

Baberowski acknowledges his right-wing extremist role models

Peter Schwarz

21 June 2017

Two weeks after his legal defeat in Cologne, Professor Jörg Baberowski has published an article in the *Basler Zeitung* (a Swiss German-language daily) in which he solidarises himself with Armin Mohler, a pioneer of the New Right.

Baberowski, who teaches history at Berlin's Humboldt University (HU), failed in his attempt to ban the general student committee (ASTA) at Bremen University from describing him as a right-wing extremist and racist. He has responded to his defeat in court by openly identifying himself with his right-wing extremist role models.

In a piece titled "The human is not an abstraction," Baberowski reaffirmed a statement that played a central role in the Cologne proceedings. In September 2015, he justified his opposition to the integration of a large number of refugees by stating that it would disrupt "the traditional continuity in which we stand and which provides social stability and consistency." According to Baberowski, "Common experiences, readings and observations" constitute the glue that holds society together.

Even the initial ruling by the lower court, the Cologne District Court, which found in favour of Baberowski on several points, declared that this statement justified describing him as a "right-wing extremist." Two weeks ago, the Cologne District Court of Appeals rejected his complaint on all points.

Baberowski is now reaffirming his far-right thesis and basing himself on an author who, in the post-war era, revived "the volkish nationalism of the 1920s" and is today honoured as a "founding father" by the new right, as the German weekly *Die Zeit* wrote in July 2016.

Baberowski began his article with a citation from Mohler's volume published in 1990 titled *Insulting*

Liberals: "The idea of an autonomous individual, which the liberals love so dearly, is the worst of all abstractions."

He then summarised Mohler's further theoretical progression. "Every human being stands in a continuity of life, is connected with family, friends and memories that give his existence continuity," he wrote, and went on to conclude, "It is a central tenet of conservative thought to conceive of people in groups and continuities of tradition."

The conception of a community "based on primordial ties" in which the people draw on "their own group, relations, neighbourhood, religion or ethnic origin [sic!]," as Baberowski writes, does, in fact, belong to the tenets of arch-conservative and fascist thought. In line with this, the Nazis coined the term "people's community" (*Volksgemeinschaft*).

The fact that Baberowski is a right-wing extremist and racist is underscored by his embrace of such conceptions. While in the past (for example, in an interview with the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on September 20, 2015) he described himself as representing a "liberal viewpoint," he now attacks liberalism by basing himself on an acknowledged fascist.

Born in 1920, the Swiss publicist Armin Mohler joined the Waffen-SS in Germany in 1942. After the war, he moved in right-wing and far-right circles. For a time he was private secretary to the writer Ernst Jünger and for a short period a speechwriter for Christian Social Union leader Franz Josef Strauß. He participated in the founding of the far-right "Republican Party," published in right-wing extremist papers such as *Junge Freiheit* and the *Deutsche National-Zeitung*, and supported Alain de Benoist, a pioneer of the French Nouvelle Droite.

Mohler is considered the most important modern representative of the “conservative revolution,” a concept he helped shape and wrote about at length. It incorporates a group of ideological tendencies characterised by their anti-liberal, anti-democratic and anti-egalitarian features, which prepared the way for National Socialism in the Weimar Republic.

Mohler, who died in 2003, retained his loyalty to his fascist role models until the end. Asked in 1995 by the *Wochenzeitung* if he still admired Hitler, he answered, “What does admire mean? He at least created the correct leadership. The cadre that he attracted had style.”

In the same year, he told the *Leipziger Volkszeitung* that he was a fascist “in the sense of Jose Antonio Primo de Rivera,” the son of the Spanish dictator and the predecessor of Franco at the head of the Falange Party. He added, “For me, fascism is when disappointed liberals and disappointed socialists come together for something new. Out of this emerges what one can call conservative revolution.”

Mohler is now seen as a role model by groups like Pegida and far-right elements in the AfD (Alternative for Germany). Götz Kubitschek, one of the leading ideologues in these circles, eulogised Mohler in a 2003 obituary and described himself as Mohler’s “pupil.”

Baberowski not only agrees with Mohler’s anti-liberal standpoint, which rejects the ideals shaped by the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions of equality, freedom and the self-determination of the individual (“the worst of all abstractions”). Like Mohler and his fascist precursors, Baberowski also draws authoritarian conclusions.

“Liberals cannot imagine,” he wrote, “that people in authoritarian orders have free spaces for action that they would not have if they relied on decisions that lead into the open and uncertainty. Most people want security, predictability and stability. They want only those changes that do not call into question their way of life.”

According to Baberowski, only the privileged—people who live “in the bourgeois districts ... where they remain among themselves”—can afford liberalism and cosmopolitanism. By contrast, the poor, who live under precarious conditions, need an authoritarian order and communities “based on primordial ties”—i.e., a fascist regime.

It is alarming that a professor at Humboldt University presents such an affirmation of authoritarian and far-right views in the *Basler Zeitung*, which belongs to the press empire of Swiss right-wing extremist Christoph Blocher. It is made even worse by the fact that the university administration and several professors continue to defend Baberowski to this day, describing his statements as “not right-wing extremist,” and declaring criticism of him to be “unacceptable.”

An official statement by the Humboldt University presidium to this effect remains on its web site. The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) called on the university in an open letter to officially retract the statement. The university has since confirmed receipt of the letter, but has neither responded nor removed the statement. None of the 23 professors who signed the statement has withdrawn his signature. One can only interpret this as a decision to defend or at least cover up right-wing extremist positions.



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