

Simon Beer

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Biographical sketch and university career

Simon Beer was born in Iași, Rumania, on 10 august 1913 to Fabris and ETTY Lentzer. He began his studies in medicine at the Université de Tours, in France, to then continue in Italy. He enrolled in the Università di Siena on 30 December 1935 (registration no. 1917) in Medicina e chirurgia, asking to be admitted to the fourth year.

In the wake of the racial laws, which affected foreign Jewish students, the Questura (Central Police Station) requested information concerning Beer's effective presence at the university on 17 November 1938¹. On 28 November the university replied that he was enrolled in the third year as of 10 March 1936 (the date not corresponding to that at the top of the dossier) and that he was enrolled in the sixth year in the academic year 1938-39. At that time Beer had asked to be admitted to the fifth year as *fuori corso* (a student who has not completed exams within the set period) and only on 16 November 1939 did he apply to be admitted to the sixth year for the academic year 1939-40. The Police Station wrote again on 12 April 1940 in an effort to understand the discrepancy between fifth year *fuori corso* and sixth year in 1938-39 and to determine whether the student was to be considered effectively *fuori corso*. On 16 April 1940 the university answered that it had communicated the enrolment in the sixth year because the student had filed a request; since, however, the student had not paid the university fees the enrolment was not completed and the student was to be considered *fuori corso* in the fifth year. The rector added:

In the current academic year 1939-40 the student in question has

¹ Cf. the documentation in ASUSi, *Medicina e chirurgia*, b. 102, f. «Beer Simon».

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completed enrolment in the sixth year, paying the first instalment of university fees as well as surtaxes, and in the current year he will have to finish his exams as, on the basis of the applicable ministerial instructions, Jewish students enrolled in the 1939-40 may not become *fuori corso*².

Continuing to study despite internment

In June 1940 Beer was interred in a concentration camp near Lama dei Peligni, in the province of Chieti. From here on 7 October 1940 he requested, through the *podestà* (mayor), to be admitted to the autumn exam session and asked to know the dates of the exams. The university provided information concerning four exam sessions but there is no evidence of a follow-up. We do not know, therefore, whether Beer sat the exams and if so with what results. Simon Beer was interned in the concentration camp of Alberobello (Bari) from 15 April 1941 and in Ferramonti di Tarsia (Cosenza) from 14 July 1942³.

Graduated after the war

Beer graduated in Bari on 1 August 1946 and to this end asked Siena for his university records so that he could defend his thesis in the summer session, pointing out that a delay of even a few months would be significant «after many years lost in a concentration camp».

It should be noted that in order to enroll at the university in Bari, Beer had had to pay the back enrolment fees from 1940 onwards, that is for all the years of the war, despite his internment in the concentration camps in the south of Italy until 8 September 1943!

Finally, a letter to Beer from the Università di Siena (which accompanies his university records) from 30 April 1952 at his New York address attests to his emigration to the US. He became a naturalized citizen on 10m July 1956, and his last known address is 1150, 5th Avenue, New York, where he died on 2

² Ivi, Università di Firenze to Questura di Firenze, 16 April 1940.

³ Cf. Anna Pizzuti (ed.), *Ebrei stranieri internati in Italia durante il periodo bellico, ad nomen* <<http://annapizzuti.it>> (accessed 8 April 2019).

June 2003⁴.

Archival sources

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Simone Duranti

Translated by Scott Staton

⁴ United States, *Social Security Death Index (SSDI), 1935-2014*, n. 110-28-8874 (available online at <<https://www.ancestry.com>>).

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