

Right-wing German academic Jörg Baberowski demands more repression against refugees

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Jörg Baberowski, a professor of history at Berlin's Humboldt University, is emerging ever more openly as a right-wing ideologue. Previously he gained notoriety for his relativization of Nazi crimes, his defence of Hitler apologist Ernst Nolte, and for publicly agitating against accepting refugees. Now he is urging the creation of a strong, authoritarian state.

At the recent Phil.Cologne conference he asserted that "men in Germany" were helpless in the face of violence from migrants because they were no longer able to fight. This had supposedly been seen on New Year's Eve in Cologne, when, he said, men had not defended women from alleged assaults. "We see that men in Germany no longer have any idea how to deal with violence," Baberowski was quoted as saying by DPA.

But his own alternative to the law of the jungle is a strong, authoritarian state that overrides constitutional procedures and democratic rights such as the presumption of innocence. "These people should have been immediately sent to prison, then they would have learnt a lesson for life," he declared.

In April, during a discussion on violence and religion, Baberowski spoke out at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences against concerning oneself with the "perpetrators' means of justification," i.e., with the reasons for violence. He rejected social policy aimed at prevention in favour of a better equipping of the state to enable it to maintain its monopoly on force. "The large amounts of money thrown away on social programmes to civilise people could just as well be tossed away," he said, summarising his reactionary position.

It is no accident that Baberowski is now intervening in the debate over events on New Year's Eve in Cologne. That incident was deliberately inflated by the media to whip up sentiments against refugees, who at the time enjoyed a broad wave of sympathy from the population.

Although more than four months have passed since the events, none of the 11 men charged in relation to the

incident have been found guilty of sexual assault. Many of the assertions about excessive violence vanished into thin air during the investigations. There is no evidence that anything more happened in Cologne than the pick-pocketing and verbal abuse that are unfortunately a common feature of such major events.

Despite this, at Phil.Cologne Baberowski added another legend to the many already in existence about the New Year's Eve events. Without a shred of evidence, he proclaimed that the cause of the violence was the situation in refugee camps. There, the state was absent and small groups of men took over command. When these groups arrived on the cathedral square on New Year's Eve, they also viewed this as a law-free zone.

Does the Humboldt professor really believe his listeners do not follow the news? At least since the abuse of refugees in the Burbach camp in North Rhine-Westphalia and at Berlin's Lageso (state office for health and social care), it has been well known that a law-free zone exists in the camps for the state and the private security contractors hired by it, but not for refugees, who are bullied, abused and repressed.

In addition, the contrasting of "men in Germany," who have forgotten how to fight, and criminal, violent foreigners is a racist cliché that has nothing to do with reality.

Baberowski knows that the number of attacks on refugee camps exploded last year. According to official figures, they rose to 1,031, i.e., five times as many as in the previous year. But he downplayed these figures. In an interview with the television channel 3Sat, he said, "I think that given the problems we currently have in Germany with immigration this is relatively harmless."

The increase in criminality among foreigners, which the statistics also show, is almost exclusively linked to violations of the law concerning aliens, such as illegal entry or breaches of the right to reside, i.e., "criminal offences" which can only be committed by foreign nationals. "With the refugees last year, violence did not come to Germany,

but poverty,” remarked Christian Pfeiffer, a former director of the criminology research institute in Lower Saxony.

Baberowski, a professor of Eastern European history from Humboldt University, is now regularly referred to in the right-wing press as a “violence researcher.” But his public utterances have nothing to do with research or scholarship. As soon as one begins to critically examine and investigate them, they turn out to be groundless. Baberowski is not spreading scientific knowledge, but ideological prejudices previously associated with the most extreme right-wing circles.

In his blinkered view of violence and society, as he explained it in his last book *Zones of Violence*, there is either the law of the jungle or the authoritarian state. There is no place for democratic structures.

This is based on a notion of humanity widely associated with conservative and anti-democratic circles during the Weimar Republic. Accordingly human beings are not capable of reason or regulating themselves or society, but are rather irredeemable predators who must be confined and suppressed.

“No order is conceivable which is not based on hierarchy and social inequality, because opportunities and abilities are unequally distributed,” states Baberowski in the book. This order must then be defended by state power against resistance.

With the same theory of violence, Baberowski justifies brutal wars. In the *Eßlinger Zeitung* he declared last November that the principle of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” had to be implemented against terrorists. Prior to that, in a discussion at the German Historical Museum, he recommended “taking hostages, burning down villages and hanging up people and spreading fear and terror,” to defeat terrorists.

Baberowski’s latest statements are in line with this. Over the past two years, the Humboldt University professor has been elevated to the position of a leading spokesman for a new right-wing movement in Germany, which applauds militarism, cultivates nationalism and racism and propagandises for the strengthening of the state apparatus. Attacks on the weakest members of society are combined with a deep hatred of the working class and any social opposition. The authoritarian state is the guarantor of order.

This development confirms the correctness of the offensive undertaken by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (PSG) at Humboldt University against Baberowski’s right-wing positions. In a series of meetings and articles, the IYSSE demonstrated how Baberowski relativized the crimes of National Socialism and defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte. “Hitler was no psychopath,

and he wasn’t vicious,” Baberowski declared in a February 2014 edition of *Der Spiegel*.

The book *Scholarship or War Propaganda* documented this controversy and demonstrated how these revisions of history were connected with the return of German militarism and growing social inequality. In order to wage new wars, a new narrative was required, “a falsification of history that conceals and justifies the crimes of German imperialism,” the foreword stated.

The IYSSE’s critique of Baberowski provoked denunciations from the media. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) editor Jürgen Kaube railed against the IYSSE under the headline “Mobbing: Trotskyist Style.” Friederike Haupt, in the same newspaper, linked the criticism of Baberowski and of his colleague Herfried Münkler with bomb threats and death threats. Similar articles appeared in *Der Spiegel*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and several other publications.

The Institute of Historical Study and the Humboldt University’s management accused the IYSSE in public statements of defamation and character assassination. Baberowski himself excluded critical students from his events, banned them from speaking and called for legal measures against them.

There can now be no doubt that Jörg Baberowski is a right-wing ideologue. His standpoints are so explicitly xenophobic and authoritarian that they have been taken up and sharply criticised in some newspapers.

Baberowski makes it appear “as though violence could have prevented the New Year’s Eve events, and as if women desired brawler-escorts as protectors,” wrote *Focus*. The *Kölner Stadtanzeiger* pointed to several acts of violence and assaults that contradicted the professor’s theses. A wave of outrage directed at Baberowski broke out on Twitter and the *Kölner Express* referred to the fact that the professor had already “spoken out to relativize Hitler” in 2014.



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