

Princeton University provides \$300,000 in funding for right-wing historian and propagandist Jörg Baberowski

David North
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Jörg Baberowski, the extreme right-wing historian and chairman of the Department of East European Studies at Berlin's Humboldt University, was invited by Princeton University in March to participate in a closed conference-seminar on the subject of "Dictatorships in Transition." Baberowski's attendance at the event follows his receipt of an award by Princeton of \$300,000 for a research project, titled "From Totalitarian to Authoritarian Rule. Comparing Dictatorships in Transition." Sharing the award with Baberowski is his partner in this project, Professor Deborah Kaple of Princeton's Department of Sociology.

No information on the subject of the conference-seminar has been posted on the web site of Princeton University. However, the Facebook page of Humboldt's Department of East European Studies posted photos taken during the conference. It also posted photos of Baberowski and his Humboldt University colleague, Fabian Thunemann, standing in front of Trump Tower in New York City.

Baberowski is a vociferous defender of the pro-Nazi apologetics of Germany's most notorious revisionist historian, the late Ernst Nolte. Nevertheless, he enjoys significant support within the highest levels of the American academic community. It is not surprising that Baberowski has been supported by the Hoover Institution, the ideological center of anti-Marxist projects located at Stanford University. But the 2016 publication by Yale University Press of Baberowski's *Scorched Earth*, a tendentious anti-communist propaganda piece of no scholarly value, testifies to the immense and expanding influence exerted by right-wing political forces over history departments at major American universities.

Significantly, Baberowski's attendance at the Princeton conference-seminar took place only a few weeks after he had failed to obtain the support of the Academic Senate of Humboldt University for the funding of an "Interdisciplinary Center for the Comparative Study of Dictatorships." Baberowski's project, which argued that dictatorships should be studied as legitimate and even popular alternatives to democratic forms of rule, was subjected to scathing criticism by two of the four peer reviews that examined his proposal. After the peer reviews were posted online, the Academic Senate postponed indefinitely the consideration of Baberowski's project. In response to this devastating public setback, Baberowski, as is his usual practice, unleashed on his

Twitter account a torrent of vitriolic denunciations of his critics.

There is no publicly available information on the deliberations that led to Princeton's award of \$300,000 to Baberowski. Nor has there been any explanation of the decision to honor with an invitation to Princeton a man who declared in February 2014 that "Hitler was not vicious," and whose reactionary pronouncements on history and contemporary politics have identified him as a prominent ideologist of the *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), the leading neo-fascist party in Germany.

The academic community of Princeton University—and, indeed, throughout the country—should demand that the university explain why it is funding the fraudulent exercise in historical falsification and right-wing propaganda conducted by a man who not only has sought to relativize the crimes of the Third Reich, but also seeks to normalize and euphemize dictatorship—a state based on the violent deprivation of democratic rights—as an "alternative political order."

David North, the chairman of the International Editorial Board of the World Socialist Web Site sent a letter by e-mail, dated April 3, 2019, to Baberowski's project partner, Professor Deborah Kaple. Though an e-mail notification indicated that Professor Kaple opened the letter within minutes of its receipt, she has not answered North's letter.

The letter from David North is printed below:

April 3, 2019

Hello Professor Kaple,

I am writing to inquire about a recent seminar/conference conducted at Princeton University on the subject of Dictatorships in Transition [*Diktaturen in Wandel*], which was organized in conjunction with Humboldt University in Berlin. Among the participants in this seminar was Professor Jörg Baberowski. Based on information posted on the web site of Princeton University, I understand that you have been engaged in a joint research project with Professor Baberowski.

In the organization of the seminar/conference and the organization of a joint research project, was Princeton University aware that Professor Baberowski is among the

most prominent right-wing revisionist historians in Germany? He is an outspoken proponent of the views of the late Professor Ernst Nolte, whose relativization of Nazi crimes triggered the famous “Historikerstreit” of the late 1980s.

Baberowski is also a leading opponent of the immigration policies of Chancellor Merkel. His extreme right-wing views on the subject have served to legitimize the xenophobia of the neo-fascist *Alternative für Deutschland*. Baberowski’s pronouncements on immigration have been featured regularly in *Breitbart News* and, even more ominously, the *Daily Stormer*, the leading American Nazi web site.

Though Baberowski regularly claims that he is being witch-hunted and slandered, his attorneys were compelled to withdraw a claim of defamation after a German court ruled that Baberowski can be appropriately described as a right-wing extremist. The court also stated that Baberowski, contrary to the claims of his attorneys, had not been quoted by his critics out of context.

I would be interested to know whether you, or any of those who participated in the recent seminar/conference, are familiar with the controversies surrounding Professor Baberowski’s views. The issue here is not simply a matter of Professor Baberowski’s private political opinions. Rather, his defense of Ernst Nolte, who spent the last three decades of his life justifying Nazi crimes, is an integral part of Baberowski’s historical-theoretical project. Central to the Nolte-Baberowski conception is the claim that Nazi barbarism, including the Holocaust, was a response forced upon the Hitler regime by the Soviet Union. It is difficult to imagine that the extreme right-wing character and dangerous implications of Professor Baberowski’s views—which, it should be added, involve to no small extent the falsification of the historical record—passed unnoticed by scholars participating in the recent seminar/conference. Were Professor Baberowski’s views challenged at any point during the seminar/conference?

Later this month I will be participating, with co-speaker Christoph Vandreier, in public meetings at several universities dealing with the resurgence of neo-fascism in Germany. Mr. Vandreier is the author of *Why Are They Back: Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy and the Return of Fascism in Germany*. This book deals at some length with the role played by Professor Baberowski in encouraging this resurgence. Though I find it very troubling that Professor Baberowski was invited to Princeton, I leave open the possibility that his views were not well known to the organizers. That is why I am requesting a response to my question. I am including below links to articles that substantiate my description of Professor Baberowski’s views.

Yours sincerely,

David North

World Socialist Web Site

From *Der Spiegel* - February 14, 2014

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/questions-of-culpability-in-wwi-still-divide-german-historians-a-953173-2.html>

“Baberowski became a historian and a specialist in Eastern Europe. Like Münkler, he teaches and does research at the Humboldt University in Berlin. His book *Verbrannte Erde - Stalins Herrschaft der Gewalt* (*Scorched Earth - Stalin’s Reign of Violence*) won the Leipzig Book Fair Prize in 2012. ‘Nolte was done an injustice,’ says Baberowski. ‘Historically speaking, he was right.’...

“Sitting in Café Einstein, he [Baberowski] says: ‘Hitler was no psychopath, and he wasn’t vicious. He didn’t want people to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table. Stalin, on the other hand, delighted in adding to and signing off on the death lists. He was vicious. He was a psychopath.’”

From *Breitbart News* - December 7, 2015 <https://www.breitbart.com/europe/2015/12/07/left-historian-christian-germany-everything-dear-to-us-will-disappear-because-of-mass-migration/>

“Highly respected, former communist professor and historian Jörg Baberowski has warned that ‘everything dear to [Europeans]’ will soon disappear because of his government’s policies towards mass migration.

“The stark warning is sure to echo around Europe, the United Kingdom, and indeed the United States as policy makers throw open Western countries’ borders to migrants from the Middle East and North Africa.

“Mr. Baberowski is the Professor of Eastern European History at the Humboldt University of Berlin noted for his expertise on Stalinism. He is a former Communist League of West Germany member, and former chair in Eastern European History at the University of Leipzig in 2001.”

From *Daily Stormer* - December 8, 2015 <https://dailystormer.name/german-professor-says-german-identity-will-be-totally-destroyed-by-mass-immigration/>

“Highly respected, former communist professor and historian Jörg Baberowski has warned that ‘everything dear to [Europeans]’ will soon disappear because of his government’s policies towards mass migration.”



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