

The Harbin Jewish Community and the Regional Conflicts of Northeast China, 1903-1963

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Abstract

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This study examines the historical development of the Harbin Jewish community in Northeast China from its beginning in the early 1900s to its end in the 1960s. Scholars seldom pay enough attention to the Harbin Jewish community, the largest and most influential Jewish community in Asia. This study aims to fill this significant geopolitical gap of the history of Jews in the East.

I develop two major narrative strategies in locating the Harbin Jewish Community in its historical map: (1) chronologically intertwining the development of the Harbin Jewish community within the local history of Harbin, by examining the relations between the Harbin Jewish community and its changing governors, namely, the Russian, Chinese, and Japanese policies towards the Jews; (2) investigating in parallel the contacts between the Harbin Jewish community with its contemporary Jewish communities in Shanghai, Europe and the United States, especially during the globally influential World War I and World War II period.

This study challenges the argument that the Chinese and the Jews did not cross paths in these important historical events mentioned above. By tracing the history of the Harbin Jewish community, this study demonstrates that Jewish experience in China must be perceived as a whole and the survival of the Jewish refugees in Shanghai during the Holocaust in WWII should be put into its historical context rather than a single historical accident. The Harbin Jewish community thereby has an enduring legacy in the reconstruction of postmodern historiography and international relationships.

To my parents

To my teacher

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Chapter I: Introduction

The modern era full of conflicts ended with the two World Wars in the middle of the 20th century. In the case of the Harbin Jewish community in Northeast China (an area traditionally known as Manchuria), conflicts and wars run through all its existence from 1903 to 1963: first, the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05; and then, the First World War (WWI); the Sino-Soviet Conflict of 1929; Japanese aggression of Manchuria in 1931; finally, the Second World War (WWII). The history of the Harbin Jewish community was affected by all these conflicts of the last century. In this case study of the Harbin Jewish community, we wish to learn from the past, prompt cross-cultural understanding, and build a better and peaceful future for all nations together.

1.1.The Significance of the Harbin Jewish Community in Jewish and Chinese History

1.1.1. The History Gap of Jews in China

When talking about Jews of China, people either think of the Kaifeng Jews in ancient time (since the Northern Song Dynasty, 960-1127) or the temporary European Jewish refugee camps in Shanghai during WWII. The Harbin Jewish community in Northeast China, a Jewish center in Asia which rose after WWI, had been overlooked. There is no monograph on the history of Harbin Jews in Western academic circles. It was generally believed that “except for some cherished memories, China left no imprint on Jewish life and the Jews left no mark on Chinese history.”¹

¹ Irene Eber, “Passage through China,” *The Jerusalem Post*, International Edition, Week ending 5 July 1986, p16, cited in Felix Patrikeeff, *Russian Politics in Exile: The Northeast Asian Balance of Power, 1924-1931* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan in association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 2002), 165, note 39.

However, the survival of more than 20,000 Jews in Shanghai during the Holocaust is not an accident. It is related to the half century of the development of the Harbin Jewish community in China. During the two World Wars period, tens of thousands of Jewish refugees passed through Northeast China on Russia's eastern border. The Jewish communities in China were all related to each other, and had a close tie with the Jewish communities in the United States. It is well known that the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) supported the Shanghai Jews in WWII, but before that, JDC had already extended its influence to Harbin in WWI (see Chapter 2).

Existing historical works have not revealed these connections between Jews in Shanghai and in Harbin, and their contacts with the world Jewry. This study argues that Jewish experience in China must be seen as a whole, and the survival of Jews in Shanghai should be put into its historical context.

1.1.2. The Harbin Jewish Community in the Geopolitics of Modern Time

The development of Jewish communities in China constitutes an indispensable part of Jewish history in modern times. At the beginning of the 20th century, Russian Jewish immigrants established the Harbin Jewish community. At its peak, the Harbin Jewish community hosted 20,000 to 30,000 Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe in the 1920s. The study of the Harbin Jewish community in China will absolutely enrich and diversify our understanding of Russian Jewish communities in the Diaspora.

On the one hand, this study endeavours to embed the Jewish experience of China into modern Jewish history. Lloyd P. Gartner concludes that there were three influential movements in twentieth-century Jewish history – Zionism, Holocaust and Migration:

Comprehending twentieth-century Jewish history requires the realization that three vast movements in one way or another engulfed almost the entire Jewish people. One is Zionism, the Jewish national movement, which led to the founding and rapid growth of the new State of Israel. Second is its antithesis, the systematic mass murder of nearly six million Jews, now called the Holocaust, during the Second World War, and the destruction of their communities.... the third great movement was literally movement and hardly claimed any ideology. It is the voluntary international migration of millions of Jews, mostly hungry and needy, to many new countries, above all the United States.²

Similar to the development of the Jewish communities in the United States, the Harbin Jewish community was the largest and most influential Russian Jewish center in China, and it shared many characteristics with other parallel Jewish communities in the West. The events of Emigration, Zionism, and Holocaust all shaped, reshaped and finally transformed the Harbin Jewish community.

On the other hand, my study is to construct the history of the Harbin Jewish community within its Chinese context. In the existing historical writings and the memoirs of Harbin Jews, the Chinese natives were invisible. Scholars pay attention to the Harbin Jewish community under the Russian domination in the 1910s and the Japanese occupation in the 1930s. However, Manchuria's history was in the first place an integral part of Chinese history, despite Russian invasion and Japanese aggression. Initially, I examine the uphill political struggles of Harbin Jews under Chinese rule in the 1920s.

From a postmodern historical perspective (cross-cultural, cross-national, and reconstruction),³ this study intertwines the development of the Harbin Jewish community within the chronological local history of Harbin in its Chinese backdrop. By embodying these general processes of Harbin Jews in specific local dynamics, it also allows Harbin Jews to speak to central historiographic concerns. In other words, divergent from the existing literature that

² Lloyd P. Gartner, *American and British Jews in the Age of the Great Migration* (Lodon; Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2009), ix.

³ See Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (Columbia University Press, 1988).

alienates Harbin Jews to its Chinese background, my historical narrative focuses the Harbin Jewish community in its dual contexts, both Jewish and Chinese.

1.1.3. On Modern Jewish and Chinese History

If we agree with the analytical political view on history that “history is the mental form in which a civilization accounts for its past,”⁴ neither modern Jewish nor Chinese history was a happy one. Both modern Jewish and Chinese politics were born and developed in the turmoil and chaos of conflicts and wars of the late modern period. Different from the West whose history continued through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, when the Chinese and the Eastern European Jews encountered modernity, they were totally cut off from traditional historical understanding and perspectives. To them, “tradition” was equated with “backwardness” and resulted in being beaten and massacred as oppressed nations. Struggling for national survival, both modern Jewish and Chinese histories were built on crisis and struggle.⁵

In Eastern European Jewish history, the Jews became a “question” when the Russian Empire extended its influence to Poland-Lithuania and inherited the largest Jewish settlements during the three partitions of Poland in the late 18th century. Jews were not allowed to move to inner Russia but were confined in the Russian western and southern borders, later known as the Pale of Settlement. After decades of reform, integration and assimilation, the majority of Jews in the Pale were still segregated from the dominant Russian society. Anti-Jewish persecution and violence were common, but the 1881 pogroms were a watershed. After the assassination of

⁴ Frank Ankersmit, “Manifesto for an analytical political history,” in *Manifestos for History*, eds. Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow (London: Routledge, 2007), 179.

⁵ See Jonathan Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917* (Cambridge England: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005).

Alexander II in 1881, not only new residential, economic and educational restrictions to the Jews were imposed by the Russian authorities, but anti-Jewish pogroms, conducted by peasants, police and ordinary civilians, also reached its peak and were out of the Russian government's control. As a response to the economic deprivation and pogrom violence, the great Jewish migration ensued.⁶ To escape pogroms, a group of Jewish immigrants sought safety in Northeast China. In this context of Jewish history, the Jews encountered the Chinese.

However, during the time, the Chinese were in trouble too. By 1900, the powers – Britain, France, Germany, Russia and Japan – had *guafen* China. The Chinese word *guafen* 瓜分 literarily means “cutting up a melon.” A German scholar traces the initial use of *guafen* in modern Chinese literature as a translation of the concept of the “Partition of Poland.”⁷ But later, China was carved up too. Being *guafen* was a key word to understand modern Chinese history. American Christian scholar, Gilbert Reid, wrote in 1921 that: “The contact of European civilization with the peoples of Asia and Africa, and the American continents, makes sad reading for the man of justice. As to the one country of China, with a long record of civilization, statecraft, philosophy, art and religion, the question arises, ‘Has China been blessed or cursed by Western civilization?’”⁸

If we really want to understand the Chinese policy towards the Jews and the Jewish experience in China, we have to tell the tragic history of China's suffering and resistance from the perspective of those who went through it. In the sad havoc of the years, even though Qing

⁶ See John Klier, *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772-1825* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986); Irwin Michael Aronson, *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1990).

⁷ Rudolf G. Wagner, “Dividing up the [Chinese] Melon, *guafen* 瓜分: The Fate of a Transcultural Metaphor in the Formation of National Myth,” in *The Journal of Transcultural Studies*, No.1, 2017, <https://heiup.uni-heidelberg.de/journals/index.php/transcultural/article/view/23700>.

⁸ Gilbert Reid, *China, Captive or Free?: A Study of China's Entanglements* (New York, N.Y.: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1921), 1.

China strove to self-strengthen, the failed domestic reforms of the late 19th century only resulted in the radical Revolution of 1911. Furthermore, the loss of international recognition after WWI stirred up the New Cultural Movement. The national weakness and humiliation finally turned to cultural self-denial. In other words, the Chinese civilization shattered. Deviating from its traditional self-identified “Middle Kingdom” perspective, China began to see itself as a weak and small nation in the world.

Struggling to save the nation determined modern Chinese politics and foreign policies, so China’s coherent ethnic policy was to ally with other oppressed, small and weak nations to counter imperialism. Therefore, both the Chinese nationalists and the warlord governments supported Zionism and they never allowed any persecution of Jews in the Chinese territories. When China and the United States finally allied in WWII, the Chinese and the American Jews sought to aid each other so the Chinese opened their door to the European Jewish refugees. From a postmodern perspective, this study for the first time illustrates the history of Jewish survival in China in its ignored Chinese context.

1.2.The Japanese History Problem and the Jews

Even though we should read the history of the Jews in China in its Chinese background, we cannot avoid referring to Japanese history and its historical problem. Regardless of the existing Jewish communities in Harbin and Shanghai, or the Chinese project of Jewish settlements in Hainan and Kunming (see Chapter 4), the Japanese Army either occupied or attacked these places one after another. In its propaganda, Japan made some similar Jewish settlement plans, but Japan in fact barred Jewish refugees in its controlled areas.

1.2.1. Japan's Holy War

Learning from the lesson of the Chinese *vis-à-vis* Western colonization, the Japanese quest for reform started in the Meiji era (1868-1912). Victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 and the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 enabled Japan to escape the colonial fate suffered by other Asian nations. Having transformed itself into a world imperial power, Japan joined the rank of the “carving up” countries and expanded its power into China. Seizing the opportunity of WWI when Western influence weakened in Asia, Japan gained more territories in China and the Pacific, and prepared itself for becoming a supreme power in East Asia in the 1920s.

The Japanese invasion of Northeast China in 1931, known as the Manchurian Crisis, marked a turning point in both domestic Japanese politics and its relations with the rest of the world. Withdrawn from the League of Nations in 1933, isolated Japan turned to extreme militaristic nationalism and aggression. Seeking to purge the Japanese state of all foreign influence, both from China and the West, “by the end of the 1930s, extreme nationalists had taken over the state by employing radical religious fundamentalist ideas to crush or sublimate the advocates of all competing ideologies.”⁹ Walter A. Skya, in his book *Japan's Holy War*, argued that “the ideological equivalent of Nazism and Fascism in Japan was radical Shintō ultranationalism.”¹⁰

To justify Japan's wars, the radical Shintō ultra-nationalists embedded in people's minds that “the Greater East Asian War [the Pacific War] was not merely a ‘defensive war (*jiei nosen*)’ to free the peoples in East Asia from Western imperialism by expelling the Europeans and the Americans, only to let each individual country in Asia go its own way.... the political aim of the

⁹ Walter A. Skya, *Japan's Holy War: The Ideology of Radical Shintō Ultrnationalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 299.

Greater East Asian War was the consolidation of East Asia using the imperial way as the foundation of unity. This was to be a major stepping stone to the establishment of the Japan-centered world order.... it was a ‘holy war.’”¹¹ Advocating religious purification and anti-foreignism, the ideologists of State Shintō made the Japanese people believe that only “Holy” Japan could save the world. The Japanese emperor was deified and the soldiers who died for the emperor in the war were all enshrined. The radical Shintō ultranationalism not only justified Japan’s acts of terrorism, but finally also mobilized the Japanese to wage wars with both China and the United States in WWII.

But more ironically and confusing for outsiders, after 1945 the Shintō Shrine continued to function as a national cultural heritage and to work closely with the government’s official historical narratives. The remains of the Class-A war criminals of WWII were enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine. The Japanese prime ministers repeated visiting Yasukuni Shrine, mourning and honoring their “war heroes.” The Japanese textbooks seldom mention Japan’s war atrocities and the suffering they caused to other nations. Rather, Shintō nationalism remains a spiritual link from the Meiji Restoration, to the Greater East Asian War, the Allied occupation in postwar era, and Japan’s reconstruction until today. In other words, modern Japanese history maintains its “holiness” after WWII until today.¹²

It is different from postwar Germans, who faced their history with guilt and repentance. Japan has not yet come to terms with the violence it perpetrated during WWII. On the contrary, by honoring its war criminals at the Yasukuni Shrine, Japan keeps glorifying its national past. The way the Japanese treat their history, lacking awareness of its war atrocities and denying war

¹¹ Ibid., 313.

¹² For details, see Akiko Takenaka, *Yasukuni Shrine: History, Memory, and Japan's Unending Postwar* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2016).

responsibility, leads to diplomatic relationship crises with its neighbors, China and Korea. Nowadays, the Japanese historical problem has become a focus of intense political controversy internationally.

1.2.2. The Tokyo Trial

After the Cold War, Asian Americans, especially the “comfort women” (sexual slaves for the Japanese Army), began to pursue redress for Japanese crimes in the U.S. judicial system in the 1990s. Subsequently, American historians and legal scholars have begun to think seriously about the Japanese war crimes and its historical problems. American scholars have explored several reasons for Japanese historical problems, of which the main cause was the politics of justice during the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, known as the Tokyo Trial, in 1946.

In contrast to the Nuremberg Trial, which overturned the Nazi regime and severely sentenced the German war criminals, in the Tokyo Trial, only a small number of Japanese war criminals were prosecuted. The Japanese emperor and the wartime bureaucracy were all kept intact. Franziska Seraphim stated that “Emperor Hirohito, who had been the supreme commander of all Japanese military forces during the war, weathered the transition largely unscathed; he neither abdicated nor faced any criminal prosecution but instead was declared the symbolic cornerstone of Japan’s new peace constitution Further, although occupation authorities ordered the closing of some wartime ministries, large parts of the social and economic

bureaucracy remained intact and regained their position of power in the postwar political structure.”¹³

In addition, “the realization that the war crimes trials had been selective was exacerbated” by the discovery that the U.S. authorities had “quietly given safe passage to the Japanese perpetrators of hideous medical experiments on prisoners of war and local people in Manchuria, in return for scientific information.”¹⁴ For scientific, military, and political purposes, America covered up Japanese biological warfare and obstructed justice at the Tokyo Trial.¹⁵ Moreover, the Tokyo Trial also failed to identify, prosecute, and punish the military system of comfort women, the forced labors, cannibalism and many other indisputable Japanese war crimes. Consequently, the victims of Japanese war crimes were largely marginalized and never received recompense for their suffering.¹⁶

Given so many flaws of the Tokyo Trial, the scholars in *Japanese War Criminals: The Politics of Justice after the Second World War* explain that “from 1947 onward, most U.S. leaders were convinced that they should cultivate Japan as a Cold War ally rather than continuing to punish it as a wartime enemy.”¹⁷ Lisa Yoneyama in *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes*, argues that “the pursuit of Japanese war

¹³ Franziska Seraphim, *War Memory and Social Politics in Japan, 1945-2005* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006), 319.

¹⁴ Sandra Wilson, Robert Cribb, Beatrice Trefalt, and Dean Aszkielowicz, eds., *Japanese War Criminals: The Politics of Justice After the Second World War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 271.

¹⁵ See Sheldon H. Harris, *Factories of Death: Japanese Biological Warfare, 1932-45, and the American Cover-Up*. (London: Routledge, 1994). The book has two parts: Part One recounted the establishment of Japanese biological death factories across China in Harbin, Changchun, and Nanjing; Part Two was about America’s cover up. Harris illustrated that America covered up the Japanese biological warfare (BW) because they did not see BW as severe war crime against humanity, but rather as a valuable scientific achievement. After the discovery of the “secret of secrets,” the American scientists and military preserved these data for themselves after the war. Also see Jeanne Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities: Japanese Germ Warfare and American Obstruction of Justice at the Tokyo Trial* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ See Lisa Yoneyama, *Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Wilson, Cribb, Trefalt, and Aszkielowicz, eds., *Japanese War Criminals*, 9.

criminals and other Allied moves to reckon with Japan after the war became hopelessly entwined with the politics of the cold war and with the legacy of colonialism in the region, which ultimately led to the failure of Allied justice.”¹⁸

Killing more than 200,000 Japanese civilians in three days by atomic bombs, but leaving the war criminals free for political and practical purposes, Japanese American scholars question the American style of justice. Comparing the different approaches to history of the West and Japan, in the book *On the persistence of the Japanese “History Problem:” Historicism and the International Politics of History*, the message of Hitomi Koyama is clear: since the colonial period until today, if all powers follow the rule of the jungle to fight for survival, why does only Japan have to pay a price for “history?”¹⁹

1.2.3. Effect on Jewish history

The Japanese denial of war crimes and the American cover-up directly resulted in a Jewish illusion that Japan saved Jews in the Holocaust because Japan had not killed all the Jewish refugees in the Shanghai Ghetto that the Japanese discriminatively established in WWII. However, not killing does not mean saving or rescuing.

Japan’s history problem caused many other associated problems, one of which was the use of Jews to justify Japan’s wars both during and after WWII. During the war, Japanese propaganda advocated German Nazism and used Jews as a means to justify its Greater East

¹⁸ Dean Aszkielowicz. Book Review on “Cold War Ruins: Transpacific Critique of American Justice and Japanese War Crimes” by Lisa Yoneyama, in *The Journal of Japanese Studies* 44, no. 1 (2018): 225-29: 225.

¹⁹ See Hitomi Koyama, *On the Persistence of the Japanese 'History Problem': Historicism and the International Politics of History* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2018).

Asian War in domestic Japan.²⁰ However, overseas, Japan attempted to appease international opposition by promising equal treatment to the Jews in Manchuria. More ironically, after the war, Japan kept using Jews to escape war responsibility. Japanese anti-Semites, such as Koreshige Inuzuka (1890-1965), the maker of the bluff *fugu plan*, turned themselves into Jew-savers and escaped from being tried as war criminals.²¹ As a result, some postwar Jewish historians and scholars either were confused by the Japanese history problem or built their own work on it.

This study clarifies that Jews in all sense were also victims of Japanese militarism in WWII. Because Russian Jews were an oppressed nation, Japan treated Russian Jews no different than other oppressed nations, the same as Chinese and Koreans. Jews also suffered from Japan's atrocities in Northeast China in the 1930s (See Chapter 3). During the Holocaust, Japan further barred European Jewish refugees in its occupied areas. After Japan finally took over the Shanghai International Settlement in the wake of the Attack on Pearl Harbor, Japan interned the Jewish refugees who escaped Nazi Germany by the assistance of Chinese authorities and American Jewish reliefs. From a comparative, transnational and comprehensive perspective of postmodern historiography, this study fairly argues that Jews were in fact one of the victims of Japan's war atrocities.

1.3.Chapters

Based on the existing Chinese scholars' archeological research on the Harbin Jewish community, this study reveals an international angle by applying the findings of Jewish historical

²⁰ See Ben-Ami Shillony, *Politics and Culture in Wartime Japan* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2001), esp. last Chapter "The Imaginary Devil: Japanese Anti-Semitism."

²¹ For the political use of Jews in postwar Japan, see David G. Goodman, and Masanori Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype* (Lanham, Md: Lexington Books, 2000), esp. Chapter VI, "Identification and Denial: The Uses of the Jews in the Postwar Period."

records in the archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) from World War I to the present period. Therefore, instead of merely focusing on the Harbin Jewish community *per se*, this study will help address the lacunae in our understanding on the relations between the Harbin Jewish community with its changing governors during the regional conflicts among powers, as well as its relations with the Shanghai Jewish community. Thus, this study is divided into chapters chronologically.

Chapter Two explores the origins of the Harbin Jewish community under Russian domination from 1903 to 1917. The *fin de siècle* Russian colonizers selected Harbin, a small fish village in Northeast China, as an administrative center for the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). Consequently, Harbin boomed into a modern city at the beginning of the 20th century. The CER was designed by Russia as the terminal of the Trans-Siberian Railroad whose construction resulted from Russia's ambition to connect Europe, Russia, Siberia, and China. Russian Jewish immigrants spread to China from Russia as a result of the subsequent Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), a war fought for the control of Manchuria. Jews enjoyed almost all civil rights in Harbin in a time when anti-Semitic pogroms were rampant in Western Russia. This useful Jewish capital and commercial skills enhanced Russian economic power in Northeast China. Therefore, the Harbin Jewish community burgeoned on the border of Russia and China.

WWI and the Russian Revolution of 1917 caused a new wave of Russian Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe to Harbin. Chapter Three shows that the Harbin Jewish community was not only transformed by the large number of WWI refugees, but it also experienced a new political atmosphere when the Chinese took charge of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Under the brief rule of the Chinese authorities in the first half of the 1920s, Harbin grew into the major economic, political and religious Jewish center in Asia, comparable to its

contemporary Jewish communities in North America and Europe. However, the regional, national and revolutionary clashes among the Chinese, the White Russians and the Soviets in late 1920s made the Harbin Jews' situation precarious. The destabilization of the status of all these nations turned into disasters when the Japanese Guandong Army finally occupied Northeast China by force in the 1930s.

In Chapter Four, I examine the development of anti-Semitism in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo and include it in the history of the worldwide rise of anti-Semitism between the two World Wars. The savage Japanese Gendarmerie almost did what the darkest regime did to the Jews in history – extorting Jewish money and expelling them by slander, kidnapping and murder. The Harbin Jewish community consequently declined and fell into the full control of the extreme Japanese militarists.

In Chapter Five, within the context of Japan's wars of aggression in Asia and international diplomacy during the Pacific War, I argue that China was not only a forgotten ally of the United States in WWII, but also an ignored rescuer of the Jews in the Holocaust. Indeed, by virtue of the Chinese government's admission of Jews and American Jews' support, a total of about 17,000 German and Austrian Jewish refugees successfully reached and settled in Shanghai. However, the Japanese halted the massive Jewish immigration to China by military force in late 1939. As a weak and calculating power, Japan refrained from any actions that would provoke the West. By promising equal treatment to the Jews, Japan attempted to appease international opposition of its wars of aggression in Asia. However, Japan in fact banned Jewish refugees from the Japanese controlled areas, both in Harbin and Shanghai. A careful examination indicates that militarist Japan's prejudice and persecution of the Jews shockingly coincided with Nazi Germany during WWII.

The Jewish communities in China left after WWII. However, in the new era after the foundation of the State of Israel in 1948, Jews that emigrated from China to the Holy Land maintained their special identity. The history of the former Harbin Jewish community now becomes a friendship tie between Jews and Chinese. The Epilogue illustrates the double nostalgia between Harbin and Jews, and its role in the economic, diplomatic and cultural relations between Israel and China. As we will see, the scale of the Harbin Jewish community is not large enough to be marked on the map, but its history will shed light on “the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day.”²²

²² Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 2.

Chapter II: The Origins of the Harbin Jewish Community under Russian Domination

Since 1881, oppressive Tsarist policies towards Jews and waves of pogroms dominated Eastern Europe and facilitated the greatest Jewish Migration (1881-1914) in modern Jewish history. While millions of Jews arrived in the new world of the United States, Canada, West Europe and Palestine, a small group moved towards the East and ended up in Harbin, a burgeoning railway town on the Russian and Chinese border.

At the end of 1890s, when Tsarist Russia extended its influence to Northeast China by the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), Jews came along with the Russians and established their communities in China. In the beginning of the 20th century, the Harbin Jewish community arose. It created a unique Jewish immigrant culture in China and in turn, enriched the experiences of East European Jews in the Diaspora until today.

2.1. Foundation of the Harbin Jewish Community

The region of Northeast China, traditionally known as Manchuria, was the birthplace of the Manchu, who established the last dynasty of China – the Qing Dynasty. When imperialism escalated in the last decades of the 19th century, Qing China was forced to cede North Manchuria to Russia and South Manchuria to Japan. During this time, another oppressed nation, the Jews, ventured to Manchuria and started a new life in Northeast China.

2.1.1. “Matey” Imperialists – Russia’s Expansion to China

Qing China, since the 19th century, became a major victim of imperialism. To make up its trade imbalance, Britain opened China’s door by force with the First Opium War (1840-42). The result of the Opium War was the signing of the unequal Treaty of Nanjing, which set up Canton,

Xiamen, Fuzhou, Ningbo, and Shanghai as treaty ports. Following Britain, under the legal guise of treaties, France, and Germany, as well as China's neighbors Russia and Japan also expanded to China. Each power established its sphere of influence in their concessions by building houses and factories, exploiting natural resources and governing the natives.

In the late modern period, imperialism became the world order, acting throughout Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. In an article, "The Powers and the Partition of China," published in *the North American Review* in 1900, Gilbert Reid stated that "The scramble of European Powers has shifted from Constantinople to Peking, and into this scramble Japan and the United States have entered. The destiny of China seems to depend upon action taken in London, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Paris, and Tokyo."²³ The article continues to analyze the different interests of these powers in China.

During the partition of China, the interests of the powers always conflicted with each other. After the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Japan became the biggest winner through China ceding Taiwan in the South and the Liaodong Peninsula in the North. Japan's move directly affected the other powers' interests, especially Russia, because Russia saw North China as its sphere of influence. Russia had already encroached China's border territory along the Amur River since the mid-19th century, but it did not get the chance to move into inner China.²⁴ In April 1895, Russia, France and Germany, in an action known as the "Triple Intervention," forced Japan to return the Liaodong Peninsula to China. Thus, Russia made China her ally

²³ Gilbert Reid, "The Powers and the Partition of China." *The North American Review* 170, no. 522 (1900): 634-41: 634.

²⁴ Kwong Chi Man, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria: Zhang Zuolin and the Fengtian Clique during the Northern Expedition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 28.

against Japan and occupied Manchuria by building the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER, *Zhongdong tielu* 中东铁路).²⁵

The CER concession cutting through Manchuria was the shortest route to connect the Trans-Siberian Railway to Vladivostok, Russia's only ice-free port on the Pacific Coast. The Trans-Siberian Railway, built between 1891 and 1896, accelerated Russian immigration and influence from Europe to Siberia and the Far East. The Trans-Siberian Railway was planned by Russia's Minister of Finance, Sergei Witte (1849-1915), and was approved by the Tsar Alexander III (1845-1894). To emphasize the priority of this railway project, Alexander III appointed his heir the Tsarevich Nicholas Chairman of the Siberian Railway Committee and entrusted him with "the carrying out to the end of this Russian project of peace and enlightenment in the East."²⁶

The Chinese were not interested in the Russian project of "enlightenment in the East," but they were "overwhelmed by the Russian tenderings of friendship" against any future Japanese aggression.²⁷ Therefore, the Qing general and diplomat, Li Hongzhang (李鸿章 1823-1901), and Russia's Finance Minister, Witte, signed the railway contract in Berlin in September 1896. At the beginning, "because Li Hongzhang would not agree to a railroad owned or constructed by the Russian government, Witte agreed to put the railroad under the control of a nominally independent joint stock company called the Chinese Eastern Railway."²⁸ Through the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, Russia could be ceded a strip of land and obtain certain

²⁵ For details of the First Sino-Japanese War and the Sino-Japanese-Russian diplomatic relations, see Immanuel C. Y. Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), esp.332-48.

²⁶ J.N.Westwood, *A History of Russian Railways* (London: George Allen and Unwin LTD, 1964), 110.

²⁷ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 346.

²⁸ S.C.M.Paine, "The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China – An International History*, eds. Bruce A. Elleman and Stephen Kotkin (Armonk, New York and London, England: M.E. Sharpe, 2010), 17.

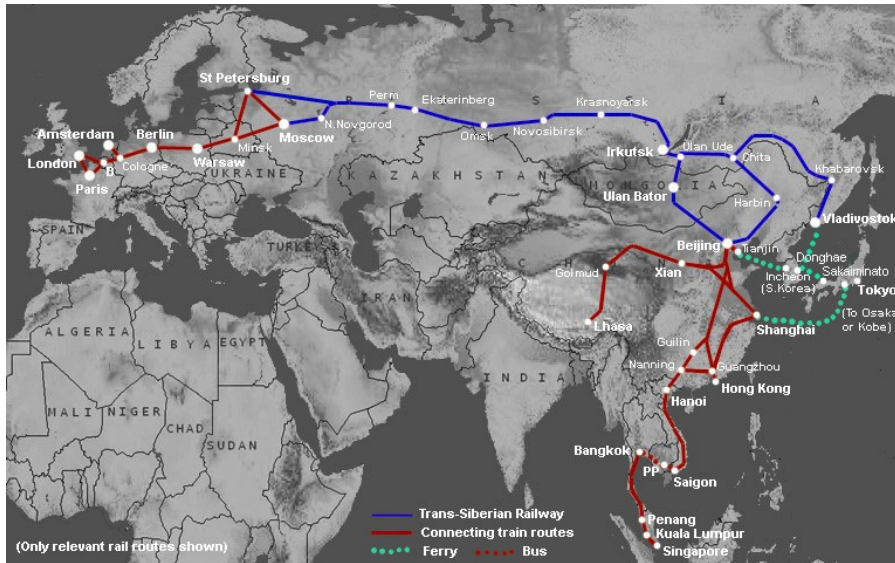
rights of jurisdiction, military control, taxation, and administration of the railway zone. However, in practice, it was hard to adhere to all these railway contractual stipulations. Interpreting the railway contract divergently, the Russians and the Chinese constantly fought with each other over control of the CER and the railway zone.²⁹ As a result, the CER became a symbol of Russia's expansion to Northeast China.



Map 1: The Qing's Ruling Area Map

(Map from <https://www.chinahighlights.com/map/ancient-china-map/qing-dynasty-map.htm>, accessed March 17, 2019).

²⁹ Soren Clausen and Stig Thogersen, eds., *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin* (Armonk and London: M.E.Sharpe, 1995), 25-26.



Map 2: Trans-Siberian, Trans-Mongolian, Trans-Manchurian...

(Map from <http://www.seat61.com/Trans-Siberian.htm#.V3BoIfkrJdg>, accessed Feb. 3, 2017)

2.1.2. Manchuria Before the Russians Came

The three Northeast Provinces of China (Heilongjiang, Jilin, and Liaoning), traditionally known as Manchuria, was the birthplace of the Manchus. The Manchus' ancestors can be historically traced back to Sushen, Yilou, Wuji, Mohe, Bohai, and Nüzhen. According to Immanuel Hsü,

Historically, the Manchus were a hardy stock of the nomadic Jurchen [女真 Nüzhen] tribe, living in what is today's Manchuria where they subsisted by hunting and fishing. During the 12th century they founded the Chin (Gold) dynasty (1115-1234), which had threatened the existence of the Southern Sung dynasty (1127-1279). Though conquered by the Mongols in the 13th century, they regained something of their former independence under the Ming (1368-1643) emperors, who divided them into three commanderies: Chien-chou, Hai-his, and Yeh-jen. They sent horses, furs, and ginseng as tribute to the Ming court, and received Chinese agricultural products as gifts in return.³⁰

³⁰ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 19-20.

In the early 17th century, Nurhaci (1559-1626), the leader of the Jianzhou (Chien-chou) Left Branch, reorganized all the Nüzhen tribe into a military system, the Eight Banners, “whereby his warriors were organized into four companies (niru) of 300 men each, represented by banners of four different colors: yellow, white, blue, and red. By 1615 the number of companies had grown to 200, and four more banners were created, with the same four colors but bordered in red, except for the red banner itself, which had a white fringe. Later, the size of the banner (gusa or gusai) grew to 7,500 men, divided into five regiments (jalan), each of which comprised five companies (niru).”³¹ Every Manchu family belonged to a banner. When the Manchus extended to the South, they also added Eight Mongol and Eight Han Banners. The Eight Banner system strengthened the Manchus more than ever before so that they could finally overthrow the Ming Dynasty and establish the Qing Dynasty in Beijing in 1644.³²

In central China, the Manchus combined the banner-style military administration with the Han civil administration which was based on Confucianism. But to keep their Manchu identity, they barred Han Chinese immigration from the Northeast. In the mid-19th century, when the Russians reached Eastern Siberia and further moved to Manchuria, the Qing Dynasty lifted the immigration ban and the influx of Han Chinese speeded up to the Northeast.³³ According to R. K. I. Quedstedt, “by 1895 Manchuria already contained a population of which the minimum

³¹ Ibid., 22.

³² For the organization of the eight banners and the Qing rule, see Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2001).

³³ For the settlement of Manchuria and its incorporation into China since the Qing Dynasty, see James Reardon-Anderson, *Reluctant Pioneers: China's Expansion Northward, 1644-1937* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); For the social backgrounds and the family ties of the migration from North China to Manchuria, see Thomas R. Gottschang, and Diana Lary, *Swallows and Settlers: The Great Migration from North China to Manchuria* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2000).

estimate is nearly six million, and the maximum in excess of 10 million, most of whom must have been Chinese.”³⁴

The Heilongjiang Province adjoining Siberia was the northernmost province of China. The population of Heilongjiang Province was 26,000 in 1734, and increased to 444,000 in 1812.³⁵ Numerous hereditary Manchu banner-style towns were scattered across this area. When the Han Chinese settled, they established the Han banner system and integrated into the Manchu society.³⁶ Gradually, “the different old customs of Manchu and Han became similar after a long period of acculturation.”³⁷ My grandfather’s family belonged to the 4th camp of the bordered yellow banner (*xianghuang situn* 镶黄四屯) in Shuangcheng, a typical Manchu town. My father remembered that his grandmother spoke a few Manchu words, and his grandfather left him a set of the Confucian Four Books³⁸. But in my generation, nothing was left, either of the Manchus or the Confucians.

In early 1897, the Russians arrived in Manchuria. To avoid civil disputes with the natives, the Russians did not build their railway administration center in the existing Manchu towns. Instead, the Russian railway engineers chose a sparsely populated fishing village known as Harbin, from where they began to construct the CER. Geographically, Harbin was located in the

³⁴ R. K. I. Quedsted, *"Matey" Imperialists: the Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895-1917* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1982), 9.

³⁵ Xue Lianju, *Harbin Renkou Bianqian* [Demographic Change of Harbin] (Harbin: Heilongjiang People’s Publisher 1998), 43.

³⁶ For the development of the Han banners in South Manchuria, see Yoshiki Enatsu, *Banner Legacy: The Rise of the Fengtian Local Elite at the End of the Qing* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 2004).

³⁷ Kwong, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria*, 37.

³⁸ The Four Books (四书 Si Shu) is the foundation of Neo-Confucianism, collected by Zhu Xi (1130-1200), a Confucian scholar in Song Dynasty. The Four Books are comprised of *the Analects*, *Mencius*, *the Great Learning* and *the Doctrine of the Mean*.

center of North Manchuria, near Acheng, Nüzhen's traditional capital. Moreover, Harbin was good for water transportation because it was by the Songhua River.

The population of Harbin increased dramatically while the CER was being constructed. Xue Lianju summarized the reasons for Harbin's rising: on the one hand, the Russian CER construction bureau moved to Harbin from Vladivostok in June 1898. The Russian officials, engineers, railway managers, staff, workers, servers, railway guards and soldiers all poured into Harbin. The Russians kept illegally expropriating lands along the railway. In 1901, the CER bureau divided the Russian railway zone into three districts: Old Harbin (Xiangfang 香坊), New Town (Nangang 南岗), and Pristan (Daoli 道里). From 1898 to 1903, in Xiangfang, the CER built 30 Russian streets with banks, businesses, churches, clubs, and schools.³⁹

On the other hand, the construction of the CER brought about an influx of Chinese laborers, who in fact built the railway and the city. With Harbin at the center, the railways were being built in three directions at the same time: east to Suifenhe, west to Manchuli, and south to Dalian. The gigantic project was completed with the sweat and toil of the Chinese people. In 1900, about 65,000 Chinese laborers, emigrating from Shandong, Hebei, Henan and other provinces, worked on the CER. When the CER was completed, the total number of Chinese railway workers reached 170,000 or so.⁴⁰ The destitute Chinese laborers worked hard day and night building the railway, but almost earned nothing compared to the Russians. Similar to the

³⁹ Xue, *Harbin Renkou Bianqian*, 50.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

situation of city and railway building in North America, the abuse and discrimination of the cheap Chinese laborers were common around the world in the last century.⁴¹

In Harbin, the Chinese laborers gathered nearby the Russian railway zone and settled in a traditional Chinese trade center called Fujiadian (Daowai), adjoining Pristan (Daoli). When the CER was open to traffic, Harbin further attracted foreign immigrants, such as Jews, Poles, Tartars, Japanese, and Koreans. Xue estimates that in 1903, when the railway was completed, there were 44,756 people residing in the railway zone and about 70,000 in greater Harbin, including both the railway zone and Fujiadian.⁴² Gradually, as a railway hub, Harbin grew into a modern city, surpassing other Manchu towns.



Map 3: Manchuria

(Map from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Manchuria>, accessed October 23, 2018)

⁴¹ For the contribution of the Chinese in building the Transcontinental Railroad, see Gordon H. Chang, and Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *The Chinese and the Iron Road: Building the Transcontinental Railroad* (California: Stanford University Press, 2019). For the discrimination law on the Chinese immigration in the United States, see “Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts,” Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: 1866-1898, Office of the Historian, accessed April 4, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>.

⁴² Xue, *Harbin Renkou Bianqian*, 56.

2.1.3. Jewish Presence in Harbin

The Trans-Siberian railway brought a large immigration from European Russia to Russia Far East. According to James Forsyth, “between 1896 and 1912 almost 1.8 million Russians left the provinces west of the Urals to go to Asiatic Russia, along with more than the same number of Ukrainians and half a million Belorussians.”⁴³ In contrast to the millions of Russians, Ukrainians and Belorussians, who left East Europe and moved to Asiatic Russia, the number of Jewish settlers was rather small. There were only 34,477 Jews in 1897 and the number increased to 50,000 in 1911 in all of Siberia.⁴⁴ The slight increase of Jewish population in the east was mainly due to the Tsarist Russia’s policy towards the Jews.

It is well-known that when Russia extended its influence to Poland-Lithuania in late 18th century, about 600,000 Polish Jews became Russian subjects during the partition of Poland. Catherine II did not allow Jews to move to inner Russia but confined them in the western and southern borders, later known as the Pale of Settlement. During this time, Siberia was sparsely populated, and was mainly for exiles, labor camps and prisons. The opening and closing of Siberia to the Jews depended on Russian needs. In 1855, when Alexander II ascended to the throne, he permitted Jewish merchants and artisans to live outside the Pale of Settlement. Under Alexander II’s liberal policy, according to Irena Vladimirsky, “certain changes were introduced into the legal status of the Jewish population of Siberia: male and female children who were born in Siberia and who stayed with their parents, were free to receive education in state public schools and were allowed to choose their own occupation. Other decrees issued in 1868 and

⁴³ James Forsyth, *A History of the Peoples of Siberia: Russia's North Asian Colony, 1581-1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992),192.

⁴⁴ Irena Vladimirsky, “Jewish Settlement in Siberia,” accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.bh.org.il/jewish-settlement-siberia/>.

1875 permitted retired Jewish soldiers and artisans to settle in every part of Siberia.”⁴⁵ As a result, Jewish settlements swelled in many Siberian cities, such as Omsk, Tomsk, Tobolsk, and Kainsk.

However, after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, not only new residential, economic and educational restrictions for the Jews were imposed, but anti-Jewish pogroms also became rampant throughout the Pale of Settlement and peaked in Kishinev in 1903.⁴⁶ Therefore, “in the 1890s the entry of Jews into Siberia and the rights of the Jews living there were further restricted. The revised edition of the passport rules published in 1890 proclaimed a total ban on Jewish immigration to Siberia, save for those who were sentenced to exile or hard labor there. This ban became the fundamental rule regarding Jewish entry into Siberia and served as a basis for further prohibitions.”⁴⁷ As one complained, if Jews wanted to escape suffering from poverty and pogrom in the Pale of Settlement and to breathe the free air of Siberia, they would find only one way open to them, namely, to commit some crime and be exiled to Siberia.⁴⁸ Moreover, “regulations of a similar nature were adopted in 1899 by the governor-general of Transbaikalia. According to these, ‘all Jews are forbidden to reside in the boundary-zone adjoining the Chinese frontier. Only those Jews who lived there prior to the ukase of June 12, 1860, are permitted to remain in the place of their registration. The banished Jews and their descendants have no right to move freely from place to place in Siberia, but may apply to the governor-general for permission to do so.’”⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ For details, see Steven J. Zipperstein, *Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History* (New York: Liveright, 2018).

⁴⁷ “Siberia,” Jewish Virtual Library, accessed March 3, 2019, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/siberia>.

⁴⁸ Joseph Jacobs and J.G. Lipman, “Siberia,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, accessed March 3, 2019, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/13627-siberia#2216>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

According to these rules, Jews were actually prohibited to live in Siberia and the border regions between Russia and China. However, Finance Minister Witte, the designer of the Trans-Siberian Railway, encouraged “those of the trade and industrial class, searching for enrichment at their own risk” to settle along the railway lines.⁵⁰ For security and economic promotion of the new Russian colony, soldiers and merchants were supposed to be the ideal settlers.

According to Takao Chizuko, “in March 1898, the Committee of Ministers gave the CER the right to issue passports. With this, it became legal for Jews to reside in the railway zone as an ‘exemption’ in cases where it was acknowledged that such Jews could contribute to the benefits of railway construction.”⁵¹ Nevertheless, forbidden Siberia but open Manchuria seemed not to be very practical for large Jewish immigration. Therefore, in its early stage, few Jews moved to Harbin from East Europe, except the first guild merchants, such as Leonty Skidelsky (c.1845-1916), who obtained a contract from the Russian government to construct the railway from Vladivostok to Khabarovsk.

Local Jews previously living in the boundary zone of Siberia and Manchuria first ventured and settled in Harbin. In his survey of the Harbin Huangshan Jewish Cemetery, scholar Zhang Tiejiang asserts that G. B. Drizin (1846-1949) was the first Jew who came to Harbin. From 1894, Drizin purchased grain and livestock along the Ash River branch, around the Fuyu District, and shipped and peddled the grain and livestock to Russia in his own ship *Truzhenik* (Toiler). Later Drizin settled in Harbin and founded the Drizin and Patushinsky Flour Mill in

⁵⁰ David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898-1914* (Stanford University Press, 1999), 87.

⁵¹ Takao Chizuko, “Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II,” *Igud Yotzei Sin* (English Supplement), no. 408, (Aug-Sep 2012): 53.

1903.⁵² However, historian Li Shuxiao, believes that Samuil Ilevich Pertzal was the first Jew that settled in Harbin and opened a clothing store in 1899. Li's research was based on an article published in the journal *Jewish Life* in No.3-4 of 1939, which asserted that Pertzal was the first Harbin Jew.⁵³ All in all, the existing historical evidence indicates that Jewish merchants began to do business in Harbin at the turn of the 1900s.

As the railway was being constructed, some Siberian Jewish merchants did retail business along the railway to support the Russian railroad workers and railroad guards. Finally, the Siberian Jews established the Harbin Jewish community in 1903. According to Abraham Kaufman:

In 1899 there was the first “minyan”, (a ten-men group of male Jews recognized by the Jewish law as an official congregation). They used to gather at random in the apartment of various Jews living in Harbin (Konovalov, I.L. Bach, M. M. Berkovich). Some Jews lived in other small villages of Hailar, Tsitsikar [Qiqihar], Yaomyn [Yaomen Zhan], Mao er shan and others....The first written document to be found in the archive of the Harbin Jewish community is dated 1902 and relates to the 32 Jews assembled in the apartment of Gendler to discuss the employment of a full time shohet (ritual slaughterer) to be paid 900 Russian roubles annually. The protocol of this gathering is dated 24 December, 1902 and is entitled “The verdict on the issue of employment of a shohet”, signed by B. Berkovich, Pertzal, Meirovich, Abramov, Bach brothers, Drizin....the first starosta (Russian for chairman or president) of the Harbin Jewish Community was specifically B. L. Berkovich. In the following year 1903 an official election of the first “Spiritual Management of the prayer home took place with Raphael Matveyevich Meirovich elected as “gabbe (= overseer), Yevsei Isayevich Dobisov as the treasurer; K. L. Gurvich as the spiritual leader, and M. L. Samsonovich as a representative of the Management.⁵⁴

⁵² Zhang Tiejiang, “The Jew Who Was the First to Come to and Settle Down in Harbin – The Discovery of the Gravestone to Grigolay Drizin,” in his book *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi: Harbin Youtairen shequ kaocha yanjiu* [Revealing the Enigma of Jewish History in Harbin: A Survey of the Harbin Jewish Community] (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publisher, 2005), 5.

⁵³ Li Shuxiao, “G.B.Drizin Qiren,” [The Person of G.B.Drizin] in *Harbin Youtairen* [Harbin Jews], eds. Qu Wei and Li Shuxiao (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2004), 78.

⁵⁴ Abraham Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin* (English Supplement, the same below), no. 402: 54-5.

On February 16, 1903, the Harbin Jewish Spiritual Community (*Harbinskoe Evreiskoe Duhovnoe Obshestvo*, HEDO) officially registered with the Russian CER authorities. Rabbi Shmuel Levin was invited from Siberia as the spiritual leader. The Khevra Kadisha (Burial brotherhood) was then established. The Harbin Jewish Spiritual Community functioned as the Kehillah, which was a local Jewish communal structure in charge of both secular and religious issues.

By 1903, about 300 to 500 Siberian Jews settled in Harbin and opened about ten stores. Nevertheless, in contrast to thousands of Russian railway workers and railway guards, the number of Jews in Harbin was too small to be noticed. At that time, the muddy village of Harbin was not yet fully developed in a modern sense, no better than the *shtetl* (small Jewish villages) in East Europe. Kaufman called Harbin “the little hamlet” and stated that “the living conditions were very difficult and demanded a great amount of energy, courage and adaptability to the unusual situations. There was no notion of the bright future that awaited this little fishing village.”⁵⁵

However, after the CER was completed, the powers waged wars to control the railway, the natural resources, and the people living in the region. Manchuria soon became the “cockpit of Asia,” where ‘drama never dies.’”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ibid.,54.

⁵⁶ Kwong, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria*, 21.



Map 4: The Pale of Settlement

(Map from <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/image/pale-settlement>, accessed March 4, 2019)

2.2. The Expansion of the Harbin Jewish Community

The Harbin Jewish community experienced its first expansion during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-05, a war fought to colonize Northeast China. After the war, many demobilized Russian Jewish soldiers chose to remain in Harbin due to the accelerated anti-Semitic persecutions and pogroms in Russia proper. But in the Chinese colonies, the Russian authorities implemented a liberal policy for the Jews living.

2.2.1. The Russo-Japanese War

By 1900, the powers had *gufen* (carved up) China. Acting against imperialist powers “cutting up” China, the Boxer Rebellion, an anti-foreigner movement, spread all over China. To

suppress the Boxer Rebellion, the provoked colonizers set up an international military coalition, known as the Eight-Nation Alliance (Britain, Germany, Russia, France, Italy, the United States, Austria-Hungary and Japan), which occupied Beijing in the summer of 1900. The Eight-Nation troops killed tens of thousands of Chinese and burned the Qing Summer Palace (Yuanmingyuan 圆明园). Post-colonial scholars observe that during this time, “claims to represent civilization in the face of barbarism and talk of the ‘Yellow Peril’ reached new heights, even while a few Western critics of imperialism wondered who were the civilized and who the barbarian.”⁵⁷

During the Boxer Rebellion, the oppressed Chinese laborers destroyed almost two-thirds of the railways that had been completed in Manchuria by 1900.⁵⁸ In the name of suppression of the Boxers, Russia sent more than 100,000 troops to Northeast China and occupied the region. However, after the Boxer Uprising subsided, the Russian army did not withdraw from China but attempted to move into Korea. Russia’s obvious invasion directly threatened Japan’s interests and security in these areas, which resulted in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. The so-called Russo-Japanese war in fact took place in Northeast China.⁵⁹

The Russo-Japanese War brought the first large wave of Russian Jewish immigration to China. To fight against Japan, Russia dispatched hundreds of thousands of soldiers to Northeast China day and night via the newly constructed CER, among whom there were more than 30,000 Jewish soldiers recruited from European Russia.⁶⁰ According to Simon Dubnow, these Jewish soldiers and physicians were "free to be sacrificed on the battlefield," because “they held no

⁵⁷ Peter Zarrow, “Felling a Dynasty, Founding a Republic,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*, ed. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 94.

⁵⁸ Westwood, *A History of Russian Railways*, 114.

⁵⁹ See Paine, “The Chinese Eastern Railway from the First Sino-Japanese War until the Russo-Japanese War,” 24-25.

⁶⁰ Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland, from the Earliest Times Until the Present Day*, Vol. 3, trans. Israel Friedlaender (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1916), 94.

government posts.”⁶¹ Moreover, the wives and children of the Jewish soldiers were at risk to be expelled from their domicile, because rights of residence were granted to the head of the family, and husbands or fathers had been sent to the war.⁶²

The war endured for more than one and a half year and ended with Russian defeat. Through the American President Theodore Roosevelt’s mediation, a peace treaty was signed by the Russian Minister Witte, and the Japanese Minister Baron Komura, in the American city of Portsmouth on September 5, 1905. Different from Russia and Japan, the United States was not interested in China’s territory. America’s Open Door Policy aimed to maintain the balance of power and equal economic opportunity in China. Under this guideline, “Roosevelt preferred that the war end on terms that left both Russia and Japan a role to play in Northeast China. Though excited by the Japanese military victories, Roosevelt worried about the consequences to American interests if Japan managed to drive Russia out entirely.”⁶³ As a result, not only did the Chinese feel humiliated, but neither Japan nor Russia were satisfied:

The Treaty ultimately gave Japan control of Korea and much of South Manchuria, including Port Arthur and the railway that connected it with the rest of the region, along with the southern half of Sakhalin Island; Russian power was curtailed in the region, but it was not required to pay Japan’s war costs. Because neither nation was in a strong financial position to continue the war easily, both were forced to compromise in the terms of the peace. Still, the Japanese public felt they had won the war, and they considered the lack of an indemnity to be an affront. There was a brief outbreak of protests and rioting in Tokyo when the terms of the agreement were made public. Similarly, the Russian people were also dissatisfied, angry about giving up half of Sakhalin.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 95.

⁶³ “The Treaty of Portsmouth and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905,” Milestones in the History of U.S. Foreign Relations: 1899-1913, Office of the Historian, accessed March 7, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1899-1913/portsmouth-treaty>.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

In Russia proper, bloody pogroms and anti-Semitic persecutions reached new heights. Jews were blamed for the unexpected victory of Japan, as American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff facilitated Japanese loans in the war. Hence, the Jews became the internal enemies while the Japanese were external. Pogroms took place throughout the Pale of Settlement and beyond the Pale in various places of Russia, such as Odessa, Mogilev, Gomel, Bialystok, Dusyati, Melitopol, Simferopol, Zhitomir, Troyanov, Minsk, Brest-Litovsk, Siedletz, Lodz and Kerch.⁶⁵ Tens of thousands of Jews were injured and murdered in the pogroms from 1904 to 1905. Millions of Jews had to leave Russia for America or somewhere else. Thus, Dubnow documented the Russo-Japanese War as a significant event in Russian Jewish history.

After the war, many Jewish soldiers chose to stay in Northeast China because of the pogroms in Russia. Two years of military life in Harbin made it a familiar place to the Jewish soldiers. Many of them went to pray in Harbin's Jewish House of Prayer. Rabbi Levin actively organized relief work for Jewish soldiers in the Russian units. With the *Pesakh* (Passover) coming, the Harbin Jewish religious committee distributed *Matzos*⁶⁶ and money to the Jewish soldiers.⁶⁷ Rabbi Levin's wife also organized a ladies' committee to visit the hospitalized Jewish soldiers.⁶⁸

When the war ended, "the Jewish population of Manchuria had significantly grown. Many of the demobilized Jewish servicemen decided to remain in Harbin and other points along the railway line and brought their families and relatives to join them."⁶⁹ According to the law,

⁶⁵ Simon Dubnow, *History of the Jews, Vol.5* (A.S. Barnes and Co., Inc. 1973), 725-36.

⁶⁶ *Matzo* is a brittle thin biscuit of unleavened bread served during Passover.

⁶⁷ For the relief work of Rabbi Levin, see Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 402: 55-6.

⁶⁸ Qu Wei and Li Shuxiao, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu* [The Concise Harbin Jewish Dictionary] (Beijing: Social Science Academic Press, 2013), 415.

⁶⁹ Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 42.

Jews who served in the army and the descendants of the former “Nikolai soldiers” (who had served in the army during the reign of Nicholas I), received permission to reside outside of the Pale.

In addition, during the war, “the army was in dire need of providers, contractors, and commissioners. Harbin began to speedily absorb any and all men of enterprise, often reckless adventurers, amongst those Jewish merchants and businessmen from Siberia and the European parts of Russia.”⁷⁰ A. Kaufman wrote that: “rumors have reached the Jewish Pale about the wondrous Harbin and Manchuria and the ‘golden rain’ perpetually falling there. Why not leave? What was there to lose here? Pogroms? Humility? Hundreds of Jewish communities were looted and razed to the ground? And out of the stuffy, oppressive ghettos in Poland, Lithuania, Ukraine, throngs of Jews began their long Exodus – Eastward: to Harbin, to the small hamlets along the newly built railway line. In 1906/1907 the Jewish population of Harbin crossed the 3000 mark.”⁷¹ Consequently, the Harbin Jewish community experienced its first expansion during the Russo-Japanese War. In that time, the Harbin Jewish community set about building the synagogue and the cemetery.

2.2.2. Russian Policy on the Jews in Harbin

When the Russians and the Japanese fought to colonize Manchuria, the disadvantaged Chinese struggled by all means to keep the integrity of their land. Examining the agricultural development of Northeast China from 1900 to 1931, Patrick Fuliang Shan argues that “The region was still in the hands of the Chinese. The local Chinese tried to utilize every possible opportunity to restrict Russian activities beyond the railway zone; even within the railway zone,

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

the local Chinese authorities wasted no time in recovering their lost interests. Indeed, Russian influence had its bounded limits.”⁷² In the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, the Qing government immediately set up a Chinese local administration office, *yamen* 衙门, in the Fujiadian zone in October 1905.⁷³ The Harbin circuit (*guandao*), also known as *Binjiang guandao yamen* or *Daotaifu*, was the last traditional local administration office, *yamen*, the Qing government established before the Qing Dynasty collapsed in 1911.

Russia also wanted to enhance its position in this new colony. In 1908, the CER organized a “self-administrative council” in the railway zone. The Russians called it the Harbin “municipality.” But the Chinese never recognized its authority. According to the CER treaty, the local administration in the railway zone was to be operated by the Chinese Eastern Railway Company, not the Russian government. The Russian “municipality” in Harbin, which the Chinese called “Russian autonomy,” was loosely organized without a central bureaucratic system as in Russia proper.

Fin de siècle Russia lacked the power to impose a full control of the newly colonized area on its eastern border. In their book, Clausen and Thogersen supported Quedstedt’s point that: “the Russian plans in Manchuria had in a sense failed already *before* the Russo-Japanese War. Economically the CER had been a very costly adventure for the Russian treasury, and the expected benefits in terms of trade had failed to materialize. Military force had been relied on to a far greater extent than originally envisaged by Count Witte, who had hoped to nurture collaborationist forces within Manchuria and gain control by largely peaceful means. Russian

⁷² Patrick Fuliang Shan, *Taming China’s Wilderness: Immigration, Settlement and the Shaping of the Heilongjiang Frontier, 1900-1931* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 190.

⁷³ Clausen and Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin*, 36; Xue, *Harbin Renkou Bianqian*, 47.

migration to Manchuria was unorganized, and the attempts to attract Russian peasant settlers had totally failed....The dream of a “Yellow Russia” had collapsed....”⁷⁴ Thus, in terms of Russia’s economic, military and immigrant disadvantages in the colonization of Manchuria, as well as the pressure from the Chinese and the Japanese governments, it was impossible for Russia to establish a strict administration in the distant Harbin station.

The disadvantageous position of Russia in China gave the Russians no choice but to accord a reluctant “liberty” to the minorities, namely, Jews, Poles, Tatars and other immigrants from East Europe. Especially, Jewish capital and commercial skills were often used to enhance Russian economic power in border regions. Russia’s new Minister of Finance, Vladimir Kokovsov, admitted that “the continuing arrival of new Jews was bringing needed capital.... Any curtailment of Jewish rights in the CER zone would have had a very unfavorable effect on the Russian position in Manchuria.”⁷⁵

Historians believe that in frontier zones like Siberia, the Far East and Manchuria, “Jewish policies were influenced more by the policies of local authorities than by those of the central authorities.”⁷⁶ When the Jewish population kept increasing in Asiatic Russia in the wake of the Russo-Japanese War, the attitudes of the local Russian authorities in the Far East and Manchuria were totally different.

When Jewish settlements spread along the railway lines, in a number of Siberian and the Far Eastern cities, such as Sretensk, Blagoveshchensk, Nikolayevsk-na-Amure, Ussuriisk, and Vladivostok, the Priamurskii Governor-General, Nikolai Gondatti, “again and again demanded of the Russian supreme authorities to equate the status” of the CER region to that of the cities in

⁷⁴ Clausen and Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin*, 34.

⁷⁵ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 108.

⁷⁶ Takao, “Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II,” 53.

Russia proper where “Jews were forbidden to settle.”⁷⁷ Takao found that “Gondatti imposed stricter measures than the central authorities, often disregarding potential benefits for the local economy. When the Russian government relaxed the residential restrictions and permitted immigration of refugees into the Russian interior in the summer of 1915, when the government had difficulties in coping with a large number of Jewish refugees within the Pale, Gondatti imposed a new limitation that made it mandatory for Jewish refugees to apply for special permits to migrate to the Far East.”⁷⁸ A. Kaufman asserted that “Jews were deported and persecuted as an unwanted, lawless element” in the Russian Far East.⁷⁹

However, on the other side of the Amur River (which the Chinese called *Heilongjiang*, the boundary line between Russian Far East and Northeast China), Jews founded a safe harbour. According to David Wolff, the general manager of the CER in Manchuria, Dmitry L. Khorvat (1858-1937), seemed “a steady supporter of a liberal minority policy and a proponent of urban colonization. On June 1, 1906, he approved the land grant in Pristan on which the Jewish community would build its synagogue, school, and hospital.”⁸⁰ Wolff estimates that nearly 25 percent of the representatives elected to the Russian municipal assembly in 1908 were Jewish.⁸¹

The Jewish community seemed to maintain an excellent relationship with the Russian authorities in Harbin. The Harbin Zionist leader, A. Kaufman, had a favorable impression of Khorvat. In his memoir, Kaufman recalled his meeting with Khorvat:

I have met General Khorvat several times in my capacity of the representative of the Harbin Jewish community, and once privately. He impressed me as an extremely pleasant personality. When the local society and the administrative circles of the KVJD

⁷⁷ Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 43.

⁷⁸ Takao, “Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II,” 53.

⁷⁹ Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 43.

⁸⁰ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 104.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 100.

[Russian abbreviation for CER] celebrated in 1914 the fifteenth anniversary of General Khorvat's heading the KVJD management, he was greeted by the two-man delegation of the Jewish community - A. Dobisov and myself. We conveyed the congratulations of the entire Jewish community living along the KVJD line and presented him with the Scroll of Esther in a silver container, produced by the Bezalel Art Academy in Jerusalem. The general was visibly moved by this homage, and told us that this was the most meaningful and valuable gift. Sometime later, at a casual encounter, his wife Camilla Benoit (the sister of the well known French painter Philippe Benoit, and a painter herself) repeated his words.⁸²

General Khorvat further reported to St. Peterburg about the Jewish achievements and contributions to the economy and welfare of the region.⁸³ The amicable relations between Jews and Russian authorities in Harbin could hardly be imagined in either European Russia or the Russian Far East.

The situation was similar to that in East Europe, where the Russians themselves were also minorities, Jews were usually tolerated. Russia's policy toward the Jews in China corresponded to the Russian government's guiding principle relating to the status of the Jews, which "stemmed from the desire to encourage economic activity that would be beneficial to the Russian economy or from the intention to use the Jewish population to disseminate Russian culture."⁸⁴ Even though the number of Harbin Jews was not as large as that in Kiev, Riga or other Jewish cities in Russia's colonies on its western border, its percentage of the total population was comparable to that in these cities. In 1913, besides the Russians (34,313 persons), 5,032 Jews constituted the second largest foreign immigration in Harbin, followed by "Poles (2,556), Japanese (696), Germans (564), Tatars (234), Latvians (218), Georgians (183), Estonians (172), Lithuanians (142) and Armenians (124)."⁸⁵ The Jewish population constituted 7.3 percent of the total

⁸² Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin", *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 43.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Yisra'el Bartal, *The Jews of Eastern Europe, 1772-1881*, trans. Chaya Naor (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 104.

⁸⁵ Olga Bakich, "Émigré Identity: The Case of Harbin," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 99, no. 1, (Winter 2000):53.

population (including 23,537 Chinese) in the Russian railway concession of Harbin in 1913. In the very same year, in Riga in East Europe for example, Russians accounted for 22.4 percent and Jews accounted for 4.5 percent of the total population.⁸⁶ Therefore, as a percentage of the total population, as well as in the Russian liberal policy in these regions, Harbin was an analogy to the cities in East Europe.

However, on the other hand, as Harbin was in Chinese territory, four-fifths of its Jews “resided either within or adjacent to the Chinese ghetto [Fujiadian].”⁸⁷ Thus a Russian Jewish community in China made the Harbin experience a very unique one in the history of the Jewish Diaspora. Teddy Kaufman comments that “we were a minority within a minority, like a Jewish fortress on a Russian island surrounded by a Chinese sea.”⁸⁸ Especially, the contact between Jews and Chinese became more and more obvious when Russia power faded in China after 1917.

2.3. The Manchurian Haven

Without overt discrimination, Jews found haven in Manchuria. Jews were not only allowed to participate in all kinds of business and city building projects, but they also could freely practice their religion, and express themselves culturally with respect to Jewish education, Zionism and Yiddishism. The flourishing of the Harbin Jewish community coincided with Harbin turning into a large city, and in turn gave the city an obvious Jewish flavor.

2.3.1. Burgeoning Jewish Business in Northeast China

⁸⁶ Anders Henriksson, “Riga-Growth, Conflict, and the Limitations of Good Government, 1850-1914,” in *The City in Late Imperial Russia*, ed. Michale F. Hamm (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 182.

⁸⁷ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 103.

⁸⁸ Teddy Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart* (Tel-Aviv: Profil-Design, Production and Publishing Ltd., 2006), 31.

For the Eastern European residents in Northeast China, the old saying came true that “God is high above and the Tsar is far away.” In a time of malaise at home and weakness abroad, the Russians in China had no choice but to practice tolerance of the other minorities. As a result, the Jewish communities were burgeoning in Manchuria.

Many Jewish merchants made their fortune during the Russo-Japanese War by building food stores and flour mills for the Russian army. According to Zvia Shickman-Bowman, Harbin Jews, such as Bonner, Mindalevich, Drizin, Patushinsky, L. Skidelsky, A. Kagan, and the Soskin brothers, operated at least five flour mills in Harbin and their domination enabled them to supervise “the operation of Russian-owned mills.”⁸⁹

Moreover, as Northeast China was abundant in soybeans, Jews played a predominant role in developing Harbin’s typical industry of soybeans. Jewish merchants, like Roman Moiseevich Kabalkin and Semion Soskin, were the pioneers in exporting Manchurian soybeans to North America and Europe. Roman M. Kabalkin (1850-1933) “who had already made his name and fortune in European Russia as a grain trader with no fear of novel methods, served for fourteen years as a consultant to the Riazan-Uralsk railway, the chief source of engineers for the CER. This association led to an invitation from the chief of the CER Commercial Department, K.P. Lazarev, to help develop freight traffic between Siberia and Manchuria.”⁹⁰ Settling down in Harbin in 1906, Kabalkin “started exporting Manchurian-grown grain and soybeans to Europe via the CER. In 1909 Kabalkin established his own soybean exporting firm in London by attracting British investors and named it ‘The English-Chinese Eastern Company.’ By 1914 Kabalkin had opened a large oil factory in “Old Harbin” [Xiangfang District] – the first to be

⁸⁹ Zvia Shickman-Bowman, “The Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898-1931,” in *The Jews of China, vol. 1: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 194.

⁹⁰ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 99.

equipped with the latest European machinery. The factory filtered soybean oil, and refined it for salads under the brand name Acetco and pressed soybean cakes for cattle. His high-quality refined soybean oil was exported to the United States.”⁹¹ Chinese scholar Zhang Tiejiang reputes Kabalkin as the founder of the Manchurian export trade.⁹²

In addition, after the Russo-Japanese War, most of the demobilized Jewish soldiers that settled down in Harbin found employment or opened a business there. A Jewish cavalryman named Joseph Kaspe opened a jewelry store in the most prosperous commercial street in Harbin and got rich. Later he founded the Moderne Hotel, which became the most luxurious and modern hotel in the Far East.⁹³ A Chinese journalist observes that “in Harbin, the Jews gradually re-established the life they had left behind. This process coincided with the rapid growth of Harbin on its way from a cluster of villages to a big city, branding the city with a distinguished ‘Jewish style.’ The city's first batch of modern hotels, banks, shops, cafes, newspapers, and publishing houses were initiated by members of the Jewish community, and helped boost the city's business. Almost all of the enterprises in Harbin at that time, whether bakeries or coal mines or mills, were closely linked to the Jews.”⁹⁴

After several years’ effort, Jews in Harbin owned large stores, trading firms and factories.

According to A. Kaufman:

The Jewish traders, bankers and industrialists in Manchuria rubbed shoulders with the most prominent representatives of the financial establishment and were listed amongst the first rank financial entrepreneurs of the region. The Stock Exchange Committee was now headed by a group of Jews: M. Fried, E. Dobisov, D. Samsonovich,

⁹¹ Shickman-Bowman, “The Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898-1931,” 192.

⁹² Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi: Harbin Youtairen shequ kaocha yanjiu*, esp.126-32.

⁹³ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 249.

⁹⁴ Jin Bo, “An unforgettable history,” *China Daily*, October 31, 2003.

G. Drizin, R. Kabalkin and others. Out of the 40 voting members of the Harbin Municipality twelve were Jewish. The main initiators and the leading representatives of the lumber, oil, river shipping, winery, pharmaceuticals, bakeries, textiles, and metallurgy industries are the Jews. So are the chief exporters of grain products, furs and leather. This equality of rights and status enjoyed by the Jews of Harbin and those living along the KVJD railway tracks, irritated the anti-Semitic governors of the adjacent proper-Russian Primorskii and Priamurskii regions.⁹⁵

As Kaufman mentions, Jewish entrepreneurs led the newly established Harbin Stock Exchange Committee. In addition, the Harbin Jewish entrepreneurs were allowed to engage in all kinds of industries without restrictions. Hence, besides the light industries which Jews traditionally engaged in, such as textile and food manufacture, Jews in Harbin were able to participate in some heavy industries, like railway building, city building projects, mining, and logging industries, which were rarely available or never possible for Jews in either European Russia or the Russian Far East. Harbin Jewish descendant, Lily Klebanoff Blake, recalled that his grandfather Michael (Mihail), from Mogilev in Belarus, moved to Harbin in 1908 and successfully engaged in the coal/timber business. Lily's father later became a manager of the world famous Moderne Hotel.⁹⁶ It was believed that China offered unusual opportunity for the Jews.

Besides the city of Harbin, Jewish businesses also extended to Manzhouli, Hailar, Qiqihar and other towns and villages along the CER lines in China. There Manchurian Jews established synagogues and Jewish schools as well. But the scale of these Jewish communities

⁹⁵ Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 42.

⁹⁶ "The Lost Shanghai Jewish Graves: Klebanoff Tsipa Aronovna," Shanghai Jewish Memorial, accessed May 23, 2019, <http://www.shanghaijewishmemorial.com/80.htm>.

were rather small, usually 10-25 families. They all recognized Harbin as the Jewish center in Northeast China.⁹⁷

2.3.2. An Eastern Zion

Jewish institutions in Harbin sprang up after the Russo-Japanese War, including a synagogue (1907), a Jewish primary school (1907), a theater (1906), a Jewish Women's Charity (1907), a library (1908), and a Jewish club "IMALDAG" (the Yiddish abbreviation of "The Jewish Musical-Literary-Theatrical Society," 1908).⁹⁸ Harbin Jews successfully set up an East European Jewish style community in China.

Harbin Jews resided next to the Russians, spoke Russian, read the Russian newspapers, and shared common resources with Russians peacefully. Some Russian emigrants maintained their bigoted anti-Semitic views, but they did not form a mainstream in Harbin before 1917. For instance, when the bizarre incident, "the Beilis Affair," in which a Jew named Mendel Beilis was accused of the ritual murder of a Christian boy, took place in Kiev in 1911 and brought about a new wave of anti-Semitic persecutions around the Russian Empire, the Jews of Harbin were not affected at all. Jews enjoyed almost all civil rights with Russians peacefully in Harbin in a time when anti-Semitic pogroms were rampant in European Russia.

Free from restriction and discrimination, Russian Jews in Harbin could openly practice their traditional religious and communal way of life. In 1906, Rabbi Levin went back to Siberia, and served as a Rabbi in Omsk and Chita, but he frequently visited Harbin. After he left, Rabbi Hashkel held his post of Harbin until 1911. In 1913, the Harbin Kehillah decided to elect a spiritual leader. When more Jews from Southern Russia, particularly Odessa, came to reside in

⁹⁷ Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 45.

⁹⁸ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 415-16.

Harbin, they called themselves “Russian Jews” to differentiate themselves from the “Siberian Jews.”⁹⁹ The “Russian Jews” wrote to Warsaw asking for an ideal candidate. Rabbi Kiselev of Borisov had the highest evaluation both for his scholarship and personality. But the “Siberian Jews” preferred to have Rabbi Levin as their spiritual leader, who was as responsible and competent as Rabbi Kiselev. During the election, Rabbi Levin moved back to Harbin and held the rabbi’s post. At the end of intensive debates, Rabbi Levin was persuaded to withdraw his candidacy for the benefit of the community. Rabbi Levin declared that he “was the first rabbi of Harbin and one of the founders of its Jewish community, and that this fact makes him responsible for its unity and peace.”¹⁰⁰ Therefore, Rabbi Kiselev was elected as the chief rabbi of Harbin, and Rabbi Levin became his deputy.

Well trained in the complexities of Jewish law, Rabbi Kiselev was committed to reshaping the Harbin Jewish community in accordance with the Orthodox Jewish life in East Europe. In his collection of *halakhic* (Jewish law) response *Sefer Mishbere Yam* [Waves of the Sea], Rabbi Kiselev mentioned his health problems but said because of the distance from centers of rabbinical learning in Poland and Russia he was the only one qualified to respond to the Jewish *halakhic* divorce and many *halakhic* problems arising from this situation.¹⁰¹ For example, in Responsum 28, dated 18 Adar I 5679 (February 18, 1919), Rabbi Kiselev addressed an unnamed rabbi in the Far East about whether a *get* (Jewish divorce) could be witnessed by non-Sabbath observant Jews in a place where there were no Sabbath observant Jews to be found. At the end of his responsum, R. Kiselev noted that: “In Siberia there is a big problem when it comes to *gittin*, as many places have no rabbi and the local shochet arranges the *get*. Needless to say,

⁹⁹ Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.405: 44.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁰¹ See Aharon M. Kiselev, *Sefer Mishbere Yam* [Waves of the Sea] (Harbin: bi-defus M. Leyitin, 1926), <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/308>.

these shochetim were often not learned at all in this matter, and this could create major halakhic complications. R. Kiseleff therefore suggested that no one should be authorized to slaughter in Siberia until he learns the laws of *gittin* and is given an authorization to arrange *gittin*.”¹⁰² By Rabbi Kiselev’s effort, the religious life of the Harbin Jewish community gradually corresponded to that in the Jewish center of East Europe. Rabbi Kiselev served the Harbin Jewish community for thirty-six years from 1913 until 1949 when he passed away.

Jewish education was another main concern of the Harbin Jewish community. In April 1907, a Jewish primary school was opened to give basic knowledge of Judaism and the Hebrew language to 18 boys and 8 girls. In 1909, the student number increased to 100 pupils, but the school “had no premises of its own and sheltered in a Chinese mud hut.”¹⁰³ It was not until April 1910 when a two-storey building of the Jewish National School was completed next to the Main Synagogue.¹⁰⁴

But more importantly, Jewish students in Harbin had the advantages for accessing higher education, because of the absence of the Russian discriminative law limiting Jewish admission to secondary and higher education. In Russia proper, the majority of Jewish youth could not be admitted to higher education, even though the quota of Jewish students allowed in state secondary schools was increased by law “to 5 percent in the capitals, to 15 percent in the Pale of Settlement, and to 10 percent elsewhere” in 1909.¹⁰⁵ According to Wolff, “school enrollment statistics for Harbin show a very different situation. The men’s and women’s commercial high schools, founded and funded by the CER, were the closest Harbin had to ‘state’ schools. In 1913,

¹⁰² Marc B. Shapiro, “China and the Answer to the Last Quiz,” The Seforim Blog, accessed August 15, 2019, <https://seforimblog.com/2018/04/china-and-answer-to-last-quiz/>.

¹⁰³ Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.405: 44.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 101.

14.7 percent of the combined student body was Jewish. The percentage in private schools was much higher (25 percent), and the overall rate for secondary education was 20.1 percent. Since the 402 students enrolled represent most of the Jewish children of high school age, we can safely assume that education was available to all who qualified.”¹⁰⁶

Without legal restriction and discrimination towards the Jews, not only the Jewish youth enjoyed the equal opportunity of education, but Zionists and Yiddishists also found heaven in privileged Harbin. The beginning of Zionism in Harbin can be traced as early as in the Russo-Japanese War, when the famous Russian Jewish soldier and a Zionist national hero, Joseph Trumpeldor (1880-1920), “came to Harbin on his way back to Russia from his captivity in Japan” in 1905.¹⁰⁷ In Harbin, Trumpeldor “lectured to the Jewish youth about the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel, and told them of ‘The Pioneer’ and ‘The Guard’ movement.”¹⁰⁸ Later, a small group of men of the Herzlian trend, J. V. Geshelin, S. G. Yabrov, S. L. Rabinovich, formed a Zionist circle in Harbin. Vladimir Kharitonovich Soskin, a brother of the Harbin “grain king” Soskin, led the Palestine Society until 1912 when the Kaufmans came to Harbin.¹⁰⁹

Abraham Josevich Kaufman (1885 – 1971) and his wife, Bertha Schwartz, graduated from medical school at the University of Bern, Switzerland. In 1905, Kaufman attended the Seventh World Zionist Congress in Basel. In 1909, after graduation from medical school, Abraham and his wife Bertha returned to Perm in Russia. In 1912, the couple left for Harbin where Bertha’s sister had settled. In Harbin, a burgeoning city in the Far East, the Kaufmans were able to start their careers as doctors without discrimination and to advocate freely for

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Kaufman “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 405: 45.

Zionism.¹¹⁰ In Harbin, without Russian censorship, Kaufman was surprised that he could announce his call for a Palestine Society assembly through the Russian newspaper, in a time when all Zionist activities were banned in European Russia.¹¹¹

However, there are two sides to every story. Not everyone in East Europe enjoyed their exodus to Harbin. Most of the wanderers had no confidence in what was waiting ahead. Siberia was already far away, while Manchuria was even farther. It took about 24 days and nights or more by train to get to Harbin from Eastern Europe. Abraham Fishzon,¹¹² the founder of the first Jewish theater in Romania, was once very afraid of being arrested and exiled to Siberia by the Russian police, but he eventually moved to Harbin. In his diary, Fishzon recalls that:

As it happened, my sister-in-law came to Kiev, and insisted that my wife and I should join her on her trip to Harbin. Harbin is somewhere in China, even further away than Siberia. How many times during the Russo-Japanese war I was offered to come to Harbin with my troupe. I was even paid in advance, but I sent the money back and refused the offer out of fear to pass through this terrible Siberia I heard of so much. I resisted as much as I could, but the insistent requests of my sister-in-law convinced my wife, and I gave up. And here we were, in the train carriage on our way to Vologda, and from Vologda to Omsk.... The train crawled on and on, slowly cutting through the endless dark and silent Siberian night, and it seemed to me that the whole thing is an agonizing nightmare....¹¹³

Fishzon's journey suggested that Harbin had been well-known in East Europe at that time. Residing in Kiev, Fishzon mentioned that he had several chances to move to Harbin. He delayed it because Harbin was too far, and in China.

¹¹⁰ For details of Kaufman's life, see Han Tianyan, Chen Hongze, and Xiao Hong, eds., *Harbin Youtai Jiazu Shi* [A History of Harbin Jewish Families] (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publisher, 2010), esp. the chapter on "The Political Leader of Harbin Jewish Community – A. I. Kaufman," 1-31.

¹¹¹ Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin" *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.405: 46.

¹¹² Abraham Fishzon was one of the most important founders of the modern Yiddish theater, for details, see David E. Fishman, *The Rise of Modern Yiddish Culture* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), 27-8; and Barbara J. Henry, and Joel Berkowitz, *Inventing the Modern Yiddish Stage: Essays in Drama, Performance, and Show Business* (Detroit, Mich: Wayne State University Press. 2012), 269-70.

¹¹³ Kaufman, "The Little Hamlet Called Harbin," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.407: 86.

However, once having arrived in Harbin, the Jews would have discovered that they attained a freedom far beyond their expectation. When Fishzon, the founder of the Yiddish theatre, finally reached Harbin in 1917, the first thing he did was to stage the Yiddish dramas which were prohibited in Russia. Having experienced a lifelong of persecution and poverty in East Europe, Fishzon finally preserved his troupe intact in Harbin.

Even so, Fishzon had been dreaming to immigrate to the United States before he died in Harbin in January 1922, eighty-four years of age.¹¹⁴ Harbin did not develop a typical Yiddish culture as that in New York or Montreal. According to a census, 62 percent of the Jews in Harbin spoke Russian in the home, and only 32 percent Yiddish.¹¹⁵ This was probably why Zionism surpassed other political trends and finally dominated Harbin Jewry. On the one hand, most Harbin Zionists, including the merchants, doctors, students, etc., were well acculturated to and integrated into the Russian society. On the other hand, however, Harbin Zionists did not have to cope with the dual loyalty problem being both Russian and Jewish nationalists. The influence of the hierarchical Russian domination did have its bounded limits in this remote city of Harbin in China.

2.4. Conclusion

Since the end of the 19th century, waves of persecutions and pogroms forced millions of Jews to uproot from the soil of East Europe. While the majority of Russian Jews emigrated to the United States, Western Europe, and Palestine, some of them moved eastwards to Northeast China. The construction of the CER and the Russo-Japanese War brought about Jewish immigration to Harbin. Without legal restriction and persecution, the Harbin Jewish community

¹¹⁴ Ibid., esp. 85-7.

¹¹⁵ Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, 102.

flourished in this frontier boomtown. For the Jews who preferred to immigrate to Manchuria instead of moving to the West, “a location outside the official boundaries and prejudices of the Russian state, but within a Russian-speaking cultural, social, and economic world” was ideal.¹¹⁶ However, when Russian influence receded from China after 1917, Harbin Jews began to experience a new journey, encountering the Chinese and the Japanese. This encounter added a surprising new page in modern Jewish history, as will be shown in the following chapters.

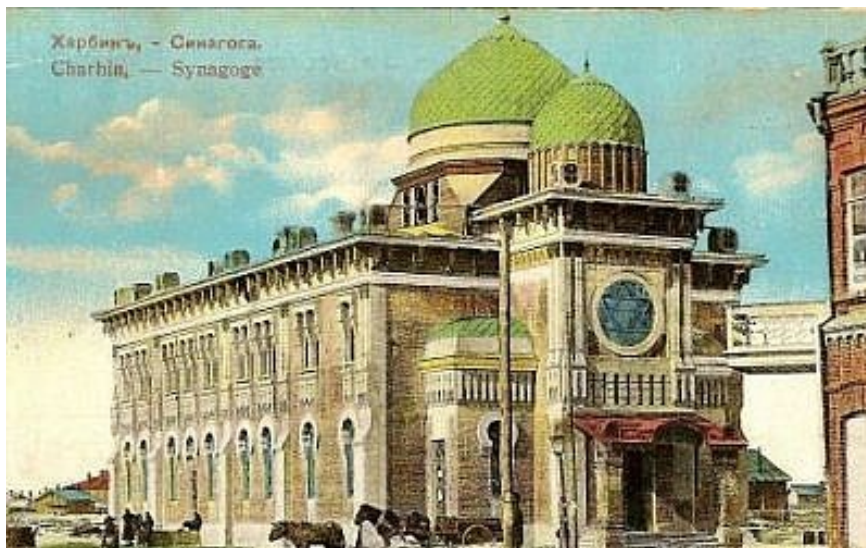


Figure 1: Harbin’s Old Synagogue.

(Image from <https://www.timesofisrael.com/home-to-one-jew-harbin-synagogue-to-be-renovated/>, accessed April 10, 2019)

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

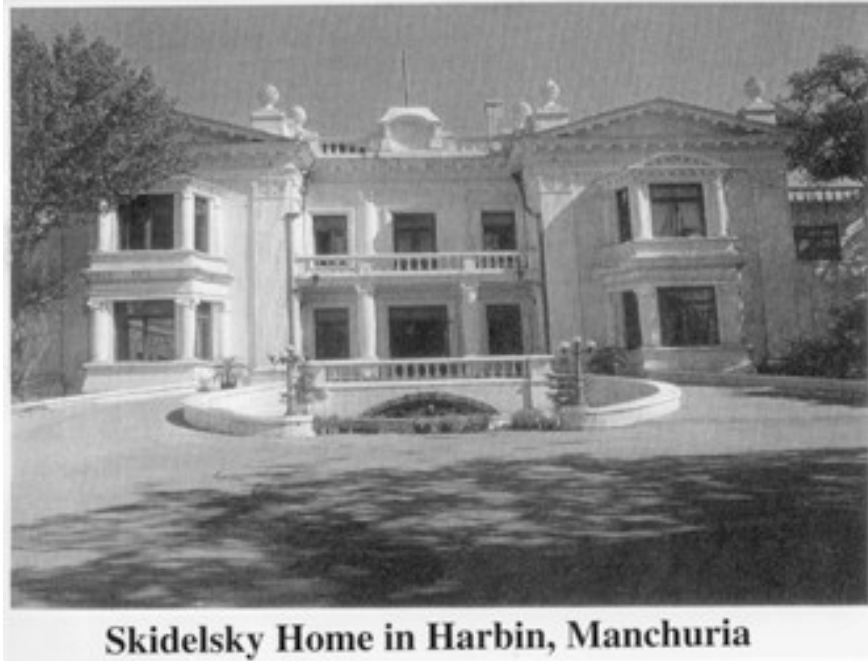


Figure 2: Skidelsky Home in Harbin

(Image from *Igud Yotzai Sin*, No. 399, p49.)

1905 Harbin
Kovtun family moves from Poltava to Harbin
Manchuria.

Isaac Kovtun



Figure 3: Kovtun Family Moves from Poltava to Harbin, 1905

(Image from *Igud Yotzai Sin*, No.399, p48.)

Chapter III: Transformation of the Harbin Jewish Community after WWI

In their book *World War I and the Jews: Conflict and Transformation in Europe, the Middle East, and America*, Marsha L. Rozenblit and Jonathan Karp admit that “in a global conflagration involving Jews from several continents and from many different countries, there really is no typical ‘Jewish’ experience.”¹¹⁷ Their book examines the different Jewish experiences in Europe, the Middle East, and America. However, like many Jewish historical writings, this book too ignores the Jews of China. They even did not notice this lacuna. In fact, when postwar Versailles-Washington systems rebalanced Russian, Japanese and Chinese power in the Far East, the Jews in China were experiencing similar political trends and struggles as in Europe, the Middle East and America.

Resembling Jews, the Chinese also experienced dramatic national reconstruction after WWI. Chinese nationalism, similar to Zionism, surged up in the 1920s, a time when the post-WWI Versailles-Washington system failed to re-establish an equal world order. The Chinese actively participated in the Great War by sending about 140,000 laborers to the British and French battlefronts and expected international recognition and a new world order in the spirit of national self-determination.¹¹⁸ Nevertheless, after the war, by ceding Shandong Province (Confucius’ hometown) from Germany to Japan, the Allies (America, Britain and France) absurdly humiliated the Germans and enhanced Japanese power in Asia – both factors fermented and constituted a cause for a second world war. As a member of the Allies in WWI, the Chinese felt betrayed. The result was the May Fourth Movement in 1919, demonstrating against “Western

¹¹⁷ Marsha L. Rozenblit and Jonathan Karp, eds., *World War I and the Jews: Conflict and Transformation in Europe, the Middle East, and America* (Berghahn Books, 2017), 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 130.

imperialism, Japanese aggression, and China's weakness in the face of both."¹¹⁹ The university students and the new literati urged a radical revolution in China. During that time, Chen Duxiu's journal *La Jeunesse* introduced democracy, science and Marxism to China. Besides the new cultural movement, China's national industries and political modernization were also in process. To some degree, WWI facilitated the making of a modern Chinese national state.¹²⁰

During WWI and Russia's Civil War, the Harbin Jewish community was not only transformed by the large number of refugees, but it also experienced a new political atmosphere when the Chinese took charge of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). From the collapse of the Russia Empire in 1917 to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1932, administration of the CER and Harbin went through three periods: the Chinese took over the CER after 1917; the Chinese and the Soviet Union jointly-managed from 1924 on; and the Sino-Soviet Conflict in 1929. Within the complex Russian-Chinese relations in Northeast China as a setting for remaking of the Harbin Jewish community, this chapter will reveal for the first time the uphill political struggles that the Harbin Jewish community experienced in the 1920s.

3.1. The Influx of Russian Jewish Émigrés and the Emerge of Anti-Semitism in Asia

Replacing East Europe, the United States became a new Jewish center after WWI. During the Great War, American Jewish relief organizations established branches in Harbin to transfer Jewish refugees from East Europe to the U.S. via the CER. During Russia's Civil War, White Russians spread anti-Semitism to Harbin and other stations along the CER, but the Chinese authorities prohibited any anti-Jewish persecutions in the areas it controlled.

¹¹⁹ James Carter, "The Rise of Nationalism and Revolutionary Parties, 1919-1937," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*, ed. Wasserstrom, 118.

¹²⁰ For details, see Xu, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization*.

3.1.1. JDC and HIAS Supported the Jews in China since WWI

WWI and the Russian Revolution of 1917 caused a new wave of Russian Jewish emigration from East Europe all over the world. From 1915 to 1925, American Jewry increased 1.5 times: “Contemporaries estimated that 1,000,000 Jews dwelled in the United States in 1900, 3,000,000 in 1915, and 4,500,000 in 1925, when drastic immigration laws took effect.”¹²¹ In Canada, about 42,029 Jews arrived between 1911 and 1921.¹²² Also, tens of thousands of Russian Jews moved west to England and France. Similarly, a large number of Jews crossed Russia’s eastern border and arrived in Northeast China.

Eastern European Jewish refugees, escaping the Great War, the Russian Revolution, and the ensuing famine, flooded into Harbin. Similar to New York, Montreal, and other cities in western countries, the Chinese city of Harbin became one of the world’s largest host cities for Eastern European Jewish refugees after the First World War. About 20,000 to 30,000 Jews lived in Harbin, and they were supported both by the local Jewish community and major American Jewish relief organizations.

To aid Eastern European Jewish refugees worldwide, many significant Jewish institutions sprang up during and after WWI. The Great War facilitated the development of American Jewish institutional life: “In response to the war, American Jews constructed not only the Joint Distribution Committee (known as JDC, “the first Jewish organization in the United States to dispense large-scale funding for international relief”¹²³) in the fall of 1914 but also the American Jewish Congress in late 1918, a month after the armistice, to coordinate postwar lobbying efforts

¹²¹ Gartner, *American and British Jews in the Age of the Great Migration*, 104.

¹²² Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking root: the origins of the Canadian Jewish community* (Toronto, Ont: Lester Pub. 1992), 158.

¹²³ “History of JDC,” JDC Archives, accessed Dec.12, 2018, <http://archives.jdc.org/our-stories/history-of-jdc/>.

on behalf of Eastern European Jews, including for Jewish national rights in the successor states.”¹²⁴ In addition, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA), an international news agency serving Jewish community newspapers and media around the world, was founded in 1917. Led by American Jewry, postwar Jewish institutions linked global Jewish communities more closely together ever, including the Jews in China.

Many American Jewish relief organizations operated in Harbin, and later in Shanghai. The most efficient and the longest sustained relief agency in Harbin was the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society of America (HIAS), a Jewish non-profit organization founded to support Jewish refugees and argue for Jewish immigration rights globally. HIAS and the JDC cooperated in the Far East. Mark Wischnitzer’s research shows that “Louis Marshall, speaking in behalf of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, promised to assist HIAS’s effort for the thousands of refugees moving ‘from the Urals to the Pacific.’ The AJDC made good this pledge by contributing five thousand dollars a month to HIAS for its Far East program.”¹²⁵

In 1918, HIAS set up a branch in Harbin, known as the Far Eastern Jewish Central Information Bureau “Daljewcib.” By the effort of its able chairman on foreign relations, Samuel Mason, the activities of HIAS in the Far East were productive. From 1918 to 1934, a period of 17 years, the Bureau Daljewcib processed 68,566 applications for emigration, documents, citizenship of countries of birth, the bringing over of relatives, individual assistance to relatives, searches, etc., with assistance of \$134,468 dollars.¹²⁶ On the one hand, the HIAS Bureau “receives a considerable number of tracers from oversea Jewish organizations to locate relatives

¹²⁴ Rozenblit and Karp, *World War I and the Jews*, 9.

¹²⁵ Mark Wischnitzer, *Visas to Freedom – The History of HIAS* (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1956), 86.

¹²⁶ YIVO, RG 1475, Box 9, Folder 91.

on the Far East, in Siberia, the USSR, and Ukraine. The World Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls, Women, and Children, the Rabbinical Bureau ‘Agunot’ for women deserted by their husbands (Warsaw) etc. apply with similar requests.”¹²⁷ On the other hand, the Bureau “Daljewcib” helped the refugees make a living or find employment in Northeastern and Central China. Qualified specialists, especially physicians, were doing rather well in China.¹²⁸ The “Daljewcib” also established information bureaus in Irkutsk and Vladivostok, but they did not last for long.¹²⁹ Only the Harbin office continued to function until 1939, when it transferred to Shanghai to aid the influx of WWII refugees from Central Europe.¹³⁰

Most of the Jewish refugees, who were trapped in Harbin, planned to go abroad and join their relatives in the United States. The main route for Russian Jewish refugees to embark for the United States was via the western ports of Japan. In order to shelter the Russian Jewish refugees and facilitate their immigration, the American JDC established its office in Yokohama. By the influence of Jacob Schiff, the Japanese Government agreed to permit Jewish war refugees enter Japan via Harbin in transit to the United States. By August 12, 1918, a total of 1706 Jewish war refugees sailed from Yokohama to the United States and other countries.¹³¹ The tiny Jewish community in Yokohama functioned as a transition point, but it did not have further development. By contrast, the city of Harbin, as the CER administration center connecting Russia, China and Japan, grew into a major Jewish center in Asia after WWI.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East – A century of Jewish life in China and Japan* (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1962), 33.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹³¹ JDC, 1914-1918 New York Collection, File 87, Refugees in the Far East, 1916, 1918-1919: “Our Mission to the Far East Report by Mr. Samuel Mason,” August 12, 1918.

In November 1920, the Kehillah of Harbin appealed to the New York JDC for 15 sewing machines and 3 paper box machines, which would enable the Harbin Jewish refugees to open 2 factories and “thus furnish work to all who are in need of it.”¹³² The JDC did not fulfill that request.¹³³ The priorities of the JDC were to appropriate funds as far as possible to plans for reconstruction work that would be “of lasting and permanent benefit to the people of various countries.”¹³⁴ Thus, when the Talmud Torah of Harbin, as well as the Shanghai Jewish school, appealed to the JDC, their requests were met. In 1920, Rabbi Levin established the Harbin Talmud Torah and served as its principal. One member of the school board, Haim Abraham Soloveitchik, formerly chairman of a committee in Vladivostok funded by the JDC and charged with the work of repatriating Siberian war prisoners, established a contact with the JDC in New York.¹³⁵ So the Cultural Committee of the JDC agreed to grant an appropriation of \$1000 to the Talmud Torah in Harbin in 1924 and another \$2,000 in 1927.¹³⁶ To the Shanghai Jewish School, the Cultural Committee appropriated \$2,000 and the Refugee Committee made a similar appropriation at the same time of \$2,000 in 1926.¹³⁷ Moreover, the JDC remitted \$500 to the Harbin Kehillah for relief of the Great Flood in 1932.¹³⁸

As New York City became a new world Jewish center after WWI, the American Jews positively supported the Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe to China as well as to other parts of the world. This tie between Jews in China and in America kept strong until WWII when it

¹³² JDC, 1919-1921 New York Collection, File 124 China, 1919-1921, “Translation Letter from Jewish Kehillah to Joint Distribution Committee,” November 1, 1920.

¹³³ JDC, 1919-1921 New York Collection, File 124 China, 1919-1921, “Letter from Albert Lucas to Mr. I. Frezer,” March 24, 1921.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ For the correspondences between H.A. Soloveitchik and the American leaders, Louis Marshall, David A. Brown, Cyrus Adler, Joseph C. Hyman, etc., see the documents in JDC, 1921-1932 New York Collection, File 180, China.

¹³⁶ JDC, 1921-1932 New York Collection, File 180 China, “Memorandum from Evelyn M. Morrissey to Mr. Joseph C. Hyman to Talmud Torah in Harbin,” Jan. 17, 1928.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ JDC, 1921-1932 New York Collection, File 180 China, “Letter from Secretary to Mr. Harry A. Havens,” Oct. 7, 1932.

became crucial for the survival of the Jewish refugees who escaped from Nazi Europe to Shanghai.

In addition, the rise of the Harbin Jewish community in China as a result of the influx of Eastern European Jewish immigrants after WWI coincided with the expansion of Jewish communities in New York, Montreal, London, Paris and other cities in the West. The following sections will pay attention to the similarities and differences of these Jewish communities in Harbin and in the west, as well as the preconditions and the course of development that made these parallels.

3.1.2. Siberian Intervention and the Emerge of Anti-Semitism in Asia

The Russian Revolution of 1917 dramatically changed the political status of the CER and Northeast China. The period from 1917 to 1922 saw a Russian émigré influx in Asia. In opposition to the Soviet regime, White Russian troops and refugees gathered in Siberia and the Far East. Far from the capital, Siberia became a major region that was controlled by the White Russians fighting against the Bolsheviks in the civil war.

During the famous “Siberian Intervention” (1918-1922), the Allied powers dispatched armed forces to support the White Russians against the Soviet Union. Japan seized this opportunity and occupied Siberia. When the other allies withdrew, Japan kept increasing its heavily armed troops in Siberia and North Manchuria. The Japanese military invasion not only strengthened the White Russians’ influence, but the Japanese offensive also intensified the White Terror in Siberia by slaughtering innocent civilians.¹³⁹ After the Red Army defeated Admiral Kolchak, leader of the White government based at Omsk, the Soviet Union strategically

¹³⁹ See Jamie Bisher, *White Terror: Cossack Warlords of the Trans-Siberian* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. Chapter 9, “White-Japanese resurgence, panic and disaster: April-December 1920.”

established a Far Eastern Republic in Chita in 1920, a buffer state between the Soviet Union and the territories occupied by Japan.¹⁴⁰

During the Siberian Intervention, anti-Semitic propaganda emerged for the first time in Asia, where traditionally nothing was known about anti-Semitism. The White Russian movement adopted anti-Semitism as their ideology, blaming the Jews for the Russian Revolution. From 1918 to 1920, anti-Jewish violence escalated to an unprecedented level. Historians believe the mass murder of Jews in Russia's Civil War was a prelude to the Holocaust.¹⁴¹ The existing literature mainly focuses on the pogroms in Ukraine, where the Jewish population was concentrated, but the Jews in Siberia suffered more distressingly in the White Terror of Russia's Civil War. Along the Trans-Siberian Railway, Cossack troops killed Jews cruelly and raped Jewish women for amusement.¹⁴² In Urga, the infamous Bloody Baron Ungern-Sternberg, "mandated that all Jews, Communists and commissars be killed along with their families and their property confiscated."¹⁴³ In the Transbaikal region, another ruthless Cossack governor, Ataman Semenov, handed out to each soldier a copy of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.¹⁴⁴ The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* described a threatening Jewish plan for global economic and political domination. The fabricated text was first produced "by the Russian secret police working in France during the Dreyfus Affair, probably in 1897 or 1898, on the basis of earlier fictional sources."¹⁴⁵ After the Russian Revolution of 1917, it circulated in the White Russian

¹⁴⁰ See N.G.O. Pereira, *White Siberia: The Politics of Civil War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

¹⁴¹ Oleg Budnitskiĭ, *Russian Jews between the Reds and the Whites, 1917-1920*, trans. Timothy J Portice (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 1.

¹⁴² See James Palmer, *The Bloody White Baron* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), esp. 156–7, on the pogrom of Urga in Mongolia.

¹⁴³ Bisher, *White Terror*, 333.

¹⁴⁴ Marvin Tokayer and Mary Swartz, *The Fugu Plan: the Untold Story of the Japanese and Jews during World War Two* (New York: Weatherhil, Inc., 1996), 47.

¹⁴⁵ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind: The History and Uses of a Cultural Stereotype*, 78.

military but was soon passed around to Europeans and became an influential anti-Semitic propaganda on the Jewish plot to take over the world.

The Japanese Army supported Semenov's troops to fight against the Red Army to the very end, so *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was also distributed among the Japanese soldiers.¹⁴⁶ According to David G. Goodman and Masanori Miyazawa, "*The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was being distributed as required reading to White Russian and Ukrainian troops in Siberia. Japanese soldiers also received copies and took it back with them to Japan, where it helped them explain how the revolution had occurred and why they were powerless to reverse it."¹⁴⁷ Especially, having served in the headquarters of the Fifth Army in Siberia as a Russian-language specialist posted to Semenov's staff, Yasue Norihiro (1888-1950) completed the first Japanese translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in 1924, under the title *Behind the World Revolution (Sekai kakumei no rimen)*.¹⁴⁸ Accordingly, Japan made its anti-Semitic policy in Harbin and Shanghai in the 1930s.

3.1.3. The Chinese Took Over the CER and Stemmed Anti-Semitism in Manchuria

In Northeast China, Japan's ambition caused the high vigilance of foreign allies, especially the United States. After the Russian Empire collapsed, Japan and America competed

¹⁴⁶ After the Russian Civil War, exiled Semenov kept collusion with the Japanese Army in Dalian. He assisted in laying the groundwork for the Japanese Guandong Army's invasion of Manchuria in 1931, and worked for the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo to enslave the Russian émigrés until the end of WWII. For more details of the cooperation between the Japanese Army and Semenov, see Bisher, *White Terror*, esp. Chapter 11, "Diaspora, Manchurian revival and legacy: June 1921 to the present day."

¹⁴⁷ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 78.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 81. For how the *Protocols* and its "conspiracy theory" were translated and accepted in Japan, see Takao Chizuko, "World War I, the Siberian Intervention, and Anti-Semitism: The Reception of *the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* in Japan," in *Russia's Great War and Revolution in the Far East: Re-imagining the Northeast Asian Theater, 1914–22*, eds. David Wolff, Yokote Shinji, and Willard Sunderland (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2018), 125–52. According to Takao, among the Japanese who initially introduced and propagated the contents of the *Protocols* in detail, the army school Russian professor Higuchi Ennosuke (1870-1931) played the most important role.

to control Manchuria. Therefore, “to counter a possible Japanese annexation of North Manchuria the United States took the lead in establishing the Inter-Allied Committee entrusted with the supervision of the Siberian railway system and the CER.”¹⁴⁹ Foreign Allies led by the U.S. requested that Chinese troops take over the CER. Seizing this opportunity and winning over other Chinese forces, warlord Zhang Zuolin in Shenyang, South Manchuria, extended his power to Jilin and Heilongjiang Provinces in North Manchuria.

Old Marshal Zhang Zuolin (张作霖 1875-1928), “the tiger of the Northeast,” governed Manchuria after the Qing Empire collapsed. Zhang supported Yuan Shikai (袁世凯 1859-1916), who replaced the revolutionary leader, Sun Yat-sen (孙中山 1866-1925) and became the first president of the Republic of China in Beijing in 1913.¹⁵⁰ The western countries recognized the Beijing Government as the central government of China *de jure*. But after Yuan died in 1916, control of the country *de facto* was divided among regional cliques.

Located in Shenyang (Fengtian) in South Manchuria, Marshal Zhang strived to build a civil government by appointing intellectuals, such as Wang Yongjiang, to reform administration.¹⁵¹ During Zhang’s rule, the unavoidable banditry problem in the frontier zone was also manageable.¹⁵² Moreover, Zhang was able to use his power to balance the Chinese interests with that of Japan in South Manchuria and Russia in the North. Thus, Zhang strengthened a relatively effective Chinese rule in the region.

¹⁴⁹ Clausen and Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin*, 43.

¹⁵⁰ Yuan Shikai, the powerful Qing Prime Minister, overturned the Qing Dynasty peacefully. When Yuan ruled China, he modernized China by combining reform policies with traditional Confucian ideology, and his reform achieved considerable progress. For more details, see Patrick Fuliang Shan, *Yuan Shikai – A Reappraisal* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

¹⁵¹ See Ronald S. Suleski, *Civil Government in Warlord China: Tradition, Modernization and Manchuria* (New York: P. Lang, 2002).

¹⁵² See Shan, *Taming China’s Wilderness*, esp. Chapter 4, “Insecurity, Banditry and Social Order.”

During the Russian Civil War, the Chinese not only controlled Manchuria militarily, but they also retrieved their rights in the CER. The Soviet Union forces struggled with the White Russian army in Siberia and could not reach Northeast China. Moreover, the internationally isolated Soviet Union attempted to draw China over to its side. Thus, on July 25, 1919, the Soviet Union published the famous “Karakhan Manifesto,” announcing a return of the CER to China without compensation.¹⁵³ It took almost 7 years for the newly established Soviet power to reach Northeast China again.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the Chinese authorities under Zhang’s leadership claimed sovereignty of the CER and the region of Northeast China.

Russia’s Civil War ended when the Soviet Union merged with the Far East Republic in late 1922. In the wake of the Japanese army retreat from the Far East, the helpless White Russians fled all over the world. According to John J. Stephan, “some 560,000 Russians had flocked to Germany by 1920, and most of these later gravitated to France, which in the 1930s emerged as a mecca for displaced Russians. An eastward wave of about 250,000 people rolled across Siberia to the Far East.”¹⁵⁵ The exiled White Russians in China mainly gathered in Harbin, from where they further transferred to Shanghai or overseas. According to a Chinese source, in Harbin, there were 60,200 Russians in 1918, but the Russian population increased to 131,073 in 1920 and 155,402 in 1922.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ For details, see Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1927* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

¹⁵⁴ It does not mean that the Soviet Union had no influence in Northeast China, but it did not become the main stream before 1924. For the Soviet Union’s influence on the Chinese, and the May Forth Movement in Harbin, see James H. Carter, *Creating A Chinese Harbin – Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002). For the influence of the Russian Revolution of 1917 on the Russians in Harbin, see Wolff David, “Harbin ou le Dernier Avatar de la politique impériale russe,” trans. Breuillard Sabine, in *Revue des études slaves*, tome 73, fascicule 2-3, (2001): 293-303.

¹⁵⁵ John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 1.

¹⁵⁶ Shi Fang, Liu Shuang, and Gao ling, *Harbin EQiao Shi* [A History of the Russian Immigration in Harbin] (Harbin: Helongjiang People’s Publisher, 2003), 71.

In the borderlands, the remnant White Russian forces kept spreading anti-Semitic propaganda and murdering Jews, but they did not become rampant because the Chinese authorities disarmed the White Russian troops and forbade any anti-Semitic persecutions. In October 1922, White bandits killed a Manchuli Jewish merchant named Nisan Mendelevich Fridman in the area of Abagaitu Islet on Russian-Chinese border. On October 17, the panic-stricken Manchuli Jewish community called for an emergency meeting and immediately informed the Harbin Jewish community of the Fridman incident. The Harbin Jewish community asked the Chinese Army for protection. The Chinese Army of the Special District of the Eastern Provinces subsequently increased sentries and patrol guards, and instituted some precautionary measures to protect Jewish émigrés.¹⁵⁷ According to Qu Wei and Li Shuxiao, the Chinese Commander in Chief of the Eastern Provinces Railway Guard banned any anti-Semitic activities in Northeast China.¹⁵⁸

Even though anti-Semitism escalated and spread to Asia after WWI, the Chinese did not develop an anti-Jewish view. In early modern China, most of the available information on Jews was translated from British, German, Japanese and some other anti-Semitic literature, but the Chinese interpreted them differently to serve their own purpose for national struggle. Irene Eber observes that in the Chinese literature on Jews, “practically all of the articles stressed the fact of the Jews’ dispersion and emphasized that the Zionist movement was an organized effort to help their return to the homeland.”¹⁵⁹ By speaking of Zionism, Chinese writers aimed to encourage the Chinese people to fight for their national independence. Recounting Jewish history and the Zionist movement, German-educated scholar Yu Songhua wrote that “If our Chinese fellow-

¹⁵⁷ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 173-74.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ Irene Eber, *Voices from Afar: Modern Chinese Writers on Oppressed Peoples and Their Literature* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1980), 26.

countrymen could have the same enthusiasm and determination that Jews displayed in their resurgent movement,” Chinese national independence would be achieved.¹⁶⁰ Sympathy and alliance with other oppressed nations was one of the main Chinese moral orientations and diplomatic policies during the two World Wars.

Therefore, in the 1920s, White Russian anti-Jewish violence was stemmed in Northeast China because of the Chinese rule. An article titled “The Great Jewish Settlement in the Far East,” in the *Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, reported in May 1926 that:

Harbin may in truth be considered a fortunate Jewish community that has entirely escaped the unpleasant operations that the other Jewish settlements in Russia have gone through during the years of the war. The town makes the impression of having, by mere chance, avoided all the terrible incidents of the Civil War, Pogroms, hunger and military communism and has remained quite untouched by them. It needs a more intimate study of the out-of-the-way corners and more distant alleys to find the tens of thousands of hungry, broken and spiritually wrecked and homeless people that the Civil wars and pogroms have brought here. It is only then that one is reminded of the great tragedy that has taken place thousands of miles away.¹⁶¹

The article shows that the Harbin Jewish community fortunately escaped the violence caused by the Russian Civil War and became a shelter for Jews in the Far East.

3.2. Golden Age of the Harbin Jewish Community under Chinese Rule

After the collapse of the Russian Empire, the Chinese inherited the CER from the Russian colonizers and Sinicized it. The existing western scholarly work speaks of a Chinese civil government of Manchuria of the 1920s. This study illustrates that during this time the Harbin Jewish community also entered its heyday and emerged as a new Jewish center in the Far East.

¹⁶⁰ Xiao Xian, “An Overview of Chinese Impressions of and Attitudes toward Jews before 1949,” in *The Jews of China, vol. 2: a Sourcebook and Research Guide*, ed. Jonathan Goldstein (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 38.

¹⁶¹ Ben Menachem, “The Great Jewish Settlement in the Far East,” *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, May 21, 1926. My thanks to my colleague, Yosef Robinson, for offering me this article.

3.2.1. Chinese – Administrated Harbin

In 1920-21, the Beijing Government established the Special District of the Eastern Provinces (东省特别区, *Dongsheng Tebie Qu*) to replace Russian colonial rule in Northeast China. The administration was both national and regional: “Although the Special District was established by a national mandate from Beijing, the details of its organization were left to regional, provincial, and municipal elites.”¹⁶² The Special District administrators responded both to the Beijing Government and Zhang Zuolin’s Shenyang Government.

In 1920, the previous CER governor Khorvat was replaced by Boris Ostroumoff, who was a bureaucrat of the former Russian Empire in Siberia.¹⁶³ Ostroumoff worked for the benefit of the Russian émigrés, as did the Chinese. The newly nominated Chinese officials of the CER were usually bilingual and bicultural. They had graduated from Russian schools in Harbin, or married Russian wives; therefore, they protected the rights of the Russian émigrés. The head of the Special District, Zhu Qinglan, “founded the International Society for the Protection of Refugees, which lobbied the Chinese commercial class for funds and carried on extensive charity work.”¹⁶⁴

The Chinese aimed to turn the CER into a commercial entity only, so the administration of the police, the courts, municipal governments, and territoriality could be transferred to the Chinese gradually. On 23 October 1920, the Beijing Government announced the abolition of “the extraterritorial rights of all Russian subjects living in China.”¹⁶⁵ On 30 October, the Chinese

¹⁶² Blaine R. Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer – Manchuria’s Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918-29* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 50.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 61.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

confirmed the authority of the Special District High Court over all the courts in Manchuria.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, Russian judges, lawyers, and laws were retained to ensure the functioning of the Russian community. Also, the CER police and guards integrated both Chinese and Russians. In 1923, the Chinese attempted to take over the CER's land Department but failed, so "the Special District continued to have two land administrations until 1935, when the new Japanese-controlled state of Manchukuo forced the USSR to sell the CER to Japan."¹⁶⁷

Under the co-management of the Chinese and the Russians, the CER gained more profits than ever: By 1923, the CER was carrying 2,762,000 tons of goods, 296.8 tons of bean oil production, and doubled passenger traffic.¹⁶⁸ It was well recognized that Chinese rule had brought about a new order in Harbin: the economic improvement of the CER, more effective juridical systems, and a better urban sanitation. Chinese religious and cultural symbols – the Buddhist Paradise Temple and the Confucian Temple – were also constructed in Harbin during this period.

To some extent, Harbin Chinese authorities inherited and improved upon the previous Russian government. Undoubtedly, the Special District was a political bright spot in the early years of the Republic of China. Its model was soon applied to Shanghai, Tianjin, and other concessions in which foreigners' influence was weakened. By examining Harbin's history in the 1920s, James Carter comments that "the first generation of Chinese nationalists had sought a modern Harbin as part of a new China, produced from cooperation between Western and Chinese forces."¹⁶⁹ Also Blaine Chiasson observes that, the period of the 1920s, "reviled as the

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 76.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 150.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁶⁹ James H. Carter, *Creating A Chinese Harbin – Nationalism in an International City, 1916-1932* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002), 3.

absolute low point of China's century-long crisis, would herald a period of relative growth and prosperity for Manchuria."¹⁷⁰

3.2.2. Prosperity of the Harbin Jewish Community

In the 1920s, Harbin became the leading city in Manchuria under Chinese administration. China gained the chance to develop its own national industries as the Europeans loosened their control in Asia because of the war. Historian Hsü wrote that "the World War I period had witnessed an unprecedented expansion of Chinese industry and commerce – especially in the fields of textiles, flour mills, silk, matches, cement, cigarettes, and modern banks and joint-stock corporations – as a result of favorable internal and external conditions."¹⁷¹ Through the Chinese program to improve the country by developing industry (*shiyujiuguo*), 400 private Chinese firms were established in Harbin during WWI, and the number grew into 1,200 by 1931.¹⁷² Clausen and Thogersen observed that "Chinese entrepreneurs thus successfully moved into the vacuum created by the demise of Russian influence."¹⁷³

Thanks to the rise of the Chinese economy, the Jewish industries and trades also thrived. There were more than 116 Jewish shops in Harbin before WWI.¹⁷⁴ But by 1926, there were 489 Jewish businesses in Harbin, multiplying more than four times as compared to before WWI.¹⁷⁵ Jewish commerce accounted for 31.6% and Jewish industry accounted for 46.5% of all the

¹⁷⁰ Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer*, 43.

¹⁷¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 495.

¹⁷² Clausen and Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City: History and Historiography in Harbin*, 46.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ Liu Shuang, *Harbin Youtai Qiaomin Shi* [A History of the Jewish Immigration in Harbin] (Beijing: Fangzhi Publisher, 2007), 75.

¹⁷⁵ Zhang Tiejiang, *Zhongguo Dongbei Youtairen Yanjiu* [Study on Jews in Northeastern China], (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publisher, 2017), 31.

foreign investment in Northern Manchuria.¹⁷⁶ Harbin scholar Zhang Tiejiang places Harbin at the centre of Jewish economy in East Asia. Zhang's researches on Harbin Jews have stimulated both Jewish studies in China in particular and the worldwide studies on the Jews of China.¹⁷⁷

According to the "1922-1923 Harbin Immigration Vocation Survey" (see below) in the *Harbin – Fujiadian, Trade - Industrial and Railway Directory*, which was conducted by a Russian named K. Ocheretin, Harbin Jews numbering 5,848 out of 56,375 Eastern European immigrants were the second largest Russian immigrant group. Poles, Latvians, Estonians, and Czechs had hundreds of people, but their numbers were far less than the Jews. The "1922-1923 Harbin Immigration Vocation Survey" (*The Survey*) classified 15 career categories, such as engineer, doctor, teacher, student, railway worker, priest, police, businessman, clerk, craftsman, and laborer. More than three thousand Russians took almost all the jobs of railway workers, accounting for 7 percent of the Russian population. The policemen were Russians too. By contrast, most Jews engaged in business to supply the railway. 1,106 Jewish landlords, merchants and industrial workers took 33.7 percent of the total 3,820 population in business. Also, 162 Jewish doctors and nurses, 131 teachers and lawyers and 464 artisans took large part of those vocations among the Eastern European immigrants. Generally speaking, *the Survey* of vocation of the Eastern European immigrants showed that Jews made up a high percentage of the employees and businessmen in Harbin. Most of them had relatively stable and high-salary jobs. Harbin Jews were among the higher and middle social classes.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Zhang's treatise *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi: Harbin Youtairen shequ kaocha yanjiu* [Revealing the Enigma of Jewish History in Harbin: A Survey of the Harbin Jewish Community] has elaborately investigated the Jewish economy in Harbin. His other book *Zhongguo Dongbei Youtairen Yanjiu* [Study on Jews in Northeastern China] details Russian Jews' economic network in some towns in North Manchuria, such as Qiqihaer, Manzhouli, and Hailaer, and the cities in South Manchuria, such as Yingkou, Dalian, Shengyang, Changchun, Jilin and Dandong.

Table 1: 1922-1923 Harbin Immigration Vocation Survey

Nation \ Career	Russia	Jew	Poland	Latvia	Estonia	Czech	Other	Total
Engineer, Technician	675	19	40	8	6	5	9	762
Doctor, Nurse	474	162	16	9	6	2	5	674
Teacher, Lawyer	1704	131	39	12	4	7	25	1922
Student	955	145	25	3	2	1	8	1139
Railway Worker	3482	16	27	6	–	1	2	3534
Priest	100	5	2	1	–	–	2	110
Police	98	–	–	2	–	–	–	100
Servant	991	9	14	2	2	2	10	1030
Landlord, Merchant, Industry, Trade	1986	1106	71	13	6	10	88	3280
Accountant, Statistician, Clerk	926	95	25	10	3	7	21	1087
Artisan	3519	464	92	25	15	49	53	4217
Laborer	2034	38	24	2	–	5	11	2114
Household	13493	1912	233	50	21	32	95	15836
Service work	7276	535	103	18	16	19	48	8015
Children	10961	1211	211	35	12	24	101	12555
Total	48674	5848	922	196	93	164	478	56375

[Table from: К. Очеретин (K.Ocheretin), *харбин – фуцзядянь: торгово - промышленный и железнодорожный справочник*, (*Harbin – Fujiadian. Trade - Industrial and Railway Directory*), (Harbin: 1925), 53, quoted in Liu, *Harbin Youtai Qiaomin Shi*, 73-4.]

The Survey indicates that Russian Jews dominated Harbin's commerce and industries. Evidently, "a socialist and ethnographer, Moisei Krol, noticed when he arrived in 1918 in Harbin that 'almost all big commercial enterprises in Harbin were in Jewish hands.'"¹⁷⁸

After 1917, Jews kept leading Harbin's typical industries of grain and soybeans. Kabalkin's soybean oil mill earned huge profits during WWI, as the food demand of European markets increased. However, the crash of the rouble after the Russian Revolution of 1917 swept away the fortunes of so many Russian factories; Kabalkin's company was no exception. Loyal to the old regime, Kabalkin never believed that the Russian Empire would collapse. As a result, almost all of his businesses in Manchuria went bankrupt. It was not until 1921 when Kabalkin re-established his company with the help of his son, Yaakov Romanovich Kabalkin.¹⁷⁹

Using new technology that he studied in Western Europe, Yaakov R. Kabalkin introduced 22 new hydraulic oil presses, which increased his company's oil yield from 10 to 12 percent. The renewed oil mill could produce 225,000 Russian pounds (3,700 tons) of soybean oil and 1,500,000 Russian pounds (25,000 tons) of soybean cakes in one year. The young Kabalkin exported the refined soybean productions to South China, Siberia, Japan, the United States, and Europe.¹⁸⁰ A prominent entrepreneur, Yaakov Kabalkin, was elected President of the Harbin Stock Exchange Committee in 1924. He headed the Stock Exchange Committee for ten years, until 1934 when the Japanese forced him to resign. In July 1939, the Japanese took over Kabalkin's oil mill, and all its soybean productions was exported solely to Japan.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Takao, "Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II," 53-4.

¹⁷⁹ Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi*, 128-30.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 131.

Harbin's well known grain and sugar producers, Semion Soskin, also known as "the grain king" and Lev Zickman, referred to as the "sugar king," were also Eastern European Jews. Soskin was from a wealthy grain merchant family in the town of Kerch in Crimea. He and his two brothers established the S. Soskin and Co. Ltd in Harbin with funds of one million American dollars after WWI. They set up branches in Vancouver, London, Dalian and Vladivostok.¹⁸² By 1923, the Soskin flour mill and oil mill, located in Fujiadian (the Chinese town), "exported nearly 250,000 kgs of wheat, soybeans, and oil, more than a quarter of the CER's total annual export."¹⁸³ The popular Harbin Russian ditty sang that "*Bez zhenshchiny muzhchina, kak ofitser bez china, kak mestnyi Soskin bez bobov* [A man without a woman is like an officer without rank, like our own Soskin without soybeans]."¹⁸⁴ This Russian ditty demonstrates how prominent the Jewish economic achievement and influence were in Harbin.

In addition, China's first and largest sugar beet processing plant, the Ashihe Sugar-refining Factory, was founded by a group of Polish Jews: Chaidewafu 柴德瓦夫 (Russian or Polish name is not available), Aaron Iosifovich Kagan, and Lev Zickman.¹⁸⁵ "They taught local farmers how to cultivate sugar beets," and produced both "soft Chinese sugar and hard cube sugar and sugarcones."¹⁸⁶ Later, they imported raw sugar from Cuba and Java. It was estimated

¹⁸² Ibid., 137.

¹⁸³ Shickman-Bowman, "The Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898-1931," 193.

¹⁸⁴ Gregory Grossman, "Building the north-east: Jewish enterprise in Manchuria, 1900-1940," in *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews – A Paper Collection from the International Seminar on the History and Culture of Jews in Harbin, 29 August to 2 September 2004*, eds. Qu Wei and Teddy Kaufman (Harbin: Heilongjiang People's Publishing House, 2005), 323.

¹⁸⁵ Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi*, 115-125.

¹⁸⁶ Shickman-Bowman, "The Construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the Origin of the Harbin Jewish Community, 1898-1931," 193-94.

that the Ashihe Sugar Factory produced about 15,000 tons of raw sugar and 6,000 tons of granulated sugar per year.¹⁸⁷

One prominent example of the cooperation of Chinese and Russian Jews in industry was the Skidelsky family. As early as the CER being constructed, the Skidelskys easily obtained timber and coal concessions from Qing government officials. After the Qing dynasty collapsed, the Skidelskys re-established a good relationship with the republican government. In 1920, the Heilongjiang Province Bureau of Railway Negotiation (*Tielu Jiaosheju*) granted the Skidelskys a permit to recruit 9,500 coal workers for the *Dalai Nur* Mines. In 1924, the head of the Industrial Department of Jilin Province, Ma Deen, and the Skidelskys signed a 30-year contract for the joint management for *Mulin* Mines between the Chinese officials and the Russian Jewish merchants. The total investment was six million Chinese currencies of Harbin (*Ha dayang*): Jilin Province invested in the mining pits three million; the Skidelskys invested another three million. The corporate headquarter was set up in Harbin. The Skidelskys and the Chinese jointly managed the investment, administration, and employees, based on a half and half principle. By 1931, there were two pits (No.2 pit was headed by the Chinese engineer Sun Yuqi), seven adits, a 9,925 square meter machinery factory, and a 138 square meter power plant, which produced 1.63 million tons of coal and gained profits of 6.7 million Chinese currencies of Jilin (*Jilin dayang*). It became the number one coal mine in Northern Manchuria. In 1927, the Skidelskys and the Chinese officials jointly established a primary school for the miners' children in *Lishu* village.¹⁸⁸ Teddy Kaufman recalls that the Skidelskys built “a town” close by the Mulin Coal Mines, “where thousands of their workers lived; there they also built a school, a hospital, a

¹⁸⁷ Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi*, 119.

¹⁸⁸ Han, Cheng and Xiao, “The Founder of Business Empire in the Far East – The Skidelsky Family,” in *Harbin Youtai Jiazuo Shi (A History of Harbin Jewish Families)*, 67-8; Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi*, 153-161.

Russian Orthodox Church and other public buildings... They were among the most generous donors to the Harbin Jewish community.”¹⁸⁹

Besides soybean, grain and sugar exportation, timber and coal industries, Russian Jews also led the tobacco industry, petroleum corporations, the fur and textile trades, and the banking and insurance business in Harbin. In January 1922, to boost the established Jewish businesses, Harbin Jewish magnates, such as Solomon Skidelsky, Yaakov (Jacob) Kabalkin, Isaac Soskin, Aaron Iosifovich Kagan, and Jacob Frizer founded the Far Eastern Jewish Bank of Commerce. With the investment of Japanese currency 400,000 *yen* (the Russian rouble crashed after the 1917 Revolution), the Jewish Bank of Commerce competed against the Japanese banks, whose capital came from South Manchuria. Subsequently, the Jewish Bank of Commerce went bankrupt in 1933 when the Japanese Guandong Army occupied North Manchuria.¹⁹⁰

In June 1923, another Jewish bank, the Jewish People’s Bank, was opened. It was registered with Chinese currency in Harbin 5,812 *yuan*. In 1924, the capital fund increased to 100,000 *yuan*. Led by small traders and middle class employees, like A. M. Pataka, Dr. A Kaufman, and G. B. Drizin, the Jewish People’s Bank provided a low interest rate and small credit, only 10 *yen* par value share, for retail traders and artisans to start their own businesses. At least 10 percent of the profits of the bank were donated to Jewish public education and charity. The Jewish People’s Bank was operated until October 1959 when the Harbin Jewish community came to its end. The Chinese government subsequently transformed the Jewish People’s Bank

¹⁸⁹ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 91.

¹⁹⁰ Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi: Harbin Youtairen shequ kaocha yanjiu*, 37.

into the Harbin People's Bank for Foreign Residents. It was one of the banks that lasted the longest time in Harbin.¹⁹¹

Overall, WWI and the Russian Revolution weakened the western colonizers' control in China so that the Chinese gained the opportunity to recover their national economy. When the Chinese administrated the CER and Harbin, the CER earned more profits and the city of greater Harbin, both the Russian enclave and Fujiaodian, flourished. Consequently, the Harbin Jewish community not only expanded by the arrival of the new Russian Jewish immigrants, but also became prosperous and came into its golden time.

Remarkably, the Russian Jews in Harbin dominated the industries and boosted the economy of the city in an early stage when other Russian Jewish immigrants in New York, Montreal, London or Paris could only sell their labours in the garment industry. One reason that made the distinction between Russian Jews in Harbin and in the West was that the unfamiliar social, political and cultural milieu in America, England and the other western countries challenged the uprooted Eastern European new comers. Lloyd Gartner observes that "Once in England, however, East European Jews moved speedily in the direction of Anglicization and assimilation into English culture."¹⁹² Even so, the East End of London, the Lower East Side of New York, the Pletzl of Paris, and "other immigrant areas of settlement were poor and crowded quarters, where Yiddish signs, kosher butchers, and Jewish restaurants gave visible expression to the foreignness of their residents."¹⁹³ Moreover, the well-established German Jews in New York, the native Jews in England and France, all shared some of the prejudices of their host societies

¹⁹¹ "Abraham Kaufman's Memoir (Chinese version)," in Qu and Li ed. *Harbin Youtairen*, 323; Zhang, *Jiekai Harbin Youtairen lishi zhi mi*, 38.

¹⁹² Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870-1914* (Detroit: Wayne state University Press, 1960), 272.

¹⁹³ Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 119.

toward the immigrants. Even though native Jews established charities to assist the new immigrants, they kept a separate identity from the Russian Jews, and feared that the differentness of the later might arouse anti-Semitism.

By contrast, the precondition of remaking of the Russian Jewish community in Harbin was different. The well-established Russian Jewish community in Harbin almost immediately absorbed the new immigrants, who constituted the same Russian Jewish identity. The new immigrants settled down in the railway zone, the most developed area of the city. Since November 1915, when the WWI refugees arrived in Harbin, a free soup kitchen “was opened on Samannaya Street, serving hot food for the refugees and the local needy three times daily.”¹⁹⁴ A Jewish infirmary and a home for the aged were both set up in 1920. Moreover, because of the previous Russian influence in Harbin, the Eastern European Jewish immigrants did not have cultural or language barriers to integrate into local society. The Russian enclave served as a buffer between the Jewish and the Chinese societies. It was much easier for the new immigrants to integrate into the native Jewry and society. Therefore, among all the Russian Jewish communities in Diaspora, Harbin was a very unique one in that it was dominated by the Russian Jews from the very beginning to the end. In Northeast China, the homogeneous Harbin Jewry established for itself the sort of coherent Russian Jewish institutions that were being challenged or destroyed in Russia itself.

But more importantly, the rise of the Harbin Jewish community could not be separated from the Chinese setting as a whole. After WWI, similar to the Jews, the Chinese also experienced national self-reconstruction, as analyzed previously. As a rising economic entity,

¹⁹⁴ Abraham Kaufman, “Harbin Jewry and the Saga of Assistance – 1914-1918, Documents and notes,” *Igud Yotzei Sin* (English Supplement), no. 385, (Sep.-Oct. 2005): 46.

China offered Jews the equal opportunity without prejudice or restrictions. Jewish doctors, professionals, technicians and merchants were welcomed in China. Evidence can also be drawn from the developments of the Tianjin and Shanghai Jewish communities in inner China.

The Tianjin (Tientsin) Jewish community was founded by Russian Jews in 1904. The Great War and the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought a wave of Jewish refugees to settle in Tianjin via Harbin. It consequently grew into the second largest Russian Jewish community in China, consisting of about 500-600 Jewish families. The Tianjin Hebrew Association was founded in 1920, led by Leo Gershevich, a fur merchant.¹⁹⁵ The Tianjin Jews had the closest ties with the Harbin Jewish community because of the fur trade industry. According to scholar Xu Xin, “There were more than 100 fur firms owned by Jews in the city. Furs were obtained in Northeast China but sorted and processed in Tianjin. Fur products were chiefly shipped to American and European markets.”¹⁹⁶

Similarly, Jews from Harbin, who moved south, also expanded and strengthened the Shanghai Jewish Community. Before the Russian Jews came, the Baghdadi Jews had already established a Sephardic Jewish community there. As Shanghai was a British colony, the Baghdadi Jewish merchants came with the Englishmen in the 1840s, just after China was forced to open to foreign trade.¹⁹⁷ The Baghdadi Jewish tycoons in Shanghai were very wealthy, but their number was no more than 700, all of whom integrated into the Shanghai’s International

¹⁹⁵ YIVO, RG 273, Box 6, Folder 65. “Short Notices of History of Jewish Settlement in Tientsin China” by L. Gershevich. Aug. 25th 1936, Tientsin, China.

¹⁹⁶ Xin Xu, “Jewish Diaspora in China,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 408, (Aug-Sep 2012): 38.

¹⁹⁷ For the history of the Baghdadi Jews in Shanghai, see Maisie J. Meyer, *From the rivers of Babylon to the Whangpoo: a century of Sephardi Jewish life in Shanghai* (Lanham, Md. : University Press of America, 2003); and *Shanghai’s Baghdadi Jews – A Collection of Biographical Reflections* (Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books, 2015).

Settlement (Concession).¹⁹⁸ Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russian Jewish refugees surged into Shanghai via Harbin. There were in total 800 to 1000 Russian Jews in Shanghai in 1924.¹⁹⁹

Hence, the Jewish communities in China all expanded after the WWI period, a time when Eastern European Jews were uprooted and immigrated all over the world. Therefore, the Russian Jewish communities not only sprang up in the western countries, such as the United States and Canada, but they also obtained a foothold and multiplied in China during the Great Immigration period. The parallel development of the Jewish communities in China, which have long been ignored, indeed deserves more attention in modern Jewish history.



Figure 4: Jewish Fur Traders in Rural China

(Image from YIVO, RG 2030, Dan and Yisha Ben-Canaan Collection)

¹⁹⁸ Lane Earns, “The Shanghai- Nagasaki Judaic Connection, 1859-1924”, in *The Jews of China*, vol. 1, ed. Goldstein, 158.

¹⁹⁹ Pan Guang and Wang Jian, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Youtai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye* [One and a half Century of the Shanghai Jews – An East Page on the Jewish History] (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002), 25.



Figure 5: Guests attend a banquet in Harbin, China, to celebrate the wedding anniversary of Isaac and Manya Soskin, circa 1925.

(Image from <https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1140234>, accessed 9 Oct. 2017)

3.2.3. Remaking of the Harbin Kehillah

After WWI, the American Jewish Congress was founded in Philadelphia's historic Independence Hall in 1918 and was led by the famous Rabbi, R. Stephen S. Wise. Similarly, the Canadian Jewish Congress was established in Montreal in 1919. In this way, diverse Jewish groups were able to vote for their representatives and be unified for the struggle for Jewish national rights all over the world. In the remote Far East, Harbin Jewry quickly recognized the new democratic trend and surprisingly made the same efforts.

After the demise of the organized Jewish communities in Siberia in 1917, Harbin became the only major Jewish center in the east. In January, 1919, the Provisional Committee of the Harbin Jewish Association organized an Electoral Bureau of the Council for a democratic

election. The Electoral Bureau of the Jewish Council was something new to the Harbin Jews, so the electoral Bureau first initiated a census of Harbin Jews.

However, the census was conducted by the Jewish school students, who were not professional. In addition, the orthodox Jews rejected the census, “arguing that ‘counting’ the Jews will inevitably bring calamity upon the community.”²⁰⁰ Consequently, the outcome of a total of 7,554 Jewish adults in Harbin was an inaccurate one. Kaufman estimated that the Jewish population ought to be 15,000 to 16,000 living in the city of Harbin in 1919.²⁰¹ Nevertheless, the census of 7,554 Jews, 4,500 who were above the age 20, and 3,000 under the age 20, was publicized in Harbin’s *Yuandong Bao* [Far Eastern Newspaper] on January 17, 1919.²⁰²

An article titled “The Great Jewish Settlement in the Far East,” in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, reported in May 1926 that “the last census of the Jewish population took place in 1917, and this also in a far from thorough manner. This census showed that there were just 7,554 Jews in the town. But the greater number of immigrants arrived since that time, that is, during the past seven years, and it can therefore be assumed that there are at least four times as many Jews in Harbin at the present time – that is, about 30,000 souls.”²⁰³

Another reliable reference is the Census of the Old Jewish Graveyard in Harbin (shown below). It indicates that from the year 1903 to 1958, there were in total 3,173 graves, 1,923 males and 1,250 females. The peak of the deceased population was 177 in 1919, which approximately doubled the total of 80 in 1917 and tripled the total of 59 in 1915. The census of

²⁰⁰ A. Kaufman “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.407: 87.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² *Yuandong Bao* [The Far Eastern Newspaper], 1906-1921, was a Chinese newspaper but was published by the Russian CER officer, Alexander V. Spitsyn, who worked for General Khorvat. *Yuandong Bao* was in fact a mouthpiece for the Russian CER office.

²⁰³ Ben Menachem, “The Great Jewish Settlement in the Far East,” in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, May 21, 1926.

the graveyard confirmed that the peak of the Harbin Jewish population happened after the WWI period.

Table 2: The Census of the Old Jewish Graveyard in Harbin

Year Population Total (Male/Female)	Year Population Total (Male/Female)	Year Population Total (Male/Female)
1903 8/1 9	1922 71/35 106	1941 36/13 49
1904 29/4 33	1923 61/29 90	1942 23/20 43
1905 44/2 46	1924 48/37 85	1943 36/17 53
1906 42/25 67	1925 49/30 79	1944 29/20 49
1907 18/15 33	1926 43/32 75	1945 39/32 71
1908 29/13 42	1927 45/39 84	1946 34/27 61
1909 33/17 50	1928 49/22 71	1947 22/18 40
1910 19/10 29	1929 43/46 89	1948 29/23 52
1911 28/13 41	1930 53/35 88	1949 23/8 31
1912 35/16 51	1931 35/33 68	1950 17/16 33
1913 35/21 56	1932 39/43 82	1951 8/11 19
1914 29/26 55	1933 32/36 68	1952 9/9 18
1915 34/25 59	1934 47/23 70	1953 9/11 20
1916 45/36 81	1935 44/22 66	1954 6/9 15
1917 52/28 80	1936 27/17 44	1955 12/3 15
1918 52/43 95	1937 34/20 54	1956 4/4 8
1919 108/69 177	1938 31/27 58	1957 8/3 11
1920 70/35 105	1939 31/18 49	1958 1/- 1
1921 55/39 94	1940 31/24 55	Total 345/244 589
Total 765/438 1,203	Total 813/568 1,381	Grand Total 3,173

{Table from: Zhang Tiejiang and Zhao Liantai, “Harbin Youtairen Mudi Kaochao Yanjiu [Investigation of the Jewish Graveyard in Harbin],” *Heilongjiang Social Sciences*, No. 1, 2002, General No. 70: 55. (The original source of the table is from Harbin Archive No.1-26-33)}.

Based on the 1919 census, the Harbin Jewish Council held a democratic election and elected 40 members: General Zionist Party had 16 members; the Bund had 8; the Poale Zion had 7; the Zeirei Zion had 4; the Mizrachi had 2; the Volks Partei had 2; and the Agudat Israel had 1.²⁰⁴ The General Zionist Party with 16 members was in the top place. Bund (Jewish Socialist Party) with 8 members was in the second place. Following them, socialist Zionism and religious Zionism (Mizrachi) also gained some influence. A small group supported the Agudat Israel, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish political party. Despite their small number, the Harbin Jewry manifested a vigorous Jewish political engagement. Hence the newly established Harbin Jewish Council transformed the Kehillah and functioned as the Jewish Association. The sequential presidents of the Harbin Jewish community from 1903 to 1950 were: E. Dobisof, G. B. Drizin, Shlomo (Salomon) Ravikovich, Isaac Soskin, Abraham Kaufman, Rabbi Aharon Kiselev, and Michael Zaigraef.²⁰⁵ Dobisof and Drizin were Siberian Jews who founded the Harbin Jewish community. Soskin and Kaufman were ardent Zionists. Rabbi Kiselev also supported Zionism.

On April 19, 1920, the Statute of the Harbin Jewish Council was successfully registered with the newly established Chinese District Court of the Border Region.²⁰⁶ The Chinese Special District of the Eastern Provinces had become the chief civil administrator of Harbin, “assuming most of the powers that the Russian administration had held previously.”²⁰⁷ The Chinese gradually secured the administration of police and court, but the Russians still dominated the previous Russia-established municipality in the railway zone as mentioned in the previous chapter. In the municipal elections taking place during 1922-23, the Chinese authorities made

²⁰⁴ A. Kaufman “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no.407: 87.

²⁰⁵ Huang Cheng, “Jews in Harbin in the Earlier Period of the 20th Century,” in *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, eds. Qu and T. Kaufman, 439.

²⁰⁶ Avraham Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” in *From Kaifeng-to Shanghai: Jews in China*, ed. Roman Malek (Nettetal: Steyler, 2000), 296-97, footnote 58.

²⁰⁷ Carter, *Creating A Chinese Harbin*, 22.

efforts to add their influence in the municipality. The elected members made up the Municipal Assembly, which consisted of 60 members: 12 Russians, 12 Chinese, 3 Japanese, 3 foreigners (1 British, 1 American, and 1 Belgian), and delegates from other blocs.²⁰⁸ The Chinese did not take over the Russian municipality by force, but they gradually expanded their influence there.

Seven Russian Jews were elected to the Municipal Assembly, constituting 11 percent. Three Jews— I. H. Soskin, I. S. Fride, and Y.Y. Yabrov – were elected by the General City bloc, which traditionally controlled the municipality. Four Jews – Dr. Y. E. Elyason, Dr. A.Y. Kaufman, Y. R. Kabalkin and Y. R. Baranov – were elected by the newly formed democratic section in the Russian bloc.²⁰⁹ The democrats “attempted to form a coalition with Chinese electors,” thus they “drew the criticism of Russian traditionalists who said they were traitors.”²¹⁰ Finally, the four Jews and one non-Jewish delegate operated the democratic bloc in the Municipal Assembly. We know details about three of the seven Jews in the Municipal Assembly: I.H. Soskin was the chairman of the Far Eastern Jewish Commercial Bank of Harbin and the president of the Harbin Jewish Council; Y.R. Kabalkin was the president of the Harbin Exchange; Dr. Kaufman was the leader of the Harbin Zionist Organization. The elected Jewish municipal members immigrated to Harbin and established themselves well in Harbin before the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Harbin Jews successfully kept their civil rights and influence as in the previous Russian dominated period before 1917. With Harbin a home base, the Chinese and the Russians, including the Russian Jews, lived relatively peacefully and harmoniously.

In 1921, the Harbin Jewish community built a new synagogue on the *Diagonalnaia* Street (*Jiangwei* Street), not far from the Main Synagogue. The New Synagogue became the largest

²⁰⁸ “A. Kaufman’s Memoir” (Chinese version), 327.

²⁰⁹ Ibid. The names are translated from Chinese by the author.

²¹⁰ Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer*, 173-74.

synagogue in Northeast China with a capacity of 800. For the large number of Jewish refugees coming after 1917, the Harbin Jewish community built one more *Heder* (Jewish primary school) in the *Majiagou* area in 1921.²¹¹ The first Jewish middle school in the Far East – the Harbin Jewish Middle School – was built in 1918 near the main synagogue in the Pristan District (*Daoli*). In August 1922, there were 140 primary students and 100 middle school students. Sixty percent of the Jewish students were from poor families, so the Jewish schools largely depended on charity and donations.²¹²

In 1920, Rabbi Levin founded the Talmud Torah School, financially aided by the Skidelsky brothers. In its first years the school followed the Orthodox teachings on *Halakha* and classic texts. But their students could not be admitted by Russian public schools; wealthy Jews chose to send their children to Russian commercial or technological schools.²¹³ Therefore, from the second grade, besides Hebrew and Torah studies, the school added 12 hours out of 34 hours every week on secular subjects, including mathematics, Russian and geography.²¹⁴ Moreover, Zionist teachers, Yehezkiel Leib Nadel and his wife Rivka, not only taught knowledge of Palestine, but also advocated equal education for female children so that Jewish girls could attend the Talmud Torah too. The Talmud Torah was the great hope for Harbin Jewish parents who wanted their children to learn Judaism and inherit the Jewish tradition. Hayim Tadmor, whose family immigrated to Palestine in 1935, recounted that “I was 12 years old when my mother and I joined my sister and her family in Palestine, and so I went directly into the sixth grade in elementary school. Thanks to the Harbin Talmud Torah, my transfer to school in Palestine was normal and natural, and I do not remember having any special problems with

²¹¹ “A. Kaufman’s Memoir (Chinese version),” 320.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 324-27.

²¹³ Han, *Harbin Youtai Jiazhu Shi*, (*A History of Harbin Jewish Families*), 153.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

Hebrew. I seem to have known enough to communicate with teachers and classmates and to study the Bible, Hebrew songs, and literature.”²¹⁵ Tadmor later became the vice present of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

The Balfour Declaration of 1917, which declared British support for the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine, boosted Zionists’ activities worldwide. On 26 November 1918, Harbin Zionists celebrated the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration in the Moderne Hotel. In December, Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) in London, sent letters to Harbin concerning Palestine fund collection.²¹⁶ In addition, the WZO sent its first representative, Israel Cohen, to East Asia in 1920. Toward the end of 1920, Cohen arrived in Harbin and he was impressed by the community’s vigorousness and generosity. Cohen said that there was no need for him to “gain converts,” and his task was “confined to spreading information and obtaining donations from a relatively small group who had succeeded in becoming or remaining wealthy despite the economic typhoon that had swept away the fortunes of so many.”²¹⁷ Jews in China made considerable donations to the Jewish National Fund. Yossi Katz’s research shows that of “the total sum collected in 32 countries in the period from the establishment of the Jewish National Fund in 1901 until 1922, the Zionists of China lie in 16th place, having collected £26,000 sterling.”²¹⁸

From 1919 to 1921, Harbin hosted two Far Eastern Zionist Congresses, aiming to prompt cultural, social and commercial contacts between the Far Eastern Jews and Palestine. In April

²¹⁵ Hayim Tadmor, “From Talmud Torah in Harbin to the Israel Academy of Sciences in Jerusalem,” in Qu and T. Kaufman ed., *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, 80.

²¹⁶ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 420.

²¹⁷ Israel Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1956) 204.

²¹⁸ Report of the JNF central management, Jerusalem, 1924, p.21 (Hebrew), quoted in Yossi Katz, “The Jews of China and their Contribution to the Establishment of the Jewish National Home in Palestine in the First Half of the Twentieth Century,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.46, no. 4, (July 2010): 550.

1921, the WZO in London nominated Kaufman as the representative of the WZO in the Far East and Siberia. Kaufman picked up the official nomination letter through the British Consul in Harbin, who was in charge of distribution of Palestine Immigration Certificates. In April 1921, the first aliyah of 47 Far Eastern Jews immigrated to Palestine. Twenty-one of them came from Harbin. In May and July, another two aliyahs, about 70 Jews, left China for Palestine.²¹⁹

Furthermore, the Palestinian informational bulletin *Sibir - Palestina* was transferred from Shanghai to Harbin in December 1920. Kaufman was its chief editor. It was renamed as *Evreiskaya Jizn* (Jewish Life) in January 1925. The journal's special issues for youth, *Maccabi*, were initiated in 1939 (*Maccabi* as the Harbin Jewish youth sport organization was established in June 1921). When Zionists' activities and publications were halted in Soviet Russia, *Jewish Life* became the only source for Far Eastern Jews to learn Palestinian information and to establish contact with other Jewish communities. Twenty percent of the copies of the journal were sent to Palestine and other countries, and eighty percent of the copies were circulated among Jews in Harbin and other Chinese cities. *Jewish Life* was published for more than 20 years until the Japanese authorities closed it in June 1943.²²⁰

It was notable that Kaufman's wife, Bertha Schwartz-Kaufman, was one of the few women who participated in the first World Zionist Congresses. She led the Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in Harbin. She was also the leader of the Harbin Women's Charity Association. The Harbin Jewish community founded the Women's Charity in 1906: "They provided clothes, some money, wood, and coal when necessary, and also helped poor Jewish families to pay rents, repay bank loans, or pay tuition for their children. The

²¹⁹ "A. Kaufman's Memoir (Chinese version)," 312.

²²⁰ Han, Chen and Xiao, *Harbin Youtai Jiazhu Shi*, 14.

expenses were covered by membership fees and donations. On average the Women's Charity Association helped about 200 families."²²¹ In addition, the Jewish Women's Charity Association opened a training school in 1921, "where nearly 40 young women were studying tailoring and sewing for free."²²² Unfortunately, Madam Kaufman died eight months after giving birth to her second son Theodore (Teddy) in 1925, at the age of 37.²²³ After her death, the Jewish community named the training school by her name as the "Schwartz-Kaufman Labor School" in memory of this extraordinary Jewish woman.²²⁴

Before 1917, the Orthodox and Zionists dominated the Harbin Jewish community, with Harbin's Chief Rabbi Kiselev advocating Zionism. In his Russian monograph called *Natsionalizm i evreĭstvo : sbornik stateĭ i leksiĭ* (Nationalism and Judaism: a collection of articles and lectures), Rabbi Kiselev combined Judaism and nationalism, and emphasized that it was the Jewish religion that kept the Jewish nationality alive in the Diaspora. To Rabbi Kiselev, Judaism and the Jewish nation were entwined like "the flame is to the ember" and are inseparable."²²⁵ With the support of Rabbi Kiselev, the spiritual leader of the community, Zionism flourished in Harbin.

However, many Russian revolutionaries fled to Harbin when the White Russians occupied Siberia. The new immigration after WWI increased the number and the influence of the

²²¹ B.B. (Victoria Valentinovna) Romanova, "Charitable Activities of Harbin Jewish Association," in *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, eds. Qu and T. Kaufman, 384. Romanova is a Russian scholar working on the Harbin Jewish community. She writes the history of the Harbin Jewish community in the context of the Russian Far East. For her articles, see the journals *Евреи в Сибири и на Дальнем Востоке* [Jews in Siberia and the Far East] and *Через Дальний Восток - на Ближний* [Through the Far East - to the Middle East]. The main source of Romanova's research is also from the memoirs of Abraham Kaufman in *Igud Yotzei Sin*.

²²² Ibid., 386.

²²³ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 176.

²²⁴ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 424.

²²⁵ Yoad Dvir, "Chief Rabbi and Spiritual Leader of the Jewish Community in Harbin – Rabbi Aharon Moshe Kiselev," *Igud Yotzei Sin* (English Supplement), no.404: 55.

Bundists (Jewish socialists) dramatically. In 1917, two Bundists out of 31 members were in the Harbin Jewish committee.²²⁶ In 1919, Bundists consisted 8 out of 40 in the Jewish council, and their number increased to 13 out of 40 in 1921.²²⁷ *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, reported in May 1926 that “At the time of the Civil War, when the Russian Far East was flooded with blood, when Baron Ungern-Sternberg, Kalmikas and Merkuloff and their divisions in the years 1918-1922 carried out their aggressions in the Amur and Baikal regions, thousands of refugee revolutionists found shelter in Harbin.”²²⁸ The report continued that “The Jewish Workers’ parties, the Bund and others, worked intensively here and enjoyed great popularity for a time among the Jewish masses. In the communal elections of 1921, they received more than 49 per cent of the entire vote.”²²⁹

Before 1920, the Harbin Bund was led by Lazar Epstein, whose son, Israel Epstein, later joined the Chinese Communist Party. In 1920, the Epsteins moved to Tianjin for business. The chairman of HIAS branch in the Far East, Meir Birman, became one of the Harbin Bund leaders. Birman recorded all the HIAS information, letters and activities in China, and sent them to the New York office. He was the chief editor of two socialist publications in Harbin: a Russian magazine *Наше Слово* (Our Word 1919) and a Yiddish newspaper *Der Weiter Misroch* (The Far East 1921), which was an analogy to New York’s newspaper *Der Forverts* (Forwards).²³⁰ But different from *Der Forverts*, which was popular among the American Jewish labor unions, the Yiddish newspaper in Harbin was ill-fated and lasted only for one year.

²²⁶ Boris Bresler, “Harbin’s Jewish Community, 1898-1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity,” in *The Jews of China*, vol. 1, ed. Goldstein, 203.

²²⁷ A. Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 407: 87; Li Shuxiao, “A. N. Kaofuman Nianbu” [Timeline of A.N. Kaufman], in *Harbin Youtairen*, eds. Qu and Li, 123.

²²⁸ Ben Menachem, “The Great Jewish Settlement in the Far East,” in *The Canadian Jewish Chronicle*, May 21, 1926.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Rudolf Lowenthal, *The Religious Periodical Press in China* (Peking: The Synodal Commission in China, 1940), 263.

However, similar to its contemporary Jewry in America, the Bundists “had to guard its separate identity and resist the Zionist bid for hegemony” of the Jewish community.²³¹ First, the issue of the language of Hebrew or Yiddish to be taught in the Harbin Jewish school curriculum raised serious debates among Zionists, Bundists and the orthodox in Harbin, like in New York, Montreal and elsewhere. According to Kaufman, the Bundists “initiated endless wrangling on the question of school agenda, demanding that the Yiddish be adopted as the official Jewish language. It was only after a long and a bitter struggle that the Council finally adopted *Ivrit* [Hebrew] to be recognized and taught in the Jewish school as the official Jewish tongue.”²³²

Unsatisfied with the firm strength of the Zionists and the Orthodox in Harbin, the Bundists further put forward to the Harbin Jewish Council a proposal for registering non-religious marriages. The Zionists pointed out that it was not the right time to discuss non-religious marriages due to the problems stemming from its practice in West Europe. Finally, 22 out of 40 in the council voted to reject Jewish non-religious marriages.²³³

Another bone of contention between the Zionists and the Bundists was the management of the Harbin Jewish club “IMALDAG” (Russian initials of The Jewish musical-literary-dramatic society). The Bundists organized a socialist library in 1918, which was merged with the IMALDAG library in 1922.²³⁴ When the Soviet Union recaptured Harbin, the Bund members advocated Soviet rule and spread Soviet propaganda. IMALDAG subsequently became “the bone of contention between the Poalei Zion Party and the Soviet dominated Bund.”²³⁵ In May 1929, the Bundists, led by Ziroel Lifschits, attempted to illegally transfer the library books to

²³¹ Jonathan Frankel, *Crisis, Revolution, and Russian Jews* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 223.

²³² A. Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 407: 88.

²³³ “A. Kaufman’s Memoir,” (Chinese version), 328.

²³⁴ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 420.

²³⁵ A. Kaufman, “The Little Hamlet Called Harbin,” *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 404: 91.

Birobidzhan (a Soviet plan for Jewish settlement, see below), but they were stopped by Kaufman and the Betar members²³⁶.

Moreover, the Bundists' free speech for Bolshevik propaganda in the Jewish club attracted the attention of the Chinese police. The Chinese authorities finally closed the Jewish club in 1925, a time when all these conflicts among the White Russians, the Red Russians, the Jews and the Chinese deepened and became more complicated with the Soviet Union reclaiming its rights on the CER.



Figure 6: The Group Picture of the Leaders of the Jewish Community in Harbin in 1917, including Rabbi Kiselev, Kaufman, Drizin, Dobisov, and Mordokhovich.

{Image from Michael Rinsky, *Китайские Евреи* [Chinese Jews], (Tel-Aviv: Shlomo Levy Ltd. 2010), p18.}

²³⁶ As a reaction to the arising anti-Semitism, the Betar Movement flourished in Harbin in the 1930s with intensive sport training programs aiming at building new Jewish youth for self-defence. See Yaacov Liberman, *My China: Jewish life in the Orient, 1900-1950* (Berkeley: Judah L. Magnes Museum; Jerusalem: Gefen Pub. House Ltd. 1998).



*Teachers and students of second grade, elementary school "Talmud Tora"
From left to right, top row: Rabbi Zelig Slutzker, Rabbi S. Levin
and Mrs. Rachel Nadel*

Figure 7: Teachers and students of second grade, elementary school “Talmud Torah”

(Image from *Igud Yotzei Sin*, No. 394, p67.)



Figure 8: Harbin New Synagogue

(Image from
<http://www.jewsofchina.org/JOC/Templates/showpage.asp?DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=103&FID=1655>,
accessed Nov.4, 2018)

3.3. The Troubled Water since 1924

The rise of the Soviet Union as an anti-imperialist power won over the Chinese revolutionaries, but the Soviet Union soon betrayed its promise and deprived the Chinese authority of the CER. The coming turmoil caused by the Soviet intervention further divided and transformed the political identities among the Russians, the Chinese, and the Jews in Harbin.

3.3.1. The Soviets Came!

When the Chinese were getting their first experience administering their former colonizers in Northeast China, the Soviets came! When Soviet Russia was entangled in war communism, and with fighting White Russians in Siberia and Russia's Far Eastern areas, the Soviets issued the Karakhan Manifesto to China in 1919. To get rid of its international isolation, "the Karakhan Manifesto offered to fulfill all of the requests that China had just had rejected by the Paris Peace Conference, including the abolition of all of Russia's extraterritorial rights in China, the return of territorial concessions, abolition of all unequal treaties to return the Chinese Eastern Railway to China free of charge."²³⁷ To win China's backing, Lenin declared that he rejected imperialism, and that only the Soviet Union could be China's true friend. In fact, the Karakhan Manifesto was the Soviets' diplomatic strategy during the war communism period.

However, after the Soviet Union recaptured Siberia and the Far East, it realized the strategic importance of the railways in Manchuria to connect it with the Far East. The Soviets did not want to kill this golden goose in making its economic communism. Therefore, the Soviets began diplomatic relations with China by denying the first version of the Karakhan Manifesto to

²³⁷ Bruce A. Elleman, "Sino-Soviet Tensions and Soviet Administrative Control over the Chinese Eastern Railway, 1917-25," in *Manchurian Railways and the Opening of China*, eds. Elleman and Kotkin, 60.

return the CER freely. From 1920, the Soviet Union began to negotiate with the Beijing Government to regain the CER, but did not get satisfactory results.

The Soviet Union then turned to Sun Yat-sen's opposition government in Guangzhou. According to Bruce Elleman, by promising Sun military and financial aid, Sun agreed that the CER would be jointly managed by Russia and China, and he signed the declaration with Adolph Joffe, the Soviet representative, on January 26, 1923.²³⁸ As early as 1921, Sun agreed to ally with the newly established Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was fostered by the Soviet Union. Sun's Chinese Nationalist Party (CNP) and the CCP formed the First United Front, which was led by the CNP. The Soviets' spreading influence in China forced the Beijing Government to reopen the negotiations. On May 31, 1924, the Soviet Union's representative, L. Karakhen, and C.T. Wang (王正廷 1882-1961), the representative of the Beijing Government, signed a second Karakhen Manifesto to jointly manage the CER.²³⁹

To cope with the difficult situation in Northeast China, in September 1924, the Soviet Union signed a secret agreement with Warlord Zhang Zuolin to contain Japan's power; but on the other hand, in January 1925, the Soviet Union signed another secret agreement with Japan, recognising Japan's "Twenty-one Demands"²⁴⁰ and all Japan's rights in China so that Japan could accept the Soviet Union's reinstatement in North Manchuria. Hence, the Soviet Union

²³⁸ Ibid.,64-5.

²³⁹ Ibid., 70-1.

²⁴⁰ "The Twenty-one Demands" were a set of demands that Japan presented to China in January 1915 when the outbreak of WWI weakened the western countries' control over China. There were five groups of the Demands: the first four groups hoped to establish and enhance a Japanese sphere of interest in Shangdong Province, South Manchuria (the most important Japanese colony in China), Inner Mongolia, the Yangzi valley (a British sphere of influence), and Fujian (opposite to Taiwan). The last group was the most offensive one which called for Japanese police and advisers to be present in the Chinese central government. Japan's "Twenty-One Demands" was a prelude for Japan's invasion of China in the 1930s. For more details, see Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999). Dickinson's work indicates that Japan transformed to one of the greatest power in the world during the WWI period, and it prepared for an Asia under the rule of the Japanese Empire.

recovered her control of the CER and North Manchuria. Bruce A. Elleman interpreted the Soviet Union's practical "diplomacy" as "deception."²⁴¹ Sow-Theng Leong assumed that the Soviet Union's revolutionary internationalism became secondary to her national self-interest in Sino-Soviet relations.²⁴² After losing control of Manchuria and Mongolia to the Soviet Union, the Chinese finally recognized that the Soviet Union's friendship was too expensive.²⁴³

3.3.2. Harbin Jews among the Reds, the Whites and the Yellow

When the Soviets came back to Harbin, they established new CER administrative rules and regulations, which further split Russians between the Reds and the Whites. According to Chiasson, "before 1924, the CER's Russian and Chinese workers had been organized into one union that was anti-Bolshevik in orientation. Ivanov, CER general manager (newly appointed by the Soviet Union), ordered this non-partisan Russian-Chinese union closed and insisted that all workers be members of the official CER union, which was under Soviet direction."²⁴⁴ Thus the White Russians working on the CER were forced to take Soviet citizenship. A table on the citizenship of Harbin Russian immigration (see below) shows that the Russian immigrants reached as high as 155,402 in 1922, but the number dropped to 58,559 after the Soviet Union recaptured the CER in 1924. Also, the table indicates that from 1927 to 1931, less than half of the former Russian imperial subjects, around 25,000 to 27,000 people, decided to take Soviet

²⁴¹ See Bruce A. Elleman, *Diplomacy and Deception: The Secret History of Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1927* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

²⁴² See Sow-Theng Leong, *Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations, 1917-1926* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1976).

²⁴³ Xue Ruihan, "1922 nian Sulian weihe zhichi Sun Zhongshan: Tongyi Sue keyi bu chechu Waimeng" [In 1922, why the Soviet Union supported Sun Yat-sen: Sun agreed the Soviet Union not to withdraw from Outer Mongolia], *Zhongguo Jindaishi, Lishi, Fenghuang Wang*, accessed October 18, 2017, http://news.ifeng.com/history/zhongguojindaishi/detail_2013_03/31/23718643_0.shtml.

²⁴⁴ Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer*, 114.

citizenship; more than half of the Russian population, about 30,000 to 40,000 chose to be stateless.

Table 3: Harbin Russian Immigration Citizenship from the 1920s to the beginning of the 1930s

year citizen	1920	1922	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931
Russia	131,013	155,402	58,559	92,852	54,644					
USSR						25,637	27,492	26,704	27,633	27,617
Stateless						30,322	29,652	30,415	36,837	41,188

(Table from: Shi, Liu, and Gao, *Harbin EQiao Shi*, 80.)

Competing with the new CER general manager Ivanov of the Soviet Union, Zhang Huanxiang (张焕相 1882-1962) became the new head of the Special District of the Eastern Provinces. General Zhang was once the head of the CER police and guards, in which both Chinese and White Russians were mixed. A food and housing allowance for employees in the CER Guards and Police attracted unemployed Russian émigrés, especially members of the former White Russian armies.²⁴⁵ Zhang worked closely with the White Russians, and called them “our Russians.” Influenced by the White Russians, Zhang had a strong anti-Soviet inclination.

Suspecting that all Jews were Bolsheviks and every Jewish meeting was a Bolshevik propaganda affair, Zhang and other Special District officials kept close watch on the Harbin Jewish community. They first prohibited the use of the Yiddish language at public meetings, entertainments or any other affairs, and then they closed the Harbin Jewish club IMALDAG.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer*, 62.

²⁴⁶ “Our Daily News Letter” *JTA*, January 15, 1926; “Harbin Jewish Community Ordered by Chinese Rule to Cease Functioning,” *JTA*, September 27, 1926.

The Harbin Jewish community was split further between the Zionists and the Bundists who welcomed Soviet rule.

The situation of the Harbin Jewish community became worse, as the conflicts between the Chinese and the Soviets widened in their joint management of the CER. In January 1926, Marshal Zhang Zuolin threatened to take the CER by force. General Zhang Huanxiang at Zhang Zuolin's behest arrested Ivanov and three Soviet directors of the CER who "refused to continue transporting Chinese railway guards and troops on credit."²⁴⁷ In March 1926, Zhang Huanxiang closed the Harbin Municipal Council by force in fear of the Soviets seizing it to gain power.²⁴⁸ After that, the Special District requested that all the Jewish institutions which made up the community submit applications for ratification of their individual statutes in September.²⁴⁹

In March 1927, the Special District administration requested that the Harbin Jewish Council reformulate its regulations. According to *JTA*, "the authorities declared that it is impossible in China, where even the citizens of Soviet Russia have no extra-territorial rights, to allow the existence of a Jewish institution with the right to unite all Jewish institutions and impose a tax upon its members."²⁵⁰ Within the Harbin Jewish community, the Bundists resented the Chinese authorities and they wrote to the Harbin Municipality to inquire, but General Chu Zhen, the Mayor of Harbin, replied in the No. 308 Command refusing to register the revised Jewish council regulations.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ George Alexander Lensen, *The damned inheritance: the Soviet Union and the Manchurian crises, 1924-1935* (Tallahassee: Diplomatic Press. 1974),18-9.

²⁴⁸ Chiasson, *Administering the Colonizer*, esp.176-9.

²⁴⁹ "Harbin Jewish Community Ordered by Chinese Rule to Cease Functioning," *JTA*, September 27, 1926.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ YIVO, HIAS-HICEM, Series I, RG352, Birman Papers, Roll 1.

In such a situation, the Harbin Jewish Council almost ceased to function. But fortunately enough, the Chinese authorities only had strong feelings against the Reds not the Jews; neither were they anti-Semites like the Whites. On May 31, 1927, the Chief of Police of the Special District of the Eastern Provinces finally approved the revised Statutes of the Jewish Communal Board of Harbin, the Harbin Kehillah.²⁵² *JTA* reported in June that “The Chinese authorities consented to permit the functioning of the Kehillah only on condition that it deal with religious and charitable activities, the registration of births, marriages and deaths of the Jewish population, and the imposition of taxes upon Jews for the maintenance of religious institutions.”²⁵³ A new Jewish Council was established by the Orthodox and the Zionist parties in early 1928.²⁵⁴ The Bund was excluded from the Jewish council.

In May of 1928, the representative of the Jewish Zionist Fund and the World Zionist Organization, Gaul Klichevsky, visited Harbin. The local Soviet newspaper *новости жизни* [News of Life] attacked Klichevsky’s visit to Harbin and sharply critiqued Zionism and British policies concerning Jews moving to Palestine.²⁵⁵ The Soviet Union saw all Jews as Russians and rejected Jewish national independence. No evidence showed that the Soviet authorities recognized the legitimacy of the Harbin Jewish community. However, the Chinese authorities backed Zionism and welcomed Klichevsky’s visit. On June 13, the Chief General Zhang Huanxiang, the Supreme Executive Officer of the Special District of Northeast Provinces, granted an interview to G. Krichevsky and A. Kaufman. They talked for 45 minutes in a very

²⁵² Avraham Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 296-97, footnote 58.

²⁵³ “Chinese Authorities Grant Harbin Kehillah Legal Status,” *JTA*, June 26, 1927, (Harbin Jun. 24).

²⁵⁴ “New Jewish Community Established in Harbin,” *JTA*, February 17, 1928, (Harbin, Jan. 15).

²⁵⁵ Г.В. Мейлиhof, “Gaul Klichevsky in Harbin in 1928” in *The Fomesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, eds. Qu and T.Kaufman, 247.

friendly manner. Zhang expressed his sympathy for Zionism and confirmed “China’s declaration of its stand on restoring Palestine to the Jews.”²⁵⁶ He further stated that “it was a great and just cause for the Jews to return to their historical homeland and regain independence and sovereignty, and that all nations should show sympathy and assist them to accomplish this great goal.”²⁵⁷

The next day, Krichevsky met General Chu Zhen, Mayor of Harbin, and General Jin Ronggui, the Chief of Police of the Special District. Both of them endorsed Zionism. In addition, General Jin attended Krichevsky’s lecture at the Jewish business assembly in the evening. Jin gave a speech “pointing out that the Jewish people constructing an independent nation was in accordance with the most basic justice and international rights, declared the deep sympathy that the Chinese people had for the Jews,” and the Chinese people’s “best wishes for the Jews finally fulfilling the great cause of restoring their historical homeland.”²⁵⁸ As an oppressed nation themselves, the Chinese seemed very much in sympathy with the Zionists who were also fighting for national independence. Thus, backing Zionism against Bundism became the earliest Chinese policy towards the Jews in modern time. Consequently, the tension between the Harbin Chinese authorities and the Jews was resolved to some degree.

Regardless of the Chinese authorities’ political view of the Harbin Jewish community, the Chinese prohibited any attack on individual Jews. One example was the Vilensky File of

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 248.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

1927, in which the Chinese Court sentenced a White Russian to life imprisonment for killing Jews, despite of the Russians' acquittal pleas for the murder.²⁵⁹ According to *JTA*,

Levi Isaac Vilensky, a Jewish refugee from Russia, was murdered by a Russian, formerly a member of the monarchist army, at the railway station Chailar [Hailar, about 750km north from the Harbin station]. M. Bichowsky Vilensky's brother-in-law who was associated with him in his railway contracting work was seriously wounded by the officer. The murderer, Ruskin, was arrested by the Chinese authorities.

The attack took place under circumstances which have caused great indignation in the Jewish community of Chailar which number 100 families. Chailar is a center where many former monarchist officers of the armies of Attaman Semionow, Kalmikow and Anenkow have found refuge and where they continue their pogrom agitation.

Ruskin, who was employed as an electrician was on a telephone pole repairing wires near the Chailar railway station. He overheard a conversation in Yiddish between Vilensky and Bichowsky, who were waiting below for a train. Ruskin came down from the pole and asked the two: "Are you Jews?" When Bichowsky replied: "Yes, and if so, what of it?" Ruskin took out his knife and attacked them. Vilensky died within two hours. Bichowsky's condition is serious.

When Ruskin was arrested, several of the station officials attempted to establish that he was drunk, but the murderer was insulted by this and stated. "No, I was sober and I killed these Jews consciously. My only regret is that they were two instead of ten." Asked whether he knew whom he was slaying he stated that he did not know who they were.²⁶⁰

This was a typical anti-Semitic violence. Ruskin even did not know who he slew. In court, Ruskin confessed "that he never saw Vilensky or Bichowsky before and that he killed them just because they were Jews."²⁶¹ Vilensky was in fact a scion of the family of the famous Berditcheff Rabbi, Levi Itzchok. This murder shocked the Far Eastern Jewish communities: "the Chailar Jewish community sent the body of the victim to Harbin where his funeral was held on July 14. General mourning was proclaimed by the community and all Jewish stores and workshops were closed for the day. Leaders of the Jewish community in Harbin have decided to

²⁵⁹ "Jews in Far Eastern Republic Stirred over Murder of Prominent Jew," *JTA*, August 16, (Harbin July 15), 1927; "Chinese Court Sentences Russian to Life Imprisonment for Murdering Jew", *JTA*, October 5, 1927, (Harbin, Oct. 4).

²⁶⁰ "Jews in Far Eastern Republic Stirred over Murder of Prominent Jew," *JTA*, August 16, (Harbin July 15), 1927

²⁶¹ "Chinese Court Sentences Russian to Life Imprisonment for Murdering Jew", *JTA*, October 5, 1927.

submit a memorandum to the Chinese Governor General concerning the increased anti-Semitic propaganda of the Russian monarchists.²⁶² But the Russians wanted to secure an acquittal for Ruskin: “great interest was displayed on the part of the Jewish community of Harbin in the trial and by the Russian colony consisting chiefly of former officers of the White Army who exercised their influence in an attempt to secure an acquittal for Ruskin, formerly a member of the monarchist army.”²⁶³ Nevertheless, the Chinese could not tolerate the ruthless crimes of murdering innocent Jews. The murderer, Ruskin, was arrested by the Chinese authorities immediately. Before long, “life imprisonment to be spent in penal servitude was the sentence imposed by the Chinese court on Ruskin” in October of the same year.²⁶⁴ It revealed that the Chinese authorities treated Jews equally and justly without any prejudice.

3.4. The Sino-Soviet War of 1929 and a Jewish Republic in the Far East

When the Soviet Union extended its influence to Northeast China in the middle of the 1920s, the situation in central China changed dramatically. After Sun Yat-sen died in March 1925, Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 1887-1975), the new leader of the Nationalist Party, launched the North Expedition to unify China. During the North Expedition, Jiang purged the communists from the United Front and broke diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. In the following decade, the Chinese Communist Party, led by Mao Zedong (毛泽东 1893-1976), had no choice but to carry out the Long March to the mountainous northwestern regions of Yan’an and unite with Chinese peasants.²⁶⁵

²⁶² “Jews in Far Eastern Republic Stirred over Murder of Prominent Jew,” *JTA*, August 16, (Harbin July 15), 1927

²⁶³ “Chinese Court Sentences Russian to Life Imprisonment for Murdering Jew”, *JTA*, October 5, 1927.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ For more details, see Bruce Elleman, *Moscow and the Emergence of Communist Power in China, 1925-30* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

In December 1928, Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang (张学良 1901-2001), the new leader of Manchuria, joined the Nationalist Party after the Japanese Guandong army assassinated his father Zhang Zuolin. Hence, the Chinese Nationalist Party ended the Warlord era and reunified China. In despite of the internal conflicts and the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in later time, the Chinese Nationalist Government, led by Jiang Jieshi, was recognized by the West as the new central government of China. Jiang's reign was based in Nanjing and it functioned until late 1937 when the Japanese Guandong Army occupied Nanjing and enacted the Rape of Nanjing.

The newly established Nanjing government devoted itself to state building and expelling foreign powers in China, especially with respect to the frontier threats posed by Russia and Japan. Japan's influence in South Manchuria was too strong to take revenge, so the Young Marshal Zhang decided to challenge the Soviet Union in North Manchuria at first. The Nanjing government also supported Zhang against the Soviet Union. Michael M. Walker observes that "A path to war was created when Chiang Kai-shek and Chang Hsueh-liang miscalculated, both diplomatically and militarily, as they viewed the Soviets as politically isolated and militarily weak and were convinced that the time was right to reassert full authority over the CER."²⁶⁶

The Sino-Soviet War started in May 1929, when Zhang "ordered police to raid the Soviet legation in Harbin."²⁶⁷ On July 10, 1929, Zhang's troops "seized complete control over the CER."²⁶⁸ On July 17, Moscow recalled from China "all Soviet diplomatic, consular, and commercial representatives" and "all persons appointed by the Soviet government to the CER."²⁶⁹ Stalin broke off all relations with the Nanjing government and prepared for war. On

²⁶⁶ Michael M. Walker, *The 1929 Sino-Soviet War: The War Nobody Knew* (Lawrence, Ks.: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 2. Walker's book elaborated the 1929 Sino-Soviet War in both military and political perspectives.

²⁶⁷ Elleman, *Moscow and the Emergence of Communist Power in China*, 193. Elleman's work has effectively sketched the process of the 1929 Sino-Soviet War.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

November 17, 1929, “Soviet ground troops, its riverine Amur fleet, and a number of air-planes invaded China on several fronts. The Soviet forces quickly took control of Manzhuli and heavy fighting focused on the Chinese city of Hailar.”²⁷⁰ Zhang Xueliang’s military defence was a complete failure. On November 26, Zhang “was ready to sue for peace on Soviet terms.”²⁷¹ The Nanjing Government asked for Britain, the United States and France to intervene, but Stalin refused any third party intervention. “On 22 December 1929, an agreement was signed at Khabarovsk by the USSR and the Nanjing government,” that meant returning “the USSR’s Asian relations to the pre-war status quo.”²⁷² The consequence of the Sino-Soviet conflict was not only that Russia controlled North Manchuria once again, but it also aroused Japan to invade Manchuria by force in 1931 in the wake of the weakness of the Chinese military.

Bruce Elleman observed that USSR’s quick win in the Sino-Soviet war cannot be separated from Stalin’s Siberian migration strategy. In the war period, Stalin “called for a ‘Great Leap Forward’ in collectivization; many rich peasants, known as kulaks, were deported to Siberia to help prop up Soviet security in underpopulated regions adjoining Manchuria. In line with the decision to exile his opponents, Stalin also ordered the creation of prison camps, the first of what would soon be popularly known as the ‘gulag archipelago.’”²⁷³ The development of the Siberian labor camps “played an essential role in helping to prop up the USSR’s Siberian defenses, initially against China, but later against Japan, by sending millions of Russians into exile into the unfortified regions directly to the north of the disputed Sino-Soviet border.”²⁷⁴

Elleman called the buildup of Soviet infrastructure in Siberia “the creation of the Stalinist state,” but he ignored the establishment of the Jewish Region in Birobidzhan, which was about

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 199.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid., 200-1.

²⁷³ Ibid., 192.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 205.

750 km from Harbin, during the same period. Besides the peasants and the prisoners, the Jews were another unpleasant subject for Stalin. According to Benjamin Pinkus, in March 1928, the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union and the Migration Committee of the Soviet Union passed a resolution of creating a Jewish national unit in Birobidzhan. Pinkus observed that “On 30 September 1931, a decision was taken by the same body on ‘Means for implementing the 1928 Resolution on establishing a Jewish Federative national unit in the Birobidzhan Region of the Far Eastern Provinces.’ Even if internal policy played a part, it was no accident that this date was ten days after the Japanese crossed into Manchuria (19 September 1931).”²⁷⁵ The Soviet Government formally declared Birobidzhan a Jewish Autonomous Region (*oblast*) in 1934 in the wake of Japan’s expulsion of the Soviets from Northeast China.²⁷⁶ The mass Siberian migration policies as a result of the growing security threat from Northeast China rightly explained why the Jewish Province of the USSR was not established in the Jewish population concentrated East Europe or regions of the shores of the Black Sea, but unexpectedly, in the Far East on the Sino-Soviet border.²⁷⁷

Even though the Soviet Union’s promise of equal nationalism against imperialism won over the Chinese and the Jewish revolutionaries, not only was Stalin’s policy on China and the Chinese Eastern Railway in continuity with the policies of the Tsars, but also Stalin’s policy on the Jews, which set Jews in regions of conflict spreading Russian culture, once again poured old wine in a new bottle. Russia’s revolutionary goal finally gave in to its national interests.

²⁷⁵ Benjamin Pinkus, *The Jews of the Soviet Union: the history of a national minority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 74.

²⁷⁶ Unfortunately, thousands of Russians and Russian Jews, who returned to Russia from Harbin, were arrested as “Japanese spies” and executed under NKVD Chief Yezhov’s special Harbin order of September 1937. For more details, see Mara Moustafine, *Secrets and Spies: The Harbin Files* (Penguin Random House Australia, 2012), and her article, “Russians from China: Migrations and Identity,” in *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 5 Issue 2, (2013):143-58.

²⁷⁷ For the literature on Birobidzhan, see Masha Gessen, *Where the Jews Aren't: The Sad and Absurd Story of Birobidzhan, Russia's Jewish Autonomous Region* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2016).

3.5. Conclusion

After WWI, both Chinese and Jewish nationalism rose up in the spirit of national self-determination. The Chinese endeavored to build a civil government in Harbin. As a result, both the Chinese and the Jewish communities were prosperous. In addition, the large number of Jewish émigrés brought by WWI made Harbin the major East European Jewish Center in Asia. The American Jewish immigration and relief branches in Harbin, such as HIAS and JDC, played an important role in supporting and transporting these Jewish refugees to America. The route of the Trans-Siberian railway from Eastern Europe to the Far East and the ship via Japan to the United States functioned until WWII.

Furthermore, the conflicts in Northeast China contributed to the first encounter between the Jews and the Chinese. As oppressed nations, both of them were experiencing a similar national reconstruction in the first half of the twentieth century. Supporting Zionists against Bundists became the earliest Chinese policy with respect to the Jews.

In the end, the regional, national and revolutionary clashes among the Chinese, the White Russians and the Soviets in North Manchuria made the Harbin Jews' situation more precarious. The misplacement and destabilization of status of all these nations in Manchuria turned to disaster when the Japanese Guandong Army finally occupied Manchuria by force in the 1930s.

Chapter IV: Anti-Semitism in the Puppet State of Manchukuo

Scholars working on Jewish history in Asia mainly pay attention to Nazi Germany's influence on Japan during the holocaust period since 1938, but they seldom notice the cooperation of the Russian Fascist Party (RFP) and the Japanese Guandong Army in Manchuria and their severe anti-Semitic activities since the Japanese controlled the region and established the puppet state of Manchukuo in 1932.

By contrast, experts on Russian fascism, John J. Stephan²⁷⁸ and Susanne Hohler²⁷⁹, as well as the Japanese scholar of Jewish studies, Takao Chizuko²⁸⁰, have shed light on the desperate situation of Jews in Manchuria under the Japanese militarists' control. Stephan analyzes the historical development of the Russian Fascist Party and its anti-Semitic activities in Manchuria from 1925 to 1945. Analysing the RFP's newspaper *Nash Put'*, Hohler recounts the internal organizations of the RFP and its anti-Semitic propaganda in Harbin. According to Hohler, it was the RFP that smeared Harbin Jews and separated the Jews from the Japanese authorities and the rest of the Harbin population. But in her articles, Takao suggests that Japanese authorities' pandering to the RFP and their repression of the Jews delivered a *coup de grace* to the Harbin Jewish community.

²⁷⁸ John J. Stephan, *The Russian Fascists: Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925-1945* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978).

²⁷⁹ Susanne Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria: The Soviet-China Encounter in the 1930s* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris & Co.Ltd, 2017).

²⁸⁰ Takao Chizuko, "Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II," *Igud Yotzei Sin*, no. 408, (Aug-Sep 2012):53-8; Takao Chizuko, "Prewar Japan's Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community: The Harbin Jewish Community under Japanese Rule 1932-1941," *JISMOR* 10, accessed July 13, 2016. <https://doors.doshisha.ac.jp/duar/repository/ir/22632/r002000100003.pdf>.

In this chapter, I will underline the background of the development of anti-Semitism in the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo in the context of the history of the worldwide rise of anti-Semitism between the two World Wars.

4.1. Military Manchukuo

4.1.1. Manchurian Incident – Japanese Plot

In September 1931, seizing on the regional disorder caused by the Sino-Russian War, the Japanese Guandong (Kwantung) Army invaded Northeast China, arguing that “the thirty million suffering people of Manchuria were eagerly awaiting Japanese liberation.”²⁸¹ However, “in a larger historical context,” the post-colonial historian of Japanese imperialism, Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, argues that the Japanese “conquest of Northeast China must be understood as a protracted, decades-long endeavor in which the so-called Manchurian Incident of 1931 represents only a brief, climactic episode.”²⁸²

As early as in the 1840s, keeping an eye on the Sino-British Opium War, the Japanese were clearly aware that “the Western barbarians, ‘who for hundreds of year...have desired and resolved to subvert enemy nations through their occult religion [Christianity] and thus conquer the whole world’ were on Japan’s doorstep.”²⁸³ Learning from the Chinese lesson, the Japanese quest for reform started in the Meiji era (1868-1912), which “was an outgrowth of a predatory international environment and a corollary of the nation-building process of the late nineteenth

²⁸¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 546.

²⁸² Yoshihisa T. Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904-1932* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 1.

²⁸³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 23.

and early twentieth centuries in which Japan self-consciously emulated Western models in both international and domestic affairs.”²⁸⁴

Victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 enabled Japan to escape the colonial fate suffered by other Asian nations. Having transformed itself into a world imperial power, Japan joined the rank of the “carving up” countries and expanded its power into China by obtaining the rights to build the South Manchurian Railway (SMR). Originated from the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese Guandong Army, which was analogous to the Russian railway guards of the CER, firmly located in South Manchuria and finally developed into an independent administration system. Matsusaka observes that: “exploiting the geography of Northeast Asia, the Japanese also used railway policies to enhance Manchuria’s ties to colonial Korea while weakening connections to China south of the Wall. The railway had served as a vital national-building tool in Europe and North America. In the hands of the Japanese in Manchuria, it became an instrument of imperialist reconstruction.”²⁸⁵

It is notable that, unlike British and U.S. China policy, “territory rather than trade lay at the heart of Japanese aspirations in Manchuria.”²⁸⁶ The American Open Door Policy, which proposed to open China to trade equally with all countries while restricting foreign political and military influence, obstructed Japan’s “attempts at territorial aggrandizement.”²⁸⁷ The Japanese Army and its allies after WWI “had regarded the Washington system as nothing more than imperialism, American style.”²⁸⁸ The Prime Minister of Japan, Hara Takashi, saw Wilson’s National Self-Determination policy as empty.²⁸⁹ Unsatisfied with the existing Western led

²⁸⁴ Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, 10.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 3

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 391.

²⁸⁹ Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914-1919*, esp. chapter 6, “Versailles in the Context of National Renovation: Wilson Arrives in Japan,” 204-38.

colonial system, Japan sought to develop on her own terms (later known as Pan-Asianism) in the wake of the collapse of international cooperation in the 1920s.

In addition, “the global depression and the concomitant rise of militarism in domestic politics” in the early part of the Shōwa era (1926-89) caused an organizational chaos in the government and spurred Japanese jingoism in the form of state Shintō ultra-nationalism.²⁹⁰ The Guandong Army in Manchuria seized the economic depression as an opportunity for military expansion. Two new leaders of the Guandong Army in the end of the 1920s, Lt. Colonel Kanji Ishiwara and Colonel Seishirō Itagaki “openly advocated the occupation of Manchuria, which they proposed to use as a bulwark against a Soviet southern advance and as a supply base in the event of war with the United States.”²⁹¹ For these reasons, Japan’s militarism “is generally believed to have shared at least some features with contemporary Italian and German” fascism.²⁹²

Moreover, China’s attempt at unification and the rise of Chinese nationalism in the 1920s threatened Japan’s profits in Shandong, Manchuria, Mongolia and other colonies. During the Chinese Nationalist Party’s North Expedition in 1926-28, the Japanese Guandong Army hoped that the Old Marshal Zhang Zuolin could separate Manchuria from the rest of China so that the influence of Japan and the Old Marshal could both be preserved. However, as a rival of Jiang Jieshi and his nationalist troops, Zhang and his Fengtian clique won over the other warlords and occupied Beijing in 1927. Zhang himself became the last “emperor” of the Beijing Government. In this time, Zhang not only dreamed about an integral China under his leadership, but also tried to get rid of Japan by denying their excessive railway privileges in South Manchuria. The

²⁹⁰ Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, 10.

²⁹¹ Hsü, *The Rise of Modern China*, 546.

²⁹² Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, 10.

partnership between Zhang and Japan became more and more troubled. When Zhang was defeated by the Chinese Nationalist Party and retreated to Manchuria in June 1928, the impatient Guandong Army under Kōmoto Daisaku's command bombed Zhang at the Huanggutun railway station.²⁹³

Scholar Kwong Chi Man argues that Manchuria was not destined to fall to the Japanese in 1931, if the Guandong Army had not assassinated the Old Marshal: “Although internal dissension might exist, the presence of Zhang Zuolin (who was only 53 years old when he was killed in 1928) as a central figure might have prevented this bloc from falling apart.”²⁹⁴ Examining the development of Japanese militarism, scholar Danny Orbach regards the rebellious Japanese Army as terrorists in name of patriotism. Orbach argues that, from their assassination of Queen Min of Korea in 1895, to the assassination of Marshal Zhang Zuolin in 1928, the radical Japanese Army officers finally turned to assassinate their own ministers and generals and overthrew Japan's civil government in WWII. Government by assassination was the curse of imperial Japan.²⁹⁵

4.1.2. Japan on Her Own

On September 18, 1931, the Japanese Guandong Army engineered the Manchurian Incident by “blowing up the South Manchurian Railway line north of Mukden (Shengyang) and blaming the explosion on the Chinese,” giving the Japanese the excuse to resort to violence.²⁹⁶ Within only five months after the invasion of Shenyang, the Japanese Guandong Army occupied

²⁹³ See Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911 – 1928: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea* (California: Stanford University Press, 1977).

²⁹⁴ Kwong, *War and Geopolitics in Interwar Manchuria*, 240.

²⁹⁵ See Danny Orbach, *Curse on This Country: The Rebellious Army of Imperial Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

²⁹⁶ Clausen and Thogersen, *The Making of a Chinese City*, 109.

Manchuria thoroughly. In 1932, the Japanese Guandong Army established a puppet state called Manchukuo by installing Puyi, the last emperor of Qing China, as its head.

The triumph of the Japanese Army's blitzkrieg in Manchuria was partly due to the Young Marshal Zhang's non-resistance policy. The Young Marshal dared not fight again after his troops had lost to the Soviet Union in 1929. Considering that the Japanese military was even stronger than the Russians, the Young Marshal Zhang did not want to fight a war that he had no hope of winning. Consequently, Zhang retreated to the south and consulted with Jiang's Nationalist government in Nanjing. Resorting to a policy of "nonresistance, noncompromise and nondirect negotiation," the Nanjing government "appealed to the Council of the League of Nations under Article 11 of the Covenant and to the United States under the Pact of Paris."²⁹⁷

Thus, the Japanese aggression turned from a war incident into a political and diplomatic one. On 7 January 1932, "as a sort of rider to his 'parallel and incessant activities,'" Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson, "handed to the Chinese and Japanese ambassadors in Washington identical notes, known after him as the Stimson Doctrine," stating that "American Government would not recognize any treaty or agreement which impaired the sovereignty, independence, or territorial integrity of China or infringed the Open Door policy, nor would recognize any situation, treaty, or agreement which was brought about by means contrary to the Pact of Paris."²⁹⁸

However, America's position was not supported by the League members in Europe, who were trapped in their own economic and political crises at home in the Great Depression. The British even saw Japan's aggression as reducing the menace from the Comintern (the Communist International). The French were only worried about their interests in South China and considered

²⁹⁷ Frank P. Chambers, *This Age of Conflict* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace World, Inc., 1962), 341.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 342-43.

it was better for the Japanese to be fighting in the north rather than moving to the south. Subsequently, the Americans preferred verbal protests against Japan rather than taking action. After all, the American investment in Manchuria was limited. Not taking a long term perspective, the American policy makers basically saw nothing lost in the Manchurian Crisis – the beginning phrase of Japan’s ensuing wars.²⁹⁹

Going through the motions, the inert League finally sent Lord Lytton to the Far East to investigate, and he submitted a report describing “the new Manchukuo as a puppet creation.” However, “in September 1932, on the eve of the publication of the report, Japan made a defiant gesture and formally recognized Manchukuo. In February 1933, the League at least adopted the report, and in the following month Japan gave notice of her withdrawal from League membership.”³⁰⁰

The American historian Sara Smith regarded the Manchurian Crisis of 1931 as “the opening phase of the second World War,” resulting from a tragedy in international relations.³⁰¹ Keeping a cold war perspective, the British historian Ian Nish found reasons or excuses for Japan’s aggression, arguing that if the League firmly took action, Japan would not have pursued a solution on her own terms in East Asia.³⁰² The post-war Chinese communist historians blamed the Chinese Nationalist Party, arguing that if the Nationalist Party had fought against the

²⁹⁹ See Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*; Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41: Moscow, Tokyo, and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992); Antony Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-1941* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002); Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

³⁰⁰ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 344.

³⁰¹ Sara R. Smith, *The Manchurian Crisis, 1931-1932: A Tragedy in International Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), Vii. Smith’s work carefully examined the process of the negotiation among Japan, the United States and the League Council in 1931. She emphasized the lack of harmony between the policy makers of the United States and Great Britain.

³⁰² Ian Nish, *Japan's Struggle with Internationalism: Japan, China and the League of Nations, 1931-1933*, (London and New York: Kegan Paul International, 1993), 236. Nish listed and sympathized with the effort of the League representative, Lord Lytton, in the Far East.

Japanese instead of persecuting the Chinese communists everywhere, Japan would not have ambitiously invaded mainland China in 1937.

However, history does not answer “if” questions. The Second World War, the darkest period in human history, was fermented in Asia initially. Dredging up the last emperor of the Qing dynasty, Puyi, as the head of puppet Manchukuo, the Japanese Guandong Army tightly controlled the Chinese, simultaneously facilitated Japanese and Korean immigration, and expelled the Russians and western foreigners from Northeast China.

A more important influence of the Manchurian Crisis is that Hitler, following Japan’s lead, left the League in October 1933. Japan’s unchecked expansionism and “its unpunished defiance of the League of Nations created an image of ‘dynamism’ that favorably impressed the Nazis, encouraging them to act aggressively.”³⁰³ As a result, “Hitler’s subsequent successful expansionism and the Western powers’ weak response in turn affected the decisions of Japanese leaders as they headed down the path to disastrous war with the United States and Great Britain in 1941.”³⁰⁴

4.1.3. The Soviet Union’s Retreat

In January-February 1933, “the Japanese launched a further assault on China, attempting to seize Jehol in Inner Mongolia. This was vital strategic position if the Japanese hoped to attack in the direction of Peking (Beijing) or, more ominously for Moscow, in the direction of Outer

³⁰³ Bruce Reynolds, *Japan in the Fascist Era* (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), XIII; For the influence of Japan on German, see John P. Fox, *Germany and the Far Eastern Crisis, 1931-1938* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

³⁰⁴ Reynolds, ed., *Japan in the Fascist Era*, XIII.

Mongolia and the Soviet Far East.”³⁰⁵ At this time, both the Chinese and the League of the Nations hoped the Soviet Union could fight against Japan, but they only gained the Soviets’ taunt. According to Jonathan Haslam, on February 24-5, 1933:

The Secretary-General of the League, Eric Drummond, wrote to the Soviet Government asking for cooperation. The Chinese (Nationalist) Government was not alone in hoping for Soviet agreement. But they were to be disappointed. On 7 March Commissar of Foreign Affairs Maxim Litvinov wrote to Drummond rejecting the invitation. His letter emphasised the USSR’s ‘strict neutrality’ with respect to the hostilities in the Far East. ‘The League of Nations has “resolved” the Manchurian problem, and after the League of Nations decision Japanese forces have begun their attack on Jehol. This serves as the best illustration of what a decision of the League of Nations is worth’, crowed *Kommunisticheskii Internatsional*, the organ of the Comintern.³⁰⁶

As early as the end of December 1931, three months after the Manchurian Incident, “the Soviet Government had offered the Japanese a non-aggression pact.”³⁰⁷ However, this did not avoid crises over possession of the Chinese Eastern Railway. By mid-April 1932, the Japanese controlled almost the entire line. The Soviet government in Manchuria was completely oppressed by the Japanese Guandong Army, who arrested the Soviet department chiefs and replaced them with Manchukuoan officials “as the first step in a concerted effort to seize the railway.”³⁰⁸ According to Lensen,

As the Kwantung Army had overrun Manchuria, dozens of Soviet railway officials and employees had been arrested. When one of them, a man by the name of Vasil’ev, had died in a Harbin jail in the summer of 1932, Consul General Slavutskii had written to Shih lu-pen, the Harbin representative of the Manchukuoan Foreign Office, to inquire about the cause of death, but had received no reply. In January 1933 the suicide of Engineer A.F. Voronin, who along with some sixty countrymen had been imprisoned and apparently mistreated for the past nine months at Hsinking (formerly Changchun),

³⁰⁵ Jonathan Haslam, *The Soviet Union and the Threat from the East, 1933-41: Moscow, Tokyo, and the Prelude to the Pacific War* (Pittsburgh, Pa: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 9.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 8.

³⁰⁸ Lensen, *The damned inheritance: the Soviet Union and the Manchurian crises*, 272.

prompted Slavutskii to send a strong letter to Shih demanding an investigation of the incident and a reply to his query about Vasil'ev's demise.... Shih responded in a letter, dated January 25, that Vasil'ev had died of typhoid and that Voronin's suicide had not been the fault of the Manchukuoan authorities. He added verbally that the charges of the mistreatment of the Soviet prisoners were false.³⁰⁹

Likewise, Robert T. Pollard reported in 1934 that: "The Chinese Eastern [Railway] was rapidly ceasing to have either strategic or commercial value to the Soviet Union. Military operations coupled with continued disorder in northern Manchuria had almost wrecked the railway. The manager of the eastern section, between Harbin and Pogradichnaya, reported that during 1932 some 56 railway employees had been killed, 825 wounded, 593 captured by bandits, and more than a thousand robbed. In addition, much damage had been done to rolling stock, the track had been destroyed in 52 places, and the telegraph line broken 775 times."³¹⁰

Facing these difficulties, the Soviet Union decided to get rid of the troubled waters in Northeast China as soon as possible. Bearing in mind the humiliations of 1904-5 Russo-Japanese War and the 1918-22 Siberian Intervention, the Soviets' impulse to take revenge finally gave way to a compromise solution – selling the railway to Japan.

For the sale of the CER with its enterprises and properties, the Soviet Union requested 250 million gold rubles, amounting to 625 million Japanese yen, but the Japanese only offered 50 million yen, less than one tenth.³¹¹ The negotiation lasted for more than two years and finally the two governments signed an agreement for a deal of 140 million yen. In March 1935, despite a Chinese protest, the Soviet Union ceded to Manchukuo all its rights concerning the CER, with its subsidiary lands, buildings, schools and hospitals. All the employees and the officials of the

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 214-15.

³¹⁰ Robert T. Pollard, "Russo-Japanese Tension," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 175, (1934): 103-04.

³¹¹ Lensen, *The damned inheritance: the Soviet Union and the Manchurian crises*, 246.

4.2. Decline of the Harbin Jewish Community

Concerning Manchukuo's power structure, scholars share a historical consensus that it "was a disguised imperialism in which Japanese military and industrial interests exploited the people and resources of Manchuria for their own enrichment and to further Japanese war aims. As a result, the regime form was military fascist, with ample use of violence by the Japanese military to sustain its rule."³¹⁵ Japanese scholar Shin'ichi Yamamuro describes Manchukuo as a Chimera, with the Guandong Army as the head of a lion, Manchuria as the body of a sheep, and the Chinese as the tail of a dragon; though powerful, the beast actually violated both the Japanese and the Chinese people.³¹⁶ Recent studies show that this Chimera also brought disasters to the Jewish people, a small community that suffered tremendously during the nightmare in Manchuria.

4.2.1. Japan's Economic Oppression

Northeast China, under Japanese domination, experienced rapid industrialization; however, the industrial development by military forces cannot compare to ordinary industrialization. Reviewing the hegemony of wartime Japan and Germany, scholars in the book *Economies under Occupation: The hegemony of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in World War II*, condemned the economies that developed under occupation for the reasons that: first, the industrial development in the occupied countries was "accompanied by huge sacrifice" on the part of oppressed populations with harsh forced labor; and secondly, the "profit incentives" were

³¹⁵ Richard Lachmann, review of *Sovereignty and Authenticity: Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern*, by Prasenjit Duara, *The American Journal of Sociology*, vol.109, no. 4, (January 2004): 1040.

³¹⁶ See Shin'ichi Yamamuro, *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, trans. Joshua A. Fogel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

used officially “as a tool for promoting war production.”³¹⁷ In Manchuria, the Japanese economic developments were based on Chinese labor camps and the ouster of foreign industries with horrifying abuses of human rights and coercive exploitation.

On the one hand, advocating Pan-Asianism, the Guandong Army set up the *Kyowakai* (Concordia Association) in July 1932, uniting the five major races of Manchukuo: Chinese, Manchus, Mongols, Koreans and Japanese. However, discrimination, abuse and violence by Japanese toward Chinese were universal, for instance, the forced sale of Chinese land for a plan to settle 3,000 Japanese farmers, provoked a Chinese peasant uprising in 1932.³¹⁸ Despite this, the Japanese government kept recruiting tens of thousands of peasants in Japan and sending them to Manchuria to occupy the region.³¹⁹

Another example of discrimination is that “the Japanese authorities decided that food would be rationed and distributed according to nationality. They decreed that the Japanese residents would eat rice, the foreigners would get wheat and rye, and the Chinese would be restricted to sorghum. Sorghum, although perfectly edible, was nonetheless better known as chicken feed”³²⁰ Alexander Menquez, a Jew growing up in Manchuria, witnessed that the Japanese police badly beat the poor screaming Chinese, “whose only crime was that they wanted

³¹⁷ Marcel Boldorf and Tetsuji Okazaki, eds., *Economies under Occupation: The hegemony of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan in World War II* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 95, 325.

³¹⁸ Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria*, 393.

³¹⁹ For details, see Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), esp. “Part IV, The New Social Imperialism and the Farm Colonization Program, 1932-1945.” According to Young, Japanese farmers were also victims of Japan’s wartime imperialism.

³²⁰ Alexander Menquez, “Growing Up Jewish in Manchuria in the 1930s: Personal Vignettes,” in *The Jews of China*, Vol, 2, ed. Goldstein, 77.

to buy bread.”³²¹ Japanese Manchukuo was built on the humiliation and enslavement of the Chinese people.

On the other hand, Japanese economic penetration not only squeezed Chinese blood, but its expansion also oppressed foreign interests. The importance of Manchuria as a market for Japan was that “Japanese goods could be given a measure of protection against competition from more advanced industrial nations. Manchuria and Korea had already performed this function for Japan’s light and textile industries before 1914, but Japan’s heavy industries badly needed a similarly advantageous market in the 1920s and 1930s.”³²² Accordingly, all the stores in Manchukuo had to sell Japanese goods, “not only by Chinese and Russian stores, but by American, English and French concerns as well. Nationality makes no difference: ‘Japanese goods must be sold!’”³²³

To monopolize the Manchurian market, the Japanese had to exclude foreign finance capital and industrial influences, such as the Russians’ share of the CER company, the Russian banks, the Jewish industries of grain, soybeans, sugar and so on. According to Dicker,

On the eve of the Japanese occupation of Manchuria in 1931 and 1932, fifty-eight per cent of Harbin’s private industries were owned by Chinese capital; thirty-three per cent by non-Soviet Russians and Russians Jews, eight per cent by the Japanese and one per cent by American and Western European interests. Russians controlled large segments of the grain and lumber trades and other commercial industries.

Yet in 1934, only two years after the Japanese moved in, the Japanese held all the ship-building enterprises in the city, as well as many of the soya bean and the flour mills. They reorganized the grain exchange, and forced Kabalkin to resign his post....By 1939,

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Christopher Howe, “Shadows, Illusions, and Realities in the History of Modern Manchuria,” review of *Manchuria Under Japanese Dominion*, by Shin’ichi Yamamuro, *China Perspectives*, no. 4 (72), (2007): 35-6.

³²³ Amleto Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan: A Handbook to Japanese Imperialism* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1939), 220.

therefore, the Japanese owned twelve per cent of all the most important industries, handling some thirty per cent of the entire trade in Harbin.³²⁴

Not only the president of the Harbin Exchange, Y.R. Kabalkin, mentioned in the previous chapter, a Jewish entrepreneur whose family led the Manchurian soybean exportation and oil pressing factories, was forced to resign his post; but also almost all influential Jewish businesses, as well as those of the Chinese and the Russians, were under the full control of the Japanese or were forced to be operated jointly with the Japanese.

As we have seen previously, Jews played a predominant role in Harbin's commercial development. The Jewish trade in Harbin was prosperous as never before around the WWI period. Though, the Soviet-Sino Conflict of 1929 brought negative effect on regional security and economy, it could not compare to the huge damage caused by Japanese coercive monopolies. From 1932 to the first half of 1936, more than thirty Jewish stores of Harbin were closed, losing the amount of 1,961,000 yuan.³²⁵ A *JTA* article in February 1935 reported that: "The Japanese policy in Manchukuo has long been anti-Jewish. Anxious to control commercial life there, the Japanese officials in Manchukuo are doing their utmost to force the Jewish firms in Harbin to liquidate....The purchasers of the Jewish firms are usually Japanese merchants. Those of the Jewish storekeepers who are not anxious to liquidate or to transfer their firm into Japanese hands are under constant terror and their lives and property are not entirely safe."³²⁶

Those not conversant with conditions in Manchukuo might consider the criticism unduly severe, but a careful examination of this history shows that *JTA*'s commentaries were much more conservative than reality because they tried to avoid direct conflicts with the Japanese authorities

³²⁴ Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 42-3.

³²⁵ Liu, *Harbin Youtai Qiaomin Shi*, 75.

³²⁶ "Events in Review," *JTA*, Feb.10, 1935.

for the good of Harbin Jews, whose lives were in hazard under the Japanese militarists' domination.

4.2.2. The Japanese Army Cooperated with the Russian Fascist Party

To wield its power in North Manchuria, a traditional Russian sphere of influence, the Japanese extended its two military agencies from Changchun (Hsinking) to Harbin: the *Tokumu Kikan* (Japanese Military Mission), responsible to the Imperial Army General Staff in Tokyo, and the *Kempei* (Japanese Military Gendarmerie), the branch of the Guandong Army in South Manchuria. Providing internal guidance, an irresponsible and corrupt class of subordinate Japanese army officers were attached to all administrative organizations, the Harbin Municipal Council, the Harbin Supreme Court and the CER Police, and non-administrative organizations, such as schools, hospitals and enterprises. "Persecuted incessantly by gendarmerie and deprived of means of livelihood and opportunities for advancement by the great incursion of Japanese," the small Chinese educated class was gradually replaced by Japanese army officials.³²⁷

Moreover, the Japanese directly arrested and expelled Soviet officials from the CER, in the name of "Asia belonging to Asians." For the stateless Russian émigrés, the Guandong Army chose to cooperate with the Russian Fascist Party (RFP). The radical anti-Communist minister of the Imperial Japanese Army, General Araki Sadao, backed the RFP against the USSR. The Japanese supported Konstantin Rodzaevsky, the chief editor of Russian Fascist Party's mouthpiece *Nash Put'*, as the leader of the RFP. RFP's collusion with Japanese Intelligence facilitated Japanese enslavement of Manchuria.

³²⁷ Ian Nish, *The History of Manchuria, 1840-1948: A Sino-Russo-Japanese Triangle*, Vo.2: Select Primary Sources (Folkestone: Renaissance Books, 2016), 120.

From its establishment in 1931 to its end in 1945, the Russian Fascist movement was mainly based in Manchukuo. The RFP published not only the daily newspaper *Nash Put'*, and the journal, *Natsiia*, but also numerous books and pamphlets spreading anti-Communism and anti-Semitism to solidify the White Russian nationalism in exile. Resembling propaganda of German Nazism, the Russian fascist ideological book, "The ABCs of Fascism" (*Azbuka fashizma*), claimed its two enemies to be the Soviet Union and the Jews in the book's first part; it outlined a future fascist state in Russia in the second part.³²⁸ The Japanese occupation of Manchuria saw RFP membership soaring dramatically, from 200 in 1931 to 5,000 in 1933, a twenty-five-fold increase in two years.³²⁹ Rodzaevsky had 12,000 followers throughout the Far East, China, Korea and Japan. Adapting to local conditions to survive, most ordinary White Russians joined the RFP for practical purposes. Puppet Manchukuo hosted the largest Russian Fascist Party in the world with Harbin serving as its center.

In Manchuria, the Russian Fascists received support from Japanese militarists. The Japanese Gendarmerie utilized the Russian fascists as spies, racketeers, and saboteurs within the USSR. The Russian fascists brought the political dissidents, special offenders, and military criminals to the second floor of the *Kempei*, the Japanese Gendarmerie headquarters, which was "located on Pochtovaya Street near the intersection with Vogzalnaya, a broad avenue that connected Cathedral Plaza with Central Railroad Station." Stephan reviews that "So sinister was its reputation that 'second floor' became a synonym for a terrible fate among White Russians. Such expressions as 'My wife put me on the second floor last night' or 'Watch out, or you'll be on the second floor' gave the *Kempei* an arcane currency in local slang"³³⁰

³²⁸ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 51-2.

³²⁹ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 89.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*, 64-6.

Worse, both the Japanese Military Mission and the Japanese Military Gendarmerie used their power for profit, with lucrative forays into the drug trade, gambling, and blackmail. The worst was prostitution. Women in military Manchukuo were the most helpless group. Countless Chinese and Russian women were raped by the Japanese soldiers, and the Japanese girls were encouraged to voluntarily serve the army as the notorious “comfort women.” 70,000 Japanese girls served in 550 licensed brothels across North Manchuria; “In Harbin alone, in 1936, there were 172 brothels, 56 opium-dens and 194 narcotics shops.”³³¹

The fastest way to make money was kidnapping, which was so rampant in Manchukuo that it was difficult for ordinary people to walk on the street without a gun or bodyguards. Even the American Consul-General, George Hanson, was so afraid of being kidnapped that he kept rifles and bodyguards all the time in his home in Harbin.³³² Amleto Vespa, who served in the Japanese Gendarmerie, witnessed that: “The 10 bandits in the employ of the Gendarmerie hardly let a day pass without ‘snatching’ some rich Chinese or Jew. A reign of terror spread all over Manchuria. Every one of the different Police Services had its group of bandits who kidnapped people for ransom. In all the principal cities, rich Chinese and Jews were thus forced to pay large sums of money in order to be set free.”³³³ In 1937, the author’s great grandfather, a Manchurian landlord in Shuangcheng city, was shot by one of these bandits. When the dead body was sent home, my grandfather was shocked. My grandfather was a 13-year-old boy at that time so that his grief and trauma lasted his entire lifetime.

The Japanese armies’ official violation of human rights wreaked havoc and created a fascist atmosphere of terror. Crimes were flourishing as never before in Manchuria in general

³³¹ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 96.

³³² *Ibid.*, 195.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 187.

and in Harbin in particular. The East “Auschwitz” – Unit 731 of Harbin – Japanese Army’s human experimentation and biological warfare will be analyzed in the following chapter. American journalist Edgar Snow, in an article entitled “Japan Builds a New Colony,” wrote in 1934 that: “Harbin, once delightful, to-day is notorious as a place of living death ... Probably in no other great city of the world is life so precarious. Harbin residents, including about 100,000 White and Red Russians, risk their lives if they go unarmed anywhere, even in broad daylight. Holdups, robberies, murders, kidnappings, are common occurrences.”³³⁴ The cooperation of the Japanese Army and the RFP made Manchuria a veritable “hell on earth.”

4.2.3. The Kaspe File and the Rise of Anti-Semitism

The Chinese and Jews were the favorite target of Manchukuo’s kidnapping business. However, as the Jewish population was relatively small, the proportion appeared far higher. In the article, “Alarming number of kidnappings of Jews reported in Harbin,” *JTA* listed three cases of kidnappings of Jews in 1932: a 3-year-old child of Subotowski, who was a manager of an American motor car firm; a Jewish butcher named Greenberg; and a Jewish physician named Eliason.³³⁵ Among them, the most pathetic case was Greenberg, whose wife was abused by the bandits. *JTA* reported that: “a Jewish butcher named Greenberg who was kidnapped and tortured when he was unable to produce \$5,000 as ransom. Finally, Greenberg’s wife offered herself as hostage for her husband to enable him to raise the ransom sum. When Greenberg finally brought the money, the bandits refused to release his wife and demanded additional sums. Greenberg was

³³⁴ *Saturday Evening Post*, Feb. 24, 1934, quoted in Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 194-95.

³³⁵ “Alarming number of kidnappings of Jews reported in Harbin,” *JTA*, Oct. 17, 1932.

completely wrecked by the experience and by the knowledge that his wife was being subjected to inhumane torture.”³³⁶

The situation became even much worse in the year of 1933. On the night of Yom Kippur 1933, when Sherel de Florence, a son of a Jewish merchant, was leaving the Synagogue, he was seized by six armed Russians in the service of the Japanese Gendarmerie, in the presence of over 200 witnesses.³³⁷ Threatening letters in connection with the ransom for Sherel were sent to the Jewish leaders. When the Jewish community was unwilling to pay the \$100,000 ransom, the kidnapers bombed the home of Dr. Salomon Ravikovitch, the president of the Harbin Jewish Community.³³⁸ Finally, Sherel was released by paying about \$ 20,000 ransom after more than 100 days of captivity.³³⁹

When the drug-store owner Meir Koffman, who was the ex-chairman of the Harbin New Synagogue,³⁴⁰ was not capable of paying the ransom of \$30,000, the Japanese Chief asserted that “If Koffman is not as rich as ‘we’ thought he was, the Jewish Association can raise the money and pay the ransom.”³⁴¹ Like any Jews in Diaspora, the wealth of Harbin Jews only brought them disaster when their civil rights could not be guaranteed. At the quarters of the Japanese Gendarmerie, Radzoyevsky, the head of RFP, burned Koffman’s face, hands and feet, and tortured him to death. Radzoyevsky believed “this is the way all the dirty Jews, enemies of

³³⁶ Ibid.

³³⁷ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 189.

³³⁸ “Bomb exploded in home of Harbin Jewish leader,” *JTA*, Jan. 11, 1933; “Trace Harbin bombing to White Russian bandits,” *JTA*, Jan. 16, 1933.

³³⁹ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 37.

³⁴⁰ Huang, “Jews in Harbin in the Earlier Period of the 20th Century.”

³⁴¹ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 190.

Russia, should die.”³⁴² The Jewish Association sought to find Koffman’s dead body in order to bury him in the Harbin Jewish cemetery, but in vain.³⁴³

It was roughly estimated that about two thirds of the kidnapped victims were Jews and one third of them were killed or died in captivity.³⁴⁴ Most of the Chinese and the Jewish victims kept silent and paid the ransom because they knew the police and the kidnappers were the same group of people. However, the Kaspe File was an exception. The Kaspes held French citizenship, so it caused an international sensation. Furthermore, the Japanese unjust arbitration of the Kaspe File marked the decline of the Harbin Jewish community.

Josef Kaspe, mentioned in chapter one, was a Jewish cavalryman, who settled in Harbin after the Russo-Japanese War. He became a millionaire by years of hard work. He owned several jewelry stores, a theater, and a world-class hotel – the Moderne Hotel, which hosted the League representative Lord Lytton in 1932. Kaspe was aware of the Japanese intention to annex his estate, so he transferred ownership of his property to his two sons who studied in Paris and obtained French citizenship. In the summer of 1933, the younger son Simeon Kaspe, the 24 year old pianist, came back to Harbin after giving a performance tour. Toward midnight on August 24, the Japanese Gendarmerie kidnapped the young Simeon Kaspe and demanded a \$ 300,000 ransom. The Japanese Gendarmerie’s Russian interpreter, Kostya Nakamura, organized the plot and enlisted Konstanitin Rodzaevsky and a Harbin Municipal Police inspector named Nikolai Martinov, who had a gang of about 15 criminals at his disposal.³⁴⁵

³⁴² Ibid., 193.

³⁴³ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 37; “White Russians suspected of murder of president of Jewish Community of Harbin,” *JTA*, Jan. 6, 1933.

³⁴⁴ Boris Bresler, “Harbin’s Jewish Community, 1898-1958: Politics, Prosperity, and Adversity,” in *The Jews of China*, Vol.1, ed. Goldstein, 209.

³⁴⁵ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 195-207; Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 81-9.

Josef Kaspe refused to pay the ransom and called on the French Consul in Harbin to intervene. In response, the Vice French Consul of Harbin, Albert Chambon, initiated a private investigation, aiming to expose the rampant crimes of Manchukuo. Thus, the Kaspe affair escalated to an international scandal. American, British and French newspapers all paid attention to the affair.³⁴⁶

One month later, the impatient kidnapers cut off Simeon's ears and sent to the father, with a note that fingers would soon follow. Just before the chief kidnapers were exposed, the Gendarmerie announced that Simeon had been killed on December 3. After ninety-five days' torture, Simeon's cheeks, nose and hands were frozen and pieces of the flesh had fallen off and gangrene had set in.³⁴⁷

This inhuman outrage provoked Harbin Jews, as well as Russians, Chinese and even some Japanese. In Harbin, there never was such a funeral as that of the young Kaspe: thousands of Harbiners of different nationalities followed the hearse all the way to the Jewish cemetery, crying "Death to the Japanese Militarists!"³⁴⁸ All the Jewish stores of Harbin completely shut down. Afraid of the demonstration escalating, "250 gendarmes and a whole regiment of Japanese Infantry came from Tsitsihar to reinforce the local forces."³⁴⁹ When Kaspe's funeral procession passed the New Synagogue, the Zionist leader Dr. Kaufman gave the following speech: "The Jews were the first people in the world to declare the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill.' We do not pursue revenge, but we seek legal protection of our lives and properties. The state authorities

³⁴⁶ See Breuillard Sabine, "L'Affaire Kaspé revisitée. Documents publiés et présentés par Sabine Breuillard," *Revue des études slaves*, tome 73, fascicule 2-3, (2001): 337-72; Dan Ben-Canaan, *The Semion Kaspe File: A Case Study of Harbin as an Intersection of Cultural and Ethnical Communities in Conflict 1932-1945* (Harbin: Heilongjiang University, 2008). Both Sabine's article and Ben-Canaan's book collected the letters that the young Kaspe wrote to his father in captivity and documents of the investigation of the Vice French Consul Chambon.

³⁴⁷ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 207.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

³⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

have an obligation to establish peace. The [Japanese and Manchurian] authorities must fight against and sweep out the bandits who foment the hatred of citizens against Jews and sow seeds of discord among citizens.”³⁵⁰

Kaufman’s public speech on the street more or less expressed his dissatisfaction to the authorities. Moreover, “according to the memoirs of Evsey Pratt, who grew up in Harbin, Kaufman held a ‘rather strong speech’ at a public meeting of the Jewish community.”³⁵¹ Teddy Kaufman confirms that his father pointed out that Kasper “had been assassinated on anti-Semitic grounds and that his murderers had enjoyed the protection of the authorities.” Dr. Kaufman declared that “a country which allows bandits and assassins to harm innocents has no right to exist.”³⁵²

Dr. Kaufman’s speech brought him big trouble. Condemning the existence of the puppet state was the most sensitive taboo for the inhabitants of Manchukuo, because Japan had just withdrawn from the League of Nations in March and the legitimacy of Manchukuo was denied by almost all the nations in 1933. Thereupon, according to Takao, *Manshu Nippo* (The Manchurian Daily News), a Japanese-language newspaper published in Dairen, criticized the closing of the Jewish stores on the day of the funeral on December 5.³⁵³ Furthermore, *Manshu Nippo* reported on Kaufman “delivering a fierce anti-Manchukuo speech on the street.”³⁵⁴ Following that, right-wing newspapers in Harbin all criticized the fact that Kaufman had protested against the Manchukuo authorities.³⁵⁵ The Russian fascists contentedly added fuel to

³⁵⁰ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 40.

³⁵¹ Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, interview with Evsey Domar conducted by Irene Eber 24-30 April 1986, p40, quoted in Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 141.

³⁵² T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 114.

³⁵³ Takao, “Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II,” 56.

³⁵⁴ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 40.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

the fire: “Radzoyevsky wrote in the iniquitous *Nash Put* a long article in which he demanded the arrest and punishment of the Doctor for having insulted those patriotic Russians who had only done an act of justice in killing a dirty Jew whose father was an agent of the ‘Third Internationale.’”³⁵⁶

In consequence, the *Tokumu Kikan* (Japanese Military Mission) summarily summoned Dr. Kaufman, and “hurled at him every insult they could think of, and threatened to expel him from Manchuria.”³⁵⁷ The Japanese forced Kaufman and other leaders of the Harbin Jewish Council (HEDO) to retract their words and to rehabilitate the “prestige” of Manchukuo. On 8 and 10 March 1934, the poor Doctor and the Jewish Council published open letters in the Jewish newspaper *Rupor* and the Japanese-owned Russian daily *Kharbinskoe Vremia*. According to Hohler,

In this letter Doctor Kaufman disclaimed that he had never said anything to question the work of the police or the integrity of the authorities in Manchukuo. He also declared that he had spoken purely as a private person, not as a representative of the Jewish community. In its letter the Jewish community declared that its members were totally satisfied with the police’s handling of the kidnapping and expressed their gratitude for the work of the police. The letter continued, expressing HEDO’s appreciation of the equal treatment of all citizens in Manchukuo, irrespective of their nationality or religion, and its gratitude for the support the Jewish community of Harbin had received from the new authorities since the establishment of Manchukuo. The letter closed by calling on the Jewish inhabitants of Harbin to “control themselves and attend to their affairs peacefully and quietly.”³⁵⁸

In this way, the Japanese authorities completely silenced the Jews in Harbin. When Harbin Jews had to “control themselves” and kept “peacefully and quietly,” the media was totally occupied by the RFP’s *Nash Puts*. Following Kaspé’s funeral, *Nash Put* published over

³⁵⁶ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 208.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 142.

30 articles to humiliate and slander Harbin Jews.³⁵⁹ First, Jews were described as unwanted people of Manchukuo and that they should leave: “Dr. Kaufman’s speech clearly shows that this Jew thinks himself above the law and takes the liberty to criticize the Government. As Moses led the Jews out of Egypt, so must Dr. Kaufman follow his example and lead the Jews out of Harbin.”³⁶⁰

Furthermore, *Nash Put’* launched personal attack on Kaufman maligning him as a heartless Jewish doctor who persecuted Orthodox Christians in Harbin. Evoking anti-Semitic stereotypes, *Nash Put’* fabricated a tragic story of an innocent Russian girl named Lydia Telezhnikova, who fell sick with cholera, being killed by Dr. Kaufman.³⁶¹ The cholera epidemic was brought about by the great flood in 1932, the year when Japanese army occupied Northeast China. When the cholera epidemic struck Harbin, Dr. Kaufman and the Jewish hospital in fact saved many lives, both Jews and non-Jews. *Nash Put’* basically reversed right and wrong.

At last, *Nash Put’* published a series of articles attacking the Harbin Jewish merchants. In the Russian fascists’ opinion, the Jews were both capitalists and communists, who destroyed their Russian homeland by means of Jewish economic strength. One article mocked Harbin’s “Sugar King,” Lev Zikman, “because a bust of him, made for him by the wife of a consular employee, broke on delivery.”³⁶² Zikman owned Manchuria’s largest sugar mill, the Ashihe Sugar Mill. In 1934, the Japanese forced him to jointly operate the Ashihe Sugar Mill and

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 138.

³⁶⁰ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 115.

³⁶¹ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 148. In her book, Hohler has included plenty of details on these anti-Semitic articles published in *Nash Put’*.

³⁶² For more details, see Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, esp. Chapter 5 “Russian Fascists, Anti-Semitism and the Public.”

usurped more than fifty percent ownership of the mill.³⁶³ *Nash Put'* probably seized this opportunity to humiliate Zikman.

To add insult to injury, the Russian fascists posted these slanderous articles on Harbin's main commercial streets, making them visible to the victim Simeon Kaspé's old father in the Moderne Hotel. When the Jews peeled off these fascist posters and appealed to the police, they were told that "because *Nash Put'* was under government supervision, like all other newspapers, the posters were published with official consent and destroying them was a crime."³⁶⁴

No matter how ridiculous these accusations sounded, the Harbin Jewish community was completely isolated from the rest of the population. Dr. Kaufman, once respected by both Jews and gentiles, was then attacked personally on the street. In addition, the Japanese Gendarmerie "assigned two Russian thugs to go at night and smash all the windows of the two synagogues. Each time that the glass was replaced it was broken with stones and bricks, until finally all repairs had to be given up. Religious services had to be held with broken windows, in a temperature thirty degrees below zero."³⁶⁵ In the night of the first of March [1934], all panels and windows of the New Synagogue in Diagonalnaia Street were destroyed, "so nearly no window was unbroken, and in the morning no service could be held, because no one could stay there because of the cold."³⁶⁶

The Kaspé affair and Harbin Jews' protest against the persecutions provoked Russian fascists' intensive anti-Semitic activities and the Japanese militarists' brutal oppression. As a

³⁶³ Grossman, "Building the north-east: Jewish enterprise in Manchuria, 1900-1940," 323; Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 428.

³⁶⁴ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 143-44.

³⁶⁵ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 230.

³⁶⁶ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 154.

result, a pogrom-like atmosphere pervaded Harbin from 1933 to 1937.³⁶⁷ These insults to the victims finally forced Dr. Kaufman and “Sugar King” Zikman to cooperate with the Manchukuo authorities at the end of 1937 when the Japanese remade their Jewish policy, which will be analyzed in the next chapter.

4.2.4. The Trial of the Kaspé Affair

In October 1934, the kidnappers of Simeon Kaspé were arrested, including Nikolai Martinov, Harbin Municipal Police inspector, and his five associates.³⁶⁸ However, afraid of their involvement being exposed, the Japanese authorities transmuted the “sordid criminal case into a political *cause celebre*.”³⁶⁹ In November, Osamu Eguchi, Chief of the Criminal Affairs Division of the Harbin Police Agency, reported on Kaspé’s affair, a report of sixty pages of Japanese text and thirty-two pages of Russian, in which he concluded that the murders of Simeon Kaspé were “Russian patriots,” raising funds by kidnapping Jews to save their homeland.³⁷⁰ The *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* reprinted the synopsis of Eguchi’s report in English. Writing in chronological order, Eguchi first pointed out that the Jews constituted the main force of the Communist movement that had caused the collapse of the Russian Empire: “The accused are perfectly sure that those guilty for the ruin of Imperial Russia, the murder of the Emperor himself and his family, are Communists and leaders of the Communist movement Jews, and, therefore, the accused decided to have revenge for their homeland, being imbued with extreme anti-Soviet

³⁶⁷ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 115.

³⁶⁸ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 166.

³⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁰ “Japs Accused of Aiding Bias in Puppet State” *JTA*, Jan. 16, 1935; “Jap Justifies Slaying of Jew in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, January 23, 1935; “Trouble in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Feb. 4, 1935.

and anti-Jewish feelings.”³⁷¹ The report further groundlessly blamed the victims, the Kaspes, were not only the agents of Comintern, but were also dirty capitalists who had stolen the Tsar’s treasures and made a great fortune out of them during the revolution. Finally, the Japanese Chief of Police defended the murders as heroes, showed his sympathy and described extenuating circumstances:

Thus the accused considered that Joseph Kaspe had made his money in a criminal manner and decided to take his money away from him and spend it in a struggle against the Bolsheviks. They considered that such action would enable them to commence a struggle against the Bolsheviks, and also to avenge themselves on the Jews. In their opinion, acting in this manner, they would kill two birds with one stone.

However, leaving their action to the conscience of the accused, and not going into consideration of whether it was bad or good of them, the fact must be stated that they showed themselves staunch fighters for their native land, who considered all means good to accomplish their aim. We know of many such cases in history. These people have lost their native land, but they always remember the fact, and fight for it, even violating the law.³⁷²

These despicable anti-Semitic slanders which considered slaying Jews as the act of patriotic heroes read bizarrely today, but they indeed prevailed and roused hatred among gentiles against Jews during the two world wars. The Japanese militarists utterly picked up the Russian fascists’ anti-Semitic views and saw the Jews as potential enemies. Subduing both the Bolsheviks and the Jews, the kidnappers were esteemed as “killing two birds in one stone.” Despite the remonstrations from Jewish communities in Shanghai, the U.S and Europe, newspapers published in Harbin carried articles full of such anti-Semitic propagandas since the Japanese imposed a blackout on the Jews’ voices.

³⁷¹ “Trouble in Manchukuo” *JTA*, Feb. 4, 1935

³⁷² *Ibid.*

However, the six accused criminals were eventually put in charge of the Courts of Justice in Harbin and taken into jail. The judges remained Chinese appointed during the period when the Chinese ruled Manchuria. It was in fact not difficult for the Chinese judges to make a just sentence, because they had experienced several such anti-Semitic cases during the period of Chinese rule, such as the Vilensky File in 1927. Amleto Vespa, an Italian mercenary who first worked for Marshal Zhang Zuolin and then served in the Japanese Gendarmerie, witnessed that “in spite of all the tricks and efforts of the Japanese to shift the issue on the ground of patriotism and politics, the Chinese judges could see nothing but plain banditry, kidnapping and murder.”³⁷³ Regardless of the opinion of their Japanese “advisors,” the Chinese judges resolutely and determinedly declared the murderers guilty. In June 1936, the Chinese judges of Harbin District Court pronounced death sentences on four of the kidnapers, and sentenced the other two to life imprisonment.

The news subsequently encouraged Harbin Jews. Kaufman praised the Harbin court decision saying that: “The trial for the criminals who kidnapped and murdered Simon Kaspe is over. The blackguards have been found guilty. Four have been sentenced to death, and two have been sentenced to life imprisonment. Punishments have been assigned to these bandits. We have not made any comments until now, because [...] we have been waiting until details of the case were clarified before the court and fair decisions were handed down.”³⁷⁴

Nevertheless, Harbin Jews found that they rejoiced too soon. Two days later, the Japanese arrested the presiding Chinese judge and declared the sentence null and void. The Japanese-owned Russian newspaper *Kharbinskoe Vremia* published articles continually

³⁷³ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 218-19.

³⁷⁴ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 41.

politicizing the Kasper file and asking for “fair justice” and a “retrial” for the murderers.³⁷⁵ Seven months later, in February 1937, the Japanese judges of the Supreme Court of Changchun, the capital of Puppet Manchukuo, dismissed the case of Kasper and granted amnesty to all the six kidnapers on the ground that they had acted as patriots. The principal criminal, Martinov, resumed his position as the Harbin Municipal Police inspector.³⁷⁶

Adding insult to injury, arresting the judges and releasing the criminals, Manchukuo-style justice, shocked all decent-minded people. Japanese scholar Takao exclaims that “the trial of the Kasper Affair and its outcome may lucidly illustrate the true nature and fraud of what was called Manchukuo, how the ‘rule of Law’ operated there.”³⁷⁷



Figure 9: Hotel Moderne, flying the French flag, 1930s.

(Image from <http://www.eastasianhistory.org/37/gamsa>, accessed March 26, 2019)

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 40-1.

³⁷⁶ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 167.

³⁷⁷ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 42.

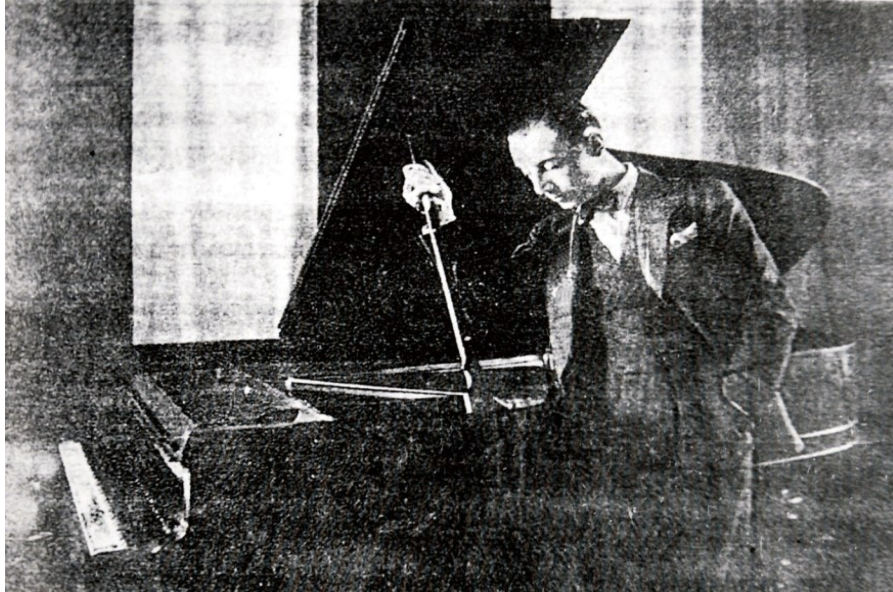


Figure 10: Simeon Kaspé in 1933

(Image from https://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/harbin/simeon_kaspe.htm, accessed March 27, 2019)

4.3. Expel Jews from Puppet Manchukuo

While the divergent powers were still locking horns on the Kaspe Affair, the sale of CER by USSR to Manchukuo, the official expansion of the Russian Fascist Party, and the Japanese anti-Jewish policy, almost crushed the Harbin Jewish community in 1935.

4.3.1. The Bureau for Russian Emigrant Affairs (BREM)

On 8 October 1934, the Soviet government ordered the Harbin Consulate to prepare for the sale of the Chinese Eastern Railway and to retreat from Manchuria.³⁷⁸ By the middle of 1935, more than 20,000 Soviets had returned to Russia. To eradicate the Soviet influence and to more effectively control the remaining Russian population in Manchukuo, the Japanese Military

³⁷⁸ Shi, Liu and Gao, *Harbin EQiao Shi*, 87.

Mission established the Bureau for Russian Emigrant Affairs (*Biuro po delam Russiskikh Emigrantov*, BREM) in December 1934.

The establishment of BREM endowed the RFP a legal status in Manchukuo, so it in fact enhanced the power of the RFP. In March 1934, the expanded RFP, changed its name to All-Russia Fascist Party, by merging with the branch in the United States. The All-Russia Fascist Party officially took full charge of all the Russian communities, constituting of 30,000 to 40,000 stateless émigrés in Manchuria. BREM divided into seven departments and had 188 organizations, covering agricultural settlement, education, administration, finance and welfare, legal and military affairs. The RFP took all the key positions in BREM. Rodzaevsky served as an adviser to the BREM directors and headed the cultural department in educating Russian youth. Mikhail Matkovsky directed the Administration Department, “which issued residence permits, employment cards, and passports required of all White Russians in Manchukuo.”³⁷⁹ “All BREM officials were responsible to” a Japanese Major named Akikusa Shun, “who met with them at regular intervals.”³⁸⁰ According to Stephan, “by the middle of 1935, BREM was operating in White Russian communities throughout Manchukuo. Branches sprang up in Mukden, Hsinking, Manchouli, Hailar, Aigun, and Pogradichinaya.”³⁸¹

All Russian émigrés over the age of eighteen were required to register with BREM. Without the BREM identification card, residence permits, and travel documents, the émigrés could hardly move or find a job in Manchukuo. Thus, “Russians called BREM ‘our consulate’ as a joke.”³⁸² According to Stephan, “BREM wielded jurisdiction not only over ethnic Russians but over other nationalities who had lived within the old Russian Empire: Ukrainians, Poles,

³⁷⁹ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 175.

³⁸⁰ Ibid.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

³⁸² Takao, “Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II,” 57.

Estonians, Latvians, Lithuanians, Georgians, Armenians, Tartars, and Baltic Germans. Collectively, these non-Russians comprised about 10 percent of Manchukuo's 'White Russian' population."³⁸³ However, the Jews were excluded.

Takao's research showed that "According to Harbin police data in the mid-1930s, out of 7000 Jews in Harbin, 4500 were stateless, 1200 had Soviet passports, 350 had Polish, 160 had Lithuanian, and 150 had Chinese passports."³⁸⁴ The data was incomplete, but it shows the majority of Harbin Jews were stateless. For practical purposes, Jews had to apply to join BREM, otherwise Jews had no official status or identity in Manchukuo. The *Hadegel*, the journal of the Zionist youth organization, the Betar, wrote an article in January 1936, insisting on "their right to [BREM] membership as anti-Communist, Russian-Jewish nationalists": "It is clear the [BREM] should include within its ranks Jewish emigrants as well. They cannot be excluded from the constructive forces that will rebuild Russia after the yoke of Bolshevism has been removed. For these reasons, the leaders of our organizations, being emigrants, applied for membership in BREM and advised the Jewish population to do the same."³⁸⁵

Even though Harbin Jews strove to obtain a legal status recognized by the government, the BREM administrators excluded the Jews and saw them as enemies. When three Jewish families applied for émigré status at the BREM branch in Manchouli, the BREM officers cried "Down with the Communist Party" and then shouted "Down with the Jews."³⁸⁶ As a result, those who failed to register with the BREM were denied employment and education. Mara Moustafien

³⁸³ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 176.

³⁸⁴ Takao, "Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II," 57.

³⁸⁵ *Hadegel*, 1-2, 12 January 1936, quoted in Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," 290.

³⁸⁶ Takao, "Russian-Jewish Harbin before World War II," 57-8.

recounted that her mother Inna “was excluded from school and had to study at home with a tutor.”³⁸⁷

BREM as the only official organization for Russian émigrés after the Soviets withdrew from Manchukuo, was supposed to receive the remaining Jews, but apparently, the Russian fascist officials were very reluctant to or even refused to include the Jewish population. Consequently, the Jews of Manchukuo were not only stateless, but also lost their legal status. Stephan called them “double refugees,” first from Bolshevism, then from fascism.³⁸⁸ It means Jews were deprived of all identities and all rights *de facto* and *de jure*, not only equal rights, but all human rights, economic, political, and religious. All Jewish properties were free to be relinquished and Jewish lives were free to be taken. The persecution of Jews in Manchukuo was comparable to that in Nazi Germany, though in a lesser degree. That is the reason why German scholar Hohler observes that “starting in late 1934 ... attacks and assaults on Jewish inhabitants of Harbin became more common:”³⁸⁹

On the night of 18 December 1934 a young Jewish married couple, named Al'tman, was assaulted by a group of drunken students from the Polytechnic Institute on Kitaiskaia Street, the main street of Pristan. They first insulted Mrs Al'tman, then started to beat her husband and tried to take his hat, possibly aware of the importance and meaning Jews ascribed to covering one's head. The offenders finally fled when the police arrived on the scene. Only days later, on 4 January 1935, a young Jewish man named Veizman was attacked by four Russian youths at the skating rink, one of the most popular meeting places for adolescents in the winter. Two of the attackers held him while the other two beat him.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁷ Mara Moustafine, “My Family and its City: Fifty Years in Harbin,” in Qu and T. Kaufman ed., *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, 368.

³⁸⁸ Stephan, *The Russian Fascists*, 176-77.

³⁸⁹ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 152.

³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Around the middle of 1935, anti-Jewish kidnappings and murders started a new round. A brother of Jacob Mali, a prominent contractor for CER, was kidnapped and killed by bandits. Before long, Jacob's son Leib was kidnapped near the synagogue in the heart of the Jewish district in June 1935. Leib was returned for a ransom of \$3,000.³⁹¹ In the same month, a shopkeeper called Leonson was kidnapped and disappeared.³⁹² It took another two years, in May 1937, for Leonson's decomposed body to be found "in a well in a newly developed urban area of Harbin."³⁹³

4.3.2. Western Jews Protest

Even though the Censorship Bureau of Manchukuo forbade any reports on kidnappings,³⁹⁴ these anti-Jewish persecutions, especially the Kaspe case which was justified by the Japanese authorities, aroused protest and indignation in the Jewish communities of China in particular and among world Jewry in general.

In August 1934, Nissim Ezra Benjamin Ezra, the secretary of the Shanghai Zionist Association and the chief editor of its official newspaper *Israel's Messenger*, went to Tokyo and asked the Japanese Vice Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru to suppress anti-Semitism in Manchuria.³⁹⁵ When Nazi Germany persecuted and expelled Jews from Europe, both Shanghai Zionist leader, N.E.B. Ezra, and Japanese diplomat, Yotara Sugimura, sought to settle German

³⁹¹ "Kidnap youth in Manchukuo," *JTA*, June 11, 1935; "Ransom is paid for Harbin boy," *JTA*, July 10, 1935.

³⁹² "Harbin merchant believed killed by captors," *JTA*, Oct. 09, 1935.

³⁹³ Takao, "Prewar Japan's Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community," 37.

³⁹⁴ Vespa, *Secret Agent of Japan*, 239-40.

³⁹⁵ Maruyama Naoki, "The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936," in *The Jews of China, Vol. 1.*, ed. Goldstein, 262; "Japan to ask Manchukuo Erase Bias" *JTA*, Oct. 2, 1934.

Jewish refugees in Harbin.³⁹⁶ However, as the situation of Harbin Jews only became ever worse, Ezra was anxious at all cost to remonstrate with the Japanese authorities. Ezra was probably “the most zealous and militant Zionist in the whole of the Far East,” as Israel Cohen, the World Zionist Organization’s first representative to East Asia, described him.³⁹⁷

From December 1934 to February 1935, Ezra first headed a delegation consisting of Rabbi M. Z. Ashkenazi, Hillel Epstein, and B. Topas, representing the Jewish community of Shanghai, that approached Minister Ariyoshi, Japan’s Minister to China, at the Japanese Legation in Shanghai. Ezra complained to the Japanese Minister Ariyoshi about the persistent ill-treatment of Harbin Jews in the past twenty months. He further pointed out that those Jewish pioneers, such as Skidelsky and Soskin, rendered yeoman service to the initial economic development of Harbin. Thus, he hoped Jews in Harbin could be fully protected and considered. Ezra also conducted similar interviews with the U. S. Consul-General, Edwin S. Cunningham, and the British Consul, Alexander Cadogan. Those authorities who received Ezra all showed sympathy to Harbin Jews and promised to contact their colleagues in Manchukuo, but nothing really helped.³⁹⁸

At last, Ezra petitioned the American Jewish Congress (AJC) concerning the desperate situation of Harbin Jews.³⁹⁹ The AJC immediately lodged a protest with Japanese Ambassador Saito in Washington. On February 5, 1935, the president of AJC, Dr. Stephen S. Wise and Professor Horace M. Kallen called upon Saito and publicly expressed American Jewry’s hope that Japan would take appropriate action to stop the anti-Semitic campaign in Harbin during the

³⁹⁶ Naoki, “The Shanghai Zionist Association and the International Politics of East Asia Until 1936,” 263; “Japan Opens Manchukuo to Refugees,” *JTA*, August 6, 1934 (Tokyo, Aug.5).

³⁹⁷ Cohen, *A Jewish Pilgrimage*, 198.

³⁹⁸ “Japs accused of Aiding Bias in Puppet State,” *JTA*, Jan. 16, 1935; “Jap Justifies Slaying of Jews in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Jan. 23, 1935; “Trouble in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Feb. 4, 1935.

³⁹⁹ “Jap Justifies Slaying of Jews in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Jan. 23, 1935.

last year and half. Mr. Saito “expressed himself in complete accord with the assurances made by the Minister to China and the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs and agreed to forward to his government the request submitted to him, which he said has his full sympathy.”⁴⁰⁰

Similar demonstrations were held by the Joint Committee of the British Jewish Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association throughout 1936 to 1937.⁴⁰¹ Representatives of the British Jews protested to the Japanese Ambassador in London concerning the anti-Jewish agitations by White Russians in Harbin and “for the wholesale arrest of Jewish businessmen who were ‘charged with fictitious offenses in order to force them to offer bribes.’”⁴⁰²

Japanese sources show that these protests from American and English Jewry did alert Japan. According to Takao, on January 14, 1935, the Harbin vice consul Hanroku Nagaoka submitted a report to Foreign Minister Koki Hirota, in which he “candidly admitted that the Jews were suffering military-sanctioned persecution committed by the Russian Fascist Party in Harbin, but expressed his view that taking a policy of siding with the Jews, who comprised a minority of the Russians living in Harbin, would never be convenient for the sake of governance, because that policy would alienate the White Russians.”⁴⁰³ Moreover, in a reply from Harbin to London on September 19, 1936, the Harbin Consul-General Shoshiro Sato reported to Shigeru Yoshida, then ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Great Britain, “admitting that Jews [were] being persecuted throughout the world, but the degree of persecution was particularly serious in Harbin.”⁴⁰⁴ Sato further explained the reasons in full accord with the Russian fascists’ “patriot theory” that was pervading in Harbin. Finally, almost all the Japanese

⁴⁰⁰ “Wise and Kallen Protest to Saito against Agitators in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Feb.6, 1935.

⁴⁰¹ “British Jews Query Japans Envoy on Harbin Excesses,” *JTA*, Jan. 19, 1937; Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 39.

⁴⁰² Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 39.

⁴⁰³ Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 39.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

authorities acquiesced to the current Japanese policy on the Jews in Harbin which they believed was good for the governance of Manchukuo and its official principles of racial harmony.



Figure 11: N.E.B. Ezra (left) with two associates

(Image from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.E.B._Ezra, accessed April 1, 2019)

4.3.3. “Those Unsatisfied were Free to Leave”

In March 1935, encouraged by Ezra and the Jews in the U.S. and Britain, Dr. Kaufman and a member of the Harbin Kehillah, Mr. I. Berkovich, representing the Harbin Jewish community, went to talk to the Japanese Consul General Marishima in Harbin. Consul Marishima remarked that Harbin Jews were facing hardships and hostilities, and he further expressed that he would like to hear from the Jewish leaders “what grievances they had so that

he could render them full assistance.”⁴⁰⁵ Kaufman and Berkovich emphasized that the White Russian newspapers constantly attacked the Jews without foundation. “After becoming acquainted with the facts,” Marishima promised to suppress the anti-Jewish turmoil in Harbin and “asked the Harbin Jewish leaders to assure Jews abroad of the friendly feelings which the Japanese Government has toward the Jewish people.”⁴⁰⁶ Recent studies show that Marishima “was apparently also quite upset about unfavorable articles in the foreign press on anti-Semitism in Harbin” and he “wanted the names of those Jews who complained to the foreign press.”⁴⁰⁷ “Kaufman is said to have answered that the anti-Semitic bias in some of the Russian press is so obvious that no one actually needed to complain explicitly about it to garner foreign attention.”⁴⁰⁸

The Japanese soon took revenge on these complaints and demonstrations conducted by Ezra, Kaufman and Jews abroad. In August 1935, the secret police surrounded and searched the Great Synagogue.⁴⁰⁹ *Israel's Messenger* reported that “the entire compound was encircled by police and every corner of drawers, boxes, including the Holy Ark, where the sacred scrolls of the law are deposited, was submitted to a search for arms and banned literature.”⁴¹⁰ A month later, on the day of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), the Japanese Gendarmerie raided the Great Synagogue, the house of Rabbi Levin, and the home of Kaufman.⁴¹¹ Teddy, son of Dr. Kaufman, wrote in his memoirs that:

⁴⁰⁵ “World Press Digest,” *JTA*, May 10, 1935. *JTA* cited from *Israel's Messenger*, so the date of the news was postponed.

⁴⁰⁶ “Japs to Curb Guardists in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, Mar. 12, 1935.

⁴⁰⁷ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 156.

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

⁴⁰⁹ “Harbin Police Search Synagogue,” *JTA*, Sep. 1 (Aug. 30, Harbin), 1935.

⁴¹⁰ *Israel's Messenger*, 1 October 1935, vol.32, no.7, p12, quoted in Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 157.

⁴¹¹ Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 39; Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 157.

I must have been about 10 years old – I remember being sick and in bed on the morning of Yom Kippur. The Japanese gendarmes suddenly appeared at our house, at Rabbi Kiselev's home and at the Main Synagogue. While guards surrounded our house, the soldiers carried out a thorough search on the provocative grounds that we had hidden arms. It was of course mere provocation. They made me get up and checked under my mattress. I was afraid they might hide weapons there and then claim that they had found them in our home. My father, who had never as much as held a firearm, told them courageously: "This child is sick and running a high temperature. Please leave him alone. If you want you may search the entire house. Please do."⁴¹²

Similar raids on the Synagogue and other Jewish institutions happened again in the fall of 1936.⁴¹³ Raiding the Synagogue and searching the Holy Scrolls of the Law on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar year, the savage Japanese Gendarmerie once more silenced the Harbin Jews and provoked the Shanghai Jews: "In an open letter to the editor of the *Shanghai Times*, on 30 October 1935, Ezra called for a public apology for this flagrant disrespect for the Jewish people and their holy day."⁴¹⁴ It reminded people of the darkest period of Jewish history in Europe. A reader's letter in *Israel's Messenger* criticized the Japanese Gendarmerie, saying that "It is unheard of that Government officials would make a raid on a sacred place of worship on the strength of some accusation by irresponsible Jew-haters. Has it ever occurred that in the twentieth century a whole congregation can be accused by some irresponsible people, and the government will act on the strength of it?"⁴¹⁵ Unfortunately, fighting against anti-Semitism, N.E.B. Ezra, editor and founder of *Israel's Messenger*, died of heart attack in his fifties in December 1936.⁴¹⁶ Shanghai Jewry then turned more furious with the Japanese government.

At the end of 1935, Harbin Jews were almost crushed: "Jews are attacked daily on the streets, but no one dares complain for fear of imprisonment by the gendarmerie in cellars, where

⁴¹² T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 111.

⁴¹³ Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 158.

⁴¹⁴ Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 39.

⁴¹⁵ *Israel's Messenger*, 1 October 1935, vol.32, no.7, p19, quoted in Hohler, *Fascism in Manchuria*, 158.

⁴¹⁶ "N.E.B. Ezra, Editor of *Israel's Messenger*, Dies in Shanghai," *JTA*, December 7, 1936 (Shanghai, Dec.6)

they are reported kept indefinitely and tortured. The attacks are conducted without interference by the police.”⁴¹⁷ Moreover, the Japanese ousted the Jews from commerce in Harbin and other Manchukuoan cities, which forced these bankrupted Jewish businessmen to leave for Shanghai, Tianjin and other Chinese cities.⁴¹⁸ Jews in Tianjin only hoped that the Japanese militarists not march to this old Chinese harbor city, otherwise they might suffer the same difficulties as the Jews in Harbin.⁴¹⁹ A Hebrew article “Hurban Harbin” published in the newspaper *ha-Aretz* in 1936 summarized the situation that:

The Jews of this city say it is called “Harbin” as a prophecy of the “destruction” “Hurban” which is their present reality. It is a fact that the Jewish community of Harbin is being destroyed. Day by day the community is emptying. It should be emphasized that Harbin was one of the nicest and best Jewish communities in a Jewish communal sense.... While Harbin was under Chinese rule, the White Russians had no influence. Not so now. In the area of Japanese domination there are tensions with Soviet Russia and the White Russians rose to become helpers and advisors to the new regime and their influence is great, and so they built a poisoned atmosphere against Jews.⁴²⁰

As Harbin became “Hurban” (a Hebrew word literally means the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem), of those Jews who wished to remain in China, 2,000 escaped to Tianjin and 4,000 to 5,000 to Shanghai.⁴²¹ Subsequently, the Tianjin and Shanghai Jewish communities expanded as never before. Tianjin Jewry reached its highest number about 2,500 persons in 1935. Tianjin’s first synagogue was built in 1937 and was inaugurated by Harbin Rabbi, R. Levin. In Shanghai, there were only 500 to 700 Sephardic Jews and 800 to 1000 Ashkenazi Jews

⁴¹⁷ “Report White Russians Terrorizing Harbin Jews,” *JTA*, Nov. 18, 1935.

⁴¹⁸ “Manchukuo Jews Arrive in Shanghai,” *JTA*, Feb. 17, 1935.

⁴¹⁹ “Between the Lines,” *JTA*, Jul.2, 1935.

⁴²⁰ Shmuel Meir Moshayof, *be-Tokhekhe Yerushalayim*, Jerusalem, 1978, pp. 104-107, reprint of article “Hurban Harbin” (in Hebrew) published in the newspaper *ha-Aretz* 21.1.1936.

⁴²¹ Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 42.

in the 1920s.⁴²² However, by the end of the 1930s, Shanghai, replacing Harbin, grew into the largest Jewish community in China. By contrast, in Harbin, only 2,251 Jews remained at the end of 1938.⁴²³

4.4. Conclusion

On June 29, 1936, in a letter to London, the British Consul-General Paul Butler at Shenyang (Mukden) gave an evaluation of the four years of Manchukuo administration, in which he pointed out that “the Kwantung army rely on terrorism as an instrument of policy” and the methods of the military despotism “can only be described as savage:”

Many well authenticated instances of the killing of Chinese, either outright or be torture, by Japanese gendarmerie or police have been reported to this consulate-general and that at Harbin. Moreover there are the strongest grounds for believing that a British subject, a German and an American, as well as several ‘white’ or Soviet Russians have met similar fates. Obviously, it is only in very rare instances that crimes of this kind become known to us. The employment of methods of torture, so far from being exceptional, appears to be a matter of routine especially in the more lawless regions, where Japanese troops and gendarmerie have absolute power, may be surmised without much difficulty, but the full story of the sufferings of the Chinese at Japanese hands will no doubt never become known.⁴²⁴

Not only has the full story of the sufferings of the Chinese rarely become known, but also that of the Jews, which the British Consul-General Butler carelessly ignored. The Japanese Gendarmerie almost did all that the darkest regimes treated Jews in history, by extorting the Jewish money in the means of slander, kidnapping and murder, and finally expelling them.

⁴²² Lane Earns, “The Shanghai- Nagasaki Judaic Connection, 1859-1924”, in *The Jews of China*, vol. 1, ed. Goldstein, 158; Pan, and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Yutai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yive*, 25.

⁴²³ “Zai Harubin Yudayajin no Jokyo” [State of the Jews Living in Harbin], *Gaiji Keisatsu-ho* [Foreign Police Report], vol.199, the Home Ministry Police Bureau, 1939, p.118, quoted in Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 38.

⁴²⁴ Paul Butler to London, 29 June 1936 in DBFP, 2nd series, vol. XX, doc.537, quoted in Nish, *The History of Manchuria*, Vol.2, 121-22.

Far from a knee-jerk reaction against the Soviet Union, wartime Japan had been turning into extreme militarism and fascism. The *JTA* sighed that “For some unaccountable reason, the latter [refer to White Russians] are allowed to pursue their nefarious deeds unmolested by the Harbin police and given a free rein to do as they please. East is being made to feel what West is like when it comes to racial hatred and prejudice.”⁴²⁵ Before very long, the union of the Japanese military and the Russian fascists – “the Manchurian Mafia” referred to by scholar Stephan – found their best ally, Nazi Germany.

⁴²⁵ “Digest of World Press Opinion,” *JTA*, Jan. 4, 1935.

Chapter V: The Miracle that Jews Survived in China during World War II

In WWII, nearly six million Jews were massacred during the Holocaust in Europe, but it is less-known that at least 20 to 30 million Chinese were killed bloodily and tens of millions became refugees. Moreover, when the Jews were uprooted and transformed their tradition in the new world, the inherent Chinese society bonded by traditional familial ties was thoroughly destroyed on its own soil.⁴²⁶ China was ruined and the people lost (*guopo jiawang* 家破人亡).

But in the West, scholars observe that “most books and articles dealing with the war in China focus on the American or Japanese points of view, plans, and experiences ... Rarely ... have the problems, hardships, and survival of the Chinese people in various areas been explored ... The lack of studies has distorted the contributions of the country and its people and the profound effects of the war on it.”⁴²⁷

In our study, distorting China’s role in WWII and covering-up Japan’s atrocities directly resulted in the Jewish illusion that the Japanese only persecuted the Chinese, but they treated foreigners well and saved the Jews in the war. However, when we re-examine the co-operation of the Japanese Guandong Army and the Russian Fascist Party and their anti-Semitic outrages in Harbin, we found that in the ensuing WWII, all Japan did was to keep taking advantage of the vulnerability of the suffering Jews.

⁴²⁶ See Diana Lary, *The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). In her book, Diana Lary explored the suffering of the Chinese people in the catastrophe and the damage of their familial and cultural ties that inherently bound Chinese society.

⁴²⁷ Katherine Reist, review of "The Chinese People at War: Human Suffering and Social Transformation, 1937-1945," by Diana Lary, and "China at War: Regions of China, 1937-1945," edited by Stephen R. MacKinnon, *China Review International*. Vol. 18 Issue 1, (2011): 92.

Within the context of Japan's wars of aggression in Asia and international diplomacy during the Pacific War, this chapter will argue that China was in fact a forgotten ally to the United States in WWII. It is the Chinese, rather than the Japanese, that saved the Jews. The Jews were also a victim of the Japanese militarism in the war. The complicated relations of the Harbin, Shanghai and American Jews are the keys to understand both Chinese and Japanese policy on the Jewish refugees.

5.1. World War II in Asia

5.1.1. Japan's Wars of Aggression

During WWI, Japan grew into a great power in Asia, the following decades saw a series of wars that Japan waged alone to challenge the West-dominated world order (the Washington System) in Asia. The first phase of wars began by occupying Manchuria in 1932. Japan was not punished by the League of Nations, so it became even more powerful. To eradicate Western influence in Asia, Japan's second phase of war was to invade China in 1937 and the third phase aimed at East Asia and the South Pacific in 1941.⁴²⁸ Hans Van De Ven concludes that "Japanese imperialism – that is, Japan's desire to drive Western countries from east and south-east Asia and then colonise these areas – was the deep cause of the Second World War in east Asia."⁴²⁹

When "Japanese forces in China pushed beyond the Great Wall and resumed their advance westward and southward into Chahar and Hopei" in 1935, Chinese nationalism and anti-Japanese sentiment increased.⁴³⁰ However, Jiang Jieshi, the Chinese Nationalist leader, was reluctant to fight against Japan. Instead, pursuing a policy of domestic consolidation before an

⁴²⁸ See Ian H. Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period* (Westport Conn.: Praeger, 2002).

⁴²⁹ Hans Van De Ven, *China at War: Triumph and Tragedy in the Emergence of the New China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018), 69.

⁴³⁰ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 345.

external war (*rangwai bixian annei*), Jiang ordered the Young Marshal Zhang Xueliang to eradicate the Chinese communists in the Northwest. Young Marshal Zhang's father was killed by the Japanese as previously mentioned, so the Young Marshal full of hatred to the Japanese, was in no mood for an internal war. On December 12, 1936, Young Marshal Zhang dramatically captured Jiang in Xi'an and forced him to terminate all civil strife. Under the influence of the Soviet Union, which feared disorder in China would further advantage Japan, the Chinese nationalists and communists agreed to form the second United Front against the aggressor, and Jiang was honored as the Generalissimo.⁴³¹

The unification of China alerted Japan. In Tokyo, the young Japanese militarists urged the renewal of war against China: "On February 26, 1936, their discontents exploded in an incident popularly known, from its date, as the "Two Twenty-Six." It was all very similar to one of the contemporaneous Nazi purges in Germany and Austria, which indeed may have inspired it. Fourteen hundred men, mainly of the Imperial Guard, under their captains and lieutenants, started out on a systematic assassination of their political opponents. Old Viscount Saito was disposed of at dawn in his own house. Finance Minister Takahashi Korekiyo ... was shot as he lay in bed ..."⁴³²

The militarists finally secured the cabinet in June 1937 when Prince Konoe Fumimato took office as the prime minister with an ambitious Pan-Asian program. The war of aggression against China ensued in the following month. On the night of July 7, 1937, the Japanese troops started firing at the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing, on the pretext that the Chinese garrison

⁴³¹ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 563-65.

⁴³² Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 345-46.

refused the Japanese entrance in the nearby city to search for a missing soldier. In late July, the Japanese Army captured Beijing. Undeclared war between China and Japan began.⁴³³

Once again, like the Manchurian Incident of six years before, China appealed to the League of Nations. The League, as well as the United States, condemned Japan's aggression positively. However, wars were "not likely to be brought to an end by manifestations of disapprobation on moral or legal grounds."⁴³⁴ To cover up the international publicity directed against Japan, the Japanese continued to pretend that the hostility was a "China Incident" so Japan's war was no more than chastisement. Less powerful than the West, the "wild dog" Japan, as Antony Best described it,⁴³⁵ was good at making an "incident" to pass the buck on the others.

From July 1937 to October 1938, the Japanese successively captured Shanghai, Nanjing, Xuzhou, Wuhan and Guangzhou. The Japanese occupied almost all eastern and southern developed cities with railways and ports to enter China. In November 1937, the Chinese Nationalist government was forced to remove to the mountain city of Chongqing in the far Southwest, near the border with South Asia. The Chinese communists fought in the Northwest and part of central China.⁴³⁶

Regardless that its main forces were bogged down in China, Tokyo was encouraged by Hitler's war in Europe in 1939. The Tripartite Pact of 1940 revealed Japan's ambitions to conquer all Asia, especially the natural-resource-rich Southeast Asian region, and to establish the so called "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere." Hitler's victory in Europe gave Japan the

⁴³³ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 346; Hus, *The Rise of Modern China*, 579-82; Rana Mitter, *Forgotten Ally: China's World War II, 1937-1945* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2014), 80-97.

⁴³⁴ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 472.

⁴³⁵ Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914-41*, 158.

⁴³⁶ Rana Mitter, "The War Years, 1937-1949," in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Modern China*, ed. Wasserstrom, 157.

chance to move on French Indo-China, and further pose a threat to Dutch East Indies, the Philippine Islands and Australia.

The Japanese move directly threatened America's security and defense supplies in the South Pacific. In his testimony on the lease-lend bill before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on January 15, 1941, Secretary of State Cordell Hull declared:

It has been clear throughout that Japan has been actuated from the start by broad and ambitious plans for establishing herself in a dominant position in the entire region of the Western Pacific. Her leaders have openly declared their determination to achieve and maintain that position by force of arms and thus to make themselves masters of an area containing almost one-half of the entire population of the world. As a consequence, they would have arbitrary control of the sea and trade routes in that region.

Previous experience and current developments indicate that the proposed 'new order' in the Pacific area means, politically, domination by one country. It means, economically, employment of the resources of the area concerned for the benefit of that country and to the ultimate impoverishment of other parts of the area and exclusion of the interests of other countries. It means, socially, the destruction of personal liberties and the reduction of the conquered peoples to the role of inferiors.⁴³⁷

To hold off Japan, President Roosevelt ordered the freezing of Japanese assets in the United States, and embargoed exports of petroleum to Japan in July 1941. Led by the United States, the ABCD powers' (America, Britain, China, and Dutch) coalition against Japan emerged.

To resist America's containment, the Japanese Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo, ordered the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Swiftly, "Japan's offensive in the Pacific had begun, like an explosive discharge, in all directions. Within four days of Pearl Harbor, her air forces had attacked Singapore, Manila, Midway, Wake, and Guam, and her land forces had

⁴³⁷ "U.S. Policy Stated: President Says it 'was' to Keep Peace in the South Pacific; Aimed to Hold off Japan; Welles Condemns Move into Indo-China as a Threat to Our 'National Security,'" *New York Times*, Jul. 25, 1941.

seized footholds in Malaya, Burma, Hong Kong and Luzon.”⁴³⁸ Within six months, Japanese forces rapidly advanced throughout Southeast Asia, as well as small islands across the southwest Pacific, New Guinea and Australia. Japan’s attacks achieved striking military successes.

5.1.2. Japan’s War Crimes

Japanese historian Conrad Totman regards the decades to 1940 as “the most vibrant” period in Japan’s entire history with respect to its industrialization accomplishments and global expansion.⁴³⁹ However, Japan’s vibrancy was built on self-militarization and sacrifice of the other nations, so it is also the darkest period in Japan’s entire history, the same as Germany. But unlike Germany’s acknowledgement of guilty in postwar, the Japanese war crimes were covered up both in Japan and in the West.

Toshiyuki Tanaka, in his book *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, conservatively estimated the death tolls of each nation under the Japanese control in the Asia-Pacific War are: “200,000 Koreans, 30,000 Taiwanese, more than 10 million Chinese, 2 million Vietnamese (mainly due to famine), 1,1 million Filipinos, 4 million Indonesians; 100,000 Malays and Singaporeans, 150, 000 Burmese, and 1,5 million Indians (due to the Bengal famine of 1943). In addition, apart from soldiers who were killed in action, more than 60,000 Allied POWs and civilian detainees died.”⁴⁴⁰

Jews were not the sole sacrifice in WWII; almost all Asian natives experienced massacre because in the colonial period of Asia, only Japan completed advanced modern military. In the Rape of Nanjing in 1938, known as the “Asian Holocaust,” the Japanese killed about 300,000

⁴³⁸ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 541.

⁴³⁹ Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2005), 437-38.

⁴⁴⁰ Toshiyuki Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II* (Lanham, Maryland, Boulder, New York, London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 8-9.

Chinese civilians.⁴⁴¹ The Japanese army adopted a “Three Alls Policy” in its wars: “kill all, burn all, loot all.” When the Japanese looted private houses in Nanjing, they killed all men, women, children and elders, “whoever happened to be at home.”⁴⁴² 20,000 to 80,000 women were raped.⁴⁴³ The Japanese troops established a comfort women system in every place they occupied. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese, Korean, Filipino young women and some Western women too became sex slaves for the Japanese troops.

The most macabre sin that the Japanese army committed was Unit 731’s human experimentation and biological warfare. Unit 731 was based at Pingfang district of Harbin, where cruel Japanese doctors experimented with lethal bacteria on thousands of men, women, elders and children. The Japanese Army transported the Chinese captives to Unit 731 for experiments “in black vans called ‘ravens’” and disposed of “prisoners’ bodies in incinerators; the tasks were made so routine that their moral sensibilities were numbed.”⁴⁴⁴

When the plague transmission from animals to human hosts were “tested with success on captive Chinese and Manchu ‘guinea pigs’ at Pingfang, “Dr. Ishii Shiro, its founder and director, had developed a technique for infecting enemy populations with bubonic plague: planes flying at low altitude could spray millions of plague-infected Oriental rat fleas (*Xenopsylla cheopsis*) on city targets. The fleas would be released with bundles of grain; the rats attracted to the grain would be bitten by the fleas, sicken, and die; then, as in a natural outbreak, the fleas would find human hosts. Or the biting fleas would directly infect the targeted humans.”⁴⁴⁵ In her book

⁴⁴¹ Iris Chang, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 102.

⁴⁴² Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 5.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Jeanne Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities: Japanese Germ Warfare and American Obstruction of Justice at the Tokyo Trial* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018), 335.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., xii.

Hidden Atrocities: Japanese Germ Warfare and American Obstruction of Justice at the Tokyo Trial, Jeanne Guillemin wrote that:

From its beginning in 1932, Ishii's Manchukuo enterprise, an offshoot of the Army Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory in Tokyo, intended to exploit the region's subjugated peoples to explore human reactions to wartime hazards for troops, such as freezing temperatures, shrapnel wounds, cholera, and syphilis. "Comfort women" coerced to serve the sexual needs of Japanese soldiers were infected, along with other women and men, with venereal diseases; in a special project in remote Qiqihar, Ishii subjected Chinese captives to blistering chemical agents. His foremost objective, though, was to conduct experiments with infectious diseases that had potential as germ weapons, like plague, anthrax, cholera, typhus, and glanders.⁴⁴⁶

In the wars of aggression against China, Ishii's plague plans were put into practice. From 1940, Japanese aerial plague attacks went through Ningbo, Quzhou, Jinhua and Changde. Hundreds of civilians, both Chinese and the Westerners, were affected and killed in these cities.

In addition, the Japanese Army also threw the white émigrés and the Allied prisoners into the pool of guinea pigs for horrific biological warfare experiments in Unit 731 and other sites.⁴⁴⁷ For an attempted war with the United States, "in the late 1930s, for instance, Japanese scientists demanded more Caucasian subjects for their anthrax and plague experiments. When the NKVD chief for the Soviet Far East, Commissar Genrikh Lyuskov, defected, 300 of his subordinates fled to Manchukuo fearing an imminent house-cleaning by Stalin, only to perish at the hands of

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁷ See Mark Felton, *The Devil's Doctors: Japanese Human Experiments on Allied Prisoners of War* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books Ltd, 2012).

Unit 731's cruel doctors.”⁴⁴⁸ Based on the terrible horrors and its antihuman nature, postmodern scholars found out that Unit 731 of Harbin was an “Auschwitz” in the East.⁴⁴⁹

After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the germ weapon was added to the Zhejiang-Jiangxi campaign, where the U.S. air forces, led by Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle, began to arrive there in early 1942.⁴⁵⁰ Later, “officers at the General Staff in Tokyo proved amenable to germ warfare plans for the Pacific, in the Philippines and beyond,” so the plague attacks were also extended to Burma and Singapore.⁴⁵¹

Another horrible Japanese war crime is cannibalism, which developed into a systematic activity among Japanese soldiers toward the end of the war. In New Guinea and the Philippines, “Japanese soldiers referred to the Allies as ‘white pigs’ and the local population as ‘black pigs.’”⁴⁵² The majority of victims of cannibalism were Australian soldiers, Asian POWs, and New Guinea locals.

Notably, in WWI, the powers fought for colonial lands and profits; but during WWII, the aim of war escalated to include torturing and killing human beings bloodily. Human beings did not act like human beings any more: humans ate other humans alive; using plague to kill people and pollute the environment; or establishing gas chambers to exterminate an entire race. Finally, the war, as well as the so called “modern era,” ended with the application of the nuclear weapon which could ruin the entire Earth. Due to its scope and its lethality, it is fair to say that WWII

⁴⁴⁸ Bisher, *White Terror*, 367.

⁴⁴⁹ See Yang Yan-Jun and Tam Yue-Him, *Unit 731: Laboratory of the Devil, Auschwitz of the East: Japanese Biological Warfare in China 1933-45* (Fonthill Media Limited, 2018).

⁴⁵⁰ Guillemin, *Hidden Atrocities*, xvi-xviii.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xviii.

⁴⁵² Tanaka, *Hidden Horrors*, 126-27.

was the darkest period of human history, where people were killed like flies. What transformed human beings into monsters? Modern civilization remains mute.

5.1.3. The World Reactions to Japan's War of Aggression against China

Soon after the war in China in 1937 began, Germany chose to assist isolated Japan and to abandon China. In the early 1930s, China and Germany developed a close economic and military relationship. Jiang's German military consultant, Hans von Seeckt, helped him to modernize the Chinese Nationalist forces. A secret fascist society "Blue Shirts" emerged within the Chinese Nationalist Party, but fascism never grew into an influential movement in China.⁴⁵³ Moreover, in 1936, Jiang sent his younger son, Weiguo, to Germany to study military science (Jiang's older son, Jingguo, as hostage, was already sent to the Soviet Union in 1925). However, the Japanese aggression war of 1937 nullified the impressive German accomplishments in China. In February 1938, Germany recognized Japanese-dominated Manchukuo. By the end of 1938, Hitler called back all the German military advisers from China. The cooperation of Germany and China ended.⁴⁵⁴

The Axis and Allied camps were in the process of shaping. After 1937, the United States and Britain supplied Jiang's Chongqing Government through the transportation on the Burma Road. American air force aid, the Flying Tigers, operated in Kunming since August 1941. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States sent General Joseph Stilwell to assist Jiang in the China-Burma-India Theater of war. According to Hsu, "from 1942 to the end of the war in 1945,

⁴⁵³ For the Blue Shirts of Guomindang, see Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution, 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005), esp. 255-8. According to Zarrow, instead of advocating fascism, Jiang Jieshi surprisingly launched a New Life Movement to restore Confucianism in the Nanjing decade from 1928-37.

⁴⁵⁴ See Akira Iriye, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2013); William C. Kirby, *Germany and Republican China* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford Univ. Press, 1984).

United States credits to China reached the unprecedented mark of U.S. \$500 million.”⁴⁵⁵ Roosevelt further made China one of the “Big Four,” along with the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union.⁴⁵⁶ Jiang, along with his wife and his English translator as well, Song Meiling (宋美齡 1898-2003), achieved a splendid diplomatic success in wartime.

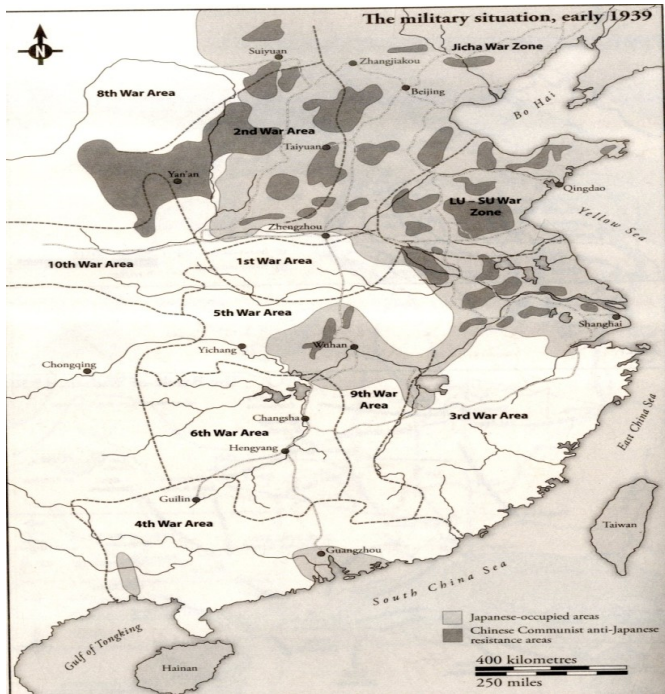
The Soviet Union also offered its direct assistance to Jiang’s Nationalist Government in Chongqing, rather than Mao Zedong’s Communist Party in Yan’an. At the beginning phase of Japan’s war of aggression from 1937 to 1939, the Soviet Union was the only country that sent substantial military aid to Jiang, with 2,000 pilots and 1,500 military advisers, and \$250 million in loans.⁴⁵⁷ Nevertheless, abandoned by the Soviet Union, the Chinese communist leader Mao Zedong and his Eighth Route Army fought alone against the Japanese invasion in the Northwestern regions. Different from Jiang’s international diplomacy, Mao’s power was built on the grass roots.⁴⁵⁸ Mao’s troops effectively expanded during their anti-Japanese wars and finally won over all China.

⁴⁵⁵ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 601.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁷ Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, 600; John W. Garver, *Chinese-Soviet Relations, 1937-1945: The Diplomacy of Chinese Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 37-41.

⁴⁵⁸ See Yang Kuisong, “The Evolution of the Relationship between the Chinese Communist Party and the Comintern during the Sino-Japanese War” in *Negotiating China's Destiny in World War II*, eds. Hans Van De Ven, Diana Lary, and Stephen R. MacKinnon (Stanford, California : Stanford University Press, 2015), 70-90.



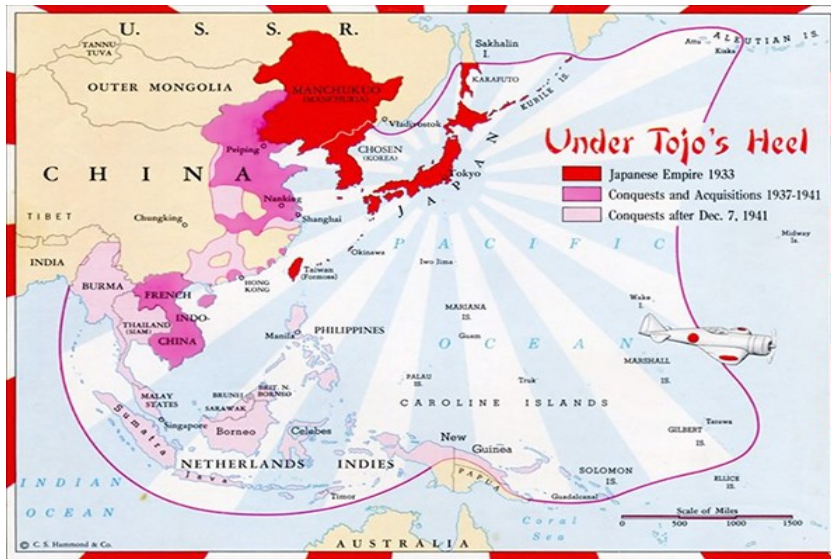
Map 6: The Military Situation, early 1939

(Map from Van De Ven, "China at War," xii.)



Figure 12: China's Forgotten Second World War

(Photograph from <https://www.historyextra.com/period/second-world-war/chinas-forgotten-second-world-war/>, accessed October 3, 2019)



Map 7: Under Tojo's Heel

(Map from <http://bhoffert.faculty.noctrl.edu/HST165/19.DarkValley2.html>, accessed April 20, 2019)

5.2. China's Response to the Holocaust: Non - Abandonment

After the Cold War, postmodern scholars discovered that China was a forgotten ally to the United States in WWII, as described above. Far more than that, the following sections will argue that China was also a forgotten rescuer for the Jews in the Holocaust, by tracing the process that Jews immigrated to Shanghai.

5.2.1. China for the Jews?

As early as in 1933-34, when Hitler came into power, a small group of German Jews immigrated to Shanghai. They were mainly Jewish professionals, like doctors, dentists and teachers, who suffered from the discriminatory Nuremberg laws, which made Jews second-class citizens, thrown out of civil service jobs, universities and other areas of public life in Germany. The Jewish professionals easily obtained "visas from the Chinese embassy in Berlin upon

presenting a recommendation from the German Foreign Office.”⁴⁵⁹ Refugee physicians were welcomed and well received in China. One observer regarded the arrival of these German Jewish doctors as a gift to China.⁴⁶⁰ As of 1937, German Jewish immigrants increased to more than 1,000.⁴⁶¹ From Shanghai, some of these Jewish doctors and other professionals went to settle in the interior of China, in places such as Tianjin, Qingdao, Hankou, and Guangzhou.

In the wake of China being the only country that did *not* develop anti-Semitism, American Jews sought to “find a new home in China for German Jews.”⁴⁶² Gaobei points out that in 1934, Maurice William, an influential Jewish dentist and socialist in New York, planned to establish a Jewish settlement in China. However, except for Albert Einstein, no one took William’s plan seriously.

Maurice William (1881-1973), born in Kharkov, Ukraine, “immigrated with his family to the United States at the age of eight In 1907, he received his degree of doctor of dental surgery.”⁴⁶³ Later, “together with several colleagues, he established one of New York's first free dental clinics.”⁴⁶⁴ It was believed that William’s book *The Social Interpretation of History: A Refutation of the Marxian Economic Interpretation of History* inspired Sun Yat-sen to find out the solution for Chinese peoples’ livelihood. After Sun died, William kept a close tie with Sun’s son, Sun Ke (孙科 1891-1973).

⁴⁵⁹ Irene Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-Existence, and Identity in a Multi-Ethnic City* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012), 73.

⁴⁶⁰“German Jewish Doctors Cause China to be Grateful to Nazis,” *JTA*, Jun. 29, 1934.

⁴⁶¹ Pan and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Youtai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye*, 50.

⁴⁶² Gao Bei, *Shanghai Sanctuary: Chinese and Japanese Policy toward European Jewish Refugees during World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 41.

⁴⁶³ “The Dentist Who Changed World History,” The Maurice William Archive, Center for Chinese Studies, University of California, accessed April 23, 2019.

<https://www.international.ucla.edu/china/MauriceWilliamsArchives/bio>.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

In America, Albert Einstein wholeheartedly supported William's plan to settle Jews in China. Among the American Jewish leaders, with whom William discussed his plan, were "U.S. Supreme Court justice Louis Brandeis, James T. Shotwell, professor of history at Columbia University and founder of the International Labor Organization, and philosopher John Dewey."⁴⁶⁵ They were all convinced that China was "the one great hope for Hitler's victims,"⁴⁶⁶ but no one knew how William's plan could be put into practise.

William also presented his plan to the Chinese Minister, Shi Zhaoqi, in Washington. Shi agreed with William's plan but seemed not to take it very seriously. At that time, China was suffering from Japan's intensive aggression in Manchuria. China's trouble was no less than that of the Jews. Moreover, in the early 1930s, the Chinese nationalists did not want to offend Germany by aiding Jews.

In its initial stage, William's plan seemed all wishful thinking, but one thing was certain: both sides that William had contacted, both the American Jewish leaders and the Chinese Nationalist Government, were aware of the possibility of settling Jews in China. In the letter to Einstein in February 1935, William wrote: "I trust some day in the near future, I may be privileged to discuss with you the details of our plan. Those who have studied the problem seem convinced that China offers unusual possibilities for German Jews."⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶⁵ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 41.

⁴⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.



Figure 13: Maurice William

(Image from <https://www.international.ucla.edu/china/MauriceWilliamsArchives/bio>, accessed April 23, 2019).

5.2.2. Rescue of Jews to Shanghai

Before long, the Annexation of Austria to Germany in March 1938 made the forced emigration of Jews inevitable. The 185,000 Jews of Austria, consisting of Europe's third largest Jewish community, "were subjected to a reign of terror unprecedented in its swiftness even when compared to Nazi Germany...Public humiliation was more blatant and sadistic, expropriation better organized, forced emigration more rapid."⁴⁶⁸ To expel Jews outright, Gestapo officer Adolf Eichmann set up the Central Office for Jewish Emigration in Vienna in August 1938. The Nazis began to persecute Jews in force across Germany and Austria. During *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Crystal, Nov. 9- 10, 1938), "Nazi thugs ransacked Jewish-owned shops and set synagogues ablaze."⁴⁶⁹ After *Kristallnacht*, "Jews were systematically eliminated from the

⁴⁶⁸ Mordecai Paldiel, *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Publ. House, 2007), 27.

⁴⁶⁹ "German archives yield information on Nazi looting," *JTA*, May 25, 2000.

German economy, thus deprived of their means of livelihood.”⁴⁷⁰ Innocent Jews were arrested and sent to the Dachau and Buchenwald camps. They would be released only if they emigrated immediately.

The increasingly severe German anti-Semitic persecutions caused world-wide concern. In July 1938, American President Roosevelt called the Evian conference, but it failed to solve the Jewish problems of emigration. The British had already closed the door of Palestine to the Jews in 1936. U.S. Department of State, according to Steve Hochstadt, “threw up a bureaucratic wall to limit Jewish immigration. The wait for a visa to the United States was years long.”⁴⁷¹ Also, the Canadian government directly opposed Jewish immigration to Canada. Daniel Levy writes that, “From 1939 to 1945, Canada accepted only 500 Jews who escaped the Nazis and 2,250 German Jewish internees from Britain. The country was so hard to get into, so unreachable, that Jews in Auschwitz named the buildings in which the Nazis stored food, gold, diamonds, confiscated goods, and other luxuries “Canada.””⁴⁷² Moreover, the Jews escaped to other European countries, like France and Switzerland, “were eventually captured and deported” by Nazis.⁴⁷³

In such a situation, East Asian countries naturally emerged as optional destinations. The Jews, the western nations, and the Asian countries themselves were all well aware of the possibility to settle Jews in the East. The optimal destination was of course Harbin, which hosted more than 20,000 Russian Jews during WWI. However, the Japanese fascist government was completely anti-Semitic. The Japanese militarists preached racial equality for the Jews, but in reality, Tokyo *de facto* and *de jure* barred Jewish refugees from its controlled areas. The

⁴⁷⁰ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 56.

⁴⁷¹ Steve Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 4-5.

⁴⁷² Daniel S. Levy, *Two-gun Cohen* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), 241.

⁴⁷³ Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai*, 4.

Japanese policy on the Jews will be analyzed below. Another option was the Philippine islands, as there was a small Jewish community, less than 1,000 people, of various nationalities there. However, the Philippine islands were not an independent state at that time. Neither the leaders of the Philippines nor the Manila Jews had the ability to settle a large number of Jews.⁴⁷⁴ Finally, Shanghai, a place which consistently received Jewish refugees from Harbin and Berlin, automatically emerged as the only choice. After the Japanese Guangdong Army crushed the Harbin Jewish community in 1935, Shanghai simply served as the new Jewish center in Asia.

As Shanghai was at war in 1937, most German Jews were reluctant to leave their homeland and exile themselves to wartime Shanghai. However, after *Kristallnacht*, when the Gestapo began to arrest Jews and send them to concentration camps, Shanghai suddenly became the sole “Noah’s Ark.” The Third Reich was impatient to expel Jews, never mind where they went. In February 1939, Gestapo Adolf Eichmann sent Heinrich Schlie, head of the Hanseatic Travel Office in Vienna, to the Japanese and Chinese embassies, to ascertain if they accepted Jewish immigration. The Japanese denied, but the Chinese answer was positive.⁴⁷⁵

The Chinese National government was sympathetic to the Jews. They saw Jews as an oppressed nation like the Chinese themselves, both suffering from fascist aggressions. It was well known that Sun Yat-sen supported Zionism in his letter to N. E. B. Ezra in Shanghai in 1920. Moreover, one of Sun’s *aide-de-camp*, the well-known “Two-Gun Cohen,” was Jewish.⁴⁷⁶ After Sun died, Sun’s widow Song Qingling (宋庆龄 1893-1981) “and the members of the China League for Civil Rights lodged a protest against Nazi persecution of Jews with the German

⁴⁷⁴ For details, see Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 62-64.

⁴⁷⁵ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 58.

⁴⁷⁶ See Levy, *Two-gun Cohen*.

Consulate in Shanghai” in 1933.⁴⁷⁷ The contemporary dominant Chinese scholars, such as Luxun (鲁迅 1881-1936), Cai Yuanpei (蔡元培 1868-1940) and Lin Yutang (林语堂 1895-1976), all took part in the protest against Nazism.⁴⁷⁸ As the Jewish situation became worse in 1938, Kong Xiangxi (孔祥熙 1881-1967), the Chinese Finance Minister, who also served as president of the Executive Yuan, openly showed sympathy for the Jews and he mentioned a plan of settling Jewish refugees in China’s southernmost island, Hainan.⁴⁷⁹

The Hainan plan, a Chinese plan to settle 30,000 Jews in Hainan Island, was well known among the Chinese authorities and the Jews of China.⁴⁸⁰ In late 1938, prepared for collaboration, Albert Raymond, the president of Ohel Leah Synagogue in Hong Kong, wrote to discuss the Hainan plan, with O. K. Yui (俞鸿钧 1898-1960), Mayor of Shanghai of 1937, and T.V. Soong (宋子文 1894-1971), one of the prominent Chinese nationalist leaders. But these letters did not show any outcome. One reason was probably that Japan attacked and occupied Hainan Island, Nansha Island and Shantou in early 1939. The correspondences among Albert Raymond and the Chinese authorities ended with T.V. Soong’s assertion that “when conditions become more

⁴⁷⁷ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Pan and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Yutai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye*, 170.

⁴⁷⁹ Ho Fengshan, *My Forty Years as a Diplomat*, trans. Ho Monto (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Dorrance Publishing Co., Inc., 2010), 46.

⁴⁸⁰ The Hainan plan needs more research. It is an academic vacancy until the paper is written. Ho Fengshan’s memoir indicates that both Ho himself and Minister Kong Xiangxi knew the Hainan plan. In addition, the Karfunkel family, fleeing from Berlin to Chongqing, mentioned the plan that the Chinese Island of Hainan could be used for a Jewish settlement of 20,000 to 30,000 persons. Some members of the Karfunkel family were Chinese citizens, so they believed that they could buy as much land as they want, see Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 223, “Appendix 5: A Biographical Sketch of the Karfunkel Family.”

normal, I shall be glad to discuss with you on what must command the sympathetic consideration of everyone.”⁴⁸¹

The Chinese planned to settle Jews in China partly because the Shanghai Jewish community kept a close relation with the Chinese government. In spring 1934, when *Israel's Messenger* celebrated its thirtieth anniversary, N. E. B. Ezra received messages of greeting from General Jiang Jieshi, Sun Ke, president of the Legislative Yuan, and C.T. Wang (王正廷 1882-1961), former Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs. More significantly, Mayor Wu Tiecheng (吴铁城 1893-1953) of the city government of Greater Shanghai, sent a message writing in Chinese about “The Revival of Judah.”⁴⁸² Apparently, the influence of the hundreds of Sephardic Jews in Shanghai far exceeded their number. In June 1935, Finance Minister Kong Xiangxi, represented the Chinese National Government, decorated Elly Kadoorie (1867-1944) and Victor Sassoon (1881-1961), two of Shanghai’s foremost Jews, with the First Class Gold Medal: “Sir Elly was decorated for promoting educational and medical work in China, and Sir Victor for his gift...to Dr. Sun’s Memorial Hospital.”⁴⁸³ In addition, another Shanghai Jewish tycoon, Silas Hardoon (1851-1931), assisted by his Chinese wife Luo Jialing, successfully integrated into Chinese society and engaged in Chinese politics.⁴⁸⁴ The Jews in Shanghai had established a strong tie with the Chinese authorities.

Therefore, the Chinese national government informed the Chinese consulates across Europe that they could issue visas to Jewish refugees whoever applied, even though the Chinese

⁴⁸¹ See JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 457, China Administration, General, 1939 Jan.-June: “Letter from Albert Raymond to Mr. O. K. Yui,” November 18, 1938; “Letter from Albert Raymond to T. V. Soong,” December 9, 1938; “Letter from T. V. Soong to Mr. Albert Raymond,” December. 9, 1938.

⁴⁸²“*Israel's Messenger* Shanghai Monthly Marks Anniversary,” *JTA*, Apr.10, 1934.

⁴⁸³“China Gives Medals to a Shanghai Jews,” *JTA*, Jun. 25, 1935.

⁴⁸⁴ See Pan and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Youtai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye*, esp. 162-68.

authorities had not yet developed a coherent and official policy on Jewish refugees as China was busy with fighting against the Japanese aggression at the moment. Evidence showed that as early as October 1938, multiple Chinese visas were issued to Jews across Europe. In Paris, Walter Immergut obtained his visa from consul general Huang Zheng on October 6, 1938.⁴⁸⁵ With a visa from the Chinese consulate in Amsterdam, the engineer Hugo Dubsky sought his release from Dachau concentration camp in February 1939.⁴⁸⁶ In Hamburg, Arthur and Margarete Lubinski obtained their visas from Consul Zhang Gengnian on April 3, 1939.⁴⁸⁷

Remarkably, Ho (He) Fengshan (何凤山 1901-1997), the Consul General in Vienna issued the largest number of Shanghai visas to the Jews. Ho arrived in Vienna in the spring of 1937 and he became Consul General in May 1938. Before long, Ho was “stunned by the jubilant welcome that Hitler received in Austria.”⁴⁸⁸ Ho had compassion for the panic-stricken Jewish community in Vienna. He was aware that the Gestapo released Jewish victims if they could show evidence of speedy departure from Germany or Austria, such as an entry visa or a ship ticket to another country. For humane reasons, Ho decided to help Jews flee from Vienna by issuing Chinese visas.⁴⁸⁹

Ho’s efforts to save Jews appeared to have started when a 17-year-old Jewish boy, Eric Goldstaub, “who had tried unsuccessfully to obtain visas from 50 other consulates, visited the Chinese Consulate in 1938. Ho issued 20 visas for the boy’s relatives. But he did not stop there.

⁴⁸⁵ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 51.

⁴⁸⁶ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 56 (footnote 76).

⁴⁸⁷ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 51.

⁴⁸⁸ “Daughter’s Obit Prompts Search: Did Her Chinese Father Save Jews?” *JTA*, Feb, 11, 2000.

⁴⁸⁹ *Ibid.*; Ho, *My Forty Years as a Diplomat*, esp. 45-48.

The boy's relatives told their friends, and soon long lines were forming outside the consulate, from where Ho was soon issuing dozens of visas each day."⁴⁹⁰

When a young Jew named Norbert Lagstein tried desperately to bypass the long line waiting in front of the Chinese consulate, he got his visas by wit: "He went home and with his fountain pen carefully copied onto a clean envelope a series of Chinese characters gleaned from the family's encyclopedia. He returned and told the policeman on duty that he had a special delivery for the consul. The policeman immediately let him in. Once inside, Norbert stuffed the envelope into his pocket, took out the passports, and applied for the visas. Thanks to Ho, the five younger members of the Lagstein family were able to leave Vienna in time and were saved."⁴⁹¹ Legstein's behavior might not be encouraged, but it at least illustrated the popularity of the Chinese consulate in Vienna.

According to Ho's memoir, one of Ho's Jewish friends, Mr. Rosenberg, an executive of the Standard Oil Company in Vienna, "wanted to move with his entire family to the United States. But he could not get a visa in time. He decided to go to Shanghai first."⁴⁹² Later Rosenberg "wrote a book, thanking China's generosity."⁴⁹³ Rosenberg admired Ho for "acting righteously in the face of a wrong."⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁰ "Daughter's Obit Prompts Search: Did Her Chinese Father Save Jews?" *JTA*, Feb, 11, 2000; For Eric Goldstaub's personal experience, see Joe O'Connor, "Miracle Man: How One Chinese Diplomat Saved Thousands of Jews from the Death Camps," *National Post*, News, Canada, Nov. 1, 2011.

⁴⁹¹ Paldiel, *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust*, 30.

⁴⁹² Ho, *My Forty Years as a Diplomat*, 47.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

The number of the visas that Ho issued to Jews in Vienna reached as high as 400 to 500 per month.⁴⁹⁵ The large number of Chinese visas issued to Jews alarmed the Ambassador to Germany, Chen Jie. Chen was anxious that the apparent Chinese aid to Jews would anger Hitler. However, the relations between China and Germany were already cold in 1938. In addition, Ho had instructions to receive Jews from Minister Kong Xiangxi, who planned to settle Jews in Hainan. Ho knew of the Hainan Plan. So Ho continued issuing visas to the Jews.⁴⁹⁶

During the two years in his post, from May 1938 to May 1940 (when the Chinese National Government sent Ho to the U.S.), Ho kept issuing visas to Jews without restrictions. It was difficult to estimate the total number of visas that Ho issued to Jews, because not all Chinese visa receivers went to Shanghai. For example, with Ho's visas, the parents of Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress, sailed to the United States through the French port of Marseilles.⁴⁹⁷ Moreover, "Recha Sternbuch, a Jewish activist working out of Switzerland, claimed that in 1939 at least 400 Jewish refugees used Chinese visas to make their way to Palestine via Switzerland."⁴⁹⁸ A JDC record of 1946 showed that about 4,000 Jewish refugees in Shanghai were from Austria.⁴⁹⁹ Ho was probably the diplomat who issued the largest number of visas to Jews.

The Shanghai Times, February 5, 1939, clearly reported that: "Chinese consulates in Europe are granting visas to all those applying with their passports for permission to come to

⁴⁹⁵ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 52; Paldiel, *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust*, 35.

⁴⁹⁶ Ho, *My Forty Years as a Diplomat*, 46.

⁴⁹⁷ "Daughter's Obit Prompts Search: Did Her Chinese Father Save Jews?" *JTA*, February 11, 2000

⁴⁹⁸ Paldiel, *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust*, 34.

⁴⁹⁹ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 465, China Administration, General, 1946 Jan.-June: "Abstract of a Statistical Analysis of 13,475 Refugees in Shanghai, China as of March 31, 1946."

Shanghai.”⁵⁰⁰ There was a false belief that Shanghai was the only free port in the world that did not need a visa because of its internationalization. It was not the case at all. The foreign concessions in China, including the Shanghai International Settlement, were all *de jure* supposed to be under Chinese sovereignty.

The self-administrative systems established by foreigners in China, such as the Shanghai Municipal Council, enjoyed self-governing and carrying on trade, but they had no international legal basis. The Chinese government had already abrogated the extraterritorial rights of certain states after WWI. Moreover, the Washington Naval Conference and the Nine-Power Treaty, led by the United States in 1921, sought to abolish all the extra-territories in China and “to respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China.”⁵⁰¹ Even though the western powers for their own interests were *de facto* reluctant to relinquish all their extraterritorial rights, they admitted Chinese sovereignty and accepted that the Chinese government made progress to establish its judicial, educational and tax systems to incorporate with the existing colonial ones.⁵⁰² Since 1927, the Chinese Nationalist government had been building a Greater Shanghai Municipality. Although the Shanghai International Settlement still had the rights to govern itself, the western powers and the Chinese Nationalist government both agreed on an ultimate goal to abolish all the unequal treaties and return the Settlement to China.⁵⁰³ An article published by the British Institute of International and Comparative Law regarding the status of the International Settlement at Shanghai in 1939 affirmed that “The

⁵⁰⁰ “Consular Body Unable to Halt Refugees Flow from Europe to Shanghai: Reply to Request from S.M.C. to Be Sent in a Day or Two; Home Governments to Be Asked to Dissuade Émigrés from Coming Here,” *The Shanghai Times*, February 5, 1939. Cited in Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 50 (note 83, p149).

⁵⁰¹ Harold Scott Quigley, "Extraterritoriality in China," *The American Journal of International Law* 20, no. 1 (1926): 46.

⁵⁰² See William W. Lockwood, "The International Settlement at Shanghai, 1924-34," *The American Political Science Review* 28, no. 6 (1934): 1030-046.

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1031.

Settlement is Chinese territory, and not, legally at any rate, a neutralized area.”⁵⁰⁴ Therefore, despite the historical special status of the Shanghai International Settlement and the current Japanese aggression, China retained the sovereignty of Shanghai and never renounced it.

5.2.3. Sun Ke Plan – Settling Jews in China’s “Back Door”

When the Jewish refugees with the Chinese visas landed in Shanghai, Sir Victor Sassoon registered them and settled them in his Embankment Building.⁵⁰⁵ A school on Ward Road was also transformed into a refugee camp which was able to house and feed 1,200 people. Until February 1939, altogether six Jewish refugee camps were set up.⁵⁰⁶

The *New York Times* on December 16, 1938 reported that “Shanghai is concerned with raising funds to assist Jewish refugees. Those who have arrived since September and those *en route*, who are due to arrive at Christmas, total 1062, mostly from Vienna.”⁵⁰⁷ On January 9, 1939, Dr. Kurt Marx, Secretary of the Relief Society for German and Austrian Jews, reported the information on Jewish refugees to the American Consul General in Shanghai, C. E. Gauss. Dr. Marx informed Consul General Gauss that the Shanghai Relief Society for German and Austrian Jews provided direct relief averaging over \$70,000, Chinese currency, per month. A proposal

⁵⁰⁴ C. F. Fraser, "The Status of the International Settlement at Shanghai," *Journal of Comparative Legislation and International Law* 21, no. 1 (1939): 52.

⁵⁰⁵ Marcia R. Ristaino, *Port of Last Resort: Diaspora Communities of Shanghai* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2003), 102.

⁵⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 118.

⁵⁰⁷ “Reich Has Trouble in Collecting ‘Fine:’ 250,000,000-Mark Installment From Jews Not Expected To Be Realized Till Next Month; Baldwin Fund Is Growing; Manchukuo May Bar Refugees; Polish Government Queried on Anti-Semitic Moves,” *New York Times*, Dec 16, 1938.

under discussion was to supply the refugees with Chinese instead of foreign food at a level close to the subsistence level provided for Chinese refugees by relief agencies in Shanghai.⁵⁰⁸

“Even if expenditures for relief are out to the minimum,” Gauss warned that, “it is not to be expected that this committee will be able to secure enough funds to provide relief in-definitely for the number of refugees now in Shanghai unless substantial contributions are obtained, from abroad.”⁵⁰⁹ Consul General Gauss sent a letter of the Jewish refugees in Shanghai, in quintuplicate to the State Department in Washington, copy to Embassy, Beijing, Chungking (Chongqing), and London on January 24, 1939.⁵¹⁰ Hence the American, the British and the Chinese governments were all informed of the situation of Jewish refugees in Shanghai.

The Chinese National Government in Chongqing noticed the great number of visas that were issued to Jews in Europe and their arrival in Shanghai, so they began to think more seriously about an effective way of settling Jews in China. At the moment, the Chinese Nationalist Government had already re-established itself at Chongqing in Southwest China.

On February 17, 1939, “to alleviate the ‘unregulated entry into Shanghai,’” Sun Ke, president of the Legislative Yuan, “proposed settling Jews in the southwest border region, that is Yunnan province which was one of the regions under Nationalist control.”⁵¹¹ Sun Ke’s perception of the Jews was based on China’s coherent ethnic policy of alliance with world oppressed small and weak nations to counter imperialism.⁵¹² As early as in January 1928, Sun Ke and other nationalist leaders started a round-the-world trip to study the “emancipation movement

⁵⁰⁸ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 457, China Administration, General, 1939 Jan.-June: “Letter from C. E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, Washington. Jewish Refugees in Shanghai,” January 24, 1939.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 66.

⁵¹² For China’s policy on ally with oppressed nations, see Eber, *Voices from Afar: Modern Chinese Writers on Oppressed Peoples and Their Literature*.

among oppressed small and weak races.”⁵¹³ They stopped at Manila, Singapore, Penang, Iraq, Egypt, Palestine, and several other countries. Sun Ke acquainted himself with the predicament of the Jews.

In early 1939, Sun Ke believed that establishing the Jewish settlement not only allied with the oppressed races, but also prompted the British and Americans to aid China’s war against Japan. According to one Chinese source, Sun visited Jiang Jieshi in his Huangshan mountain villa and asked Jiang about his attitude to the Jewish settlement plan. Like all heads of state in the world, Jiang did not see any “value” in Jewish refugees, so he said he was now most worried about the battles against Japan in Changsha, Xiangyang, Nanchang and other places, and he had no time for the Jews. But fortunately enough, Jiang did not reject Sun Ke’s plan either.⁵¹⁴

Back in Chongqing, Sun Ke obtained wholehearted support from Kong Xiangxi, Finance Minister and president of the Executive Yuan. Kong was sympathetic with Jews’ plight and sought to settle Jews in China from the very beginning.⁵¹⁵ On March 7, 1939, the Highest National Defense Council principally passed Sun Ke’s proposal and submitted it to the Executive Yuan. The Ministers of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Military, Treasury, and Transportation discussed the plan, and they formulated three main rules to aid Jewish refugees, on April 22:

1. Assistance of Entry: Chinese Consulates should grant special passports to stateless Jews, who are recognized by the relief organizations of the League of Nations or internationally well-known relief organizations, to enter China; the Jews who enjoy this privilege should hand in an application claiming that they will abide by Chinese

⁵¹³Levy, *Two-Gun Cohen*, 160.

⁵¹⁴Liu Yishi, “Zai Daxinan Anzhi Youtairen de Muhou,” [Back Stage of the Resettlement of Jews in Southwest China], in *Wenshi Yuebao [Literature and History Monthly]*, no. 10, (2002): 55-59.

⁵¹⁵For the business and friendship relations between Kong Xiangxi and the Jews, see Liu, “Zai Daxinan Anzhi Youtairen de Muhou.”

- law and they will not spread any political propaganda or object to “The Three Principles of the People”⁵¹⁶; if they violate these rules, China should deport them.
2. Settlement after Entry: stateless Jews should temporarily settle in trading ports instead of hinterland; for the Jews who prefer Chinese citizenship, they should apply according to Chinese law and legal procedure; Jews with Chinese citizenship will enjoy all civil rights equally with other citizens, without any racial or religious discrimination.
 3. Recommendation of Employment: as most stateless Jews are in a difficult situation at present, it is necessary [for the Chinese government] to assist Jewish refugees in finding jobs; as China is in construction, the government offices need all kinds of experts and technicians, such as scientists, engineers, doctors, and machinists⁵¹⁷

On May 2, the Highest National Defense Council formally passed the regulations and submitted a secret order to the officials in all departments. Gao Bei has analyzed the political details of the Sun Ke plan that circulated among the Chinese officials: for instance, the Chinese authorities did not want to offend Germany by aiding Jews, so they emphasized that the plan was for “stateless” Jews. Most ironically, the warlord of Yunnan Province, Long Yun, suggested sending Jews to cultivate Yunnan’s fertile land, without knowing Jews in Diaspora did not develop agriculture.⁵¹⁸

Here I will underline the practical aspect of the Sun Ke plan: Why did the Chinese National Government plan to settle Jews in Yunnan Province? Geographically, Yunnan connected Chongqing, the new capital of the Chinese National Government, and the famous Burma Road, which conveyed British and American supplies to China. During 1937-38, more than 100,000 Chinese and Burmese labors “working under American-trained engineers,” built a soft-surface road through rugged country, linking Lashio, in the British colony of Burma, to

⁵¹⁶ “The Three Principles of the People,” namely nationalism, democracy and the livelihood of the people, was a political philosophy developed by Sun Yat-sen, and was the foundational principles of the Chinese Nationalist Government.

⁵¹⁷ See Pan and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Youtai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye*, esp. 178-80. The original documents of the Sun Ke Plan are collected by the Second Historical Archives of China in Nanjing.

⁵¹⁸ See Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 32-9.

Kunming, the capital of Yunnan Province.⁵¹⁹ The so-called “Burma Road” was in fact constructed to transport material aid to China. Right after Japan’s aggression, the United States and Britain aided China with \$50 million, an amount “small but not despicable,” in Chambers’ words.⁵²⁰ China used the money to pave the Burma Road and bought large trucks. Before the Pacific War, Britain and the United States aided China, in order to make sure China’s economy would not be crushed by the Japanese on the one hand; but on the other hand, the British and Americans avoided direct conflict with Japan for supporting China. Consequently, “the Burma Road circumvented the areas held by Japan and opened a back door, however steep and narrow, to the Chinese refuge.”⁵²¹ Therefore, by settling Jews in Yunnan, China’s “back door,” the Chongqing Government apparently regarded Jews as a connection to the American and the British aid.

When the news that China was willing to receive Jewish refugees was publicized and reached the United States in early 1939, Maurice William, who first planned to settle Jews in China and had private contact with Sun Ke, immediately met with Hu Shi, the Chinese ambassador to the United States. By that time, William already had joined the Chinese Nationalist Party, and had become secretary of the American Bureau of Medical Aid to China and chairman of the fundraising committee of the United Council for Civilian Relief in China, which was joined by Albert Einstein, Herbert Hoover, and Henry Luce (publisher of *Time* magazine).⁵²² To support the Sun Ke plan, William pointed out that “Chinese and Jews were both victims of aggressive wars and should cooperate and provide one another with aid.”⁵²³

⁵¹⁹ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 348.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, 345

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, 349.

⁵²² Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 40; “The Dentist Who Changed World History.”

⁵²³ Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 44.

In William's view, not only would the German Jews find refuge in China, but in return, China would also benefit from Jewish technical and commercial services in solving China's problems of reconstruction.⁵²⁴ In addition, William emphasized that American Jews "were capable of providing China with help in its war with Japan."⁵²⁵ Gao Bei further indicates that: "In order to make the Chinese government officials consider his proposal more seriously, William also wrote to Kong Xiangxi, Wang Zhengting (the foreign minister), and Sun Ke, respectively, in June and July 1939. William informed the Chinese leaders that as the chairman of the Campaign Committee of the United Council he had successfully collected 15,000 dollars for the project."⁵²⁶

Moreover, William proposed the plan of settling Jewish refugees in China to the U.S. Department of State. Robert T. Pell of the State Department's Division of European Affairs met William on August 31, 1939. Pell also wrote William a letter of introduction to contact the President's Advisory Committee, but there was no response from the American government.⁵²⁷

When William was bridging the gaps between the governments of China and the United States, Jakob Berglas, a German banker who took refuge in Shanghai, provided the implementing measures for settling 100,000 Jewish refugees in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province. He suggested creating a Committee in New York responsible for raising funds. Berglas also made a detailed budget for the refugees' food, housing, and transportation, which he believed could be applied to all emigration schemes.⁵²⁸ However, Bernhard Kahn, of the New York JDC, questioned the practicality of Berglas' scheme, especially concerning his ambitious

⁵²⁴ Ibid.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 48.

⁵²⁸ YIVO, RG 1475, box 9, folder 98: "Immigration into China," reprinted from Shanghai newspaper, *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle*, of July 31st and August 1, 1939.

figure of 100,000 refugees.⁵²⁹ Mr. Charles J. Liebman, President of the Refugee Economic Corporation in New York, summarized the Berglas plan as dubiously sound and premature.⁵³⁰ Nevertheless, negotiating among Chongqing, Shanghai and New York, Berglas became a spokesman for the Jewish settlement plan in China and his plan was widely circulating among world Jewry.

While the Chinese authorities and the American Jews were still negotiating on the feasibility of establishing a Jewish settlement in Yunnan, news of the China's plan to settle Jews already spread among European Jews. As a result, Jewish refugees in Europe began concentrated immigration to China since April 1939.

As more than 300,000 German and Austrian Jews escaped to France, Mr. Dijour, secretary of the HIAS bureau in Paris, went to see Chinese Consul General Huang Tianmai (Huang Zheng) on April 22. Overseas, Huang did not learn the details of the Sun Ke plan, but he confirmed that the Chinese Government was willing to receive Jews. Huang further asked Dijour to use Jewish influence in the West to support China.⁵³¹

Even though the Jewish settlement plan was immature, refugees began to flood into China. Some obtained Chinese visas, and some set out illegally by bribing the transporting agencies. Ironically, Consul General Huang in Paris, with whom Dijour contacted for Jewish immigration, illegally gained profits by issuing Chinese visas. Huang signed an agreement with a travel agency and increased the regular visa fee to as high as 800 francs. When Gu Weijun

⁵²⁹ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 458, China Administration, General, 1939 July-Dec: "Memorandum on Conversations with Mr. Jacob Berglas of China," November 15, 1939.

⁵³⁰ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 458, China Administration, General, 1939 July-Dec: "Letter from Mr. Liebman to Emery Komlos, Re, The Berglas Plan for China." November 13, 1939.

⁵³¹ YIVO, HIAS-HICEM I, MKM, 15-57, file XV, C-4, from D.J. Bernstein to HIAS New York, April 27, 1939. English translation of report of conversation with the Chinese Consul General, Huang Tianmai, April 22, 1939, cited in Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 65.

(Wellington Koo 顾维钧 1888-1985), “one of the most important and influential diplomats in China's modern history and the ambassador to France,” discovered Huang’s illicit business, Gu immediately reported to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, who called back Huang to China subsequently.⁵³² According to Gao Bei:

Gu Weijun also received a list of more than 200 European Jews who had obtained such visas from Consul General Huang Zheng. The Chinese embassy in Paris informed the French Foreign Ministry that those visas were invalid, and the Nationalist Foreign Ministry ordered Huang Zheng to return to China immediately.

Although the Foreign Ministry announced in June 1939 that the Huang Zheng visas were invalid, representatives of the Jewish community in Paris came to the Chinese embassy to ask Gu Weijun if Jews could still go to China with valid visas. The Jewish representatives also told the ambassador that they had received information from the annex of the Chinese consulate general, where the visa office was located, that German Jews who wished to go to Shanghai could all obtain visas. Meanwhile, since Shanghai was then occupied by the Japanese, the Chinese consuls could not guarantee that the refugees would be able to land in Shanghai. The Chinese consulate general also made it clear that if Jews wanted to go to the interior of China, they would be able to get their visas soon.⁵³³

Gao’s research clearly shows that the Chinese government officially approved collective Jewish immigration to China after April 1939. The route to Shanghai was the fastest and most familiar way to enter China, so the Jewish refugees in Paris chose to land in Shanghai. In addition, a large number of Jewish refugees fleeing to Shanghai came from Vienna, by virtue of Consul General Ho Fengshan’s effort, as discussed previously. Exceptionally, incomplete evidence shows that the Aid Association of German Jews (Hilfsverein der deutschen Juden) in Berlin, different from international HIAS and JDC, had little contact with the Chinese

⁵³² Gao, *Shanghai Sanctuary*, 53.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*, 53-4.

authorities, so that a large number of German Jews, who directly departed from Berlin to Shanghai, might not apply for visas.⁵³⁴

In any case, the prevalent view that a visa was not required for Shanghai is not true. Due to the war situations in both Europe and China, illegal transportation might be a common occurrence. However, as long as China maintained its sovereignty, large-scale immigration to China, including Shanghai, had to be accepted by China. Therefore, it was not the visa non-requirement, but rather China's permission that saved Jews.

According to Yehuda Bauer, in Shanghai, "by early February, 1939, there were 2,500 new refugees there; by the end of March, there were 4,000; by May, there were 9,000."⁵³⁵ The number of Jews that arrived in Shanghai by May doubled the number of March. It showed that the majority of Jews fleeing Europe reached Shanghai just after China announced its Jewish settlement plan. *JTA* also reported that the number of the Jewish refugees dramatically reached 8,000 in the middle of May,⁵³⁶ and more than 13,000 in July.⁵³⁷ By the middle of August, the Jewish refugees increased to 15,000.⁵³⁸

During this period, Jewish relief organizations successively set up in Shanghai: "the International Committee (IC), set up by Sir Victor Sassoon in July 1938; and the Relief Committee for German Jews, established by a German Jew named Dr. Karl Marx in October, 1938. Marx left Shanghai in 1939, and his organization became the Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai (CFA), headed by Michael Speelman, a Dutch Jewish

⁵³⁴ See Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*; Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai*.

⁵³⁵ Yehuda Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 304.

⁵³⁶"8,000 Refugees in Shanghai, 2,000 on Way, Sassoon Reveals," *JTA*, May 15, 1939 (Shanghai, May 14).

⁵³⁷"1,286 Landed at Shanghai," *JTA*, July 16, 1939.

⁵³⁸"Refugees Banned from Jap-ruled International Zone in Shanghai After Aug. 21," *JTA*, August 13, 1939.

banker.”⁵³⁹ Sir Victor Sassoon contributed \$153,053, Chinese currency, to aid in establishing refugees in business.⁵⁴⁰ The New York JDC sent funds directly to CFA. Before May 1939, JDC had sent \$ 160,530 to Shanghai.⁵⁴¹

The Jewish relief organizations in Shanghai, which knew little about the Chinese efforts to rescue the Jews in Europe, believed Shanghai was a free port to land because the Chinese passport office, which was responsible to check passport upon docking in Shanghai, ceased to exist after the Japanese aggression of 1937.

When most of the refugees found shelter in Hongkou, part of the Shanghai International Settlement which was occupied by the Japanese, because food and housing were cheaper there, the Japanese Navy banned Jews from landing in Shanghai since August 21, 1939.⁵⁴² After September, the Japanese Navy and the Shanghai Municipal Council illegally created a permit system and closed the door to mass Jewish immigration. The Japanese policy toward the Jewish refugees will be analysed below.

Japanese intervention halted the massive Jewish immigration to China since late 1939. Meanwhile, Japan started intensive aerial bombing of Chongqing and tried to crush Jiang Jieshi by cutting off his supply lines from Britain and the United States. When the Japanese extended its battlefronts to South East Asia in 1940, the Sun Ke plan consequently ceased.

However, from the humane point of view, the Chinese consulates kept issuing Jews visas to escape from Europe in a time when China’s suffering was no less than that of the Jews. In

⁵³⁹ Bauer, *American Jewry and the Holocaust*, 305.

⁵⁴⁰ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 457, China Administration, General, 1939 Jan.-June: “Letter from C. E. Gauss to the Secretary of State, Washington. Jewish Refugees in Shanghai,” January 24, 1939; “Letter from Executive Director to Hon. H. A. Hollzer,” May 12, 1939.

⁵⁴¹ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 457, China Administration, General, 1939 Jan.-June: “Letter from Executive Director to Hon. H. A. Hollzer,” May 12, 1939.

⁵⁴² “Refugees Banned from Jap-ruled International Zone in Shanghai after Aug. 21,” *JTA*, August 13, 1939.

October 1940, “a letter to Lisbon and New York mentions clearly that the Chinese consul in Stockholm is granting visas without difficulties.”⁵⁴³ Some Jews, by airline, did reach Kunming in Yunnan Province, the proposed Jewish settlement in China, such as Max Kanner, Michael Nothman and the Karfunkel family.⁵⁴⁴

Wolfgang Karfunkel and his father Hans, a German physician, seized the last opportunity leaving Germany and immigrated to China in fall 1940. Hans’ brother Leo and his family already lived in Nanjing and achieved Chinese citizenship in 1936.⁵⁴⁵ In August 1940, with the visas to Kunming and Chongqing, Wolfgang and his father “traveled on a German airline via Russia to Alma-Ata and then to Urumchi, on to Zhengtu, and then to Chongqing.”⁵⁴⁶ Settling down in Chongqing at the age of sixteen, Wolfgang soon mastered the Chinese language and eventually became a truck driver on the famous Burma Road. In 1949, Wolfgang married a Chinese girl named Sulan. The couple immigrated to Israel in 1951. In his memoir, Wolfgang missed and appreciated the eleven years that he lived in Chongqing during WWII.⁵⁴⁷

At last, it must be mentioned that in the northwest and central China, quite a few righteous Jews participated in the Chinese communists’ battlefield against Japan, such as Israel Epstein, Hans Shippe, Ruth Weiss, Jakob Rosenfeld, Richard Frey (Stein), Sydney Sapiro and so on. The Tianjin Jew, Israel Epstein, and his wife-to-be Elsie, joined pro-China relief volunteering. Epstein, an editor for the *South China Morning Post*, published articles denouncing Japanese war crimes. Elsie was “an activist in the women’s movement to boycott Japanese silk,”

⁵⁴³ JDC, RG33-44, File 732, letter from I. Valk, Vilna to HICEM, Lisbon and HIAS New York, October 7, 1940, cited in Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 85.

⁵⁴⁴ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 70.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, 222; “Refugee Dentist Becomes Chinese Citizen,” *JTA*, March 9, 1936.

⁵⁴⁶ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 223.

⁵⁴⁷ Wolfgang Karfunkel, *Chinesische Jahre: Eine abenteuerliche Flucht* [Chinese Years: An Adventurous Escape] (Berlin: Goldbeck-Löwe, 2005); also see “A Biographical Sketch of the Karfundel Family,” in Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 221-24, Appendix 5.

and “she was also involved in the American Committee for Chinese War Orphans.”⁵⁴⁸ Another well-known example was Doctor Jakob Rosenfeld, who escaped from a Nazi concentration camp and operated a private clinic in Shanghai.⁵⁴⁹ In 1941, Rosenfeld joined the New Fourth Army in Subei. In 1947, Rosenfeld became a personal doctor for General Luo Ronghuan of the Northeast Field Army in Harbin.⁵⁵⁰ In addition, in October, 1941, German Jew Eva, wife of Chinese poet Xiao San, participated in the anti-Fascists Alliance, which was held by the Chinese communist leaders Mao Zedong and Zhu De in Yan’an.⁵⁵¹ Hans Shippe, a Galician Jew, joined the Eighth Route Army and was killed while fighting the Japanese on the battlefield in Shandong province in November 1941.⁵⁵² Thus, these Jews in China made considerable contributions to the worldwide anti-Fascist war.

5.2.4. Conclusion

In fact, China was the ally of the United States fighting against Japan in WWII. Wartime Chinese and Jews knew that they were oppressed nations suffering from militarism and fascism, so that they should unite with each other. Thus, the Chinese opened their door to Jewish refugees. By virtue of the Chinese government’s admission of Jews and American Jews’ support, a total of about 17,000 German and Austrian Jewish refugees successfully reached and settled in Shanghai by the end of 1939.⁵⁵³ Steve Hochstadt estimates that among the Jews who escaped

⁵⁴⁸ Israel Epstein, *My China Eye: Memoirs of a Jew and a Journalist* (Long River Press, 2005), 25.

⁵⁴⁹ See Ronen Shnidman, “How a Jewish Doctor Helped Form Backbone of Revolutionary China’s Medical System,” *Times of Israel*, August 12, 2019.

⁵⁵⁰ Fu Mingjing, “Doctor Rosenfeld and the Liberation War in Northeast China”, in Qu and T.Kaufman ed., *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, 389-96.

⁵⁵¹ Pan and Wang, *Yigeban Shiji Yilai de Shanghai Youtairen – Youtai Minzushi shang de Dongfang Yiye*, 173.

⁵⁵² Jonathan Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia: Singapore, Manila, Taipei, Harbin, Shanghai, Rangoon, and Surabaya* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2015), 161.

⁵⁵³ “17,000 Refugees Admitted to Shanghai in 1939,” *JTA*, February 13, 1940.

from Europe, the Shanghai refugees “made up about one of every 13 refugees during this ‘panic emigration,’ and probably one in 10 of those who left in 1939.”⁵⁵⁴

In postmodern time, we get the chance to recount the miracle of Jews who survived in China within a whole global history by exploring the ignored Chinese and Jewish war experiences and cooperation. In the golden time for rescuing Jews from the Nazis, the whole world abandoned Jews, but only China offered a “back door.”



Figure 14 : Kong Xiangxi

(Image from <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%AD%94%E7%A5%A5%E7%86%99>, accessed April 20, 2019)

⁵⁵⁴ Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai*, 4.



Figure 15: Sun Ke

(Image from <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%AD%99%E7%A7%91/697>, accessed April 7, 2019)



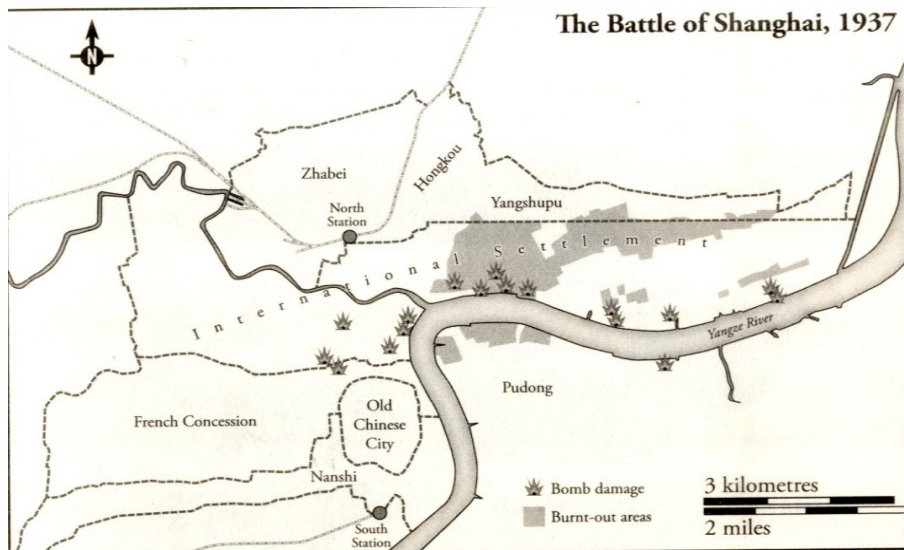
Figure 16 : Ho Fengshan

(Image from http://www.sohu.com/a/305033821_616577, accessed April 28, 2019)



Figure 17: Jews outside the Chinese Consulate in Vienna

(Image from http://www.sohu.com/a/305033821_616577, accessed April 28, 2019)



Map 8: The Battle of Shanghai, 1937

(Map from Van De Ven, "China at War," Maps, xi).



Map 9: Yunnan Province, China

(Map from https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Yunnan-Province-China_fig1_26849897, accessed April 25, 2019)

5.3. Japan’s Response to the Holocaust – Fascist in Disguise of Friend

Along with the aspiration for the creation of a New Order in East Asia, internationally-isolated Japan grew friendly with Nazi Germany by signing the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936. Chambers comments that “by an irresistible logic, the aggressor of the East became linked with the aggressor of the West.”⁵⁵⁵ The alliance of Japan and Germany effectively contained the influence of the Soviet Union and Britain both in Europe and in Asia. Concerning the Jews, the Japanese not only accepted all German anti-Semitic propaganda, but they also transferred it to a Japanese style of prejudice against Jews.

⁵⁵⁵ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 470.

5.3.1. Playing the “Jewish Card” in Japan’s Total War

Once the Japanese Imperial Army established closer ties with Adolf Hitler, Nazi paranoid preaching on an international Jewish conspiracy deeply convinced the contemporary Japanese militarists and thus anti-Semitic propaganda flooded into the Japanese media. As previous chapters showed, the Japanese Army was first impressed by the American banker Jacob Schiff’s loan in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, and then during the Siberian Intervention of 1918-22, the Japanese Army picked up *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* from the White Russians. When turning into the fascist era of the 1930s, the Japanese Army subsequently drew a conclusion that the Jews, who dominated both democratic America and the communist Soviet Union, were the ultimate enemy of Japan. Thus “Holy” Japan’s task was to “strike down the Jews and save Mankind.”⁵⁵⁶ Yasue Norihiro, who completed the first Japanese translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, confirmed that Adolf Hitler was the only liberator of Europeans who were facing the increasing threat of Jewish power.⁵⁵⁷

As previous chapters on Harbin Jews illustrate, Jews, like all the other nations, were also experiencing nationalism, socialism, colonialism and the other turmoil in the beginning of the 20th century. However, because Jews did not have a national homeland, they became the scapegoat for all the current conflicts among nations. Japan took advantage of the vulnerability of the Jews. On the one hand, the Japanese Army used Jews as “a means to control domestic thought and justify the war” from the middle of the 1930s until the end of WWII.⁵⁵⁸ On the other hand, however, while starting the War of Aggression against China in July 1937, Tokyo

⁵⁵⁶ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 107.

⁵⁵⁷ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 304.

⁵⁵⁸ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 111.

attempted to appease international opposition by promising equal treatment to the Jews in Manchukuo.

From 1935, the Jews in the United States and Britain consistently protested against the persecution of Jews in Manchukuo. Shanghai Zionist leader Ezra, before he died in December 1936, wrote at least seven letters of remonstrance to Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister Shigemitsu Mamoru.⁵⁵⁹ Tokyo feared to provoke the United States and Britain into economic sanctions against Japan. Japan's economy, especially its military needed imported oil, largely "relied on access to British and American markets, and that it therefore could not afford to alienate these Powers."⁵⁶⁰ Well aware of its own weakness, Tokyo had to be very cautious in dealing with the West. Therefore, from the summer of 1937, to appease international opposition to its war of aggression in China, Japan suddenly shifted its attitude to the Jews in Manchukuo for a strategic position.

In August 1937, Tokyo sent General Higuchi Kiichiro (1888-1970), one of the heads of military intelligence, to command the Harbin Special Services Agency (SSA) of the Guandong Army. The Jewish expert Yasue was ordered to be Higuchi's adviser. In 1938, Yasue "was appointed chief of the newly established SSA in Dalian (Dairen)" in south Manchuria.⁵⁶¹ The Foreign Economy Bureau in the Research Department of the South Manchurian Railway Company, led by Yasue, was in charge of conducting surveys on the "Jewish Question."⁵⁶² Furthermore, in spring 1939, Navy Captain Koreshige Inuzuka (1890-1965), Yasue's colleague

⁵⁵⁹ Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," 294.

⁵⁶⁰ Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia*, 149.

⁵⁶¹ Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," 300.

⁵⁶² Takao Chizuko, "The Birobidzhan Project from the Japanese Perspective," in *Mizrekhh: Jewish Studies in the Far East*, ed. Ber B. Kotlerman (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), 60. The Japanese collections on the Jewish problem are now held in the Dalian Library in China, open to all.

in the Moslem and Jewish Problem Committee in Tokyo, was officially posted to Shanghai as assistant to Consul Ishiguro Shiro. According to Goodman and Miyazawa, “Inuzuka’s prescription was to pre-empt Jewish power lest it threaten Japan and force the Japanese to resort to force to suppress the Jews. This was the formulation that guided him during his tenure in Shanghai.”⁵⁶³ The so called “Jewish experts” sent to Manchukuo and China mainland were actually powerful anti-Semitic propaganda makers in domestic Japan.

Soon after the War of Aggression against China began, Col. Yasue arrived in Harbin and summoned Kaufman. According to Avraham Altman, “Yasue reportedly told Kaufman that the Jews in Manchukuo, China and Japan should organize themselves into a single body. This decision must have been taken fairly high up in the military hierarchy, because the proposed structure bestrode the Jewish communities in four army commands: three on the mainland and one in Kobe, the largest community in Japan.”⁵⁶⁴ Hesitatingly, Kaufman “replied that he would have to consult with other communal leaders before giving his reply.”⁵⁶⁵

However, Kaufman did not have any choice if he and the entire Harbin Jewish community did not want to be thrown into the Songhua River, the largest river in Harbin. The Japanese Gendarmerie threw Chinese who refused to cooperate into the River. According to Wang Tifu’s memoir, the puppet Chinese diplomat, Wang was reluctant to cooperate at first, but he surrendered when he saw that the Japanese Gendarmerie threw four people into the ice holes that they drilled on the Songhua River surface in winter.⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ Goodman and Miyazawa, *Jews in the Japanese Mind*, 130.

⁵⁶⁴ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 297.

⁵⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 298.

⁵⁶⁶ See Wang Tifu, (dictated). *Jianguo Xitele yu Jiuguo Youtairen de Weiman Waijiaoguan*, [A Manchurian Diplomat, who had met Hitler and saved Jews], recorded by Yang Mingsheng, (Harbin: Heilongjiang People’s Publisher. 2001).

Worse than the Chinese, Harbin Jews were also facing the threat from the Russian Fascist Party. Repeating the persecutions of Jews in Manchukuo, in January 1937, the Japanese and the White Russians “staged an anti-Communist demonstration featuring violent anti-Jewish slogans,” on the Soviet-Manchukuo border.⁵⁶⁷ *JTA* reported that “The demonstrators paraded through the city’s streets flaunting banner and shouting, ‘Kill the Jews.’”⁵⁶⁸ Terrorized Jewish families had to hide in cellars and attics.⁵⁶⁹ Also, in early 1937, Manchukuo police arrested a Polish Jewish Merchant named Jacob E. Hammer, who lived in Harbin for seven years. After nine months of ill treatment and starvation, Jacob was executed by a secret trial on charges of espionage for the Soviet Union.⁵⁷⁰

In the White Terror of Manchukuo, the disadvantaged Harbin Jews were destined to fall into the Japanese Army’s hands. The legal entity “The National Council of Far Eastern Jewish Communities,” which Harbin Jews strove for a long time, was finally created in Manchukuo and the Japanese Guandong Army was in charge of it. Moreover, the Japanese closed the Russian fascist newspaper *Nash Put’*, but the Japanese used the Russian fascists to monitor if Jews were loyal to Japan.

In December 1937, General Higuchi, head of the Harbin SSA of the Guandong Army, and Kaufman, president of the Harbin Jewish Community, held the first Far East Jewish Conference in Harbin.⁵⁷¹ Jewish delegates from Tientsin, Kobe, Dairen, Osaka, Mukden and other cities all attended. In the conference, Higuchi expressed Japanese friendship for the Jews, declaring: “While Manchukuo is basically founded on the cooperation of five peoples —

⁵⁶⁷“Czarists, Japs Hit Jews in Anti-red Parade on Soviet Border” *JTA*, January 31, 1937 (Harbin, Jan.29)

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁰“Polish Jewish Merchant Executed As Soviet Spy in Manchukuo,” *JTA*, October 8, 1937, (Harbin, Oct.7)

⁵⁷¹ In the interview in May 1967 in Israel, Kaufman said the Far East Jewish Conferences had been a Jewish initiative, see Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 317.

Japanese, Chinese, Mongols, Koreans and Russians — it will in the future gladly support loyal Jewish people, enabling Jews to live in peace and to establish peaceful homes here.”⁵⁷²

Under the cloak of racial equality, Japan hoped to win over international support for its war of aggression against China. The second and third Far East Jewish Conferences were separately held at the end of 1938 and 1939. In the 1938 conference, as the European Jewish refugees started to spread in Asia, the Jewish delegates raised the immigration issue and hoped Japan would open the door, but the Japanese Army made more effort to urge the Jews to cooperate in “the holy task of Nippon and Manchukuo in establishing a new order in the East.”⁵⁷³ During the conference, “Yasue reported to his superiors that the Guandong Army’s guidance policy at the conference aimed to get the Jewish side ‘to understand the true intentions of the Japanese and Manchukuoan authorities, and in this way, to bring about an improvement in American public opinion, which has taken a turn for the worse recently and to have our operations vis-a-vis American Jewry yield favorable results.’”⁵⁷⁴ Around the middle of 1939, Yasue, Inuzuka and Ishiguro further proposed to establish a Jewish settlement to attract American investment. But all the requests should be made from the Jewish side, Yasue emphasized, “otherwise, Japan’s opponents would say that Japan acceded in order to make use of the Jews or to get money from them.”⁵⁷⁵

After the second conference, “in the spring of 1939, Kaufman himself was called to Japan for talks with senior officials and for sightseeing...Kaufman left for Japan on May 2 accompanied by a woman described as his Japanese wife.”⁵⁷⁶ According to Altman, “Kaufman

⁵⁷²“General Asserts Japan’s Friendship for Jews at Harbin Conference,” *JTA*, January 13, 1938.

⁵⁷³“Jews Urged to Aid Japan’s ‘Holy Task’”, *JTA*, January 1, 1939 (Harbin, Dec.30, 1938).

⁵⁷⁴ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style,” 310.

⁵⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 314.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 312.

and his party arrived in Tokyo on May 9, where they put up at the Imperial Hotel. The next day he made a statement at a press conference held at the hotel. As reported in the *Japan Times and Mail*, he repeated his praise of Japan's treatment of the Jews in Manchukuo and of its actions in China."⁵⁷⁷ In the meeting with Higuchi at the Army Ministry in the next day, Kaufman promised to correct the misperceptions in England and America that Japan discriminated against Jews.⁵⁷⁸

In fear of his life, amnesic Kaufman seemed to forget about the Japanese atrocities and enjoyed Japan's new "friendship." The Jewish newspaper in Harbin then "was full of praise of Japan."⁵⁷⁹ On the one hand, The *Evreiskaya Jizn* (Jewish Life), edited by Kaufman, added an English version since late 1937, introduced Japanese culture and history, and advocated Japanese rule.⁵⁸⁰ Kaufman sent the English version of *Jewish life* to libraries in the Vatican, Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the American Congress.⁵⁸¹ On the other hand, Meir Birman of HIAS in Harbin said that Kaufman censored the Jewish press.⁵⁸² *JTA* news directly reported from Harbin ceased since early 1939. The news of Harbin from *JTA* was reported in Shanghai, Vladivostok, and other places after 1939.

However, Kaufman was wise enough to foresee that American Jews would not believe him. There was no evidence of Kaufman establishing direct contact with the American Jewish leaders, except a fake one that was made by the Japanese.⁵⁸³ Kaufman practically asked Lew Zikman, the Manchurian "Sugar King," to approach the American Jews. Zikman's property was

⁵⁷⁷ Ibid., 312-13.

⁵⁷⁸ Ibid., 313.

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid., 307. In his article, Altman cited Kaufman's speech in details, such as justifying Japan's war in China's best interests.

⁵⁸⁰ The English version of *Evreiskaya Jizn* (Jewish Life) is collected by National Library of Israel in Jerusalem. The entire collection of *Evreiskaya Jizn* is at אגודת יוצאי סין (Association of Former Residents of China) in Tel-Aviv.

⁵⁸¹ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 394.

⁵⁸² DAL 96, to HIAS-HICEM, Paris, May 13, 1938, Central Archive of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, cited in Altman, "Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style," 305, (footnote 92).

⁵⁸³ Pamela R. Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees: A World War II Dilemma*. (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998), 21.

seized by the Japanese, and he himself was personally attacked by the Russian fascists, so Zikman was firmly resolved to depend on Japan. Zikman proposed a plan to settle 200 Jewish refugee families in Manchuria and to establish a garment manufacturing plant with American funds.⁵⁸⁴ Zikman then contacted American Jewish leaders Dr. Cyrus Adler and Rabbi Stephen Wise.

Nevertheless, after the United States terminated the 1911 Japan-U.S. Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1939, U.S. – Japan relations further deteriorated. “In step with their country, American Jews did support China” against Japan.⁵⁸⁵ In the correspondence to Zikman, the prominent Rabbi Wise wrote that “it is wholly vicious for Jews to give support to Japan, as truly Fascist a nation as Germany or Italy...a nation that is bound to take an anti-Semitic attitude, and indeed has already done so.”⁵⁸⁶ In a boycott of Japanese goods, Rabbi Wise declared that “I am in favor of taking any action against Japan, short of war, or what may lead to war, that will make it impossible for Japan to continue its relentless and criminal war against China.”⁵⁸⁷

Apparently, Kaufman failed to convince the American Jews. Avraham Altman blamed Kaufman for being used by Japan.⁵⁸⁸ In his book, Wang Zhijun collected Jewish memoirs, which showed that Jews as foreigners looked down upon the Chinese natives around them, and indicated Kaufman hurt the Chinese people’s emotions.⁵⁸⁹ However, Takao Chizuko, by studying archival documents in the Central Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, finds that as early as at the end

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., 21.

⁵⁸⁶ David Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews: The Jewish Refugee Community of Shanghai, 1938-1945* (New York: Yeshiva University Press, 1976), 228.

⁵⁸⁷ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 21.

⁵⁸⁸ Altman, “Controlling the Jews, Manchukuo Style.”

⁵⁸⁹ Wang Zhijun and Li Wei, *20 Shiji Shangbanqi Harbin Youtairen de Zongjiao Shenghuo yu Zhengzhi Shenghuo* [Harbin Jews in Early 1900’s: Their Political and Religious Lives] (Beijing: People’s Publisher, 2013).

of 1935 when anti-Semitic persecutions were rampant in Harbin, Kaufman wrote to the Jewish Agency in Palestine and applied for collective emigration. Takao's research shows that:

In his letter of November 5, 1935 to the Jewish Agency, Kaufman asked whether or not Palestine could accept immigrants from Manchukuo, and emphasized that Jewish life in Manchukuo under Japan's rule was no longer peaceful and quiet, saying "Here Jews' enthusiasm for exodus to Palestine is growing daily. [...] The living conditions here are suggestive of those of our fellow [Jews] in Germany."

Kaufman requested the Jewish Agency to provide information on obtaining category A3 visas for craftsman with small capital. In response to his request, however, the Palestine Jewish Agency wrote a reply dated December 31, 1935, stating that "Palestine primarily accepts immigrants from Warsaw, Berlin, and Bucharest. Currently there is no room for Jews from Harbin to enter Palestine using category A3 visas."⁵⁹⁰

In 1936, a Palestinian quota for Harbin Jews was impossible. In 1937, the Japanese forces occupied Shanghai and Tianjin, which were Harbin Jews' *pis aller* resorts. The Japanese authorities in Tianjin arrested Simon Genn, an exporter and president of the Tianjin Jewish Community, and Lev Piastunovich, a Zionist Revisionist leader.⁵⁹¹ Furthermore, the Japanese Army forced Tianjin Jews to sign individual anti-Soviet oaths.⁵⁹² Before long, in 1938, Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany sequentially arrived in Shanghai. In that situation, Kaufman's "cooperating with Japan and by actively using 'Japan's plan to take advantage of the Jews'"⁵⁹³ was no more than expediency.

However, did Kaufman achieve his goal to influence Japanese policy and to save Jewish lives? Did the anti-Semitic experts of Japan paradoxically make a pro-Jewish policy? Was it possible for the Japanese Army, who kidnapped and murdered Harbin Jews and enacted the

⁵⁹⁰ Takao, "Prewar Japan's Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community," 44.

⁵⁹¹ "Excesses Averted in Tientsin," *JTA*, September 1, 1937; "Japanese Arrest Jews As Soviet Sympathizers," *JTA*, December 19, 1937; "Tientsin Authorities Seize 2 Jewish Leaders, Shanghai Hears," *JTA*, January 27, 1938; "2,000 Jews Affected by Japanese Blockade in Tientsin," *JTA*, July 2, 1939.

⁵⁹² *Ibid.*

⁵⁹³ Takao, "Prewar Japan's Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community," 45.

Nanjing Rape, to be completely merciful for the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany? We will find answers in Japan's immigration policy to the Jewish refugees.

5.3.2. Barred Jews from the Japanese Controlled Areas

Japan did face an economic crisis after its aggression of China. On the one hand, some Japanese officials hoped to obtain American financial support, including creating the *fugu* plan to attract American Jewish capital, as David Kranzler elaborated in his work. However, on the other hand, Tokyo more and more struggled for autarky, independent from the West. Antony Best in his book *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia, 1914–1941*, points out that “from 1937 Japan's machinations against Western interests and its efforts to attain influence in Asia steadily escalated.”⁵⁹⁴ But well aware of its own weakness, Japan could not alienate the U.S. and Britain whose “economic sanctions could strangle the Japanese economy.”⁵⁹⁵ As a weak and calculating power, Japan refrained from any actions that would provoke the West. Japan saw its high-sounding “pro-Jewish” policy as a distraction from its obvious expansion in Asia. Notably, Japan not only played the Jewish card, but also simultaneously disseminated a pro-Islamic policy and Pan-Asianism in the Middle East, India, and the other countries in South East Asia.⁵⁹⁶ The pretended “pro-Jewish” policy was only one of its multiple war strategies.

However, when the flow of Jewish refugees fleeing from Nazi Germany to Asia accelerated, it was not easy for Japan to juggle its promise of racial equality to the Jews with restricting Jewish immigration to Asia. In late September 1938, in Vienna, “Consul General Yamaji Akira wrote Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro, the imperial prince who was concurrently

⁵⁹⁴ Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia*, , 152.

⁵⁹⁵ Fumiaki Kubo, Ryūji Hattori, and Satoshi Hattori, “The 1930s: Japan's War with China and American Non-Recognition,” in *The History of US-Japan Relations: from Perry to the Present*, ed. Makoto Iokibe, trans. Tosh Minohara (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 96.

⁵⁹⁶ Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia*, 133-59.

foreign minister,” about Japan’s attitude to the forced Jewish emigration in Austria.⁵⁹⁷ According to Pamela R. Sakamoto, “the Foreign Minister responded to Yamaji within a week and also cabled all consular offices abroad the same day. The instructions served as the basis for an emerging policy towards the Jews: Japan did not want ‘foreigners being expelled by Germany and Italy;’...apply the existing ‘regulation governing the entry of aliens into Japan’ to prevent people from coming.”⁵⁹⁸

However, because Jews with German passports did not need visas to enter Japan, the fascist ally country, Yamaji found that “it was ‘more or less impossible’ to prevent people from going to Japan on the basis of Japan’s foreign immigration law.”⁵⁹⁹ Yamaji “saw no reason for Japan to disguise its intentions to discourage entry when the prohibitions were so tough elsewhere.”⁶⁰⁰ Therefore, “it would be appropriate, Yamaji suggested, if the Japanese government declared that it was prohibiting immigration. This would not have a major negative effect on relations with German, Italy, or other countries.”⁶⁰¹ Obviously, Yamaji was confused by Tokyo’s disguise in prohibition of Jewish refugees. In Vienna, Yamaji, as well as other Japanese diplomats, did not learn that Tokyo was playing the Jewish card with the United States and Britain, rather than Germany.

Nevertheless, when more and more Jewish refugees spread into Asia, Tokyo had to offer a clear policy on the Jews, rather than ambiguous instructions. On December 6, 1938, Army Minister Itagakic Serishiro, the prime minister, and the ministers of foreign, navy and treasury, held the so called “Five Ministers Conference” concerning the “Jewish problem.” Yasue,

⁵⁹⁷ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 45.

⁵⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁵⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Inuzuka, and other Jewish experts had certain influence on the Japanese top decision-makers, but their influence was very limited. Tokyo was clearly aware that: “The Soviet Union and the Jewish people share a mutual interest. In the struggle against fascism, in particular, the Jewish people are seeking for cooperation between democratic states and the Soviet Union. Moreover, since Japan concluded the anti-Comintern Pact with Germany, the Jewish people regard Japan as a fascist state, and the relations between the Jewish people and Japan have changed to something that requires extra caution.”⁶⁰² Thus the five ministers formulated a more practical policy toward Jews, and outlined three main principles:

1. Jews living in Japan, Manchuria, and China are to be treated fairly and in the same manner as other foreign nationals. No special effort to expel them is to be made.
2. Jews entering Japan, Manchuria, and China are to be dealt with on the basis of existing immigration policies pertaining to other foreigners.
3. No special effort to attract Jews to Japan, Manchuria, or China is to be made. However, exceptions may be made for businessmen and technicians with utility value for Japan.⁶⁰³

Here, Japan’s fundamental policy toward Jews declared clearly that Japan would not make “special effort to attract Jews.” Individual Jews with investment or technology might be accepted, but mass Jewish immigration was impossible. For diplomatic purposes, Japan’s propaganda kept preaching equal treatment to the Jews, but both Manchuria and Shanghai, which were occupied by the Japanese Army and Navy, tightened up their Jewish immigration regulations.

In Manchuria, when more and more German and Austrian Jews who took the Trans-Siberian railway reached Harbin and Dalian, Ueda Kenkichi, Japan’s ambassador to Manchukuo, cabled “the German and Italian embassies in Manchukuo [to] assume responsibility for sending

⁶⁰² “Mamoru Shigemitsu, the ambassador to the Soviet Union, sent to Foreign Minister Kazunari Ugaki, on August 2, 1938,” cited in Takao, “The Birobidzhan Project from the Japanese Perspective,” 62-63.

⁶⁰³ Sakamoto’s translation: Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 56.

refugees back.”⁶⁰⁴ On December 16, 1938, the *New York Times* reported that “probable barring of Jewish refugees from Manchukuo in the future was foreseen in a statement in authoritative quarters in Dairen today to the effect that ‘there can be no question of Manchukuo being used as a dumping heap for Europe.’”⁶⁰⁵

To cover the backhanded way in which the Japanese government was impeding Jewish immigration, the Japanese publicized an “incident” to blame on the Jews. The *New York Times* on December 16 continued to report that: “The conviction of a group of twenty-six Harbin Jews was partly responsible for the new stand. These men were accused of sending agents to Tientsin and purchasing the yen at the rate of 31 to the British pound, then smuggling the yen into Manchukuo. They were then remitted abroad at the artificial official rate of 17 yen to a pound. This would have grown to enormous proportions, except that the legal limit of remittance abroad per person is £ 50 annually.”⁶⁰⁶

Consequently, the Japanese Army “launched an anti-Semitic campaign in north China and Manchukuo, barring both territories to Jewish immigrants.”⁶⁰⁷ On December 20, *JTA* reported that the Japanese Army carried out a pogrom and arrested many Jews in Dalian.⁶⁰⁸ Also, “the Japanese Consulate has refused to grant visas for ten destitute families of Jewish musicians from Berlin to go to Harbin, Manchukuo, where jobs had been obtained for them by the HIAS-ICA Emigration association.”⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁴ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 80.

⁶⁰⁵ “Reich Has Trouble in Collecting ‘Fine:’ 250,000,000-Mark Installment From Jews Not Expected To Be Realized Till Next Month; Baldwin Fund Is Growing; Manchukuo May Bar Refugees; Polish Government Queried on Anti-Semitic Moves,” *New York Times*, Dec 16, 1938.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁷ “Anti-Semitic Campaign Reported in North China, Manchukuo,” *JTA*, December 20, 1938 (London, Dec. 19)

⁶⁰⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁹ “10 Families Barred from Manchukuo,” *JTA*, December 20, 1938, (Shanghai, Dec. 19)

In January 1939, *JTA* news discovered that Japan said one thing and did another: on the one hand, “The Japanese Government has rejected the request of Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano for cooperation with the Rome-Berlin axis in anti-Jewish measures on the ground of Japan’s ‘traditional policy of racial equality;’ on the other hand, “but Tokyo agreed to tighten up immigration regulations to prevent an increase in the present Jewish population.”⁶¹⁰

Jewish refugees were easily barred from Manchukuo since late 1938. However, in Shanghai, a traditional British sphere of influence, Japan took pains to impede Jewish immigration. The Japanese occupied Greater Shanghai by force in late 1937, but they did not have diplomatic rights and international recognition. The Japanese took over the Chinese zone by establishing a puppet Chinese administration. However, the Japanese did not occupy the Shanghai International Settlement and the French Concession, because Japan did not want to involve Britain, France and the United States in a war against Japan.

On February 24, 1939, the *New York Times* reported that when “popular feeling in Shanghai was becoming steadily more anti-Japanese,” and “officials of the International Settlement were growing more arrogant,” the Japanese authorities threatened to abolish the Shanghai International Settlement and took radical measures against the Jews.⁶¹¹ The *New York Times* recorded a dialogue between Representative No Akaike and Foreign Minister Hachiro Arita in Tokyo:

Mr. Akaike injected the Jews into Japan’s China problem when he declared that Shanghai was an ‘invulnerable foothold for the Jews,’ as well as Britain’s Far Eastern base. He complained that 1,500 Jewish refugees had been admitted to the Settlement with the result that they would be housed in a former primary school building which the

⁶¹⁰“Japan Reported Snubbing ‘axis’ on Anti-Jewish Measures,” *JTA*, January 11, 1939.

⁶¹¹“Hiranuma Warns Of Shanghai Move: Japanese Premier Says He Is Considering Radical Step to Halt Attacks,” *New York Times*, Feb 24, 1939.

council had formerly refused to rent to the Japanese Army. “Mr. Akaike wanted to know why these Jews had been allowed to pass through Manchukuo.

Mr. Arita answered that only eighty Jews had passed through Manchukuo – ‘probably because the Manchukuoan Government did not want them to settle there.’ He reminded Mr. Akaike that Japan did not discriminate against Jews and he defended the council’s action in granting the school building for the use of Jewish refugees.

The popular newspaper *Yomiuri* dragged the Jewish issue into the China problem in an article declaring that Shanghai needs a surgical operation. It declares Shanghai is a nest of gangsters and lawbreakers, where Jewish financiers are active, anti-Japanese newspapers published, and terrorists sheltered.

The demand for reform of the council, it says, is like suggesting ‘the dropping of an eye-lotion from a high window,’ the International Settlement is a cancer that requires an operation, it asserts.⁶¹²

This report shows that the Japanese authorities intentionally dragged “the Jewish issue into the China problem” to balance the conflicts with Britain. Japan wanted to abolish the Shanghai International Settlement, but it could not afford to offend Britain. Therefore, Japan had to admit that Shanghai as an “invulnerable foothold for the Jews,” as Akaike declared.

On April 6, 1939, *JTA* published an article “Jewish Refugees in China Barred from Japanese-controlled Areas,” saying that: “The International Settlement authorities show great sympathy with the refugees and place no obstacles in the way of their admission, but the Japanese authorities are not permitting the refugees to leave the [international] settlement either for Northern China, or Manchukuo, Inner Mongolia and other territories under Japanese control. Only highly qualified specialists can, after great difficulties, obtain permission to settle in these territories.”⁶¹³

In April 1939, when mass Jewish immigration with Chinese visas flooded into Shanghai, the Japanese foreign ministry, the army and the navy immediately set up a committee for

⁶¹² Ibid.

⁶¹³ “Jewish Refugees in China Barred from Japanese-controlled Areas,” *JTA*, April 6, 1939.

countermeasures. Before Japan took firm action, it played tricks again. On May 25, 1939, Navy Captain Inuzuka, Consul Shiro Ishiguro and Colonel Yasue summoned Sir Victor Sassoon and Mr. Ellis Hayim, who represented the Shanghai Jewish community. Noticing the “serious shortage of funds” of the Jewish relief organizations, the Japanese revealed that “the Japanese themselves had tried to stop, through petitions of foreign consuls to Germany the flow of refugees into Shanghai.”⁶¹⁴ From the Jewish side, Sassoon asked the Japanese authorities to “provide a warehouse, a school building – any kind of edifice – to serve as a shelter for the Jews in the area north of Shanghai.”⁶¹⁵ But the Japanese refused Sassoon’s request.

However, when the news was announced in August, the Japanese claimed that “acting upon the request of the Jewish Refugee Committee here,” the Japanese naval authorities prohibited new Jewish refugees in Shanghai.⁶¹⁶ Thus, postwar literature critiques Sassoon, who represented the wealthy Shanghai Sephardi Jews, as showing cold shoulder to the Nazi refugees. However, it would have been impossible for Sassoon initially to request that the Japanese prohibit refugees. It was well-known that, after Ezra died, Sassoon and the Shanghai Jews turned into radical anti-Japanese. During his trip to North America in February 1939, Sassoon made anti-Japanese speeches in New York, Chicago, and Vancouver. According to Sakamoto, Sassoon’s “subject was always the same: Japan had a dire need for capital in order to achieve its plans of economic development in China; if the United States, Great Britain, and France stopped exporting to Japan, he said, the China Incident would be resolved quickly, leading to a Japanese withdrawal from China.”⁶¹⁷

⁶¹⁴ Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 84.

⁶¹⁵ Ibid.

⁶¹⁶ “Refugees Banned from Jap-ruled International Zone in Shanghai after Aug. 21,” *JTA*, August 13, 1939.

⁶¹⁷ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 71.

Nevertheless, the door of Shanghai was closed to Jewish refugees. *New York Times* on August 12, 1939, reported that: “Further immigration of Jewish refugees in the section of Shanghai’s International Settlement north of Soochow Creek was banned today by the Japanese Navy, effective Aug.21. The proscribed area is within the International Settlement governed by the Shanghai Municipal Council, but the Japanese placed it under armed occupation two years ago. A spokesman said the ban was imposed ‘without reference to Settlement authorities’ and ‘by right of military conquest.’”⁶¹⁸

When the Japanese navy banned Jewish refugees in Shanghai “by the right of military conquest,” the Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai had to cooperate with the Japanese authorities for its survival. That is why the existing literature of Jews in Shanghai, as well as the main body of the JDC archival records, largely revealed how the Jewish relief organizations dealt with the Japanese authorities in Shanghai.

By August 1939, the majority of Jewish refugees, more than 15,000 people, had already arrived in Shanghai. After the Japanese ban was issued, HIAS sought to remove Shanghai refugees to other countries. On September 17, HIAS announced it had “cabled \$10,000 to the Refugee Aid Committee in Shanghai to finance emigration of 300 Jewish refugees from Germany and Austria to other countries.”⁶¹⁹ In addition, 750 refugees registered for migration to the Philippine island of Mindanao.⁶²⁰ By HIAS’ intervention, in October, the Japanese Navy and the Shanghai Municipal Council illegally created a Shanghai entry permit system, and entry was “limited to refugees having relatives in the Chinese city and others possessing \$400 per adult and

⁶¹⁸ “Part of Shanghai To Exclude Jews: Japanese-Ruled District of International Settlement Will Bar Refugees,” *New York Times*, Aug 12, 1939.

⁶¹⁹ “Hias Cables \$10,000 to Aid Removal of 300 Refugees from Shanghai,” *JTA*, September 17, 1939

⁶²⁰ “750 Refugees in Shanghai Register for Migration to Mindanao,” *JTA*, December 4, 1939 (Shanghai, Dec. 3)

\$100 per child.”⁶²¹ The Japanese authorities practically refused to issue any permits.⁶²² But during the elections for members of the Shanghai Municipal Council in April 1940, the Japanese suddenly issued one thousand permits. The Jews sold “their vote to the Japanese for the promise that permits will be issued for all their relatives to come to Shanghai.”⁶²³ From fall 1939 to June 1940, “only 1,900 Jews had arrived” in Shanghai.⁶²⁴

The reports from the *New York Times* and the *Jewish Telegraphic Agency* all indicate that Japan banned Jewish refugees from the Japanese controlled areas. Sakamoto, whose research focuses on the inner Japanese foreign ministry policy on the Jewish refugees, draws the same conclusion that Japanese policy was all about restrictions and prohibitions. However, Sakamoto cannot explain the gap between the Japanese policy and the emergence of the mass Jewish immigration in Shanghai, so she called it a WWII “dilemma.”

Sakamoto did not know that when the Japanese Consul General Yamaji in Vienna dissuaded the Jews from immigrating to Asia, the Chinese Consul General Ho Fengshan granted Shanghai visas to any Jews who applied to go to China. Therefore, the Japanese policy on the Jewish refugees was not a dilemma, but rather a coherent prohibition. Japan’s true attitude to the Jews was also revealed in their policy to the Polish refugees who were stranded in Kobe in 1941.

⁶²¹ Hias-ica Plans to Move from Paris to Brussels to Facilitate Emigration Work” *JTA*, October 17, 1939 (Paris, Oct. 16); for details about the Shanghai entry permit system, see Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*.

⁶²² JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 460, China: Administration, General, 1940 July-Dec.: “Letter from Michel Speelman to Moses Leavitt, Secretary JDC, with enclosed list of immigrants who arrived in Shanghai with landing money provided by HICEM,” August 13th, 1940.

⁶²³ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 79.

⁶²⁴ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 78.

5.3.3. Japanese Transportation Business was Open for Jews

The invasion of Poland by Germany and the Soviet Union in September 1939 marked the beginning of WWII in Europe. For the Jews, a new wave of evacuation began. The Western European ports under the fascists' control being closed, an increased flow of Eastern European Jewish refugees fled the Reich and German-occupied territories via the Trans-Siberian Railway, a route that was once used during WWI.

The Soviet Union permitted transit by the Trans-Siberian Railway to Jews holding immigration visas for the United States and Palestine. The Eastern European Jews could land in Vladivostok and sail to Shanghai, where they could embark on Japanese steamers to the United States. If the Jewish refugees could obtain the Japanese and Manchukuoan transit visas, they would transit to the United States via the ports of Japan and Manchuria, just as it was in WWI. The American Jewish relief organizations arranged with the Japanese line to transport Eastern European Jews across the Pacific Ocean and disembark them at San Francisco. The Japanese, however, took advantage of the troubled situation of Jews and increased the payment for the trans-Pacific crossing in American dollars at the rate of \$250 per person, a high fare which added a heavy burden on the emigrants.⁶²⁵ Japan barred Jewish refugees in its areas, but Japan allowed Jews to transfer to other countries via Japan.

Even so, the Japanese Foreign Minister Arita provided a strict standard for Japanese transit visas: "Japanese transit visas could not be issued unless entry visas were in hand. If the applicant had an entry visa for another country, a Japanese transit visa should be granted, but not

⁶²⁵ "Shanghai Expects New Influx of Refugees, Spurred by Soviet Transit Permission," *JTA*, June 10, 1940 (Shanghai, Jun. 9); "War Causes Shifting of Routes for European Jewish Emigration," *JTA*, July 10, 1940 (Lisbon, Jun. 29).

an entry one.”⁶²⁶ By this standard, the Japanese and Manchukuoan diplomats, such as Chiune Sugihara in Kaunas, Wang Tifu in Berlin,⁶²⁷ and many other Japanese diplomats, began to issue transit visas to the Jews.

From Jewish sources, “4413 refugees arrived in Japan between July 1, 1940, and May 30, 1941. This figure included 2074 German refugees, 2040 Polish ones, and 299 from other countries.”⁶²⁸ By August 1941, about 3,500 Jewish refugees left Japan, but the remaining 1,000, who held the Sugihara visas, were stranded in Japan.

In the end of August 1940, in Kaunas, Lithuania, Japanese consul Sugihara agreed to issue Japanese transit visas to the Jews, in the condition that the Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk granted Curaçao entry visas. Sugihara neither broke his government’s rules for issuing visas, nor was he punished by his government. In early February 1941, Sugihara wrote Tokyo from Prague that he had issued visas to 2,132 Lithuanians and Poles, among them only about 1,500 Jews.⁶²⁹ Before Zwartendijk shut his office in August 1940, he issued about 2,200 to 2,400 Curaçao visas.⁶³⁰ Following him, Sugihara began to issue Japanese transit visas, so the number of 1,500 Jews or so, who held the Sugihara visas, was reasonable. However, the more than 1,000 Polish Jews, including 450 rabbis and yeshiva students, never materialized in Curaçao, the Dutch colonized island in South America, as a reasonable destination. When their efforts to immigrant

⁶²⁶ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 120.

⁶²⁷ Wang Tifu, who was a colleague of Sugihara in Harbin and later became a puppet Chinese diplomat of Manchukuo in Berlin, recounted that he issued 12,000 Manchukuoan transit visas to Jews, see Wang, *Jianguo Xitele yu Jiuguo Youtairen de Weiman Waijiaoguan* [A Manchurian Diplomat, who had met Hitler and saved Jews]. However, except Wang’s memoir, no evidence supports the number. Both Eber and Sakamoto’s research show that the Manchukuoan visas were as strict as the Japanese visas.

⁶²⁸ YIVO Institute, HIAS-HICEM I, MKM 15-57, 15-B22, cited in Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 115.

⁶²⁹ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 113.

⁶³⁰ Paldiel, *Diplomat Heroes of the Holocaust*, 44.

to the United States and Palestine failed, they were stranded in Kobe from fall 1940 to fall 1941.⁶³¹

At this time, Harbin once again emerged as the best place to settle the Jewish refugees. In early 1940, Shanghai Jews urged Harbin Jews to negotiate with the Japanese authorities, and sought “permission for European refugees in Shanghai who have relatives in Manchukuo to join them, and also for holders of special permit to enter Manchukuo from Soviet Russia, which hitherto has been strictly forbidden.”⁶³² During the Third Congress of Far-Eastern Jewish Communities, “Shanghai delegates reported on the critical condition of the 17,000 refugees in Shanghai, 80 percent of whom, they said, were unable to earn a livelihood and were ‘caught as in a mouse-trap’ because of the prohibition on their proceeding to the Chinese provinces and Manchukuo. Their position has been rendered still more difficulty by the inability of the local Jewish community to continue relief work on the previous scale.”⁶³³

Therefore, both Jews in Shanghai and Harbin wanted to secure permits for the refugees to enter Manchukuo. Harbin Jews would cover all costs for the refugees as they did in WWI. In addition, the Mir yeshiva in Kobe contacted Harbin Rabbi Kisilev about when to observe Shabbat and Yom Kippur. Rabbi Kisilev insisted the observations should follow the local calendar.⁶³⁴ Both Rabbi Kisilev and Dr. Kaufman hoped Japan could permit Jewish refugees to enter Harbin. That was why they agreed to cooperate with Japan.

⁶³¹ For the experience of the yeshiva rabbis and students in Kobe, see the literature: Tokayer and Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*; Vera Schwarcz, *In the Crook of the Rock: Jewish Refuge in a World Gone Mad: the Chaya Leah Walkin Story* (Boston : Academic Studies Press, 2018).

⁶³² “Seek Permission for Refugees in Shanghai to Enter Manchukuo,” *JTA*, January 12, 1940, (Harbin, Jan. 11)

⁶³³ *Ibid.*

⁶³⁴ Shapiro, “China and the Answer to the Last Quiz.”

Meanwhile, the Orthodox groups in New York asked the JDC to cooperate and provided necessary guarantees to rescue the Mir yeshiva students. Almost all the rabbinical organizations in New York participated financially in the rescue movement, such as Mizrachi Organization of America, Young Israel Council, Vaad Hahatzalah, Ezras Torah, Rabbinical Council of America, Zeirei Agudath Israel of America, Hapoel Hamizrachi of America, Union of Orthodox Congregations, Hassidei Habbad, American offices of the Yeshivath and so on.⁶³⁵ After the war, the rescue movement of the Mir yeshiva students stranded in “the friendly country of Japan” became a collective memory among the New York Jews.

Nevertheless, the Jewish collective memory had nothing to do with practical Japanese policy. Japan had never expected Jewish refugees to stay in the Japanese soil. The Japanese consul in Moscow stopped issuing of transit visas to Polish Jews in early 1941. The irritated Japanese authorities in Tokyo threatened to intern all the Jewish refugees, or to deport them from Kobe to the island of Sakhalin in Siberia.⁶³⁶ The so-called Jewish experts, Yasue and Inuzuka, were forced to leave their posts separately in October 1940 and February 1942.⁶³⁷ As Japan could not throw all these Jewish refugees into the Pacific Ocean, the government in Tokyo finally decided to deport all the 1,000 stranded Jews in Kobe to the Shanghai International Settlement,

⁶³⁵ For the letters between rabbinical groups and JDC, see JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 738: Lithuania: Subject Matter, Emigration, Yeshivah and Rabbinical Groups, 1940 - 1941 (Jan.); and File 727: Japan: Yeshivah and Rabbinical Groups.

⁶³⁶ “Soviet Extends Period for Emigration from Lithuania,” *JTA*, February 6, 1941 (Stockholm, Feb. 5); “Japan Bars Further Transit of Polish Jewish Refugees; Cites Congestion,” *JTA*, March 18, 1941 (Tokyo, Mar. 17); “News Brief,” *JTA*, May 1, 1941 (Shanghai, Apr. 30); “Emigration of Refugees from Japan to America, Canada Halted,” *JTA*, July 31, 1941 (Lisbon, Jul. 30); “Polish-Jewish Refugees Reach Bombay En Route from Japan to Palestine,” *JTA*, August 8, 1941 (London, Aug. 7)

⁶³⁷ Tokayer and Swartz, *The Fugu Plan*, 16-7.

which was *not* under full control of the Japanese. Since August 1941, the Shanghai Jewish refugee situation became even more difficult.⁶³⁸

The Japanese policy to the Jews “had everything to do with restricting refugees and nothing to do with rescue or settlements,” as Sakamoto claims.⁶³⁹ However, a popular belief is that the Japanese saved tens of thousands of holocaust refugees during WWII by issuing them “life visas.” On the contrary, Japan even denied entry to 1,000 Jews, so how could it be possible for more refugees to be admitted?

There are two main rumors about Jewish immigration in Manchukuo. The most well-known is the dramatized *Fugu Plan*: Tamura Kozo, a Japanese industrialist in the United States, planned to establish a Jewish settlement of in Manchukuo. Tamura worked with Captain Inuzuka in Shanghai and Ayukawa Yoshisuke of Manchukuo Heavy Industries Development Corporation. In America, Tamura proposed his plan to several Jewish leaders, such as Rabbi Wise, and Dr. Bernhard Kahn of JDC. But the Japanese Guandong Army, which was the ultimate power, never adopted Tamura’s plan officially.⁶⁴⁰

Less-known, but also cited by scholars, is the rumor that 20,000 Jewish refugees crossed the Manchuria-Soviet border and found shelter in Manchukuo in 1938. The truth is that in March 1938, Higuchi Kiichiro, afore-mentioned head of military intelligence in Harbin, helped several families of Jewish refugees in Otpor, a Manchuria-Soviet border town, to enter Manchukuo.⁶⁴¹ Higuchi left his office of Harbin for Japan as of July 1938, a time before the intensive European

⁶³⁸ “Japan Deports Stranded Jewish Refugees,” *JTA*, August 20, 1941, (Tokyo, Aug. 19); “Japanese Steamers Refuse to Carry Polish Jews to American Shores,” *JTA*, October 17, 1941 (Tokyo, Oct. 16)

⁶³⁹ Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 161.

⁶⁴⁰ For more details of the settlement plans, see Sakamoto, *Japanese Diplomats and Jewish Refugees*, 83-90.

⁶⁴¹ Naoki Maruyama, “Facing a Dilemma: Japan’s Jewish Policy in the Late 1930s,” in *War and Militarism in Modern Japan – Issues of History and Identity*, ed. Guy Podoler (Folkestone, Kent, UK: Global Oriental Ltd., 2009), 31.

Jewish immigration reached Asia. Post-war literature exaggerates the number of “several Jewish families” to “20,000 Jewish lives” that were saved by Higuchi. Consequently, Higuchi was honored as a trustee of Japan’s Israel Association after WWII.⁶⁴²

Both Jewish and Japanese sources show that Harbin Jewish population was reduced to less than 3,000 in 1938.⁶⁴³ The JDC report recorded that Harbin admitted in total 113 refugees from 1933 till 1940.⁶⁴⁴ It was impossible for large number of Jews to survive in other cities of Manchukuo either. In the letters to various Jewish organizations in Hong Kong and Shanghai, Meir Birman of HIAS strove to settle refugees in Chinese cities rather than in Manchukuo.⁶⁴⁵ Birman himself relocated to Shanghai in September 1939.

In addition, the Jewish leaders in Shanghai warned European refugees that “Japan’s rule in Shanghai might endanger Jews as much as German rule.”⁶⁴⁶ Doubting that Jewish leaders made an excuse to discourage Jewish immigration, Irene Eber thus critiques the indifference and the irresponsibility of the Jewish organizations.⁶⁴⁷ The postwar scholars like Eber and Kranzler were not acquainted with the wartime situation in China. Japan’s war in Asia indeed caused great terror both to natives and foreigners. Soon after the attack on Pearl Harbour, misfortune fell on the Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Germany only to suffer from the Japanese fascists.

⁶⁴² “Report Reveals Japanese General Personally Saved 20,000 Jewish Refugees in 1938,” *JTA*, January 4, 1971, (New York, Jan. 3)

⁶⁴³ “Zai Harubin Yudayajin no Jokyo” [State of the Jews Living in Harbin], *Gaiji Keisatsu-ho* (Foreign Police Report) vol.199, the Home Ministry Police Bureau, (1939):118, quoted in Takao, “Prewar Japan’s Perception of Jews and the Harbin Jewish Community,” 38; “White Guardist Reign of Terror Cuts Harbin Jewish Population from 12,000 to 3,000,” *JTA*, August 15, 1938 (Harbin, Aug. 14).

⁶⁴⁴ JDC, 1933-1944 New York Collection Selected Documents, File 466, China: Administration, General, 1946 July-Dec.: “Complementary Report (See Report No. 1 and Report Written by the Polish Refugees),” Harbin, July 2, 1946.

⁶⁴⁵ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 61, (footnote 100).

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁴⁷ See Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 60, 70, 91.

5.3.4. Ghetto in the East

By a carefully camouflaged tactic, Japan successfully played the dangerous game of cat and mouse with the West. When the Japanese Navy launched its surprise attack on Pearl Harbor and the Japanese Army landed at Malaya on December 7, 1941, all the Americans and British were shocked. Antony Best writes that “the sense of shock was ably summed up by Sir Shenton Thomas who, in a letter to the Colonial Office on 17 December, noted, ‘The Jap is good. In the air and on land he has already done things which we didn’t expect.’”⁶⁴⁸ Also, “Churchill, who had consistently underestimated the Japanese, afterwards described the fall of Singapore as ‘the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history.’”⁶⁴⁹ Postmodern scholars satirized the U.S. isolationists and commented that: “fortunately for Roosevelt, both Germany and Italy declared war on America just four days later. America was now at war in both Europe and Asia.”⁶⁵⁰

In the Pacific War, Japan dispatched its main troops from the North to South-East Asia. To prevent a Russian attack on its Northern frontier, Japan signed a Non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in April 1941. Therefore, “Japan dared not persecute any of the thousands of Russian Jews and non-Jews in the regions under its control.”⁶⁵¹ During the Pacific War, for the security of Manchuria, the Japanese left the Harbin Jews, most of whom were Russians, free, but not intact. In June 1943, the Japanese authorities closed Kaufman’s newspaper *Jewish Life*.⁶⁵² In 1944, the Japanese intended to place the statue of Amaterasu, the sun goddess and the most

⁶⁴⁸ Best, *British Intelligence and the Japanese Challenge in Asia*, 188.

⁶⁴⁹ Chambers, *This Age of Conflict*, 541.

⁶⁵⁰ Kubo, and Hattori, “The 1930s: Japan’s War with China and American Non-Recognition,” 101.

⁶⁵¹ Jonathan Goldstein, “1942: a year of survival for Philippine Jews at the edge of the Diaspora”, *The Australian Journal of Jewish Studies*, Vol. 27, (2013): 69.

⁶⁵² Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 393.

important deity of the Shinto religion, in every synagogue. Rabbi Kiselev resisted under threat of death. The Japanese finally gave in.⁶⁵³

The Russian Jewish community in Shanghai also remained free after Japan occupied the Shanghai International Settlement in the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor. But the Japanese authorities seized the Sephardic Jews who were British subjects as hostages or anti-Axis elements. *JTA* in May 1943 reported that “The Japanese authorities have closed down the offices of the Sephardic community in Shanghai and confiscated its property.... At the same time they mobilized all Jewish mechanics and skilled laborers for forced labor. Simultaneously, Jewish doctors and dentists were ordered to report for work in Japanese hospitals. The Jews are being paid twenty-five percent of what the Japanese workers receive.”⁶⁵⁴ The wealthy Sephardic Jews in Shanghai lost all their fortunes during the war. Sir Elly Kadoorie died in Japanese captivity in February 1944.⁶⁵⁵ The Japanese confiscated all the extensive Jewish properties not only in Shanghai, but also in Hong Kong, Singapore, and the other South-East Asian regions.⁶⁵⁶ The Sephardic communities ceased to exist in the Japanese military controlled areas during the Pacific War.

The most unfortunate were the Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. According to *JTA* in May 1942, “the number of Jewish refugees in Shanghai who depend on relief has grown from 7,000 before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor to 14,000 at present. This, the report explains, is due to the fact that a third of the Jewish refugees in the city lost their livelihood after Japan’s entry into

⁶⁵³ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 65.

⁶⁵⁴ “Japan Seizes 100 Jewish Refugees As Hostages in Shanghai; Many Others Arrested,” *JTA*, May 23, 1943 (London, May. 21)

⁶⁵⁵ “Sir Elly Kadoorie, Bagdad-born Jewish Philanthropist, Dies in Japanese Captivity,” *JTA*, March 5, 1944, (London, Mar. 3)

⁶⁵⁶ See Meron Medzini, *Under the Shadow of the Rising Sun: Japan and the Jews During the Holocaust Era* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2016).

war against the United States.”⁶⁵⁷ Worse, Japan mimicked Germany and intensified discriminatory anti-Jewish measures. In November 1942, the Japanese ordered all Jewish owners of automobiles to display a special marker on front of their vehicles to indicate that they belonged to Jews. In addition, the Japanese stamped the Jewish identification papers with the letter “J”.⁶⁵⁸ Moreover, Jewish businesses were forced to liquidate. In March 1943, the Japanese police “shut down all Jewish cafes, restaurants and cabarets in Shanghai on the pretext that they were centers of Allied propaganda and were demoralizing Japanese troops.”⁶⁵⁹ Japan also imposed the Chinese Puppet leader, Wang Jingwei, to broadcast anti-Jewish and anti-American propaganda in Nanjing.⁶⁶⁰ In June 1943, “in order to prevent the Chinese from being exploited by the Jews,” the Japanese authorities interned the 15,000 Jewish refugees into a ghetto in the Hongkou area.⁶⁶¹

Jewish life in Hongkou Ghetto was harsh and humiliating. The brutal and sadistic Japanese official Ghoya Kanoh was in charge of the ghetto. Ghoya called himself “King of the Jews,”⁶⁶² “who arbitrarily issued or denied issuing a pass [to leave the ghetto] and who used physical violence whenever it suited him.”⁶⁶³ Furthermore, starvation took heavy toll among the Jewish refugees, who rarely obtained more than five meals a week. The Japanese authorities

⁶⁵⁷ “First Authentic Report on Situation of Jewish Refugees Under Japan Reaches Europe,” *JTA*, May 31, 1942, (Lisbon, May. 29)

⁶⁵⁸ “Japan Orders Jews in Shanghai to Display Special Marker on Their Automobiles,” *JTA*, November 8, 1942, (Lisbon, Nov. 6); Japan Stamps Passports of Shanghai Jews with Letter “j”, *JTA*, November 9, 1942, (Zurich, Nov. 8)

⁶⁵⁹ “Japanese Police Intensify Anti-Jewish Measures in Shanghai,” *JTA*, March 7, 1943, (London, Mar. 5)

⁶⁶⁰ See Zhou Xun, *Chinese Perceptions of the “Jews” and Judaism: A History of the Youtai* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001), esp. 141-55.

⁶⁶¹ “Japanese Newspaper Urges Internment of Shanghai Jews in Ghetto,” *JTA*, July 27, 1942, (Berne, Jul. 26) “Internment of Thousands of Jewish Refugees by Japan Reported in Nazi Broadcast,” *JTA*, May 25, 1943, (Stockholm, May. 24); “Japan Confirms Internment of 15,000 Jewish Refugees in Ghetto in Hongkong Area,” *JTA*, June 20, 1943 (London, Jun. 18)

⁶⁶² Dicker, *Wanderers and settlers in The Far East*, 126.

⁶⁶³ Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 181.

interned the two JDC representatives in Shanghai, Laura Margolies and Manuel Siegel. JDC could not send money from New York to Shanghai due to the war. The relief funds were borrowed locally on the promise that it would be repaid by the American JDC at the end of the war. In addition, the Shanghai Jewish Relief Association, composed mostly of Russian Jews, imposed a voluntary tax upon the local Jewish population. Tianjin Jews also raised funds for Jewish refugee relief. Even so, 1,497 Jewish refugees, about one in tenth, died of starvation in the Shanghai ghetto. The surviving Jews were penniless and, in many cases, ill after years of internment, persecution and brutality in the Japanese occupation.⁶⁶⁴

The Japanese militarists did not murder the Jewish refugees but only starved them, because Shanghai was a world window for Japanese rule and Japan feared that the Allied powers would take revenge. In October 1942, Japan released a group of Jewish refugees, 29 Polish and 14 Czechoslovakian Jews, from Shanghai to London, under the scheme providing for the exchange of British and Allied citizens in the Far East.⁶⁶⁵

Japanese propaganda wanted the public to believe that all its anti-Semitic activities were under German pressure, so that the Shanghai Jewish refugee survivors condemned the Germans but felt grateful to the Japanese.⁶⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the “Warsaw Butcher” Gestapo, Col. Josef

⁶⁶⁴ “Jewish Refugees in Shanghai Facing Starvation; Japanese Refuse to Feed Them,” *JTA*, July 29, 1942, (New York, Jul. 28); “Thousands of German Jews Beg for Bread in Shanghai Streets; Mortality Mounting,” *JTA*, October 20, 1942 (London, Oct. 19); “Starvation Taking Heavy Toll Among Refugees in Shanghai, JDC Worker Reports,” *JTA*, December 5, 1943, (New York, Dec. 3); “Jewish Refugees in Japanese-held Shanghai Live on Starvation Diet; Funds Needed,” *JTA*, April 28, 1944, (Geneva, Apr. 27); “12,000 of 20,000 Jewish Refugees in Shanghai Completely Destitute,” *JTA*, January 12, 1945, (Paris, Jan. 11); “20,000 Jewish Refugees, Interned in Shanghai, Will Be Liberated by Japan’s Surrender,” *JTA*, August 14, 1945 (Bern, Switzerland, Aug. 13); “1,497 Jewish Refugees Died of Starvation in Shanghai During Japanese Occupation,” *JTA*, October 16, 1945 (New York, Oct. 15); “14,000 Surviving Jewish Refugees in Shanghai Need Large-scale Relief, Says JDC Aide,” *JTA*, January 25, 1946 (New York, Jan. 24)

⁶⁶⁵ “First Group of Jews from Japanese-occupied Territory Reaches England,” *JTA*, October 16, 1942, (London, Oct. 15)

⁶⁶⁶ See Gerhard Krebs, “The ‘Jewish Problem’ in Japanese-German Relations, 1933-1945,” in *Japan in the Fascist Era*, ed. Reynolds, 107-132.

Meisinger, did have some influence on Japan but it was very limited, because Germany and Japan were not military allies. James R. Ross reviewed thousands of documents on the Shanghai Jewish refugees, and found that the Meisinger's plot to kill Shanghai Jews, if it existed, was never seriously considered by the Japanese, because "the Japanese distrusted the Gestapo and Meisinger:"

A recently declassified report from the Office of Naval Intelligence suggests that the Meisinger plot may have been fabricated by a Japanese official to extort money from the wealthier Russian Jews who had resisted Japanese requests for funds to assist the European refugees.

Furthermore, it was the German Government, not the Japanese, who declared the Jews stateless in November 1941. One more reason, the Gestapo had so little influence over the Jewish community in Shanghai.

The Japanese did restrict the European Jewish refugees to a ghetto after May 1943, but not to placate the Gestapo. They were more concerned with security issues, such as reports of black market activity among the refugees.⁶⁶⁷

Apparently, German influence on Japan needs to be re-evaluated. Kranzler also admitted that his research on "the Nazi-influenced Japanese policy in the occupied territories and the German influence in the creation of the ghetto is not yet complete."⁶⁶⁸ Nevertheless, Ross' argument is highly in accord with my research that the Japanese were used to extort money from the wealthier Russian Jews and to restrict refugees' black market activity. In any case, Japan's mistreatment of the Jews, did not stem from anti-Jewish hatred but rather from political prejudice and practical purposes, and was self-determined.

⁶⁶⁷ James R. Ross, "Germans Didn't Plot to Kill Shanghai Jews," *New York Times*, July 10, 1994. Ross was the author of the book, *Escape to Shanghai: A Jewish Community in China* (New York: Free Press, 1994).

⁶⁶⁸ Kranzler, *Japanese, Nazis and Jews*, 507, (note, 18a).

5.3.5. Conclusion

Since the Cold War, different from Germany, which is labelled as “evil” fascist, the case of Japan has been a debate: its wars in Asia are good for the economy, but only the attack on Pearl Harbor was stupid. Even today, Japan still justifies its series of wars as liberation of the Asians from the West.

However, Japan’s military liberation caused even greater suffering for the Asians. Japan has never faced up to its crimes, which they deal with like “a blanket of snow...hiding all traces, muffling all sound.”⁶⁶⁹ Japan scholar Gavan McCormack critiques that “Japan’s war atrocities were arguably no less than those of Nazi Germany”: “In some respects, Japan was guilty of crimes which even the Nazis did not commit—trading in opium to finance the activities of its puppet governments, bacteriological and gas warfare, and (in China) the scorched-earth policies to force the evacuation of vast areas.”⁶⁷⁰

For the Jews, post-war Japan turns into a holocaust savior. However, a careful examination shows that militarist Japan’s prejudice and persecution of the Jews shockingly coincided with Nazi Germany: in 1933, Nazi Germany forced Jews out of German public life, while the Japanese Army violently kidnapped and murdered Jews in Manchuria and created the “Kaspe File;” in 1938, when Nazis expelled Jews from Europe, the Japanese barred Jews from its occupied areas in Asia; during the Pacific War since 1941, Germany established death camps, while Japan set up Shanghai ghetto to starve Jewish refugees. Therefore, no matter what propaganda they proclaim, the nature of militarists and fascists is against humanity. Wartime Japan is a lesson to all the nations in the world.

⁶⁶⁹ Maria Hsia Chang and Robert P. Barker, “Victor’s Justice and Japan’s Amnesia: The Tokyo War Crimes Trial Reconsidered,” *East Asia: An International Quarterly*, Vol. 19 Issue 4, (Winter 2001): 55.

⁶⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 60.

Chapter VI: Epilogue

6.1. The End of the Harbin Jewish Community

At the end of WWII, the Shanghai Jewish refugees managed to go back to Europe or immigrate to other countries. Meanwhile, the Shanghai International Settlement as a treaty port ceased to exist anymore due to the war. According to Steve Hochstadt, “Nearly all refugee families wanted to leave Shanghai as soon as possible. Very few had been able to create a life they wanted to continue in China. Remaining in postcolonial China after the war meant learning and adopting Chinese culture; only a handful of European Jews accepted that challenge.”⁶⁷¹ Consequently, “by the end of 1948, nearly 10,000 refugees had left Shanghai, with thousands still seeking a way out. About 1,700 went to Germany and Austria, 7,000 to the United States, and 1,000 to Australia.”⁶⁷² When the State of Israel was founded in 1948, many Shanghai Jewish refugees also chose to immigrate to Israel.⁶⁷³

The Jewish communities in Shanghai, Tianjin and other port cities began with the western colonization in China, and ended when the colonial period finished. However, the situation in Harbin was much different because the special history of Harbin as a Russian “white guard city,” which caused the Russians in Harbin, including the Russian Jews, to have no place to go back to.

On August 8, 1945, based on the Yalta Conference agreement, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan. The Soviet Army defeated the Japanese Guandong Army and secured Harbin on August 18. The Soviet Union ruled Harbin until April 1946 when the Chinese communists

⁶⁷¹ Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich*, 187.

⁶⁷² *Ibid.*, 189.

⁶⁷³ For the details of the emigration of Jews in Shanghai after WWII, see Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai*, esp. 177-221.

moved in. At the beginning, the Harbin Russians welcomed the Soviet Army with euphoria. According to Olga Bakich, “Harsh Japanese control and indoctrination in Japanese superiority became more and more intolerable, and a number of people turned to secret work for the Soviet consulate in Harbin. The arrival of the Soviet army was warmly welcomed; on the streets soldiers were embraced and given cigarettes, apples, sweets, and flowers. Some Harbin Russians helped the Red army command keep order and prevent acts of sabotage by desperate Japanese.”⁶⁷⁴

After thirteen years’ repression in Japanese Manchukuo, the Russian émigrés saw “in the victory of the Soviet arms in Manchuria some sign of a future resurrection of the former glory and power of Russia, a herald of returning Russian influence in Manchuria and a possibility of calmer, safer, and harmless existence for themselves in the near future.”⁶⁷⁵ Bakich wrote that “Almost immediately, however, celebrations, meetings, and patriotic speeches gave way to arrests of some 15,000 Harbin Russians”⁶⁷⁶ with the operation of SMERSH (Death to Spies) in the NKVD department:

One of the first actions of the Soviet army was to seize the documents of the Bureau for the Affairs of Russian Emigrés with its massive files on each Harbin Russian. Japanese insistence on control and records helped the USSR to lay charges for infractions such as collaboration with the enemy, membership in the Russian Fascist Party and in White Russian organizations, service in Russian detachments of the Kwantung army, and publication of anti-Soviet articles and books. In several instances the Soviet command, to save the trouble of individual arrests, called meetings of prominent public figures and arrested all present. Many people, however, were seized for no reason, on a denunciation or gossip, or again, simply for being *kharbintsy* [residents of Harbin]. All were taken to the USSR, where many were shot or perished in the camps. In August 1946, at a trial in Moscow, key figures of the White movement were found guilty of anti-Soviet espionage, sabotage, terrorism, armed struggle, and spying for Japan. Ataman G.M. Semenov was hanged; the leader of Russian Fascists K. V. Rodzaevskii, Lieutenant General A. P.

⁶⁷⁴ Olga Bakich, “Émigré Identity: The Case of Harbin,” *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Volume 99, Number 1, (Winter 2000): 64.

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

Baksheev, Major General L.V. Vlas'evskii, B.N.Shepunov, and I.A.Mikhailov were shot; and Prince N. A. Ukhtomskii and L. P. Okhotin were sentenced to twenty and fifteen years of hard labor, respectively.⁶⁷⁷

Among those arrested were the leaders of the Harbin Jewish community, including Dr. Kaufman and several other key leaders. Dr. Kaufman's son, Teddy Kaufman, recalls that "After about two weeks of detention under very harsh conditions they were all transferred to the Harbin prison, on 'Commercial (Kommercheskaya) Street,' and from there they were transported in cattle wagons to the Soviet Union. At first they were held in a prisoners' camp in Grodekovo, a border town along the Manchuria-Russian frontier, and were later sent to hard labor camps in Siberia, and other desolate areas of the Soviet Union."⁶⁷⁸ Dr. Kaufman was jailed and became a camp doctor in the Soviet Union for a decade.⁶⁷⁹

The remaining Harbin Jews were supposed to apply the Soviet citizenship and many did. Teddy Kaufman and his friends burnt the archives of Betar, Maccabi and the relevant archives of the Zionist movement. Before long, the Soviet consulate in Harbin summoned all Jewish youth. According to Teddy Kaufman, "About three hundred youngsters answered the summons and the auditorium was full. In a long speech Comrade Osipov, the first secretary of the Soviet consulate accused the Jewish youth of being anti-Soviet, lacking faithfulness to the 'motherland'.... and urged us to dismantle the Jewish youth organizations and join the Soviet youth movement."⁶⁸⁰ Thus, the Soviet consulate in Harbin established the Union of Soviet Youth, and spread Soviet

⁶⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁸ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 145.

⁶⁷⁹ Dr. A. Kaufman was released from the Soviet camp and immigrated to Israel in 1971. He wrote a biography called "Camp Doctor" on his experience in the Soviet Union, which was published in series in *Igud Yotzei Sin*.

⁶⁸⁰ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 141.

films, books and newspapers, to prepare Harbin Russians, as well as the Jews, “to be worthy of future residence in the Soviet Union.”⁶⁸¹

After the State of Israel was officially declared in 1948, Harbin Jews were eager to immigrate to Israel. However, “the Soviet consulate made loud noises about refusing to allow Soviet citizens to go there and belittled a homeland of ‘sand and stones.’”⁶⁸² Even though the Soviet consulate granted the exit permits, Harbin Jews first had to obtain a permit to travel to Tianjin or another city, where they could leave for Hong Kong and from there via various countries to Israel. Except the Jewish leaders who were arrested and sent to the Soviet Union, Harbin Zionists, such as Kaufman’s family members, gradually immigrated to Israel. Rabbi Kiselev died in Harbin in September 1949 at the age of 83. After Rabbi Kiselev passed away, Rabbi Saadia Litvin, who served the community as *shohet* (ritual slaughterer) for thirty-five years, acted as the chief rabbi. In January 1950, Rabbi Litvin immigrated to Israel from Harbin.⁶⁸³ There were no more official rabbis in Harbin. Rabbi Levin, the first rabbi of Harbin, and his family immigrated to different parts of the world from Tianjin. Rabbi Levin and his wife Hannah had four children: Nathan, Sara, Gita (Genia) and Basia. Rabbi Levin and Basia immigrated to Chile, Nathan to Germany, Gita to the United States. Sara’s daughter, Marina, and her family are now living in the United States.⁶⁸⁴

In late 1949, the Chinese Communist Party, whose troops effectively expanded during the anti-Japanese War, finally defeated the Chinese Nationalist Party and founded the People’s Republic of China. The newly-established Chinese communist government saw the Russian and

⁶⁸¹ Bakich, “Émigré Identity: The Case of Harbin,” 66.

⁶⁸² Moustafine, *Secrets and Spies: The Harbin Files*, 391.

⁶⁸³ T. Kaufman, *The Jews of Harbin live on in My Heart*, 70-1.

⁶⁸⁴ Sylvana Osorio and Barbara Kay, email to the author, October 14, 2018. My thanks to Sylvana Osorio, Marina’s daughter (Rabbi Levin’s great granddaughter), and Barbara Kay, Marina’s sister in law.

Jewish émigrés as Soviet Union subjects, so the Chinese authorities encouraged the former Russian émigrés to go back to Russia. In 1953, there were 454 Jews in Harbin, among whom, 395 had Soviet Union citizenship (87%), 29 were stateless, 19 had Polish citizenship, 3 Israeli, 1 Hungarian, 1 Japanese and 6 uncertain.⁶⁸⁵

Notably, 3,000 Russian émigrés and their families in Shanghai, Tianjin and other cities were allowed to go back to the Soviet Union as early as in 1947. The Soviet Union welcomed these émigrés back to their motherland, and offered them job opportunities and bursaries.⁶⁸⁶ By contrast, more than 20,000 Harbin Russians, who were labeled as “*belobandity* (White bandits)” and Japanese collaborators, had nowhere to return. They remained in China until 1954 “when the Soviet consulate in Harbin announced to the Harbin Russians that they were granted permission to be ‘repatriated’ to the virgin lands of Kazakhstan, Altai, and several other rough regions.”⁶⁸⁷

Gradually Harbin Russians and Jews emigrated to the Soviet Union, Australia, Israel, and countries in North and South America. In November 1953, the Harbin Soviet consulate transformed the Harbin Jewish hospital into the Second Soviet Immigrants Hospital. In January 1954, the Harbin Jewish council rented the building of the new synagogue to the local Public Security Bureau. In 1958, the remaining 294 Harbin Jews relocated the Jewish cemetery to Huangshan. In 1963, the Harbin Jewish community was officially closed.⁶⁸⁸ Hence, more than half a century of Jewish Diaspora in China was over.

⁶⁸⁵ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 432.

⁶⁸⁶ Shi, Liu, and Gao, *Harbin EQiao Shi*, 93-4.

⁶⁸⁷ Bakich, “Émigré Identity: The Case of Harbin,” 66.

⁶⁸⁸ Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, 432-34.

6.2. Double Nostalgia

In the new era after the foundation of the State of Israel, Jews who emigrated from China to the Holy Land retained their special identity, and they established the association of former residents of China, later known as *Igud Yotzei Sin*. In June 1951, Jews of China rented a small office at Mr. King's law offices on Rothschild Boulevard in Tel Aviv (moved to the Gruzenberg Street in 1972), where members of *Igud Yotzei Sin* got together and published a bulletin. The Bulletin collects all the memoirs and historical documents of Jews from China in Russian initially, and later in Hebrew and English until the present.⁶⁸⁹

In 1954, Jews of China built their own synagogue with the compensation from the Chinese government: “as a result of development projects carried out by the Shanghai authorities, the Ashkenazi Synagogue in the City was demolished. The Chinese Government transferred to Israel via the Embassies of China and Israel in Bern, Switzerland, a sum of money, which was considered equal to the value of the demolished synagogue, with an explicit condition that the money be used to build a synagogue in Israel. The Tel-Aviv municipality donated a plot of land on Golan Street in Ramat Hachayal ("Shikun Shanghai" at that time). With the money that was received from China plus donations from ex-China residents and the Ponve family, a synagogue was built in memory of the Jewish communities of China. It was inaugurated in 1962.”⁶⁹⁰ Every Sabbath, the congregation in the Synagogue prayed for their deceased family members and reminisced concerning their old times in China.

For decades, the Bulletin of *Igud Yotsei Sin* and the synagogue of the Jews of China maintained “a permanent link between the former China residents of the Diaspora with their

⁶⁸⁹ All the information is from the official website of *Igud Yotzei Sin*: “About,” Association of Former Residents of China in Israel, accessed January 6, 2019, <http://www.jewsofchina.org/about>.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid.

compatriots in Israel, to strengthen their bonds with the State of Israel, to update the readers on the activities of the Igud, to reconstruct and publish the rich history and culture of the Jews of China, to signify the contribution of the Jews of China to the State of Israel and to maintain the memories of the Jews, ex-China residents, who passed away.”⁶⁹¹ Moreover, *Igud Yotsei Sin* effectively bonded the Jews of China worldwide with the Jewish Far-Eastern Associations established in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Montreal and Sydney.

The leaders of *Igud Yotzei Sin* are mainly from Harbin, such as Boris Kotz, Teddy Kaufman, and Yossi Klein. Two years after Israel and China officially established diplomatic relations, Teddy Kaufman was among the first group of Jews who went back to seek their roots in Harbin in August 1994. During the Cold War, because Israel and China belonged to different camps, they did not establish normal diplomatic relations until 1992.⁶⁹² Teddy Kaufman’s visit to Harbin and the succeeding establishment of the “Israel-China Friendship Society” by *Igud Yotzei Sin* aimed to strengthen the ties between Israel and China. The Jews of China consequently became the live link between the two nations.

From the Chinese side, Teddy Kaufman’s back-home journey to Harbin reminded the Chinese authorities and scholars the existence of the former Jewish community in China. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), the Red Guards almost destroyed the Chinese traditional sites and history, not to mention the destruction of the Russian and Jewish relics. Therefore, when the Chinese rebuilt their cities in the 1980s to 1990s, the Jewish vestiges both in Harbin, Shanghai and Tianjin suddenly became part of a valuable historical heritage and a means to attract tourists and foreign investments under the Reform and Opening-up (*gaige kaifang*) policy.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² For Israel and China relations, see Jonathan Goldstein and Yitzhak Shichor, eds., *Sin ye-Yisra'el : me-evah le-kirvah* [China and Israel : from discord to concord] (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2016).

Consequently, the history of Harbin Jews became “a unique historical treasure and cultural resource ... it possesses significance appealing to global Jewry.”⁶⁹³

In the Chinese perspective, the former Jewish communities in China not only mark the Jewish contributions to the development of the Chinese cities, but also demonstrate Chinese people’s humanitarianism to the Jewish people who escaped persecutions and the holocaust in Europe and took refuge in Harbin and Shanghai. Tourists to Harbin nowadays will discover that the city visualizes a Jewish Harbin. The historical buildings on the Central Street, connecting the CER station to the Songhua riverbank, are marked as Jewish relics. The Heilongjiang Provincial and Harbin Municipal governments have invested \$2.5 million to \$3.5 million in renovating Jewish historical sites, including the two synagogues, the Jewish middle school, and the Jewish cemetery.⁶⁹⁴ The New Synagogue was restored by the Harbin municipality in 2004 and serves as the Harbin Jewish history and culture museum with a 400-photo exhibition. The Old Synagogue was refurbished as the city’s Concert Hall in 2013. In an interview with the *JTA* in 2004, Qu Wei, president of Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, told the *JTA* staff in Harbin that “We want to show the cooperation between the Israeli people and the Chinese people,” and “bring that historical friendship into current friendship.”⁶⁹⁵

Consequently, Harbin, as well as Shanghai, have become popular tourist cities among Jews. The Harbin Jews, who immigrated to Israel, Germany, the United States, and Australia, are

⁶⁹³ Patrick Fuliang Shan, “Proud and Creative Jewish Community Harbin Diaspora, Jewish Memory and Sino-Israel Relations,” *American Review of China Studies* (Zhongguo yan jiu xue kan), Vol 9, (Fall 2008): 21. Shan’s article shows a detailed history of the Harbin Jewish community in Sino-Israel diplomatic relations.

⁶⁹⁴ “Around the Jewish World Chinese City with Jewish Past Reaching out Now to World Jewry,” *JTA*, August 12, 2004; “85-year-old synagogue marks Chinese-Jewish friendship,” *China Daily*, January 9, 2006.

⁶⁹⁵ “Around the Jewish World Chinese City with Jewish Past Reaching out Now to World Jewry,” *JTA*, August 12, 2004.

eager to come back to search their roots.⁶⁹⁶ Helmut Stern, the renowned Jewish violinist of the Berlin Philharmonic, has been visiting Harbin since the late 1970s. Stern along with his parents escaped from Nazi Germany and lived in Harbin from 1938 to 1949. As a Holocaust survivor, Stern globally advertises the fact that he and his family survived in Harbin of China.⁶⁹⁷ Like Stern, more than 100 Jews every year go back to visit Harbin to pay respect to their second hometown.⁶⁹⁸ The Chinese provincial and municipal officials endorse the development of Jewish programs in Harbin on all economic, political, cultural and social levels. The world-reputed Harbin Ice Festival especially sets up a 4-day tour featuring the Jewish Sites.⁶⁹⁹ Jonathan Goldstein observes that “unlike some European Jews who retain only negative feelings toward their ancestral homelands,” including many members of his family toward Poland, Jewish nostalgia for Harbin and the warm welcome from Harbin seem an exceptional case in the Diaspora.⁷⁰⁰

The role the former Harbin Jewish community played between Jews and Chinese reached its climax when the former Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, visited Harbin in June 2004. Olmert’s family fled to China from war-torn Russia after World War I. Visiting Harbin, Olmert paid respects to his grandfather, who was buried in the Harbin’s Huangshan Jewish cemetery, the largest Jewish cemetery in East Asia with over 600 graves. "My grandfather will remain here forever, so this place is of great significance to me," Olmert said, “The place has become the

⁶⁹⁶ See “Finding Family Roots at Harbin’s Jewish Cemetery,” *Zhongguo Wang*, accessed May 22, 2019. <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2004/Sep/106964.htm>.

⁶⁹⁷ *Helmut Stern, Saitensprünge’ Lebensbericht* [Extramusical Escapades: A Musician's *Memoirs*] (Berlin: Transit, 1990).

⁶⁹⁸ Shan, “Proud and Creative Jewish Community Harbin Diaspora, Jewish Memory and Sino-Israel Relations,” 22.

⁶⁹⁹ “4-day Harbin Ice Festival & Jewish Sites Tour,” Ice Festival Harbin, accessed January 6, 2019, <https://www.icefestivalharbin.com/tour-p71-4-day-harbin-ice-festival-jewish-sites-tour.html>.

⁷⁰⁰ See Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, Chapter 5 “Between Russia, China, Japan, and Israel: The Transnational Identity of Harbin’s Jews, 1899-2015, with Special Reference to the Ehud Olmert Family.”

symbol of the friendship between China and Israel.”⁷⁰¹ Furthermore, Olmert’s parents, Mordechai and Bella, who received professional training in Harbin, spoke some Mandarin at home. “Chinese culture became a part of our family’s tradition. It is my first memory from my childhood in Israel,” Olmert asserted, “We maintain a profound love for the Chinese people and are grateful for the warmth and friendship offered to the Jewish people in the early years of the 20th century and Second World War from the people of Shanghai and Harbin.”⁷⁰² Hence, the Olmert family, as scholar Goldstein observes, have transformed their identity from Russian Jews to Jews of China.⁷⁰³

Harbin and Jews have a double nostalgia. As a result, Harbin becomes the economic, diplomatic and cultural bridge between Israel and China. As contemporary Israel and China both develop rapidly, China has almost become Israel’s largest trading partner and imports Israel’s new technology for military and agriculture.⁷⁰⁴ According to Qu Wei, Jewish business and investment in Harbin grew into \$100 million in 2015.⁷⁰⁵ A Canadian Jewish journalist observes that “as if catching up with its own past, Harbin is eager to attract a new wave of Jewish business and settlers to replicate the success that the earlier legendary generation had brought.”⁷⁰⁶

In the academic and educational fields, the Harbin Jewish History and Culture Research Center was founded by the Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Science in Harbin in 2000. Li Shuxiao, a specialist in the local history of Harbin, became the director of the Harbin

⁷⁰¹ “Israel’s deputy PM visits grave of grandfather,” *China Daily*, June 26, 2004.

⁷⁰² “For Olmert, Visit to China is Rich in Diplomatic and Personal Meaning,” *JTA*, January 9, 2007.

⁷⁰³ For details, see Goldstein, *Jewish Identities in East and Southeast Asia*, Chapter 5 “Between Russia, China, Japan, and Israel: The Transnational Identity of Harbin’s Jews, 1899-2015, with Special Reference to the Ehud Olmert Family.”

⁷⁰⁴ Ng Weng Hoong, “China’s Harbin City courts the Jews once again,” in *The Canadian Jewish News*, February 19, 2015.

⁷⁰⁵ Qu Wei, “Yue shi Guxiang Ming” [Bright is the Moon over My Home Village], an Interview on Jews in Harbin (in Chinese), published by CCTV, Sep.9, 2015, accessed on 15 May, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0CAY77F87uA&index=23&list=PLfAyWdGHnLdF8c594fqTNZGq9AWPsptj>.

⁷⁰⁶ Ng Weng Hoong, “China’s Harbin City courts the Jews once again,” in *The Canadian Jewish News*, February 19, 2015.

Jewish Research Center. In addition, an Israeli journalist named Dan Ben-Canaan established the Sino-Israel Research and Study Center in at Heilongjiang University in 2002. From 2004 to 2006, the Heilongjiang Provincial Academy of Social Sciences, led by Qu Wei, and the Israel-China Friendship Society, led by Teddy Kaufman, held two international seminars on “Jews of China,” attracting many scholars from Israel, the United States, Canada, Australia, Russia, France and England. Dozens of articles, books and memories have been published in Chinese, Hebrew, English, Russian and German, including an anthology *The Homesick Feeling of Harbin Jews*, and an album *The Jews in Harbin*. At the time this study is finished, the Harbin Jewish Archives, collected by the Heilongjiang Provincial Archives, are inaccessible to public researchers, but only open to designated staff. *The Compilation of Documents on the Harbin Jewish Archives: First Compilation*, which contains 15 volumes, has been recently published by China’s Social Sciences Academic Press.⁷⁰⁷ The Chinese scholars take advantage of the historical relics so that almost all the essential academic surveys on the Harbin Jewish community are published in Chinese.

Interestingly, some western scholars pay attention to the Jews of China from a post-colonial view and saw Harbin Jews as a cultural phenomenon that a group of immigrants lived in a place that they never belonged to.⁷⁰⁸ However, when we recount this history of Jews in China, we find that Harbin is neither an unexpected safe heaven nor that remembering China is mere fancy nostalgia. The history of Harbin Jews is an epitome of the last century: first, Harbin Jews experienced the Russian colonial period in China; and then they witnessed the rising of both Chinese and Jewish nationalism after WWI; at last, the disasters of WWII almost destroyed the

⁷⁰⁷ Guo Qiuping, *The Compilation of Documents on the Harbin Jewish Archives: First Compilation* (15 Volumes) (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2017).

⁷⁰⁸ See Thomas Lahusen, “Remembering China, Imagining Israel: The Memory of Difference,” in *Harbin Manchuria: Place, Space and Identity*, ed. Thomas Lahusen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 253-69.

two ancient nations and finally transformed their traditional lives and beliefs. Honored or humiliated, prosperous or miserable, the Chinese and the Jews once shared similar experience of national reconstruction and turned to each other for support. In the new era, we wish that the two nations revive the history, strengthen their friendship, and contribute to a peaceful world.



Figure 18: Harbin's Old Synagogue Concert Hall

(Image from <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%93%88%E5%B0%94%E6%BB%A8%E8%80%81%E4%BC%9A%E5%A0%82%E9%9F%B3%E4%B9%90%E5%8E%85/22073268>, accessed August 22, 2019)



Figure 19: A Concert at the Old Synagogue

(Image from https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/10/arts/music/in-china-rejuvenating-a-classical-music-heritage-linked-to-a-jewish-community.html?_r=3, accessed 14 April 2017)



Map 10: A Sketch Map of the Jewish Sites in Harbin

(Map from: Qu and Li, *Harbin Youtai Jianming Cishu*, Appendix VI)

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