

YOU AND US

Stories of China and Israel Friendships



Compiled by Gao Qiufu He Beijian & Yao Zhenxian etc.

Translated by Ego



China Intercontinental Press

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Preface

\ I got much experience and feeling during three years as ambassador to Israel, and what I want to share with people is that the Chinese people and Jewish people are similar and close in many things. As two great nations in the world, the Chinese nation and Jewish nation both have long history and splendid cultures, and have made great contributions to the development of world civilization. The friendly exchanges between the Chinese nation and Jewish nation can be dated back to over 1,000 years, and both nations respected, appreciated and supported each other during this long period. This friendship is precious for its long history, and is solid as it has stood realistic tests.

Both of us have suffered serious disasters, but we rose after setbacks and marched towards national rejuvenation with our unremitting hard efforts. Only nations having created splendid civilization strongly yearn for more glory, and only people having gone through hardships cherish even more hard-won happiness. With splendid civilization for thousands of years, profound hardships for centuries and unremitting struggle for over 100 years, both of us have experienced tortuous difficulties in pursuing our dreams, and the historical and civilization deposits have laid the social and civil foundation for the Sino-Israeli relations.

Only with high ambition and hard work can one make great achievements. When the past hardship has been turned as the motive force to push us forward and we have fully mastered our own destinies, both China and Israel started a new history. China and Israel established diplomatic relations in 1992, realizing a historical leap forward in their friendly relations. Over 22 years since establishing diplomatic relations, with the joint efforts by both parties, our ancient wisdom has generated new inspirations of innovation, our sincere friendship has produced fruits of cooperation, and we achieved substantial development in our relations. Between the two countries, exchanges at all levels are

becoming daily frequency, and abundant fruits have been obtained in the cooperation in all areas. China has become the third largest trade partner of Israel, in 2013, the bilateral trade volume exceeded 10.8 billion US dollars, over 200 times more than that at the beginning of establishing diplomatic relations. The cooperation of both countries is daily expanding and deepening in all fields of science and technology, culture, education, new energy, biological technology, modern agriculture, environmental protection and information technology. The pragmatic cooperation between China and Israel is carried out in all areas and at all levels, bringing definite benefits to the peoples of both countries.

During the past 22 years, both of us have firmly kept the correct orientation of our relations for healthy and steady development. Our two countries have different conditions and are in different phases of development, with different social systems and ideologies, and different views on some issues, but we have the common determination to develop the relations between us, and make the same efforts in deepening our pragmatic cooperation for the same goal to enhance the friendship and mutual understanding between our peoples. The world today is undergoing economic globalization and informatization of society, and we are in a time of peaceful development for win-win mutual benefit. I firmly believe that the Sino-Israeli relations have broad prospects with great potential, we will have better relations in the future, and more fruits will be obtained in our friendship.

There are many stories about the friendly exchanges and relations of China and Israel. The 12 stories selected in this book vividly show some pictures of them, they include the life support in the times of war and the passionate dedication in the years of peace, the great efforts made by the governments of both countries in developing the relations between the two countries, as well as the rich results in the pragmatic cooperation in different fields.

This book is not only a retrospect of the past, but also aims at inheriting. It tells us that our governments and peoples of both

countries should, at the new start point of history, carry on our believes with firm confidence, and make new progress to further push forward the Sino-Israeli relations, to jointly continue our new friendly cooperation.

I therefore put down these words as a preface.

Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the State of Israel

Gao Yanping

Mar. 20, 2014

Introduction

The Chinese nation and Jewish nation represent two major ancient civilizations in the world, and their contacts were started when the ancient Jews fled to China. From then on, China was a country where the Jews having lost their motherland for a time could live and work in peace and contentment. During the massacre by Nazi, Shanghai was the only big city in the world accepting Jew refugees. In China, the Chinese people and the Jews treated each other friendly for about 1,000 years, and in the war against the fascists, they supported each other, leaving a historical chapter in the Chinese-Jews friendship. On Jan. 24, 1992, China and Israel established diplomatic relations, starting a new page in the relations of the two countries and two peoples. Over 22 years since establishing diplomatic relations, abundant results have been achieved in the economic and scientific and technological cooperation between China and Israel, and humanistic and cultural exchanges have also been flourishing in rapid development. I would like to thank China Intercontinental Press for organizing these 12 stories, and they exhibited vividly to us the profound friendship between our two countries and two peoples.

The section “Past Years” describes the friendly relations between the Chinese people and the Jews in history, and all figures and things in the stories are quite familiar to me. Ehud Olmert is the first Israeli Prime Minister originating from China. I cannot forget his words with me: “My grandparents stay in China forever, my parents always yearn for China, and my biggest wish is to visit China.” In June 2004, he finally realized his dream. I remembered that on the afternoon of June 24, I accompanied him to the ruins of Jews in Shanghai, and then he flew to Harbin, presenting a stone he brought from Israel to the tomb of his grandfather. To look for and verify documents about Ho Feng-Shan, we did hard and detailed work with “Life Visa” and other organizations. In Oct. 1999, together with Ho Feng-Shan’s daughter Ho Monli, we

declared for the first time to the public the deeds of Ho Feng-Shan in Vancouver. Today, this first Chinese who was awarded the title “Chassidey Umot HaOlam” has become a hero saving the Jew refugees with equal publicity as Schindler and Wallenberg. Many Jews have also actively supported and participated in the revolution and construction undertakings of the Chinese people, and Rosenfeld is one of them. The book mentioned the exhibition of Rosenfeld’s deeds we held in Apr. 1996, I can never forget the words of Li Guang, Rosenfeld’s guard at the exhibition: “Doctor Rosenfeld is the Bethune of Austria”. It is not possible for this book to record all these Jewish friends, but I’d like to mention some of them: Hans Shippe, Israel Epstein, Ruth Weiss, Richard Frey, Sidney Shapiro and Hans Miller. The Chinese people will never forget their contributions.

The section “Shaking Hands” records the “icebreakers” who worked hard for establishing diplomatic relations between China and Israel. One of the authors, Gao Qiufu is one of my old friends, and also a senior I respect very much. He still keeps on writing today, and not long ago, he gave me his new book about his past stories in Asia with his personal signature. Simon Peres, Moshe Arens, Merhav and Suffott are all friends I am quite familiar. I remember that President Peres once told me, his affection with China was originated from his teacher—the father of Israel Ben-Gurion. Peres’ words were well proved by the bedroom of Ben-Gurion in his lifetime which I paid visit: books about the Long March and Mao Zedong were put at his bedside. This section mentioned some Israeli diplomatic officials, now I think I should also mention three Chinese diplomatic officials who made important contributions to “ice-breaking”: Yang Fuchang, vice foreign minister in charge of affairs in establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, Wu Sike (now Middle East issue special envoy of China) and Liu Zhentang (later Chinese ambassador to Iran and Lebanon) who directly arranged details for China and Israel establishing diplomatic relations in those days. It should also be pointed out that the intelligent pools

and scholars of China and Israel also played important roles. Three months before China and Israel establishing diplomatic relations, we as Chinese scholars visited Israel for the first time, we met with many high-ranking officials and intelligent agencies, and made frank exchanges; after backing home, we wrote investigation reports, as contribution to the decision-making by the Central Government to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. The scholars of Israel and international Jew organizations, especially Simon Wiesenthal Center well known for chasing and claiming compensation for the massacre crime of Nazi, also played an important role in “breaking the ice”. This center recently published statements in succession, condemning Abe for visiting Yasukuni Shrine and denying historical criminal responsibilities, and this has been praised by the Chinese people.

The section “Cooperation” described in detail the rich results in the economic cooperation of China and Israel, and the most successful are fields of agriculture, communication, medical service, navigation, diamond and risk investment. Over 20 years ago, there was a hot surge of Israeli enterprises coming to China for investment, and today, more and more Chinese enterprises have entered the Israeli market. In Dec. 1992, Werner Herzog became the first Israeli President visiting China. When I accompanied him in the visit, I had an interesting dialogue with the famous entrepreneur Saar Eisenberg coming with the President, and it was published on major papers of the United States. Eisenberg asked: “How many Chinese have become rich?” I replied, not quite sure: “about 5 percent.” He said: “Then there won’t be a market for diamond.” Then I asked: “Do you know the population of China? It’s 1.2 billion.” He was quite surprised: “Oh, that’s 60 million, a great market!” Later, he pushed the establishment of Shanghai Diamond Exchange with great enthusiasm, and finally signed the agreement with Shanghai three days before his passing away. He said to journalists that day: “I select Shanghai to set up this center because it has very friendly relations with Israel; it helped many Jews during World War II. And I was one of them.” Now the business of Shanghai Diamond

Exchange is very good. In May 2013, at the dinner during his re-visit to Shanghai, Prime Minister Netanyahu told us: “We welcome more Chinese entrepreneurs to invest in Israel. China has great industrial influence and global influence, and Israel has its own technologies in all high-tech fields.” Pushed by him, Fosun Pharmacy Company of China purchased an Israeli company with 220 million US dollars, China Bright Group plans to purchase Tnuva Food Company, the biggest dairy and food supplier in Israel, and China will possibly build an express railway linking the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. In addition, the development situation in the humanistic and cultural field is also quite good between China and Israel.

I made these presentations, comments, supplements and short stories here with the hope that they will guide our readers to better understand the splendiddness of this book, and make their contributions to further promoting the Sino-Israeli friendship after reading this book.

Pan Guang

Mar. 23, 2014

At Shanghai Jewish Research Center

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Past Years

Abraham Olmert's Chinese Red Lantern ◀

Doctor Rosenfeld ◀

"He was not an Angel. He was God!" ◀

He Made Yesterday Once More ◀

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Abraham Olmert's Chinese Red Lantern

At that time, he lived in a very small room without decoration. Every morning when he opened his eyes, he would see a pair of big red lanterns hanging from the ceiling, brought back by his parents from the remote China. In those days, there was no wax at home, so the two red lanterns could only be lit up just a few times in a year. So they grew daily mysterious hanging them in silence. Sometimes, the younger brothers would squeeze into his bed before sleep or getting up for various reasons, and often, the eyes and thought of children would go into the red lanterns, trying to look for their treasure.

This Jewish boy, with the name Abraham Olmert, was born in 1936. Since he got memory, he found that his parents, when chatting, often spoke a language he could not understand. He knew later that was Chinese, an ancient language in the remote orient.

His parents often told him and his brothers that, in the orient very far away, there is a country, with many cities, such as Harbin, Dalian, Qingdao, Beiping, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shanghai ... and they had many relatives there, some were elders and some of his same generation. He still remembered the excitement and joy of his parents when receiving a letter from afar, and he was also quite thrilled for the opportunity to add some peculiar post stamps to his album. Those remote stories are like pirate ships, and all his illusions can sail with those ships on the misty sea, but never reach the destination at the horizon.

Later on, he grew up, no more letters came from afar, but those friends growing up together with his parents in China and immigrating to Israel would occasionally drop around, and sometimes, they would talk about their past in China and in Harbin. To his special joy, sometimes they would bring him some candles, so that he could light up the two red lanterns.

In 1981, Abraham's father published reminiscences, which contained long chapters about he and his wife's life experience in China.

Parents and 3-week old
Amram



“My parents left Harbin nearly 60 years ago, but they still often talk in Chinese at home. China is always a topic of talks in my family.” Yosef Olmert, the third younger brother of Abraham Olmert and an Israeli expert on Syria issue told the Chinese guests he met.

In 1998, his father passed away at the age of 87, and his last words were in Chinese.

Ehud Olmert, a brother of Abraham Olmert, once the Prime Minister of Israel said: “To many Israelis, China is another world, far away at the horizon. People living in Israel mainly came from Russia, Poland and other Eastern European countries, as well as Moslem countries in Northern Africa. We are different, always with China in our hearts, although we were not born there and have never seen her with our own eyes, we still think of her day and night.”

In the real life and mental world of Abraham Olmert, father’s reminiscences, younger brother’s recall with emotion and everlasting Chinese trace on his mother, are closely linked with his curiosity and speculation he had since young and that has never ceased existing. That was a great mystery that must be made known.

More than 40 years later, from 2000 to 2004, Abraham Olmert came to China as the science and agriculture minister of Israel. He made a Chinese name for himself—Ou Muran (Amram Olmert).

“That’s the way we grip it”

When he was a little kid, Amram Olmert found his father was fond of playing table tennis. Of course, father likes all sports, but Amram found that as father grew old, he became increasingly fond of playing table tennis. He also found that his father gripped the bat in a quite strange way—like holding a pen or pencil! That was totally different from the way of Europeans. He asked father, why he gripped the bat that way, comfortable? “That’s the way we grip it,” father said without thinking. Not understanding who were meant by “we” as father said, he asked closely: “We? Who did you mean?” “We the Chinese,” father said. It was true that the Chinese table tennis players dominated the world table tennis circle many years with this

Family photo of Olmert’s parents, the four brothers and the wife of Amram, in 1958.

way of gripping bat. But it was out of his expectation that father straightly took himself as Chinese.

Later, Amram told his Chinese friends: "Is the Canadian foreigner 'Dashan' quite famous in China? One of the reasons is he speaks good Chinese. Maybe you don't believe, my father spoke Chinese better than him! He was in perfect northeast accent. Father told me that many ordinary northern Chinese people could not speak Chinese so well as him, so they all admired my father. He went to China before ten and left China at the age over twenty, so he was a Manchurian; he studied at Chinese schools, and became a teacher in a Chinese school. He really had an amazing ability on Chinese language."

Amram knew that actually to his father, that way of gripping bat was a symbol of China rather than a method to win a game. His father left China decades ago and had no more chance to go back, and most messages that could be obtained from the media were not optimistic. But, father's love for China never changed. This strong



“Chinese complex” and clinging sense of pride of his parents in their daily life and mental world made Amram moving and proud. Such love of father for China, in essence, is quite like the love of Jews for Israel, for their Jewish nation and for their families. This intangible yet powerful force has passed imperceptibly to Amram and his younger brothers.

Amram is an agricultural expert, and for a period an official of the agricultural department of the state. When he was on business trip to a country with no diplomatic relations with Israel, if he was asked which country he came from, he would first say “my parents lived in China” to dodge it off. Mostly he wanted to hide his true identity in doing so. But strangely, at that time, an unexplainable sense of pride came, as if he really represented a great oriental country.

Of course, it was different when he came to China later, whenever somebody asked him where he came from as a habitual

