

German daily reacts to Baberowski ruling with campaign of lies against the IYSSE

The Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei

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On Monday, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) published, on the front page of its literary supplement, a hysterical attack on the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party—SGP), its youth organization, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), and the *World Socialist Web Site*. The FAZ was responding to a March 15 ruling by the Cologne District Court, which held that the general student committee (Asta) at Bremen University is allowed to call Humboldt University Professor Jörg Baberowski a “right-wing extremist.”

In “The creeping poison of character assassination,” author Heike Schmoll piles up countless lies and repugnant slanders. Schmoll studied theology and published a book in 2008, *Praise the Elite: Why We Need Them*. Her FAZ article is comparable in style, substance and diction to the conspiracy theories one usually finds in ultra-right newspapers. She lies without restraint, does not supply a single piece of evidence for her accusations and has not even made the effort, as any honourable journalist would have done, to contact the IYSSE or SGP, against whom her tirade is directed.

The Baberowski ruling was evidently a bitter blow for the FAZ. The conservative daily published the article by the Humboldt professor that the judges in Cologne deemed to be a “sufficient factual starting point” for the description “right-wing extremist.” The newspaper vehemently defended Baberowski from criticism and published his right-wing views on many other occasions. Schmoll’s article fulfils a very definite purpose: it aims to intimidate and criminalise criticism of far-right positions.

The Cologne court merely confirmed what Baberowski’s critics, not to mention his adulators, have known for some time. While his books have found no recognition in international academic circles, the American ultra-right has praised his attacks on refugees. The alt-right web site Breitbart News, as well as the fascist *Daily Stormer*, have taken note of the Humboldt professor with approval. And in the wake of the Cologne ruling, all of the usual suspects in the German far-right milieu declared their solidarity with

Baberowski: the *Junge Freiheit* magazine, *Compact* magazine, the Politically Incorrect blog and Alternative for Germany (AfD) politician Bernd Höcke.

In her FAZ article, Schmoll attempted to portray Baberowski as the victim of a campaign that threatens the “university as a venue for free discourse, academic disputes, intellectual thought experiments and speech free from censorship.” She continued, “The often-invoked freedom of scholarship, which is guaranteed in the Basic Law, appears only to exist on paper in some places.”

Schmoll accuses the IYSSE of practising “strict censorship” against Baberowski and political scientist Herfried Münkler, and of “radically” blocking “the free exchange of opinions.” She ultimately attributes to the Trotskyist youth organisation responsibility for a “conformist pressure” that is applied from the kindergarten through high school and university.

All of this turns reality on its head. For Schmoll, “freedom of scholarship” only applies to extreme right-wing and militarist positions. She condemns criticism of these positions as censorship and the distribution of leaflets as an attack on freedom of opinion. It is noteworthy that she never cites any of Baberowski’s controversial statements. It would, after all, be difficult to publicly justify statements such as “Hitler was not vicious,” the war of annihilation was “imposed upon” the Wehrmacht by Stalin, and refugees threaten the “bonds of our society.” Or, for that matter, Münkler’s postulate that as the “power at the centre” of Europe, Germany must act as the “hegemon” and “disciplinarian.”

Instead, Schmoll employs blatant lies to back up her absurd assertions.

For example, she claims that the IYSSE disrupted Baberowski’s lectures and prevented students from “listening” to him. The university group also supposedly ambushed the “popular” professor in his private life “in the manner of the paparazzi.” In fact, neither the IYSSE nor any of its members have ever disrupted one of Baberowski’s events or prevented students from attending them, much less

ambushed him in private. Schmoll's assertions are flat-out lies lacking any factual basis.

By contrast, Baberowski is infamous for having critics of his right-wing positions thrown out of meetings, suppressing discussions and attempting to silence students that are critical of him.

When the IYSSE announced three years ago its intention to attend a public colloquium with the discredited Trotsky biographer Robert Service and submitted nine critical questions to him, Baberowski secretly changed the location of the event, mobilised a team of security personnel to block students and professors critical of him from taking part, and banned questions at the meeting.

Baberowski has repeatedly called on university management to refuse meeting rooms to the IYSSE, which is represented in the student parliament with four seats. He described students from his own institute as a “despicable bunch” and “red-coated fascists” because they distributed IYSSE flyers. Baberowski then sued the Bremen Asta to prevent these statements from being cited and criticised.

To discredit the IYSSE, Schmoll introduces the fairy tale of American gold. She asserts that the IYSSE possesses “substantial financial resources from the United States.” In addition, the organ of the SGP, the German edition of the *World Socialist Web Site*, is operated from American servers, making it “untouchable under German media law.”

Both statements are utterly false. Neither the IYSSE nor the SGP—unlike many German academics and journalists—receives money from the United States. The *World Socialist Web Site* has a German copyright, with information on the service provider, address for summons and responsible editor. There is a link to the copyright page under each article.

Schmoll is particularly outraged at the IYSSE for taking the student parliament elections seriously, campaigning for them with leaflets opposing militarism and the rise of the right, and winning support on this basis. “The small group is assuming the right to decide on historical truth,” she remarks on this utilisation of democratic rights.

Schmoll then presents the protests of the Bremen Asta against an appearance by Baberowski at its university as having been caused by the intervention of the IYSSE. “Beforehand, representatives of the IYSSE made contact in a timely manner with the University of Bremen Asta, which subsequently endeavoured to prevent the ‘right-wing extremist’ professor from Berlin from speaking in Bremen.”

This is also a lie, which Schmoll can neither provide evidence for nor prove. The IYSSE had no contact with the Bremen Asta prior to the meeting. Schmoll invents such a meeting to defame the growing opposition among students to right-wing professors. Anybody like the IYSSE who

attacks these right-wing standpoints is to be silenced by a filthy campaign of lies. A previous article in the FAZ, on March 21, even falsely claimed that “violence” against Baberowski broke out in Bremen.

While Schmoll lies and blathers about “standout figures” being straightened out by the “social collective,” she does not even bother to mention the conflict that took place at Humboldt University and that is now being repeated at many universities.

Baberowski is no honourable professor or “standout figure” who is being described as a “right-wing extremist” for no discernible reason, but a right-wing ideologue. He is a regular talk show guest, gives interviews and publishes articles in the daily press. He writes a regular column for the *Basler Zeitung*, which is part of the press empire of Swiss right-wing radical Christoph Blocher.

This was also confirmed by the Cologne court. The chamber stated that Baberowski had “consciously decided to express himself not in a well-considered, controlled manner, but in a way which...is generally regarded as provocative.”

The ruling is all the more devastating because, in the effort to silence his critics, Baberowski went to a court that is considered by journalists “to be the harshest in the country” (*Spiegel Online*). However, even this court could do nothing else than permit the use of the description right-wing extremist.

The SGP and IYSSE will not be intimidated by the FAZ’s filthy campaign. Baberowski has been exposed as a right-wing ideologue and warmonger, and Schmoll’s lies cannot change that.



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