

‘Jews Are Leeches’: Rafal Ziemkiewicz, Poland’s Most Outspokenly Antisemitic Pundit, Lands His Own TV Talk Show

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A Polish pundit notorious for vitriolic antisemitic tirades has landed his own television show on one of the country’s most popular broadcast networks.

Rafal Ziemkiewicz — a columnist for the Polish far right weekly *Do Rzeczy* — will host a forthcoming news and chat show titled “Bez Ogrodek” (“Without Inhibitions”) on the Polsat television channel. Billed as an “infotainment” program, the show’s format will feature Ziemkiewicz discussing the day’s news and events with two co-thinkers, the columnists Monika Jaruzelska and Wiktor Swietlik. Pilot episodes are currently being recorded, though a launch date for the show is still to be announced.

A science fiction writer who took up punditry following the collapse of Poland’s communist regime in 1989, Ziemkiewicz has emerged in recent years as a standard bearer for the influential antisemitic, homophobic and anti-immigrant nationalist current in Polish politics.

In its annual report on global antisemitism for 2018, Tel Aviv University’s Kantor Center for the Study of Contemporary European Jewry highlighted Ziemkiewicz’s role as Poland’s leading antisemitic propagandist. In the wake of the passage that same year of legislation in Poland that enables civil prosecution of historians who examine the collusion of some Poles with the Nazi occupiers during World War II, Ziemkiewicz declared, “For many years I convinced people that we must support Israel. Today, because of a few stupid and greedy scabs, I feel like an idiot.”

Noting that the word “scabs” was “historically used in antisemitic discourse in Poland,” the Kantor Center report observed that Ziemkiewicz “was not disciplined or punished and he repeated the offensive term in subsequent media appearances.” After discovering that his name had been included in the center’s report, Ziemkiewicz boasted, “I consider it as my professional success to be included on a list of antisemites.”

Much of Ziemkiewicz’s rhetoric targeting Jews has been even more virulent. On a video posted to his YouTube channel this week, Ziemkiewicz asserted that the Jewish victims of the July 10, 1941 pogrom in the Polish town of Jedwabne had essentially deserved their fate.

“These Jews have historically been the exploiters, the leeches,” he ranted. “There has been no bigger enemy of the Polish peasant than the Jewish middleman who screwed him

for cash in every possible way. In times of foreign occupations, they were also German spies. The emancipation of the Polish people required getting rid of those exploiters.”

A recent examination of Ziemkiewicz’s writings by the “Never Again” Association — a Polish NGO that combats antisemitism and racism — emphasized his constant use of crude antisemitic tropes.

In his latest book, Ziemkiewicz claimed that “Zionism under the influence of the Holocaust, or rather the myth of the Holocaust that they created, acquired a peculiar cruelty.” Demeaning young Israelis who serve in the IDF as “killing machines,” Ziemkiewicz also attacked what he called “Jewish aggressiveness,” saying that the “ideology of the Holocaust” could be summarized as “Jews, Jews über alles” — a reference to the Nazi anthem.

Other minorities have not been spared Ziemkiewicz’s wrath. In one article he penned in 2019, the pundit urged that members of the LGBTQ community “have to be shot.” Last year, he referred to women participating in mass demonstrations against new restrictions on abortion introduced by the Polish government as “aggressive, vulgar whores.”

While Ziemkiewicz still lacks an international reputation, his ravings have sparked concern in other countries. In October, the British government refused entry to Ziemkiewicz shortly after he arrived at London’s Heathrow Airport with his wife and daughter, a student at Oxford University. According to Ziemkiewicz, he received an official note informing him that his views were “at odds with British values and likely to cause offense.” He later complained about being detained “with men whom I could not communicate with in any European language, from Africa, some Middle and Far Eastern countries.”

With the announcement of his chat show on the Polsat network, Ziemkiewicz is now certain to reach an even larger audience. His two co-hosts are no less extreme in their opinions. Recent guests on Monika Jaruzelska’s show on her YouTube channel have included Stanislaw Michalkiewicz, a writer principally known for his crude antisemitism, and Grzegorz Braun, a far-right MP and vocal proponent of vaccine refusal in Poland.

A free-to-air-channel, Polsat, which commissioned Ziemkiewicz’s new show, is the among most widely viewed broadcasters in Poland. The channel is the main home for Polish versions of popular western TV shows, including “Dancing With The Stars” and “Hell’s Kitchen.”

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