

JEWISH SHANGHAI *-IN MEMORIAM*

Robert W. Case

Sephardic Jews began arriving in Shanghai in the middle of the 19th century. Just before World War II, Tens of thousands of Ashkenazi Jews fled Europe to go to Shanghai. It was the only city in the world, which did not require a visa, guarantee, or any identity documents, and the Chinese readily accepted them. By the early '40's the Shanghai Jewish Community had grown to be the largest Jewish community in the Far East, numbering in excess of 30,000. At that time, they had their own schools, a hospital, a cemetery, a Jewish club, a kosher restaurant, and a newspaper.

This European Ghetto, known as the Hongkew district, is twelve blocks long and five blocks wide. (*Of note is that W. Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of the Treasury in the Carter administration 1977-1979, and formerly an ambassador under Kennedy and Johnson, lived in Shanghai from 1939-1947 at 59 Chusan Road, where he resided with his parents under extreme conditions. The house is still standing, and is occupied by a Chinese family. The area today would be considered a "slum". Mr. Blumenthal revisited his old residence in 1976, when he was head of the U.S. Economic Mission to China.*)



This was Secretary Blumenthal's House !

When the Japanese invaded Shanghai, they immediately established the "***Designated Area for Stateless Refugees***" (Ghetto) on the pretense that the Jewish refugees were "stateless" and all Jews which arrived in Shanghai from Europe were forced to relocate to this area within one month. (Apparently, this policy did not apply to the rich Jews from Baghdad and the other sephardic Jews, who were already in Shanghai) The Jews, however, always lived together in peace with the Chinese people of Shanghai. They helped each other in many ways, and forged a profound friendship, in spite of the Japanese occupation.

We visited the site of the ***Ohel Moishe Synagogue***, which was built in 1927 and is no longer. However, the Chinese government established the ***Jewish Refugee Memorial Hall of Shanghai*** in the building that housed the synagogue. Inside there are displays of many pictures of Jewish life in Shanghai, before the Japanese invasion.



The ***Ohel Moishe Synagogue*** Photo by Robert W. Case October 2002

The other synagogue, ***Ohel Rachel Synagogue***, has been closed for renovations since March of 2002. The synagogue was built by Sir Jacob Sassoon, in 1927, and named in memory of his wife, Rachel. Sir Sassoon, a sephardic Jew, had also built both the ***Peninsula Hotel*** and founded the ***Star Ferry Line*** in Hong Kong.



Marble Hall- Former Residence of Sir Elly Kadoorie

Photo by Robert W. Case October 2002

Away from the Ghetto, there is Marble Hall, the magnificent former residence of Sir Elly Kadoorie, a Jew from Baghdad, which he built in 1924 and served as the family residence until 1949. This home is over 40,000 sq.ft. Today, it is now the Municipal Children's Palace, one of many such Palaces in Shanghai.

The *Seymour Road Jewish School*, built by Horace Kadoorie, (Sir Elly's son) in 1932 is now the *Shanghai Municipal Education Commission*. The *Shanghai Jewish Club* is now part of the *Shanghai Musical Conservatory*. The *Shanghai Jewish Hospital* was built in 1934 with funds provided by the Sephardic Jewish Community of Shanghai. It is presently a wing of the *ENT Hospital*. The *Point Road Jewish Cemetery* was built in 1940 and was mainly the burial ground for Jewish refugees.

The Chinese Government, through the *Shanghai Municipal Tourism Administrative Commission*, is very proud of the role that the Shanghai Chinese played in saving the lives of thousands of Jewish refugees during WWII, as well their assimilation into the community, until the Japanese Invasion. It should be noted for the record that no other nation in the World did as much for the Jewish refugees as did China.

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