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In Memoriam: Marek Edelman

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## Fighter for Freedom And Dignity of Life

by Dean Andromidas

Oct. 9—The last living leader of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Dr. Marek Edelman, passed away on Oct. 2, at his Warsaw home. Edelman, who was 90, was a leader of the Jewish Fighters Organization in Poland, which fought against the Nazis' final attempt to liquidate the Ghetto. He escaped, and lived to fight again, in the 1944 Warsaw uprising. After the war, he waged a political struggle to free Poland from Communism.

The LaRouche movement first came into contact with Edelman, then, a prominent cardiologist in Lodz, and a respected member of the Solidarnosc movement, in August 1990, when he gave an interview to Jacques Cheminade, the leader of the LaRouche movement in France. It was first published in *Nouvelle Solidarité*, and translated for *EIR* (Oct. 19, 1990).

When asked to comment on his fight against both Nazism and Communism, he said, "Everything against which I fought during that period, all the horror of Nazism, I've found in another form in my fight against the Communist power. I've risen up against the same destruction of man by man. What counts today, the same as during the 1940s and the following years, is to become involved constantly in human freedom and the dignity of life. The only differences are the type, the method, and the means of struggle, not the struggle itself. My goals and my ideas have never changed; today they are just as up-to-date."

Speaking to Cheminade nine months after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Edelman showed considerable foresight in his concerns about the newly freed, former communist countries: "There must be a political and economic commitment of great scope from the Western European countries with respect to us. But if you are aiding someone, you must start by having a sense of charity. The West, therefore, ought to have it, even if this implies certain sacrifices on its part."



Mariusz Kubik

Marek Edelman  
Sept. 19, 1919-Oct. 2, 2009

"For if the West does not accept this idea, does not undertake its responsibilities, this will cost it much more dearly, much later. We need something for Eastern Europe of the sort that the United States did for Western Europe after 1945: We need a 'new Marshall Plan.' We need the West to understand that the countries of the East must also be freed from an illegitimate debt. All this must be coordinated altogether in one plan; one lone country cannot take the initiative."

### An Outspoken Critic of Zionism

At the outbreak of World War II, Edelman was a member of the anti-Zionist labor groups the Jewish Bund and the General Jewish Labor Union. When Warsaw's Jews were herded into the Ghetto, he joined the Jewish Fighters Organization (ZOB) and, as a very young man, served on its five-man leadership committee, which was led by Mordechai Anielewicz.

He was a committed anti-Zionist and a Polish patriot, a principled position that later earned him the criticism of, especially, right-wing Zionists in Israel. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon was particularly critical of him. In August 2002, at the height of Sharon's brutal onslaught to crush the Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation, Edelman published an open letter to the Palestinians, written as one resis-

tance fighter to another. It was an appeal for Palestinians and Israelis alike to end the conflict. He wrote that, “nowhere in the world can a guerrilla force bring conclusive victory; nor can it be defeated by heavily armed armies. Neither can your war attain resolution. Blood will be spilled in vain and lives will be lost on both sides. . . . Both you and the State of Israel have to radically change your attitude,” and negotiate peace.

Sharon and his allies tried to condemn Edelman, with little effect. Only a few months before, the Israeli press had exposed that the Israeli Defense Forces had studied the Nazis’ own after-action report on how they had liquidated the Warsaw Ghetto, for “tips” they could use against the Palestinians.<sup>1</sup> This was the infamous report by Nazi SS Maj. Gen. Jürgen Stroop, entitled “The Warsaw Ghetto Is No More.” Its use by the IDF was reported in detail in “Israel: Warsaw Ghetto Methods: U.S., Europe Are Accountable,” *EIR* Feb. 8, 2002.<sup>2</sup>

Edelman’s letter to the Palestinian resistance groups was covered in *EIR* on Sept. 13, 2002 (“Israel’s Sharon Copies the Nazi War Crimes in the Warsaw Ghetto”),<sup>3</sup> reporting on Edelman’s own account of the uprising. Written in November 1945, entitled “The Ghetto Fights,”<sup>4</sup> this 30-page report is a powerful counter to that of Stroop, and one of the most important historical documents in existence detailing the methods used by the Nazis, not just to crush the will of the Jews so that they would not fight for their lives, but to strip them of their honor and human dignity as well. Even more important, it documents the spirit of resistance embodied in Edelman, including his commitment to carry on the struggle for “human freedom and the dignity of life” for another half a century. The report serves as a universal statement on endurance of the human spirit.

*EIR*’s coverage drew the disturbing parallels between the Nazi tactics and those used by the Israeli military against the Palestinians, including collective punishment. The March 5, 2004 issue of *EIR* (“The Ghosts of Ghettos Past: Israelis Fight for Their Nation’s Soul”)<sup>5</sup>

also dealt in part with these parallels, and the role of Jewish peace activists.

## Edelman’s Legacy Today

Edelman’s passing has occurred in the midst of yet another crisis, no less serious for humanity than that of World War II, the collapse of the Soviet Union, or the expanding British-orchestrated wars, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is the ongoing economic collapse that threatens to throw humanity into a new dark age. The fact that the current “health reform” policy being promoted by the Obama Administration is modeled on Hitler’s own T-4 euthanasia program, which saw its ultimate implementation in the Nazi concentration camps, should make us pause to reflect on Edelman’s struggle and the quality of his leadership.

His booklet “The Ghetto Fights” is quite useful in this respect, because it documents how the first, and most difficult task, was to “overcome our own terrifying apathy,” in order to “fight against our own acceptance of the generally prevailing feeling of panic.” Moreover, he documents how the panic created by Nazi propaganda, often far more subtle than one would think, combined with terror tactics, created passivity, such that the majority of the Ghetto’s population could not believe, until it was too late, that the Nazis were planning their mass murder—despite the evidence presented to them. These demonic tactics were not unique to the Nazis, but were grounded in the principle, albeit in the most extreme form, used by an oligarchy to maintain its power.

Yet, Edelman and his comrades were able to politically mobilize themselves and thousands around them, to demonstrate that maintaining their universal humanity was primary, and that the fatal illusions they held, to convince themselves they were preserving their lives by submission, were just that: illusions. In the early phase of the Ghetto uprising this was done through political organizing and mobilization, especially among the youth, including the setting up of makeshift schools and holding of cultural events, and then, finally, armed resistance.

In the context of the currently developing mass strike in the United States, and the fight against Nazi health proposals, a reflection on the lives of fighters such as Edelman will provide crucial lessons for today’s emerging leaders.

1. Amir Oren, *Ha’aretz*, Jan. 25, 2002.

2. [http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2002/2905israel\\_warsaw.html](http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2002/2905israel_warsaw.html)

3. <http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/2002/eirv29/eirv29n35.pdf>

4. <http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/Holocaust/warsaw-uprising.html>

5. [http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2004/3109isr\\_resisters.html](http://www.larouchepub.com/other/2004/3109isr_resisters.html)