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Copy
German General Consulate
Shanghai

01/11/1940

B.020

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Subject: JUDAISM IN SHANGHAI

Resident colonies of Jews –
Beginning – extent of emigrant's immigration –
Local distribution – countries of origin –
Subdivision of occupation – organisations and economic
Situation- attitude of emigrants to other nations-
Summary

There is a long history of Jews in Shanghai. The densely populated city has always attracted people of all types because of its peculiar political structure and economic importance. It is a gateway to the extensive Chinese hinterland. For Jews it is easy to get into economic life, which agrees with their known qualities. It is a result of a combination of the liberal Anglo-Saxon spirit and great French openness in Shanghai. They have great opportunities to become rich and influential.

Between 6,000 and 7,000 Jews were living in Shanghai before the war: 1,000 in Hongkew, 2,000 in the International settlement and the rest in French concession. Some rich families came from Bagdad and Bombay, like the Harpoons, the Ezras, the Shamoons, the Elis, and the Kadoories. They have been settled in this country for several generations and the foundation of their wealth was built through the trade of opium.

The most well known Jew is Sir Ellice Victor Sassoon. It is said that he was descended from Bagdad. Among others he is related to the well-known English parliamentarian Sir Philip Sassoon. He was educated in Harrow and Cambridge and lived until the end of the World War in Bombay. As he did not care much for British post-war taxes, which amounted to half of his earnings, he transferred his fortune of approx 85 million Gold dollars to international Shanghai. Here he was able to invest his money in the real estate business. Today it is said that a considerable part of Shanghai's land is in his hands. In the same way, his name is connected with some of Shanghai's great enterprises, like the most important hotels. The Sassoon Banking Co. financed his transactions, which were stretched across all parts of economy. In addition to other positions, Sassoon is the President of the Royal Air Force Association. He is an advocate for the support of Japan through Great Britain and the United States in the case of war between Japan and Russia. Apart from the aforementioned "public figures" there are many Jews with Russian and other origins in Shanghai, which you can easily ascertain with a glance in a phone book. It goes without saying that many real estate enterprises are in their hands. The Shanghai press, which is published in the English language, is strongly influenced by English and American Jews.

After the unification of the "Ostmark", the immigration of German Jews to Shanghai began. From mid August 1938 to May 1939 about 10,000 emigrants settled in Shanghai: about 5,200 men, 3,800 woman and 1,000 children. The small proportion of women can be explained by the fact that many emigrants leave their families behind and that many Jewish women have found work in England as domestic servants.

When the great immigration of Jews started, Shanghai was already overpopulated. The China-Japan conflict had driven more than 120,000 Chinese refugees into the concessions.

Great parts of the suburbs situated north of Soochow Creek were destroyed in war. The White Russians who lived there sought refuge in free parts of the settlements. The responsible administrative authorities were worried about the arrival of mostly poor emigrants. At first Japanese people prevented further immigration to their own suburb Hongkew. The International and French administration followed this example (compare report of General Consulate from 1/9/1939 No. 571). After discussions between the concerned parties it was agreed that entry to the International settlement would be granted only under the following conditions:

- Possession of US\$ 400 per adult and US\$ 100 per child, or
- Firm conclusion of a contract with a Shanghai citizen, or
- Close relationship to emigrants who already live in the country

Besides a Japanese visa, the Japanese also expect signed permits from Jewish relief organizations. For this purpose Jewish relief organizations have founded an "Emigration Department". The administration of the French settlement has refused, and still today continues to turn down emigration (compare report from 18/11 No.681). The influx of Jewish emigrants has virtually stopped as a result of the outbreak of the European war.

New statistics show that from approximately 18,000 Jews, there are 11,000 living in Hongkew, about 6,000 in International and the rest in French settlements. Only 10,000 Jews registered themselves at the General Consulate. The strength of the Jewish colony of around 25,000 people can be ascertained by comparing it with other foreign Colonies in Shanghai: 40,000 Japanese, 20,000 Russian, 10,000 British, 4,000 American and 3,000 French and also 2,000 German.

You can see in enclosure 2 that the emigrants have come from many different countries. However, a predominant number of around 5,000 were from Germany, 2,000 people from the "Ostmark".

In so far that the Jewish emigrants are without employment, they have been accommodated in five camps: Ward-, Wayside-, Pingliang-, Alcock- or Chaoufoong Road (all in Hongkew). Men, women and children live separated in dorms of between 30 and 70 beds. Since the previous year relief organisations have rented flats for families with several children and for elderly people. The food in the camps was initially free. Those who have money must pay for food now, because they found out that some people abused this offer. That is also a motive for them to start finding jobs. In enclosure 3 and 4 you can find out about their original occupations. However, not all of them were able to find employment, which was similar to their former position. They have opened many food shops, bars and restaurants in Hongkew, which are for the Jewish customers. Some streets are called "Neu Kurfuerstendamm" by the press because there are predominantly German shop signs. In the free parts of Shanghai outside of Hongkew exist shops of all kinds, which did not require much money for opening.

The Jewish tradesmen mostly came from Vienna. They work as watchmakers, goldsmiths, tailors, shoemakers, butchers, car mechanics, hairdressers, Putzmacherinnen¹ (milliner) and dressmakers, in knit factories and beauty parlours.

Many Jews rebuilt houses, which were destroyed during the China –Japan conflict and rent rooms mainly to other emigrants.

In the last few months many commission shops have been opened, selling things that were brought by emigrants. Physicians sell their personal things in order to keep their heads above water, because some of them had problems starting a new practice. Relief organisations themselves founded a shop in Nanking Road, near Palace Hotel, where Jews can sell their art works, as well as their porcelain and silver.

It is an open secret that some emigrants know how to get a great amount of money from Europe to Shanghai. In April 1939 they transferred about 1 mill Chinese dollars², in those

¹ Translation unknown

days 500,000 RM. Those Jews were able to open shops with better presentation in International and French settlements. These concern mostly fashion shops, beauty parlours and knit factories.

As mentioned previously, and as is evident by the contents of enclosure 3, there are many physicians among the emigrants. A string of them opened either individual or common practices. Some of them are very busy, because of their cheap fees. Others have found employment as Mission doctors, in particular with the American Missions, and have been stationed in inner China.

The emigrants have opened six pharmacies in Shanghai. Besides that, a number work as pharmacist and analytical chemists in Chinese pharmaceutical factories.

About half a dozen Jewish lawyers have gone into partnership with Chinese lawyers.

The Jewish residents Ellis Hayim, Kann and Kelen, who have connections with local finance circles, founded a relief organisation for Jewish emigrants. Above this committee work two parallel organisations:

- 1) The original "International Committee for Granting Relief to European Refugees"

whose work will soon be carried on from the "International Committee for the Organisation of European Immigrants in China" under the direction of Sir Victor Sassoon.

- 2) "Committee for the Assistance of European Jewish Refugees in Shanghai"

which is lead by Dr. Kurt Marx.

Scope of duties of the first organization:

- a) To distribute credit for basic needs,
- b) Liaison with consulate authorities,
- c) Liaison with local authorities,
- d) Separate hospital help,
- e) Fund for children's milk,
- f) Liaison with charitable non-Jewish relief organizations

Scope of duties of the second organization:

- a) Procurement of shelter and food supply in homes or through housing and food committees
- b) Support in special circumstances,
- c) Medical help and a medication dispensary,
- d) Liaison with worldwide Jewish relief organizations.
(Hicem, Hijasn Joint etc.)

The money for credits from Sassoon was exhausted in July 1939, as borrowers did not meet their repayment responsibility, despite several appeals. According to a news report, most of the money came from New York, London and Egypt.

The funds go through "HICEM" and are distributed by them. In 1939 they paid out cheques amounting to about US\$ 13.6600 to 2,600 as well as D 605.-³ in Shanghai. Austrian Jews were not permitted to apply for these funds, as their communities had not made any payments to the HICEM in previous years. The name "HICEM" is a connection of front letters from different participating organizations. French Jews are also not allowed to use this fund,

² Translation uncertain

³ Translation unknown

because after the outbreak of war it was forbidden to export capital out of France. The dry up of this source of help could be a great danger for Jews in Hongkew, especially if the Chinese-Japan war does not come to an end. Even now Jews fight with financial problems, which has led the Jewish press to suggest a variety of solutions to aid the recovery of the economic system. However, all the suggestions have the same condition; that other groups have to provide the means. For example, they suggest tax-free status for public welfare cooperative building associations and the foundation of a cooperative bank as a credit institute. Since the outbreak of the European war, international navigation has been restricted and has therefore also put a stop to the lucrative "Bars" run by Jews for sailors.

As it is known the strong unity of the Jewish community means that relief organisations offer each other mutual assistance and foster a sense of community spirit. As a sign of this unity one can observe that only a few of their many quarrels appear before the public, which are mainly between German and Austrian Jews. In the same way, one hears only sporadically that the Sephardi and Ashkenazi, as a result of differences in their traditions, cannot get along with each other. Their cooperation is only possible in the area of charity. The love between the original Jewish inhabitants and the Jewish arrivals is not so great.

In a report from 17/5/1939 No.B158 the then existing organisations were registered. From those only the following are important to note:

Jewish Communal Association (public): 259 Kiangse Road,
Shanghai Ashkenazi, Jewish Association (for Russian Jews),
Hebrew Relief Society,
Jewish Shelter House,
Shanghai Jewish School,
Synagogue Ohell Moishe: 350 Rue Bourgeat (ritual),
Synagogue Ohell Rachel: 500 Seymour Road (ritual),
Synagogue Beth Aharon: 50 Museum Street (ritual),
Shanghai Zionist Association

The most active ones are the already mentioned relief organisations. The P.C gives loans of about 1.000,00 CH \$⁴, but mostly less, for opening new businesses. They attempt to bring together several partners from professions such as doctors, dentists and lawyers, in order to lower the cost of establishing a business.

The Shanghai winter aid follows the German model with collections of money and donations in kind. Sometimes they offer cheap stews. There are already two Jewish hospitals. Some wealthy Shanghai Jews donated several thousand dollars for the foundation of a maternity home, which is due to open approximately in February.

After the model set by other nations, Jews have established a court of arbitration for their frequent quarrels. They said in public that jurisdiction is not obligatory, but voluntary. It is also possible to appeal to a Chinese court.

There have been great efforts to find jobs for Jewish engineers, chemist and others in the Chinese government. Sometimes they have been successful. A Directory appeared at the end of last year listing 6,000 names, in the hope of fostering unity and business connections.

The need for social activities is not only served by chess clubs and similar groups, but also by a local branch of Jewish front-line soldiers. The Theodor Herzl Organization disseminates Zionist propaganda. Characteristic was the complaint that the local Jewish School allegedly did not have enough Jewish-National spirit.

"Machsike Laumde Tauroh" is a society for the preservation of Jewish tradition and culture, which trains young people.

⁴ Translation uncertain

A union of former concentration camp inmates take care to preserve the memory of that time. At the beginning they had their own newspaper.

A man called Fuchs, apparently a former director of a music ensemble in Europe, founded a band with 39 members. They often appear before the Jewish public.

They have founded different kinds of sports clubs. Table tennis (!) has an important role. The "Jewish Recreation Club" with nearly 600 members is one of the biggest Clubs in Shanghai, found 27 years ago. Jews beat the big drum for their sport clubs and say that, for example, Boxer Max Baer, tennis player Susanne Lenglen, Olympic medallist Helena Meyer and others are Jews. Also arts are important, at least apparently according to the Jewish press. It is so that "Oedipus" was performed in Jewish theatre!

The "Jewish Artist Club" was founded to help Jewish artists. They give regular exhibitions.

Max Heimann is naturally an "excellent painter", who exhibited his pictures in Shanghai's biggest Hotel. He portrays important personalities from Shanghai society.

Former "Ulanen-Oberleutnant und Rennreiter" Arthur Goldschmidt reports on riding events in the Shanghai in press.

The Shanghai press is, as previously mentioned, strongly influenced by Jews, as it is the world over. For this reason, columns are willingly devoted to emigrant issues. Beyond that, the emigrants have still not managed to publish their own press in German language. Enclosure 8 contains a list of all authorities here of which only the marked ones are still functioning. Considering these numbers, it is of course typical Jewish exaggeration, when the stateless Jew Dr. Lax calls himself a correspondent of the "Jewish United Press Association". But success cannot be denied: "Gelbe Post", originally a fortnightly paper, then became a weekly paper and will soon be coming out daily.

The importance of this press does not escape the Jewish community. But also at this stage of German affairs editors should practise moderation and reserve in their newspapers. If this does not happen, there is still the possibility that the Jewish members of the press, who are not already stateless, could be denaturalised. Furthermore, the General Consulate is considering the possibility of prosecuting them in the Chinese courts.

Attitudes of the Jews to other Nations

A thousand years of experience has shown that Jews are able to nest as parasites in their host countries. That they are sure of the sympathy of the English is self-evident, especially now. They boast that the conscience of the world will look after them and that their perceived status as will gain them universal sympathy.

Jews apply for admission to the British army with the secure expectation that the answer will be negative. They said that they want a Jewish battalion and that they were disappointed about rejection. It is interesting to know, according to a newsletter released after a meeting of China Jews, that students of the Jewish school in Shanghai have gained easy admittance to Cambridge University.

Jews flatter the Chinese by learning their language, emphasizing old Chinese culture and saying sentences like: "I love china, I'm glad to come to china." The Jewish Choir is able to sing, for example, traditional Chinese music. The Jews try to get on especially good terms with the Japanese. The suggestion to turn down Jewish emigration came from the Japanese. They wanted to eliminate competition in business. Jewish traders bought Japanese products to Hongkew and sold them cheaper. Because of that the Japanese lost their customers. Jewish customers enlarged demand, when they settled down. The Japanese in Hongkew and Jews are on friendly terms. Articles under the heading: Japanese-Jewish Understanding are, of course, splashed on every column.

The attitude of local Jews towards Germany is, as expected, one of disapproval. Only the tone varies. The greatest wish of the majority is for the victory of the allies. They hope for a reduction in anti-Semitism and a solution of the Jewish question. Recently the press advised local Jews not to send parcels to Germany, as they would likely not reach their intended recipients and also because these parcels may hinder the intention of starving out the enemy.

Summary

The intensive and rapid rate of Jewish immigration in the last two years has not given rise to anti-Semitism among the public of the local host nation. That is against expectations and experiences in other countries. The rush ended suddenly, because of outbreak of the European War. With financial help of local relatives it was possible for emigrants to settle down. The fear of the local community that the living standard would decrease with immigrations has so far not been realised. Because of the relatively low influence of Jewish emigrants, the danger of their presence is not yet recognised. They were still pitied as innocent victims and they see only economic advantages of that immigration: new customers for the Shanghai markets. Products are well displayed in Jewish shops. They have established new dressmaking, fashion houses and beauty parlours, and emigrants have adapted to life in the Far East.

In Shanghai only the police are not deceived by Jewish behaviour. The police see behind the scenes and so they have increasingly become anti-Semitic over the past months. Crimes in connection with property have apparently increased to around 30 v.H.⁵ in the last few months among the emigrants. Because of their misery, some Jewish women work as prostitutes. They have displaced the Russian prostitutes with their cheaper prices. Out of consideration for Jewish emigrants, who speak mostly German, the police have taken on some Jewish police officers (five under 8000). It is worthwhile to note that the police administration of the International settlement, which is united under the Scottish "Logen" disapprove of Jews. This disapproval appears to be restricted to the poor Jewish emigrants.

How the new Jewish immigration in Shanghai will develop is impossible to predict. You could only suppose that their future goals will include, for example, the wish for self-government. But these are all problems that Shanghai will have to resolve later. At the moment, for Germany the main thing is that it is free from a great number of Jews, who could bring still more Jews out of Europe.

16 photos of the Hongkew Jewish quarter are enclosed.

Cc Embassy of Shanghai.

Signed M. Fischer

⁵ Translation unknown

Enclosure 2 to report No. B.0202 from 11. January 1940

Countries of birth of the emigrants.

Altreich ⁶	4,037
Austria	2,180
East Prussia	690
Poland	969
Czechoslovakia	88
Hungary	172
Yugoslavia	29
Sudetenland	22
Bulgaria	10
Bohemia and Moravia	159
Romania	153
Russia	32
Belgium	3
Lithuania	1
Italia	3
Serbia	2
Switzerland	4
Estonia	1
Latvia	5
Japan	1
England	3
Egypt	3
China	3
Turkey	2
France	2
America	5
Netherlands	1

⁶ Emigrants originating from Imperial Germany (?)

Manuel worker	125
Worker	102
Seller	29
Hairdresser	30
Gardener	12
Cook	19
Car mechanic	40
Farmer	125

⁷ Note: there appears to be an intervening page missing. These notes appear to refer to male occupations.

Enclosure 3 to report No. B.0202 from 11. January 1940

Female occupations of the Jewish emigrants in Shanghai

Wife	2,648
Salaried employee	401
Modistin ⁸	124
Hans employee ⁹	107
Nurse	47
Cosmetician	44
Dentist	9
Chemist employee	14
Doctor	12
Teacher	11
Photographer	8
Analytical chemist	2
Laboratory assistant	2
Music teacher	36
Actress	11
Lace maker	41
Arts & Crafts saleslady	40
Physiotherapist	9
Dressmaker	198
Worker	17

⁸ Translation unknown

⁹ Translation uncertain – originally “Hansangestellte”