

Interviewee: RELLES, Rabbi Mayer

Date: June 27, 1983

Interviewer: Ellen Rofman

Number of Audiotapes: 2 English

No restrictions

Transcript: 1 v. (unpaged)

SUMMARY

Rabbi Relles born in Skala, Poland June 2, 1908 lived in Italy from 1933 to 1944. He studied at a university and a rabbinical college. He explains how he managed to remain in Italy as a student. He describes Mussolini's treatment of Jews and his changing attitude towards Hitler. Even after anti-Jewish laws were passed in 1938, and his arrest and brief internment in June 1940 first in Campagna, then in Ferramonti, he was treated extremely well by the Italians.

In December 1943, after police warned Jews they would be arrested, Rabbi Relles tried to flee. He was arrested near the Swiss border and detained first at a *Questara* in Como, then at a barracks in Camerlata in Northern Italy.

He describes his escape to Milan, stays at various safe houses, and living in a rest home under a false name, using papers giving him a new identity, helped by individual Italians, nuns and a committee that worked to rescue Jews. He explains how he survived and gives a very detailed account of his escape to Switzerland in April 1944 - when he was brought to Como from Milan as part of a group rescue organized by a Mrs. Comelli. He cites many instances of help by non-Jews and kind treatment from Italians during this period. He arrived in the United States from Switzerland November 8, 1951.

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SUBJECT HEADINGS

World War, 1939 - 1945 - Personal narratives, Jewish

World War, 1939 – 1945 - Jews rescue

Aid by non-Jews

Internment - Italy