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## Interview: Professor Marek Edelman

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# Poland and Eastern Europe need debt moratoria and a new Marshall Plan

*Jacques Cheminade, the president of the Schiller Institute in France, interviewed Dr. Marek Edelman, first a leader of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and now a respected member of Solidarnosc, on Aug. 29. Cheminade, along with the founder of the Schiller Institutes, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, and Jonathan Tennenbaum met with Solidarnosc leaders in Gdansk and assisted at the first mass commemorating the murdered soldiers of Katyn Forest that included both active duty and veteran military in uniform on Sept. 17, celebrated by Father Henryk Jankowski.*

*The interviewer takes note of the fact that a majority of the leaders of the Center and the Road agree on one point: Western Europe, and in particular the French, must do much more for Poland. Professor Edelman's position in favor of a new Marshall Plan and a debt moratorium on the debt is entirely in accord with the Schiller Institute's.*

*Cheminade met with Professor Edelman for an hour in the library of the Pirogowa Hospital in Lodz, where he is chief of cardiology and continues to be actively devoted to his patients. The interview appeared in the weekly Nouvelle Solidarité. It has been translated from the French.*

**Q:** Dr. Edelman, you are the last survivor of those who led the Warsaw Ghetto insurrection. What is the contribution of this tradition of struggle that you embody to the Poland of 1990?

**Edelman:** 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.

**Q:** What is that program that, today, would be able to unify Poles in the road to democracy and mutual development, as yesterday they unified against Nazi and Soviet occupiers?

**Edelman:** Democracy is a difficult thing to practice, most especially when you are coming out of several years of struggle against totalitarianism. We are moving forward practically without examples to follow; we have to innovate, change the whole configuration of the state and of society.

But to change society is the hardest, because 50 years of Nazism and Communism have changed men's psychology. Society has become accustomed to submit to the state, to get everything from the state, sanction, security, or comfort. The end is tragic, but tragic in a "gray" overcast way: The state has become exhausted, it can no longer contribute anything whatever to society, no perspective for development, no moral direction, nothing. When the state itself no longer has what it takes to assure the minimum to live on, to survive, everyone rebels. The very idea of the state itself founders; no military coup d'état would be able to change anything.

Today, we must create a free market which replaces the hold of the state and allows for production to take place. But this is difficult, very difficult, because unemployment is growing, purchasing power is dropping.

The population is being very patient, since it knows what it just escaped from. The division within society is not fundamental. It's talked about a lot, but the problem is not so much this division, as the desire of society to go fast, too fast.

In East Germany, for example, they are going too fast toward a market economy. The danger is that the economic situation is getting worse, that they were going too fast toward a free market without taking the time to build; therefore, a new dictatorship would be able to think about taking power, but without having a recipe.

There is no magic recipe to move from communism to freedom; we have to hold together in order to build, as we did in order to destroy the communist power.

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**Q:** The Church has been the bastion of resistance to communism—I’m thinking of Popieluszko, Jankowski, Uminski, Gadowski, Michnikowski. What role do you see for the Catholic Church in the construction of a new Poland?

**Edelman:** It’s a question that requires reflection. . . . The Church has gained a great deal in being at the side of Solidarnosc. There have been remarkable priests in our struggle. However, the hierarchy did not back them, not enough. Today, one part of that hierarchy has become conformist. It wants to exert its influence at the heart of the state. And it does not appreciate our prime minister, who is nevertheless a man of the Church because he acts on his conscience as a Christian before that of any other earthly institution.

**Q:** The Poland of the Old Testament and that of the New used to be segregated before the Second World War; the Holocaust then destroyed the Jewish community. However, even today, the question of relations between Judaism and Christianity is still alive in Poland and, as we saw with the Auschwitz affair, many unfortunately tried to reopen certain wounds. In what light do you, as a symbol of the Warsaw Ghetto resistance, see the contribution of Judaism to the construction of the Poland of tomorrow?

**Edelman:** When a nation is reborn, such as today’s Poland, it is normal that its nationalism gets expressed, and even a bit of chauvinism. However, we should not confuse this in any case with anti-Semitism. There is no reason whatever to see anti-Semitism appearing in Poland. Simply enough, and this is a political problem, if something goes wrong, the tendency is to find someone to blame, and if the real culprit is hard to find, you find a mythical culprit. Poland in this is no different from other countries in Eastern Europe, and, I must say, no different from Germany and from France. It’s a political affair, nothing else. It’s useless to conjure up old demons.

Now, on culture, on Judaism in the reconstruction of Poland—well, it has become integrated into Poland! The contribution of Judaism is a characteristic and integral part of Polish culture. Let’s say it exists at its heart; it would be otherwise very difficult to isolate one element from the national context.

**Q:** How do you feel about the division of the liberators of Poland between the tendency represented by Road [of Prime

Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Bronislaw Geremek, and Adam Michnik] and that represented by the Centrum [which supports Lech Walesa]?

**Edelman:** The Centrum, from what I understand, is a populist movement, centered around one man. Mr. Walesa wants an “acceleration” in the process of reforms, he speaks about forcing out all the leadership of the old regime from all administrative positions. That’s very hard to bring about, there’s a great risk of destabilization. Mr. Mazowiecki wants change by small steps, he wants to avoid ruptures in order to more surely attain a democratic regime. An acceleration would imply violence, perhaps not physical violence but political, and political violence always leads to something bad.

**Q:** What do you think that men of reason and dialogue like yourself were able to bring to a generous, romantic people, if perhaps a bit too often disorganized?

**Edelman:** I have hope that reason will prevail, with or without me, but the situation is not yet clear, no more in Poland than on a worldwide scale. The Gulf crisis would be terrible for us, with the rise in oil prices. With that, we Poles would not be able to handle what happens.

The responsibility belongs to France, Germany, Japan, the United States, and England. We will have to live with the consequences of their failures, or rather the benefits of their wisdom. The world today is all one place.

**Q:** I have been very struck with the high moral demands of Poles in their internal or family life, and their detachment or even cynicism toward public life. How do you think the moral authority of the state may be restored, and internal and public life reconciled?

**Edelman:** What you are correctly saying about our public life is the result of the communist system, which nobody ever truly believed in. But this is not something that vanishes by miracle; unfortunately that is going to continue still. That cannot change in a profound way except if Polish people may benefit from good economic conditions, assuring their development and that of their families.

**Q:** I am personally convinced of the need for a grand plan for development on a European scale—in the midst of which Poland would play a dynamic role—a plan which we have

called the Paris-Berlin-Vienna Triangle. According to this plan, we would rebuild infrastructure and would spark the creation of thousands of high-technology small and medium-size enterprises.

This is the creative conception of economics, in contrast to the financier conception, which is speculative and sterile. But I have the sense that Poland, with its Balcerowicz Plan has become committed to the logic of the financier, which causes injustice. What do you think?

**Edelman:** Yes, you're right. But you have to understand that our economy will not "take off" unless the West makes certain sacrifices. 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 first start by having a sense of charity. The West therefore, ought to have it, even if this implies certain sacrifices on its part.

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 countries of 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. Obviously this goes beyond the case of Poland. I am talking about relations between Western Europe and Eastern Europe.

**Q:** You mean that we cannot have a real plan of development for Poland unless the Western nations, and in particular Western Europe, offer it different opportunities?

**Edelman:** One cannot work up enthusiasm with falling living standards. The split between society and the economy is terrible in our countries in the East. We need to completely change the spirit of the economy and society. This costs much more than to rebuild a house. We need stability, for example, monetary stability, and growth, better working conditions. But this can not be accomplished without the intervention of the countries of Western Europe, without an equitable economic order and mutual development.

We are doing too much talking. There are plenty of pretty words. We need to act. We need you to give us the means to act. If we change things in depth before the year 2000, you ought to be satisfied. Help us; you will help yourselves at the same time, since that's your responsibility as Europeans.

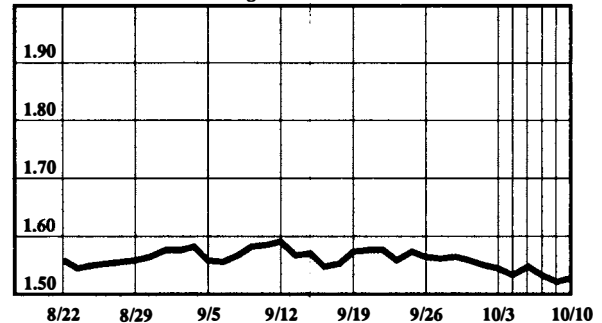
**Q:** What more can we do, immediately, in Western Europe, for you, the Polish people?

**Edelman:** Poland is today a poor country. For example, we need medicines. . . . But the essential thing I want to say is: At least, do not make things worse for us. Concretely, control this affair with Iraq, lest we must pay the consequences.

## Currency Rates

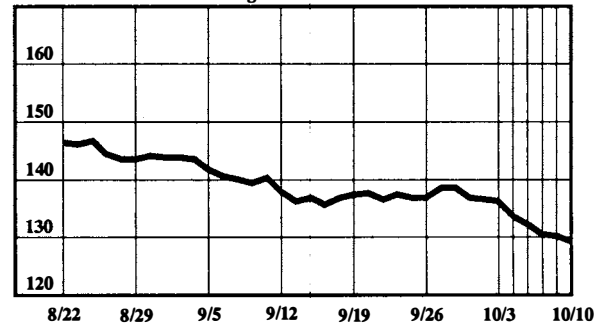
### The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



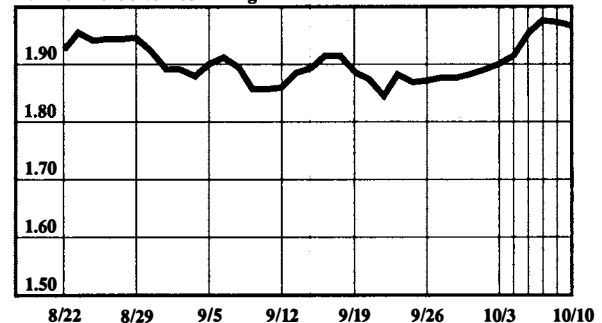
### The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



### The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



### The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

