

Right-wing academic Jörg Baberowski agitates against refugees at Christian Social Union event in Germany

Johannes Stern
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The right-wing German academic Jörg Baberowski has up to this point spread his reactionary opinions in books, articles and interviews, in which he has defended the Hitler apologist Ernst Nolte, downplayed the Nazis' war of extermination and agitated against refugees.

But the Humboldt University (HU) professor is now openly emerging as a leading right-wing political figure. He is intent on using his position at Humboldt University to build an extreme right-wing movement in Germany.

Last weekend, Baberowski spoke at a so-called specialist congress on migration and refugees held by the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) in Erding. The congress had as little to do with specialist scholarship as the professor's work. It was a party meeting, or more accurately an agitational meeting, at which the leadership of the right-wing party railed against the allegedly too lax refugee policy of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, called for the restriction of immigration and more deportations, and urged more aggressive military interventions in the Middle East and Africa.

According to the CSU publication *Bayernkurier*, the atmosphere in the town hall in Erding was inflammatory. The opening speech was given by Bavarian state premier and CSU chairman Horst Seehofer, a declared supporter of Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban. Seehofer would like to adopt Orban's own methods of barbed wire fences and stringent border controls in Germany to keep refugees out.

Shortly before the congress, the CSU leader threatened to take extraordinary emergency measures

and file a constitutional complaint against the federal government if it did not act. In his keynote speech in Erding on refugee policy, Seehofer left no doubt what he meant. He demanded the sealing of the 3,000-kilometre German border and the adoption of firm measures to restrict the rate of immigration. He described doing nothing as a "capitulation by the constitutional state to reality."

In the subsequent discussion involving leading CSU politicians, Baberowski supported their "resistance to Merkel's policy", but went even further. The federal government was allowing "illegal immigrants" into the country, and thus risking "everything that has previously worked," the Humboldt professor railed. The chancellor was acting according to the maxim: "We don't know anything, we can't do anything and we will just let it happen."

Bavarian Radio cited Baberowski as saying, "people who come without passports are illegal. We don't have any idea who is coming. Uncontrolled immigration calls everything into question that has previously worked. With the 'all in' approach, we have used an important opportunity to take in everyone involved. If we continue to wave them through, it will be claimed that Germany will solve the problem. And the US is pushing for a solution."

On the issue of "combatting the origins of refugees," Baberowski also sought to outdo the agitators of the CSU.

When the federal minister for economic cooperation and development, Gerd Müller, proposed that "we go to these states" and "invest there" to improve the situation, Baberowski opposed him and said that countries like Syria, Iraq and Libya were no longer

“states,” but “public spaces of violence, where violent actors decide what will be done.” There was therefore no point in “sending money there.”

Like Müller, Baberowski is of the opinion that it is “necessary to go” to the states in the Middle East and north Africa. However, he does not propose to “invest”, but rather employ military methods to intervene in violation of all norms and conventions of international law.

One year ago, at a discussion in the German Historical Museum entitled “Germany: intervention power”, Baberowski declared, “And if one is not ready to take hostages, burn down villages and hang people to spread fear and terror like the terrorists do, if one isn’t prepared for that, then one cannot win such a conflict, then it is better to stay out of it.”

Baberowski’s appearance at the CSU meeting in Erding confirms the warning made by the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) that “Baberowski’s attack on fundamental democratic rights and academic freedoms serves interests which intend to transform Humboldt University into a centre for right-wing and militarist propaganda.”

On 12 February 2014, Baberowski excluded HU students and historians from a public colloquium to suppress all critical discussion of the biography of Leon Trotsky by the internationally discredited British historian Robert Service. At about the same time, he declared his support in *Der Spiegel* for Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte, stating, “Hitler was not a psychopath, he was not vicious.”

Baberowski’s extreme right-wing agenda is now so obvious that not only the CSU, but also the fascist NPD, see him as an ideological collaborator. The Humboldt professor’s articles on refugees have been shared and supported by NPD Facebook pages, and in the latest issue of the NPD paper *Deutsche Stimme* (*German Voice*), Baberowski is described as conducting “excellent [academic] work” and is defended against left-wing critics.

His extreme right-wing and fascist agenda is so apparent that even sections of the bourgeois media, as well as his own supporters, are becoming uneasy.

Shortly after Baberowski’s appearance in Erding, an article appeared in the *Tagesspiegel* by his pupil Tobias Bütow, which noted with concern, “Accusations that he

belongs to the extreme right are increasing. It is also being discussed in the French press. The historian, who was once renowned beyond the bounds of his academic discipline, wants to trigger debates beyond the pages of the historical journals, and is step-by-step losing his academic credibility.”

While Bütow is desperately seeking to distance himself from the extreme right-wing political positions of his mentor, he is at the same time trying to save Baberowski’s “scholarly and academic” work. At the end of the article he writes, “His historical research on violence enables us to better understand the mass murders, massacres and crimes of the 20th century. But the historian’s political advice provokes misunderstanding in the 21st century. And strife.”

Bütow’s attempt to “save what can be saved” will go down like a lead balloon. The PSG has demonstrated in detail on the basis of Baberowski’s public statements and a careful analysis of his books that his “historical research into violence” is not about “a better understanding of the crimes of the 20th century”, but rather the preparation of new crimes.

The foreword to the book *Scholarship or War Propaganda* states, with reference to his downplaying of the war crimes in World War II and the Nazis’ attempt to present Germany’s war of extermination as a war of self-defence against violent partisans, “Such historical falsifications were previously voiced only by ultra-right and fascist circles. Their promotion today is closely linked with the attempts of the German government to revive German militarism.”



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