

Blum, Marcel
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One Videotape
In French

- Abstract: Marcel Blum was born in Iași, Romania on May 5, 1924. His family was lower-middle class. In 1941, the Romanian army incited a mass pogrom in his town. Marcel and his father experienced something similar to a death march. Throughout the war, Marcel worked on and off in forced labor camps. Marcel published many articles and at the time of his interview was working on a publication about the Romanian pogroms. He strongly refutes those who deny that the Holocaust happened in Romania. He lived in Romania after the war and worked as a doctor for many years before moving to Israel to be with his daughter.
- 1:01:00 Marcel Blum was born in Iași, Romania on May 5, 1924. Iași was a large city of approximately 100,000 people. Marcel's father's name was Abraham and his mother's name was Maravine. His mother was a housewife and his father was a civil servant, but worked with private firms. Marcel had one older sister.
- 1:01:57 He started school when he was four years old. He went to a traditional Jewish school called a Heder. He learned to read and write Hebrew and Yiddish.
- 1:02:24 After a couple years, Marcel also started public elementary school where most of the students were Christian. He continued to learn traditional Jewish studies, though. At his elementary school, the children made fun of him and beat him up just because he was Jewish.
- 1:04:08 In 1930 he started attending a technical school because his family was too poor to pay for the higher taxes at the public school.
- 1:04:27 Marcel began working in maintenance at a large manor when he was eleven years old.
- 1:05:07 In 1940, a fascist regime rose to power and was very anti-Semitic. The following year, when he had just begun his second year at a Jewish high school, the war broke out.
- 1:06:38 During 1940, most of the government was anti-Jewish. They started restricting Jewish rights. Jews were forbidden from joining the Romanian army. The Jews began to be put into "communities." They were not exactly like the German engineered ghettos, but very similar nonetheless.

- 1:08:33 In January 1942 there was a mass pogrom in Romania. Thousands of Jews were killed. Marcel describes how many Romanians pierced Jewish men through the heart as a way of killing them. Many of the Jews were put into forced labor camps.
- 1:10:12 Marcel describes Antonescu's plan to exterminate the Jews. He says that Antonescu did not consider Jews citizens. They were enemies and symbolized the Soviet rebellion. According to Marcel, Antonescu said that the Jews were preparing a red flag to welcome the Soviets.
- 1:11:45 Newspapers, in particular one named Kamaria (?), started printing stories of Jews killing Christians during the night. On Saturday, June 28, 1941 soldiers came into a nearby village and killed its entire Jewish population. Marcel and his family heard announcements on the radio that the Jews had planned to kill all the Christians in that village.
- 1:13:59 The family and some neighbors built a shelter then. Pogroms were taking place all over Romania, including Marcel's town. The leader in his town was a schoolmate and a young Romanian army officer. He found and entered their shelter and ordered all the young men out. There were about fifty men.
- 1:15:17 The officer told Marcel and the other men to start marching. As they marched the officer told them that they were all going to be shot because the Jews wanted to incite war with the Russians. The officer asked, "Who is the biggest communist of this neighborhood?" A man was chosen and beaten to death.
- 1:17:32 While they were marching, the Romanian officers made them walk with their hands in the air, just so they could bat them down with their batons.
- 1:19:14 They were marched to the city hall and Marcel saw a German soldier for the first time. When the German asked for Marcel's identification papers, he punched Marcel so hard that he lost his front teeth. There were about 3,000 to 4,000 Jewish men at the city hall. Most of them were shot and thrown into a mass grave.
- 1:22:01 Marcel lists some of the names of those who died. His uncle was among them.
- 1:22:53 He tells a short story about his uncle, who had been the leader of a peasant uprising.
- 1:25:12 Iași was a predominately Jewish town and that is why (according to Marcel) there was such a huge pogrom there. Marcel blames the Romanian government for inciting it.

- 1:26:15 Marcel describes his town's strong cultural history and how the violence came as a result of orders from Bucharest.
- 1:29:01 Some of those who had not been shot at the city hall cried out "Long live the General! Long live Antonescu! Long live Romania!" in order to prove their national loyalty. Marcel was one of those who cried out.
- 1:31:21 Those who remained started to march again. Before leaving the city square, an air raid alarm sounded and Marcel and the other Jewish men had to simply lie down in the middle of the street.
- 1:32:21 After the raid, the men were marched some more and then put into about thirty wagons. Marcel describes the conditions inside the wagon: hot, stuffy, small.
- 1:34:44 After several hours in the wagon, they stopped at a synagogue in a village far away.
- 2:00:49 The men were forced to list their jewelry and goods. Marcel describes the conditions at the synagogue. They were only there for one night. As they were being loaded back into the wagons in the morning, Marcel saw that all those who had gone outside during the night to get a drink of water or go to the bathroom had been shot.
- 2:08:25 The Romanians told them they were just going to be cleaning the wagons, but forced them to stay and started moving again. There were only about 500 men left.
- 2:09:15 Marcel talks about the conditions in the wagon—worse on the second trip. He was very thirsty. He tried to drink rain water.
- 2:14:10 Marcel describes the routine of traveling by day and stopping at night. This pattern continued for several days.
- 2:19:42 He talks about the food they finally received: corn pones, raw cabbage a little coffee and water. During a period of two months, he only received bread twice.
- 2:21:57 He was finally able to get some help from some family in Bucharest. Marcel says that this experience was essentially one of the first "death marches."
- 2:23:46 Marcel was put into a forced labor camp at a quarry.
- 2:27:06 He describes the "red scares" at the camp and the conditions there.

- 2:28:01 Marcel was “selected” as a communist rebel and placed against a wall to be shot. A man named Bucaret saved his life by paying off the camp’s officer.
- 2:30:43 In September 1941 Marcel was released from the labor camp. He started wearing the yellow star shortly after his release.
- 2:32:14 He returned to school that November. Twenty five of the teachers had been killed. He wrote a paper on Pesach and the liberation of the ancient Jews that gave him hope.
- 2:34:00 Marcel tells what happened to those who had been taken on a train during the Iași pogrom.
- 2:35:01 While he had been at the labor camp, his friend held a funeral for him. All of Marcel’s family survived the pogrom.
- 3:01:45 In 1942, Marcel, his father and their remaining male neighbors were sent to a work camp, a Lager.
- 3:02:10 Marcel tells the story of how he lost his finger at the camp.
- 3:02:48 He describes the work camp’s daily routine and conditions: lice, filth, beans for breakfast and soup for the rest of the day.
- 3:04:11 Most of the guards were Romanian, but some Jews were put in charge of the other Jews. Marcel does not blame them. He says they did not have a choice.
- 3:05:11 Marcel was released to Iași when the Soviets arrived. He was supposed to go to another work camp, but fled his home. He was captured and sentenced to twenty five years in prison for desertion.
- 3:07:59 On August 20, 1944 the Soviets entered Iași. Marcel describes what happened. The Soviets gave him amnesty for his crimes and his prison sentence was remitted.
- 3:10:80 During the liberation and before the war had ended, Marcel got into trouble and was supposed to be shot again. Miraculously the shooter turned out to be his neighbor’s friend and his neighbor stopped his friend from shooting Marcel.
- 3:11:00 Marcel talks about his career as a doctor. He has published 540 publications in Romanian and about twenty in French.

- 3:13:00 Marcel married twice, both times to doctors. His first wife died of a brain tumor. His only child, a daughter from his first marriage, moved to Israel with her husband. He talks more about his family.
- 3:15:23 Marcel finally made Aliyah in 1989.
- 3:16:51 Marcel talks more in detail about the Death March and how his father protected him. He attributes his survival to the people around him. His father told him during the march, “You are young. You must survive.”
- 3:21:09 Marcel’s family was not religious, but traditional. They spoke only Yiddish at home. They had strong family ties with a strong sense of morality, a quality shared by most Jews in his town.
- 3:23:37 Only three men survived the war and the pogrom in his town—Marcel, his father and one neighbor. Marcel says he does not have survivor’s guilt, but feels “uncomfortable” about surviving.
- 3:25:00 Marcel mentions again how false information led to the mass killing of the Jews in Romania. The Iași pogrom is not found in the history books of Romania.
- 3:29:20 Marcel stayed in Romania because the government told him they would revoke his diploma of medicine if he tried to practice outside of the country.
- 3:31:40 Marcel chose medicine because it is a humanitarian science and discusses more his views on the human condition.
- 3:34:15 Marcel talks about Holocaust deniers and revisionists in Romania.
- 4:01:08 Marcel refutes those who question whether there was a Holocaust in Romania. He continues to argue his point for several minutes, offering statistical data and historical stories.
- 4:06:03 According to Marcel, Antonescu gave justifications for his actions towards the Jews during the war, but all the pogroms were done with one goal in mind: the final destruction of the Jews.
- 4:08:40 Marcel describes his community as a child; most of the youth were members of the Hashomer Hatzair.
- 4:11:00 The synagogue in Iași was one of the oldest in Romania. He describes cultural and intellectual life in Iași.
- 4:14:35 Romania had the first Jewish theater in the world (according to Marcel).

- 4:16:00 Marcel tells another story about anti-Semitism prior to and after the war.
- 4:20:00 He shares his opinions about the Romanian intellectual community and its malleability in the hands of any given government.
- 4:22:15 Marcel believes that the Catholic Church is anti-Semitic, as is the Orthodox Church, just not to the same extent.
- 4:22:30 He talks about his decision to move to Israel. He moved so late in life to be near his daughter.
- 4:23:55 At the time of the interview, he was working on a publication about the Romanian pogroms during the war.
- 4:25:30 Marcel talks about other Jewish writers who wrote on the Holocaust. He prefers philosophers to the ultra-realism of an author like Primo Levi. He maintains that his experiences were worse than those of Primo Levi.
- 4:28:48 Marcel believes the future of the Jewish people is full of hope.
- 4:29:45 He shows documents from the war.