

# INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE CHINESE AND THE JEWISH REFUGEES IN SHANGHAI DURING WORLD WAR II

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Shanghai's waterfront offered an imposing view of a wide street lined with massive stone buildings that ranged from square and squat to tall and towering. Colorful flags whipped gaily in the wind from several rooftops. Mutti gasped, and pointed to a large, gray stone building. From its balcony flew the offensive red, white, and black flag of Hitler's German Reich—the huge, hateful swastika fluttered mockingly in the breeze under a clear china-blue sky.

— Ursula Bacon, 1939<sup>1</sup>

For many Central and Eastern European Jews who suffered under Nazi Germany's persecution, immigrating to other countries was the only way to escape from almost certain deaths in Europe. From 1933 to 1950, about 20,000 Jews<sup>2</sup> from Germany, Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia sought refuge in Shanghai, living side by side with about 100,000 Chinese citizens<sup>3</sup> in Hongkew (now Hongkou), an area smaller than one square mile.<sup>4</sup> With mixed feelings of uncertainty, fear, and hope, the Jewish refugees began life in a cosmopolitan city jointly administered by the French, British, American, Japanese, and Chinese governments. During their years of stay in Shanghai, the Jews interacted with the Chinese communities, acquiring bitter and joyful memories, engaging in cultural exchanges, and transforming the society in unimaginable ways.

## Historical Background

### *Shanghai in the 1930s*

Most Jewish refugees envisioned Shanghai as a small coastal city with a homogeneous Chinese population and houses built with mud and bamboos before seeing it themselves.<sup>5</sup> Contrary to their expectations, Shanghai, a westernized international commercial center in the 1930s governed by both foreign and Chinese authorities, boasted a substantial foreign population. Divided into the French Concession, the International Settlement, and Chinatown (or Old Chinese City), Shanghai enjoyed financial vitality and cultural diversity. While the first Central European refugees considered Shanghai to be a representative Chinese city, it was in fact unique in twentieth-century China. Shanghai was the only Chinese city that earned Frederick Wakeman's remark as "one of the most intricate and complicated urban societies in the world."<sup>6</sup>

Shanghai's transformation from an ordinary Chinese city to a modern metropolis began with the Treaty of Nanjing (or Nanking) in 1840, when Britain forced the Qing Dynasty to open five ports for international trade after defeating the Chinese in the First Opium War.<sup>7</sup> British, American, and French Concessions quickly sprouted as foreign enclaves in the city, providing an ideal environment for European investors.<sup>8</sup> The British and American Concessions were soon combined to become the International Settlement.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Second Sino-Japanese War, which began on 7 July 1937, completely shattered political stability in China. The Battle of Shanghai (13 August-12 November, 1937) became the first major military engagements between China and Japan. After three months of battle, the number of Chinese refugees in Shanghai and its outskirts peaked at more

than 700,000 people.<sup>10</sup> Most of these refugees moved from Chinatown into the French Concession and the International Settlement.

Jewish refugees from Europe benefited from the unique political and cultural situation of Shanghai. The existence of multiple governing authorities made immigration to the city possible. Ever since foreign authorities assumed control over their respective concessions, administrative gaps enabled refugees from all kinds of backgrounds to find shelter in Shanghai. Examples include Korean refugees, who came in 1910 when Japan conquered the Korean Peninsula, and Russian political refugees, some of them aristocrats, who immigrated to Shanghai after the October Revolution.<sup>11</sup> After Japan gained partial control of Shanghai in November 1937, the Chinese government lost the power to regulate foreign immigration into the city. At the same time, British, French, and American interests prevented the Japanese military from assuming authority on this issue until the beginning of World War II.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, from November 1937 to September 1939, passport and visa controls were loose. Immigration to Shanghai was comparatively easy during this two-year period since applicants did not need proof of financial support, certificates of employment, criminal record reports, or other criteria that other countries required.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of refugees settled in Hongkew District of the International Settlement upon arrival, because Hongkew was not only close to the port, the endpoint of the refugees' month-long voyages, but also offered the immigrants a low cost of living. The Battle of Shanghai caused severe destruction in certain areas of the city. Hongkew was one of those areas heavily bombarded by Japanese and Chinese armies. Thus, rent rates in Hongkew were 75% lower than those in other neighborhoods of the International Settlement and in the French Concession, while food prices were about 30% lower than those of other districts in Shanghai.<sup>14</sup> These favorable conditions enabled

Jewish refugees to settle down and survive in Hongkew in the late 1930s.<sup>15</sup>

Shanghai's political system also contributed to the development of distinctive Jewish refugee cultures. Since foreign concessions were Chinese territory but not subject to the direct control of the Chinese government, foreigners had the chance to engage in cultural and political activities in Shanghai with much less constraint than they would have faced in the rest of China. For Jewish refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, this cultural and political freedom gave rise to operettas, concerts, plays, newspapers, and magazines performed or written in German and Yiddish; Zionist organizations and communist study groups; Jewish sports teams and leagues; and European-style restaurants, cafés, and shops. These diverse activities allowed the nostalgic émigrés to preserve their cultural identities and overcome the hardships of the war years.

Moreover, the continuous presence of western cultures and substantial foreign populations in Shanghai fostered cultural exchange between the Chinese and the refugees. After decades of contact with westerners, the Chinese had changed their initial amazement towards western culture to gradual acceptance and voluntary adoption.<sup>16</sup> Many Chinese were able to acquire the languages, customs, and professional knowledge of Jewish refugees during their constant interactions with the emigrant community.

### *Chinese Perception of Jews*

The Jewish war refugees from Central and Eastern Europe were not the first group of Jews who had settled in China.<sup>17</sup> Some scholars claim that Jews already came to China during the Zhou Dynasty (1046–256 B.C.), drawing evidence from the Old Testament and records left on the tablet inscriptions of Kaifeng Jews.<sup>18</sup> Others believe that Jews may have come to China through the Silk Road upon the

beginning of the Jewish Diaspora. However, most scholars think that Jews came to China during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.).<sup>19</sup> Since then, Jewish immigrants have resided in Kaifeng, Beijing, Chongqing, Hong Kong, Harbin, among others, over the centuries, creating vibrant communities and maintaining distinct cultures.<sup>20</sup> During the first 1,100 years of Jewish presence in China, however, meaningful contacts between these Jewish and Chinese communities were minimal. By the nineteenth century, twenty different Chinese terms were used to refer to Jews and many Chinese confused Jews with Muslims due to similarities of their religious rituals and daily outfit.<sup>21</sup>

Modern Jewish immigrants from Europe came in direct contact with the Chinese after 1840, when the British army opened up China's long isolation from the rest of the world. While antisemitism was entrenched in European history, similar sentiments did not took hold among the Chinese.<sup>22</sup> Recorded incidents of antisemitic propaganda and demonstrations were organized by European residents in Shanghai rather than by the Chinese.<sup>23</sup>

Several factors contributed to the Chinese's lack of hostility towards Jewish immigration. European antisemitism largely originated from religious conflicts between Christianity and Judaism. However, the Chinese community was almost exclusively non-Christian and had no religion-based hatred against Jews. In fact, Judaism and Chinese culture, which is based on Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, share more similarities than differences with each other.<sup>24</sup> The Jews of Kaifeng, a group of immigrants who settled in the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127 A.D.), observed and documented their cultural similarity with the Chinese with inscriptions on stone tablets: "Confucianism and our religion are similar in general and different in details. Their purpose and rules both encourage believers to respect natural laws and ancestors, be loyal to the ruler, comply with filial duties, maintain a harmonious relationship with wives and children,

obey the order of seniority, and establish friendships.”<sup>25</sup> These similarities between Chinese culture and Judaism reduced emotional distances between the two groups and fostered mutual understanding. Furthermore, the Chinese and the Jews shared experiences as victims under the oppression inflicted by European Christians and fascist powers. After the First and Second Opium Wars, the Chinese suffered under military aggressions initiated by French, British, German, Austrian, American, Russian, and Japanese soldiers during the Sino-French War, the Siege of the International Legations, and the two Sino-Japanese Wars. The Chinese and the Jews’ mutual suffering under Japanese and German fascists gave rise to empathy towards each other’s experiences and hatred against common enemies.<sup>26</sup>

### *Jewish Communities in Shanghai*

The city of Shanghai already had two Jewish communities prior to the arrival of the refugees.<sup>27</sup> Sephardi Jews, whose majority was wealthy British citizens, arrived in Shanghai via Bombay after 1850, hoping to take advantage of economic benefits offered by the newly established treaty port.<sup>28</sup> The Sephardi Jews thrived in the opium trade, real estate investments, banking businesses, and industrial production.<sup>29</sup> Fewer than 1,000 people, these upper-class Sephardi Jews nevertheless significantly influenced the Chinese economy and politics.<sup>30</sup> The second Jewish community in Shanghai consisted of 7,000 Yiddish-speaking Russian Jews who came between 1904 and 1920 in order to escape from the Russo-Japanese War and antisemitic persecution.<sup>31</sup> Mainly middle-class merchants, they represented interests different from those of the White Russians<sup>32</sup> and the Sephardi Jews. Together with war refugees from Central and Eastern Europe, they formed three Jewish communities in Shanghai during the 1940s.

Although Sephardi Jews, Russian Jews, and war refugees

were often described as a single group of “Shanghai Jews” or “Jews in Shanghai,” their cultures and traditions were distinct from each other. Regarding themselves as British gentlemen, Sephardi Jews often downplayed their identity as Jews. For instance, Rena Krasno, a Russian Jew born in Shanghai, complained that the Sephardi millionaire Silas Aaron Hardoon “showed little interest in Jewish causes.”<sup>33</sup> By contrast, many Russian Jews built synagogues and organized Zionist campaigns vigorously. The German- and Yiddish-speaking Jews from Central and Eastern Europe were not well-to-do merchants but rather desperate, penniless refugees when they arrived in Shanghai. Never regarded as aggressors or exploiters, the refugees did not encounter hostile sentiments that the Chinese had against other white Europeans, including Sephardi and Russian Jews.<sup>34</sup> While Sephardi Jews and Russian Jews were mostly in contact with wealthy Chinese merchants and politicians, the refugees had the opportunity to learn about the daily life of poor Chinese and witness first-hand the agony and torture experienced by ordinary citizens under Japanese aggression. These harrowing memories certainly strengthened some Jewish refugees’ determination to contribute to the Chinese war effort against the Japanese.

Despite differences in culture, religion, and financial means, the three Jewish communities in Shanghai displayed solidarity in hard times. To provide shelter, food, medical treatment, and education for the refugees and their children, Sephardi and Russian Jews donated money and private estates, which served as hospitals, schools, large dormitories, and soup kitchens.<sup>35</sup> The Jewish refugees therefore maintained relatively more comfortable lifestyles with a monthly budget of sixty Yuan from the donations of Sephardi and Russian Jews and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), when the average Chinese refugee struggled to survive with a monthly budget of only two Yuan.<sup>36</sup> Although 1,726 Jewish refugees died of hunger, malaria, and other diseases during their stay in

Shanghai, the majority was able to survive until the end of the war.<sup>37</sup>

### Escape from Europe

The refugees who successfully obtained passage to Shanghai and settled down in a Chinese city that they knew little about demonstrated exceptional courage and determination. At the same time, the Chinese also played a substantial role in assisting the refugees to leave Europe, establishing the foundation for meaningful interactions between the two communities in the following years.

#### *“Visas for Life”: The Contribution of Feng Shan Ho*

Although passengers did not need to present a visa when entering Shanghai between 1937 and 1939, Austrian Jews had to obtain visas in order to apply for permits to leave the country.<sup>38</sup> After the *Anschluss*, thousands of Austrian Jews were sent to concentration camps in Buchenwald and Dachau while more than 190,000 Jews desperately searched for countries that still had immigration quotas for Jews. Dr. Feng Shan Ho, Chinese ambassador in Vienna, offered tremendous help to Jews by issuing thousands of visas despite increasing pressure from the Chinese government.<sup>39</sup> Jie Chen, Chinese ambassador in Berlin, warned Ho repeatedly that such actions would provoke the German government and possibly harm diplomatic relationships between China and Germany.<sup>40</sup> When Ho disregarded Chen’s warnings, his visa officer was dismissed and Ho himself was given a record of demerit. Despite penalties, Ho continued to issue visas to Jews until his service in Vienna ended in May 1940.

Many Jewish refugees who went to Shanghai were grateful for Ho’s deed. Eric Geldstaub (phonetic translation) recalled that he submitted visa applications to more than fifty



embassies. After all his applications were rejected, he went to the Chinese embassy and was immediately granted 20 visas by Ho. Each visa saved one of his family members. His father, who was arrested on *Kristallnacht*, was released within several days after Austrian authorities confirmed that he had obtained a Chinese visa.<sup>41</sup>

*Four Waves of Immigration, 1933-1941*

For most Jewish refugees, Shanghai was a “port of last resort.” According to Werner Michael Blumenthal, who fled to Shanghai from Germany shortly before war broke out in 1939, most Jews fought for the chance to immigrate to North America, Australia or Latin America.<sup>42</sup> Virtually no one wanted to go to Shanghai if there were other options. Nevertheless, Shanghai accepted about 20,000 Jewish refugees during the war, a number more than that of Canada, Australia, India, South Africa, and New Zealand combined.<sup>43</sup> Except for a few thousand Jews who went to other countries after brief stays in Shanghai, most of the refugees remained in the city until the end of the war.

Jewish immigration to Shanghai can be divided into four phases. The first wave took place between January 1933 and August 1937. During this time period, about 130,000 of the 525,000 Jews in the Third Reich left when the government engaged in initial persecution through the *Sturmableitung* (SA) and the Nuremberg Laws.<sup>44</sup> Because many countries in the world were still open to Jewish immigration, few considered Shanghai as a destination. Only about 1,000 to 1,500 German Jews settled in Shanghai due to familial or professional connections with the city.<sup>45</sup> Since no major war took place in Europe and Asia at that time, those who immigrated to Shanghai were able to find jobs in a short time or establish businesses with the assets they brought from Germany.<sup>46</sup>

The second phase applies to the period between

September 1937 and August 1939.<sup>47</sup> Antisemitism gained full force in Germany, with thousands of Jews sent to concentration camps after November 9, 1938. As sentiments of leaving Germany and the recently annexed Austria reached a climax, Shanghai suddenly became an acceptable option.<sup>48</sup> A total of about 20,000 Jews came to Shanghai with little cash and luggage during this two-year period.<sup>49</sup> Most settled down in the Hongkew District with the help of several nonprofit Jewish organizations, such as the JDC.

From September 1939 to June 1941, thousands of Yiddish-speaking Eastern European Jews joined the waves of immigration in search of a sanctuary after the outbreak of World War II. Because of battles in the Mediterranean, the Balkans, and North Africa, European Jews could no longer come to Shanghai by ship as the German and Austrian Jews did.<sup>50</sup> Thus, approximately 3,000 to 4,000 Polish Jews chose to travel all the way across Soviet Siberia to Kobe, Japan.<sup>51</sup> After several months' stay, nearly 1,000 of them were deported to Shanghai. Together with German and Austrian Jews who continued to arrive, an additional 4,000 Jews settled down in Shanghai. This drastic decline in the number of emigrants was caused not only by the war, but also by restrictions of the Shanghai Municipal Council.<sup>52</sup>

The last phase of immigration was the six-month period from 22 June 1941 to December 8, 1941, the beginning of the Pacific War. After Germany invaded the Soviet Union through Operation Barbarossa, the Nazi government barred all Jews from leaving Europe. Nevertheless, about 2,000 refugees managed to arrive in Shanghai from the Russian Far East, Northeast China, Japan, and other countries that refused to accommodate Jews.<sup>53</sup>

### *Discussions of Possible Jewish Settlement in Yunnan*

Besides accepting Jewish refugees in Shanghai, in

1939, the Chinese government also planned to open an area in Yunnan Province to accommodate more refugees. Sun Ke, President of the Legislative Bureau and son of Dr. Sun Yat-Sen, initiated this effort. He suggested that the Chinese government: (1) determine a residential area in the Southwest specifically for Jewish settlement; (2) dispatch a committee to establish and regulate this area; (3) promote this plan to Jewish communities around China to obtain their support; (4) establish a bureau to register jobless Jews so that those who were professionally trained could be employed by the Chinese government; (5) and allow Jewish refugees to apply for Chinese citizenship with the promise that newly admitted citizens would never be discriminated on the ground of race or ethnicity.<sup>54</sup>

On 2 May 1939, the Chinese government adopted these recommendations. Both *Israel's Messenger*, an English-language newspaper published in Shanghai from 1904 to 1941, and *Die gelbe Post*, a German-language newspaper established by Austrian refugee Adolf Josef Storfer in May 1939, reported the contents of Sun's plan and Jews around the world supported it enthusiastically.<sup>55</sup> The Chinese government, however, ultimately aborted the plan due to difficulties such as lack of funding. Nevertheless, this incident demonstrated that the Chinese sympathized with Jewish suffering and were willing to offer assistance even when the domestic population was facing starvation and death during the war.<sup>56</sup> Although no refugees ultimately settled in Yunnan Province, other Chinese cities such as Harbin, Tianjin (or Tientsin), Dalian, Tsingtao, and Chongqing also accommodated thousands of Jews from Europe.<sup>57</sup>

### Initial Encounters

Arriving at a Chinese city for the first time, the Jewish refugees curiously observed Shanghai and its Chinese residents while trying to acclimate to the local culture and life. The

refugees were amazed at the grandiose skyscrapers and clean streets built by Sephardi Jews when they first laid eyes upon the vicinity of the Bund.<sup>58</sup> Seeing how buildings along Nanjing Road mimicked those of the most modern commercial districts of Europe, some refugees even exclaimed that Shanghai was not much different from any western metropolis. If they had dreamed of decent life in Shanghai, however, their illusion was completely shattered when they witnessed the dingy, crowded alleys of Hongkew, one of Shanghai's poorest residential areas, which immediately demonstrated to the refugees the large gap between rich and poor in Shanghai.

Sigmund Tobias, a Polish Jewish refugee born in Germany, reported how the war against the Japanese had turned Shanghai into a city of beggars:

Chinese beggars roamed all over Shanghai; we could see groups of them on Broadway following the many foreigners who came to the docks only one block away from the street. The beggars showed off terrible sores on their bodies or stumps where arms or legs had been. Where they were not following foreigners or well-dressed Chinese, the beggars sat on the sidewalk, propped up against a wall with flies buzzing all around them, and wailed their sad stories while waving a cup or a hat at anyone passing by. At first the beggars cried especially loudly when they saw any of the Jewish refugees, but they soon learned that we had little to give.<sup>59</sup>

Even more appalling than the sight of wandering panhandlers was the abundance of corpses on the street, which vividly demonstrated to the refugees the horrors of war. At first, the Jewish newcomers reported the dead bodies to the police out of good will, but after learning that whoever made the

report had to pay for the pickup, the refugees could do nothing more than sympathize with the dead. The body of a rickshaw puller made an indelible impression on Tobias:

The body of the dead runner lay in front of our lane for several days; the rickshaw disappeared later that afternoon. During the next few days, whenever I left the lane I took special care to make a big circle around the corpse. Even though I tried not to look in that direction, I couldn't avoid seeing the flies buzzing around the body or ignore the terrible smell.<sup>60</sup>

Other unique Chinese lifestyles and conducts also attracted attention from the refugees. For example, many Jews wondered why Chinese men preferred women with bound feet and how these women were able to balance themselves when their feet were so tiny.<sup>61</sup> Others were astonished by how dangerous it was to take public transportation in Shanghai. George Reinisch described getting on a tram as "suicidal" because as soon as the tram stops at a station, the Chinese would swarm onto it from all directions (including the windows), a phenomenon that once nearly caused his father to die of suffocation.<sup>62</sup>

Although the refugees' initial impression of Shanghai was not favorable, there were also pleasant instances during the first encounters with the Chinese. Tobias recalled:

When we first arrived in Shanghai the Chinese called us *nakuning*, or foreigners, though they seemed somewhat surprised to find us living right next to them in the poorest parts of town. It pleased many of us, who were used to being treated as outcasts in Germany, to be called foreigners just like all the other Europeans in

Shanghai.<sup>63</sup>

After experiencing initial amazement, disappointment, and shock, Jewish refugees began to explore their surrounding Chinese community and culture with heightened curiosity. Horst Peter Eisfelder, a German Jew who came to Shanghai in 1938, recalled visiting Chinatown in his memoir *Exil in China: Meine Jahre in Shanghai und Nanking* (translated title: *Chinese Exile: My Years in Shanghai and Nanking*).<sup>64</sup> The Chinese-style architecture of Yu Garden, lotus flowers, and goldfish were completely different from the European-style buildings in the International Settlement and the French Concession. Because few Europeans had ever come to the area at that time, nearly all street names, shop signs, and billboards were in Chinese. "There, white faces would still attract stares from other people and create confusion. It was the only place where you could get a feeling of what real Chinese cities look like.... We were all deeply attracted by this 'pure' China."<sup>65</sup>

Apart from Yu Garden, Longhua Temple was another place that offered a taste of Chinese spiritual life. Lilli Finkelstein still has a vivid memory of the two-thousand-year-old temple.<sup>66</sup> Attracted by the glowing porcelain tiles and the gold-gilded statues of the Buddha when visiting the temple, Finkelstein then prayed for her brother, who was still in Nazi-occupied France. Surprisingly, after the war ended, the American army found Finkelstein's brother in Buchenwald concentration camp. He survived the Holocaust and later became a successful businessman. Joseph Leventhal, a Jewish artist, created a painting, *Shanghai Experience*, in which two rabbis were talking in front of Longhua Temple, in order to immortalize the interactions between the Chinese and the Jews.<sup>67</sup>

While the refugees had both positive and negative feelings about Shanghai, the Chinese residents' impression about the Jews was overwhelmingly favorable. Many Chinese

remembered how polite and “civilized” the Jews were. Ms. Qian, who has been living in Hongkew since 1946, recalled that the Jewish refugees were always polite and united, and they respected the Chinese.<sup>68</sup> What Qian found the most interesting was that Jewish parents never quarreled in front of their children. Ms. Qi, whose cigarette shop was next to a Jewish snack shop, also commented that unlike other haughty foreigners who despised the Chinese, the Jewish refugees always greeted their Chinese neighbors.<sup>69</sup>

### Acclimating to Life in Shanghai

As their initial curiosity about the city of Shanghai faded away, the refugees began to interact with their Chinese neighbors with clear purposes in mind: to explore business opportunities and adjust to local life. The Chinese, on the other hand, responded by partially adopting the refugees’ culture. The reciprocal influence of the Chinese and the Jews on each other would long outlive the war years.

#### *Language Learning*

The first step towards acclimating to life in Shanghai for the Jewish refugees was to acquire a basic knowledge about China. Within the Jewish community there was a wide variety of opportunities for Jews who wanted to learn more about the Chinese language and culture. Professor W. Y. Tonn, a Jewish sinologist, founded an Asia Seminar for Jews, which provided 22 courses and 281 lectures per semester on topics such as Chinese literature and art.<sup>70</sup> In addition, both *Die gelbe Post* and the *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle* regularly published advertisements of courses on the Shanghai dialect and Mandarin. Although learning resources were readily available, the extent to which Jewish refugees learned Chinese and adapted to local culture varied greatly based on age, profession,

and personal interest. Some refugees tried to “localize” themselves as much as possible. For instance, German Jewish refugee Frank Theyleg recalled that upon arriving in Shanghai, he tried out every Chinese dish he knew, asked every Chinese he encountered to teach him Chinese words and sayings, watched Chinese movies, and learned to write Chinese characters.<sup>71</sup> Within a short time, his accent became so authentic that he was often mistaken as a Chinese when talking to others on the phone. He could also read and understand Chinese newspapers without much difficulty.

Conversely, other Jewish refugees in Shanghai adopted the prevailing British and American attitudes of the time and hence discriminated against the Chinese. As Werner Michael Blumenthal recalled, many Jews, including himself, despised the Chinese, distanced themselves from their Chinese neighbors, and only occasionally spoke the Shanghai dialect when interacting with rickshaw pullers and street vendors.<sup>72</sup> Blumenthal’s bad impression of Chinese food improved only after he visited top-class restaurants in Nanjing Road at the end of WWII.

“Shanghai babies,” Jewish children born in Shanghai during the war, adopted a third way.<sup>73</sup> Because these “Shanghai babies” spent a considerable amount of time playing with Chinese children of the Hongkew neighborhood, most of them learned to speak the Shanghai dialect fluently. Sonja Mühlberger, who spent the first eight years of her childhood in Shanghai, recalled playing rubber band skipping and singing Chinese songs with other Chinese children in the neighborhood in her memoir *Geboren in Shanghai als Kind von Emigranten: Leben und Überleben im Ghetto von Hongkew (1939-1947)* (translated title: *Born in Shanghai as Child of Emmigrants: Life and Survival in the Ghetto of Hongkew (1939-1947)*).<sup>74</sup>

Most refugees had limited motivation to learn Chinese since they considered Shanghai as a temporary shelter rather than a permanent home. They planned to leave for other places





A "Shanghai baby" and her Chinese neighbors, 1945

after the war: some wanted to go back to Europe in search of surviving relatives; Zionists dreamed of the creation of a Jewish state; others wanted to join relatives or friends who had gone to Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas. Very few wanted to remain in Shanghai.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, the Chinese residents of Shanghai were more enthusiastic about learning the languages of the refugees in order to do business with Jewish customers, who were financially better-off than their Chinese neighbors in general. According to Ron Klinger, a Viennese refugee born in Shanghai, it was very convenient for German and Austrian Jews to do business with the Chinese since many Chinese quickly learned to speak German.<sup>76</sup> Jerry Moses attested to the Chinese's remarkable language skills with an anecdote that took place soon after he arrived in Shanghai in 1941.<sup>77</sup> When Jerry Moses and his brother were playing a ball game one day, he almost hit a Chinese man, who walked between them. He said to his brother in German, "Some

people just can't watch where they're going!" To his surprise, the Chinese man turned around and spoke in flawless German, "You rude little boy. Why aren't you careful about how you throw the ball?" Moses described his amazement:

I was absolutely thunderstruck to hear this beautiful German coming out of this strange looking face. I had never met a Chinese up to that point. My mother said I said hardly anything the whole day after that. I remember it more clearly than anything else about the trip [in Shanghai].<sup>78</sup>

Furthermore, the Chinese not only learned to speak German, but also mastered different German dialects since they interacted with immigrants from different parts of Germany and Austria. Some even learned to speak colloquial Yiddish fluently.<sup>79</sup> Franziska Tausig offered a vivid description:

To honor the truth, I must confess that the Chinese residents of Shanghai learned German incomparably more easily than we could stutter Chinese. You could count those who had learned reasonably good Chinese with one hand. The Chinese, however, were soon divided into a variety of groups. The Amahs and boys of Chusan Road, where many Viennese emigrants lived, spoke Viennese dialect, while those from Tongshaw Road and Sevard Road spoke Berlin dialect and Yiddish, respectively, as if the ghetto was once again divided into "subghettos."<sup>80</sup>

### *Athletics*

Aside from learning each other's languages, the refugees and the Chinese interacted most directly through athletic

competitions. The Jewish Recreation Club (JRC) consisted of many German and Austrian refugees who were once professional athletes. Thus, its boxing, soccer, international chess, ping pong, tennis, and track and field divisions competed frequently with other Chinese sport teams in Shanghai.<sup>81</sup> One of the JRC's recurring opponents was the Chinese soccer team Lien Nee. The *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle* published a variety of reports about the competition between Jewish soccer teams and Lien Lee, including ticketing information, sports commentaries, the number of fans in the stadium, predictions of the game outcomes, and articles on prominent Chinese football players. Alone between September and December 1943, there were four reports on Jewish-Chinese soccer games.<sup>82</sup>

### *Intermarriages*

One of the most convincing pieces of evidence of the refugees' acceptance of Chinese culture is the occurrence of romance and intermarriage between the two groups. The Jewish refugees in Shanghai regarded marriage as an important ritual that consolidates the connection between members of the Jewish community and fosters unity within the group.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the fact that interracial marriages were able to take place among the relatively conservative Jewish communities demonstrated the considerable degree of cultural interaction between the Jews and the Chinese. For instance, Robert Renven Sokal, an Austrian Jewish refugee, developed a love affair with Julie Chenchu Yang, daughter of a wealthy Chinese family in Ningbo, when they both studied biology at St. John's University in Shanghai.<sup>84</sup> The couple eventually married each other despite disapproval from their respective families. Other examples of interracial marriages include that of German Jewish painter David Ludwig Bloch and his Chinese wife Lilly Disiu Cheng, and that of German Jewish physician Wilhelm Mainzer (phonetic translation), who married a Chinese nurse.<sup>85</sup> These

intermarriages demonstrate the extent to which Jewish refugees accept Chinese culture and attempt to integrate into Chinese communities.

### The Jewish Refugees' Influences on the Chinese Community

#### *"Little Vienna"*

Prior to the arrival of Jewish refugees, Hongkew was one of the poorest neighborhoods in Shanghai. Severely destructed during the Battle of Shanghai in 1937, Hongkew was filled with dilapidated buildings, ruins, rubble, and deserted houses.<sup>86</sup> Since most of the original middle-class residents moved into other residential areas to avoid warfare, Hongkew became relatively sparsely populated by the end of 1937.<sup>87</sup> The Chinese families who remained were uneducated, impoverished citizens from the lower classes.

When the Jewish refugees arrived in Hongkew, those with more financial means and skills transformed the neighborhood into an exquisite Viennese enclave, replacing the Chinese houses with European-style architecture. Earlier arrivers who came between 1933 and 1938 refurnished, redecorated, and rebuilt decaying houses— adding flush toilets, bathtubs, and balconies—so that the furnishings inside the buildings could better suit European lifestyle.<sup>88</sup> Cafes, clothes stores, restaurants, bars, bakeries, and clinics with German signs replaced demolished Chinese shops. The area around Chusan Road (or Zhoushan Road) and Huoshan Road became so exotic that Hongkew was given a new nickname "Little Vienna," or "Kleines Wien." To this day, Hongkew's Central European architectural style is still partially preserved in former neighborhoods of the refugees.<sup>89</sup>

The Jewish newcomers not only transformed the layout and appearance of the Hongkew District, but also introduced the Chinese to Central European fashion and cuisine through

the various authentic Viennese eateries and apparel shops. "Bong Street," a clothes store opened by a German Jewish refugee, specialized in designing popular western-style apparel. In the early 1940s, wearing clothes with labels of "Bong Street" became a symbol of high social standing among the Chinese.<sup>90</sup> "Fiaker" restaurant, owned by an Austrian Jewish refugee, attracted Chinese celebrity clientele such as Soong Mei-ling, Soong Ching-ling, Soong Tse-ven, and Mei Lanfang.<sup>91</sup> Although Shanghai was not new to foreign culture, the Central European elements of "Little Vienna" were certainly a unique



"Refugees' Home in Shanghai," Watercolor by Paul Fischer, 1949

existence within the city's cultural montage in the 1940s.

Despite the fact that some Jewish refugees were able to establish successful small businesses that attracted affluent local Chinese customers and created a Jewish cultural enclave in Hongkew, the majority of refugees were not able to enjoy the luxury of newly furnished European-style houses or practice their former professions and earn a stable income. Instead, Jews who left Germany and Austria after November 1938 were ordered to abandon most of their valuables and were only allowed to bring with them ten Reichsmarks in cash, or four U.S. dollars from the same period.<sup>92</sup> Upon arrival in Shanghai, most refugees were in a dire state of impoverishment, lacked the funding to start their own shops or clinics, and could only rely on the JDC's overstrained relief funds, soup kitchens, and overcrowded public accommodation facilities for their daily survival. Hence, the creation of "Little Vienna" was mainly the effort of a small minority of émigrés who chose to settle in Shanghai prior to *Kristallnacht* and were thus better prepared for their journey and long-term stay rather than the result of a general state of well-being within the refugee community.

### *Cultural and Academic Influences*

Among the Jewish refugees were talented people. As musicians, painters, dancers, film directors, and doctors, they brought professional knowledge to Shanghai and introduced the Chinese community to European art and culture. Besides imparting knowledge to Chinese students, the refugees also depicted the daily life of ordinary Chinese citizens, thus showcasing their experiences in Shanghai to the western world. The Chinese in turn cooperated with Jewish artists, creating songs, films, and pictures that bear clear traces of oriental culture. These mutual influences manifested the far-reaching interactions between the Jewish and Chinese communities.

The music life in Shanghai did not leave a positive first

impression on the refugees.<sup>93</sup> There were few places where music of high culture, such as symphony, was played, and theaters lacked professionally trained musicians. The situation quickly improved as some Jewish immigrants found employment in all kinds of bars, night clubs, cafés, restaurants, and rooftop gardens in Shanghai, thus introducing more Jewish-western pop music to the city.<sup>94</sup>

Some professional Jewish musicians taught in Shanghai's universities, and many of their Chinese students later became nationally prominent musicians. For instance, Ewin Felber, art director of the European Jewish Artist Society (EJAS), taught at the University of Shanghai, published music critiques in English and German newspapers, and learned Chinese music.<sup>95</sup> Alfred Wittenberg, German Jewish refugee who immigrated to Shanghai in 1939, worked as professor in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music.<sup>96</sup> His students included Chinese violinists Tan Shuzhen, Chen Zonghui, and Mao Chuen, as well as pianists Fan Jisen and Li Minqiang.<sup>97</sup> Composers Wolfgang Fraenkel and Julius Schloss, both German Jews who left for Shanghai after internment in Sachsenhausen and Dachau, also taught in the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. Their students Ding Shande, Qu Xixian, Sang Tong, Tang Zhengfang, Huang Yijun, and Chen Chuanxi all became nationally renowned composers in the following decades.<sup>98</sup>

Otto Joachim, violinist and composer, along with his brother cellist Walter Joachim, opened a music studio and organized a band in Shanghai after leaving Germany in 1939. One of their most famous Chinese students was cellist Situ Zhiwen. Otto Joachim recorded more than thirty Chinese albums through his studio and composed the famous "Rose, Rose, I Love You" with Chinese pop song lyricist and composer Chen Gexin. The English version of the song, translated in 1945 and first recorded by Frankie Laine in 1951, introduced Chinese pop music to the U.S.<sup>99</sup>

Justus Keil-Pasqual, professional German dancer



who earned a reputation internationally through his solo performances around Europe, founded a dancing academy in Shanghai after emigrating from Germany in 1939. The academy offered a wide array of courses including classical dance, acrobatics, folk song, and cabaret while specializing in social dance, gymnastics, and ballet. Famous Chinese dancer Wang Yuan was one of the graduates of the academy.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, former Jewish employees of the German film industry made significant contributions to the nascent film business of China. Jacob and Louise Fleck, Austrian directors of more than 300 silent and sound films, came to Shanghai in 1940 after being detained in Dachau for 16 months.<sup>101</sup> They quickly got in contact with Fei Mu, Chinese film director and head of Lianhua Film Company, out of professional interest and curiosity towards the Chinese film industry. Fei Mu invited Jacob and Louise Fleck to direct a Chinese film named *Children of the World*.<sup>102</sup> The first Chinese film made by foreign directors, *Children of the World* attested to the solidarity between all antifascist allies by promoting sentiments against fascist powers and peace.<sup>103</sup> The Flecks initially searched for Chinese actors who spoke fluent English in order to produce an English version of the film and release it in Europe and the U.S. However, because of the outburst of the Pacific War at the end of 1941, the Japanese army occupied the International Settlement, and *Children of the World* was banned from screening.<sup>104</sup>

Experiences in Shanghai also inspired multiple Jewish refugee artists to create paintings and woodcuts with Chinese subjects. Friedrich Schiff, an Austrian Jewish artist who first came to China in 1930, decided for a long-term stay in Shanghai after the *Anschluss*. Living in China for over twenty years, Friedrich Schiff produced multiple painting series that feature rickshaw pullers, fortune tellers, barbers, night clubs, and wealthy westerners, thereby presenting the contrasting lives of rich and poor in Shanghai.<sup>105</sup> A complete collection of



his cartoons was compiled and published by Gerd Kaminski in both German and Chinese in *China gemalt—Chinesische Zeitgeschichte in Bildern Friedrich Schiffs* (translated title: *China Painted—Chinese Contemporary History in Pictures of Friedrich Schiff*).

Another prominent Jewish refugee artist in Shanghai was the aforementioned David Ludwig Bloch. Born and raised in Bavaria, Bloch was expelled from the Staatsschule für angewandte Malerei in Munich after *Kristallnacht* and detained in Dachau. After arriving in Shanghai in May 1940, he continued to pursue his interests in watercolor paintings and woodcuts. His personal art exhibition held in the Shanghai Art Gallery on Nanjing Road gained unanimously positive reviews from colleagues and visitors.<sup>106</sup> Bloch's paintings and woodcuts mainly focused on lower-class Chinese workers. His most famous woodcut collection, *Rickshaw*, was first published in Shanghai in 1942 and was later reprinted in *Holzschnitte, Woodcuts: Shanghai 1940-1949*.<sup>107</sup>

Other cultural and academic contributions of Jewish refugees to the Chinese society include Adolf Josef Storfer's introduction of Freudian psychoanalysis to China and the translation of Jewish literature by Haim Bialik from Hebrew and Yiddish to English and Chinese.<sup>108</sup>

### United Against the Fascists

Although the European refugees were able to escape from the horrors of genocide, they still constantly witnessed daily persecution of the Chinese by Japanese fascists. Out of compassion, indignation, and shared experiences as victims, the Jewish refugees in Shanghai helped their Chinese neighbors to endure the inhumane conditions of war and to actively assist the Chinese war effort against the Japanese in the form of military service. The émigrés' empathy, professional expertise, and brilliance certainly played a significant role in China's final

victory of 1945.

*Empathy Towards the Suffering of the Chinese Neighbors*

Already during the first days of their arrival, the refugees were confronted with Japanese fascism, which refreshed their memories of Nazi atrocities. Tobias recalled:<sup>109</sup>

A heavily armed Japanese soldier, with bayonet fixed to his rifle, stood guard on the middle of the bridge and was shouting at a Chinese man. Without any warning, the soldier stepped forward and smashed the man's head with the butt of the gun. I heard the heavy thud of the rifle against the Chinese man's head and saw him fall and begin to bleed heavily. The soldier kept kicking him and screaming until the beaten man crawled to safety.

I shrank back and grabbed my parents' hands as I pulled them away... Even though the Japanese soldier was wearing khaki leggings that stretched from just below the knee down to his army shoes, in my mind's eye I saw the polished boots of a German Nazi soldier kicking the fallen man again and again.

Upon witnessing the suffering of their Chinese neighbors, the refugees began to sympathize and identify with the Chinese in a way that was previously unimaginable. The Shanghai Jewish Chronicle published an article by O. E-k. on March 7, 1940 that describes the author's complicated and heart-rending feelings when seeing a Chinese woman sob:

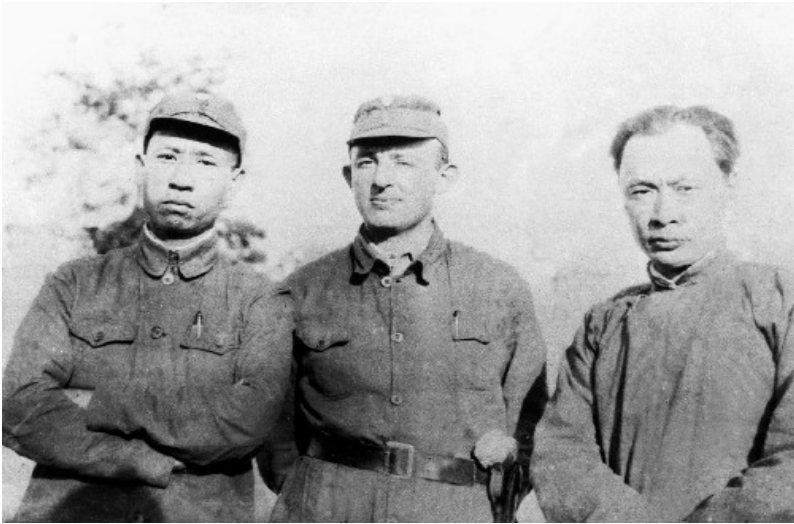
I've now been here for about a year. I've now

lived amidst the Chinese people for a whole year, and although I've seen so much misery for the whole time, I have never watched a Chinese man or woman cry. At least not until today, when it now became clear to me that right opposite to me in the tram, a Chinese woman was crying [...] crying as a heavily suffering man would, in a way that people in Germany [...] or in England [...] or in any other place would cry.<sup>110</sup>

*Jewish Refugees and Chinese Communists*

The Jewish refugees in Shanghai went beyond empathizing with the Chinese and offered direct support in the war against the Japanese. In particular, about twenty to thirty German Jews with leftist ideologies formed a study group that regularly met to discuss Marxism and Leninism, and many group members later took part in the war efforts of the Chinese Communists.<sup>111</sup> Hans Shippe, former member of the German Communist Party, settled in Shanghai after the NSDAP seized power in Germany in 1933. Working as a journalist in 1938, he interviewed leaders of the New Fourth Army, such as Ye Ting, Xiang Ying, Zhou Zikun, and Yuan Guoping, in order to promote the war efforts of the Chinese Communists.<sup>112</sup> He later died fighting against the Japanese in a battle in the Yimeng Mountains.<sup>113</sup>

Another member of the study group, Ruth Weiss, also served as the bridge between antifascist parties in China. An Austrian Jewish journalist who had been reporting in Shanghai and Chengdu since 1933, Weiss disclosed situations of the anti-Japanese battles in China to western societies, served as translator for high-ranking officials of the Red Army, and worked as nurse on the battlefield.<sup>114</sup> After learning that her parents were both killed in concentration camps, Weiss applied for Chinese citizenship in 1939. She continuously contributed



Jacob Rosenfeld and his Chinese comrades, 1943

to the war against the Japanese and the establishment of Chinese socialism until her death in 1983.<sup>115</sup>

Jacob Rosenfeld, an Austrian physician who was twice detained because of his leftist ideas and Jewish ethnicity, came to Shanghai in August 1939.<sup>116</sup> Upon learning about the war efforts of the Chinese Communists, he applied to become a medical officer in the New Fourth Army in March 1941. During his subsequent service in the Eighth Route Army, the Northeast Democratic Coalition Army, and the People's Liberation Army, he cured hundreds of Communist soldiers and officers, thus becoming a close acquaintance of Generals Chen Yi and Luo Ronghuan. In addition, he helped to improve the medical conditions of the Communist army by offering lectures on anatomy, physiology, and surgery to 162 medical staff of the New Fourth Army. In 1942, Rosenfeld became a special member of the Chinese Communist Party, and he later obtained the highest military title offered to a foreigner.<sup>117</sup> Yao Huang and Huixin Zhang's book *Jacob Rosenfeld in China*<sup>118</sup> offers a more detailed account of Rosenfeld's experiences from

1939 to 1949, the year in which he returned for his relatives in Austria.

Richard Frey (original name: Richard Stein) had similar experiences as Rosenfeld. After arriving in Shanghai as an Austrian Jewish refugee on January 15, 1939, Frey became a medical officer of the Communist army under General Xiao Ke in 1941.<sup>119</sup> From 1942 to 1944, he rescued injured soldiers on the battlefield while imparting professional skills to Chinese medical staff. In order to overcome the language barrier, he spent a considerable amount of time studying Mandarin. Even Chairman Mao honored Frey's distinguished service to the Communist army after he established laboratories that could produce penicillin. Frey later joined the Chinese Communist Party and became a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) after the founding of the People's Republic.<sup>120</sup>

### *Mutual Support During the War*

While Jewish journalists and physicians directly influenced the outcome of the War against Japanese fascists, average Chinese citizens and Jewish refugees of Hongkew supported each other during times of hardship. Li A-hao, a Chinese citizen born in 1927 and lived side by side with the refugees in Hongkew during World War II, recalled that his Jewish neighbors often exchanged their rice and bread for his corn flour pies and tofu residues in order to save his starving family from death. Another Jewish neighbor of Li, who formerly worked as a physician, cured Li's wife for free when he heard that the destitute Chinese couple could not afford the medical costs necessary to cure Ms. Li's stomachache. In return, Li's family helped a single mother to look after her young daughter Maya for several years.<sup>121</sup>

Frank Theyleg's way of supporting the Chinese was more daunting. After arriving in Shanghai in 1939, Theyleg



Tomb of Dr. Richard Frey in China, 2012

searched for job opportunities as an engineer and got in contact with Wang, a street vendor. Theyleg soon discovered that Wang was in fact head of a workers' association, so that he quickly received employment in a factory through Wang's contact. The Japanese soldiers later expropriated the factory and ordered all workers to produce hand grenades for the Japanese army. Based on mutual hatred against Japanese aggression, Wang and Theyleg reduced the length of the fuses so that no hand grenade would explode.<sup>122</sup> Theyleg's courage to sabotage the production was exceptional, considering that the owner of the factory was immediately executed after the Japanese found out about the act.

### Memories of Shanghai: Contact Between Chinese and Jews After the War

The end of the Second World War marked the end of

the Jewish refugees' stay in Shanghai. From 1946 to 1951, most refugees immigrated to Israel, the U. S., Canada, and Australia, while a minority went back to Europe in search of surviving relatives.<sup>123</sup> Although few refugees chose to settle permanently in Shanghai, the friendship between the Chinese and the Jewish community continued in the following decades.

One of the most telling examples of this long-lasting emotional connection is the story of Lin Daozhi and Carl Anger. On March 6, 1939, German Jewish refugee Carl Anger escaped to Shanghai.<sup>124</sup> He soon became principal of a Jewish school in Hongkew and established friendship with Lin Daozhi, who was also headmaster of a church school in Hongkew. Anger decided to return to Germany after the war ended. Before departure, he entrusted Lin with the school's most valuable property: over 1,000 books in English, German, and Hebrew, promising that he would one day come back to Shanghai. For the next twenty years, Lin carefully transported the books with him whenever the family moved to new addresses, sometimes through thunderstorms and across rivers. Although Anger and Lin continued to communicate with each other, Anger never returned to Shanghai. The preservation of the books became increasingly more difficult as foreign publications were classified as illegal during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. It was only after Lin and his daughter knelt down before the Red Guards and appealed to various governmental agencies that the books escaped their destiny of being burned.<sup>125</sup> After Lin Daozhi passed away in 1981, his son Lin Shangyi and grandson Sun Lide continued to preserve the books. Lin's promise to Anger had been kept for 68 years until the tomb of Anger and his wife was found in Schwerin, Germany.<sup>126</sup>

The story of Lin and Anger attests to the strong friendship and trust between the refugees and their Chinese neighbors in Shanghai, but it is only a small part of a larger picture. The Chinese strove to preserve the footprints of Jewish refugees by reconstructing the White Horse Inn, a

café opened by Austrian refugees, establishing the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, and contacting former refugees for historical research.<sup>127</sup> Former refugees regarded Shanghai as an integral part of their identity. They immortalized their memories of the Chinese city by writing memoirs , directing films and documentaries, and forming organizations that help all refugees keep in touch with each other.<sup>128</sup> It is through this mutual effort of the Chinese and the Jewish refugees that these two civilizations could continue to maintain harmonious relationships with each other to the present day.



<sup>1</sup> Ursula Bacon, *Shanghai Diary: A Young Girl's Journey from Hitler's Hate to War-Torn China* (Milwaukee: M Press, 2007), 35.

<sup>2</sup> The number of Jewish refugees in Shanghai was never precisely determined. Figures range from 18,000 (Hausdorff) to 20,000 (Shi, Pan, and Li) and to 25,000 (Wang). M. Hausdorff, "Der Musikleben der Immigranten," *The Shanghai Herald*, Sondernummer (1939): 10; Huiqun Shi, Guang Pan, and Peidong Li, editors, *A Compilation of Literature and Historical Sources in Shanghai: Jews Recalling Shanghai*, vol. 78 (Shanghai: The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Shanghai, Department of the Compilation of Literature and Historical Sources, 1995), 41; Jian Wang, *Escape and Rescue: Jewish Refugees and Shanghai in World War II* (Shanghai: Jiao Tong University Press, 2016), 2. The sources of data include records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and reports of local newspapers. I consider 20,000 to be the most reliable estimate since it is the most frequently reported in scholarly research and in memoirs of the refugees. This number only includes refugees who considered Shanghai as their final destination on the route of escape and excludes those who went to other Chinese cities or other countries via Shanghai.

<sup>3</sup> Yanhua Zhang and Jian Wang, *The Space, the Stories and Shanghai Jews: Hongkew Ghetto Then and Now* (Nanjing: Yi Lin Press, 2011), 72.

<sup>4</sup> Shi, Pan, and Li, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Zukang Pu and Xie'an Huang, *Jewish Refugees in Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press, 2017), 38.

<sup>6</sup> Frederick Wakeman Jr., "Policing Modern Shanghai," *The China Quarterly*, no. 115, (1988): 409.

<sup>7</sup> John K. Fairbank, "The Creation of the Treaty System." *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 10, ed. Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 214.

<sup>8</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 54.

<sup>9</sup> Irene Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and the Jewish Refugees from Central Europe: Survival, Co-existence, and Identity in a Multi-ethnic City* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 7. Chinese historians refer to Hongkew as the Japanese Concession. Shi, Pan, and Li, 130.

<sup>10</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 58.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>12</sup> Jiawen Xing, editor and translator, "Jewish Refugees' Memories about Shanghai," *Memories and Archives*, vol. 4 (2013): 46.

<sup>13</sup> Guang Pan, editor. *Jewish Refugees Memoirs: Their Experience in Wartime China* (Beijing: Current Affairs Publishing House, 2015), 22-23.

<sup>14</sup> Guang Pan and Jian Wang, *Jews and China: Contact and Friendship Between Two Old Civilizations in Modern Times* (Beijing: Current Affairs Publishing House, 2010), 41.

<sup>15</sup> Although most refugees settled down in Hongkew, some Jews with better financial means also chose to reside in better-furnished houses of the French Concession when they first arrived. Unfortunately, in February 1943, the Japanese authorities ordered all stateless refugees who came to Shanghai after 1937 to move into Hongkew before August 1943 if they had not yet done so and renamed the district as the Hongkew Ghetto. Living in Hongkew became official Japanese policy and Japanese officials strictly controlled any travel out of the district, including daily commute to the workplace. Lihua Rao, *The Spiritual Home of the Refugees: A Study of the Shanghai Jewish Chronicle* (Beijing: Xinhua Publishing House, 2003), 41.

<sup>16</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 55.

<sup>17</sup> For detailed information, see Sidney Shapiro, editor and translator, *Jews in Old China: Studies by Chinese Scholars*, Expanded edition (New York: Hippocrene Books, 2001).

<sup>18</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>20</sup> Guang Pan, editor, *The Jews in China*, Updated edition (Beijing: China Intercontinental Press, 2015), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Michael Pollak, editor, *The Sino-Judaic Bibliographies of Rudolf Loewenthal* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press in association with the Sino-Judaic Institute, 1988), 5-7. Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 10.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> Avrum M. Ehrlich, *The Jewish-Chinese Nexus: A Meeting of Civilizations* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 50.

<sup>25</sup> Yuan Chen and Han Ye, *A Study of Judaism in Kaifeng* (Shanghai: The Commerical Press, 1923), 2. The English translation is mine.

<sup>26</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 152.

<sup>27</sup> Guang Pan, *The Jews in Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Pictorial Press, 2005), 2.

<sup>28</sup> The Sephardi Jews were also called Baghdadi Jews. They came to Shanghai via Bombay. Irene Eber, "Overland and By Sea: Eight Centuries of the Jewish Presence in China," *Chinese Journal of International Law* 4, no. 1 (2005): 245; Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 17.

<sup>29</sup> Guang Pan and Jian Wang, *The Jews in Shanghai During the Past One-and-Half Centuries: An Oriental Page in Jewish Ethnic History* (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2002), 80-122.

<sup>30</sup> Irene Eber, *Voices from Shanghai: Jewish Exiles in Wartime China*, (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 2008), 7; Pan and Wang, *An Oriental Page in Jewish Ethnic History*, 153-168.

<sup>31</sup> Rena Krasno, *Strangers Always: A Jewish Family in Wartime Shanghai* (Berkeley: Pacific View Press), 1992, xiii.

<sup>32</sup> Citizens of the Republic of Belarus.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5. In her diaries written in 1942, Rena Krasno recounted two instances in which a rickshaw puller and a grocery store owner discriminated against her (4-5, 35-36). This discrimination was not a form of Chinese antisemitism but a protest against white Europeans who exploited Chinese labor. Rena Krasno was discriminated because of her identity as a well-to-do European rather than as a Jew. Because most refugees lived in the Hongkew District, a restricted area after 1943, and had limited financial means, the Chinese could easily distinguish them from the typically wealthy white Europeans. Consequently, the Chinese adopted a friendly and welcoming attitude towards the Jewish refugees.

<sup>35</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 95-109.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>37</sup> Pu and Huang, 59.

<sup>38</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 39.

<sup>39</sup> The exact number of visas issued by Feng Shan Ho was hard to estimate. Records indicate that between June 1938 and July 20, 1938, more than 1,000 visas were issued, the majority of which were intended for Jews. Scholar Jian Wang thus estimated that between March 1938 and May 1940, when Ho served as ambassador in Vienna, about 4,000 visas were given to Jewish applicants. Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 41. Guanchu Liu, Ho's student, recalled that the visa officers sometimes issued more than a hundred visas on a busy day. Based on the amount of visa application fees collected by the embassy, a total of 10,047 visas were issued by Ho, and Liu estimated that about 8,000 to 9,000 of those were given to Jews in Vienna. Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 212.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>41</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 212.

<sup>42</sup> *Memories of Life: Jews in Shanghai*. Documentary produced by the Radio and Television Shanghai, 2015. Online streaming available under <http://tv.cntv.cn/video/VSET100244578958/69d14a9bd51a418395c3dc30002968b5>.

<sup>43</sup> Alex Grobman and Daniel Landes, editors, *Genocide, Critical Issues of the Holocaust: A Companion Volume to the film, Genocide*, 1st ed., (Chappaqua: Rossel Books), 1983, 299.

<sup>44</sup> Steve Hochstadt, *Exodus to Shanghai: Stories of Escape from the Third Reich*

(New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 11.

<sup>45</sup> Alvin Mars, "A Note on the Jewish Refugees in Shanghai," *Jewish Social Studies* 31, no. 1 (1969): 286.

<sup>46</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>48</sup> Hochstadt, 12.

<sup>49</sup> Eber, *Wartime Shanghai and Jewish Refugees from Central Europe*, 72.

<sup>50</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 42.

<sup>51</sup> Eber, *Voices from Shanghai*, 19.

<sup>52</sup> Mars, 289.

<sup>53</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 43.

<sup>54</sup> Second Historical Archives of China, "The Planning Process of the Chongqing Nationalist Government's Plan to Accommodate Jews in Exile, *Republican Archives*, vol. 3, (1993): 19, quoted in Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 209.

<sup>55</sup> Bruno Kroker, "Zukunftsland Yunnan: Kann Südwest China mitteleuropäischen Auswanderern Möglichkeiten bieten?," *Die gelbe Post*, May 1939, 5-6; Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 211.

<sup>56</sup> Jian Wang, *A History of the Social Life of Jews in Shanghai* (Shanghai: Shanghai Lexicographical Publishing House, 2008), 295.

<sup>57</sup> Hellmut Stern, *Saitensprünge: Erinnerungen eines leidenschaftlichen Kosmopoliten*, 9. Auflage, (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch, 2000), 2; Isabelle Maynard, *China Dreams: Growing Up Jewish in Tientsin*, (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1996), 5; Herman Dicker, *Wanderers and Settlers in the Far East: A Century of Jewish Life in China and Japan* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1962), 53; Pan, *Jewish Refugees Memoirs*, 96-97; Wolfgang Kafgang, *Once Upon a Time in Chongqing* (Xi'an: Shanxi People's Publishing House, 2014), 3.

<sup>58</sup> Zhang and Wang, 11.

<sup>59</sup> Sigmund Tobias, *Strange Haven: A Jewish Childhood in Wartime Shanghai* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 22-23.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Pan, *Jewish Refugees Memoirs*, 87.

<sup>63</sup> Tobias, 42-43.

<sup>64</sup> *Exile in China: Horst Peter Eisfelder, Exil in China: Meine Jahre in Shanghai und Nanking*, (*Chinese Exile: My Years in Shanghai and Nanking*), Third edition, Klagenfurt: Kitab Verlag, 2005; Zhang and Wang, 163.

<sup>65</sup> Zhang and Wang, 163.

<sup>66</sup> Shi, Pan and Li, 193-194.

<sup>67</sup> Zhang and Wang, 60.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 142-143.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 144.

<sup>70</sup> Lewin, *Shanghai Jewish Chronicle*, 14 November 1943.

<sup>71</sup> Shi, Pan and Li, 178.

<sup>72</sup> Werner Michael Blumenthal, *From Exile to Washington: A Memoir of Leadership in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Overlook Press, 2013), 61-116.

<sup>73</sup> Records show that between 1939 and June 1945, there were 294 Jewish children born in Shanghai. Pu and Huang, 58.

<sup>74</sup> Mühlberger, Sonja. *Geboren in Shanghai als Kind von Emigranten: Leben und Überleben (1939-1947) im Ghetto von Hongkew, (Born in Shanghai as Child of Emigrants: Life and Survival in the Ghetto of Hongkew (1939-1947))*, Teetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2006; Pu and Huang, 54.

<sup>75</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 225-226.

<sup>76</sup> Pu and Huang, 258.

<sup>77</sup> Jerry Moses, "Escape Routes," Digital Information of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, 2018.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Krasno, 19.

<sup>80</sup> Franziska Tausig, *Shanghai Passage: Emigration ins Ghetto*, (Vienna: Milena Verlag, 2007), 147.

<sup>81</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 147-148.

<sup>82</sup> The titles of the reports are: "Schwerer Gang nach dem Kiaochow Park" (December 9), "Chinesische und Foreigner-Teams im kommenden Fußballprogramm" (October 14), "Heute Fußball-Großkampf JRC-Lien Nee" (October 31), and "JRC erste Mannschaft und Reserve am Sonntag in der Shanghai Liga" (December 2).

<sup>83</sup> "The Brand-new Life Begins." Digital Information of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum, 2018.

<sup>84</sup> Stefan Schomann, *Letzte Zuflucht Shanghai: Die Liebesgeschichte von Robert Reuven Sokal und Julie Chenchu Yang*, (Munich: Heyne Verlag, 2008), 52-64.

<sup>85</sup> Pan, *Jewish Refugees Memoirs*, 156.

<sup>86</sup> Zhang and Wang, 7.

<sup>87</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 150.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 150-151.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, 150-154.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>91</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 97-98.

<sup>92</sup> Moses, "Escape Routes," the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum.

<sup>93</sup> Yating Tang, *Musical Life of Shanghai Jewish Communities: 1850-1950, 1998-2005*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Conservatory of Music Press, 2007), 62.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 74.

- <sup>95</sup> Ibid, 86.
- <sup>96</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 134.
- <sup>97</sup> Ibid, 151.
- <sup>98</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>99</sup> Pu and Huang, 32-33.
- <sup>100</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 131-132.
- <sup>101</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 205.
- <sup>102</sup> *Children of the World*, directed by Jacob Fleck and Louise Fleck (1941; Shanghai: Lianhua Film Company), Online Streaming available under [http://www.1905.com/vod/play/356450.shtml?api\\_source=baidu\\_vod-film201207](http://www.1905.com/vod/play/356450.shtml?api_source=baidu_vod-film201207).
- <sup>103</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 145.
- <sup>104</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 207-208.
- <sup>105</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 209-210.
- <sup>106</sup> Wang, *Escape and Rescue*, 211.
- <sup>107</sup> David Ludwig Bloch, *Holzschnitte, Woodcuts: Shanghai 1940-1949*, edited by Barbara Hoster, Roman Malek, and Katharina Wenzel-Teuber, Sankt Augustin: Steyler Verlag, 1997.
- <sup>108</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 150-151.
- <sup>109</sup> Tobias, 12-13.
- <sup>110</sup> The quote is my own translation of the original German text: "Ein Jahr lang etwa bin ich nun schon hier, ein ganzes Jahr lebe ich jetzt inmitten des chinesischen Volkes, und so viel Elend ich in dieser ganzen Zeit auch schon gesehen habe, nie sah ich bisher einen Chinesen oder eine Chinesin weinen. Wenigstens bis heute nicht, wo mir dies erst klar wurde, als mir gegenüber in der Straßenbahn eine Chinesin weinte [...]. so weinte, wie ein Mensch in schwerem Leide zu weinen vermag [...] genauso weinte, wie in Deutschland geweint wird [...] oder in England [...] oder wo auch immer."
- <sup>111</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 71.
- <sup>112</sup> Ibid, 215.
- <sup>113</sup> Huo Wang, "He Died on China's Soil, The Story of Hans Shippe," *China Reconstructs*, December 1979, 17-19.
- <sup>114</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 216.
- <sup>115</sup> Licha Ye, editor, *Friends from Foreign Countries: Foreigners Who Hand Special Experiences in China*, (Beijing: Chinese People's Liberation Army Publishing House, 1993), 209-211.
- <sup>116</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 217.
- <sup>117</sup> "Exhibition in Memory of Jacob Rosenfeld," *Special Exhibition of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum*, Accessed 15 January 2018.
- <sup>118</sup> Yao Huang and Huixin Zhang, *Jacob Rosenfeld in China*, (Beijing: Chinese People's Liberation Army Publishing House, 1992).

<sup>119</sup> Pan and Wang, *Jews and China*, 218.

<sup>120</sup> Caizhang Feng and Baoding Li, *Medical Officers of the Red Army*, (Beijing: Beijing Science and Technology Press, 1991), 683.

<sup>121</sup> Pu and Huang, 136-141.

<sup>122</sup> Shi, Pan and Li, 179-181.

<sup>123</sup> Pan and Wang, *An Oriental Page in Jewish Ethnic History*, 233-234.

<sup>124</sup> Pu and Huang, 123.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 117-121.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 237-249, 251-261; Pan and Wang, *An Oriental Page in Jewish Ethnic History*, 257-262.

<sup>128</sup> Pu and Huang, 240-241; Pan and Wang, *An Oriental Page in Jewish Ethnic History*, 248-250, 262-267.

### Images

Page 66: "A Jewish girl and her Chinese friends in the Shanghai Ghetto during WWII, from the collection of the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum," from Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum (1945), accessed January 24, 2019, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Girls\\_of\\_the\\_Shanghai\\_Ghetto.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/51/Girls_of_the_Shanghai_Ghetto.png).

Page 70: "Refugee's Home in Shanghai," watercolor by Paul Fischer (1949), accessed January 24, 2019, via Flickr, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/magnesiummuseum/15277094039/in/photostream>.

Page 77: "Jakob Rosenfeld and Liu Shaoqi (left) and Chen Yi (right) taken at the New Fourth Army Headquarters in Yancheng of Jiangsu, China," accessed January 24, 2019, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob\\_Rosenfeld.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jacob_Rosenfeld.jpg).

Page 79: "Tomb of Richard Frey in China," accessed January 24, 2019, via Wikimedia Commons, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Richard\\_Frey-1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Richard_Frey-1.jpg).

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- Qingyang Zhou