

Summary of Oral History Interview with Daniel de Montmollin—in English

RG Number: RG-50.498.0013

Daniel de Montmollin—Brother Daniel (Frère Daniel)—born in 1921 in Switzerland; studied theology at University of Lausanne in 1940; meeting Brother Roger (Frère Roger) in 1942; Brother Roger returning to Switzerland to elude capture by the Gestapo in France for harboring Jews in Taizé (in Saône and Loire)—a French army officer alerted him of danger; Brother Roger very active in Romandy region in Switzerland; Taizé Community; Brother Daniel and three other brothers living in apartment near the cathedral in Geneva—1942; Brother Pierre coming to Taizé; Brother Daniel speaking of his theology studies; Brother Roger making short trips to Taizé—beginning in 1942; refugees crossing the demarcation line—about 15 km north of Taizé—Russians, Germans; refugees unknown to Brother Daniel; taking risks; 1945—receiving refugees on Sundays—in barracks in small forest; the beginning of the Taizé Community; seeing officers, sometimes German officers; speaking of a chaplain; prisoners of war staying in barracks for years (1946–1947); Jews fleeing the Nazis—from Germany or even further—central European countries; stories from Brother Roger of the Jews he harbored—a survival period where silence was prevalent; the Community adopting 25 orphans abandoned by their parents—war orphans; an attorney friend from Chalon-sur-Saône (1943–1945)—renting a home for the children; no Jews among adopted children; hiding Jews in Taizé (1940–1942); Jews leaving Taizé and heading south towards Spain—looking to find a boat, a flight; objective of the Brothers—welcome the refugees and then help them find a way out as quickly as possible; refugees spending 10–15 days in Taizé; the region was under high surveillance by the Nazis; speaking of the young men; a network that organized the refugee travel; welcoming Jews that knocked on the door; Brother Daniel on the border with his military company—in the north of Switzerland; Germans tormented by the thought of the war ending—stopping at nothing; days after the end of the war, Brother Daniel's company directing refugee camps—refugees from Germany, Italy—in the thousands; Italian troops chased by the Germans traversing the Col of Grand Saint Bernard—between Italy and Switzerland; Jewish refugees, soldiers, colonels in the refugee camps (three to four thousand)—in the canton of Bern; as an officer, regulating and feeding those in the camp; everyone mobilized to the Swiss border; Brother Roger contracting tuberculosis; Brother Daniel arriving in France just after the war; the French Resistance; Allied air forces and the mechanics of Cormatin—getting one of the planes back in the air—crowning achievement; collaboration; incredible nurses; a concert in Taizé in 1946 by the Lévenroute quartet—a Jewish family of musicians helped by Brother Roger's family while they took refuge in Switzerland; Brother Roger's activism in reference to targeted people—whether Muslim or Jewish; presence of Jews in Lausanne and Geneva; Brother Daniel speaking of St. Aubin in Neuchâtel, Switzerland—his birthplace, which was three km from Brother Roger's village