

Interviewee:	<u>BECHER</u> , Ursula	Date:	October 15, 1999
Interviewer:	Marcia Goldberg		
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SUMMARY

Ursula Becher, nee Hilsch, born March 17, 1924 in Berlin, Germany and was an only child of a well-to-do family. She was harassed by gentile students during the early 1930s until her transfer to a private Jewish school. After *Kristallnacht*, she sought refuge in Amsterdam, Netherlands, but was betrayed and sexually abused before she returned to Berlin. In the summer of 1939, her family left Germany for Naples, Italy and sailed to Shanghai on the Japanese ship, *Hakuma Maru*. She details the hardships of living among impoverished Chinese in war-torn Hongkew. When her mother died of an infection in 1940, Ursula became the housekeeper and assistant in her father's successful tailor shop. In 1943, they were forced into the Hongkew Ghetto. She learned both Chinese and Japanese languages and worked as an interpreter. She mentions fearful meetings with the Japanese commander, Ghoya, to obtain passes for work outside the ghetto. She gives a detailed description of cultural and religious activities in the Jewish community of the ghetto.

In 1946, Ursula married Hans Becher. They left Shanghai in 1949 to settle in Melbourne, Australia, where she worked in a clothing shop and he, starting as a factory laborer, worked up to an executive position. Their daughter remained in Melbourne; their son, married with three children, settled in Israel.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

Germany - Emigration and Immigration, Berlin to Shanghai, China
Jewish-Chinese relations
Jewish Ghettos - Japanese in Shanghai, China
Jews - Relations with Christians - Berlin, Germany
Refugees, Jewish