

Interviewee:	<u>AWIN</u> , Leo	Date:	October 19, 1991
Interviewer:	Eva Abraham		
Audio tapes:	1 English	Transcript:	1 vol. (unpaged) English
Audio Record #:	GC00033	Libr. Catlg. #:	D 810.J4 G7 #53
Restrictions:	None		

SUMMARY

Leo Awin was born in Vienna, Austria, in 1919 into a traditional Jewish home. His parents were born in parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that later became Romania and Poland. He grew up in the jewelry trade. After *Kristallnacht*, he helped at the *Kultusgemeinde* in Vienna, processing emigration papers for Jews. The family emigrated to Shanghai, going to Genoa, Italy by train then to Shanghai via the Suez Canal on the *SS Victoria* in May 1939.

The American Joint Distribution Committee helped the Awins and other Jewish refugees to settle in the Hongkew District of Shanghai. He describes Shanghai under Japanese occupation, including cultural life and relations among Jewish refugees of different nationalities in the International Settlement. He found work as a jeweler, first with Jewish immigrants and later worked clandestinely for a German jeweler. Polish refugees arrived by Trans-Siberian Railroad via Japan in 1942 or 1943. He married in 1947. At the end of the war Canada passed a special bill to admit Jewish refugees with Austrian passports as craftsmen. The Awins left Shanghai when 400 families, about 600-700 people, left in 1949 in four transport planes sent especially for them from Tokyo by the U.S. Air Force due to a special request by the Joint Distribution Committee. They left on short notice as the Communist forces closed in on the Shanghai airport. The remaining refugees left Shanghai during the next six months. He describes the cruelty of the Japanese towards the Chinese population and the comparatively easy treatment of Westerners by their soldiers. His transport arrived in Canada via Tokyo, and the Awin family settled permanently in Canada.