

# Professor on the run

**Forger, academic, judge, solicitor, PhD candidate, undergraduate student, rabbi, lover, prisoner... Introducing Mr. Mariusz Kornilowicz aka Prof. Noah Rosenkranz, a Polish lawyer and an international conman.**

**by Marek Wroński**

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Translated from the Polish by Anna Schneider

**‘Do you think [he] just woke up one morning and said, “I think I’ll [teach] law school today.’” (‘Legally blonde’)**

More than two years ago, in a series of magazine articles, I reported on the activities of an unusual trickster, who, equipped with fake foreign academic certificates, impersonated a German-Israeli scholar at several Polish universities, teaching Legal Studies and Administration. (‘Imitation academic’, *Politics*, No. 20, May 2011; ‘Dr. chameleon’, *Politics*, No. 24, June 2011, ‘Professor chameleon’, *Academic Forum*, Issue FA 6/2011, June 2011). Pretending to be a professor of law, on a sabbatical from a prestigious research institute in Jerusalem, the imposter managed to win five engagements as a university professor at five different higher education institutions in Poland, four of them simultaneously. Then he successfully taught regular college classes, winning approval both from his students as well as his superiors. It later transpired that he did not have any foreign degrees entitling him to perform the duties he took on. His highest academic qualification was a Master’s degree in law that he received in 1991. However, it was not from another country but from a Polish tertiary education establishment, namely the University of Warsaw.

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1 This is an English translation of an article published originally in the Polish language in a monthly magazine for Poland’s academics, *Academic Forum*, in November 2013. (Oszust w prawniczej todze, Marek Wroński FA 11/2013 Forum Akademickie, Lublin: Akademska Oficyna Wydawnicza, ISBN:1233-0930. Retrieved on 12 Mar 2014 from <http://forumakademickie.pl/fa/2013/11/oszust-w-prawniczej-todze/>). The publication is from a series of articles that has been appearing from 2002 each month in the magazine’s section called ‘From the Archives of Scientific Misconduct’ [Z archiwum nieuczciwosci naukowej] <http://forumakademickie.pl/publicystyka/nauka/z-archiwum-nieuczciwosci-naukowej/>

## **Forger**

The ‘foreigner’ was born Mariusz Kornilowicz in Poland’s capital, Warsaw, in the year 1963. In 2009 he took advantage of his Jewish background and travelled to Israel to have his name changed to Noah Rosenkranz. After returning to Poland he produced two crude fake documents, probably using his home computer and printer: a 1996 PhD certificate in international law from the Freie Universität Berlin in Germany and a post-doctoral diploma from the Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem. He then had them both translated from the German into Polish by a sworn translator. These cheap forgeries were the basis for employment in four of the five Polish universities that had hired Prof. Rosenkranz.

## **Academic**

When the impostor arrived on the academic scene in Warsaw, the Polish higher education institutions were experiencing serious shortages of teaching staff. It was particularly difficult for schools to find teachers with post-doctoral qualifications in the field of law. A university lecturer in legal studies of the rank of professor with excellent credentials, looking for a job was what Polish universities were desperate for. That the trickster was a charming man, and easy to communicate with, was only a bonus. The establishments that swallowed the bait were: the School of Business, Administration and Information Technology in Warsaw, the Faculty of Law and Administration at the Ryszard Łazarski University in Warsaw, College of Business and Social Sciences in Otwock and the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce. Each of them, unbeknown to each other, engaged the Israeli scholar of Polish descent for the academic year 2010/2011. Of course, each of them understood that they were his primary employer as this resulted in gaining access to additional benefits related to university accreditation requirements.

However, the first victim that fell for the tall tales of the sleek lawyer well before he became Prof. Rosenkranz, a Jewish scholar, was the Helena Chodkowska Higher School of Management and Law in Warsaw. They hired Mr. Kornilowicz in mid-2009, without the legally required documents after he had managed to charm the then Director of the Institute of Law in the School, who recommended the fake to their HR Department for a professorial position at the Institute. The persuasive applicant explained that his first degree was from the University of Warsaw. This was the only genuine document among his certificates with all the rest being forgeries. His ‘foreign’ doctoral and post-doctoral degree certificates had not

even been good quality imitations but were crude photocopies. All the same, the Helena Chodkowska School offered Mr. Kornilowicz employment as a university professor to teach Law and Administration, and were waiting for the originals to arrive. The trickster claimed that he had sent them to the Ministry for Science and Higher Education in order to have them formally recognised. He promised to bring the originals as soon as he received the confirmations, but, as this has never happened, the university, after a year of employing him, terminated his contract. Before his dismissal, however, Prof. Kornilowicz made a trip to Israel, supposedly to attend important legal training. When he returned he was Prof. Noah Rosenkranz. His first engagement under the new name was at the College of Business and Social Sciences in Otwock, then in parallel, at the Łazarski University in Warsaw and at the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce, headed by Prof. Koźluk.

Prof. Rosenkranz was initially very successful in his academic career. As his students later acknowledged, the 'foreigner' was an exciting and eloquent lecturer and he quickly became their favourite. The imposter's luck ran out in March 2011 and the person responsible for his undoing was Mr. Duda, Head of the Human Resources Department at the University of Natural Sciences and Humanities in Siedlce. In the Autumn of 2010, examining the newcomer's documents, he spotted among them one that stirred his suspicion. It was a photocopy of a (forged!) letter from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, addressed to 'Whom it may concern'. The document stated that Prof. Rosenkranz's foreign doctoral and post-doctoral degrees 'can be considered as being equivalent to' the Polish ones. However, Mr. Duda, rather than accept this as evidence that the foreign credentials had been recognised in Poland, decided to double check this with the Department for Academic Recognition of Diplomas at the Ministry for Science and Higher Education. It was then that it came to light that the diplomas were only clumsy forgeries. Informed of this shocking revelation the indignant Prof. Rosenkranz announced that the only solution remaining to him was to travel to Israel to retrieve the originals and bring them to his Polish employer to shame them for disbelieving his explanation. So he left on the expedition to fulfil his promise - but never returned. When he had failed to report back to work within the specified time, the universities who were employing him had no alternative but to terminate his engagement contract for disciplinary reasons.

## Judge

Let us examine Mr. Mariusz Korniłowicz's credentials. He completed his judicial training in 1992-1994 at the District Voivodeship Court which was located at the time in Suwałki<sup>2</sup>. After his judicial examinations he was appointed an associate judge in the District Court in Pisz. Two years later he was transferred to Augustów, where on 17 October 1996 he was appointed by the President of Poland to the position of full judge. As I was told by those who knew him at that time, Justice Korniłowicz was a conscientious judge who applied himself to his job. On 1 July 1997 he was transferred back to Pisz where he performed his judicial duties until mid-June 2002. At this point he was expelled from the judicial service because it was found that in the academic year 1998/1999 he forged his travel expenses. They were allegedly for attending postgraduate courses in European Law at the University of Łódź<sup>3</sup>. In the year 2000, he claimed travel to a variety of training courses in Warsaw and Białystok<sup>4</sup>. Meticulous inspection of these claims unearthed another fraud. It was found that Mr. Justice Korniłowicz in May 2000, presented a fake tax invoice to his employer, the Pisz Court of Law, for the purchase of a refrigerator for PLN 1 680 for his residence in Pisz. However, when in December 2000 the Court conducted an inventory inspection at his apartment, the officer of the administrative department who was verifying the inventory list established that the said piece of white goods was not new, as Mr. Korniłowicz had claimed, but was manufactured as long ago as April 1993. This old and dilapidated refrigerator previously belonged to the husband of Mr. Korniłowicz's sister, who resided in Poznań. The piece of junk was offered to the Justice by his brother in-law when the latter moved houses. A scandal ensued and Mr. Korniłowicz, hoping to hush it up, repaid the amount he owed in full.

However, the then President of the District Court, Justice Mariola Lachowicz, ordered a complete inspection of all the tax invoices related to the past business trips of Justice Korniłowicz. The process of meticulous examination of the dates and destinations revealed that he travelled to training sessions that never took place. He managed to 'attend' twenty non-existing events for which he claimed PLN 7 603. The case was referred to both the

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2 Suwałki is a town in northeastern Poland, in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, located near the Lithuanian border.

3 The University of Łódź is a fully accredited, state university, employing 2600 academics, and attended by almost 50 000 students. It has 2nd place among Polish universities for qualifying future lawyers, as ranked by the Polish Ministry of Justice.

4 Białystok is the largest city (population: 300 000) in northeastern Poland and the capital of the Podlaskie Voivodeship.

disciplinary officer and the district attorney in Łomża<sup>5</sup>. The High Disciplinary Court in Warsaw on 18 June 2002 considered Mariusz Korniłowicz's misconduct and fraud to be so serious that it warranted his termination from the position of court judge.

A month later, prosecutor Jadwiga Zawadzka filed charges accusing Mariusz Korniłowicz of numerous instances of fraud involving forged or manipulated travel invoices. The District Court in Pisz found itself in an unfavourable position when they purchased an old refrigerator for the price of a new one. The court proceedings took seven years and at their conclusion Mariusz Korniłowicz was sentenced to one and a half years of imprisonment, with the sentence suspended for three years and a fine of PLN 4 800 as well as the court costs in the amount of PLN 1 384. Mr. Korniłowicz did not hurry with these payments and was pursued by a debt collector. He was so reluctant to pay that he was threatened by serving time in a jail for the unpaid fines.

### **Solicitor**

Disciplinary termination of a judge obviously prevents an individual from working as a legal counsel or solicitor due to the conflict with the requirement of unblemished character and conduct. However, Mariusz Korniłowicz did not concern himself with such 'unimportant' details and subsequently applied for the admission to the Olsztyn<sup>6</sup> Chamber of Legal Counsels. Among the documents that the ex-judge submitted to support his application was a letter dated 18 June 2002, which stated that he departed after nearly six years of work, and very favourable references which underlined his deep knowledge, impressive skills, solid qualifications as well as his good personality. Both documents were allegedly signed by the then President of the District Court in Pisz, Ms. Mariola Lachowicz . The Olsztyn Chamber welcomed the former judge into their ranks. After a few months Mr. Korniłowicz moved to Poland's capital, Warsaw, where he joined the local Bar Association. After a year as a solicitor, he built himself a beautiful and spacious house in Piaseczno, a prestigious Warsaw suburb, which included 6 bedrooms and 4 bathrooms and covered altogether 500 m<sup>2</sup>. The size of the block of land - 2000 m<sup>2</sup> - was also impressive. Mr. Korniłowicz lived quietly in this luxurious residence with his wife Renata and their two children.

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5 Łomża is a city in northeastern Poland, in the Podlaskie Voivodeship, located 150 kilometres from Warsaw.

6 Olsztyn is a city in northeastern Poland and the capital of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship.

## **PhD candidate**

It is interesting to note that in the academic year 2004/2005 Mr. Kornilowicz enrolled in a doctoral program at the Institute of Economics of the Polish Academy of Sciences and then quickly lost interest in this endeavour and left the program.

Today, it is difficult to assess how well Mariusz Kornilowicz performed in his role as a solicitor. What is certain is that at some point in time he kept charging his clients the fees for his services but stopped representing them. Several of his clients lodged official complaints and in November 2009 the District Disciplinary Court fined Mr. Kornilowicz PLN 14 000, and in November 2011 – PLN 7 500. In February 2011, he received a reprimand and a warning for neglecting his duties. Needless to say, Mr. Kornilowicz has not paid any of the fines, nor the court costs that amounted to PLN 8 000. The Warsaw Chamber of Legal Counsels did not take any legal action to enforce these fines. Meanwhile, the Chamber was vigorously blocking me from gaining journalistic access to the public information regarding Mr. Kornilowicz. It took a year after my newspaper articles appeared and an arrest warrant issued, that the Chamber, in August 2012, terminated Mr. Kornilowicz from the profession of legal counsel.

## **Conman on the run**

The first charges for a possible criminal case were filed in March 2011, by the Minister for Science and Higher Education, Prof. Barbara Kudrycka, when the ministry received the information that Mr. Kornilowicz's foreign certificates may be counterfeit. Over the next several months complaints were also lodged by the three schools that employed Noah Rosenkranz. His total remuneration there was PLN 120 000. Two other universities stated that they did not suffer any financial losses because the imposter had a valid Master's degree in law which was sufficient to qualify him to conduct tutorials. The School of Business, Administration and Information Technology in Warsaw conveniently ignored the fact that Noah Rosenkranz was listed on their website as professor and Head of the Department of Constitutional Law. In a letter, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for General Affairs Mr. Tadeusz Morawski, indicated that 'the Professor's' salary was PLN 1 368 per month, and his total yearly earnings amounted only to PLN 16 500. Similar arguments were presented by the Helena Chodkowska School of Management and Law in Warsaw. They stressed that 'Prof.'

Korniłowicz did not conduct examinations. His role extended only to conducting tutorials for which, by law, his Master's degree was sufficient.

The prosecution had a sluggish start. Aspirant Łukasz Macioch from the police station in 21 Wilcza Street in Warsaw, who led the investigation, stated that it was difficult for him to get access to the relevant documents related to this case, as, apparently, the universities were 'too embarrassed' to share the information which showed that they had so easily fallen victim to Mr. Korniłowicz's deception. After all, the PhD certificate from Berlin was just an ordinary computer printout made on an A4 paper sheet. It did not have any stamps and was not even adorned by the ornamental lettering so common for such documents. The papers - including the post doctoral degree certificate from Israel - were written in German, a language never used in Israel on any official documents as it is only a minority language there<sup>7</sup>. Needless to say, the 'professor', when summoned by the police for questioning, did not give a sign of life, which suggested that perhaps he really moved to Israel, as he had claimed previously.

### **Family man**

The turning point occurred on 21 December 2011 at 6 am when the police paid a visit to the imposter's home in Piaseczno. There, they found abundant evidence of the cheat's occupancy of his Piaseczno residence: inside the house there was his unmade bed and in the backyard – his Range Rover, which he had on lease from a company that was his client. Further searching revealed the fact that his ex-wife was lying to the police when she claimed that she had not seen her former husband for two years - in the Piaseczno house the police found many recent letters addressed to Mr. Korniłowicz, as well as his Hebrew text books, while in the car which was parked in the backyard they unearthed his current driver's licence and his practising certificate issued by the Bar Association. In a word - clear signs that the ex-husband was a household member in Piaseczno. A few days after the police search the fugitive made a phone call to the investigating aspirant, Mr. Maciocha, asking the police to allow him to spend Christmas with his children and ex-wife, and declaring that on 8<sup>th</sup> January, he would personally report to court for a hearing. However, he has not kept his word and has never showed up. Subsequently, in May 2012, the dutiful prosecutor overseeing the investigation,

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<sup>7</sup> The main language used for communication among the Israelis is Hebrew, while Hebrew and Arabic are the only official languages in Israel.

Mr. Michał Mistygacz, asked the court for a warrant for an immediate arrest of Mr. Kornilowicz for a period of two weeks. The court granted him permission.

For almost a year nothing much was happening and the sought-after-swindler seemed to have disappeared from the surface of the Earth. I made numerous attempts to find out how it was possible for a judge who was removed from the bar, to practise as a solicitor. This was obviously contrary to law. However, my inquiries were never answered. Finally, they prompted a criminal investigation which revealed that the documents that the imposter presented in 2002 and the signatures on them, allegedly of the then President of the District Court in Pisz, were forged. The District Prosecutor in Szczytno undertook an investigation into this matter. In turn, the District Prosecutor's Office in Olsztyn is conducting an investigation into counsel Kornilowicz fraudulently depriving one of his clients of almost PLN 45 000.

At the end of 2012, the sentence of 2009, from the District Court in Ostrołęka, expired, despite the fact that during the 3-year suspension period Mariusz Kornilowicz committed a new series of criminal acts, falsifying further documents as Prof. Noah Rosenkranz. However, under the law Mariusz Kornilowicz does not have a criminal record!

### **Undergraduate student**

In mid-October 2012 a rumour started to circulate among the first year students of Judaic Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow that their 50-year-old fellow student, Mariusz Kornilowicz, who stood out from the crowd with his Hasidic-style beard, dark frock, yarmulke and tallit, is in fact the famous Prof. Noah Rosenkranz. His Jewish name was discovered by accident, when, as a freshman, he applied to join the Students' Research Club, and sent an email as Rosenkranz. When the information reached the Director of the Institute, he conducted an investigation which confirmed that student Mariusz Kornilowicz was accepted to the university program in accordance with the law - on the basis of his High School Certificate which he received in the late 80's.

### **Rabbi, lover**

To his university teachers Mr. Kornilowicz explained that he was a retired rabbi who, after almost 30 years spent in Germany, had now returned to his Polish roots. In turn, his fellow-



students were told a variety of moving stories, including one in which he claimed that he came to Cracow to wait for the beloved from his youth, whom he accidentally met after many years. She was married to a man who was in an irreversible coma and she must look after him. Once his lover's spouse had gone to meet his maker, they would get married.

Meanwhile, he wanted to soak in this special atmosphere that prevails in the halls and corridors of the ancient university and which he remembered so well from his youth.

The new student of Jewish Studies, who was renting an apartment in Nowa Huta<sup>8</sup>, attended his university classes diligently, but rarely took part in the discussions. He had an erudite's knowledge of Judaism, but it was not the type of knowledge that is required of a rabbi. His knowledge of Hebrew was limited. He spoke Polish without a trace of foreign accent which would be typical for a person living away from Poland for many years. He was sometimes observed walking the hallways of the Faculty of Law.

### **Prisoner**

As the news of the newcomer was being spread around, the students became more and more outraged that the authorities at the Institute of Jewish Studies did not act. Eventually, they went to complain to the Dean of the Faculty of History, who is responsible for the Judaic courses. Finally, the reports about the unusual student reached the Prosecutor's the Office of the Warsaw- CBD District. The police arrested Mr. Korniłowicz in Cracow on October 17, 2013 during his classes at the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Jagiellonian University. After two weeks, he was transferred to Warsaw where Prosecutor Mistygacz presented him with the allegations while the District Court, Warsaw - CBD ordered a three-month detention. During this time the Warsaw Prosecutor's Office would have received the files from the prosecution proceedings from Szczytno and Olsztyn<sup>9</sup> and the three cases would be investigated jointly. I expect that just for impersonating a university professor the prosecutor will request a few years of imprisonment. It seems that Mariusz Korniłowicz aka Noah Rosenkranz in the

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8 Nowa Huta, or literally The New Steel Mill, is a suburb in Cracow with more than 200,000 inhabitants. It was started in 1949 by the Communist authorities and was planned to become, for ideological reasons, a major centre of heavy industry to counteract the resistance of the middle class in Cracow to the new regime by attracting to it people from the working class. In the 1980s the Solidarity members demonstrated there in violent street protests and were fought by the police.

9 Szczytno and Olsztyn are towns in north-eastern Poland, in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodship.

coming years will have plenty of time to study Judaism, as well as use his knowledge of the criminal code for the benefit of his inmates.

When I saw his photographs that were taken when he was being transported by the police to Warsaw, his appearance struck me: over the last one and a half years Noah Rosenkranz had aged about 20-25 years. This 46-year-old man today looks like a 70-year-old. Clearly, the lifestyle he has been leading took its toll. I will keep updating readers of the further developments in the life and career of our academic action hero.

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