

WARSAW, 1943 and 1983

Next week will mark the 40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, certainly one of the most remarkable and heroic chapters in Jewish history. And the Polish government is planning an official commemoration, which most Jewish groups plan to boycott.

Last week, the Bay Area Jewish communities observed Yom Hashoa. Community services were held under the leadership of local survivors. The Jewish community's Mass Media project produced more than a dozen different programs on the Holocaust for the TV and radio audience of this region. There was an outstanding locally-supported production on educational TV about the artists of the Holocaust, and the opening here of the film produced by the Simon Wiesenthal Center. "The six million were remembered.

But to be remembered among them, as the most dramatic symbol of the many Jewish resistances to the Nazis, must be the hundreds of Jews who fought a Nazi army for 28 days in the Warsaw Ghetto, beginning on April 19, 1943. They too will never be forgotten.

The Jarulzelski government of Poland decided to hold an official week-long commemoration of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and invited Polish Jews, and Jewish groups from around the world to participate.

Marek Edelman, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and perhaps the only one still living in Poland, was invited to participate. He refused, writing this explanation: "Forty years ago we fought not only to survive, we fought to live in dignity and freedom. Celebrating our anniversary here, where the whole of public life has been burdened with humiliation, and where words and gestures have become completely false, is a disloyalty to our struggle."

The Communist Politburo, which is the Polish government, has exploited anti-semitism during every national crisis, in 1947, 1956 and 1968. In the more recent

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effort to crush Solidarity and the democracy that movement might bring with it, the government used anti-semitism again. It sponsored anti-semitic publications which, among other things, accused Solidarity of being a Zionist conspiracy. Twice the Protocols of the Elders of Zion were printed, on the presses of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of National Defense. General Jarulzelski's own army newspaper may have been the most blatantly anti-semitic of all.

Now he and his government want to honor the Jewish heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto. The reason is clear enough. The government still wants to exploit the Jews. In between its pogroms, the Polish government has on needy occasions tried to "rehabilitate" itself by gaining a kinder image. Smile at the Jews. It's not a new technique. The wolf did it with Little Red Riding Hood.

The Polish regime would like Jews and Jewish organizations to participate in the official 40th anniversary as a kind of show-piece, and endorsement. Many Jews, like Marek Edeleman refused. A number of Jewish organizations around the world, like the World Jewish Congress, accepted on first impulse - and then cancelled on reconsideration. If you are a member of a national Jewish organization, you might want to ask whether it intends to participate.