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JEWISH TRAGEDY IN INNER MONGOLIA

By Mikhail Rinsky

In August 1945 in the city of Hailar, Inner Mongolia, Japanese occupying forces and their White Russian collaborators brutally murdered a group of Soviet citizens, including 12 Jews. This essay covers the lives of some of them and their descendants.

SETTLERS FROM BELARUS

The uprisings, riots and pogroms of the early twentieth century led small-town Jews to leave the western provinces of the Russian Empire. Driven to despair by unemployment, poverty, humiliation and pogroms, whole families left their shacks for America and Siberia. The most desperate and daring went to a distant region, Inner Mongolia, on the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). The Russian Czar constructed the railway at the end of the 19th century as the shortest route to the Pacific Ocean. He also wanted to profit from the riches of Inner Mongolia and neighboring Chinese Manchuria. The Russian government encouraged the resettlement of Jews from overpopulated towns, hoping the resourceful settlers would engage in trade and supply cities and stations along the railway.

Leib and Maria Friedman left the Belarusian town of Latakia before World War I. After a long and arduous journey, they settled in Hailar station, in those years a small town in northeastern Inner Mongolia whose primary business was fattening livestock for market. Cattle and sheep bought from local Chinese and Mongols were fattened and slaughtered, and the carcasses were frozen and sent to major cities. The second important source of income was furs.

The family had five children - three daughters and two sons. The second son, **David**, was born in 1920. The family was prosperous, and the Soviet authorities on the CER did not interfere with their business. But anti-Semitic White Russian emigres had fled to China during and after the Russian Civil War. The White Russians persecuted the small population of no more than 200 Jews in Hailar, a town with a modest synagogue and no Jewish schools. All the children studied in Russian-speaking schools whose teachers were from the former Russian nobility.

Among the friends of the family were **Meir and Sarah Genkin**, who came from Belarus to Hailar in 1927 with Soviet passports. More precisely, Sarah returned to Hailar. Sarah had come to the city a few years earlier with her husband. A son, **Abrasha (Abram)**, was born in 1924. After her husband was killed by the local nomadic bandits called hunguzami, Sarah left her son with her sister and travelled back to her hometown of Krichev in Belarus. The wealthy family of **Leib and Alta Levitan**, who traded in furs, warmly received little Abrasha and adopted him. So when Sarah and her second husband Meir Genkin returned to Hailar in 1927, her son remained, by mutual consent, in the Levitan family and kept the Levitan surname.

Meir Genkin engaged in the same business as Leib Friedman, and soon children arrived. In 1928, Sarah gave birth to a daughter, **Leah**, and the following year to **Zelda**.

Life for the Jews at CER stations in the 1920s depended much more on Soviet citizenship than in centrally located Harbin. Harbin's relatively large population of Jews could defend themselves. They had their own schools, hospitals, sports grounds, Zionist scout troops known as Beitar, and Maccabi sports games.

Hailar Jews were surrounded by White Russians and had no choice but to seek protection from the CER, which required Soviet citizenship. So while a number of Russian Jews in Harbin chose to remain stateless, the Friedmans and Levitans and many other Jewish families in Hailar accepted Soviet citizenship. The authorities did not interfere with them as they bought horses and cattle from local ranchers and resold them in bigger cities, mainly Harbin.

Children from the pre-revolutionary wave of Jewish emigration went to Russian schools for ten years and more. Initially the Soviet administration offered some protection for Jews from White Russian attacks. But then everything changed.

FROM IRKUTSK TO HAILAR

During World War I, Russia was "pregnant with revolution." In distant, cold Irkutsk in Siberia, merchants found it increasingly difficult to procure horses and cattle from the Buryat and Tungus people, and even more difficult to resell to wholesalers. Anti-Semites, especially military suppliers, used the war as a pretext for atrocities. So the Litvin family moved to Inner Mongolia, the only distant region where Russian was then spoken, and where the existence of the Chinese Eastern Railway made the pastoral area promising.

Simeon Litvin knew his job. He could accurately determine the age of a horse by its teeth and learned to speak the Mongolian and Tungus languages when communicating with Buryat and Tungus people. So when the family settled in the small town of Hailar on the CER, Simon quickly made himself at home and gained friends among his suppliers. There were ups and downs in commerce and he failed to get rich, but life in Hailar was inexpensive. His wife Rachel could buy seeds and a basket of produce at the market for a ruble. Therefore, the family was not destitute. They had three daughters, and in 1920 a son, Chaim, was born.

The Russian Revolution, the Civil War, and the influx of refugees made for an unstable situation. In the 1920s, Jews in Hailar and other small towns along the CER line welcomed the establishment of a Soviet administration and the introduction of Soviet laws to provide protection against anti-Semites, who were involved in Soviet medical institutions and education, including the only Russian ten-year school in Hailar. In the 1930s, Hailar had fewer than 70 Jewish families among some 10,000 Europeans.

Chaim Litvin recalled that the Red Army of China arrived in Hailar in 1929 as one of many warring factions. The army marched through the city singing, "Don't lament as Red rifles beat the bourgeoisie." Simeon was arrested temporarily for standing up for a neighbor. Wealthier people experienced some confiscations of property. A month later, the Red Army left.

At first Simeon conducted his affairs independently, but then he and other merchants banded together to assist each other. In those years, Soviet citizenship did not prevent Jews from observing

their traditions. Simeon and Rachel's family observed Jewish holidays, prepared Jewish foods, did not work on Saturday and visited the synagogue.

Chaim at age 14 was a shiftless son. His school principal accused him of being a bad influence on his classmates, so he left school and went to work. First he did odd jobs. After he learned enough Chinese and Mongolian, he began reselling small livestock. When Chaim was 16, his uncle gave him three thousand rubles to invest, and Chaim began buying and selling cattle wholesale.

The Litvins' eldest daughter Bluma graduated from high school with honours but could not receive the gold medal because she was a Jew. Bluma then studied in Harbin and became a pharmacist. She and her husband and two children returned to the Soviet Union in 1927 and shared the sad fate of many returning Harbin Jews. After her husband was arrested, Bluma managed to hide in the outskirts of Moscow and work as a pharmacist. While still in school, her oldest daughter married an Armenian.

After moving to Israel, Chaim managed to contact his sister through his Armenian relatives. Bluma eventually relocated to Israel, but during the Six Day War in 1967, she panicked and went back to Russia, where she lived until her death.

Leah, the middle daughter, followed her sister to Harbin to study pharmacy, then returned to Hailar. She married an outstanding tailor named **Lev Apatov**. No one in Hailar could sew a man's suit as well as he could. Leah gave birth to a son, **David**, and they shared an eight-room home with her parents and Chaim. The Apatov family had its own wing with a separate entrance, and the whole family lived together in harmony. We'll say more about Lev's tragic fate later.

Dina, the youngest daughter, married **Abram Usherovich**, a merchant in Hailar, and gave birth to two children. In 1958, the family moved to Australia.

JAPANESE OCCUPATION

The situation changed dramatically when the Japanese occupied Manchuria in the early 1930s and established the puppet state of Manchukuo. The Soviet Union sold its part of the railroad to the Japanese, and most Soviet citizens left Manchuria.

Japanese troops and police became increasingly aggressive, attacking and insulting private citizens. To crack down on the Russian and Mongolian gangs that had wielded power in the CER zone before their arrival, the Japanese ruthlessly beheaded captives without trials and put their heads on public display. They also shut down Russian, Tatar and Jewish cemeteries, declaring them a "war zone."

Japanese authorities were quite tolerant towards the Jews, but made distinctions according to an immigrant's country of origin. For example, Jews who were immigrants from Germany, an ally of Japan, had the same preferential ration cards as the Germans. In the worst situation were Soviet citizens, regardless of their ethnic group. White Russian émigrés who collaborated with the Japanese authorities were allowed to abuse Soviet citizens, including Jews. At least in the early years, the Japanese did not interfere with business activity, but they turned a blind eye to anti-Semites' looting, arson and physical attacks on Jews.

Chaim Litvin's Story

As the oppression increased, trade became increasingly difficult. Starting from 1938, the Japanese became more actively involved in commercial operations with cattle and increasingly restricted the rights of local merchants, especially Soviet citizens. Chaim had to give up trading in livestock and camels and begin trading in flour, Chinese vodka and hay.

The situation grew dire around the beginning of World War II and worsened after the Nazis attacked the Soviet Union. White Guard militias marched through the streets wearing uniforms similar to those of the Japanese, and they made no secret of their anti-Soviet views and anti-Semitism.

General Baksheyev headed the Office of Immigrants in Hailar, and a former lieutenant, Peshkov, was in charge of the armed forces. Many young Jews were afraid to go out in the evenings and attend dances. Chaim was one of the brave ones, and when he was attacked, he hit back.

Jews and gentiles rarely intermarried. Although Russian girls gladly met with Jewish boys, there was only a single case of a mixed marriage. But in one case, a Russian beauty named Olga voluntarily converted to Judaism and changed her name to Rachel. She left for Sverdlovsk in the 1950s with her Jewish husband and children.

The Japanese authorities increasingly harassed Soviet citizens and, with the encouragement of their White Russian collaborators, severely restricted travel outside the city. Even earlier they had started to issue only one-week visas for commercial travel. Each year, people needed to go to the city of Manzhouli to extend their Soviet passports. Japanese forces organized surveillance of Russian emigres and questioned Chaim about what he discussed with the Soviet consulate. Plates with the red letters "USSR" were attached to the gates of Soviet citizens.

Starting in 1942, Japanese authorities required camel drivers to stop working for Soviet citizens. Chaim had to sell camels for half the going rate to Japanese businessmen. He put the money in a bank, and the currency of course dropped in value. By 1944 the family was down to two cows and two horses. They also were prevented from traveling outside city limits. Violating this prohibition was one of the far-fetched reasons for arresting people.

Zelda and David Friedman's Story

The brothers Boris and David Friedman and Abram Levitan managed to finish high school. David went to study at Harbin University of North Manchuria and Abram went to one of the most prestigious colleges in Tianjin, where he joined a Betar group and became an active Zionist. But in spite of excellent grades, **Genya**, the eldest of David's sisters, did not receive a school medal. Then schools stopped accepting the children of Soviet citizens altogether and expelled those who already were in school.

The sisters Leah and Zelda Genkin lived through a lot. In 1939, their mother Sarah died, and like Abram, they went to live with the Levitans. The Levitan family observed Jewish traditions, especially during the holidays, and kept kosher. The girls attended Russian primary school before anti-Soviet

feeling and anti-Semitism were rampant. When the Russian Orthodox school taught lessons about God's law, Jews were allowed to leave. But the girls often stayed, especially when the Old Testament was studied.

As the Japanese authorities tightened their hold on the school, the administration expelled the girls, then took them back. The Levitans began hiring private tutors so their daughters could keep up. Then the White Russian henchmen of the Japanese put restrictions even on private tutoring. However, in the summer of 1945, Leah graduated from high-school, and Zelda would finish the following year.

As with Abrasha (Abram), Aunt Alta was like a mother to the girls, but she died in the early 1940s. This was a great sorrow for the family, although death protected her from experiencing the tragic martyrdom of her husband and son.

Inhuman Cruelty

In 1943, Japanese increased surveillance on many Soviet citizens. Chaim Litvin knew by sight the four men who observed him from the window of the house across the street. Like many Soviet citizens and Russian Jews, he expected to be arrested at any time.

On January 8, 1944, at seven o'clock in the morning, a group of men arrived at their home. Among them was a man who claimed to be a barrister. When Rachel began to cry, the "barrister" roughly pushed her, and Chaim, unable to restrain himself, struck the scoundrel. A bag immediately was put over Chaim's head, and he was taken to the police station.

Sophisticated torture and beatings followed. Chaim was hit on the head with specially prepared knotty branches that ripped his hair out by the roots and made him bleed. Iodine poured on his head burned unbearably. Burning cigarettes were pressed into his face.

His torturers would drink hot tea and throw it in his face. They demanded Chaim confess that he had illegally left of the city. A former employee of the Russians "testified" against him, then beat him. The torturers tied his hands and feet, poured water into his nostrils until they couldn't pour any more, then pressed on his stomach to cause vomiting. They hit his elbows with a board and hung him by his hands for several days. If Chaim had confessed, his testimony would have earned him a lengthy sentence. But he stood firm.

One of the prisoners could not withstand the torture and "confessed" immediately in his cell. He built his own coffin and was taken out and shot.

They also arrested and tortured Chaim's brother-in-law, Abram Usherovich. His head wound festered, but he survived. Several more arrested Jews endured the same torture as Chaim. One was **Jacob (Yasha) Onikul**, who was accused of listening to radio broadcasts and sharing their content.

After seven months of this nightmare, there was a hearing in a "court" in Hailar. Chaim was given 13 years, Yasha 10 years. They were moved to Harbin and put to work as prisoners in a sawmill. The mistreatment continued there. Other prisoners included partisans captured from Mao Tse-tung's Eighth Army. Their commanders had been strangled with a rope in the prison yard. The rest were imprisoned indefinitely.

As Soviet troops advanced toward Harbin at the end of the war, Japanese planned to kill all the prisoners. Anticipating this, the prisoners staged a riot and barricaded themselves in their cells. With the help of Russian immigrants outside the prison, they were saved from mass execution.

Zelda and David Friedman told the author about the terrible days of the Japanese occupation in Hailar, and Chaim Litvin and others added their testimonies. The Friedmans and Chaim also told the author of the savage crimes committed by the Japanese and White Russians in Hailar on Aug. 9, the day the Soviet Union declared war on Japan after the U.S. detonated atomic bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Doors in courtyards in Hailar where Soviet citizens lived had been marked earlier with special plates. Now Japanese policemen quickly went from yard to yard, accompanied by their inside man Kaevich, a White Russian guard who knew everyone. The policemen grabbed every Soviet citizen they could. Everyone who managed to flee the city survived. Meyerovitch the cattle dealer harnessed his horse and escaped with his family. His son is now living in Montreal, Canada. Labkovsky ran to warn Kogan, but he refused to leave his house.

After deciding to leave, Simeon Litvin and his son-in-law Lev Apatov went to warn relatives on a neighboring street and ran right into the hands of their executioners. Rachel's brother, **Boris Barkovsky**, also did not escape arrest. **Nahum**, the father of Yasha Onikul, and his younger brother **Zalman Onikul** were detained. Chaim Litvin and Yasha Onikul were still in the Harbin prison, or, most likely, they would have been taken as well.

Leib Friedman and his eldest son Boris were arrested. David was getting ready to visit them from Harbin but hadn't yet arrived, or he too would have been arrested.

Kind Uncle Leib Levitan, who had sheltered and brought up Abram, Leah and Zelda, was captured along with his adopted son. Abram had just arrived from Tientsin (now Tianjin) on his school vacation. Meir Genkin, father of Leah and Zelda, was caught by surprise in a sudden raid.

In total, the Japanese police, with the active participation of the White Russians, captured 42 Soviet citizens, including 12 Jews. All were taken by truck to the country, where a large pit was dug in the Grubensky administrative region, and everyone was brutally beheaded. The bodies were pushed into the pit, and the pit immediately was covered with dirt.

Here are the names of all the murdered Jews, including those already mentioned:

Leib Friedman and Boris Levitan, Leib Abraham, Meir Genkin, Simeon Litvin, Nahum and Zalman Onikul, Lev Apatov, **Yakov Kogan**, **Raphael Grigerman** and Boris Barkovsky.

The property of all those executed was looted. Mothers, wives and children were forced to leave their homes and hide with relatives and friends before the Soviet troops arrived.

A Soviet soldier discovered the 42 bodies when he noticed a leg sticking out of the ground. The Soviet military authorities exhumed the remains and identified the bodies and – it's terrible to write this - the heads of the executed prisoners. One of the local Jewish residents, Abram Usherovich, Litvin's brother-in-law, was brought in to identify the corpses.

The remains were reburied initially in a mass grave in the city park, and a monument was installed. At that time it was still not possible to bury the dead in the Jewish cemetery, which was considered a Japanese military zone and was closed. Later all 12 Jews were reburied in a Jewish cemetery.

Life Goes On

On Aug. 9, 1945, after the arrest of the father of the Genkin family, Abraham and Leib Levitin, with the Genkin daughters Leah and Zelda, ran from the city to escape their own Soviet Russian neighbors. Their house was thoroughly looted, and it was unsafe to return. A good Jewish family sheltered the victims. For a while, the four of them lived in a small apartment with Leib's widow, David Friedman's mother Maria, two sisters, and another Jewish woman.

Leah, who had graduated from high school, went to Harbin at the invitation of friends after the liberation from Japan. She got a job at Dalbank, and studied midwifery in the evening. Zelda graduated from high school in December 1945 and enrolled in the railroad department of the Polytechnic Institute. For a time, the sisters stayed with friends, and then Leah was given a room at Dalbank. In 1950, Leah married a young civil engineer and moved with him to Beijing, where she taught Russian at a university. In 1956, the family moved with their young daughter to Australia.

When Zelda completed her courses at the Polytechnic Institute, she also went to Beijing to teach Russian. In 1954, although she had obtained an Australian visa, she chose to immigrate to Israel and sailed there via Italy. Upon arrival, she was sent to the (refugee) camp, Shar-a Aliyah, but thanks to friends she moved to a kibbutz right away. She worked there while studying Hebrew in an ulpan. Soon she was able to work in railroad design, her specialty at the institute. However, she did not receive a diploma.

David Friedman, who graduated from Harbin University in the early 1940s, did not receive a diploma for the same reason – he was a Soviet citizen and a Jew. He got a job in the Jewish People's Bank of Harbin. After the death of his father and brother under Soviet rule, the Jewish bank closed, and he worked as an economist in the ship repair docks of the city of Dalian, a city founded by Russians in 1898 in Liaoning Province south of Harbin.

After the tragic death of her husband and son, David's mother Maria lived for some time with Leah and Zelda in Hailar, then moved in with him in Dalian. There, after the war, with the help of the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, David and his mother immigrated to Israel in 1953. His younger sister Nesya was already there with her husband and child. His other two sisters went from China to Australia. In Israel, David began to study at the ulpan, then got a job as an accountant in a factory in Hadera. He was lucky. He was invited to work as an economist on the assembly and repair of aircraft and stayed for 35 years until his retirement.

David knew about the arrival of Zelda Genkin in Israel, but he was still out of work. In 1955, he proposed to Zelda, and they rented an apartment in Tel Aviv. After being retrained, Zelda went to work designing roads. She worked until 1961, when their first daughter, Irit, was born. After Irit grew up, Zelda got a job with the Tel Aviv municipality. In 1964 they had another daughter, Sarit.

David and Zelda's daughters did well. Their elder daughter graduated from Tel Aviv University and is working on radio news broadcasts in Arabic. The younger daughter, an artist and teacher, graduated from the Art Institute in Ramat Hasharon. David and Zelda have three granddaughters.

Chaim Litvin and Yasha Onikul hurried home from Harbin, covering 700 kilometers in only three days. They managed to find seats on a military train while others waited. More than once they made their way past gunfire, but many people sympathized with the former prisoners and even offered food. Chaim found his home empty and looted. All the surviving members of his family were crowded into Abraham and Dina Usherovich's small house.

In Hailar, there were more tragic killings, re-awakening painful memories. Chaim and Yasha took part in burial rites to perpetuate the memory of those executed.

After returning home, Chaim had to find a way to earn a living. He was now responsible for his mother, his widowed sister and her son. The house was ruined. Chinese and Mongol friends offered assistance to local Jews who had lost everything but Chaim refused. He began buying and selling items from soldiers as well as goods made by the Chinese and Mongols.

In 1946, Chaim, Yasha Onikul and two more Hailar Jews went to the Soviet consulate in Manzhouli on the border with the Soviet Union and negotiated a major contract to supply fabrics, livestock, wool, ghee and furs. The experienced contractors refused payment in cash and asked instead for guns, shotguns and shot, sugar, salt, tea, candles, and kerosene - all necessities for their Chinese and Mongolian suppliers. They even began disinfecting the skins of fur-bearing animals such as marmot to meet the demands of Soviet inspectors. In 1948, when the Chinese government took over, they sold the lot to the Chinese Army and made a considerable profit.

Just at that time, in 1947, Chaim married Rina Kornoto. They soon had a son and named him Shimon, after his grandfather. Life goes on. Chaim bred and fattened cattle and purchased farm equipment, including American mowing machines. In the free territory of Mongolia, they built a large farm and attracted Russian workers. In 1954, the Soviet consulate persistently invited citizens to return home to the USSR, but the tragic fate returnees had faced was still fresh in the family's memory.

Chaim worked until 1959, when the Chinese Communists confiscated everything. Then he worked as a mechanic. The situation for Soviet citizens became especially dangerous after Soviet relations with China worsened in 1962. One day in various Chinese cities, Soviet employees, including Yasha Onikul, were arrested.

Chaim's desire to live in the Jewish historical homeland grew stronger as the Jewish state developed. And in 1963 the whole Litvin family went to Israel.

As with many people, absorption wasn't easy. But Chaim already had identified his "slot" in his new life. In Hong Kong on the way to Israel, he scouted antique shops and oriental products. In Israel, he began to order these products through catalogues, and they sold relatively well. Over the years, as Israel became more affluent, Chaim's business grew.

His eldest son Shimon became a mechanic and opened his own shop for automotive spare parts. Now he works as a specialist at a large company. He also fought in the Six-Day War and the Yom Kippur War. Shimon has two children. His younger son Joseph chose a martial arts career and lives in Australia, where he is a karate instructor.

Chaim and Rina Litvin lived prosperously in Nahariya, thanks to their sons and grandsons. Into his old age, Chaim remembered the difficulties and dangers of life in Hailar, and especially the tragedy of his father's death. Rina died in 2015 at the age of 92 and Chaim in October, 2017, at the age of 97.

Other Victims and Their Descendants

The author learned about the 12 Jewish victims of Japanese atrocities in Hailar from Chaim Levin, who even in old age had an excellent memory, and from other descendants of the slain. Boris Barkovsky, Nahum Onikul, Yakov Kogan and Raphael Grigerman were not vastly wealthy merchants. They were cattle dealers, intermediaries between Mongol herders and major procurement offices. They traveled widely to trade in cattle, horses and furs with the Mongols. They stopped at night at Chinese inns, where instead of paying for their room, they bought tea, clothes and other necessities from the Chinese and left their hosts money from the sales.

Boris Barkovsky, brother of Chaim Litvin's mother Rachel, arrived in Mongolia at the same time as Chaim's parents and became a fur trader. After his tragic death, his wife **Chaya Barkovsky** and his two sons immigrated to Israel in the 1950s. During the Six-Day War, son Joseph, father of two, left the bomb shelter on a false call and was killed by Arabs. Son David worked on a kibbutz in experimental farming.

The Onikul family probably arrived in Hailar from a European town. Nahum and his wife Freyda differed from many of the Siberian Jews there in that they were pious and observed the laws of kashrut by eating less meat and more milk. They had three sons. The oldest, Alexander, went to study in European Russia, where the family had relatives. There, like many people associated with the Chinese Eastern Railway, he was arrested and sentenced to prison.

Zalman Onikul's son was beheaded with his father. Jacob (Yasha) Onikul, who survived the horrors and torture in the Japanese prison with Chaim Litvin, became his partner in doing business with the Soviet army. Then he worked in the citizens office created by the Soviet Union before the Chinese Eastern Railway was transferred to China. The office continued to function even after the exodus of Soviet citizens. Jacob became deputy chairman of the department in Hailar and so loved his work that he was in no hurry to leave, despite all complications for Soviet citizens who remained in Hailar.

In 1962, during worsening relations with the Soviet Union, the Chinese arrested functionaries once all branches of society on the same day. Jacob was held in a prison next to his own house. Through the window of his cell he could hear the voices of his loved ones. The Chinese kept him there a year and a half, allegedly for spying. The physical and psychological aspects of his imprisonment caused Jacob to develop Parkinson's disease. His father-in-law, wife and children waited for his release, and then the family immediately left for Australia. Today Jacob's two sons and his daughter live there comfortably.

Raphael Grigerman and his wife Zina arrived in Hailar from Siberia. They had two sons and a daughter. All three of their children went to the Soviet Union in the 1930s, and all three of them were sent to prison camps. After the tragedy of August 9, 1945, Raphael's widow went to be with their children, who by that time had served their sentences. They may have been released early because of the war.

Yakov Kogan, one of the 12 brutally murdered Jews, was a cattle and fur dealer. His wife Dora taught Hebrew at the synagogue in Hailar. Irina, the daughter of Yakov and Dora, married in Harbin and moved with her husband to the USSR. After her husband's death in Kazakhstan, she went with her son and his family to Australia. Two days after Yakov's younger brother Zalman married, Zalman was sent by the Chinese authorities to the Soviet Union, because Soviet citizens were forbidden to marry in China.

The fate of these heroes and their descendants demonstrates the character of our people. Grandfathers and fathers experienced tragedies in the first half of the twentieth century. Then their descendants endured many difficulties, including immigrating and adjusting to a young country from the Diaspora.

Unfortunately, many of those who returned to the Soviet Union were sent to prison. But those who survived - or at least many of their descendants - are no longer within those borders. The "Chinese Jews" who came to Israel as a rule had a quiet, satisfying old age in the company of children and grandchildren -- in their own country.

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