

Humboldt University student parliament condemns radical right-wing Professor Baberowski

By Helmut van Heiken
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On June 18, the student parliament of Humboldt University in Berlin voted overwhelmingly to condemn the aggressive conduct of history professor Jörg Baberowski. The representatives of well over 30,000 students demanded that the university administration end its support for the right-wing professor and that he face consequences for threatening and assaulting students.

In January of this year, Baberowski was caught tearing down student parliament campaign posters for the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) from university bulletin boards. When IYSSE student parliament deputy Sven Wurm recorded these actions, the professor struck the phone from his hands and threatened him, saying, “Should I smack you in the face?” Baberowski has attacked students in this manner more than once before. Last fall, two deputies of the academic senate submitted a formal complaint to the university against the right-wing professor after he defamed them as “unbelievably dumb” and “left-wing extremist fanatics.”

Student deputies from across Germany and internationally have condemned Baberowski’s attack on the IYSSE and criticized the university administration for their campaign in defense of the right-wing professor. Now, in its first meeting since the events in question—the congress was held online due to the coronavirus pandemic—the Humboldt University student parliament has likewise taken a clear stand.

The motion was brought forward by the IYSSE and was passed with 43 affirmative votes to four negative, with four abstentions. The motion is titled, “Extreme Right-wing Professor Baberowski Attacks Student

Parliament Deputy: No to Right-Wing Violence at the Humboldt University!” and begins with the words, “We condemn the serious and violent intervention in this year’s student parliament elections at our university.”

It states further: “We solidarize with the victimized students and demand that the university administration end its support of the extreme right-wing professor and make Baberowski face consequences for his actions. Students have the right to hold elections, to hold political discussions and to criticize extreme right-wing professors without being threatened and assaulted by the same. The university is obligated to afford a secure environment, without intimidation and violence.”

Sven Wurm, who himself proposed the motion, put the university’s support for radical right-wing positions and Baberowski’s aggressive behavior at the center of his remarks. The scandal is not limited to the abuse meted out by a professor to dissenting students; rather, it includes the fact that the university is covering for this same professor.

As early as February, university President Sabine Kunst depicted Baberowski’s attack as an “understandable human response” and refused to publicly condemn the assault. A formal complaint to the university against Baberowski remains unanswered to this day.

Behind the stance of the university lies a clear political agenda. Despite Baberowski belittling violence against refugees, beating the war drums and repeatedly trivializing the crimes of the Nazis, the administration of the Humboldt University provides him cover. Baberowski, who claimed that Hitler was not vicious, is “not radical right-wing,” according to

the university administration in an official statement.

“Media attacks” against the professor are “unacceptable.”

In the student parliament debate, the motion was greeted with strong support. Only the Chairman of the RCDS (Association of Christian Democratic Students, the student movement of the right-wing Christian Democratic Union), David Rodriguez Edel, spoke against the motion and supported the professor’s violent act, which he belittled as the reaction to the character assassination of Baberowski.

The leader of the CDU student group had already made himself conspicuous with his right-wing views, for example, by supporting the Spanish fascist party Vox and ultra-right Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro. After the assault on Wurm, Edel met personally with Baberowski to discuss with him, among other things, “academic politics at the Humboldt University.”

Because Rodriguez Edel ever more openly denounced the IYSSE, one of the student parliament’s presiding members was compelled to call him to order. Subsequently, many of the student parliament deputies took a stand against the RCDS leader.

A representative of the Open List of Critical Students (OLKS) addressed the supposed character assassination by noting that the Cologne Higher Regional Court had dismissed the claim by Baberowski that he was a victim of such an attack. In 2017, the court determined that Baberowski had been correctly quoted by his students and that it was therefore legitimate to characterize him as “right-wing radical,” “racist” and “glorifying violence.”

A representative of the queer-feminist LGBT*I*Q-list declared herself stunned that a student deputy could defend Baberowski’s violent actions. She made the point that the two student representatives of the academic senate who had been harshly insulted by Baberowski on social media have since that time been confronted with a right-wing and at times racist mobbing campaign.

Because the provocations of the RCDS chairman impelled so many student deputies to speak, time constraints forced the debate to end. The clear vote of 43 to four shows that the great majority of students do not accept the collaboration of the university administration with extreme right-wing professors. The IYSSE is fighting to transform this sentiment into

conscious political resistance and to arm the opposition of workers and youth with a socialist perspective so as to combat militarism, fascism and war.

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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