

Rodger Citron*

Preface

When Patricia Salkin became the Dean of Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center (“Touro Law”) in 2012, one of her many ideas for the law school was to hold a conference on the history of the Jews of Shanghai. While teaching Chinese Law at Albany Law School, she developed a relationship with the Law School of the Shanghai University of International Business and Economics (SUIBE). It was during her visits to Shanghai that then-Dean Salkin learned about the Jewish refugees from Germany and other European countries who sought refuge from Nazi Germany in the late 1930s and early 1940s.

Touro Law is part of the Touro College and University System, which was founded under Jewish auspices. As such, Touro Law has an abiding interest in the history of the Holocaust, especially how the law and the legal system in Germany enabled the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. Prior to Dean Salkin’s arrival in 2012, the law school held international conferences on the infamous Wannsee Conference in Berlin, in 2002, and the Nuremberg trials, in 2006. However, never had Touro Law explored the history of the European Jews who found refuge in Shanghai.

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Dean Salkin approached her colleagues at SUIBE. It quickly became apparent that a conference about the Jewish refugees in Shanghai would be of great interest. As Dean Salkin and her team moved forward, they learned about the diverse history—really, histories—of the Jews in Shanghai. Baghdadi Jews came to Shanghai in the nineteenth century and prospered, Russian Jews emigrated in the early twentieth century, and as many as 18,000 Jewish refugees escaped Nazi persecution in the 1930s and 1940s.

After more than a year of work that included extensive collaboration with SUIBE, the conference took place in Shanghai over three days in June 2015. It never is easy to organize a conference. Here the organizational and logistical challenges were all the more difficult because the two schools were more than 7,000 miles apart and in completely opposite time zones! When it was morning in New York, it was evening in Shanghai, and vice versa. Through all of the planning—the extensive correspondence, the international phone calls, the various demands of protocol—SUIBE always was a gracious and generous partner and host.

The conference featured a presentation by Manli Ho, the daughter of Dr. Feng Shan Ho, who had received the title of Righteous Among the Nations, Israel's highest award, for courage in issuing Chinese visas to save Jews from the Shoah while he was the Chinese Consul General in Vienna from 1938 through 1940. Other distinguished scholars gave talks, including Maisie Meyer, Pan Guang, Dan Ben-Canaan, Jonathan Goldstein, Xu Xin, and Steve Hochstadt. Former refugees and others who lived in Shanghai before World War II—Evelyn Pike Rubin, Lotte Marcus, and Liliane Willens—and emigrants' family members—Anne Atkinson—told family histories.

The conference was delightful. It kicked off with an elegant evening reception at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum that drew media reception from television and print journalists in Shanghai. This event combined the feelings of a joyous reunion with respect, even admiration, for the tolerance shown by Shanghai's residents to these various Jewish populations from the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century. Over the next two days, there were a number of panel sessions at SUIBE. Many of the panelists agreed to publish their papers and graciously worked with Professor Hochstadt, who edited the papers and brought this book to life. Thank you to the authors and the editor, who have assembled a volume that contributes to the scholarly literature in this area and commemorates a fascinating history.

And thank you to Dr. Alan Kadish, President of the Touro College and University System, for his generous support of the publication of this volume.

It takes a village to put on an international conference. Along with Touro Law, the cosponsors were SUIBE, the Center for Jewish Studies Shanghai, the Shanghai Society for People's Friendship Studies, and the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Conference underwriters and supporters included the Capobianco family, the Jacob D. Fuchsberg law firm, the Herman Goldman Foundation, the Sino-Judaic Institute, and the Florence and Laurence Spungen Family Foundation. Your generous support made this conference possible.

Thank you also to the Conference Planning Committee. It included Vice President Xu Yong-lin, SUIBE; Dean Shoubin Ni and Professor Joan Tang, Law School of SUIBE; Professors Jonathan Goldstein, Pan Guang, Ben Kahn, and Steve Hochstadt; and now-Provost Salkin, Dr. Susan Thompson, Assistant Dean Linda Howard Weissman, and myself, of Touro Law. Although he was not officially a member of the committee, Danny Spungen must be mentioned here for his tireless support of the conference. Finally, thank you to the Israeli Consul General and the US Consulate for advice and support along the way, and to Rabbi Shalom Greenberg at the Chabad in Shanghai, who provided sound advice about working in Shanghai and capably handled all aspects of the conference food needs. Thank you, all of you. Your dedication and hard work enabled the conference to go as planned and to make it look easy.

