

# THE JERUSALEM POST

## **New Poland deputy education minister was member of far-right parties**

By Jeremy Sharon

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Tomasz Rzymkowski has made comments about ‘the powerful Jewish lobby’ and described legislation of his as ‘a total ban on talking to the Holocaust industry.’

The newly appointed deputy education minister of Poland, Tomasz Rzymkowski, was formerly a member of far-right political parties and has talked of “the powerful Jewish lobby” pressuring European governments to “regain wealth.”

Rzymkowski, who is a member of the ruling Law and Justice Party, a populist nationalist outfit, was previously a member of parliament for the Nationalist Movement Party, an amalgamation of far-right and right-wing populist elements.

Last week, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki appointed Rzymkowski as secretary of state at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and government plenipotentiary for general education and pedagogical supervision.

Rzymkowski has made a series of problematic comments about Jews, the Holocaust and other minorities in Poland.

He has been prominent in opposing property restitution for Polish Jews who were deprived of their property after the Holocaust by the Communist regime in Poland after the Second World War.

In 2018, against the background of US legislation to monitor progress of European countries in providing property restitution to Jews, particularly heirless property, he said that “the powerful Jewish lobby in the US is increasingly using political instruments to put pressure on European countries to regain wealth.”

In May 2019, he went to the US and staged a one-man protest outside of the White House where he “presented” his bill for the Polish parliament opposing any restitution for heirless Jewish property.

Heirless property is property for which there is no longer a valid claimant, mostly because owners were murdered in the Holocaust.

The Terezin Declaration of 2009, to which Poland is a signatory, recommends that European countries use money from heirless properties to financially assist Holocaust survivors and for Holocaust education.

Back in Poland, Rzymkowski described his bill as “a total ban on talking to the Holocaust industry.”

As deputy education minister, Rzymkowski will have authority over school curriculums, examinations and commissioning textbooks, among other responsibilities.

“Rzymkowski has been notorious for extremely hostile statements about minorities, including Jews,” said Dr. Rafal Pankowski, associate professor at Collegium Civitas and co-founder of the Never Again Association.

“His appointment... illustrates the climate of acceptance for far-right nationalism,” he said. “I am really worried about the future of the Polish educational system.”

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