

Right-wing extremist Professor Jörg Baberowski attacks critics at Berlin's Humboldt University

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The German right-wing extremist Professor Jörg Baberowski is targeting his critics with increasing aggressiveness. On his Facebook page, Baberowski has insulted and threatened other professors at Humboldt University because they criticised a xenophobic statement he made.

Baberowski is one of the new right's leading spokesmen in Germany. After gaining a national reputation in 2015 with an attack on refugees published in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Baberowski founded a discussion circle with the goal of making right-wing extremist positions socially acceptable, as an article in *Die Zeit* reported on March 22 of this year. Earlier this year, the "Statement 2018" emerged from this fascistic network. Right-wing academics criticised "illegal mass immigration" and declared their solidarity with the xenophobic far-right.

This repugnant declaration was answered by several counter-statements signed by thousands of academics. An open letter to Wilhelm Hopf, founder and head of LIT publishers, which specialises in scholarly publications, gained particular attention. Hopf was one of the signatories of "Statement 2018." As a result of the open letter, more than 200 professors and academics from Germany and Austria threatened to end their collaboration with the right-wing publisher.

In the open letter, the academics noted "with astonishment" that Hopf, who heads "an internationally active company with offices in Berlin, Vienna, Hamburg, London, Zürich and New York," signed the "Statement 2018." The open letter pointed out that the anti-immigrant statement came in the context of a "political conjuncture in which a discourse directed against refugees is a cornerstone of the institutionalisation of the far-right in Germany."

"Our scholarly efforts are ultimately directed towards the pedagogic and democratic goal of combating prejudice and exclusion," the signatories continued. "We therefore not only distance ourselves from the inhumane goals of

'Statement 2018,' but in addition do not want to be associated with a publisher expressing himself in such a way. We can therefore no longer collaborate with LIT publishers in the future and we call for a decisive rejection of xenophobia and nationalism."

Hopf subsequently withdrew his signature and said that as LIT publisher, he had made a "mistake" in signing the "Statement 2018."

Included among the signatories of the open letter were four professors and three academic staff at Humboldt University, including literary scholar Eva Boesenberg, cultural scholar Susanne Gehrmann, ethnologist Wolfgang Kaschuba and sport sociologist Tina Nobis.

Baberowski subsequently launched a disgraceful slander campaign against these professors. In two texts published on his Facebook page and elsewhere, Baberowski insulted the academics as "denunciators" who are "smug professors who have never uttered a critical word in their lives." He compared their statement to the Nazis' call to boycott Jewish businesses. The statement was a "propaganda campaign" reminding him of "the darkest times," he continued. "Don't buy from the outcasts!" Baberowski added.

The demagoguery here is boundless. Colleagues opposing the attack on refugees and the rise of the far-right are compared to the fascist terror. And this from a professor who is notorious for downplaying the Nazis' crimes and relativising the Holocaust.

Baberowski previously declared publicly that Hitler was "not vicious" because "he did not want to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table,"—a claim that can be proven to be false. He has defended the Nazi apologist Ernst Nolte and claimed in his writings that the Red Army imposed the war in the east on the Germans.

Baberowski was not content with denouncing his colleagues. He also explicitly threatened them. At the end of his tirade against the signatories of the open letter, he

declared, “The humiliated and excluded will remember who pilloried them.” Coming from the founder of a far-right discussion circle, this must be taken as a serious warning.

This is not the first time that Baberowski has insulted and threatened his critics. In March, he accused the *Tagesspiegel* of discrediting “people with different opinions in a manner reminiscent of dictatorships,” because the Berlin daily criticized the “Statement 2018.”

In February of last year, he insulted and threatened students at his own institute because they distributed a leaflet critical of him. Baberowski described Sven Wurm, an International Youth and Students for Social Equality deputy in the student parliament at Berlin’s Humboldt University, as a “red-coated fascist” and “despicable denunciator,” and photographed him against his will. In his lectures, Baberowski urged students to take action against his critics. “You can also say no. Everybody can do something...” he said, before reading out the location and time of the next IYSSE meeting.

The right-wing extremist professor is able to act so aggressively at the university, threatening and insulting colleagues, because the administration is covering for him.

When the Cologne Court of Appeals rejected Baberowski’s legal suit last year against the student association in Bremen, seeking to bar the student association from referring to him as a right-wing extremist, the university administration came to his defence. It published a statement describing Baberowski as a “renowned scholar,” and labelled “attacks in the media” against him as “unacceptable.” While the right-wing professor disgracefully defamed colleagues and students, the university sought to deny students the right to reply in the media.

At the time, the editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* rejected this attack on freedom of opinion and explained the reason for the close partnership between the university administration and Baberowski:

The official collaboration between the Humboldt University administration and Baberowski to suppress critics of right-wing extremist positions can be understood only in the context of the sharp shift to the right within ruling circles. In their domestic policy, sections of the Social Democratic Party and Left Party have adapted to the anti-refugee propaganda and are even participating in it. Baberowski is viewed as an ally in this reactionary orientation.

To reestablish Germany as an influential and active military power, the ruling class must break the

German population’s strong opposition to war, which is based on the bloody and tragic experiences of the 20th century. It is therefore necessary to rewrite history and whitewash the crimes of German imperialism. Baberowski plays an important role in this filthy and underhanded initiative.

This analysis has since been fully confirmed. The establishment parties’ right-wing policies paved the way for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) to enter parliament, and this is now being used to carry out a further shift to the right by the entire political establishment. The new grand coalition is the most right-wing German government since the downfall of Nazi rule. It is launching a massive rearmament program, accelerating the destruction of social services and adopting the AfD’s refugee policies.

But these policies are widely hated within the population. The vast majority of the people are not prepared to accept the return of the fascistic filth from the past. Numerous student parliaments, student unions, department committees and other student bodies have supported the IYSSE and sharply criticised Baberowski. Hundreds came to meetings on the topic. The widespread criticism of the “Statement 2018” is bound up with this opposition.

This is why Baberowski is responding with increasing aggressiveness to his critics. He realises that, in the final analysis, he can impose his right-wing agenda only by resorting to violence. The way in which Baberowski, supported by the university, assails academic colleagues who criticise him must therefore be taken as a serious warning. It underscores the significance of the IYSSE’s struggle on university campuses against historical falsification and right-wing ideology.



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