

Remembering...

Marek Edelman

By: *Robert Strybel*,

Our Warsaw Correspondent

Tough, courageous ghetto fighter dead at 87

WARSAW—Marek Edelman, the last surviving leader of the 1943 Warsaw Jewish Ghetto Uprising recently died in his Warsaw home at the age of 87. A supporter of the Bund (Jewish socialist party), during the Nazi German occupation of Poland, he helped set up the leftist Jewish Combat Organization (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa).

Following the suicide of its commander Mordechai Anielewicz, Edelman took over the command. He survived the crushing of the ill-fated rising and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto, which the Germans reduced to rubble. After his escape, he joined the underground Home Army (Armia Krajowa) and the following year fought in and also survived the Warsaw Uprising.

Since he had been born in Homel, Poland (now Belarus), located in the one-half of Poland annexed by Stalin and never returned, after the war Edelman gave his place of birth as Warsaw to avoid being sent to the USSR. He studied medicine, became a medical doctor and spent most of his life in the central city of Łódź.

Although communist Poland claimed to be building socialism, of which Edelman had been a life-long advocate, he soon became disillusioned with life in a totalitarian state. When most of Poland's surviving Jews left the country in the wake of the communist party's 1968 anti-Semitic purge, Edelman stayed put. "Nobody is going to tell me what to do or where to go," he replied defiantly.

In the 1970s, Edelman joined the largely Jewish-led Workers Defense Committee (KOR), an anti-communist dissident movement. In 1980, he became a member of Solidarity and one of the leaders of the union's Łódź region, but when martial law was declared in December 1981 he was jailed by the Jaruzelski regime. He maintained his staunch anti-communist stance when he rejected the regime's offer in 1983 to join its committee to mark the 40th anniversary of the Ghetto Uprising. In 1998, he was awarded the Order of the White Eagle, Poland's highest decoration, for his life-long dedication to democracy, freedom and human rights.

But Edelman was also quite a controversial character. He frequently ruffled the feathers of fellow-Jews with his anti-Zionist views and harsh criticism of Israel's mistreatment of the Palestinians. He was also a vocal defender of Bosnian and Kosovar refugees as well as Gypsies who suffered discrimination in the Czech Republic.

He also offended Catholic sensibilities with his atheistic tirades. "People were killed in the ghetto not because God willed it, but because evil people committed those crimes," Edelman argued. "There is nothing in the heavens, neither brightness nor darkness, heat nor cold – pure nothingness."

Edelman readily gave interviews but often criticized and ridiculed his interviewers. "What a stupid question, are you really that naïve?" he would interrupt the questioner. "You must have never been starving. In the ghetto nobody was interested in any God. Everybody only wanted to survive."

Despite his bossy ways and prickly personality, Edelman commanded great authority across the ethnic and religious divide. His undiplomatic and often impolite remarks were readily forgiven in view of his uncompromising sense of commitment and what he had gone through.

"A great man of courage and truth is gone," said Israel's former ambassador to

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Czechs try to resolve Lisbon impasse

An article by Jan Cienski in Prague and Tony Barber in Brussels which was written in the FinancialTimes.com states... The difficulties over approving the Lisbon treaty became even more entrenched on Monday when the Czech government said it would convey President Vaclav Klaus's last-minute demand to amend the pact to the rest of the European Union.

Speaking after a meeting of his cabinet, Jan Fischer, the Czech caretaker prime minister, rejected any step that would require re-ratification of the treaty, which has already been approved by the Czech Republic's parliament.

However, in an apparent bid to finesse the standoff between Mr. Klaus and the rest of the EU, Mr. Fischer said the government was willing "to discuss a possible solution to this situation with its European partners" during an EU summit at the end of the month.

In return, Mr. Klaus has to offer a guarantee that he will sign Lisbon once the Czech constitutional court rules on a recent challenge to the treaty. There was no response from Mr. Klaus's office as to whether those were acceptable conditions.

Klaus throws up further Lisbon hurdle - Oct-09

The EU had hoped Mr. Klaus would have relaxed his opposition to Lisbon before the summit, but this now looks increasingly remote.

The Czech president, long known for his Eurosceptic views, is the last obstacle to the entry into force of the Lisbon treaty, a charter of institutional reforms that has been eight years in the making.

Although the Czech parliament ratified the treaty in May, Mr. Klaus first refused to sign until after the second Irish referendum on the pact. Then he said his hands were tied until the resolution of a court challenge to the treaty – expected within a month.

Finally, last week Mr. Klaus threw up an unexpected roadblock by saying the Czech Republic needed an opt-out from the treaty's charter of fundamental rights.

He raised the fear – dismissed by the government and most experts – that the pact could open the way for land claims by the descendants of ethnic Germans expelled after the second world war.

EU policymakers can barely disguise their impatience and irritation at Mr. Klaus's last-minute obstacles. Under the brightest of outlooks, they now do not expect the treaty to take effect until the early months of 2010.

All governments and parliaments in the 27-nation EU have approved the treaty, which establishes a full-time president, gives the European parliament a voice in almost all EU legislation and reduces the number of policy areas where decisions require unanimity among governments.

Mr. Klaus's demand for a legally binding exemption from the charter has sent legal experts scurrying to determine under what conditions, if any, such an exemption might be granted.

If it threatened to require re-ratification of the entire treaty, all EU governments would instantly reject Mr. Klaus's demand.

His request that the Czech exemption should carry the same legal force as exemptions won by Poland and the UK in 2007, when the treaty's text was still being negotiated, risks falling into that category. □

Your help is needed

Get involved in Polonia!

Join a

Polish Organization

Polish Club of Laguna Woods

By: *Marie Gates*

The Polish Club of Laguna Woods held the Commemoration of the 70th Anniversary of the Outbreak of World War II (1939-1945) September 20, 2009 in the Theatre-Auditorium of Clubhouse three.

Program: Reflections of World War II by Movie and Songs.

No one can forget this sad anniversary. On September 1, 1939, Hitler attacked Poland from the West. September 17, 1939 Soviets troops invaded Poland from the East following a German-Soviet agreement to divide Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. The Nazi Germany occupation policy in Poland was designed to eradicate Polish culture through mass executions and extermination now known as the Holocaust. All over the world millions of people lost their lives. Millions of victims were starved, tortured, worked to death, executed in gas chambers, shot or hanged. More than 16 million people were annihilated by the Hitler regime 1939-1945 in numerous extermination camps. Stalin continued his terror and persecution by deporting 1.7 million Poles to Siberia. Only one third of them survived. Of the victims who died during imprisonment or were exterminated, 10 million were Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, and Jewish. We, as the witnesses of the war, the survivors, must prevent the memory of the disaster and destruction of the war. We must pass the stories on to our children and grandchildren so that they will forever cherish the peace and freedom granted to them.

FREEDOM AND PEACE ARE, WITHOUT ANY DOUBT, THE GREATEST TREASURES A HUMAN BEING CAN POSSESS.

The program began with the singing of American and Polish Hymns by Kasia Bitner followed by one minute of silence to honor all people who lost their lives in fighting for Peace and Freedom. Reflections of World War II, a 50 minute movie, presented short, carefully selected stories of the War. Irena Glowacka-

Lawyer and Video Studio prepared and edited the film. Stories of the Polish Holocaust Heroes, Irena Gut Opdyke and Irena Sandler were also included in this poignant presentation.

Entertainment was provided by 19-year-old soprano, Kasia Bitner, who began her voice lessons at age nine. She loves to sing and is very accomplished young lady. Kasia has had many musical accomplishments in both America and Europe throughout her career. She recently recorded her first CD featuring a beautiful mix of classical, Broadway, and Polish songs. Kasia sang Polish and American World War II songs. Polish songs included "Czterwone Maki na Monte Casino;" "Rozszumiały się Wierzy Płaczące;" and "Rozkwitały Pęki Białych Róż." Kasia sang the Polish songs accompanied by her father, Krzysztof Bitner, on Accordion. American songs included "I'll Walk Alone" and "Amazing Grace." The audience showed their appreciation with a standing ovation. Irena Lawyer thanked members and guests for their support of the Polish Club and their help in organizing the program. She invited all to the Wine Reception following the program.

Upcoming Club Event:

Sunday, December 20, 2009. Christmas Dinner.

Traditional Polish Christmas Family Dinner at 5 pm in Clubhouse Seven. There will be Christmas carols in both Polish and English sung by Soprano Kasia Bitner for all to enjoy. Christmas gifts for the lucky winners and children will be distributed. Everybody is invited.

For further information call Irena at (949) 206-9122. □

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