equipped with obsolete locomotives and cars, working with no precise schedule, i.e. subject to constant and unpredictable delays (an inheritance of the British mandate administration) – into a powerful railway network, equipped with diesel engines and a +/- minute delays, serving a greater part of the country.

We see our Harbin engineers manning the leading positions in other branches of Israel's economy: Alexander Abramov of the Israel Water Works "Mekorot"; Emmanuel Ingerman of the Haifa Technion; Izhak Losser a leading builder of the Haifa port; Zelda Henkin-Friedman, a highway building engineer; Leon Nahemson of Israel Telephone Industry; Arieh Bursuk of the Israel Electric Company, engineers Leka Madorsky, Paul Boltiansky, Leonard Lamin, Mark Schifrin – all of them helped bring about the development of Israel. My apologies go those whom I failed to mention.

In 1956 I was invited to establish and head the technical information service of the Tel Aviv Production Institute. In this capacity I worked for many years as a consultant-engineer of the Scientific Information Center, Scientific Council of Research and Development, as well as lecturing on scientific-technological information subjects.

My heart is filled with joy when I see how widely is the solar energy exploited in Israel, how high is the standard and the caliber of the Israeli

production. Very often, having received data from all over the world in many languages, it was I and my staff who supplied the initial vital technical information about the use of materials, and systems and methods of their application in the given area. Letters of gratitude from numerous enterprises may attest to it.

The saga of the HPI Jewish engineers, who contributed to the construction and development of Israel and the New China, is yet to fill many volumes of research and assessment.

### Conclusion

I am grateful to the Chinese people for my happy childhood in Harbin, for their friendship and help and understanding during the 14-year-long Japanese occupation, for the seven years of creativity that followed, for my student years in the HPI, for my work with the Chinese Chang-chun Railway Administration, for my ripening and achievements, no matter how modest.

I am grateful for the bedrock upon which I could build my future life in Israel, the land of my forefathers, I am also thankful to the Social Science Academy of the Heilongjiang Province headed by Professor Qui Wei and other distinguished professors for having found it necessary to depict the traces of the intellectual initiative and relentless activity of the Jews in developing a land, once waste and barren: Dong-Bei – the North Eastern borderland of China, in creating the city of Harbin and other cities and towns and settlements of this blessed land.

I am also deeply satisfied by my minute bit of help as an engineer-economist in the development of the Chinese Chang-chun Railway during its first seven years of existence, and that of my sister, Irina Moiseevna Volobrinisky, as a teacher and the head of the personnel department of the CCR, to say nothing about the many years' work of my father Moisei Samuilovich Volobrinisky, in the KVJD central hospital and, later, CCR

hospital as a physician, who fought, together with other physicians, against the tuberculosis, cholera and other epidemic outbreaks in the area. It remains for me only to wish our beloved Harbin, the city of our youth, our victories, our growth and our bloom --

**To grow and rise  
To touch the skies,  
And now and then  
Remember us.**

**(From the Russian: Emmanuel Pratt)**

### At a reception in honor of Stella and David Udovitch



1. Stella is presented with a birthday cake
2. At the office of Igud Yotzei Sin
3. Leah Klurman wishes Stella many happy returns of the day

# A Home for Jews in China

By Mark Magnier

Esther and Paul Agan look over Harbin's rather dowdy Xinyang Square, see the mud and the snarled traffic, then count the buildings from the corner. "One, two, three – that's it!" says Esther, 80. "That's the building where we had our wedding reception! It was a beautiful building. I think it rubbed off – we've been together 56 years."

A half-century after most of the Jewish community fled Harbin, pushed out by an increasingly unfriendly Communist government wary of "imperialist capitalists", former residents are venturing back for a nostalgic look. Many were born and lived their early lives in this once-booming city in China's northeast. Now, after years of not being welcomed, they are returning to a city that is eager to see them. Harbin recently announced a \$3.2 million renovation of its main synagogue, and it is stepping up efforts to preserve other historically significant buildings and sprucing up the Jewish cemetery, Asia's largest.

For the Chinese, it's less a warm and fuzzy embrace of the old days than a fairly blatant bid to spur the struggling local economy. Last month, at an international conference on "Jewish History and Culture in Harbin" that was attended by nearly 100 former residents and their families, officials gushed about the "always smart" and "always good with money" Jews who might help return Harbin to its former glory.

"We haven't heard such compliments since the days of Moses," says Yaacov (Jack) Liberman, 81, a Harbin native now living in San Diego. Liberman was on his first trip back since his family left China in 1948.

Although most people don't tend to associate Jews with China, Harbin

was an enclave of relative tolerance in the first half of the 20th century, as chaos, war and revolution raged in a troubled world. Jews, mainly from Russia, came to see it as a sanctuary and a land of opportunity. The first Jew reportedly arrived in Harbin around 1899, leading what would eventually be three waves of immigration, says Li Shuxiao, vice director of Jewish research at the Heilongjiang Academy of Social Sciences. The first group, in the early 20th century, came in search of opportunity after the opening of the Russia-China railroad. The second fled the 1917 Russian Revolution. A third sought to escape a Russia-China border conflict in 1929. The peak was around 1920, when the local Jewish population reached 20,000.

"Most Russian Jews came to China without money and worked hard," says Pan Guang, a history professor at the Institute of European and Asian Studies in Shanghai. "It paid off, and they became solidly middle-class." Many of those now returning for a visit to Harbin, once known as the "little Paris of the East" recall a privileged life with Chinese and Russian maids, a whirl of social events and winters crossing the Songhua River on Russian telhai, sleds pushed by an attendant. "It was 30 below zero," recalls Hannah Muller, who left China for Israel in 1949 and hadn't been back since. It was wonderful. We were all wrapped up in bearskins."

Harbin was not always enthusiastic about having them come back. For much of the last decade, officials feared that the returnees would demand reparations for the factories, houses and personal effects that were expropriated after Mao Tse-tung came to power in 1949. But relations

picked up after that did not happen. Fifty-seven people reportedly still have property claims not covered by bilateral treaties which, theoretically, they could pursue. But most of those in their 70s and 80s who have recently returned say they can't be bothered. "What's past is past," says Harbin-born Bernard Darel, 75, an import-export businessman now living in Tel Aviv whose family's button factory and apartment were taken over by the Communists in 1949. "It's a long time ago, a long way to Tipperary."

For most of the prosperous returnees who were bantering in Russian, English and Hebrew, the real draw was the chance to catch up with long-lost friends and relive memories of what many see as a golden era. For Esther and Paul Agran, Harbin is more than a hometown – it's the birthplace of their lifelong romance. Esther was popular and good-looking, from a wealthy family that owned a cosmetics factory just behind the synagogue. "In school she was unreachable," Paul recalls. "I didn't think I had a chance." One cold November day, however, she came to his uncle's fur shop, and their eyes met. In a few months they were married in a gala wedding with 400 guests.

One rainy evening, during the group's weeklong stay, Jack Liberman weaves across Harbin's torn-up Tongjiang Street past head-high piles of sand and dirt and into a hulking, 70-year-old building housing a rail car manufacturer. "What are you doing? This is a business!" a rattled security guard barks as Liberman leads a stream of visitors past him. It is anything but that to the group of foreigners from Israel, the U.S., Canada, Australia and other faraway places. They try to ignore the chipped

green paint and harsh lights as they remake the interior in their minds. "This was our synagogue," Lieberman says. "The men sat there. The women were up in the balcony there. The ark would have been up there, at the end and to the right," he says, referring to the place where the temple's Torah was kept. "It was a really beautiful place." As he reminisces, Teddy Kaufman, an 80-year-old Harbin-born Israeli and an impetus to bringing the group together, walks by. "Were these pictures originally here?" someone asks Kaufman, pointing at a dusty mural of bears cavorting in the wild. "There are no pictures in a synagogue," Kaufman responds emphatically, "especially none of bears."

Amid the grime and exposed wiring are hints of the building's former splendor. A once-grand chandelier still hangs in the entranceway, its graceful, cut-crystal arcs now brown with smoke and stains. Worked into the window grilles and chipped floor are images of the Star of David. "This was the second synagogue in town," says Paul Conway, 58, now a resident of Australia. "That's because Jews always have to say, 'Oh, that other synagogue, I wouldn't be caught dead there.'"

Across the street is a former mosque, a testament to a time when, at least in Harbin, the two communities coexisted peacefully. "My father was a Russian and Tatar, a Muslim, and my mother was Jewish," says Mara Moustafine, 50, who was four when the family immigrated to Australia in 1959, one of the last to leave. "That's the kind of city it was."

Harbin managed to prosper through much of the early 20th century under ever-changing authority. Czarist Russia, Nationalist China, Imperial Japan, Soviet Russia and Communist China exerted control over this strategic, resource-rich area in the midst of the three countries. In general, most of the governments were relatively tolerant, even

encouraging, of the Jewish enclave into the 1940s.

That changed after the Communists came to power. "Rapid changes in China made it difficult to continue living here," says Xu Xin, a professor of Jewish studies at Nanjing University. "There was a huge exodus through the early 1950s." For David Udovitch, 84, it came down to soup and labor unions. The former owner of a paint factory in Harbin recalls returning home from work in 1953 and learning that a union representative had stopped by, looked into the family's soup pot and asked why they were eating meat when workers hadn't had any in months. "That's when I knew it was time to leave," he says, standing near his mother's grave in the Jewish cemetery.

A few hundred Jews, mostly those too old to leave or lacking overseas sponsors, lingered for a decade, until the last one, an elderly woman, reportedly died in the mid-1960s. Many are in the graveyard, moved to the outskirts of town in 1958. For the local government, the cemetery and the memories it holds are a potential gold mine, starting with tourism, it hopes, then spreading to trade and investment.

Many who left formed social groups in their new homes to help one another. Over the years, most retained strong emotional ties to China even though their lives in Harbin were often quite insulated from Chinese society. "We were kosher, so I never even tried Chinese food until I was 17," says Leana Leibovitch, 81, who looked for her old house but learned that it had been demolished sometime after her departure in 1948 for Australia. "Now, of course, I love it."

Kaufman, since the early 1970's the leader of the Tel Aviv-based Association of Former Residents of China, took the lead in arranging the rapprochement. When he approached Harbin's leaders in 1992 about building links, he recalls, they didn't even know what a synagogue

was, let alone that there once were two of them in the city.

"For the, history started with the Communist revolution in 1949," he says. "They'd thrown away the pages of history." He got their attention on a return trip two years later by pointing out that Harbin lagged far behind Shanghai and Beijing, where foreigners were welcomed with more open arms and minds. A trip to Israel by local officials a few years later – and the promise of Israeli aid for reconstruction to keep Jewish history alive – made them even more receptive. "They're quite open about it – getting the rich Jews to invest," says Moustafine, author of "Secrets and Spies: The Harbin File," a book about her family's experiences. "My view is, if we can preserve the buildings and get China to open up the archives while former residents are still alive, it's all for the good."

Now the government is on board from the top of Heilongjiang province on down, with Gov. Zhang Zuoyi welcoming returnees with a call to invest and set up joint ventures. "Sure, it's public relations. Everyone understands that," Kaufman says. "The mention of rich Jews isn't meant as an insult. Many people in Asia think all Jews are smart and rich – and if you're rich, you must be a Jew."

There are limited signs that the Harbin strategy is paying dividends. "I need to buy four or five containers of blankets, a few containers of diapers and I'm interested in buying some coal." Tel Aviv resident Darel, sporting a lapel pin with entwined Chinese and Israeli flags, tells his Chinese hosts. "I don't need to do business here," he adds later. "In a lot of ways, it's easier in Guangzhou. But my memories are very good, and I feel like doing it because it's the old hometown."

**(From the Los Angeles Times, September 21, 2004)**

*Mark Magnier, Times Staff Writer, was recently on assignment in Harbin. Lijin Yin in the Times' Beijing Bureau contributed to this report.*

# The "Chasid" from Japan:

*"Just as the Holy One, blessed be He, is called Compassionate, so should you be compassionate; just as He is called Gracious, so should you be gracious; just as He is called Righteous, so should you be righteous; just as He is called 'Chasid' - the One Who does Lovingkindness - so should you be a chasid." (Maimonides, Book of Mitzvos, #8)*

*In our previous letter, we discussed why all human beings must do acts of tzedakah and lovingkindness. In this letter, I will share with you a story of a righteous hero from Japan who gave tzedakah and risked his life in order to save Jewish lives during the period of the Holocaust. Years later, he himself became a member of the Jewish people through accepting the Covenant of the Torah and its path of mitzvos.*

*Soon after I sent out the Hazon announcements yesterday, I received the news of the bombing in the Tel-Aviv market - a reminder that we still have enemies who seek to destroy us. It is therefore comforting to read this story about a good man from the Far East who sought to give us "chayim" - life:*

## Seek and Save by D. Sofer

The guests crowded the beautifully set tables in Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz's tiny Jerusalem apartment. After celebratory "l'chayims" (toasts to life) and impassioned singing, Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz - the world renown sage, the dean of the Holy City's Mirrer Yeshiva - stood up to speak. The festive atmosphere immediately turned solemn. There was silence.

"My dear Reb Avraham," the rabbi began warmly, "may you merit to grow in Torah and yiras Shamayim (awe of Heaven), in line with the aspirations of your pure heart. May you become a true son of Avraham Avinu (Abraham, our forefather), after whom you are now named."

The blessing was one that might be bestowed upon a lad at his bar mitzvah, when, as an adult, his life starts anew. Indeed, a new life, complete with a new name, was beginning for Avraham Kotsuji - at the age of sixty. His story, of how a Japanese college professor became an Orthodox Jew, is perhaps one of the most unusual human dramas of World War II.

"We will never forget what you did for us when we were in Japan," the sage continued. "Nor how you risked your life to save us. The merit of that mesirus nefesh (self-sacrifice) is what stood in your stead and led you to seek shelter under the wings of the Shechinah (Divine Presence) and to become a genuine member of the

Nation you helped so much."

Setzuso Kotsuji was born in 1900 into an aristocratic Japanese family. His father was a prominent Shinto priest, descended from a long-line of well-known priests. Kiyoto, Setzuso's birthplace, was the center of the Shinto religion and the Shinto's main house of worship was located there. Quite naturally, Setzuso's father hoped that he would follow the family tradition and also study for the priesthood.

Divine Providence, it seems, had other plans - ones that would impact the lives of thousands and continue to do so till this very day. When Setzuso was thirteen, he visited an antique bookshop and discovered a Tanach (Hebrew Bible) which had been translated into Japanese. It was the first time he learned about monotheism. Thirstily, he devoured the sacred work. In time he began to embrace the belief in a single G-d as Truth. Gradually he veered away from his polytheistic heritage.

After marrying, Setzuso's search for Truth brought him to America, where he began to study Tanach and Hebrew at a university. When he eventually returned to Japan with a doctorate in Hebrew and Judaic studies, Setzuso continued to broaden his knowledge in these fields.

In 1937, Setzuso published his first book in Japanese on Hebrew language and

grammar. He also founded the Tanach and Hebrew Department at Tokyo University. The department attracted many non-Jewish students and, quite rapidly, Professor Kotsuji gained acclaim in Japan as a scholar and thinker of repute. Soon thereafter he became highly esteemed in government circles, where he made many friends. The professor would eventually put those connections to good use in the saving of many lives.

At that time, a number of Japanese researchers were publishing studies that linked their nation to the Ten Lost Tribes. Though erroneous, the claims evoked a wave of interest in Judaism among Japan's Intelligentsia and Prof. Kotsuji's books became widely read.

During his studies in the United States, Prof. Kotsuji had never actually met Torah-observant Jews. His first encounter with such individuals would come in Charbin, the capital of Manchuria, where a large community of former Russian Jews had existed since 1890. When Manchuria was conquered by Japan, the emperor invited Prof. Kotsuji to serve as his Jewish Affairs Advisor. Prof. Kotsuji accepted this offer and moved to Charbin, where he remained for a few years. While there, the professor formed warm relationships with its Jewish community and its Rav (spiritual leader), Rabbi Moshe Aharon Kiselev.

Prof. Kotsuji's friendship and admiration for Jewry peaked in 1941, when the Jewish refugees of the Holocaust began to stream to Japan in search of a haven. When the Mirrer Yeshiva, one of the most prominent bastions of higher Jewish learning in pre-Holocaust Europe, arrived in the Japanese city of Kobe, Prof. Kotsuji saw an opportunity to finally familiarize himself with the Torah world. In Kobe, he became very close with the academy's roshei yeshiva (deans) and talmidim (students), whose refinement and nobility of spirit, he would later relate, had a profound impact on him.

The Jewish refugees' entry permits to Japan were in actuality only transfer visas, which expired within two weeks of their arrival. Although the Japanese authorities extended these visas a number of times, after a while there pressure was exerted upon the yeshiva to leave Japan and continue to their "destination" - which was, of course, non-existent and would have meant certain death.

For purely humanitarian reasons, Prof. Kotsuji became involved in the refugees' plight and made vigorous efforts to have their visas extended. Toward this goal, he utilized his friendship with Japan's foreign affairs minister. When top ranking members of Kobe's police force opposed the extension of these visas, Prof. Kotsuji, in an effort to preserve lives, bribed the officials with large sums of money, which he borrowed from his wealthy brother-in-law. He repaid the debt himself.

As a result of Prof. Kotsuji's intervention, the Japanese authorities agreed to extend the refugees' visas several times, letting them stay for eight months instead of the original two-week period. Later, when the Japanese decided to banish the Jews from Japan, they did not expel them completely but instead deported them to Shanghai, China, which was then under Japanese rule.

As more and more Jewish refugees streamed into Japan, anti-Semitic sentiments skyrocketed. Germany, at the time Japan's ally, attempted to persuade Japan to expel its Jews. Poisonous anti-Semitic propaganda flooded the Japanese media and revolting caricatures of Jews were regularly plastered throughout

Japanese newspapers.

In 1941, on the eve of Japan's war against the United States, Japan and Germany became closer still. And anti-Semitism in Japan, a country which had barely any Jews, intensified to the point that high ranking Japanese leaders publicly blamed the Jews for both World Wars, claiming that wherever Jews go, they spread havoc.

Prof. Kotsuji countered these accusations by waging a vigorous and brave battle against anti-Semitic incitement. Determined to halt it, and to portray the Jews to the Japanese in a positive light, he published a book, titled "The True Character of the Jewish Nation". In it he exploded all of the German myths and lies about the Jews, and portrayed the Jewish Nation as highly ethical and as the Chosen Nation to whom G-d bequeathed the true faith.

Prof. Kotsuji also began traveling throughout Japan, delivering lectures in which he praised the Jewish Nation and again refuted the lies of her enemies. He even appealed to the Japanese to assist the Jews, declaring, "Divine Providence has brought thousands of unfortunate refugees to our shores, so that we should grant them a safe haven, where they will find peace and tranquility. This is our mission in life. Let us not betray it."

Prof. Kotsuji practiced what he preached, and much of the humane treatment the Japanese accorded the Jewish refugees may be attributed to his efforts.

When a delegation comprising the leaders of the Jewish refugees - headed by the Amshinover Rebbe, Rabbi Shimon Kalisch, and Rabbi Moshe Shatzkes - met with Japanese government representatives in Tokyo, they were greatly aided by Prof. Kotsuji, who acted as their mediator and translator. As a direct result of his intervention, the Japanese improved their attitude toward the Jewish refugees and withstood Germany's pressure to banish the Jews from Japan - at least temporarily. In 1941, when the Japanese government changed its attitude, and indeed banished the Jewish refugees to Shanghai, Prof. Kotsuji continued to maintain warm and active ties with the Jews. Even though Japan was relatively empty of Jews at that

time, he still delivered lectures on the fine attributes of the Jewish Nation.

Such activity was particular risky since the Japanese government was led by a pro-Nazi nationalist group which wrathfully persecuted all of its opponents. But this did not deter Prof. Kotsuji, who refused to stop speaking out against the Nazis. When the publisher of his forthcoming book asked him to delete the denouncements of the Nazis, Prof. Kotsuji refused.

Prof. Kotsuji was warned by many that he was risking his life by publishing such material and delivering his lectures. But the courageous professor paid no attention.

Towards the end of 1942, the Japanese Bureau of Investigation began to believe the German reports that Jewish subversives were planning to gain control of the world. Prof. Kotsuji was accused of encouraging that plot and of abetting Japan's enemies, the Jews. Prof. Kotsuji was arrested and interrogated under torture, in which his interrogators demanded that he reveal his role in the plot. When he said that it was all a figment of the imaginations of the anti-Semites, he was further tortured to the point that his life was in danger.

Then a miracle occurred. At the peak of the interrogation, a high-ranking Japanese colonel who knew Prof. Kotsuji very well suddenly appeared at the prison where the professor was being held. The colonel was startled to see one of Japan's most-respected academics incarcerated on blatantly false charges and locked up with criminals. Immediately, the colonel demanded that Prof. Kotsuji be released, and that all of the charges against him be dropped. This incident heightened Prof. Kotsuji's already strong belief in the Divine, and induced him to conclude that the Creator protects those who defend Jewry.

When the war ended, the Jewish refugees, who by then left the Far East, remained in close contact with Prof. Kotsuji. When the American army arrived in Japan, Prof. Kotsuji became friendly with its chaplain, the observant Rabbi Mental, who taught him more about Judaism. A few years later, Prof. Kotsuji finished his translation of Shir HaShirim (Song of Songs), a project which enabled him to better understand

the relationship between the Divine and the Jewish Nation.

During that period, Prof. Kotsuji continued to correspond with his friends from the Kobe period - the talmidei chachamim (scholars) of the Mirrer Yeshivah. When he felt that he was ready to accept himself the beauty and depth of Jewish observance and belief, he informed those friends that he would be coming to Jerusalem to convert.

In 1959, sixty-year-old Professor Setzuso Kotsuji converted to Judaism. He was renamed Avraham ben Avraham Kotsuji and warmly welcomed to the Jewish faith by his friends from the Mirrer Yeshiva,

which he was responsible for preserving and which today with its Jerusalem and Brooklyn campuses is again among Judaism's most prominent institutions of higher learning.

Professor Avraham Kotsuji spent the final years of his life in Brooklyn's fervently-Orthodox community. The heads of the Mirrer Yeshivah formed a special committee that rallied to his aid and raised money to support and care for all of his needs.

Avraham ben Avraham Kotsuji returned his soul to the Creator on the 5th of Cheshvan, 5734/1974. His casket, in accordance with his will, was brought

to Jerusalem, where he was buried atop Har HaMenuchos. His funeral was attended by a large throng of the world's most prominent rabbinical authorities, communal leaders, and students of the Mirrer Yeshivah. May his name be forever remembered and blessed.

The above story was recently published in the American edition of "Yated Ne'eman" - a weekly Torah newspaper, and it is reprinted with the permission of the Editor, Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz. For further information about this newspaper, contact: Editor@yated.com

# *Statistics of the fluctuation of the numbers of the Jewish residents of Harbin 1898 - 1959*

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We are pleased to publish the statistics of the fluctuation of the numbers of the Jewish residents living in Harbin during the first half of the 20th century. These figures were presented by two Chinese researchers, Li Shu-xiao and Fu Ming-jin of the Jewish research Center, Academy of Social Sciences of Heilongjiang Province at the Harbin international conference on the Jewish presence in modern China in Aug. 2004.

Year	Population	Year	Population
1899	10	1924	5848
1900	45	1925	1400
1902	300	1926	1367
1903	500	1927	1352
1906	3000	1929	1324
1908	6000	1931	2600
1911	2400	1933	2170
1913	5032	1935	1500
1919	7500	1937	1100
1920	2000	1952	453
1922	1100	1959	130

The sources of the above figures were derived from the documentation of the Harbin municipal and Jewish institutions as well as fro the archives of private researchers, including those of Dr. A. I. Kaufman.

Juxtaposition of this table with the events which occurred in those years may provide a sensitive and an accurate indication of the cause of the fluctuation (at times sharp and steep) of the Jewish presence in Harbin from its birth to the self-liquidation of the Jewish community of Harbin.

E.Pratt.

I g u d y o t z e i S i n

# Romance and Reality Merge in Artist Village

By Emmanuel Pratt

In the spring of 1994, to escape the noise and pressures of a metropolis, a couple of artists moved from Peking to Songzhuang, a hamlet in the hills nine miles to the west of the capital. They were soon followed by other artists who liked the idea of living and working in a peaceful and romantic environment. Gradually more and more artists came, so that now Songzhuang and the surrounding villages number more than 300 painters, sculptors and calligraphers. It did not take long for the newcomers (most of them in their twenties or early thirties) to adopt the rustic way of life and shed their city image. They exchanged their fashionable garb for the traditional Chinese shirt of blue cotton and a pair of jeans or khaki pants, to be soon stained by paint. Most of them also took to shaving their heads clean, which quickly became their "trade mark". Some of the artists successfully researched the market, and are doing extremely well: they bought property in Songzhuang and built spacious studios. They are, however, a minority. The majority can hardly make ends meet, eating cheap food and borrowing money from their friends to see a doctor when they are ill. Says one of them: "Unemployed artists obviously earn much less than the academy teachers who cater to market demands. Asked if it is because of financial difficulties that he moved away from the city to live an impoverished life in a remote village, he replied: "No, it is a matter of lifestyle preference. We care more about art as art than about the amount of money we earn from selling our paintings." Liu Lin is an abstract painter working in watercolor and ink. Having moved to Songzhuang, he bought a big house,

but times were bad, and he had to sell it and buy a smaller place. His current property was purchased by his student, a girl from Jinan, whom he eventually married.

Lao San, Liu Lin's neighbor, is a gardener by profession. In Songzhuang he opened a small restaurant targeted at the painters. His prices were accordingly low, only a few yuan a meal. But it was still too expensive for the most of his clients, and he had to close the canteen and go back to his old profession. On sundown every day he plays his guitar and sings plaintive songs with his Golden Labrador "Peng" (friend) lying at his feet, listening attentively.

Opposite Lao San lives the one-legged Tao-Tao. He lost his leg in a car accident in Shenyang (Moukden) where he lived before moving to Songzhuang. Tao-tao's girlfriend left him to go and study painting in France. Tao-tao seldom associates with his colleagues, living a lonely life and planning to return to Shenyang to work in an interior design firm.

Pian Shan, a calligrapher and a poet, and Liu Tiong, his painter wife from Sichuan are considered an exemplary married couple of the village. They are making out quite well, with her working on a contract basis for a Peking art gallery, and him carving jade name stamps. He specializes in the ancient classical xiao zhuan style, selling the stamps on order to various art and curio shops in Peking.

In the early 1990's, Zhao Tielin, an avant guard Chinese photographer, shot a series of photographs that revealed in a stark, merciless light the humiliation and suffering of helpless women exposed to sex exploitation in

the cities of South China. The series was so shocking that it earned the photographer immediate fame, and galvanized the authorities into action against the traders in women. This enabled him to settle in Songzhuang, where he acquired a large and a well-equipped studio.

Just as anywhere else, here, too, the lens of Zhao's camera is pointed at the human story, this time at the struggle of the young artists for survival, freedom of expression and genuine commitment to art – against commercialism and materialism, in short, at the new version of an old story of "not by bread alone..." His new series of photographs juxtaposes the posh art galleries and shops of the Peking commercial center and Shanghai's Bund, and the simple, tranquil and romantic setting of the rustic Songzhuang Artists' Village and their poverty stricken but inspired inhabitants.

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# The Chinese Paradise

By Emmanuel Pratt

The Chinese word "Dao" (Island in the sea) is represented by a puzzling combination of two characters: "bird" on top of a "mountain". However, a short excursion through the maze of Chinese mythological symbols will lower your eyebrows to their natural level: the Chinese Islands of the Blessed – Paradise – where the immortals dwell in eternal harmony and happiness – are usually portrayed as rocky islands in a misty sea.

In ancient times these islands were believed to be visible from the top of the sacred Mount Taishan (Eastern Shandong Province) on the distant horizon of the Yellow Sea on a clear hour of the rising sun. Some identify them with the Southern islands of Japan (Ji-ben – the rising sun). The First Emperor, Qin Shih Huang-di (circa 2nd century BCE), a Daoist mystic visionary, sent a flotilla to investigate them, but it never reached its destination: a mighty typhoon sent the ships to the bottom of the ocean. It was also believed that on top of the highest mountain of these rocky islands lives a beautiful goddess of harmony in the likeness of a blue bird with broad wings, long tail and an alluring voice, singing to the Immortals who

inhabit these islands. In traditional China of an earlier period, shrouds for the dead were often adorned with pictures of mountainous islands and flying

are called in Chinese, "Xian", - "Immortals", are represented by a combination of two Chinese characters: "ren" – man, and "shan" – mountain. These are men and women who have in their lifetime achieved or developed supernatural powers, and who have been elevated, after their death, to the status of gods. There are hundreds and hundreds of them and they are supposed to lead happy, carefree lives on the "Islands of the Blessed" in the Eastern Sea (see above).

It is important to remember that the word "xian" can be applied to living people who have shown extraordinary talent and skill in some field: a man may be a xian because of his talent as a poet, a swordsman, or even as a drinker, as is shown in the case of the poet LI Tai-bo. Strange as it may seem to a Western, xian often figures as part of the professional name... of a prostitute. The Eight Immortals (Ba xian) form a sort of "aristocracy" group of 'saints'. They are often depicted all together as a group, feasting at the table of the Queen Mother of the West (Xi-wang-mu) or they are shown standing on a terrace, greeting the god of longevity who is flying past on a crane.



## The Feast of the Immortals

cranes, so that the deceased might feel they were already enjoying eternal happiness.

### "The Immortals"

The Chinese Saints, or, as they

# The New Israel's Messenger



Vol. VII No. 4

IYS Sephardi Division

Editor: Sasson Jacoby

This issue is the 28<sup>th</sup> of the *Messenger*, and we are returning to its usual format after digressing about our Portuguese Sephardi brethren in the material provided by the UNA (Uniao Macaense America) Bulletin. For the benefit of our readers, this is an organization in California founded by Macanese Portuguese expatriates from Macau, Hong Kong and Shanghai, which is similar to our Igud Yotzei Sin. They are of mixed Portuguese parentage who now proudly call themselves "Sons of Macau," in Portuguese Filhos de Macau. I maintain close contact with the ex-editor of their Bulletin, Jorge Remedios and his wife, Raquel, who have provided me with much material on the Portuguese Sephardi Jews. It is good to know that many Macanese who bear Portuguese Jewish surnames, now realize they have a Jewish connection.

Maisie Meyer, author of the book *From the Rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: A Century of Sephardi Life in Shanghai*, again arrived in Jerusalem at the end of May was in connection with the future publication of another book, this time dealing with the biographies of Sephardi families in Shanghai. She sat for three hours with four of us, whom I humorously think of as "The Chinese Gang of Four," Yosef Yaacov (Joe Jacob), Rebecca Toueg, Cissy Flegg (Abraham), and myself. It proved to be an exhaustive discussion in which it soon became apparent that the book would prove to be of overwhelming interest to those of our members now scattered all over the world.

Recording the colorful past of individual families, we realized, was embroidered by an unconscious ability memory always employs. More and more details were revealed as the discussion continued. The bridge to the past is no more, but hopefully it can be rebuilt. Publication of such a book is extremely important. To some of us the past may have faded away, but such a book will provide a ring of truth, and of plausibility, to the mosaic of our past history in Shanghai. At the very least



it will add verisimilitude to the story of the lives of our community members. It will also, and importantly, provide an illuminating contrast of the various levels of our society that once existed. There are already a score of family histories in the making, and all kudos to Maisie for making unimaginable efforts in coordinating contacts with people spread far and wide, and in editing and rewriting material. We did our best to aid her in this respect and are convinced we provided her with much material to make a success of the book. Digging into our memories brought up

new facts, new names, and new ideas. It was exhaustive but we were glad to have been of much help.

Regarding the plan for the reconstruction of the Ohel Rachel Synagogue, Rachel Lev, the museum designer, has completed the drawings of the interior architecture including walls, floors, windows, wooden, stone iron elements and stucco ornaments. Others are furniture, lighting fixtures, ceremonial objects. Hopefully, this plan will be published in the form of a booklet for distribution among our community members.

It is well to recall that Ohel Rachel served as a cultural center and a point of contact for the community, as well as being the torchbearer of our traditions, religious and otherwise.

# AH CHAN: THE COMPLEAT FOOD PROCESSOR

(With due apologies to Izaak Walton, 1593-1683, the English author best known as the writer of a classic on fishing *The Compleat Angler* published in 1653).

In those bygone days in Shanghai, many members of our Baghdadi community, like other foreigners in that cosmopolitan city, had Chinese servants at home, some of whom lived with us, and in many respects were members of the family. Though not belonging to the elite of our community, we, like others of our living standard, had more than one servant. In our family the most important one was the “baby amah” or nanny (for there were six children) and she lived in, sleeping with us in our nursery room.

The second most important member was our cook, who also lived in, and the third was our “boy” who did all the rough work like dish washing and house cleaning, and who lived out. Of course, all of them didn't have a word of English, for a Chinese servant speaking pidgin Chinese would have cost three times more. It was no wonder that our dad who spoke a fairly fluent Shanghai dialect had no problem dealing with them; nor did all of us children, for all of us at a tender age managed with our Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic, Chinese and of course, English.

Thinking about this later on in life, I reached the conclusion that children of wealthy parents usually had no knowledge of Chinese, while those of “poorer” parents generally managed



Two Chinese cleavers, simple but effective, and with a wooden chopping block takes the place of a modern food processor.

well with the Shanghai dialect. However, with this introduction of our Chinese servants, I wish to concentrate on our cook, Ah Chan (Ah is the Cantonese term for a person or family). How he came into our household is a mystery to me, but it must have been in the early 1920s. The cook did not fit the usual stereotype of his trade – rotund and round. Unusual for a Cantonese, he was tall and lean, far from being a living testimonial of his art. His coloring was a deep yellow, undoubtedly due to what my parents were wont to refer to him as an *afiunchi*, the Arabic term for an opium addict. Usually at the end of his day's work he would leave and return to his room in our back courtyard late at night. A fine cook, he had learned

Middle Eastern cuisine.

He also had a smattering of Baghdadi Arabic which he often used in the kitchen in frequent arguments with my parents. At a tender age I was fascinated with his skill in the use of two Chinese cleavers on a wooden chopping block. At one time, my father presented him with a mincing machine to ease his work. Ah Chan looked at it with scorn and grunted in Arabic *ana ahsan* (I'm better).

He wasn't wrong, for I once watched him preparing a hunk of meat for kebab, using his two choppers skillfully to mince it within a couple of minutes to put it on skewers. Our crowded kitchen was full of clutter, pots, pans, plates, cutlery and of course, a large black coal-burning stove. Primitive compared to what we have in our kitchen today, but not lacking in the quality of food produced on it.

With regard to Ah Chan's choppers. He had two of them and he took good care of them, because they were his essential tools for his work. For, like other Chinese cooks, it is used to cut, score, slice, shred, mince, chop, crush, and tenderize meat and vegetables. It is a simple tool consisting of a rectangular piece of steel with a wooden handle. In fact, it does the work of a modern food processor. I like to think of it as the compleat food processor.

I once read an article on the subject of Chinese cooking, and the writer said that the Chinese cleaver is simple but effective – Western chefs use a dozen

specialized knives while Chinese cooks use only two choppers. A text attributed to the Taoist philosopher Chuang Tzu, who lived in the fourth century B.C.E. praises the skill of a cook named Ting, who handled the cleaver "in perfect rhythm" as though he were performing a complicated dance or keeping in time to music. Ah Chan, I think, would have competed well with the legendary Ting. He must have used his two choppers for years, and he took care to have them sharpened every few weeks. As we grew up, father had him cook Chinese food every Sunday. We all looked forward to it, for all of us knew how to use chopsticks, an art we learned from our amah. By that time we had dispensed with her duties, but before she left us, father consented to employ her son as the "boy" servant and he stayed with us for some years.

We all grew fond of Ah Chan's Chinese food, and he often produced the appropriate food for the different Chinese festivals. We especially liked the rice dumplings eaten on the Dragon Boat Festival which happened on the fifth day of the fifth month of the Chinese calendar. They were known as tsung tzu and were made of glutinous rice (we called it "sticky rice") with red beans folded into a pyramid shape wrapped in bamboo leaves and eaten with sugar after being steamed.

However, as time went on, and Ah Chan grew older and weaker (probably because of his opium addiction) it became apparent that his time was done. Enter at this stage, another actor on the scene. In typical Chinese fashion, it called for a middle man to conduct negotiations for Ah Chan's departure for his home village near Canton. He turned out to be no less than the Cantonese cook of S.E. Abraham (known generally as Sasson Hazan, of the Beth Aharon Synagogue), and bore the name of Khoon Cha, obviously distorted by the Baghdadis from the original

Cantonese. He was something of a legend, for he spoke fluent Baghdadi Judeo-Arabic, undoubtedly the only Chinese who could do so in the 100-year history of our community.

Khoon Cha often came to meet Ah Chan, so was no stranger to our home. In fact, he would often sit with my father in our drawing room, companionably drinking tea and smoking, holding long conversations. This was something unusual, but my dad probably was one of few "liberals" who would do such a thing. Apparently, he was pumping Khoon Cha for a lot of information about the comings and goings of our community members.

Our community never was more than 1000 members, or even less, but gossiping was without doubt more prevalent than that number warranted. On occasion, I would even eavesdrop on their conversations, and I heard Khoon Cha describe how he and his master, the worthy Sasson Hazan, produced arak in a still (a distilling apparatus to produce hard liquor) in the backyard of their home off Woosung Road near the Hongkew Market. Of course, Sasson Hazan never had a licence for such an activity, but everything went in Shanghai in those days.

Where the worthy Sasson Hazan had acquired the expertise to produce his brand of arak is certainly another of the mysteries of many things concerning the members of our century-long Baghdadi community. The dates he used to produce his arak were at that time one of the several varieties that came from Iraq. At some time in Shanghai, the community members perforce had to buy dates from an Armenian who had imported them from the U.S. This left our Baghdadis unsatisfied, and since they were accustomed to several varieties of dates from their old homeland, they turned to my father and begged him to import them from Iraq as he had connections with his family in Baghdad. The upshot was

that my father and his brother-in-law, Shaul Jacob, the community's official shohet, banded together annually to import the three or four kinds of dates with which the Baghdadis were familiar. Incidentally, when my maternal grandfather, the Hakham Eliahu Yitzhak Hazan, prepared for his departure to Eretz Israel in 1935, he was accompanied by Sasson Hazan, and the two left on the Italian liner, the s.s. Conte Verde. I learnt of these details as reported in an issue of The Israel's Messenger in the files of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem a few years ago. All I had known previously was that the Hakham had simply departed.

That arak produced by Sasson Hazan was popular among the tipplers of our community and all swore by it as having a harder punch than that of the ordinary arak. Later on, I learned that the mash used in the distiller was made of dates, not of grapes, and the taste was made by using gum arabic and not aniseed. Unfortunately, by the time I began to taste hard liquor, the hazan's arak was not available any more. Incidentally, gum arabic was used by some Baghdadis in lieu of chewing gum. I knew that because I often saw my parents chewing them. They claimed it was good for their teeth.



*To be continued on page 30*

# Social and Personal

## REMEMBERING BORIS BRESLER

By Sas Jacoby

Five years have passed since Boris Bresler, editor of our Bulletin's English supplement left us on March 8, 2000 at age 81. His untimely demise came as a shock to all of us who knew him from his schooldays in Harbin and Tientsin, as well as this writer who knew him for a scant three years when he took over the editorship. It also coincided with the inauguration of The New Israel's Messenger.

At that time I was aware of his rich academic past but I found out that he was never too proud to take advice and criticism about the technicalities of his new profession. His contacts abroad with academic and past friends abroad proved to be useful in his work here. As I began to know him better, I realized quickly as time went on that the many superlatives about Boris from his friends were not exaggerated.

We had long conversations about the bygone days of Jewry in China and their way of life there, and he also began talking about compiling



Boris Bresler

a history of the Jewish communities of the Far East. Apparently he had begun talking of this to institutions and individuals in the U.S.

Not brought up in the strict observance of traditions of Judaism he always believed that Judaic thoughts and philosophy had something to contribute to the world and the good things of humanity. Although he was a serious person, humor was something important to him. His laugh at something funny was boyish and hearty, and indeed, vital to him, a quality which aroused great affection from those around him.

The Igud Yotzei Sin and all those who knew him cherish his memory. He is widely missed by all of us.

*Continued from page 29*

Back to the negotiations for Ah Chan's departure. It took some time but it was all arranged and the the sum was paid for his travel to Canton by train, together with a bonus. I estimated later that all this happened around 1930, a year before the hostilities with the Japanese in Shanghai erupted at the end of 1931, after which we moved out of Hongkew to the other more salubrious areas across the Soochow Creek, closer to the Ohel Rachel Synagogue in Seymour Road. We left our home on No. 18 Yuhang Road, an area in Hongkew which was once populated by many Baghdadi Jews in the earlier part of the 20th century. We had moved there from Quinsan Road to a "foreign-style" house built in the late 19th century which had seen better days. It was more comfortable even though it had no flush toilets and even had the remains of gas lighting before the use of electricity. By the time the Pacific war broke out in December 8, 1941, our family had moved to three homes, the last on Seymour Road which was brand new, boasting of three bathrooms and even central heating.

By then we had no cook but "only" one boy and one amah, later reduced to one amah during part of the war, and none by the end of WWII, when our family was dispersed, partly to the U.S. and three sons to Israel, of whom I am the sole survivor.

The wedding of Naomi Toeg and Yoel Rubin took place on January 27 in Kibbutz Ramat Rachel near Jerusalem. Naomi is the daughter of Ruth and the late Arie Toeg. Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, a long-time friend of Arie and his family, officiated at the wedding.

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## Birth

A daughter, Gili Grace, was born to Sharon and Jacky Toueg on February 14. Jacky is the son of Rebecca and Ezra Toueg. A family celebration was held.



## Wedding





# CHUSAN ROAD CHATTER

Issue 384

IYS Hongkew Division

Editor: Kurt Maimann

## Snapshots of Black Tuesday

By Jocundus

It was a frightful day, this 17th of July, and its memory will long be a nightmare in our community. Precious life has been lost. Homes, built up lovingly and tenaciously, have been wrecked. The loss of property has been considerable.

But it was, in some way, also a day to be proud of, as always in the hour of danger the superb qualities of our race have sprung into clear relief. May be, really, in ordinary times we are guilty of some of the amiable characteristics that our critics do not tire taxing us with: quarrelsomeness, petty jealousy, and want of self-control. But let something serious happen, and all of a sudden the same people who have hitherto been over nervous, pusillanimous and self-centered, will live up to the opportunity and do their duty untiringly.

The bombs had hardly ceased to drop when the rescue parties swung into action. And how they worked! Hats off to the boys who, in the midst of a panicky and frightened crowd, set calmly and effectually to work, clearing away wreckage, digging out buried people, white and yellow alike, from the among the debris, tended to them, and carted them off to the dressing stations. Improvised ambulances had been set up at various places, and doctors and voluntary assistants were at hand in no time. After the first half hour,

everything ran as smoothly as at a dress rehearsal.



It may be out of place here, but the memory brought back to me the time when I last saw a Jewish crowd behaving in a like manner. This was after the notorious 10th of November 1938, when I with many others was shipped off not without adequate preliminary "treatment" to the Concentration Camps. Mine was Dachau. There we were, yesterday honorable business men, civil servants, professional men, mostly well advanced in years and long unaccustomed to physical work, who were bidden to form road gangs and labor squads under conditions better not spoken of. And what happened? There were no breakdowns, no nervous crises, no manifest despair. Calmly, as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened, the men bent down to their toil, and just those who seemed least fitted to this kind of life – literary people, confirmed café-goers, physical weaklings – kept upright and set a good example.



There were many instances of silent heroism. There is the story of a man who, after having himself been dug out, set immediately to working for the others for hours on end.

There is the story of the nurse El. Kronthal, who refusing to leave her duty, got killed while her charge, in the same rooms, remained unhurt. And there were many, many others. Strange, as often in such cases, were the workings of fate. Out of a party sitting around a card table, one of the players got badly hurt by a fragment while the others were unscathed. A casual acquaintance told me his story: "I saw a flash up twice, so I said to my room-mate we had better go down the stairs. One minute after we had got out, the room collapsed". A timely warning and close escape! The comical touch was not quite absent. It was, for instance, quite a common occurrence for Chinese, after they had been dug out, to ask: How much do I owe you? Business sense is deep rooted in Shanghai, even when bombs are dropping. The day after the catastrophe, the streets offered a weird aspect. The district, usually so teeming with life, looked like the city of the dead. Even where no damage had been done, most shops were boarded up. The market was not its usual noisy self and many stalls were vacant. The unofficial street marked at the intersection of East Yuhang and Chusan Roads was completely deserted. Only now, a fortnight after the event, life is slowly coming back to normal.

(From "Our Life", August 17, 1945)

# THE GERMAN JEWS OF HARBIN - A HAVEN IN TROUBLED TIMES

Prof. W. Z. Rubinsohn

It is a pleasure to be given the opportunity to return to this town, Harbin, which accepted us, when we came here as fugitives in 1939. We were approximately hundred and fifty émigrés from Germany, who came here to a strange language, a strange culture, a different way of life. For many of us Harbin became "a new home", that stayed with us for all our life.

The very title of this paper arouses a basic problem: Were these émigrés "German Jews" or "Jewish German? The German Jewish professor Victor Klemperer, "... steadfastly refused to accept the identity of a non-German ...that the regime and increasing numbers of his neighbors wanted to force upon him... Klemperer comes to tell Germany today, that the Jews were Germans, perhaps the best Germans, maybe even the last Germans, for they were the ones who were not Nazis" [in: O. Bartov, Germany's War and the Holocaust, Ithaca/London 2003, 215; from V. Klemperer, Ich will Zeugnis ablegen bis zum letzten. Tagebücher 1933-1941, Darmstadt: WB, 1998].

Thus, many would have considered themselves to be Jewish Germans, who brought with them German expertise, German medicine, German music, language and culture. Since Jewish assets in Germany had been largely expropriated, financial investments by them were minimal. It seems necessary to say few words about the reason that in the end compelled these people to leave Germany. Cornelia Hecht recently noted in her excellent dissertation [C. Hecht, Deutsche Juden und

Antisemitismus in der Weimarer Republik, Bonn, 2003, p. 97]: "Anti-Semitism had been part of the daily life of German Jews, notwithstanding their emancipation... these Jews apparently took no, - or well-nigh no, - notice of the anti-Semitism as long as it was limited to the social sphere, and did not impinge on the juridical-political or economic spheres". But when the Nazis came to power, the situation was altered drastically. Eighty percents of Germany's 600,000 Jews were citizens, the rest were mostly people from Eastern Europe, with permanent resident status in Germany. Many of these had already been born in Germany.

Jews could be found in all walks of life, as farmers, tailors, seamstresses, factory hands and small-business owners. In 1937-1938 the German government set out to impoverish Jews by requiring them to register their property and then by "Aryanizing" Jewish businesses. This meant that Jewish workers, managers, etc. were dismissed, and the ownership of most Jewish businesses, doctors and dental practices, lawyers offices were taken over by non-Jewish Germans ("Aryanized") who bought them at bargain prices fixed by Nazis. Jewish doctors were forbidden to treat non-Jews and Jewish lawyers were not permitted to practice law. At the annual party Nürnberg rally held in Nürnberg in 1935, the Nazis arranged new laws, which institutionalized many of the racial theories prevalent in Nazi ideology. The Nürnberg laws excluded Jews from Reich citizenship (and forbade sex with, - or marriage to persons

of "German or related blood"). As a "Jew" or "Mischling" were defined people with between 4 and 1 Jewish grandparent(s). Thus, it became unpleasantly clear that the citizenship of Jews had been "auf Widerruf" ("Subject to recall") [Monika Richarz, Bürger auf Widerruf, München, 1989, 46ff – אזרחים על, (עורכת), תנאי, ירושלים 1993].

On February 28, 1933 "The Order for the Defense of "People" ("Volk") and "State" ("Staat") cancelled all basic democratic rights. As part of Hitler's "Synchronization" ("Gleichschaltung") Jews were excluded from public service (government, universities, medicine, education etc.) in all spheres. Between the years 1933-1941, the Nazis aimed to make Germany "Judenrein", by tightening their grip on the rights, properties, businesses and belongings of the Jews; as yet, the Nazis preferred the emigration of Jews. In order to facilitate the emigration and to provide for minimal means of subsistence, the "Hilfsverein deutscher Juden" was founded (in 1933). People needed not only financial help, but also, primarily, help in finding nations that would be ready to accept them. This was an increasing of difficult task.

"In the late 1930's, when the Jews of Germany and Austria were in great danger, Palestine was closed to them. ...not only that, but Britain "put pressure on the German, Greek, Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Turkish governments not to allow "illegal" immigrants into Palestine". (By "illegal" the British meant those not included in the "List of Immigrants" according to the Shaw Commission of 1929, or

the [Hope-Simpson Commission; the Peel C. omission froze immigration at 1936 (12,000 per annum for 5 years) & the "White Paper" of 1939 (75,000 for 5 years). The tragic fate of the 937 passengers of the "St. Louis" in 1939, and of 750 Jewish immigrants fleeing from Hitler's war against them on the "Struma" in 1941, show only part of the problem. The "National Origins Act" (1924) reduced the quota of immigrants to the U.S. from the 1921's law census (from 3% to 2% of the census 1890). The Act was meant to discriminate against eastern Europeans. This law was only repealed in 1965. Humanly, the tragic fate of Max Schohl best illustrates this dilemma: to stay or leave a country he knew and loved, a status that had been attained. [Df. In David Clay Large, *And The World Closed Its Doors. The Story of one Family Abandoned to the Holocaust*, N.-Y.: Basic Books, 2003].

News of the impending catastrophe reached China on December 1, 1933, with the arrival of a group that included members of the victims of the "First Wave" of Hitler's "Gleichschaltung": physicians, scientists and professors. Their arrival came soon after the Kaspé Case in Harbin; not the murder of a talented young man posed a problem for the Jewish community, but the lenient sentencing of the kidnappers that showed up the close cooperation between the Japanese authorities and the dangerous criminal element of white-Russian anti-Semites. It would be most imprudent for me to speak of the Japanese aggression in Manchuria (Harbin was captured on February 5) and Manchuria was declared independent on February 18, 1932.

"Asevidenceofgrowinganti-Semitism accumulated in the north, the Jewish community began to look for ways to defuse the situation". Through contacts to the Japanese officials in Shanghai, leaders of the Jewish community tried to get in touch with

authorities in Manchu-Kuo [Marcia Reynders Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort. The Diaspora Communities of Shanghai*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford U. Pr., 2001]. N. E. B. Ezra, editor of "Israel's Messenger", traveled to Japan to meet the Japanese Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs, Shigamitsu Mamoru. At their meeting, Ezra suggested that Manchu-Kuo might take-in 50,000 immigrants, who would participate in the development of the country. "The Japanese official replied with hesitation, claiming that Manchu-Kuo faced many problems and that the proposed movement was too big for the present. Shigemitsu stressed, however, that no restrictions would be placed on individuals wishing to settle in Manchu-Kuo".

This presentation of the facts is not quite accurate, as G. F. Zakharova showed in a fairly recent study.

"The Japanese government in any way possible furthered the settlement of "reservists" (demobilized Japanese), Japanese and Koreans settlers, while introducing strict quotas for Chinese immigrants. As to the settlement of Jewish refugees in Manchuria, a similar idea had been discussed earlier by Sun Fo, the son of SunYatsen with Jacob Berglas and was rejected by the Chongping government as "impractical" and "premature".

On December 18, 1933 Vladimir Kislitsin had established the Bureau of Russian Emigrant Affairs (BREM) under Japanese auspices [Viktor Usov, *Poslednij Imperator Kitaia, 1906-1967*, Moskva: Olma Press, 2003, 198-250, gives a rather different account]. The Russian leaders emphasized the fact that the committee was the officially endorsed body of the white Russian community...". As Japan began to adopt a more and more expansive political, economic, and military strategy in China, based in Manchudi-Kuo", the Japanese became interested in "finding ways to centralize their influence and control over the Jews with BREM serving as a role model.

"According to one astute observer, in 1937 the Japanese approached Dr. Abraham Kaufman, president of the Hebrew Association of Harbin, asking him to organize an umbrella organization of Hebrew associations in China and Japan. Dr. Kaufman complied with this "offer that he could not refuse", both in order to win Japanese support for "diminishing the rampant Anti-Semitism inspired by White Russians in Harbin. Even more important, Kaufman hoped to persuade the Japanese to offer protected areas for settlement by Jews fleeing Nazi Europe". [Ristaino 148f 153]. Thus, the "Jewish National Council of the Far East" at the close of the final conference in December 1939, Chairman Kaufman signed a petition to the Japanese minister, Abe Nobuyuki, expressing his gratitude for the protection without prejudice that the Japanese authorities had given Jews in East Asia." [Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking. The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*", Penguin Books, 1997]. The settlement plan failed, both because of active aggressive Japanese activity against China (The Battle of Nanking, August-13 - December 1938) and the Soviet Unit (July 11-August10, 1938; Halkingol and at Lake Hassan), and because the Jews of America, led by the president of the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, refused to give any support, financial or political, to enemies of America. But Dr. Kaufman saw the necessity of counter-acting the danger stemming from the newly signed "Agreement on Cultural Cooperation" between Japan and Germany. Certainly, it would have endangered all Jews of the Far East if an anti-Japanese policy had been adopted by the Jewish organizations of the Far East [Ristaino 150f]. On December 6, 1938, the Japanese minister of foreign affairs, Prince Konoe Fumimaro, adopted at a five ministers meeting three "articles" clarifying the Japanese position on the Jewish issue. First, Japan

repudiated Nazi Germany's extreme Anti-Semitic policy. Secondly, treating Jews (including those of Manchu-Kuo and China) in a fair manner; thirdly, Japan wished to maintain, now and also in the future, good relation with the U.S.A. "This policy statement was transmitted to Japanese official installations abroad and no doubt was influential in decisions of Sugihara and officials in Japan's Moscow embassy and Japanese consulates to interpret Tokyo's pronouncement as favoring the issuing of transit visas to fleeing Jews". Among the many that benefited from the policy adopted by the Harbin Hebrew Spiritual Society (HEDD)

were a number of Jews from Berlin and other parts of Germany. These were specialists in certain professions that the Manchu-digo authorities believed to be of use for the state, such as doctors, dentists, engineers, furriers, musicians, foreign language teachers, lawyers and small-enterprise owners. For them part of the problem had been the necessity to receive an official invitation; this received, they had to find a ship to Shanghai. The next step was to find funds for the tickets after the families assets had been "frozen" by the authorities. After October 1938 German passports lost their validity, unless been brought

to the "Pa behörde" to be stamped with a big red "J"; this made Jewish emigrants immediately recognizable as such. While the disembarkment in Shanghai was simple, it was necessary to receive a Japanese visa to Dalien (then, Dairen); from there to Harbin. The immigrants had to wait for a visa to enter Manchudi-Kuo. In our case we had to wait for three long months for the Manchurian visa. It was thanks to the generosity of the Jewish community of Dairen and the efforts of the Harbin Jewish Community especially its president, Dr. Kaufman, that we found a new home in Harbin.

# A Jew in China

by Eric Schechter

34

"In the beginning, God created heaven and earth ... " said Boa Minmin (who goes by the name Maya) when asked to say something in Hebrew. Located in the western suburbs of Beijing, the prestigious Peking University is home to over 46,000 students – 15 of whom are specializing in an obscure, Semitic language spoken by Jews. The four-year program, established before China and the Jewish State had diplomatic relations, is now led by an Israeli cultural attaché.

Though Israel was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China, Beijing only returned the favor in 1992. Until then, the Jewish state was reviled by the PRC as a vanguard of Western imperialism in the Middle East, and is still hauled over the coals – though mostly in its English-language press, which Arab diplomats read.

No doubt, China's new diplomatic relationship with Israel has led to a certain amount of juggling. When speaking to our press delegation, Foreign Affairs spokesman Liu Jianchao kept to answers that would

make everyone happy. On the topic of Palestinian terrorism, he told us: "We have asked our Arab friends to use their influence with the PA so that it takes more effective measures to reduce attacks on Israeli civilians." He also expressed his government's opposition to the security fence, recommending that Israel and the Palestinians return instead to the moribund Road Map. But at that point, Liu's heart did not seem to be in it.

The Chinese do take business quite seriously though. By the late 1970s, the late billionaire Shaul Eisenberg helped forge ties between Chinese and Israeli military industries. Israel upgraded old Soviet tanks and sold Python-3 air-to-air missiles, but as the \$1.2 billion sale of Phalcon early-warning aircraft fell through in 2001, diplomatic ties were strained.

Jews are admired here, in part because of their supposed financial acumen. At one point during the visit, I found myself having a beer with a Guangzhou businessman who joked that Jews and Chinese should intermarry and breed a new super-

race. And it is not just talk. The Jews of Kaifeng disappear precisely because the more numerous Chinese married off their children to them.

Our delegation never did get to Kaifeng. Instead, we visited the rather austere Ohel Moshe Synagogue in Shanghai. Built in 1907, the synagogue was used by Russian Jews who had fled Czarist persecution and, during World War II, by thousands of refugees from the Nazis.

That was the past. This is the future: In the early 1990s, one gifted student of the Peking University program translated A.B. Yehoshua's short novel *Three Days and a Child* into Chinese, winning an award from the Institute for the Translation of Hebrew Literature in Bnei Brak. Gradually, a civilizational divide is being bridged. Shir (Ma Xiaoyan), a part-time copy editor at the Xinhua news agency boasted, "I read a lot of articles from both *Ha'aretz* and *The Jerusalem Post*." That is more than can be said for many Israelis.

**(From *The Jerusalem Post*, June 25, 2004)**

# Legends of the Chinese Jews of Kaifeng

(continued from the previous issue)

## 9. A Permanent Record in an Impermanent World

*The Jews inscribe a record of their history and achievements on several large stone columns so that, no matter what the future holds, nothing will be forgotten.*

Four hundred years had elapsed since the Jews arrived in Kaifeng. During this time, the community had become at home and comfortable in its new environment, learning the Chinese language and culture, gaining familiarity with Chinese customs and rites.

The Jews were prosperous, thriving in the favorable political and social climate provided by the city of Kaifeng. At the high point of their recorded history, around the year 1400, their number reached five thousand. Unlike Jews living in anti-Semitic lands where laws forbade them to participate in politics, the civil service, and public affairs, here they were encouraged to fully engage themselves in the opportunities open to their neighbors. Like everyone else, they could enhance their social status by taking and passing the formidable imperial examinations. These exams were open to anyone; that is, anyone willing and able to devote the time and effort necessary for serious study of Confucianism and the Chinese classics. For many, this meant a lifetime of study. As an old Chinese saying goes: "One has to spend at least ten years below the window [studying] since a hundred years are needed to bring up a learned scholar."

Presented with such an opportunity, many Jews flocked to enroll in Chinese schools, studied diligently, and prepared

themselves for the exams. Of course, the more time they spent learning Confucianism and the Chinese classics, the less time they devoted to Torah study. As a result, many completely lost their knowledge of Hebrew. Since the Torah had not been translated into Chinese, they were no longer able to read the Law, even if they had the time and desire to do so. By and by, those who were determined to take up a political career abandoned Torah study and become even more ignorant of the history of their people.

Meanwhile intermarriage between the Jews and their Chinese neighbors continued, and acculturation turned into assimilation. As they adapted to their new home, fewer and fewer evinced enthusiasm for attending synagogue, participating in prayer, or for recapturing their traditional way of life. The community elders were concerned. They urged people to visit the synagogue and listen to the reading of the Law. But as more and more people lost any knowledge of Hebrew, the prayers were rendered meaningless.

What additional measures could be taken to prevent ethnic extinction? The problem, as the elders saw it, was no longer how to survive as individual Jews, but how to survive collectively, as a recognizable Jewish community. If a feeling of Jewishness was embedded deep in the Jewish soul, thrust there by the prophets, how could it be reawakened? After much discussion, the elders agreed that one practical method to keep history alive was to make it readily available to all, especially later generations. They determined to preserve what was known of their

history and heritage by inscribing it on large stone steles. This way nothing would be lost; the community's history and traditions would be in a permanent rather than an ephemeral, oral form and would be available from generation to generation. Some believed that the writing should be exclusively in Hebrew. They insisted that Hebrew, rather than any other language, was unique to their religion. "We want the work to be holy and in line with our tradition," they asserted. But the majority believed that the writing should be done in Chinese to make it possible for everyone to read and comprehend. They argued that their community had been living in China for so many years that Chinese had already replaced Hebrew as their mother tongue and had become the daily language of their lives. If they wanted to make the inscribed history comprehensible to every member of the community, as well as to later generations, there was no other alternative. And they cited a valid precedent:

"We had the Septuagint in ancient times," they said. "It was because of the Septuagint translation that the Greek-speaking Jews of Alexandria, Egypt, did not forget our tradition, and that the rest of the world became aware of the culture of the Jews."

As this was essentially to be a history of their people, they started the text with Abraham, the forefather of the Jews, beginning with these words:

Abraham, the patriarch who founded the religion of Israel, was of the nineteenth generation from Adam. From the creation of heaven and earth the patriarchs handed down the tradition that they received. They made no image, flattered

no spirits or ghosts, and believed in no superstitions. Instead they believed that spirits and ghosts cannot help men, that idols cannot protect them, and that superstitions are useless. So Abraham meditated only upon heaven.

Abraham gave them [the concepts of the Jewish faith] to Isaac, who gave them to Jacob, who gave them to the Twelve Tribes, who passed them on to Moses. Moses transmitted them to Ezra. And from that time on the religion of the patriarchs glowed with renewed brilliance ...

As to how Moses got the Law and the Ten Commandments, it says:

Intelligent, benevolent, and righteous, Moses sought the Law on Mount Sinai, where he fasted for forty days and forty nights. His earnest prayers moved God's heart, and that is how the Torah, in fifty-three sections,\* originated. Meticulous and excellent, they inspire goodness in the good and expose the wickedness of the bad.

Now it came to their history in China. They decided to write the following: Our religion was transmitted to China from the west. We settled in Kaifeng by

imperial command. More than seventy clans named Li, An, Ai, Gao, Mu, Zhao, Jin, Zhou, Zhang, Shi ... arrived during the Northern Song Dynasty [960-1127], bringing entry tribute of western cloth. The emperor said: "You have come to our Central Plain. Preserve your ancestral customs and settle in Biangliang [Kaifeng]." In the first year of the Long Xing period [1163] of Song, when Chief Rabbi Levi was the leader of our faithful, the building of our synagogue was commenced ...

During the Ming Dynasty [1368-1644] persons who were well versed in the Scriptures and urged others to do good were designated rabbis and elders. They preached our religion. Thanks to their efforts, today all of our people observe the law, worship God, venerate their ancestors, are loyal to their sovereign and filial to their parents.

The text continues with an account of the Jewish community's life in China. This long inscription was carved on a special stone called the Number One Stele erected in the courtyard of the synagogue in 1489 so that everyone who came was able to read it.

Many years later, the Jews of Kaifeng, fearing that in time the story of their community would not be handed on, prepared a second stele providing further details of their life. This record has given the modern world valuable history about the life and times of these Jews. The great steles proved to be a treasure for historians, for while the synagogue was twice swept away by floods of the Yellow River, the monumental inscriptions were preserved. Later on people commented on this fortuitous circumstance, saying that it was a miracle brought about because God would not allow the name of His chosen people to perish.

For the present-day Jews of Kaifeng, descendants of the original settlers who are now integrated with the massive native Chinese population, the steles still serve as a substantive record of their heritage, silently retelling the history of their ancestors.

\* The Torah is usually divided into fifty-four portions for weekly study and liturgical reading. The Kaifeng Jews divided it into fifty-three portions.

## Shanghai, 2005

### **Kosher Food @ The East China Fair March 1 - 4, 2005**

#### **Location:**

"Sofitel Jin Jiang Oriental Pudong, Shanghai"  
"Club Room - 41st floor"

#### **Time:**

7:00 – 9:00am for Shacharit and breakfast  
7:00 – 10:00pm for Arvit and dinner

#### **Hotel Accommodations:**

We have organized cooperate room rate (for more information and reservation please go to:  
[www.chinajewish.org/RSVNFormSofitel.pdf](http://www.chinajewish.org/RSVNFormSofitel.pdf).)

#### **Kosher Lunch Sandwiches:**

Once again at the Mini-Market, Located behind Hall #1 of the Shanghai New International Expo Centre  
For more information please feel free to contact us at the Jewish Center.

1720 HongQiao Road, Villa #1 \* Shanghai, 200336, CHINA  
Telephone: 8621 6278 0225 \* Fax: 8621 6278 0223 \*  
[office@chinajewish.org](mailto:office@chinajewish.org) \* [www.chinajewish.org](http://www.chinajewish.org)

## Tel Aviv, 2005



### **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.

# Letters

**Ian Leventhal**  
**President and CEO**  
**LIVING BRIDGE CORPORATION**  
**Tel (416) 635-5491**

Subject: Re: salvaging the Jewish Ghetto

To T. Kaufman: Thanks for your confirmation. I too am looking forward to meeting you. In the meantime, I have some news that may interest you. During our last two years of working on a plan for the Jewish district restoration we became affiliated with the Tong Ji University Planning Institute. The Tong Ji is a government endorsed and highly respected institution in China. The renowned Professor Ruan of Tong Ji has always been an advocate of architectural preservation in Shanghai. His department has been instrumental in assisting us in obtaining a 'Protected Historical Site' designation for the Jewish District in Hong Kow {Kew}. As of late Professor Ruan is compiling a book on the past, present and future of the District. The present day Chinese refer to the area around the Ohel Moishe Synagogue as Tilanqiao. This is an ancient reference to the area and in translation means, Carrying Basket Bridge.

Anyway, Professor Ruan has asked me to provide him with five Jewish family stories with accompanying pictures to include in his chapter on Jewish Life in the Jewish area, Ward Rd, Wayside, Tong Shan etc. Are you interested in supplying material to be included in the book.? I believe a story about you and or your family if you lived in Hong Kew, might be an interesting addition. I have currently collected material from Eric Goldstaub, and Harry Fiedler, now of Toronto, and Tom Lewinsohn an American. It would be nice to include an Israeli. All you have to do is send me by e mail 3 or 5 clear photographs showing your family in the 1938 to 1949 period in Shanghai. The story could be one or two pages long. I would forward the material to Professor Ruan's assistant who is compiling the book. The book at present is set to be printed in Chinese, and the University is giving only credits, no fees. If you are interested, let me know.

\*\*\*\*\*Thank you for getting in touch with me. I look forward to meeting with you when I am in Israel . I will get in touch with you again just prior to my March 17 arrival in Tel Aviv, and we can set up a meeting, In the meantime, you can view the Living Bridge web site at [www.livingbridge.net](http://www.livingbridge.net) or you might want to google me under the heading Ian Leventhal in Shanghai. In the meantime keep well. Email: [ianleventhal@rogers.com](mailto:ianleventhal@rogers.com)

## **Dina Vincow**

To T. Kaufman: I have received this letter. Do you have any advice that I could pass on to the mother of this young man. Are there any Jews living in or visiting Harbin for Passover this year? I would like to wish you all a Happy Passover and to tell you how much I enjoyed reading your book, from which I learnt a lot about our past. It also brought back many memories and explained things that I did not know as a young person.

Mrs. Vincow,

My name is Linda Stone Fish. I am a member of Beth Sholom and also teach at SU in the Department of Marriage and Family Therapy. I recently heard (while at temple for Purim) that you are originally from Harbin. My son, Isaac Stone Fish, a junior at Columbia, majoring in East Asian Languages and Cultures, is studying in Harbin this spring. He is (almost) fluent in Mandarin. I was just wondering if you know anyone who would be willing to host him for Passover. He has never missed a passover and he would love to attend one. Thank you so very much for considering my request.

Email : [dvincow@syr.edu](mailto:dvincow@syr.edu)

Tel. : 315-446-0497

**Robert Wang zhen**  
**Center for Jewish Studies**  
**Shanghai**

We are very glad to send you the Jewish Studies Bulletin (e-edition) No.1-4, as a new way for us to communicate with each other. Since the condition is very limited, we can only give you the Chinese edition, if you have interests in any of these bulletins, please don't hesitate to contact with us, any suggestions, reviews, information or supports are welcome, and we also hope the bulletin can be a new bridge for us to exchange our ideas.

**Harriet Heifetz**  
**Illinois, USA**

To T. Kaufman: The enclosed contribution is a long delayed response to a previous request. I send it to you in memory of my parents – Alter and Musia Tikotsky – who had spent a great many years in Tientsin, where I was born in 1920. Between 1923 and 1927, however, we lived in what is now Israel (then Palestine) and returned to China as citizens of that country, and thus as British subjects.

My father died and was buried in Tientsin in 1946. Some three years later, my mother left China for Israel, where a large group of refugee children were put in her charge. It was 1951 before she could join my husband and me in Chicago. Here she continued to work with children – first for the Jewish Children’s Bureau and later for the Vista Dal Mar in Los Angeles. She died at the age of 92.

As you see, my earliest recollections are of China and of Israel, spanning the first 26 years of my life. I may have been largely out of touch, but those influences remain. From time to time your Bulletin has brought back meaningful memories and long lost connections. There is instant recognition when I read about places I have know, schools I have attended, activities I took part in, friendships I valued. It was another time, another life, but I welcome reminders of those formative years and I admire what you and your colleagues have done to preserve, enrich and strengthen the sense of community within the larger national context.

It is a token contribution that I make this year. I would like to do more. My hope is to establish an appropriate memorial to my parents in perpetuity. To that end, I would appreciate pertinent information regarding various levels of endowment, and what they would be able to sustain. I assume the range would allow me a choice, a symbolically significant tribute that I could afford to fund.

As we enter a new year, I wish you and your compatriots a hopeful and rewarding 2005. And I look forward to hearing from you.

Address: 835 Moseley Road, Highland Park, Il. 60035

**Dalit Shickman**

My son, Avi, came home from the army for the weekend and was so pleased to receive the book and generous gift. It’s not an easy life in the army and it is such a pleasure to be appreciated. My daughter, Vered, also thanks Igud Yotzei Sin for the scholarship she received this year. She takes her studies in biopsychology very seriously and the scholarship has been very helpful. These gifts help them feel very much in touch with the lives their father, Simon Shickman and grandparents, Isaac and Dora Shickman led in China. Thanking you again ...

**John Sidline**

To the IYS: I am the great grandson of Mendel Moiseeff (and the grandson of Moise Moiseeff). I have several digital pictures from my family from Manchouli. I am happy to provide them to you. Also, my aunt Riva Moiseeff Basin, who recently passed away, wrote a wonderful account of life in Manchouli. I am happy to send that to you as well. Email: john@sidline.com Tel: 503-624-2333

**Peter Berton**

To T. Kaufman: I sent you my recollections of the Japan tour by the Harbin Symphony Orchestra. I would like you to reproduce the original program of our concerts in Tokyo which illustrates what I am saying in the piece about the discrepancies between the English and Japanese texts. Thanks in advance. All best wishes belatedly for Purim. I just had a homentash.

P.S. Will send the pictures separately.

**Isabelle Maynard**

Dear fellow Tientsinners and people who are interested in Tientsin, I am writing to let you know that a book "The Jews of Tianjin" was published in China last year by China International Press is now available in New York. Anna Song , the editor is currently visiting her sister in New York and brought with her many books for sale. The cost is \$30 and you can email her if you are interested at ninasong@comcast.net. .

This is a splendid book with many photos of places and people in Tientsin. I keep finding friends and relatives in group photos and you probably will too. The preface is written by Israel Epstein and is called Memories of the Jews in Tianjin. Pass this on to people who you think might be interested in the book.

## **Dan Ben-Canaan**

I have attached the file.doc of the "Jews in China" article by Prof. Pan Guang, as well as a book review and additional material on the subject. If I understood you correctly, Prof. Pan Guang's book was published as a pictorial album, with many photographs but little text. You may contact Prof. Pan Guang himself at the Shanghai Center for International Studies. His e-mail is [guangpan@fudan.ihep.ac.cn](mailto:guangpan@fudan.ihep.ac.cn) and I am sure he will be happy to provide Igud Yotzei Sin with an English copy of the album. In the past months we have been working at the new Heilongjiang Television & Radio Broadcast Center on three documentary films on the subjects of the Harbin Jewish Community. As you may know, I am the Editor-in-chief of the English News program there. In any case, the first documentary (14 minutes) that we have just finished working on, has won the Television Center's annual competition's first prize for news documentaries (I'll send a DVD copy to Teddy as soon as possible). The work on my documentary "Eastern Winds" The Story of the Jews of Harbin is taking longer time. It is a 60 to 90 minutes long and it traces the roots of the community from Russia through the Eastern Siberian Railway to Harbin. It also includes an attempt to answer the question "Why Jewish people moved to China?". The documentary includes historical films as well as pictures and many interviews. I may need some further assistance from Teddy and others on that question. Please forward my warm regards to Teddy Kaufman and Yossi Klien. May you all in the Igud have a very happy Pesach.

Please open the attachment: "Book Review - The Jews in China.doc"

Prof. Dan Ben-Canaan

Heilongjiang University \* School of Western Studies \* English Department

No. 74 Xuefu Road, Nangang District, Harbin P.R. China 150080

Heilongjiang Television Network China \* Senior Editor, English News \* General Advisor

Heilongjiang Academy of Social Science \* Research Fellow

China Enterprises and Business representative

Mail Address:

No. 136 Huang He Lu Road, Building B - Apartment 801

Nangang District, Harbin 150090 P.R China

Mobile: (86)13845184401 \* Home: (86-451) 82260930

Office Tel: (86-451)86608242 \* Fax: (86-451)82625540

E-Mail: [canaan@inter.net.il](mailto:canaan@inter.net.il)

## **Rena Krasno**

To T. Kaufman: I just returned from Denver and received your book an hour after I got home. Many, many congratulations! After I catch my breath, I will read your book and write a book review for Points East. I am certain your book will be very interesting. Thank you so much for thinking to send me a copy. I do appreciate it as well as your kind words. I am very busy. Just signed a contract for a new children's book which will come out in spring 2006, and started writing another one (for adults). It will be my 8th book. I do work very hard but enjoy my life very much reading, writing, learning, meeting fascinating people, travelling etc... I am sure you too enjoy your life to the full. I think you and I are the types for whom work and research are part of the pleasure of life. Best regards to Rasha, and thanks again

## **Solomon Berman**

To T. Kaufman: My name is Solomon Berman. of Menin rd. Monbulk Victoria Australia. The purpose of this email is to express my gratitude for your role in bringing about my getting in contact with my cousin with whom I have lost contact since we left China in 1951. As it happens he and his family are residing in Ashkelon and he contacted me two days ago. Once again I extend my sincere gratitude for your role in bringing this about.

## **Xu Buzeng**

To Benny and Shoshana Tzur: Haven't heard from you for quite a long time. How are you? I have been busy with my research on Sino-Judaic history as usual. I have important news to tell you. Dr. Qiu Fa Zu (then spelled Tjiu Fa Dsdu in Germany) saved a team of more than 30 Dachau Concentration Camp inmates (many of them were Jews) from likely execution. In recent months I have watched in the CCTV (China Central Television) and have read Dr. Qiu's article on his ten years of life in Germany and his rescue of the concentration inmates in wartime Germany when Nazism ran rampant. Dr. Qiu studied and worked in Munich from 1937-1946. He graduated from the Munich University Medical College with a doctor's degree and worked as a surgeon at the University Teaching Hospital. Qiu was promoted to the post of Oberarzt in charge of daily affairs. As Munich suffered heavy Allied bombings, part of the University Hospital was evacuated to Bad Toelz, some fifty kilometers from Munich. It was a place with less bombings. The site of this affiliated hospital of 200 beds (with Dr. Qiu in charge) was formerly a sanatorium.

One day in the spring of 1945 a group of concentration inmates (about 30 in number, with many Jews) were escorted by German soldiers passing Bad Toelz and they had a rest in the square in front of the hospital. They were said to come from the nearby Dauchau concentration camp and were to be transferred to other places. They were lean and shackled. Out of pity and sympathy Qiu gave false information to the German officer that the prisoners were sick and might be affected with typhoid fever which was epidemic. He would like to take them in and cure them. Unexpectedly the German officer agreed. Not long after this Germany capitulated and the prisoners were saved, surviving the massacre. Dr. Qiu seemed to be another Schindler or the Chinese diplomat Ho Feng Shan who were the rescuers of Jews from the Holocaust. Qiu is ninety-one years old and in good health. He is an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the honorary President of Tongji Medical University in the Central China Metropolis of Wuhan. He lives with his German wife (formerly his pupil) there. Dr. Qiu also told me that in 1985 the chancellor of Germany Mr. Kohl visited the University, met with Dr. Qiu and said, "We are schoolmates. You are the honorary doctor of the Heidelberg University (in 1982) and I graduated from the same University. We Germans will never forget our old friend who offered us a helping hand in the hard times (meaning the rescuing the masses of German civilians wounded in the Allied bombings during the Second World War." For this Dr. Qiu was conferred the Grand Cross of Germany. It was the first medal of State rank ever awarded to Chinese scientists. Dr. Qiu told me further that in the early 1980s when he revisited Germany he met in Munich and Bad Toelz many of his former patients (including the son of the head of Bad Toelz Sanatorium whose knee cyst Dr. Qiu had cured). Dr. Qiu also met the girl who had worked in the bakery at Bad Toelz that had provided Qiu's hospital with bread. If she is living, she may be approaching her eighties. Is it feasible to publish Dr. Qiu's brave act in the mass media of Munich and/or Bad Toelz as well as on the internet ( e.g. [www.rickshaw.org](http://www.rickshaw.org)) so that those who were there may tell more stories about what they had witnessed? On the occasion of worldwide celebration of victory over fascism, it seems more meaningful than ever to publish Dr. Qiu's brave act at the risk of his own safety and even life.

## **Shoshana Zirkin, China**

To T. Kaufmann: I am currently a Chinese language student at Fudan University in Shanghai. I graduated last year with an undergraduate degree in both Religious Studies and Chinese History. I attended a conference this past October entitled "International Symposium on Judaism," coordinated by Professor Xu Xin at Nanjing University, where I presented a paper on the subject of Jewish Refugees in Shanghai during World War II. This was also the topic of my senior honors thesis. At the conference I met Professor Avrum Ehrlich. Avrum teaches in the Center for Judaic and Inter-Religious Studies at Shandong University. Several weeks ago he asked me to work with him to edit a book tentatively entitled Jews and Judaism in Modern China: A Meeting of Civilizations. It will be a collection of articles aimed at the informed reader, discussing the current state of Jews and Judaism in Modern China. I am contacting you because, given your personal history and present involvement with The Association of Former Jewish Residents of China, we are hoping that you will want to contribute an article. The American publisher KTAV has already agreed to support this project, and articles should only be about 10-15 pages. I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you so much

## **Robert Wang zhen Center for Jewish Studies, Shanghai**

We are very glad to send you the Jewish Studies Bulletin (e-edition) No.1-4, as a new way for us to communicate with each other. Since the condition is very limited, we can only give you the Chinese edition, if you have interests in any of these bulletins, please don't hesitate to contact with us, any suggestions, reviews, information or supports are welcome, and we also hope the bulletin can be a new bridge for us to exchange our ideas.

# Searching and Researching

## **Glenn Siegel**

I have been researching my family genealogy and believe that I might be related to Mr. Mirkin. In 1907 my grandmother and her sister immigrated to the United States. They had 2 brothers who could not get visas, and instead they went to Shanghai through Harbin. Their name was Chaikin and their first names were probably Moises and Boris. The story goes that one of them had a daughter who married a Mirkin and that they eventually moved to Israel. I wanted to know if any of this is familiar to you. I also wanted to ask you to look at my family website. It has many old pictures from Russia and apparently from China. The web address is [homepage.mac.com/winemusic](http://homepage.mac.com/winemusic). (Don't use WWW). Look at the folders called "Old Unknown Family" and "Russia Unknown." In "old unknown family" there's a picture of a Leo and the inscription puts him in Harbin. You mentioned that Boris has a sister in Australia. Please let me know if you think it would be appropriate to contact her.

## **Owners of Nazi-Era Passports Sought**

**By Zhang Jun**

A local resident is looking for owners of two Jewish passports issued in Nazi-era Germany and Austria, which he bought six years ago from a local flea market. One of the passport owners is Manfred Lichtenstein, born on August 24, 1932 in Halle, Germany. The other belongs to Gerti Waszkouttzer, born on December 9, 1934 in Vienna. Both documents were issued in 1938.

"Hopefully, both of the passports can be returned to their owners. If they are still alive, they should be in their

70s or 80s," Zhu Peiyi, manager of Jietong International Freight Co. Ltd. told Shanghai Daily yesterday. If his search for the owners is successful, Zhu said he will return the passports free of charge.

As a time-long collector of old goods, Zhu stumbled across the two Jewish passports at a local used-goods market near Yuyuan Garden. Each of the passports was printed in old-styled German. The covers contain the words "Deutsches Reich" which means "German Reich" and "passport for strangers" according to a German friend of Zhu. Both of the passports contain 28 pages including old-styled German language such as the word "Freigrenz" which indicates that Jewish owners were not allowed to change all of their money into foreign currency to make it more difficult for them to leave Germany. If they left Germany, they had to leave a lot of their property and possessions back home.

Zhu explained that he heard the city is going to build a Jewish cultural site along the northern Bund and many Jewish people are coming back to the city to look for their past, which spurred him to publicize his personal collection.

"The holders of the passports are very probably among the refugees to Shanghai during the 1940s," said Xu Guohua, a scholar of Jewish culture at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences. Xu said it is not clear why and how the passports were left in the city over such a long period of time. During the Second World War, more than 30,000 Jewish refugees fled Europe for Shanghai, where many lived in the area of the city that is currently known as Hongkou (Hongkew) District.

(From the Shanghai Daily, December 14, 2004)

## **Eugene Alperovich New York, USA**

I am trying to locate a burial site of my great grandmother

First Name: Lubov

Middle Name: Solomonovna

Last Name: Ostrovskaya

She was a Russian Jewish lady and died in Harbin in 1931.

Attached is a picture (taken in 1931) of the monument in the cemetery in Harbin. Please let me know where I could inquire about this.

**Email Address :** [ejen1@yahoo.com](mailto:ejen1@yahoo.com)

**Phone Number :** 718-464-0000

## **Sara**

I am a political science student at University "Romatre" in Rome doing research about the Jews in China, in particular in the Heilongjiang Province. I would like to have more information about the Jews in China and Jewish immigration to Manchuria. Some time ago I read an article by Pan Guang, but now I can't find it! Please, if possible, could you send me a copy? Thank you very much

**Email Address:** [dk80sara@libero.it](mailto:dk80sara@libero.it)

**Tel:** 338 4315903

**Reply:** Please visit our website [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org). Use the search engine and find articles by Pan Guang. Also you will find much information if you go to Harbin - Publications - and then go to Transcripts given by Host and Transcripts given by Guest Speakers. In addition try the Chronology section of the Harbin website for a history of the Jews of Harbin. If you need more information please do not hesitate to contact us via our website

**Teddy Piastunovich**

**[teddy@jewsofchina.org](mailto:teddy@jewsofchina.org)**

## Mark Shklov

To T. Kaufman: I obtained your name from a friend in Japan who, in turn, was advised by Ms. Izumi Sato about Igud Yotzei Sin. I would appreciate whatever information or direction you might be so kind as to offer concerning Jews in Harbin in general and my Father's family in particular. My Father, Nathan Shklov, was born in Harbin in 1911. Like many men of his generation, my Father was not one to indulge in long discussions about his origins and he passed away before I, like many men of my generation, was smart enough to insist that he tell me about our family background. I know very little about my Grandfather, Moses Shklov, except that he was a Russian Jew, that he was a soldier during the Sino-Japanese War and later had a lumber camp or mill in Manchuria. My Grandmother was Bluma Shklov.

I would be interested in learning more about the Jews of Harbin and my Father's background. I am living in Honolulu, Hawaii, where my Father and Mother eventually settled after immigrating from Canada in the 1950s.

**SHKLOV BERMAN & O'CONNOR**  
Attorneys at Law

Tel (808) 585-8858 Fax (808) 599-4198  
Email: mark@shklovlaw.com.

## Solomon Berman

Further to our communication regarding the search my uncle Abraham Markovitch Borodavkin and his children, Mark Abramovich and Sofia Abramovna Borodavkin, as well as his wife Rahil. These are relevant details about the family in question:

**Solomon Berman**, son of Samuel Berman and Lubov Berman, born Borodavkin, currently residing in Australia, **seeking** his uncle **Abraham Markovitch Borodavkin, date of birth 1910-1914**, in city of Harbin- Manchuria. He was employed in fur industry in the city of Dairen. Approx. in 1946 he was arrested in Dairen on suspicion of espionage for Japanese and sent to **Siberia**. He had a son **Mark Abramovich** (born in Harbin or Dairen) and daughter Sofia **Abramovna**

**Borodavkin** (born in Harbin or Dairen approx. in 1936) and wife Rahile, who was a music teacher in conservatory of music in Dairen.

Address: 25 Menin Rd. Monbulk, Victoria 3793, Australia

Tel: 1061 3 97 521 383

Communication in English and Russian is accepted.

### Contact person in Germany:

Communication in Russian and Germany is accepted.

Leonid Watkowski

Weidenauer Strasse, 150

57076 Siegen. BRD.

Tel/fax 1049 271 484679

E-Mail: watkowski@t-online.de

## Eileen Spiegel

Hello. I am hoping to find information on my great uncle who remained in Russia while his family immigrated to the USA in early 1900. My father remembers being told that his uncle stayed and then went on to China and then possibly Australia. His name would have been Alex Triguboff. The last name could also be spelled Treguboff, Trehuboff, Triguboff, Drihuboff, or some other variation.

While reading the book, The FUGU Plan, I found his name (assuming he is my great uncle). If you have any information, or know of a place I can search, I would greatly appreciate it. We were told that he started or was a founder of a synagogue in either Shanghai or Harbin and was in the silk trade. We know that there is an Alex Triguboff living in Australia and has been quite successful but have no other details.

Alex Triguboff would very very old or have passed away by now. My grandmother, [Rose Treguboff] was the oldest sibling and her youngest brother that came to the US died in 1990 or so in his late 70s. I have a cousin who's father was Harry but the name was spelled Treguboff. On the boat papers that my great grandfather, Israel, carried the name was spelled Druhoboff. I am sure no one understood his accent.

**Email Address:** eitalk58@aol.com

**Phone Number:** 312-782-101

## Reply from Teddy Piastunovich

During a recent trip to Harbin I snapped a few pictures of some graves. Lubov Simionova Triguboff, born 1885 died 1932.

The Triguboff family (Father and mother Frida) emigrated to Israel from Tianjin China in the 50s. The parents died in Israel and are buried in Tel Aviv. The sons, Joe and Harry Triguboff left for Australia. Joe (a lawyer) died in Australia at a young age whilst Harry Triguboff, a known developer, lives in Sydney. He can be reached through his company Meriton. I will try to obtain some information on Alex Triguboff, who I think for a time resided in Tokyo but has since died.

Address of Harry Triguboff: Levels 5 & 6, 267-277 Casterleagh Street, Sydney 2000.

## Goldie Zyskind

I am interested in finding information about my late father who lived in Shanghai for a few years during and after the war. I am interested in family connections and/or anyone who may know of his roots in Warsaw prior to the war. Could you please let me know how I can advertise in your magazine, the cost and how much information to put in?

**Reply:** Thank you for your email.

1. Please enter our website [www.jewsofchina.org](http://www.jewsofchina.org) and click on the "Family Search" field.
  2. Enter as much information as you can in the first field (full name and patronym of your father)
  3. Enter as much information as you have in the "Message" field and we will post that information for our readers to see.
  4. In addition we will place your inquiry in a future edition of the Bulletin, which will also be posted on our website. Hopefully someone will respond to your inquiry
- Teddy Piastunovich**  
[teddy@jewsofchina.org](mailto:teddy@jewsofchina.org)

# Rabbi A.-M. Kiselev and the Religious Life of the Jews in Harbin

by Teddy Kaufman

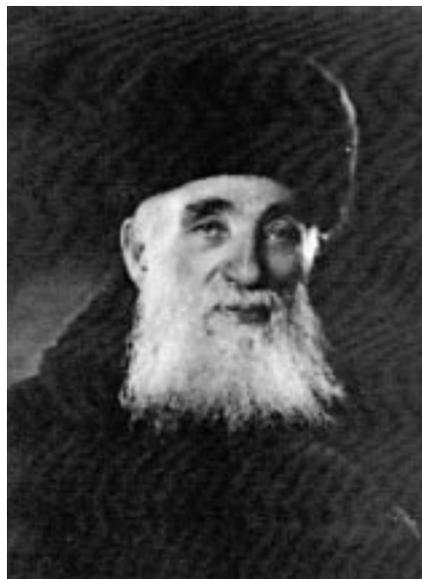
*A report delivered at the International Seminar in Harbin*

The beginning of the religious life of the Jews in Harbin goes back to the year 1903 when about 500 Jews had already been living in Harbin for a few years and when several "minyens" (ten Jewish men necessary for the start of communal praying) already existed. The prayers till then took place in private homes and in temporary premises rented for this purpose.

As far back as in 1907 the foundation for the Main Synagogue was laid and the inauguration ceremony was held on January 15, 1909. But very soon one Synagogue did not have enough place for the growing Jewish population, and in 1918 the foundation for the New Synagogue was laid and the inauguration ceremony was held in 1921. One more synagogue was built in Modiagou.

Jewish life flourished in Harbin at the beginning of the 1920's so services were also held in the Jewish high school, the Talmud-Torah school and in the Jewish free soup kitchen. During all the years of the existence of the old age home "Moshav Zkenim" a synagogue functioned there and prayers were held three times a day. The Main and the New Synagogues had cantors who led the prayers and a children's choir who sang during the Jewish holidays.

The Jewish Community in Harbin had a religious character since the



Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Communities of the Far East and the city of Harbin The President Jewish Religious Society, The Honorary Rabbi Gaon A.M. Kiselev (born on September 18, 1863 – died on September 8, 1949) Yortzeit (anniversary) on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Elul of the year 5709 (this year on Thursday, September 12, 2005)

very first days of its existence. An organization called HEDO, the Harbin Jewish Religious Community (Harbinskoe Evreiskoe Duhovnoe Obshestvo) was established. The Jewish Community comprised all the institutions that are traditionally an inseparable part of all the great Jewish communities in the world: i.e. a religious bathhouse (Mikveh) and a Matzoth bakery which supplied

matzoth to all the other Jewish communities in the North-East of China in Hailar, Qiqikar, Manzhouli, Hangdaohezi, Shengyan, as well as more distant cities like Qingdao, Hankou, and also the communities in Japan: Kobe, Tokyo and Yokohama.

The Jewish community employed a Rabbi, a circumciser (mohel) and a slaughterer of fowl and cattle (shochet) who was responsible for the slaughter of animals and birds according to the religious ritual. The mohel and the shochet traveled to other places in the Heilongjiang province and performed circumcision and ritual slaughter for the Jewish communities there.

There also was a burial society - Hevra Kadisha (Holy Burial Society) that buried the community's dead in accordance with Jewish ritual. It maintained the Jewish Cemetery and a hearst. The Holy Burial Society employed the manager of the cemetery who lived with his family on the premises of the cemetery, and also the driver of the hearst. Burials were generally performed at the expense of Hevra Kadisha, but the well-off families were requested to pay large sums of money for the funerals of members of their families to help with the up-keep of the Society. About eighty per cent of the income of Hevra Kadisha was spent on benefactory needs of the Jewish Community.

The community provided a free soup kitchen for the poor and an old age home (Moshav Zkenim) for the elderly and invalids. The Jewish Ladies' Benefactory Society supplied warm clothing and helped to pay for heating during the winter months. A Jewish Hospital was built and a Free-loan Society (Gmiluth Hesed Ezra) was established.

The Harbin Jewish Community existed for 60 years from 1903 to 1963. In 1958 those Jews still living in Harbin and numbered about 150 members, did a great service to the community in transferring the Jewish Cemetery from the city to a place situated far away from Harbin (more than an hour's ride). Thanks to that transfer the Jewish Cemetery of Harbin was the only one in China to have been preserved during the Cultural Revolution when all the other cemeteries without exception, including Chinese, Russian Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, Moslem etc. were demolished.

The synagogues had circles for the study of the Talmud that functioned on a daily basis. The Bar-Mitzvah and wedding ceremonies were also held in Synagogues. Rabbi A.-M. Kiselev served the Jewish Community for 36 years, from 1913 till he passed away in September 1949. Undoubtedly, he possessed a domineering personality that made its imprint on the spiritual life of Jewish Harbin.

Rabbi Kiselev's predecessors were Rabbi Zalman Hashkel who fell ill and died soon after his arrival in Harbin. Like Rabbi Kiselev, he is buried in the Harbin Jewish Cemetery. The second Rabbi was Rabbi S. Levin who came to Harbin from Omsk, Russia, and served as Director of the Talmud Torah School in Harbin and Rabbi of the Jewish Community of Tianjin before he left China for the USA.

Rabbi A.-M. Kiselev was revered and loved by all the Jews of Harbin, China and the Far East. The Congress of the Jewish communities of the Far East

held in Harbin in 1937 elected Rabbi Kiselev as the Chief Rabbi of China and the Far East, including Japan.

The Zionist leaders who "conquered" the Jewish Community and who led it during the next years came to Harbin in 1912. They were Dr. A.I. Kaufman, Dr. S.I. Ravikovich, A.S. Izgur and others. By their initiative a tender for the candidature of a Rabbi of Harbin was held in Russia. Rabbi Kiselev was then a Rabbi in Borisov. He offered himself for the post and was unanimously elected by the Board of Directors of the Harbin Community. Rabbi Kiselev was born in Surozh, Chernigov Gubernia of Russia, on September 18, 1886. He graduated from the world-famous Volozhin Yeshiva headed by the outstanding Rabbi Chaim Soloveichik. Many famous rabbis of Russia taught in that yeshiva. Since his early age Rabbi Kiselev was a genius in his knowledge of the Talmud. He knew several languages: Yiddish, Hebrew, Russian and German. He was well-versed in modern philosophy and Russian literature. Rabbi Kiselev wrote two books in Hebrew, dealing with various problems of the Talmud: one is called "The Waves of the Sea", the other is "Sayings by an Author". He wrote a book in Russian, too. The title of the book is "Nationalism and Jewry". Besides, he wrote numerous papers on Jewish holidays, the Bible, on Rashi and Rambam, etc. On every holiday he delivered a sermon in the Synagogue and also gave lectures in Russian on various themes connected with Judaism.

He corresponded with the Chief Rabbis of Israel, the Honorable Rabbis I.L. Kook and I. Herzog. He was a man who understood the modern world, a Zionist and an Orthodox Jew in one person, who adhered to the letter of all the religious laws. He understood that the world of Jewish learning, rabbinical authorities, the way of life of the Jewish shtetl, the small-town Jewish community of Eastern Europe, were not relevant to

the Jewish Harbin.

Rabbi Kiselev realized that in the modern world the Jews should adhere to the preservation of the values of Judaism: circumcision, the Jewish marriage and funeral ceremonies, Jewish holidays, the Bar-Mitzva ceremony, the Yom Kippur fast and the eating of matzoth on Passover. He realized that only a small percentage of the Jewish population of Harbin that never exceeded 5-10% are those who go to the Synagogue three times a day. But the aim of Rabbi Kiselev was to find a way for the young Jewish people to traditional Judaism and thus to preserve the great philosophy of the Jewish religion in them. He realized that for this purpose it was necessary to preserve the Jew as a human being and then to preserve the Jew in the human being..

Rabbi Kiselev was the spiritual leader of the Jews in Harbin, China and all of the Far East. It is to him that we owe the flourishing of the religious life of the Jews in China that went on parallel to our traditional national education.

The immortal principles of our Bible lie in the foundation of the fine edifice of the Harbin Jewish Community: "Love thy neighbor as yourself," "All Israel is responsible for one another." and "Next Year in Jerusalem". These biblical commandments, these age-long prayers of generations are what preserved the Jews in remote Harbin during all the years of the existence of this exceptional Jewish community in this unusual Chinese city.

Anyone interested in  
memorializing their  
deceased loved ones  
should contact  
Igud Yotzei Sin.

# The House of Harry Still Stands

By Catherine Armitage

(Correspondent from Tianjin)

On a crack-paced walking tour of his boyhood haunts in this colonial port city two hours' drive east of Beijing, Harry Triguboff sees the future. To some, the billionaire Sydney property developer of Meriton Apartments fame is an "anti-union bastard who needs a good kicking". To Prime Minister John Howard, he epitomizes Sydney's optimism and drive. But on this day, in this city, the septuagenarian archetypal Aussie migrant-made-good is a doting father leading his daughters on a family pilgrimage. He is "so excited, like a little boy", says his elder daughter Orna, 43, a university arts lecturer.

An earlier sweep around Shanghai convinced Harry that the future lies in bigger apartments, with his and hers offices, eat-in kitchens and family computer areas. The 72-year-old China-born Russian Jewish migrant, whose home unit developments reshaped Sydney, also plans structure with fewer columns, more concrete and less steel, following the Chinese example. And if Harry has his way, government restrictions will be lifted so that some of the huge wealth accumulating in the hands of individual Chinese nationals will flood into his Sydney properties.

"I hope to influence the Government to allow them (Chinese) to invest in Australian real estate. That would be of great help to us, because they have a lot of money here, and we need a lot of housing there," he said. "That is one of my big ideas while I am here." China's boom inspires big dreams. At a time when most men of his age are

contemplating a tranquil dotage, Harry is thinking of plunging into Shanghai, the hottest real estate market in China and perhaps the world. It would be a huge step for the man who last year debuted 507th place on the Forbes list of world billionaires with US\$1.3 billion, whose corporate blurb credits his success with his focus on "building homes for Australians within Australia".

After slipping in a couple of meetings and building inspections on a trip that was supposed to be "pure pleasure", he muses that he'd need the right staff and the necessary connections to buy land. "That doesn't happen in five minutes. But it is very exciting and I am sure the amount of money that can be made is immense."

But mainly this trip is about showing daughters Orna and Sharon, 42, where he grew up "before they pull it down". The rest of us trot to keep up while an animated Harry strides around the city's former British concession, pointing and laughingly arguing with Charlie the Chinese guide over who did what where during the wartime Japanese occupation.

Boyhood is revealed as a happy hiatus between revolutions before the family is broken up, a time of burgeoning wealth and rollicking wartime adventures. It was a privileged interlude of blithe ignorance of the Holocaust for which Harry has paid ever since, as a generous giver to Jewish and other charities.

And as always with Harry, it's a succession of buildings, some demolished, some crumbling, and

some not too different from when he left for Australia aged 14 in 1949. "Here I am, little Harry, sitting down with my father, counting the money," he says, reminiscing on a nightly ritual as he obliges Orna by posing for a photograph in what was the den of the former family home. The money came in "big sacks" from his entrepreneurial father's property and trading businesses all over town, he recalls.

The home, which coincidentally now houses a property management company, is an elegant three-storey residence of dark wood paneling, cast-iron banisters and tasteful floor mosaics. "We did those," says Harry, proudly fondling the patterned handrail and stroking the mosaic with his foot. In the attic where Harry played billiards there was a false wall for hiding gold bars. He can't find it now. Billiards is still his favorite thing to do. "I think it's nostalgia, as much as anything else," says Sharon, who is raising three school-age children in Sydney's eastern suburbs. In the past she and Orna have occasionally worked in the family business, but neither of them see it as a career.

There's the art-deco synagogue largely financed by Mr. Triguboff senior, crumbling and neglected but at least no longer a Cantonese restaurant as it was when Harry last saw it seven years ago. The cinema is still there, now showing a Hong Kong kick flick, and so is Kiessling's coffee shop, where Harry and his friends bought ice cream.

Down the road is a former hotel

where Harry recalls his father, the owner, arguing with the managers about renting the rooms out by the hour. Did his father think it a good thing or a bad thing? "Good or bad, I don't know, but the main thing was that he should get the money."

Once there was a plot to kidnap young Harry. The perpetrators who turned out to be schoolmates of his older brother Joe, apologised. In the former Victoria Park, Harry used to sit on the cannons and chat up the Russian ladies who walked by. In the grounds was the Gordon Hall where the treaty of Tianjin (1858) opened the strategic port to foreign trade and legalized the sale of opium, much to modern China's mortification. Harry reckons "the first thing the Communists did was pull down the hall and put up a big office block". The block is now the mayor's office, and the remaining land has been renamed City Party Committee Park.

He recalls catching the train to the seaside resort of Beidaihe for the summer. "Three months without electricity!" exclaims Orna. The rickshaw drivers made the journey on foot, anxious not to miss the summer business. During the war, according

to Harry, the Japanese-manned locomotives targeted by prowling American bombers would disengage from the carriages to avoid them, then return to collect the stranded passengers when the danger had passed. For parties, the best Russian chefs were sent for from Harbin in the north, bringing the news of the 1946-49 civil war as they crossed the frontline between Mao's Communists and Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists.

The tales flow freely enough but Triguboff's feelings on revisiting the lost world of childhood are largely hidden. You get the sense that he doesn't want to linger, especially at the shabby third-storey walk-up flat, one of the family's earlier homes in Tianjin, before most of the money was made.

"Dad, can we go upstairs?" says Orna, calling her father back as he turns away from the dark entrance in search of the next landmark. Later, he answers that the tour "reminds me of my family and friends and all that".

In 1949, knowing their idyll was at an end with the Communist victory, his parents dispatched Harry and 21-year-old brother Joe to Sydney, where they went to the prestigious Presbyterian

Scots College at Bellevue Hill because his brother told the principal that the then Bank of NSW (now Westpac) would be obliged.

His parents settled in Israel, where it has been reported that his widowed father died alone, unable to emigrate because Australia regarded him as a war criminal for trading with the Japanese. Harry definitely doesn't want to talk about this part of the story. A little weary over lunch after the tour, he waves it away with his hand. After China, where he also planned to visit Beijing and his birthplace Dalian, he was heading for Israel, then to England, where he studied as a textile engineer in the 1950s.

He declares himself "proud" that many of the old buildings of Tianjin remain despite the breakneck development evident everywhere. Charlie the guide tells him that the house of Herbert Hoover, the 31st US president who had been a mining engineer in Tianjin, was leveled just last year. There's a sharp intake of breath from Sharon but Harry is unmoved. "I never knew that. But our house was better than his. His is gone, but ours still stands."

**(From The Australian)**



Harry Triguboff, with daughters Orna (left) and Sharon (right) revisiting Tianjin

# The Jewish Community of Japan

By Steven L. Herman

In the half-century since it was founded, the Jewish Community Center of Japan has always prided itself on being able to accommodate any request for a minyan, even at short notice. Community members say that many visiting Jews, who may not be religiously observant at home, suddenly seem to yearn for a connection with their brethren in an exotic land. The actor Edward G. Robinson once called the center saying, "I need a minyan," recalls Bernard Valier, who spent 17 years in Japan starting in 1953. The small but diverse congregation that makes up the center's community was able to give Robinson – born Emmanuel Goldenberg – his minyan, as it did for other visiting notables on short notice, says Valier, who now lives in London.

Flexibility and tolerance has been a theme at the center, known simply as the Jewish Community of Japan, for 50 years. "We do not describe ourselves as Conservatives or Reform or Orthodox, but simply as Jewish," says the community's president, Daniel Turk. "We have services in different formats, languages and levels of participation."

"We had to find a way to live together, pray together, and fight together," says Rabbi Marvin Tokayer of New York, who was the popular spiritual leader of the community for 10 years.

The first known minyan in Japan took place in 1889 and the first synagogue was established in the 1890s in Nagasaki. Prior to World War II, the majority of Jews in Japan lived in Kobe and Yokohama. The Jewish cemetery in Yokohama has tombstones dating back to 1869. The Jewish Community of Japan in Tokyo

was established on March 21, 1953, founded by merchant Jews primarily from the Chinese cities of Harbin and Shanghai. "The criteria to be a member was to be able to speak Russian, play poker and drink vodka," remembers a former community president Ernie Salomon, a Tokyo resident since 1950. Shortly after its inception, the community center was raided by police during a "Monte Carlo Night." Police believed that the Jews were reopening an illegal casino, which had been shuttered not long before in another part of the neighborhood. Two board members were among those arrested.



Prince Mikasa, right, Brother of then-Emperor Hirohito, attends a seder at the Jewish Community Japan in 1956

The founder of Tokyo's organized Jewish community was a Russian textile businessman, Anatole Ponve, who established the Kobe synagogue in 1937. During the early 1940s, Ponve was among those who mobilized a massive effort to take care of Jewish refugees from Europe. After the war, Ponve, the community's first president, personally guaranteed a loan from Chase Manhattan Bank for the purchase of the land for the community center from a Japanese family in the upscale Hiroo District. The Jewish Community of Japan,

which serves 150 families, is foremost a religious institution with a synagogue known as Beth David, named for the father of one of the community's early leaders and benefactors, Shoul Eisenberg, who later became a leading industrialist in Israel. In the early years, the dining room at the center was not kosher – beef stroganoff was a favorite dish – but that changed when a new rabbi threatened to quit if the kitchen was not made kosher. In recent decades, the center's kitchen has been under rabbinical supervision. Founding members, while very religiously observant, were enthusiastic about funding their fledgling community. At the initial fund-raiser in 1953, when the community ran out of items to auction, an empty box was successfully put up for bid.

That charitable spirit was evident earlier this month [November 1, 2003] at the community center's 50th anniversary gala celebration. A bottle of "slightly used" mineral water was auctioned off for about \$140 and then graciously donated back to the synagogue. The winner of a \$2,200 cash lottery also donated the money back to the community. The money raised by the gala held at the Tokyo American Club, likely will mean the community center will be in the black for the first time in decades. "Our endowment has diminished significantly over the years," Turk says. "Recently, we have been focusing considerable attention and effort trying to manage our revenue and expenses to a point where our normal operations are self-sufficient."

The celebration drew about 200 people, including current or former

community members from across Japan, Europe and North America. A number of Japanese guests also attended.

The Jewish Community of Japan actually has a number of Japanese members, including spouses of Jewish members, some of whom have converted to Judaism. There is also a small number of Japanese who have converted for reasons unrelated to marriage. Japan has never had a significant indigenous Jewish population, and there is little history of note between Japan and the Jewish people. "It is probably fair to say that even educated people have only a fragmentary and superficial knowledge of the Jewish people," Turk says.

That lack of familiarity was evident during a comedy routine at the gala evening, which featured a "Jewish acolyte" trekking to the top of a mountain to seek enlightenment from the "Buddhist monk." A Japanese aerospace business executive, befuddled by the skit, turned to his Jewish host after watching the faux monk and asked seriously, "Is that Jesus Christ?"

The lack of encounters between Jews

and Japanese has also meant that there has been little of the hostility experienced by Jews in many other lands. During World War II, the Japanese were encouraged by their Nazi allies to exterminate the Jews under their control, especially those in Shanghai – but the Japanese had no inclination to comply.

"In fact, Jews who made it to Japan were saved as a result," Turk says. Jews in Japan are more likely to experience philo-Semitism, with magazine articles expressing admiration for Jewish talent, intelligence and success.

Prince Mikasa, the youngest brother of the late Emperor Hirohito, is among the notable friends of the Jews in Japan. "He reads Hebrew well, and in his younger days, not infrequently visited our center, such as to participate in the Passover Seder," Turk says. A number of other Japanese members also speak fluent Hebrew and are synagogue regulars. The current rabbi, Henri Noach, is still learning Japanese, but he is fluent in French, Hebrew and English – which helps him serve the center's families, who are diverse in nationalities and native languages. "The fact that one

rabbi has to serve the needs of people who are so different makes the job challenging and exhilarating," Noach says.

Noach, a Conservative rabbi, is also charged with determining the suitability of conversion candidates. He says Japanese "have less preconceptions about Judaism, because it is not part of their historical and cultural orbit. In this sense, they may be less resistant to absorbing core concepts of Judaism."

Japanese conversion candidates appear to want to commit themselves to an active

Jewish life for the sake of their spouses and are prepared to raise their children as Jews, Noach says, noting that those with Israeli spouses are "highly motivated," with many planning to move to Israel. Noach says he is frequently asked what people thought when he told them he was moving from Belgium to Japan to take over the pulpit in Tokyo. "My family thought that I was mishugunah," Noach says. "My friends and colleagues, however, generally thought it was cool. Maybe they are both right."

## HK & Shanghai Hotels Buys Bund Site For US\$109 Mln

Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels Ltd., which manages The Peninsula hotels in Asia and the U.S., said Friday it has entered into an agreement with Shanghai's real-estate authority to buy a plot of land in the city's Bund waterfront district for US\$109 million. The site will be used to build a Peninsula hotel and an apartment hotel

as well as a shopping arcade. The land is close to the old British Consulate in the Waitanyuan area of Shanghai's Huang Pu district. The total cost of the project is US\$361 million, and will be funded through commercial borrowing and internal resources. The project is being developed by The Peninsula Shanghai Waitan

Hotel Co., a unit of The Peninsula Shanghai Ltd., a joint venture between Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels Ltd. and SPG Hotel Ltd., a property developer. Hongkong & Shanghai Hotels has been absent from Shanghai for around half a century.

(From the Dow Jones Newswires)

# Tientsin - 1925

By Israel Kohen

Upon my return from Harbin I passed through Mukden again, early one morning. It was New Year's Day, and snow was falling heavily. As I sat in the railway restaurant eating porridge – proof of the penetration of English habits – I caught a glimpse through the window of another symbol of English culture: a glossy silk hat on the head of a high Japanese official who was driving in a closed carriage to offer congratulations to the Governor. My astonishment at the strange spectacle was cut short by the arrival of Mr. Herskowitz and his wife with my hat and coat and I reluctantly parted with the warm Siberian apparel I had worn for the past week. Presently I was in the train once more, traveling in the direction of Tientsin. My compartment was poorly heated, and as the dining car was small and draughty and most of its Chinese occupants alternatively coughed and spat, I chose the lesser of two evils by remaining in my seat. Fortunately the sleeping berth at night was broad and cosy, but I had to leave it betimes as the train thundered into Tientsin station the following morning at half-past six, when it was still dark. I was arranging with a porter for the transference of my luggage to a hotel when I was suddenly greeted by name. I had written to a local Jewish resident of my coming, but I did not expect anybody to meet me at that unearthly hour. Yet here were four Jews, strangers yet friends, who had turned out in the cold and darkness to offer me a fraternal welcome. I was touched by their kindness, and as we drove to the Astor House Hotel they told me that arrangements had been made for me to address a public meeting in the afternoon. One spoke English like an Englishman; the others had come from Russia. "But is there a Jewish community here?" I asked in surprise.

"There are almost enough Jews here for two communities," said one, "an English and a Russian congregation. There are probably three hundred Jewish souls here altogether, and we are raising a fund to build a synagogue."

At the hotel I was shown the North China Star with a quarter-page advertisement announcing that I would speak at four o'clock in the Gordon Memorial Hall, so I felt assured; and as I had nothing else to do I decided to call upon the British Consul-General and invite him to the meeting, and then take a view of the city. The Consul-General, Mr. Kerr, was officially not at home, for it was Sunday, but he readily received me, asked me about my experiences and promised to come.

Tientsin is a large and up-to-date city, with broad thoroughfares, electric tramcars, modern houses, big public buildings and at least one fashionable European hotel – in short, a smaller edition of Shanghai. It is almost equally cosmopolitan, for it has nine foreign Settlements, whose areas are carefully delimited on the local map, though the Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian Settlements are now all designated with the prefix "ex". The creation during the last fifty years of these foreign Settlements, of which the British, covering 900 acres, is the largest, has provided a powerful impetus to the economic development of Tientsin, which is now the largest port in North China, though its harbor is ice-locked in the winter. The streets in the various concessions bear names in the respective languages and are reminiscent of the particular country to whose jurisdiction they belong. Thus, the principal thoroughfare in the British Settlement is Victoria Road, whilst conspicuous in the American area is Woodrow Wilson Street. The architecture of the residential

neighborhood, however, presents little diversity, most of the houses being of the large detached or semi-detached villa type, surrounded by gardens. As for the commercial quarters, they might be in any Western city but of the occasional Chinese signs on the shop fronts or the rickshaws driven past by the Celestial coolies.

I was accompanied on my round of sightseeing by Mr. Max Dietrich, one of the gentlemen who met me in the morning. Despite his German name he had never been in Germany or Austria in all his life, nor could he speak more than a word or two of German. He was a curious instance of the Jew without a fatherland. He was born in Constantinople of a father born in Galicia, but he spent his childhood in Egypt and afterwards went out to China, where he made his home. At the outbreak of war he was technically an Austrian subject, but as he spoke only English, was employed by an English firm, and had always been regarded as English, he enjoyed the protection of the British Consul. After the collapse of Austria and the embodiment of Galicia in the new Polish State, it was suggested to him that he could apply for recognition as a Polish subject and thus shake off the odium attaching to an ex-enemy subject.

"But I have read too much of the Jews in Poland who have been killed by their fanatical fellow-citizens," said Mr. Dietrich, "to be disposed to present Poland with another citizen, even though I should never come within reach of the pogrom-makers. I want to become either a Jew or an Englishman."

"But a Jew you are," I rejoined.

"I mean a Jew politically and nationally, with a Jewish passport. Isn't that possible?"

"Not yet," I replied, "though the Palestinian passport is in Hebrew as well

as in English and Arabic. But to acquire Palestinian nationality you must qualify by residence in the country."

"I'm afraid that isn't possible for me at present," he replied, "so I must try and get transferred to Hongkong, so as to qualify there for British papers."

On entering the native quarter we came into contact with a wedding procession. It consisted of about three dozen people, all gaudily arrayed in grotesque red costumes and shouting lustily, carrying picturesque banners inscribed with joyous greetings, and headed by a band which produced the most terrifying jangling din, punctuated by comical shrieks. In the middle was borne on the shoulders of hefty coolies an ornate palanquin, also painted red, in which the bride sat carefully concealed behind curtains; whilst the bridegroom was calmly awaiting his lady-love at the scene of the nuptial ceremony. Occasionally the procession got dispersed in the traffic, and this only added to the discord. The shops and stores were all open; the shopmen, with fingers interlaced on their breast, bade you a smiling welcome at every turn. We inspected some carpets and goat-skin rugs, which are manufactured here in great quantities and sold very cheaply, and after concluding some purchases we returned to the hotel.

We arrived in time to see a serenade that was being given at the entrance to the head of a prominent American firm which was a big employer of native labor; he was a guest at the hotel and was leaving later in the day. The serenaders, a group of military trumpeters and drummers, who wore woollen gloves against the cold, went through their musical exercises with deadly earnestness. They had with them a sort of portable cabinet, carried on two men's shoulders, from which the leader produced an elaborate scroll, doubtless inscribed with the most fervent wishes in the most florid terms, and took it into the hotel for presentation to the parting guest.

The Gordon Hall, in which my meeting took place, is an imposing stone edifice, adorned with turrets, in the British Settlement, which was built as a

memorial to General Gordon and offered a safe asylum to hundreds of foreigners during the Boxer Riots in 1900. A great Union Jack was stretched across the wall at the upper end of the room, and two rows of children – boys and girls – wearing the Zionist colors and holding little Zionist flags, were drawn up at the opposite end, ready to sing Hatikvah under the direction of a teacher. The audience consisted mostly of Russian Jews, who had migrated across Siberia during the war, and were apparently in easy circumstances, whilst the rest comprised Bagdadi and American Jews and a few Christians. After the Hebrew anthem had been tunefully rendered by the children, I was introduced in English by Mr. Dietrich and in Russian by Mr. Gershevich, and then I delivered my address, partly in English and partly in German. A supplementary speech was given by a gentleman in Russian, and the British Consul-General supported my appeal and proposed a vote of thanks for my address. These polyglot proceedings concluded with the announcement of the subscription list, the contribution of Mr. Kerr being greeted with the greatest applause.

Upon returning to the hotel for tea I found that a thé dansant was in full swing in the large dining-room, and I felt transported for the moment to some hotel in the Strand. There were many Jewish guests present whom I had no seen at the meeting, but I considerably refrained from spoiling their pleasure by soliciting donations. I could not help reflecting, however, how easily Jews could adapt themselves to any strange environment, for I was told that some of them had arrived from Siberia only a couple of months ago, and here they were jazzing away as though without a care in the world. In the evening I had dinner at the house of a Russian Jew, one of the many wholesale furriers in the city, and the meal with its vodka, herring hors d'oeuvre, and beetroot soup, was entirely faithful to the Russo-Jewish tradition.

The following morning I was taken by a friend to see another Russian Jew who had attended my meeting, but who, though wealthy, had contributed nothing.

We found him with some men in his office, which was filled with the smoke of Russian cigarettes. I was welcomed quite cordially and offered a cigarette, but this was the only gift that I received, for its wealthy donor at once proclaimed himself a Bundist and said that, as such, he could not "on principle" subscribe to the Zionist cause.

"Do you attend synagogue?" I asked.

"Sometimes," he replied.

"And don't you pray there for the restoration of Zion?" I continued.

"Not particularly," he said. "Zion is not likely to be restored through my prayers."

"Quite true," I rejoined, "nor through your financial support either."

One of his friends maintained that it was much more important to send money for the relief of sufferers of the pogroms in the Ukraine, but when I asked him how much he had sent, he pleaded the difficulty of ensuring that the money would reach its destination. Another man indulged in a violent denunciation of the Zionist Commission in Palestine.

"They are suppressing the Jewish language." He exclaimed excitedly.

"Nonsense," I retorted, "they are doing all they can to foster Hebrew as the national tongue."

"I don't mean that," he replied, waving his hands. "That's a reactionary tongue – the tongue of priests and theologians. I mean Yiddish – the only true Jewish Volkssprache, and that is suppressed and prohibited in Palestine."

"You are utterly mistaken," I said; "there is complete liberty of language, though Hebrew and not Yiddish is an official language."

"Aha! There it is!" he cried, banging a desk. "Yiddish, the language of the people, is oppressed by the reactionary bourgeoisie in Palestine. No; I have lived for Yiddish and I shall die for it!"

"But not in China," I calmly observed.

The temperature of the room had considerably risen during the last few moments, and as my quest was obviously doomed, my companion and I, after a mutual exchange of good wishes, withdrew I time to enable me to catch the afternoon train to Peking.

# "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.

# IN MEMORIAM

## **Eric Gabriel**

We walked the same path. We faced similar challenges and aspired to identical goals. Only Eric went ahead. He led the way. He was my senior.

Eric Gabriel, the only boy in a beautiful family that had four girls, grew up in Shanghai where his first love became the Betar, and the second love the Jewish Volunteer Corps. He met his third and everlasting love, his wife Reva, during his early twenties.

Blessed with two girls of their own, they moved to Hongkong where Eric joined the famous Eisenberg Group of Companies, becoming its manager, first in Hongkong and later in Manila. Eric's success derived from his extraordinary talent at public relations. He was always like, always popular, and always surrounded with friends. Where Eisenberg's millions failed to open doors, Eric's charm, enthusiasm and charisma easily smoothed the way to prime ministers, generals and dictators alike.

His later years were spent here in San Diego in quiet and peaceful retirement. But even during these final years of Eric's turbulent life he devoted his energy and attention towards our other mutual cause – the welfare of our landsmen from China through its association, Igud Yotzei Sin. Here again, Eric wrote articles in the Association's Bulletin, contributed funds, and provided material and photos for their archives.

Even now, after Eric's demise, there remains a multitude of unpublished historical items of interest that are in his family's possession. These will one day find their way to the historical treasures of the Igud and possibly also to the Jewish Research Center in Harbin, China.

When a man lives to the age of ninety and leaves a trail of devoted

contributions to his family and friends, such a man's passing need not stimulate mourning. Rather, the good life that just ended needs to be celebrated. Eric's life was a blessing to all who knew him. His achievements were a living memorial for all of us to remember and to cherish.

Rest in peace, my friend. Zichrona l'vracha.

Yana Liberman

## **Herman Sondov**

Herman Sondov, formerly of New York City and a resident of Fort Lauderdale, Florida, passed away on January 27,



Eric Gabriel, center. Reva and Grandfather. Dana at right. Son-in Law Daniel and daughter, Laura at left.

2005. He was 97 years old and was very active until the last three months of his life. He enjoyed his lifestyle and lived life to the fullest. Herman was born in Hamburg, Germany on January 19, 1908 and migrated to the US through Russia and China where he spent many years. He was married to the late Rhea Raiken and they were longtime members of The American Far Eastern Society. He was the President/CEO of Speciality Electronics Corp. and Republic Mobile Home Corp. Until his death he was the current President of Sondov International Corp. Herman was well respected in the business community and also by

his family and friends. Those left to cherish his memory are his daughter Rina Delizza and son, Steven Sondov. He had one granddaughter, Brett Leslie Deutscher. He will be greatly missed by all.

## **Lola Ginzburg**

Our dearly beloved Lola Ginzburg died peacefully on February 3, 2005 at the age of 96. She is mourned by her family: daughter and son-in-law Inna and Morrie Mink, MD; grandchildren, Barry, Wendy, Stephanie, Lori and Gary; great-grandchildren, Aaron, David, Emma,

Tonya, Ilana and Aliya. Her loving family will remember her stunning beauty and grace. She always enjoyed sharing Shabbat with her family and will be especially missed Friday nights and holiday dinners. She was born in Siberia in 1908. She also resided in Shanghai, China, Sidney, Australia and Corte Madera, CA. For the past eight years after the death of her husband Sheile Ginzburg, Lola has lived at Drake Terrace in San Rafael.

The family is grateful for the outstanding care and love provided by the wonderful staff, especially her caregivers Elsa Guzman and Veronica Gonzales. Funeral services were held on Sunday, February 6, at Mot. Tamalpais Cemetery, 2500 Fifth Ave. San Rafael, CA. Donations in memory of Lola may be made to Herman Uhley Research Fund, Mt. Zion Health Fund, 3330 Geary Blvd., SF 94118.

## **Rene Rivkin**

May 6, 2005: For a man who once had everything, Rene Rivkin died with virtually nothing. No fortune, no wife, no religious faith, no will to live, no peace

of mind. That, at least, is how it seemed. But Rivkin, 60, had one thing money can't buy – the deep and abiding love of family and friends. The difficult part for them to accept must be that it wasn't enough to stop him taking his own life last weekend in the Sydney apartment where he had lived with his elderly mother since his recent divorce. Their depth of feeling was almost palpable at a somber funeral service on Friday for the once high-flying stockbroker, whose life slowly crumbled after his 2003 conviction and jailing for insider trading. His wife of 32 years, Gayle, and their five children spoke of a generous, fun-loving, larger-than-life "hero" whose final days were overshadowed by the black dog of depression.

The several hundred mourners included radio host Alan Jones, businessman Nick Whitlam, fashion designer Peter Morissey and model Bessie Bardot. The funeral also brought out two figures rarely seen publicly in recent times, former Labor senator Graham Richardson and Qantas director Trevor Kennedy, the subject of corporate probes into allegations that they and Rivkin secretly held shares through Swiss bank accounts in the burned-down printing company Offset Alpine.

After Rivkin's coffin was piped into Sydney's Eastern Suburbs Crematorium to the strains of Amazing Grace, his eldest son Damien, 31, told mourners: "My father was never happier than when giving share advice. His eyes would light up, not only because he got it right, but because he was helping people to make money. He was a big man in every way, with a vast intellect, a massive heart and great passion. I would have done anything to ease his pain." Rivkin's youngest child and only daughter Tara, 19, said: "No matter how bad he felt, he always made us feel how much he loved us. I spent most of my life idolizing him. He constantly told me how he wanted his suffering to end. I like to think of his as asleep."

### **Ida Kopelevich**

Ida Kopolovich (nee Kopelman) passed away on December 15, 2004 in Tel Aviv.

She was 92.

Ida was born in Ulan-Udeh, Siberia, in 1913 and migrated to Shanghai in 1927 with her parents, Dvora and Nahum Kopelman, and brother, Itzhak. There she married Alexander (Shura) Kopolovich. They came to Israel with the wave of the Chinese aliya in 1949 and settled in kibbutz Sdot Yam. Later, the Kopolovich family moved to Haifa where Shura worked at the port. He was also a devoted member of Igud Yotzei Sin – till his death in 1986.

Ida and Shura Kopolovich will be remembered as a highly cultured, modest and amicable couple. Ida is survived by daughter Rivka Hon and Eli Kamah, and families. May their memory be blessed.

### **Abraham Zinman**

#### **In Memory of my Father**

The poetess Zelda wrote: "Each man was given a name..." Indeed, each man has a name – given him by God, by father and mother, by his love, and by his life and death.

His parents named him Avraham. My mother, his love, called him Abram. And his life and death knew him as "A Patriarch", "a proud Jew", and "a fearless man with a generous heart."

As for me, I called him simply, "dad", "father".

He was born in China and was elected as secretary of the Dairen Jewish community. As a true Zionist, in 1951 he made aliya to Eretz Israel and helped to transfer the Torah scrolls from the Dairen Synagogue to Israel. As his ancient forefather, so did he leave his native land to migrate to the Promised Land, never to look behind, never to stop marveling at the miracle of the renovation of the Jewish nation. He loved the Land of Israel with all his heart. Her sorrow was his, and his was her joy, and called the new settlers: "Maccabees of our time", not closing his eyes to our errors and omissions.

He was a man of inflexible principles and a faith in eternal Truth. In the most difficult moments of his life he never lost hope, repeating the words of Galileo: "And yet, she still revolves!" His

motto was: "Don't give up!", "Always forward!", "Believe in your Truth!" He loved history and his last days he spent reading Churchill.

The trait that distinguished him most was his generosity. Nobody ever heard him say: "I don't have!" His purse was always open for the needy. He gave, but he gave quietly, modestly, secretly. How proud he was when on his last "Simhat Torah" he was called to the rostrum as a "Hatan Torah" to read the final "passuk" of the Torah. He did not know that these were also the last days of his life.

How deeply he loved "Kabbalat Shabbat!", and the Shabbat candles, gently shedding their light on to the festive table. He and mother gave my children a pair of silver candlesticks for their wedding, so that they, too, could light the Shabbat candles and remember their grandparents.

He loved to sing. He loved the Israeli songs and the Russian romances. He sang to the last days of his life. "Liubochka," he said to mother, "Liubochka, what a miracle! I still sing!..." And he sang – till his strength left him and the coach of life stopped.

Papa! I miss you so much! It's spring again. The orange groves are in bloom again, spreading their sweet scent over the hills. And you are not with us. Tall, and proud, and noble. You have returned to your Creator. May your memory be blessed.

Your daughter, Rivka Kotik. In the name of the loving families Zinman, Slutzker and Kotik.

### **Mark Bent**

Mark Bent, formerly of Harbin, passed away on January 30 in Biamont, California at 85.

Mark was born on September 20, 1920 in Irkutsk, Siberia, and belonged to a well known family of the Harbin wholesale textile dealers, owners of a large textile firm Arkadi Bent & Brothers, on Kitaiskaya corner Konnaya Street. He was buried on February 2 in Cathedral City, Palm Springs, California. May his memory be blessed.

# Eulogy for Mother

Irene Rozanski



Just after midnight on Saturday, April 2nd, I held my mother's hand as she took her last breaths and slipped away peacefully as she so longed for.

Born in Vladivostok, Russia in 1920, Irene was a very strong, courageous woman who had been through many trying times in her life. As a young girl in China, she lost her father at a very early age, which was very difficult for her as they had a very close bond. She was schooled in a Catholic convent in China and frequently spoke of her experience there. She was a prankster, a ball player, and from what we heard a popular teenager. She has maintained loyal and meaningful friendships with several of her schoolmates throughout her life. Thank you to each one of you for being here today.

She spoke many languages – Russian, French, German, Hebrew and even Chinese! While in China she met and married Paul Hein at the age of 25 and gave birth to two beautiful girls – Louise and Barbara. In 1948 they had to leave China as it was becoming a communist country and Israel became their new home. In their new land our mother along with her sister-in-law Rosie, opened a beauty shop. Mother was the hairdresser and Rosie the manicurist. She told us stories without nicking a few ears while cutting hair.

In 1956 they ventured to America and made their home in Los Angeles. Mother was hired by Aetna Insurance Co. in the claims department and quickly advanced to Supervisor of that department where she worked for many years. In late 1957 life would change for Mother when our father Paul became ill. About the same time, our parents discovered that a

third child was on the way and that was me. In May of 1958 both sadness and joy arrived simultaneously with the birth of a daughter and the loss of her husband three days later.

Although suffering the devastating loss of her husband, she knew she had to continue as she now had three mouths to feed. She called for her mother, who was living in Canada, to come and help her through these difficult times. The next ten years would be difficult ones for Mother as she concentrated on providing for her family and not having the opportunity to have much of a social life.

In the mid-60s she was reacquainted with a family friend, Jerry Rozanski, who had lost his wife as well. The two developed a love for each other and married in August 1968. Life was good for our Mother again. She and Jerry loved to travel and made several trips abroad. They were the first couple on the dance floor at any party. They loved entertaining whether at home or in a restaurant and had a large circle of friends, most of whom they had known from China many years before. Irene was known as "Ira" to her Chinese gang. Over the next 24 years their marriage was a happy one. In her mid-fifties Mother was able to retire and enjoy life with Jerry. Her eldest daughter Louise had become a very successful escrow officer. She worked her way up to becoming president of an escrow company. Mother was very proud of Louise's hard work. She had three wonderful children – Peter, Paul and Laura (not Mary). Irene was actively involved with her grandchildren's lives and was very proud of them. Her middle daughter Barbara had become a successful businesswoman

in the music and entertainment industry. Her youngest daughter, that's me, became a registered nurse and ventured to Las Vegas to make her home and in 1997 married Ernest Franz.

Mother's marriage to Jerry also brought her a son – Dorik and his lovely wife Tamara and their three children – Helen, Rebecca and Mark. Mother developed a very close bond with all of them that continued until her death. She considered them her family.

In 1992 life would change again for Mother. Jerry's health declined and when he passed away it left her a widow once again. Her eldest daughter Louise was able to move in and they became constant companions. Although they loved each other dearly, they were frequently at odds with each other probably because they were very much alike.

In the early 90s Mother was diagnosed with emphysema, suffering the devastating effects of years of cigarette smoking. At first her limitations were minimal but over time the disease progressed to the point where she was no longer able to enjoy activities such as visiting with friends, traveling and entertaining, and her most favorite hobby – her bi-weekly Mahjong games.

With the dawn of the new millennium, sadness would descend upon our family again. Our sister Louise passed away suddenly. This came as a great shock to all of us but Mother never quite got over losing her child. Mother had a younger brother Harry who lived with his family in Montreal, Canada. She maintained a close relationship with her brother over the

years, with frequent visits. Sadly, their last visit was early last summer as Harry's health had declined as well. This was very troubling to Mother. With the progression of her condition she soon became unable to do many of the daily routines she had been used to and now needed continuous assistance. We were blessed with two wonderful women – Nora and Sosanna who cared for our mother as if she were their own. They tended to her every need, and for that we will be forever grateful. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Over the last few months our mother's hospice nurse Sharon became a close confidante and friend. We thank you as well for your kindness and compassion.

My sister Barbara became very involved in Mother's care and was always there to take care of all the logistics, groceries, meds, doctors' visits, etc. I cannot say enough to my sister for the love and tender care

you have given Mother as I was too far away to do the daily routines. Over the last few years my visits became more frequent and Mother and I spend a lot of time talking, reminiscing and loving each other. I have many memories of my mother. One of her most frequent comments to all of us was to take a sweater. Mother became a very good cook in her later years and will always be remembered for her famous chopped liver and Bunat cakes, and I am sure many of you have sampled her Russian hot mustard. She also made her own lox and taught me to do so as well.

In recent years our family expanded and Irene became a great-grandmother to nine children – James, Heather, Devin, Jessica, Ashley, Alec, Lance, Joshua and Max – whom she loved dearly and was very proud of. I have always referred to Mother as "Ma" rather than Mom which she really didn't like. Recently Barbie began

calling her Ma as well. Just a week before her death, while on the phone with Barbie, she told her that if she was going to call her Ma, then she in turn would call Barbie "Da" for daughter. This made everyone laugh. What we valued most about Mother was her sense of humor even to the end and her bravery knowing she didn't have long to live. Irene was a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister, aunt, cousin and friend. She was the favorite mother-in-law to my husband Ernie.

In life we loved you dearly, in death we do the same. It broke our hearts to lose you, you did not go alone. For part of us went with you the day God called you home. You left us peaceful memories, your love is still our guide and though we cannot see you, you are always at our side. Our family chain is broken and nothing seems the same, but as God calls us one by one the chain will link again.

We love you Ma!!

## ***Our Grandma Rosetta - a flower in full bloom***

I want to describe you and say a few words about you... and I don't know where to begin...

You married so young. Your husband was a wonderful man, and together you have created a family in such turbulent times. You have brought into the world two children and raised them in warmth and love. From your early childhood you suffered – from cold and hunger and fear. But you have survived. Yes, you have survived! It was yet in your early days that you showed what a fighter and a proud, independent soul you were. You proved to the world around you that you are capable of "doing it" all on your own, and now I know from whom have I inherited this spirit of yours.

You have survived hatred. You have survived racial malice. You are our history. You are mother of all of us. Without you we would not have been here. I remember how in my childhood you taught me manners and civil ways, how you cooked for us the most delicious



Rosetta Rabinovitch

of food in the world. I'll never forget it. Nor will I forget how you spoiled us with your luxurious treats, the finest you could buy or make. I'll never forget the stories you have told us, and how I wondered at the things you could do, at the hardships you have survived, and yet remain so ever young.

You always amazed us. You always charmed us – to your very last minute. Sometimes you were so funny, and always so wise. How can one raise so many children? You were mother to two, grandmother to five and great grandmother to 11! You lived 95 years. Do you understand what it means? It means that God loved you and gave you

so long a life. So long, and so powerful! He wanted you to continue and carry your tradition for the generations to come. Neither I nor my children and theirs will ever forget who Rosetta Rabinowitz had been!

Somewhere within me I knew that you knew that the time has come, and that you wanted to go. You told us so many times, and it always hurt us to hear you say so. And we always hoped that you would still go on – be it for a little while more, for a wee bit more... But that last "more" had been exhausted, too. God wanted you back. You passed away on the eve of Shabbat. They say that this is given only to the righteous. And righteous you were.

One more word, the most important of all: "תודה!" – "Thank you! Thank you for everything!" I whispered it to you when I visited you last in the hospital, and I think you heard me, because your hand moved in mine. Thank you that you were and who you were... and are... and will always remain.

Your granddaughter, Keren

# From The Album of The Past



**Chief Chaplain Richlof of the American Army in Tientsin at the Hanukka festival in the Synagogue. December 1945**

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

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13 Gruzenberg Street  
P.O Box 29786, Tel Aviv, 61297, Israel  
Phone: (03) 5171997, Fax: (03) 5161631.  
e-mail: igud-sin@barak-online.net

Editor-in-chief: **T.Kaufman**  
Editorial board: **Sas Jacoby,**  
**Teddy Kaufman, Emmanuel Pratt,**  
**Rebecca Toueg, Joe Levoff**  
Editor New Israel Messenger: **S. Jacoby**  
Editor, Chusan Road: **K. Maimann**  
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"The aim of the Association is to organize the former residents from the Far East for the Purpose of mutual assistance and cooperation."  
(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.