

Exclusive: Banned Far-Right Politician ‘Tricked’ Government to Sneak Into UK

By Tim Hume
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Civil society groups in the UK and Poland said the incident highlighted major concerns about the UK government’s ability to control its borders and tackle extremism.

The UK government is facing embarrassing questions over its boasts of “taking back control of the borders” after a far-right Polish politician was able to brazenly flout an order banning him from the country.

Janusz Korwin-Mikke, a veteran Polish MP who is the co-founder of the far-right Konfederacja (Confederation) party, was banned from entering the UK by an order by then-Home Secretary Priti Patel last year. A letter to Korwin-Mikke dated the 23rd of August 2022, a copy of which was obtained by VICE News, states that Patel had “personally directed that you should be excluded from the United Kingdom on the grounds that your presence here would not be conducive to the public good due to your unacceptable behaviour and extremism.”

Yet in defiance of the ban, Korwin-Mikke was able – via a circuitous route – to travel to the UK last month to attend a controversial gathering of Polish far-right politicians, dubbed a “freedom picnic,” in Bury, Greater Manchester. Korwin-Mikke confirmed to VICE News that he had been prevented last month from boarding his direct Wizz Air flight from Warsaw to the UK due to the exclusion order – but said he had instead flown to Dublin, Ireland, where he was ultimately able to make his way into the UK via boat.

He refused to provide any further details to VICE News about the boat trip, although an associate, citing Korwin-Mikke, posted on a Polish blog that the boat trip had been provided by a “sympathiser” of the far-right politician.

Korwin-Mikke said that he had expected to be arrested once he arrived at the “freedom picnic,” held at a Polish community centre in Bury on the 11th of June, but faced no issues with police who were monitoring a protest outside the event.

“Everything was OK,” Korwin-Mikke said. “I did the speech in Bury, and the next day I went back to Poland with no problems.”

The Home Office turned down repeated VICE News requests for comment on Korwin-Mikke’s brazen flouting of the exclusion order, stating: “We do not routinely comment on individual cases.”

But the episode has alarmed civil society groups in both countries. Faith Matters, a UK-based interfaith organisation which has repeatedly raised concerns about activity by Polish far-right groups in the UK, and previously called for Korwin-Mikke to be banned from the country, said the case highlighted major concerns about the government’s ability to control the borders and tackle extremism.

“There is a real problem with the fact that someone who has been excluded from the UK by the Home Office manages to enter the country,” the group said in a statement to VICE News.

“What does this say about the safety and security of our country and how people can bypass systems and enter?”

In particular, the case raised questions about the government’s commitment to keeping out far-right figures seeking to “poison the minds” of communities in the UK, as it appeared there was “little co-ordinated and concerted action and intelligence by the government in order to stop them,” the statement said.

Rafal Pankowski, the head of Never Again, a Polish anti-racism organisation, said that Korwin-Mikke “sneaking through the British border” had made a mockery of the Conservative government’s hardline rhetoric about “taking back control of the borders.”

“It is also ironic that a leader of an extreme-right anti-migrant party has found numerous supporters among the Polish migrants in Britain,” he told VICE News.

Speaking appearances by Korwin-Mikke and other Polish far-right figures in the UK have fuelled growing concern in recent years, amid fears that they are fanning extremist sentiment within Britain’s large Polish community. Polish far-right groups have become an increasingly active presence on the UK extremist scene, forging links with UK groups like Britain First, while concerns have been raised about an extremist influence in some “Saturday schools” and cultural centres for the UK Polish community.

Polish nationals abroad are eligible to vote in elections in Poland, and the Polish community in the UK represents a significant enough group for politicians such as Korwin-Mikke to actively court its support. Poland is due to hold national elections later this year, with Korwin-Mikke’s radical right-wing Konfederacja party currently polling in third place, at about 13 percent.

Korwin-Mikke is a controversial figure who has repeatedly made headlines over the years for his sexist, racist, antisemitic and homophobic comments, including stating that women do not deserve equal pay with men due to being “smaller, weaker and less intelligent,” inflammatory remarks about Muslim immigration, and railing against so-called LGBTQ “propaganda” in schools. The political agenda of Konfederacja, the party he co-founded, is best summed up in an infamous slogan from its leader Slawomir Mentzen: “We don’t want the Jews, the homosexuals, abortion, taxes and the European Union.”

To the alarm of civil society groups like Faith Matters and Never Again, his message appears to have found a degree of support from some British Poles. Following his appearance in Bury, Korwin-Mikke tweeted a photo of a watch that he said he had been presented as a gift by the local Polish community, which had an inscription saying it was “a father’s duty” to “fucking kill these people.” The inscription was a reference to a controversial comment made by Korwin-Mikke in 2014, outlining what he felt was the correct response to people who taught sex education, including about LGBTQ identities, in schools.

The June trip was at least the second time that Korwin-Mikke, who has repeatedly delivered speeches in the UK over the years, had travelled to Britain in spite of the government’s attempts to keep him out.



Korwin-Mikke said that en route to last year's "freedom picnic" in Bury in May 2022, he had also been prevented from boarding his direct flight from Poland, with the airline telling him the Home Office had prevented them from issuing his boarding pass.

Instead, he flew to Dublin, where he had been able to board a ferry to the UK to attend that year's event.

Last month, he said, he attempted the same strategy after being prevented from boarding his flight from Warsaw. But he was stopped by Irish police from buying a ferry ticket in Dublin.

Instead, he said, he was able to find alternative boat transport from Dublin to the UK, although he repeatedly refused to disclose any more details about this, insisting it was "absolutely not important." A blog on the Polish Economy Forum website headlined "Korwin-Mikke tricked his way into England," citing Korwin-Mikke and written by his biographer, said the boat trip to the UK had been provided by one of the Polish MP's "sympathisers."

Korwin-Mikke – who denies any allegations of extremism, describing himself as a "libertarian" and a "counter-revolutionary, not a revolutionary" – said he was unaware of any formal complaint from the UK government to Poland over his actions. By contrast, he said he had registered his disapproval with Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs over the UK ban, and requested that it exclude a British representative in retaliation.

They had taken no action in this regard, he said. Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not respond to a VICE News request for comment.

Korwin-Mikke said that in light of his ban from the UK, he would not seek to unlawfully enter the UK again.

Firstly, he said, he respected the UK government's right to determine who was allowed to enter the country, but secondly, it made little difference whether he campaigned in person or not.

"In the age of the internet, it is absolutely unimportant whether I am there personally or not," he said.

"On Twitter I have 300,000 viewers, the audience in Bury is nothing, just a symbol. If they think they can stop ideas by this? This is just ridiculous.

T. Hume: "Exclusive: Banned Far-Right Politician «Tricked» Government to Sneak Into UK". Vice.com, 13.07.2023.

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/ak3k5g/janusz-korwin-mikke-poland-far-right>