

Media is the Virus

Witnessing Voices from Berlin, Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg Opposing the German Corona Policy

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Est moderne celui qui croit que les autres croient.

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The street protests against the German Corona policy, which accompanied the declaration of a pandemic state in March 2020, are part of a controversy over the danger of and proper response to the spread of SARS-CoV-2, in which a fear of the virus confronts a fear of the government-imposed measures to contain the spread of the virus. While the majority of those in favor of the measures accuses the minority of those critical of the measures of downplaying or even denying the danger of the virus, the minority accuses the majority of downplaying or even denying the dangers of the measures. Both sides usually accuse each other of not being properly informed and therefore of taking an objectively wrong position, which turns the controversy into a knowledge controversy that both sides primarily understand as a problem of media practices, due to the ambivalence of the media as a source of transparency and enlightenment, on the one hand, and intransparency and conscious or unconscious deception, on the other. In this context, the media are subjected to a dichotomous categorization into so-called mainstream media and alternative media, with a tendency to synchronize this dichotomous categorization of the media with the dichotomous categorization of positions, equating the established mainstream media with the positions of the proponents of measures and the alternative media with the positions of their opponents. Both the majority and the minority view the media and the media practices of the other side as one-sided and impute a lack of media competence to the opposing recipients. This has led to a confrontational situation and fragmented publics with a discourse that seems to know only friend or foe and a mutual stereotypical misrepresentation, making mutual understanding a difficult endeavor.

Reporting in which none of those described can recognize themselves leads to a further splitting off of those who know that the commentary refers to them but does not accurately describe them, especially when they are in the minority facing a powerful majority. This tendency can be countered by anthropological research, and that means by the detailed and contextualized documentation of their practices and self-representations that reflects their certainties and uncertainties, the searching, the unfinished, the processual, the heterogeneity, the humor, and the discussions among them, as well as their view of the others – research that is aware that the real credulity is believing in the credulity of others. It sounds simple, but it is rarely done.

The following descriptions complement my attempt, published in the last issue of *Curare* 43(2020)1–4 with the title *Capitalism is the Virus*, to find an adequate form of representation for the protests against the Corona policy in Germany. While the first part focused on protests in Leipzig, the present text reports on large and small demonstrations in Berlin, Ravensburg, and Kempten in 2020 and in addition portrays anonymously and with her consent a protester and her point of view from Freiburg im Breisgau, whom I got to know at a demonstration in Leipzig. The two texts can be read as one.

“The end of the pandemic (if there ever was one).” Berlin I

For August 1, 2020 the initiatives *Querdenken 711* from Stuttgart [*Querdenken* means lateral thinking, or thinking out of the box, the number refers to the area code of the region where the respective *Querdenken* group is based] and *Nicht ohne uns!*



Fig. 1 “We are the second wave!” Berlin. August 1, 2020.

[Not without us!] from Berlin – both formed early in the wake of the protest against the measures imposed by the government at the end of March 2020 to contain the spread of SARS-CoV-2 – have called for a large demonstration in Berlin under the slogan “The end of the pandemic – the day of freedom”. *In the future, a new holiday should be added to the calendar on August 1; it will be celebrated as the Day of Liberty*; that’s how the Stuttgart IT entrepreneur, co-organizer, and founder of the *Querdenken* movement Michael Ballweg announced the demonstration in a video posted on YouTube. A bus company offered cheap rides from all over Germany. Accordingly euphoric were the expectations on many YouTube channels of the critics of the measures, who in the meantime have networked themselves into a Germany-wide protest scene. Around noon, there is to be a demonstration march through the city center ending with a rally on the Straße des 17. Juni. When I arrive at Brandenburg Gate at the announced time, I meet

only isolated small groups speaking Swabian dialect and wearing *Querdenken 711* T-shirts, who are also searching for the demonstration, and at first I think the whole event is turning out to be a flop. But after I briefly have something to eat and come back to the street Unter den Linden, a huge procession is moving along the street; others also tell me later about the moment when the crowd suddenly appeared out of nowhere.

At first glance, the participants are a very heterogeneous group, a colorful mix of clothing styles and ages, all mostly crowded together and largely without masks. A police bus at the side of the road repeats like a mantra and ineffectively that social distance must be kept and masks must be worn. The sun burns down from the cloudless sky, the mood of the people is exuberant, and numerous journalists stand on the sidelines, filming the procession or reporting live themselves. The march reminds me of Gerhard Seyfried’s humorous comic books about the left-wing alternative scene in



Fig. 2 Demonstrators and counter-demonstrators trying to talk to each other. Berlin. August 1, 2020.

West Berlin in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many protesters carry homemade cardboard signs with sometimes very long messages in German:

“Interest-led virologists + power-hungry politicians + money-hungry pharmaceutical industry + synchronized media = Corona pandemic”,

“Stop the plandemic. Many more people die from the measures than from Corona! Our children suffer mentally! Our fellow human beings die due to postponed surgeries and in old people’s homes due to loneliness! More suicides in a month than in the whole year! Dear people, defend yourselves and protest, e.g. with posters and/or T-shirts. Stop the financial and pharmaceutical mafia, their ‘Groko puppets’ and the vaccination and muzzle madness!” [“Groko” is the abbreviation for the Grand Coalition],

“Black Lives Matter? Corona hysteria = hunger pandemic in Africa”,

“Basic rights are not a treat”,

“We are the mosquito in the bedroom of politics!”,

“Whoever participates is guilty!”,

“Grannies for Enlightenment 2.0” [this slogan ironically refers to the movement “grannies against the right”, which usually demonstrates against the Corona protests which many label right wing],

“Democracy needs freedom!”,

“Stop the lies, enslavement, and abuse of power”,

“Nobody intends to introduce compulsory vaccination!” [alluding to East Germany’s leader denying that the Berlin Wall was being planned, a few weeks before it was built],

“We are the second wave!”,

“No to the dictatorship of the new normal!”,

“For medical autonomy!”,

“Neutral studies!”

“Merkel out!”

On one sign is a collage of pictures of the German chancellor Angela Merkel, Germany's Federal President Frank Walter Steinmeier, Vladimir Putin, and Donald Trump. Merkel and Steinmeier are crossed out, as is "GEZ" [which stands for Germany's mandatory fee that funds public television and radio stations]. Next to it, the black-white-red flag of the German Kaiserreich and a Q cut out of a U.S. flag [referring to a movement that assumes that an unknown person or group under the pseudonym Q from the so-called Deep State of the USA reports about the secret machinations and plans of a pedophile elite with the aim to put a stop to them; Donald Trump is considered to be an ally of Q]. Elsewhere, someone carries a cardboard sign with a cover of the magazine *Compact*, on which the head of Bill Gates is depicted and subtitled "The Vaccine Dictator". Someone has written on his green parasol in felt pen: "Basic rights must be preserved". There are German flags and black-white-red flags of the German Kaiserreich and now and then German imperial war flags. In addition, there are also many rainbow flags and flags with peace doves.

Many protesters also state their demands on printed T-shirts:

"It's nobody's business... but I'm exempt from mandatory masking due to PANIC DISORDERS!",

"Reacting with mandatory masking 3 months after Corona outbreak is like using a condom during sex when the woman is already pregnant!"

Someone else is wearing a white T-shirt with a German flag; underneath it is written "R.I.P. Fundamental Rights".

In felt pen on another T-shirt: "Fake virus - The lie in which WE live. Freedom of speech!!!", combined with a crossed-out GEZ sign.

Several times a self-written Q can be seen.

The T-shirts are often used to express one's own media consumptions. For example, the slogan "Who, if not me?" refers to the latest book critical of Merkel by Henryk M. Broder, who runs the conservative website "Achse des Guten" [Axis of Good]; "Believe little, question everything, think for yourself?" refers to the book by former SPD politician Albrecht Müller, who is co-responsible for the website *nachdenkseiten* [serious thinking pages]; and "Es kommt immer anders, wenn



Fig. 3 Things that the protesters can agree upon. Berlin. August 1, 2020.



Fig. 4 Hysteria and hunger. Berlin. August 1, 2020.

man denkt" [Things always turn out differently when you think] refers to the Internet magazine *Rubikon*. All of these are media that in the meantime play an important role among critics of the measures.

I would probably have been able to identify the views of the group of ten men, by their appearance, even without their T-shirts with the imprints "Blood & Honor", "Deutsche Jungs" [German Boys], "Der Dritte Weg" [The Third Way = the name of a small neo-Nazi party] and "Ruhrpott" [A local term for the polycentric urban Ruhr area in North Rhine-Westphalia] on T-shirts in *Fraktur*, an old German style of lettering similar to Gothic typeface in English.

At Brandenburg Gate are about 30 mostly young counter-demonstrators wearing masks and holding identical signs and flags from the campaign "Stand up against racism" of the "Association of those Persecuted by the Nazi regime – Association of Anti-fascists (VVN-BdA)". Their slogans emblazoned on a circle in rainbow colors:

"No place for Nazis!";

"No to agitation against Muslims!";

"Stop the arsonists!";

and in front of a picture of the right-wing AfD politician Björn Höcke raising his arm in a Nazi salute: "Never again!";

in each case with the addition: "No podium for the AfD!"

The counter-demonstrators alternately chant:

"Alerta Alerta Antifascista!";

"Nazis out!";

"Get out!";

and a derisive "You lost the war!"

One participant in the Corona demonstration later reported that in the section of the march she was in, the protesters joined in with the "Nazis out!" chants of the counter-demonstrators.

A little further, two young women and a man, the latter wearing a "Fight Racism" T-shirt, stand on the sidelines, all wearing masks and talking to some demonstrators. The mood is aggressive, one young woman asks an older protester if she doesn't know with whom she is demonstrating here and shouts at her that the world has just the biggest problem ever, while and she merely feels limited in her freedom by a mask. The woman, probably in her late fifties, tries to explain to her that the danger is not particularly serious, that she

only needs to inform herself properly once, then she would also recognize this and advises her to take off the mask, because under it one gets bad air and can no longer think properly. The other young woman objects that her boyfriend has leukemia and belongs to the risk group, if she can protect someone's life with a small gesture, why shouldn't she just do so? Another woman interferes from behind and calls out that they simply have to realize what is behind all of this, that it is about something completely different than wearing a mask or not.

During the rally, the number 800,000 makes the rounds among the participants; that's how many demonstrators the police would have confirmed. And one could confidently add quite a bit to the numbers of the police. Later, a speaker on stage says the number of participants is 1.3 million. The performances on the stage are broadcasted via several large screens on the *Straße des 17. Juni*. The moderator is Nana Domena, who, in an eccentric, entertainer-like manner, repeatedly and alternately calls out the words "peace" and "freedom" and asks those present to shout back the respective other word. Which many do. Just as they follow his regular invitation to form a heart with their hands and hold it in the air or in front of their chest. A search query on the Internet takes me to the page of the Cologne tabloid newspaper *Express*, in which he is described as "Cologne's party celebrity" and "Cologne's shrillest and most hyperactive party and Internet moderator", who has recently sought out a dubious stage to put people in a good mood. When its Michael Ballweg's turn, the founder of *Querdenken* and co-organizer of the demonstration, he speaks of the "freedom virus" having reached Berlin.

Next to me is a couple from Berlin, about mid-40s. I ask them what their main criticism is. The man says that he works in the restaurant business and that the Corona measures have pushed an entire industry to the wall, that it is not going to be pushed to the wall, but has already been pushed to the wall, and that people just don't notice it yet because so much borrowed money has been pumped into it. In the meantime, he considers the measures excessive, since the virus has not turned out to be particularly dangerous. And it is completely unclear what the strategy of the federal government is; first it was called "flattening



Fig. 5 Germany, Sweden and the Siegessäule. Berlin. August 29, 2020.

the curve” to avoid overloading the health care system; when in the end there was no shortage of beds, it was suddenly about the reproduction factor; and now the reproduction factor is fine and the measures continue anyway. And in the news, you always hear only bad news, there is no glimmer of hope at all, especially for entrepreneurs. There simply seems to be no plan as to what exactly the goal of the measures is. The woman is a physiotherapist and says for her it is about a different approach to health, there are so many things in nature that have healing powers; unfortunately, the relevant knowledge is increasingly lost or pushed into the background.

After some time, the police turn off the electricity and stop the meeting because the hygiene requirements are not being followed. It takes a very long time for those present to slowly leave; many remain seated in front of the stage shouting, “We’re staying here!” As I make my way back home, two young female bicyclists pass by and I hear one say to the other that the whole world is suffering from Corona and the people here are demonstrating against Corona measures; she

can’t believe it. Afterwards I see a sticker at a traffic light advertising today’s demonstration. Above a picture of the Brandenburg Gate it says: “Day of freedom 1.8.20 / The end of the pandemic (if there ever was one) / Berlin we’re coming (again, as often as is necessary)”.

“You are standing here today because you no longer want anyone to tell you how to live and think.” *Berlin II*

For the end of August, another demonstration is announced by *Querdenken 711 Stuttgart*, among other things to provide proof of the large number of participants. After the demonstration on August 1, the police had spoken of 17,000 participants, which they later corrected to 30,000, which is still in great contrast to the nearly one million that the organizers still assert in retrospect. This time the demonstration is titled “Berlin invites Europe – celebration for freedom and peace”. On the way to the rally at the Siegessäule, I pass numerous camping buses, from one of which a group of alternative-looking young people gets out with

a self-written cardboard sign, “Never again war, never again fascism!”, and I wonder if they are going to the Corona demonstration or the counter-demonstration.

I sit down on a wall near the stage and watch the square slowly filling up. A man around 60 passes by on his bicycle, stops, and asks the bystanders, *What is going on?* After someone answers him, he says dryly, *Ah, they apparently want to cancel Corona.* As he does so, he taps his cell phone, looking uninterested. *I guess they don't know what Corona does, I have two in the family that had it.* Then he rides away.

In front of me, a group of good-humored people in their 70s, as I suppose, install themselves with folding chairs and coolers. Yes, says one of the women, laughing, one learns, they were already here on August 1, and it was so hot back then and they had nothing to drink. Later, still laughing, she shows her crocheted mask with big holes and, with a smoky voice, tells the story of her granddaughter, who told the teachers at school, who were worried about her grandparents, that her grandmother was *in resistance*.

From the wall, I have a good view of the sea of self-made signs and discover the cardboard sign with the inscription “Never again war, never again fascism!” among the demonstrators. It is one of very many mostly in German:

“Policemen of Germany / We need you!”,

“Stop the masked ball”,

“Masks down! No panic! Show your face!”,

“Overmortality = Pandemic”,

“Corona false alarm / Measures crisis / Biggest misjudgment of all times / Corona is not a killer virus / No increased mortality! / Hunt for infected people (sick people don't matter!) / Pandemic is over! / Unified media (GDR) / Democracy???

/ Driving a car is more dangerous / Defamation of dissenters / Goodbye knowledge... Suspicion rules the world / Modern slavery / Corona – dumbing down the people”,

“Resignation of Interior Senator Geisel as ‘democracy pest””,

“Stop the neo-Nazis. Never again dictatorship”,

“Plandemic of PCR tests. Tests up = sick people up / Tests down = pandemic down”,



Fig. 6 “For a better world.” Berlin. August 29, 2020.

“For all our children. Love is life and masks are death”,

“There is only one risk group to protect! That is our children. The others can decide for themselves. Children must not feel that they are a danger to others just by existing. No mask for children!”

“American world fascism is the goal. Corona is just the way to get there”,

“Corona dictatorship”,

“Covid 1984”,

“Merkel must go. We can manage it!” [referring to Angela Merkel’s statement “We can manage it!” when it came to accepting a large number of refugees in 2015],

“Give us back our basic rights!”

“Measures destroy lives. Suicides, depressions, panic, bankruptcies, violence, mass unemployment, divorce, poverty!”

“Why dies of the virus: ONLY freedom?”

“For a country in which not only politicians live well and with pleasure!”

“Together in the direction of world peace”,

“Obedience and humility you should show (... and never inform independently)”

“AHA-Regel der Freiheit = Aufwachen, Hinterfragen, Absetzen der Maske & der Regierung” [the AHA rules are *Abstand halten* – keep distance; *Hygiene*; *Alltagsmaske tragen* – wear a mask in everyday life. The slogan here finds new words in German that begin with A, H, and A: “AHA rules of freedom: wake up, question, take down your mask and the government”],

“Jesus Saves”,

“Save the Economy! No 2nd Lockdown”,

“Let He Who Is Without Measure-Sin Cast the First Stone”,

“Toxic Triad: Charité hospital, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Boston Consulting Group. Global Health?”

“Dialogue, transparency, & open scientific discourse, save peace & life”,

“I have a right to self-determined dying, but not a right to self-determined life!”

“The people came, saw the truth, and won!”

“Stop all senseless measures immediately”,

“Stick your 400-million gene vaccinations up your own ass! Forced vaccination IfSG §20(6) No thanks!”

“Don’t pay the Bill!”

“In doubt for freedom #showyourfaceagainst-vaccination! Los Coronazis no pasarán”,

“God is with us”,

“Peace treaty with Germany”,

“Whoever bans demos promotes anarchy”,

“The majority of the population does not understand what is really happening. And it does not even understand that it does not understand. Noam Chomsky”,

“Frankenstein’s mRNA vaccine without product liability – who wants that?”

“Against stupidity no vaccine helps!”

“I stand here also for you and your children”,

“I am NOT: Corona denier, Reichsbürger, or right-wing extremist and still HERE!”

Above the slogan “The only two reasons to wear a mask” is a picture of Angela Merkel [the chancellor] and Jens Spahn [the Minister of Health] with masks over their entire faces.

Above the poster “Freedom. No medicalization of life. No expropriation of health” flies a small flag of Germany’s federal state of Baden.

For “Quo vadis? WWG1WGA” the Q is large and set off in red.

A young couple passes by with bicycles and a small child, on whose child seat is written, “Our Breath Our Soul Our Children Our Love Our Body Our Freedom Voluntary and Unharmful”.

Someone else with a bicycle wears a shirt in German colors with a large peace dove button.

A woman wears a cutout heart in German colors with the slogan: “Scandal! I love my country”.

A large banner next to the stage reads: “Corona panic eats Basic Constitutional Law.”

Frequently encountered is the slogan: “Where injustice becomes right, resistance becomes a duty!” It appears in the most diverse variations, as a self-written cardboard sign, as a large banner in front of the booth of *Querdenken Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, as a printed T-shirt, either sans-serif or in Fraktur, a Gothic script.

The protest T-shirts are also numerous:

“Fuck the Virus”,

“FCK CRNA”,

“Corona fear? Math helps!”

“Corona swindle 2020”,

“A_lles H_altlose A_ichtmacherei” [alluding to the so-called AHA rules, but here “everything baseless attention-getting”],

“Mindfuck twenty#twenty”,



Fig. 7 PCRdemic. Berlin. August 29, 2020.



Fig. 8 "Measures destroy lives." Berlin. August 29, 2020.



Fig. 9 Prophecy. Berlin. August 29, 2020.



Fig. 10 “Left-wing friends, where are you? You are missing!” Berlin. August 29, 2020.



Fig. 11 Fact checkers. Berlin. August 29, 2020.

“Completely normal citizen”,

“Widerstand2020.de” [“Resistance 2020” is the name of a newly founded party critical of Corona measures],

“Manipulated / Lied / Stolen / Merkel / Muzzle? / I disagree!” Between the words on this shirt are pink coronaviruses on a black background.

T-shirts from the last demonstration are also common:

“The end of the pandemic 1.8.20 Berlin”,

a couple in matching his-and-hers T-shirts: “Courage to express your opinion! I am proud to be a conspirator. Demo 1.8.2020 Berlin ‘Day of Freedom’”, with a winking smiley.

Another has “The virus of the moment: crazy people leading the blind” on his chest and “Television is not created for idiots – it creates them” on the back.

“Angela, this is your people” [which makes a rhyme in German: “Angela, Dein Volk ist da!”],

“Family of humankind”,

“We are the sovereign”,

“Tin foil hat wearer, conspiracy theorist, Weir-do, right-wing and left-wing, anti-vaccination, Querdenkerin, German”.

One woman has written “For a better world” on her T-shirt using felt pen,

another has drawn a peace sign and written underneath: “There is no way to peace, peace is the way.”

A large printed banner reads, “Lock them up finally!” Below, photos of Bill Gates, Christian Drosten, Angela Merkel, Jens Spahn, Markus Söder, and Lothar Wieler.

The printed poster “No Hygiene GDR” looks like an AFD party design, but refrains from naming the party, which can be read only on the flyer its bearer is handing out.

Many flags can be seen, including: Swedes, Saxons, German Reich war flags, and lots of German flags, sometimes with, sometimes without “We are the people” inscription. Next to them, flags with “Keep America Great 2020”, Rainbow flags with and without “Pace” printed on them, and peace doves. There are also larger groups from Holland



Fig. 12 “Hygiene rules of freedom: Wake up, question, remove mask and government.” Berlin. August 29, 2020.

and Belgium among the demonstrators, who carry their national colors and flags.

A woman with gray hair, presumably of retirement age, with a classic blue peace flag and matching button on her T-shirt carries a self-written cardboard sign in front of her belly: “Left-wing friends, where are you? You are missing!”

I consider the man with the tin foil hat and the Reichskriegsflagge, which reads “Deutschland Treue um Treue” [Germany loyalty for loyalty] in Fraktur lettering, to be satire.

The man carrying a six-pack of Corona beer around apparently also wants to show a sense of humor.

On stage, Michael Ballweg gives an opening speech in German:

And I stand here with the German Basic Law, which has guaranteed us basic rights for more than 70 years. It is the best thing that has happened to us so far, but could not protect us in 2020 from the government increasingly arrogating power. Currently, the constitutional majority is a majority of the Bundestag and Bundesrat, which means the people are not asked. And there is an important article in the Basic

Law, which, significantly, is also the last article in the Basic Law. It is Article 146: “This Basic Law, which shall apply to the entire German people after the completion of the unity and freedom of Germany, shall cease to be valid on the day on which a constitution comes into force which has been freely decided by the German people.”

That is why we are starting today to give ourselves our own constitution, which will correct these weaknesses and return power to us, the people. The constitution is to be given by the sovereign and not by the Bundestag and Bundesrat. I have never done this before. I have learned in recent weeks that my strength lies in uniting people. That’s why I’m confident that we can do this together. You are standing here today because you no longer want anyone to tell you how to live and how to think. And we are the constituent assembly. I call on all people nationwide to come to Berlin and work with us on a new constitution. We have created ideal conditions here. There are more than 60 truck stages where we are opening up the debate space and people are allowed to discuss and speak, free of prejudice. The Querdenken camp is registered for 14 days. And on the main stage, there will always be a

daily summary of the results. [...] And I hereby call on the police to protect our constitutional assembly.

I get into a conversation with a man in his mid-forties from North Rhine-Westphalia who works in the advertising industry. He had followed the demonstration on August 1 only on YouTube and had also heard the discussions about the number of participants, but now he wanted to see for himself. At home, he finds no support for his critical view of the measures. Many of his friends are physicians who are critical of the measures, but do not take any further action. At work, he said, everyone was uncritical and told him he was the only one they heard such critical things from. And all their circles of friends believe one hundred percent of what they are told by the government and the media. There are so many discrepancies. He had already asked himself whether he was not traumatized for some reason and thus in a delusion, making him the only one who sees the world completely differently. The people would mostly not deal with the subject in terms of content. When he sends people videos asking them to take a look at them, for example the lectures by John Ioannidis from Stanford, he doesn't get any feedback on the content, but only something like: well, what kind of guy is that with his shaggy hair and he can't do a proper PowerPoint presentation either, that can't be anything reasonable. In his experience, no one listens to the arguments.

He seems very well informed about all the details of the debate and says that he would really like to believe that everything is so bad and that the measures are therefore necessary, but the statistics provided by the Robert Koch Institute are simply not convincing and the measures are not consistent and convincing if one assumes that it is as bad as claimed. For example, he lists all the common types of masks, none of which provides sufficient protection against viruses. He notes that viruses can also be absorbed through the eyes, that the masks should actually be thrown away after being worn once, that fabric masks are so damp after an hour that they become permeable, that there are some masks that protect only the wearers but not the others. Most people don't even understand who is protecting whom. He wears a mask in the supermarket, for example, but only because he knows that others are afraid, not because he thinks it makes sense. He distanc-

es himself from conspiracy theories, but for him it is clear that we are being lied to, but it is unclear who is doing that and why. And he wonders whether the politicians are doing it knowingly or unknowingly. It is often said that the financial system is at its end and that Corona has been found or invented as a scapegoat that can be blamed for the inevitable crash. But perhaps it's simply that politicians realize that they gain prestige by making tough demands. Just as Söder could suddenly hope for the chancellorship, and Laschet's hopes for it dwindled further and further after his plea to ease the anti-Corona measures. And then it all develops a momentum of its own. Politically, everything has shifted for him. He used to read the *Neue Züricher Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *DIE WELT*, and the *taz* and assumed that he was then fully informed. That isn't the case anymore. He used to hang out with people from the Antifa, but he can no longer imagine that. In his view, the Antifa fails completely in Corona times.

In the Internet magazine *Rubikon*, he found many good contributions by philosophers on Corona. He worries about a split in society and thinks people should stop thinking in camps and just judge people by what they say and pursue more common goals. You should be able to think anything without immediately being labeled radical right-wing; there should be no restrictions, he studied philosophy, and philosophy has to cross borders, in that sense almost all philosophers have been radical right-wing at some point. It has even happened to him now that he had to agree with an AfD politician. A few days ago, he saw a speech on YouTube by Martin Vincentz, the AfD's health policy spokesman in the North Rhine-Westphalia state parliament, and he could only agree with all he said. Among other things, Vincentz got to the heart of the matter with the tests: on the one hand, the numbers of infections presented were not put in relation to the number of tests conducted; the presentation of absolute numbers alone gives a completely false impression. And on the other hand, the very mention of infections was wrong, because the test alone was not suitable for diagnosing an infection, as the developer of the test also stated; the PCR test was a highly sensitive diagnostic procedure that proved only that those tested had had contact with the virus at some point. But even if one assumes that

positive test results are equivalent to an infection, one must also consider the so-called false positive rate, which is about one percent. And the more asymptomatic people are tested, the higher the absolute number of false-positive results. Therefore, it is essential to always put the results in relation to the number of tests, and for months this ratio has been around one percent, which should not be a cause for concern. In addition, the one percent would also correspond to the false-positive rate, which is why one could even say that there are no positive results at all and certainly no infections. However, all this cannot be seen if, as usual, only absolute numbers were presented. And all the measures are based on these numbers, which was total insanity, if one thinks about it. Even the absolute numbers were not particularly bad at the moment, but all we heard in the news was that everything is still extremely bad. Because no bad news could be delivered from Germany at the moment, we were now always presented with absolute numbers from abroad until we can then continue with Germany again in the fall.

On stage, the Green politician Claudio Sieber from Flensburg talks about how he criticized the measures and was laughed at by his party and how he realized that the decision-makers were uninformed and ignorant and that all measures were based on the statements of a single scientist. This is followed by a speech by the lawyer Reiner Füllmich in which he explains his planned class action lawsuit in the USA against Christian Drosten, Lothar Wieler, and Jens Spahn, because the PCR test, which is used worldwide as the basis for measuring the infection figures and thus for the measures, is unsuitable.

Afterwards, I join a conversation between a man wearing a "Trump 2020" baseball cap and a *Querdenken* T-shirt and two women, all around 50, who ask about the black, white, and red flag the man next to him is waving. He thinks it's the flag of our actual constitution. At the moment, he says, we are not sovereign, but still occupied. Then he shows us that he has returned his *Personalausweis* [the identity card of the Federal Republic of Germany], he merely had to prove ancestors until 1914, after that it was no problem. Now he is protected against seizure, for example, he explains. At the moment we have no human rights, we all have signed that away when we applied for

our current identity cards; only if we returned our identity cards would we have human rights again. The two women ask him what he calls himself, to which group he belongs, is he a Reichsbürger [literally meaning a citizen of the German Reich from 1871-1914; the term is used by a group that refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the Federal Republic]? The media would certainly say so, he answers, but he is a Bundesstaatler [someone loyal to a federal state, rather than the whole republic]. The Reichsbürger like Hitler, he says, but he himself regards Hitler as an asshole. The two women inquire which Internet site one has to go to in order to apply for this. One of them asks him if he knows Thorsten Schulte, from whom she has just ordered his book, *Manipulated: 120 Years of Lies and Deception*, but it hasn't arrived yet. Yes, he says, but he's a bit mad at him right now, because he doesn't understand why he doesn't accept the Deutschland GmbH thing [the assumption that the Federal Republic of Germany is legally not a sovereign state, but a company; GmbH is the abbreviation for Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung, meaning "company with limited liability", which is a common type of legal entity of companies], and he wonders which side Schulte is actually on. He himself had fled from the GDR to the West and never thought that things would get as bad as they are now. Now everyone was to be vaccinated with vaccines that were no longer biological but changed our DNA, which we would not be able to get rid of for the rest of our lives. The other woman says that in the GDR they were also lied to with numbers and that there were also compulsory vaccinations and that they didn't know anything about all the vaccine damage back then.

I ask the man why he is in favor of Trump. Because he would sign the peace treaty, he had already offered Merkel, but she had so far refused.

Two demonstration stewards with yellow *Querdenken* vests come by and ask the man next to him to roll up his flag. After a short conversation, they say in a friendly way that they are glad that they are now educated about the flag, but it just doesn't look good when such flags are shown on these demonstrations, the media just don't understand it. Thereupon he rolls up the flag.

On stage, the medical doctor Heiko Schöningh of the initiative "Physicians for Enlightenment" speaks about his research on Corona being the

biggest coup of organized crime ever. Towards evening, the “Citizens in Uniform” appear, as well as the editors of the weekly newspaper *Democratic Resistance*, which was founded at the beginning of the pandemic and appears – maybe but not definitely ironically – in a tabloid newspaper style. They emphasize again and again that it is the biggest weekly newspaper in Germany. Anselm Lenz, one of its founders, appears in a suit and says, *My name is Anselm Lenz* (which strikes me as somewhat embarrassing, since he seems to do it in a way as if it were not really necessary to introduce himself, but he does it anyway out of feigned modesty visible to all – kind of like, “My name is Johnny Cash”). He talks about revolution, he talks about proclaiming the 7th Republic. He says we are all standing together now, whether right-wing or left-wing does not matter at the moment, because it is about the one thing, about our shared goal, and after we have reached that, we will divide up again and go our own ways, get out of each other’s way, and possibly even fight each other, but that is not of interest at the moment. Then a man from the Bundeswehr appears and says that his wife could not come today, but he had spoken to her on the phone earlier and she said, she would rather be shot than be vaccinated.

On the way back, I see a lost poster on the ground: “You need power only if you intend something bad. For everything else, love is enough to get it done. Charly Chaplin.” It starts to rain. As I get into my car, a cab drives by. The cab driver is wearing a medical mask, the passenger a crocheted one.

“Corona is an idiot test and you failed it!” *On Trump, good, evil, and being alone*

Corona is an idiot test and you failed it, a man shouts the next day to police officers who have barricaded the entrance to the Grosser Stern [great roundabout] at the Siegessäule. The man is of retirement age, wears a red “Make America Great Again” baseball cap, and his blue T-shirt reads “Let Us Make Christianity Brave Again.” He has put on a US flag with Trump’s name embroidered on it. The Antifa is responsible for the small tears in the flag, he says. He holds in his hand a handwritten cardboard sign that reads: “Drop the criminal Merkel government over the North Pole. With a parachute

and 1 week of food. Important: masks and minimum distance.”

About 100 meters away, a group of demonstrators faces the police, who apparently just broke up the gathering. Actually, the “camp” Michael Ballweg spoke of yesterday is supposed to take place here, but obviously that is not happening. About 20 other people, all apparently at least 40 years old, gather at the barrier and start talking. Two young women in their early 20s on bicycles pass by and are prevented by the policemen from going through the barrier. One of them asks if this is because of the Corona protests, and they turn back, annoyed. *These assholes should just stay in Stuttgart*, they grumble.

The *Tagesspiegel* newspaper headlines today that there was a “storm on the Reichstag” yesterday. This is also a topic among those present, some of whom are angry about that and others dismiss it indifferently, *What else should one expect from the mainstream media?* In any case, everyone seems to assume that the action was orchestrated to put the protests in a bad light and to label the movement as a whole right-wing. I ask the man with the Trump gear why Trump is good. Trump has kept everything he promised, and that is sincerity and you can trust someone like that. I ask whether Trump has also done something good, but he obviously does not want to get involved in a conversation, merely answering slightly aggressively that he just said that.

A woman standing next to him with a *Querdenken 711* T-shirt and sewn-on peace signs adds that Trump is against the Deep State, that he is the only president who has not started a war and that he wants a peace treaty with Germany. Trump had offered Merkel to sign the peace treaty, but she had refused, for whatever reason. She had read the Basic Law last week and suddenly discovered passages that originated from the Weimar Constitution, which she had only heard about recently. Everybody could exchange his or her identity card for a “yellow certificate”. She is uncertain and asks the man with the Trump cap, but he says he doesn’t know anything about that. Actually, vaccination is her main topic. *But when you start to understand what it’s all about and what’s connected to it, it’s really shocking. In Germany, Trump is portrayed in a blatantly negative way, you can’t believe anything, even the translations, which are often not correct at*

all, you have to watch his speeches in the original. But she doesn't know enough about that to tell me more, I'd have to ask someone else.

Trump is also the topic of other discussions. A woman with a southern German accent and an alternative style of dress says that the Bible speaks of two beasts that stand for the devil, that Clinton is one beast and Merkel is also connected to Clinton, but she's not clear about who the other beast is. Trump could be, he had done a lot of good, but in December 2019 he had talked about mandatory vaccination for everyone, so she was not sure if he was not the second animal. She said there was a kind of casting show, "Looking Glass", on which people simulated the future by computers and looked to see who could best carry through their own goals. And that was Trump, who had been chosen years ago to be able to do that. I asked by whom he had been chosen and for what purpose. She does not know, she answers.

A man in his mid-50s, a concierge from Bavaria, joins in the conversation and says that it can be assumed that Trump was chosen by "them" and while he is saying that he points to the sky. He doesn't let anything bad be said about Trump since Trump is one of the good guys. To avoid using the word conspiracy theory, I ask him cautiously when he came across this "story", whether now with Corona or already before. *You mean what do I think about conspiracy theories?*, he asks laughing. Yes. He came across this many years ago, particularly in connection with the financial crisis. The Christian Democratic Union of Germany even had the New World Order in its party program. The euro will soon no longer exist. He advises people to buy gold and silver; silver is perhaps better because it has a higher increase in value during a crisis. Or a car. Or something, the current money will soon have no more value in any case. He doesn't know how long it will take until the crash, but as much money as is being printed now to keep up appearances, it can't last much longer. He had just been talking to someone who said he had his silver in a safe deposit box, but this was too unsafe for him, now he has it all at home. Another says in Melbourne they are just doing another hard lockdown. That destroys everything and he assumes that they plan to do exactly the same with us.

Another common topic is feeling lost in one's own circle of friends. A man from Baden-Würt-

temberg says he had such a fight with his housemate that they stopped bringing up the subject of Corona in order to continue living together. An elderly couple from Lower Saxony says they were all alone in their hometown and it was so good to be here among people who felt the same way they did. A woman from Berlin also says she was so alone. On Facebook, she would forward and post things critical of anti-Corona measures every now and then and was always laughed at or picked on. And then they say she is anti-Semitic. But these were all people who knew her.

"What could politics have done better?" *Late summer reading*

Early September 2020. People seem to have divided between those with fear and those without. On my way to a bakery in Sonthofen, Bavaria, I pass through a small idyllic village where two people, obviously teachers, with cloth masks in front of their mouths and noses are talking and watching their elementary school classes romp around on the sports field. The children are also wearing masks over their mouths and noses. At a traffic light, a young woman stops, sitting alone in her car wearing a medical mask. At the bakery, I encounter a long line of about 20 people that extends far out onto the sidewalk as everyone keeps a distance of one to two meters from each other. Some wear masks outside, others put them on just before entering the building, as required by a sign on the door. The saleswomen stand behind the counter without masks. There is a Plexiglas pane on the counter and a red barrier tape in front of the counter at a distance of about 50 centimeters. I place my breakfast order at a separate counter on the side, where there is neither Plexiglas nor barrier tape. Since I want to sit down in the café area, I have to write down my address, phone number, and time of attendance on a pre-printed and small cut piece of paper. It is nowhere noted what happens with the data, and no one checks whether the data I have entered are correct. At the table, you are allowed to take down your own mask.

At the neighboring table sit five women, all obviously over 70, some perhaps over 80. They seem to be in a very good mood, talking loudly and enthusiastically and laughing a lot. Again and again, the conversation turns to Corona. Don't let your-

self be driven crazy, they confirm to each other. They complain about wearing what they call funny masks and make fun of the behavior of those who, in their opinion, take them too seriously. They are indignant that others are forbidden to visit and hug them.

Yesterday, while hiking on the German-Austrian border, I came across a very old farmer's wife who was leisurely making her way to her scything husband and who expressed her calmness about Corona when asked whether the small wooden bridge that connected Germany and Austria there had also been closed a few months ago. Yes, there had been a barrier tape, but people had simply climbed over it. Many people she knows are very afraid, and you don't even dare to sneeze anymore when you're around people, but she's not so sure whether the disease is really as bad as they always say. And the old people have to die of something, after all, she concludes.

During my subsequent visit to an open-air swimming pool, a woman of pensionable age who came into the entrance area requiring a mask in front of me without mouth and nose protection also seemed to have little fear, ignoring the bottle of disinfectant provided and briefly licking the tip of her index finger before taking out the form for her contact details from the box provided. The cashier did not ask her to put on a mask.

The next morning, at the same bakery, two young women are sitting at the next table with their small children. They, too, are talking about Corona, especially about the question of returning home from vacation. On the highways at the moment are many illuminated signs saying, "Return from risk area – quarantine!" The quarantine is implemented differently everywhere, one gets different information everywhere, and it is unclear to them how it is legally regulated whether one is actually obliged to be tested if one comes back from a risk area.

The weekend issue of the local newspaper catches my attention with its headline, which promises to put Corona politics to the test. A perusal of this issue exemplifies the breadth of the current discussion and problems; there is hardly a contribution in it that does not mention Corona: the front page reports how the cancellation of the Oktoberfest is affecting Munich celebrities and this year's Playboy-chosen "Wies'n Playmate", who

is quoted as saying it is doubly unfortunate for her that the festival is not taking place this year. One article deals with the effects of Corona on the Germans' relationship with their "17th state", Mallorca. Another is about the balance of climate protection measures: although the fight against the Corona pandemic has greatly reduced carbon dioxide emissions, it is still too little. The business section explains how a water sports fair on Lake Constance will be run under Corona conditions and that Lufthansa will have to cut jobs further as a result of the Corona travel restrictions, despite massive government financial aid. The local section opens with a report about a tent rental company that was hit particularly hard by the cancellation of the cattle herding celebrations.

Experience with the general obligation to wear masks at Bavarian schools, which has been in force since the new school year, are also discussed. This general obligation is to be lifted after the weekend again, because fewer people returning from travel mean less danger. Nevertheless, the obligation to wear masks on school grounds remains. And if the number of infections increases, the general obligation can be reintroduced at any time. Very different assessments of mandatory masking are quoted, ranging from "unbearable imposition", to the acceptance of a necessary health protection, to regret about the lack of group instruction, which would be avoided even after the end of the mandatory masking in the classroom and would be a pedagogical regression.

A commentator draws a positive balance: the mask obligation was correct. There are indeed more pleasant things than sitting in the classroom with a mask in almost midsummer temperatures. But let's be honest: there are worse things. She also cites the return of travelers and a high incidence of infection in neighboring countries, which is why this measure made sense. *Now, some may argue that children and adolescents are unlikely to be at serious risk of developing Covid-19 anyway, and that it is therefore unnecessary for schoolchildren to wear masks. But that is too shortsighted. It is primarily the at-risk groups that need to be supported. To do that, it's urgent that the spread of coronavirus is contained – and that grandchildren don't carry a potentially deadly disease with them to grandma and grandpa's house.* However, those responsible should ensure that public transport is equalized

at peak times so that the protective measures in the schools are not reduced to absurdity as pupils squeeze into often hopelessly overcrowded buses and streetcars after the end of the school day.

The article below that puts into perspective the reports about a 26-year-old American woman who was denounced by the BILD newspaper about a week earlier as an irresponsible, pleasure-seeking “superspreader” because she had infected other people through negligent behavior, for which she was then threatened with “severe consequences” by the Bavarian State Premiere and the Bavarian Minister of the Interior. Apparently, she had not gone on a “pub crawl” as reported, and it was unclear whether she had infected her colleagues in a pub she had visited or whether she herself had been infected there. In addition, it is unclear whether a quarantine was prescribed for her or only recommended after her positive test.

In an interview, cabaret artist Gerhard Polt is outraged by the term “systemically important”, which has been used since March to describe professions in the healthcare, utilities, and transportation sectors. He finds this term scandalous, even more so when it is used by higher authorities. Playing does not have the value of work for them. System-relevant solidarity is a paradox in itself. Not only artists and musicians, there are many people who are not considered systemically relevant by politicians. Folk musician Michel Weil, interviewed with him, adds that he hasn't performed since March 1. *Culture was not mentioned at all in the first five or six weeks. When rules are made in Germany, they rage.* Asked what he would like to see from politicians now, Polt says, *I would support artists financially in every way so they can pay their rents. And one would have to rethink the previous measures. If I'm allowed to fly to Mallorca in a full plane, why are only 100 people allowed into a large theater? Here in Munich, 2,000 young people without masks regularly meet at Gärtnerplatz to drink beer until three in the morning. Some of the measures are absurd.*

In the sports section, after *the many uninteresting articles also in sports about Corona regulations, analyses of hygiene concepts, comments on the minimum distance, considerations of aerosols*, a columnist jokingly looks forward to the really important questions, which now finally *no longer have a stupid virus at the center.* [...] *The start of the Bundesliga*

season is not only magical for players and fans (who are now allowed to get closer to the players again). All members of the press are also looking forward to the new season with gleeful excitement. They are united with supporters and players in their love of the game. Alongside this, a report on FC Bayern Munich's first game of the new season, which was won 8-0 against Schalke in their own stadium without a crowd; the player Kingsley Colman was not present, but in quarantine due to a positive Corona test. The 1. FC Cologne should have played today against TSG 1899 Hoffenheim actually in front of 9,200 spectators, but the city of Cologne had withdrawn the permission for this 20 hours before the start of the game due to the increased “Corona incidence number”. The column “The Question of the Week” deals humorously with the pros and cons of looking forward to the Bundesliga. One journalist feels reminded of the good old days and looks forward to hearing the rapid clicking and popping of the balls, which otherwise drowns out the jumbled shouting of the spectators. *In the old days, at the kick between the laundry poles, there were no spectators either. The game was the game. Thrown back on itself. Those who know this can easily deal with ghostly scenes.* His antipode considers the emotions in a full stadium, including beer serving, fanaticism, and dirty chants, indispensable. *The idea of spectators tamed under sophisticated hygiene tactics, distributed like masked chess pieces on the board in the stadium, is nothing to look forward to. Like mildew, the new reason of state “Corona measures” covers the start of the Bundesliga. [...] In his compartments, on the other hand, the sad fan already sees his own Corona table, in which there are point deductions for suspected cases in the stadium. And referees who have the goal disinfected after crossbar hits.*

In addition to this, we can read that the upcoming Carnival in North Rhine-Westphalia will be largely cancelled due to Corona and, aside from an article about the additional income of Allgäu politicians, that the indoor swimming pool in neighboring Immenstadt will remain closed for an indefinite period because the ventilation technology does not meet the “Corona requirements”.

In the “Weekend Journal”, one page is an assessment of what is currently known about the “Corona course”, that is, the development of Covid-19. It is illustrated with an intensive care patient whose face is covered by a nose-and-mouth

protection and around whom seven people in blue protective suits and masks are concentratedly caring, apparently a picture from Spain, because underneath it says, *In Spain, the situation in hospitals is already much more strained*. Since physicians became familiar with Covid-19 a few months ago, the picture of the disease and thus also of therapy has changed significantly, which can be seen in intensive care guidelines. The fourth version is now being worked on, and the article cites numerous clinicians and studies from medical journals. In the beginning, it was known only that the virus could cause a lung disease with dramatic courses. However, one doctor said, it was quickly learned that it was a multi-faceted disease and that patients had a wide variety of symptoms. Compared to the 2017/18 flu epidemic, Covid patients tended to be younger at admission and were treated for significantly longer, had more severe courses and higher mortality, he is cited. The disease is roughly divided into two phases: a viral phase, in which the pathogen multiplies in the respiratory tract and lasts up to ten days after the onset of symptoms, and the inflammatory phase, in which the inflammation affects almost all other organ systems beyond the respiratory tract and can trigger thromboses. In the worst case, there is a risk of a cytokine storm, an escalating reaction of the immune system. People with vascular damage such as cardiovascular disease are therefore particularly at risk, as are people with pre-damaged lungs, kidneys, and liver. The administration of blood thinners has therefore proved helpful, but the search for medicines has so far produced more disappointments than successes, although the cortisone preparation dexamethasone, which is supposed to slow down the cytokine storm, is currently giving cause for hope. Claus Wendtner, who treated the first Covid patients in Germany in Munich and whose team published the results together with virologist Christian Drosten in the journal "Nature", assesses the current situation as quite relaxed. He sees significantly fewer severe cases than in April, which is probably because more young people are weathering the disease at home, and that it has been possible to better protect vulnerable groups. Whether this will remain the case next fall remains to be seen, but in view of the unknown number of unreported cases, he suspects that the case mortality rate will remain well be-

low one percent. The article concludes that many questions are still open, especially with regard to long-term consequences, but, as the president of the German Interdisciplinary Association for Intensive Care and Emergency Medicine is quoted as saying, one must assume that patients with a severe course will continue to have problems for a long time.

A double-page spread puts political decisions of recent months "under the looking glass: What could politicians have done better?" One journalist looks at the question whether the lockdown imposed in Germany at the beginning of March could have been avoided, whether the same path could not have been taken as in Sweden, which did not impose curfews and did not close its stores. His answer is: yes, but that could not have been known at the time, even if *the much-discussed microbiologist Prof. Sucharit Bhakdi* may have known this at the time when he wrote the bestseller *Corona False Alarm?* together with his wife. And that is why he thinks the German government has acted correctly. He attributes the decline in the number of deaths in Germany and Sweden to the increase in medical knowledge described in the above article and the associated use of anticoagulants and dexamethasone. In countries with inadequate healthcare systems, like the USA, this development takes longer. One sentence later, he states that it is now proven that the virus is hardly dangerous for many people, and that the numerous tests carried out recently show that many people are infected but show no or hardly any symptoms. What can be learned from this? There must not be a second lockdown under any circumstances.

The same author has written another article about the sense and nonsense of testing, which ends by advising the Bavarian state government to reconsider its testing strategy. The text refers mainly to the statements by Professor Harald Renz, Vice President of the German Society for Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine and Medical Managing Director and Medical Director of the University Hospital of Gießen and Marburg. The tests are too inaccurate, have too many false-positive and false-negative results, are only a snapshot, and a positive test also says nothing about whether the person tested is infectious at all.

Another article deals with the *confusion around a small piece of cloth*. It roughly traces the conflicting assessments of the effectiveness of the masks that have been announced by official bodies in the course of the last few months and assembles various voices on the subject. The tenor, however, is that a discussion about effectiveness is irresponsible because it makes people feel insecure. The pandemic could have been nipped in the bud with timely mask-wearing, and people should rather wear self-sewn masks than none at all, since it is not about the permeability of the masks, but about stopping virus-laden droplets.

Another article reports on the practical problems and hurdles encountered in applying for and receiving bridging aid for companies that are in financial difficulties as a result of the pandemic, but it considers the financial emergency aid from the government to be a success overall.

The last article, titled “Scientists as Substitute Politicians”, deals with communication in the “Corona Crisis”, which often leads to uncertainty. The media scholar Norbert Bolz is quoted emphasizing that it is politicians who make the decisions and not scientists. But politicians are often afraid to make decisions and hide behind scientists. This harms politics as well as science and unsettles the population. During the pandemic, many people were disappointed to learn that science does not offer truths, but only changing hypotheses. “Follow science” could not be a model for politics, as had already been shown in the climate debate. In her crisis speech on television, Chancellor Merkel did not argue, but admonished. This is good for people who want the political leadership to take them by the hand, but Bolz would prefer a more open and transparent discussion about how unclear the situation is. The director of the Kiel Institute for Crisis Research, Frank Roselieb, is also quoted. Even if some things did not go well, especially the inconsistent introduction of measures, for example when schools were closed but bars and clubs remained open for a few more days, the high approval rates among the population showed that all in all things had gone very well. On the federal level, he said, plans and scenarios for a nationwide epidemic that had already been drawn up in 2007 and updated in 2017 were broadly being worked through, according to a kind of script. The most important key messages, questions and

answers on how to explain the situation to people had been prepared. There is even DIN standard 17091 for public crisis communication. It could be placed next to many statements by the federal government and many interviews and checked off point by point. The only thing that went wrong was the way “Corona skeptics” were dealt with. One should not exclude them from communication, but talk professionally on the same level. In crisis communication, there is the “one hour-one hour principle”: each side presents its position for 30 minutes, then there is an hour of discussion, and then the discussion has to end.

An editorial and a debate contribution also deal with the treatment of critics of the measures. One of them sees a divided society looming and the need for everyone to come together again as the most difficult Corona aftereffect. Debate is important and this newspaper also wants to give space to voices that are critical, but not necessarily radical. Just as they would not give space to a fanatical opponent of climate protection or interview a Holocaust denier about the culture of remembrance, they did not want to provide a stage for people who downplayed the virus or dismissed it as a great conspiracy. Because we would know by now that the virus is deadly and has already killed nearly a million people. And in all likelihood, the outbreak would have been much worse without restrictive measures. Corona is not comparable to the flu. A letter to the editors also emphasizes the importance of a public debate, but this does not mean that serious media should give a platform to those who deny Corona or spread conspiracy myths. In our country, fortunately, everyone has the right to their own opinion, but no one has the right to their own facts. However, part of the struggle for the best way is to let critics have their say, and that is the foundation of democratic society. That’s what they’ve always done in this newspaper in recent months, the journalist notes, but they probably also got a lot wrong when they focused too much on a few extremes in their coverage of some Corona demonstrations, instead of reporting on what concerns and fears were articulated by the majority at many of those events.

The commentary on the opposite page, titled “Boundless Insanity”, asks readers what they think of conspiracy theories. In contrast to the 1990s, when they were as popular as they are today, con-

spiracy theories are no longer presented as fiction but claim to be true. There was talk of powerful cartels that control the world's destiny, and the name Bill Gates came up again and again. In all honesty, the author writes, he has often been annoyed by this gentleman when Windows has crashed again, but he cannot imagine him as a villain from a James Bond movie. The latest contribution to the global conspiracy story came from the USA. An anonymous informant from government circles, who calls himself "Q", is said to have learned that Democrats and Hollywood elites maintain secret camps in which children are held captive and abused, and Donald Trump is the hoped-for savior. If readers were to think that the United States were far away, he would have to contradict them, because insanity was also gaining a foothold in the beautiful Allgäu region. The other day, a car with a local license plate in front of him at a traffic light in Kempten had a sticker with "Q" on the rear window. In 1920s Germany, too, wild rumors flew around the country, and a political hazard presented himself as the savior. We all knew how that ended, he concludes.

"Do you know how difficult it is to write a new constitution?" *On the question of what should be done*

On September 13, 2020, a demonstration against the Corona measures takes place in Ravensburg. It starts at 12 o'clock. There is no obligation to wear a mask. On the market square is a truck that serves as a stage and on which some drummers hang around. In front of it there is a printed poster reading "Der Ruf der Trommeln. Wir sind laut, weil man uns die Freiheit klaut! [The call of the drums. We are loud because they are stealing our freedom!]" The first speaker introduces himself as a man of the first moment and complains that there are so few people here today. He speaks of 50, but I count 150. He urges those present to continue trying to convince others and to tell them they had been at these demonstrations, because they have good reasons for being here. The main problem, he says, is the restrictions on basic rights. Next to me is a man wearing a "Rage against the vaccine" T-shirt, and one of the organizers is walking around reminding people to keep a meter and a half distance from each other. The second speak-

er is a cabaret artist and fire performer who first thanks the police and then goes on to say that he hasn't had any jobs since March. Today, he says, is his 55th demonstration. From the very beginning, he decided to talk to the police, and in the meantime, he has spoken to hundreds of police officers, and almost all of the conversations have been positive. Except in Berlin two weeks ago, where the behavior of the police was catastrophic. And he emphasizes that this is a movement from the middle of society, neither left-wing nor right-wing extremist. His circle of friends has completely dispersed since Corona. He says the CIA invented the term "conspiracy theory" to defame critics, and the federal government shamelessly exploited that to shut people's brains off. He urges the audience to go shopping without masks and to ask people where they get their information and to explain to people what is meant by the expression "lying press".

Before the protest march starts, flyers, flowers, and copies of the Basic Law are handed out. Many participants have brought drums or plastic buckets and begin to beat in unison. We follow the



Fig. 13 Following the call of the drums. Ravensburg. September 13, 2020.



Fig. 14 “Stop the Corona lie.” Ravensburg, September 13, 2020.

truck that leads the march. Next to the drummers on the truck, a woman stands and shouts to the crowd, *Why are you here?* And the crowd shouts in rhythm with the drums, *We are here, we are loud, because we are being robbed of our freedom.* At the side, a young man wearing a face mask stands and gives a thumbs-down to the demonstrators. A little further, a man in his 40s stands at the sidelines and aggressively shouts to the crowd that they are Nazis and fascists. A woman wearing a cloth mask takes a selfie with the demonstration in the background. When a demonstrator wants to give her a flyer, she gesticulates wildly in defense and quickly moves away. A demonstrator with a guitar sings in a good mood:

*Wissenschaftler, Ärzte und auch Rechtsanwälte,
Statistiker, Virologen und Professoren.
Viele sind sich zwischenzeitlich völlig einig,
sie wollen die Wahrheit finden, das haben sie geschworen.*

Dazu zählt nicht nur Corona, leider geht's um so viel mehr.

*Oder willst Du bald wieder leben wie in der DDR?
Oder wie im Dritten Reich? Ohne Freiheit ohne Rechte,
ohne Frieden, ohne Zukunft? Das verhindern finstere Mächte.*

Darum: Warum rennst Du noch mit dieser Sklavenmaske rum?

*Zum Verstehen bist Du doch sicher nicht zu dumm.
Doch vielleicht bist Du ein Schläfschaf, dann gute Nacht!*

*Bist Du ein Schläfschaf? Dann werd' jetzt wach!
Bist Du ein Schläfschaf? Informier Dich jetzt!
Bevor es unsere Demokratie total zerfetzt.*

Früher war es der Hitler, heute sind es unsere Minister.

Plus Wieler, Drosten, Spahn, ziehen sie jetzt alle Register.

Und handeln völlig sinnfrei, sicher nicht zum Wohl des Volkes.

Das ha'm wir längst durchschaut, dass Angst und Panik so gewollt ist.

Doch die größte Sauerei ist, was der Mainstream so berichtet

und die GEZ auf ihre Zwangsgebühren nicht verzichtet.

Dass News manipuliert werden, dass sich echt die Balken biegen

und Fake News präsentiert werden und Politiker, die lügen.

Merkel, Söder, Lauterbach, zieht Euch jetzt warm an! Eure Tage sind gezählt und ich zähl mit.

Ja, Ihr werdet dafür gerade stehen, was Ihr uns angetan habt.

Ein Anfang wäre ein sofortiger Rücktritt.

Und wenn nicht, lasst Euch gesagt sein, wir werden immer mehr.

Immer mehr, die demonstrieren, ganz in Frieden.

Wenn Ihr von Gandhi nichts gelernt habt, ja, dann tut's mir wirklich leid, denn Frieden, Freiheit, Liebe werden siegen.

Zum Schluss ein Dank von Herzen an alle die, die für uns kämpfen

und die verhindern wollen, dass sie uns unter Zwang bald alle impfen.

Die den Mut haben, zu berichten, was der Mainstream uns nicht zeigt,

wenn die Löschung durch YouTube ihrer Videos weiter steigt.

Dazu zählen Bodo Schiffmann, Heiko Schrang und Markus Haintz

Bakhti, Wodarg, Eckert und jetzt auch die Polizei.

Roger Bittel und Ralf Ludwig, Thorsten Schulte sind dabei.

Ja, hören denn nicht mehr unseren lauten Hilfeschrei?

So vielen möchte ich noch danken, doch das Lied ist gleich zu Ende

Ja, Ihr lieben, so sieht's aus, dazu falt' ich meine Hände

Und frage Dich noch einmal: Warum rennst Du noch mit dieser Sklavenmaske rum?

Zum Verstehen bist Du doch sicher nicht zu dumm.

Doch vielleicht bist Du ein Schlafschaf, dann gute Nacht

Bist Du ein Schlafschaf? Dann werd jetzt wach!

Bist Du ein Schlafschaf? Informier Dich jetzt!

Bevor es unsere Demokratie total zerfetzt.

[Scientists, doctors, and lawyers, statisticians, virologists, and professors.

In the meantime, many are in complete agreement:

they want to find the truth, that's what they swore to us.

This includes not only Corona; unfortunately it is about so much more.

Or do you want to live like in the GDR again soon? Or like in the Third Reich? Without freedom without rights, without peace, without a future, because dark forces prevent it?

Therefore: why are you still running around with this slave mask?

You are surely not too stupid to understand.

But maybe you are a sheeple, then good night!

Are you a sheeple? Then wake up now!

Are you a sheeple? Inform yourself now!

Before our democracy is completely shredded.

In the past, it was Hitler, today it's our ministers. Plus Wieler, Drost, Spahn, pulling all the tricks. And acting senselessly, certainly not for the good of the people.

We have long since understood that fear and panic are deliberately stirred up.

But the biggest mess is what the mainstream is reporting and the GEZ does not dispense with its compulsory fees.

That the news are manipulated to the max, Fake news are presented as well as politicians who lie.

Merkel, Söder, Lauterbach, watch out for what's coming!

Your days are numbered and I'm counting them. Yes, you'll have to account for what you've done to us.

Resigning immediately would be a good start.

And if not, let me tell you, there will be more and more of us.

More and more demonstrating, in peace.

If you have learned nothing from Gandhi, yes, then I'm really sorry, because peace, freedom, and love will triumph.

Finally, thanks from the bottom of my heart to all those who fight for us and who want to prevent us from being vaccinated under compulsion.

Who have the courage to report what the mainstream does not show us, when YouTube increasingly delete their videos.

These include Bodo Schiffmann, Heiko Schrang, and Markus Haintz.

Bakhti, Wodarg, Eckhardt, and now the police. Roger Bittel and Ralf Ludwig, and Thorsten Schulte are among them.

Aren't there any more who hear our loud cry for help?

I would like to thank so many, but the song is about to end.

Yes, dear ones, that's how it looks, I clasp my hands

And ask you once again:

Why are you still running around with this slave mask?

You are surely not too stupid to understand.

But maybe you are sheeple, then good night!

Are you sheeple? Then wake up now!

Are you sheeple? Inform yourself now!

Before our democracy is completely shredded.]

The protest march moves through the city and ends in a large parking area in front of the Oberschwabenhalle, a multipurpose hall for sports and music events. A stage is set up there, where a speaker greets the participants. He says that they distance themselves from any form of extremism, from the left as well as from the right, and that they are against violence and open to all opinions. One of the first speakers talks about Klaus Schwab and that the conspiracy is real. The digital revolution will change people. But he will not let himself be changed, we remain as God created us, he ends combatively. A woman in an alternative clothing style distributes the newspaper *Demokratischer Widerstand* [Democratic Resistance] and points out that the editor Anselm Lenz worked for a long time for the *taz* [a left-wing daily newspaper] and then began to think for himself.

On stage, Thorsten Schulte, author of the book *Fremdbestimmt: 120 Jahre Lügen und Täuschung* [Determined by others: 120 years of lies and deception] speaks. He mentions his book and asks us whether we all want to live in an other-determined way or in a self-determined way like he does. He says that we must first analyze other-determination and then think about how to get to self-determination. And you have to realize what it means to call for a constitutional assembly, as some people did in Berlin two weeks ago. *Do you know how difficult it is to write a new constitution?* If he were to ask us what annoys us about the Ba-

sic Law [Germany's constitutional document] and what needs to be changed, he doesn't think most of us could tell him what the new constitution should do differently from the current Basic Law. Someone shouts, *Referendum! Correct*, answers Schulte. *That's what it's all about.* We should simply ensure that in the future we can hold referendums on all relevant issues via Article 29, for example, freedom from vaccination, which we no longer have now due to the measles vaccination requirement. We already had that with smallpox in the 1950s, he says, but in contrast to Corona, that even made sense. We could write the most beautiful constitution, but what does that mean? he asks. It may all look good on paper. In theory, the GDR also had a good constitution. But a constitution doesn't mean anything; it's much more important that the people are really sovereign and have a say in decisions, but that's not the case with us at the moment: we're allowed to vote every four years, but politics does what it wants. And that was usually not what the majority of the people wanted. In his opinion, we need to initiate a mass movement for direct democracy, for a free decision about vaccination. And for that we would only need to change Article 29 in our Basic Law. And that would open the door for many positive changes. Then we could decide that the lobbyists no longer have any business in Berlin. Then we could also enforce freedom from vaccination, he shouts to the audience in front of him.

A man next to me comments dryly, *Well, the guy is probably a bit unworldly. If we had a referendum on compulsory vaccination, we would have compulsory vaccination tomorrow. And we would also have death penalties back again very quickly.* I ask him why there are so few people at the demonstration. He doesn't know either, he answers, maybe because so many demonstrations are taking place at the same time.

Arriving on stage in the meantime is Nana from Cologne who had already taken over the moderation at the large demonstrations in Berlin and is now slowly transforming the character of the rally into a party.

I get into a conversation with a couple around 50; both work in medium-sized companies in the area. They were skeptical right from the start; the statistics simply didn't fit; it had quickly become clear to them that something was terribly wrong.

People were scared out of their wits and no longer realized what they were actually doing. For example, their neighbor, who was already a little older and was standing alone on the balcony with a mask, where she could neither infect herself nor protect anyone else. The local press derogated the demonstrations here, and the Ravensburg pharmaceutical industry had the time of its life. If it needed a building plot, for example, it merely had to snap its fingers. Until now, they had always voted for the Green Party, but now they can no longer imagine doing so. Many people would feel that way. They suspect that the smallest parties will gain popularity. They are surprised at themselves that they have recently been liking more and more speeches by AfD politicians. What the latter said about Corona was usually pretty good. But, of course, voting for the AfD is not an alternative either, they conclude.

“But then it gets quite conspiracy-theory-ish.”
Spiritual awakening

A few days later, I attend a two-hour Corona rally in Kempten. The weather is very hot. There are about 200 people present, most of them respecting the distance rules, standing on the market square in front of a stage. Again, most of the participants seem to be over 40 years old. The moderator wears a T-shirt with the slogan “Truth, Freedom, Peace”.

I get into a conversation with a couple around 50 years old who left their daughter at home the first nine days when at school masks were compulsory. At Lake Constance, there is a café where you don't have to wear a mask, sometimes they go there for about an hour to drink coffee, out of solidarity. The woman works in a health food store. *At the beginning, my boss was extremely afraid of the virus, so everyone had to wear masks. Now, when it turned out that everything was not as dramatic as*



Fig. 15 Social Distancing. Kempten. September 19, 2020.

feared, she is panic-stricken by the authorities and fears ruin. What an absurd rule it is to make store owners liable if customers do not comply with the mask obligation. And then you don't have any concrete guidelines anyway and have to come up with everything yourself.

They themselves were critical right at the beginning, the presentation of the cumulative numbers seemed dubious to them right away. They could hardly talk about Corona with friends, people were always very quick to stop discussing. But her husband has been a conspiracy theorist for a long time anyway, so it's always been difficult to go to parties, she says with a laugh, she's only now slowly come around to it with Corona. When I ask the man what he thinks, why all this happens, he says, *Oh, dann wird es aber ziemlich verschwörungstheoretisch – Oh, but then it gets quite conspiracy theory-ish.* When I pursue asking and he mentions a name that I wanted to write down because I didn't know it, he seems a little uncomfortable with it: It is about Peter Fitzek, I should simply google "King of Germany", but do not be frightened when I go to his Internet page, that is admittedly quite weird, but what he says is actually quite good. *For him, it's all part of a general process of spiritual awareness, it's all about recognizing self-responsibility, and as long as the majority hasn't recognized that, it's going to get worse and worse until it reaches a tipping point, which probably won't take much longer.*

“As usual, I see only Nazis at this demonstration.” Silent march

On October 10, 2020, a “silent march” through Berlin is announced under the slogan “We have to talk!” Starting time is one minute to twelve. In the call, demonstrators are asked to leave flags, signs, banners, as well as clothing with slogans or symbols of organizations, associations, etc. at home. *We are a colorful mix of different people who, far from any political orientation, ethnicity, or income, do not agree with the politicization of the Corona virus and the resulting restriction of our human rights, it says on the associated website. What needs to be talked about, among ten other points, above all: that the pandemic of national significance is annulled – without vaccine!* The requirements at the demonstration are to wear mouth-and-nose protection and



Fig. 16 Waiting until all have one and a half meters distance from each other. Berlin. October 10, 2020.

to keep a minimum distance of 1.5 meters. Black masks are distributed, people with a medical exemption from wearing masks were asked not to participate.

It takes some time for the stewards to make sure that the distances between the participants are correct and the crowd can start moving. The media will report in the evening that about 6,000 people participated. The mood where I stand is good; again, most people seem older than 40 years and quickly begin conversing with each other. The requirements are made fun of – mask plus distance, and that even outdoors; even the chancellor had said in an interview, when asked why she did not wear a mask, that you don't need a mask if you keep a distance of 1.5 meters. Accordingly, many of those present wear a self-made mask made of fly screen, onion netting or crocheted. One participant has on his black mask a small white ghost, another the inscription: “The silence of the lambs”.

Someone looks around theatrically and says ironically to the general amusement of the bystanders: *As usual, I see only Nazis at this demon-*



Fig. 17 “We have to talk – the Silent March.” Berlin. October 10, 2020.

stration. Even though we’re not supposed to bring flags or signs, I saw a homemade cardboard earlier that reads: “We need new conspiracy theories, the old ones have all proven to be true.” The children of one woman did not want to accompany her if there was no drumming, another says she left her children at home because she did not know what kind of demonstration it was and how the police would behave. In her environment, people would always complain about the measures and moan that it was getting worse and worse and when she said: “Then come with me on the street!” they waved her off and said, “No, I’m not a demo person.”

Another woman confirms that and adds: Or they said it was nonsense, why would the government want to harm us? Yes, she used to think that, too, says another woman. *Me, too*, the first one confirms with a laugh, *at least until half a year ago*. Another tells of a friend who said she didn’t have the energy to work so intensely on Corona, but instead preferred to concentrate on her yoga classes, which were important for the people, and so that was her contribution, and of her socio-peda-

gogical colleague who said she had also followed the Corona discussion a lot at the beginning, but hadn’t been able to form a clear opinion and then decided not to continue following it, but to concentrate on her project for the development of school democracy.

A while after the demonstration has started to move, I stop at a booth of some Seventh-Day Adventists, which provides information about what Satan intends with Corona. I get into a conversation with a round of three smoking women around 50, who obviously have nothing to do with the booth. One of them said that she was particularly disturbed by the government’s proclamation of an epidemic situation of national scope without any criteria having been named for it, that there were therefore no criteria for lifting this state of emergency again, and that they could only wait for the government to end it again with some arbitrary justification, or simply not, and that they could apparently simply rule as long as they wanted.

Another said that she also saw *the whole Corona thing* very critically, but she would never go to such a demo. *Viruses are indeed quite bad, but*



Fig. 18 Love and fear. Berlin. October 10, 2020.

Corona is not necessarily worse than the others. Viruses are always among us, and she knows people who have had very severe courses of herpes and Epstein-Barr and long-term consequences such as chronic fatigue syndrome, as is now also reported from Corona. That's just the way it is, it can happen and it's really bad, but you don't make such a circus out of it as with Corona. It would be better to make sure that people eat better and don't get so fat, and then they wouldn't be so vulnerable. But she would not go to such a demonstration, because she would be afraid of being seen. The *Berliner Morgenpost* newspaper always said that the protesters against the Corona policy were extreme right-wing people. She was employed and if her boss found out that she was at such a demo, she would not be employed for long anymore. And she had been self-employed for a long time and knew what existential fear means. If she is seen here now, she can always say that she lives here. She continues that the press has become a real problem, that it is all hard to believe, but the media have so much power.

The third woman says that she had regularly demonstrated against the Castor transports of radioactive waste in the early 1990s. Once it escalated so much that she got scared and climbed a tree to protect herself. From above, she saw how a large black bloc, today we would say Antifa, stormed towards the police, threw stones at them brutally, and then got into several police cars further back. The media filmed it carefully and showed it afterwards on TV. When she told her friends, they all said she was crazy. But that's how it was, without her knowing what was behind it. But one had to question everything. I ask her whether she was already considered a conspiracy theorist back then. *No, at that time the friendly protester from next door was not yet a conspiracy theorist.*

A man in his 40s from Saxony, who humorously says he came here today because he wants to take a look at the people he knows from YouTube videos, explains that he was quite relaxed right from the start of the pandemic, that we live with viruses, that we are populated by all kinds of things and coexist with them. Since 9/11, he has been following the question of a planned transformation of

the world. Life on earth could not go on as things were at the moment. *People have to be brought under control. There are also very blatant ideas of regularization in the discourse on ecology, such as everyone having only one child and so on. And maybe Corona is even good and we should all be happy; since in the past the people in power would have started a war if something had to be set to zero again.* When I mention my conversation with the Castor opponent, he tells of an experience during the demonstrations in 2008 against the G8 meeting in Heiligendamm. In the crowd, someone stood next to him who picked up a stone and encouraged the bystanders to attack the police. They all talked to him in a calming manner until one of them said that he knew this guy from the last time, that he was a plainclothes cop, whereupon he quickly ran towards the police line, which quickly and easily let him through. *That is quite normal. You only have to look at the story of the NPD [National Democratic Party of Germany – a small far-right and neo-Nazi party], which they tried to ban. That didn't work because it turned out that half of its executive board consisted of undercover agents.*

Accordingly, I often hear the opinion that the demonstration in front of the Reichstag at the end of August, in which the participants overcame a barrier and ran onto the stairs of the Reichstag, was either orchestrated or at least deliberately tolerated. The only purpose of the demonstration was to discredit the Corona protests. The demonstration had nothing to do with the *Querdenker* demonstration; it had been announced by a well-known NPD member, who calls every year to “storm the Reichstag”. And there were thousands of police officers in the city and only three were placed there in front of the Reichstag. And it worked: since then, the reports about the *Querdenker* demonstration were only about this alleged storming of the Reichstag.

A woman around 40 years old from North Rhine-Westphalia, who had already been to all the big demonstrations in Berlin, tells how she recently saw a child alone in the park wearing a mask and said to him that he was here in the park, where he could take off his mask. The child said he hadn't noticed, but he'd better leave the mask on, to avoid doing something wrong again. The



Fig. 19 The mask is the message. Berlin. October 10, 2020.

children were traumatized and would never get over it; children believed what they were told, and today the children were told that they could kill their grandparents or those of their friends if they did not behave properly. Markus Söder [Minister-President of Bavaria] had really said that to a child.

Another woman adds that she finds it so bad that children are given the feeling that there is something wrong with them, although they themselves do not notice anything at all wrong with themselves; what kind of body perception would the children develop as a result? At the last demonstration she was part of a group that was surrounded by the police in front of the Russian embassy, she has never seen so much police violence, not even in the squatter scene 20 years ago.

One person says that more and more critical articles are now appearing in the daily newspapers. Another replies that this is true, but it still won't change anything. Sometimes she has the impression that this only happens now and then so the media can say that they are reporting critically, like a kind of fig leaf. *Recently, there was a Corona special on ARD TV, which said that it makes no sense to always only mention the absolute infection figures, because that only creates panic, but that one must put the figures in relation to each other and that, if one does that, it can be shown that the total mortality in the Corona year is in the completely normal average and that the hospital occupancy and the death figures have been constantly low since April, the latter even at less than one percent. However, this does not change the fact that the Tagesschau [Tagesschau means "Review of the Day" and is the name of the German daily news broadcast on the public-service television network ARD] continues to report horror stories with absolute numbers of new infections every day, apart from the fact that a positive PCR test is not necessarily a new infection, and the report did not go that far either. And anyway, this also does not change the reputation of the protesters. On their bus tour through Germany, Bodo Schiffmann and Samuel Eckhardt [two critics of the Corona policy who became famous among the protest scene] celebrate the fact that ARD was now saying what their deleted YouTube videos had been saying for months. But that doesn't lead to anyone officially acknowledging that and rehabilitating them. No one stands up and says: oh, sorry, you were right after all, we were just too stupid to understand that. Even when Health Minis-*

ter Jens Spahn at some point cleverly announced that when testing large groups of asymptomatic people, one has to be careful that the false-positive rate distorts the result enormously, he presented this as if it were a latest finding of his own, while this had all along been the criticism of those who are portrayed as covidiot. And basically none of that matters anyway, because, completely unimpressed by these insights, all the measures are simply continuing and are even getting worse again, now they are even starting to designate risk areas within Germany and to restrict travel. Today, the Süddeutsche Zeitung headlined: "The plague in the cities", because Merkel had said yesterday that the pandemic would be decided in the metropolises. Now another wedge is being driven among the population, suddenly the city is being played off against the countryside, and that's complete nonsense', since before, the hotspots were in the countryside, like in Heinsberg or Ischgl. Probably it was only about preventing demonstrations in the big cities anyway. And what kind of military language is that again: the pandemic will be decided in the metropolises, already when she hears that... And then in Berlin the Bundeswehr will now be deployed to help the health offices. She had read about soldiers in uniform and with masks and face shields entering a kindergarten to test the children for Corona. Where are we living, and where is this supposed to lead? Together with all the defamations of the protests as antisocial, it is probably only a matter of time until the first person without a mask falls victim to a mob, it is already the case that people are aggressively approached if they do not wear a mask, even without asking whether they might have a mask exemption certificate. Many people would say that the mask is the new Hitler salute; at first she found that exaggerated, but in the meantime, she finds it quite plausible. Because many people don't care at all about the discussion of whether the masks are useful or not. Some of them just wear them symbolically, and it's just a matter of showing the right attitude by wearing a mask: wearing masks against the right, wearing masks as an expression of solidarity, as social tenderness, and all these sayings. You could just do that little bit of mask-wearing, that's really not so bad, and so on. And those who don't participate are excluded or beaten up. And she had the impression that the more left-wing people were, the more strongly they didn't want to discuss things, but to join in and show that they were on the right side.

The demonstration marched from Adenauerplatz to the Siegestsäule; at the end the participants are referred to the rally later in the afternoon on Alexanderplatz. There, the crowd is a bit less dense, a few hundred people gather in front of a stage. Among the speakers is Heiko Schöning, one of the founders of the initiative “Physicians for Enlightenment”. He is happy to see so many free people at this freedom demonstration. He wants to encourage those present and to remove the fear, because fear is unhealthy, that means not good for the immune system, and thus makes you vulnerable to diseases; the good news is that there is no evidence that we have a medical pandemic and that a killer virus is on the way; we could check that out, for example, on the website of the Extra-Parliamentary Investigation Committee with the address corona-ausschuss.de. The second wave has been announced. The main goal is to destroy the economy so that we all are ready for the Great Reset, for a new start. This is the biggest crime of organized crime there has ever been. He had already predicted all this in the fall of 2019, which we could see in an interview with Ken Jebsen on the KenFM YouTube channel. The important thing now is to stand up and stop participating, to stop working for organized crime and to stop buying from organized crime. He tells of his recent arrest during an anti-lockdown protest in London; he was detained for 22 hours on a misdemeanor charge with no opportunity to speak to his wife or lawyer. It would come down to refusing the chain of command. The look on the policeman's face after he asked his colleagues what he had been arrested for showed him that he knew very well that it was not legal to arrest him. And yet he said nothing. These were precisely the moments that matter.

“People are not being properly informed. Let's put it this way: They're being fooled.” Ulla

At a Corona demonstration in Leipzig on November 7, 2020 that had been called for nationwide, I meet Ulla. Born 52 years ago as the youngest of four children, she lives back in her small home village in the Black Forest after living in several other places in Germany and abroad. Her father worked as a construction engineer, her mother as a housewife. She herself trained as a masseuse, later as a

physiotherapist, and now specializes in osteopathy and craniosacral therapy. She came to Leipzig alone. Actually, she had a doctor's certificate that attested that, for health reasons, she could not wear a mask. On the train from Freiburg to Frankfurt, however, she pulled a scarf over her mouth. *At the beginning, I didn't say anything about a certificate, because it was too stressful for me, and people have been thrown off trains in the past because they didn't wear a mask. The ticket collector just said that the scarf had to go over my nose, too. From Frankfurt, she sat with a couple at a table for four. The two of them didn't have masks either, and they, too, had medical certificates. The ticket collector accepted it, but other passengers did not. They come and ask: Why aren't you wearing a mask? They don't ask nicely, but reproachfully: Why aren't you wearing a mask? A young German soldier asks us why we don't wear masks. Where I have to ask myself: is he allowed to do that? Does he have the right? He is 20 years old. Her co-passenger then spoke to him and was able to clarify the issue. And then I got off the train in Leipzig, and there were two women, one older, one young, who were extremely upset. They said that they think it's irresponsible that we don't wear masks. If we all die now... That's irresponsible. And then the younger one showed me the middle finger and said she wished we would die of Corona. And then I stood there and thought: that's kind of shocking. And at the same time I thought: this has nothing to do with me. I do see this crisis. It seems to me somehow like a huge madhouse. And everyone is carrying some kind of baggage or trauma, and it's really coming out now. That's how I see it. And I accept it if someone is scared. I do always ask: Are you afraid of the virus? I'm not someone who says: Take the masks off! But the other way around is not accepted. Everybody has to wear masks. And if you don't, you are a mass murderer. Then I am to blame if someone's grandma dies at 90, to put it a little bit exaggeratedly. And that's not okay! [...]*

I haven't had the certificate for long, but I already often didn't wear a mask before. And I have also been confronted. But what happened today was the most extreme. A few days ago, I was on a bus in the Black Forest and a bus driver and a female passenger approached me and wanted to see my certificate. To the woman I said: 'No!' And I wanted to show it to the bus driver, but I was not allowed to come close to him, because I didn't have a mask on. But the best thing was, the bus driver didn't have a mask on either. And nor-

mally they have a Plexiglas in front of the driver's seat. So I said, 'Why don't you have a mask on and no Plexiglas?' And he said his bus was broken. I said, 'That's actually kind of strange if you're so scared!' The measures are so pointless, and people are just crazy. And what the media is doing, I really have to blame the media for that, for me it's a crime in the meantime. The media say these mask deniers are similar to Holocaust deniers, they are criminals, they have to be fought. And that's what I find really violent. But fear is continuously being stirred up. And that's what I hold against the government: that it works with fear and panic.

She herself was also afraid at the beginning. On February 23, she returned to Germany from Myanmar, where she had worked as a physiotherapist in a Buddhist center. There she had already heard about the virus from China. That was already a topic there, but not too bad. Nevertheless, I had already prepared myself for everything to be really bad and that they would quarantine me at the airport in Frankfurt am Main. But when I arrived there, nothing happened and no one was interested in where I was coming from. I have to say, I was completely absorbed in the propaganda at the beginning. I took it all very seriously. That you have to protect yourself and others and so on. My turning point, however, was when this – I've come to call her this God Chancellor – when she said that there will only be a return to normal life if there is a vaccine. That was the moment for me when I thought, that's not possible. I am not a classic opponent of vaccination, but that was the moment when I thought, that can't be true. And then Bill Gates announced on the German news that he would vaccinate 7 billion people. And then it started with the statistics. And then I got more and more information through acquaintances. They said it wasn't as bad as was presented. I then came across other platforms. And then I voluntarily went into isolation in the first week of May and did some research. I read everything I could get my hands on, various media: Markus Gärtner, Rubikon, Nuoviso. I really read everything, medical sites, Lancet, Telepolis, I read everything. And then I also stumbled across Ken Jebsen. I then fell from one extreme to the other, so to speak; that means, I have an idea how one falls for this propaganda. [...] On May 6, I went to a demonstration of doctors in Stuttgart with a friend who was critical from the beginning. We have known each other for a long time, but have found each other again because she also sees it as critically as

I do. And in her family, everyone is uncritical, she has a very difficult situation. That helped me a lot in the beginning, that there are people who think the same way, or who have the same ideals. It's no longer about the virus, it's about something else. It's about what we want to do, how we want to live, how we can design the future, what has to change? It hasn't just been this intense since Corona, it's been going on for a few years now, and for me the credo is: Corona reveals. All the shit comes out: corruption, all the lies. It's like a pimple that's ripe, now we just have to squeeze it. And what I found nice was that you meet people who just have the same vibe. It's about humanity, you're equally connected, you're in an exchange. How do I want to live, what do I want to leave to the state, what is my own responsibility? That is Ballweg's great credo: that you have to consider where I am responsible for myself. What's happening here now, this decree: 'We'll all protect each other from something' – that's a dysfunctional protection. The question is, how can you live your life without the state telling you what to do? [...] With the masks, for example: I am a physiotherapist, I should actually work with a mask. I don't do that. I do it the same way I always do it: normally, if I have a cold, then I don't work. And if a patient arrives with a cough and a fever of 40 degrees, then I send him home. That's just normal infection control. But what we are doing at the moment, as Dr. Wodarg said at the beginning, is sending healthy people into quarantine because they can supposedly transmit without symptoms. That is definitely wrong.

[...] I had breast cancer two years ago. And for me it was like: hey guys, when I have chemotherapy, then I have to protect myself. But the neighbor's child can go to kindergarten. I have to take care of myself. This extreme idea, 'We all have to protect each other' and, 'If I don't protect myself, grandma dies,' that is wrong. What's happening is that people are going totally nuts. I'm like, how did we all do this before? Of course, after chemotherapy, you have to take care of yourself. You have to take personal responsibility. And when I had chemotherapy, then I said, well, I can't go to this event, but the event can still take place. I just don't go, but the other hundred can go. [...] We have to find a normal way of dealing with things again and accept that we humans have to die at some point; that's just the way it is.

[...] There is no proportionality to the measures. You have to think about it: we have 10,000 Corona deaths in eight months. A friend of mine is a mortu-

cian. 2,500 people die every day in Germany. Death is just normal. We all have to die. At some point. That's the way it is. But what is being conveyed now: we all have to make it possible for a 93-year-old to live to 94. That may sound a bit harsh, but we are mistreating children for this. What happens to the children, I think, is a catastrophe. Masks, this constant hand washing, these distance rules, and then they are taught that you are a virus slinger. For me, that is massively dysfunctional. That is no longer normal. And it no longer has anything to do with infection control. We send healthy people into quarantine. More people die from tuberculosis than from Corona; streptococcus, staphylococcus, syphilis, nobody talks about them anymore, cancer, cardiovascular, smokers, I wonder why they don't ban smoking. It's much more harmful than Corona. You can see: it's not about health anymore. We are not governed by governments, we are governed by corporations. And that has to stop, worldwide. [...] We need more humanity again. People need to be approached. And I think that's what Querdenken conveys. It's about reinstating basic rights, as they are in the Basic Law. To a large extent, they have been undermined and restricted. And the basic rights must be reinstated. To me, this community on the demonstrations has been very helpful. I live in a small village, and I am one of the few who are critical. I deal with it frankly. And when you meet people who just think the same way, who know the same channels and what it's all about, or who know what Messenger RNA actually means, etc., that's just very helpful. [...] And I like the people of this protest movement. It's a diverse mix of people who take responsibility for their own lives and don't want the state to do it for them. Grassroots democracy is always an expression that comes up among the protesters. But what is happening at the moment is this extreme divide in the society. And that leads to something like what I just experienced on the train: that a person I don't know wants me to die. I should get Corona and die.

[...] The question is, why is all this happening and where is it going? I asked the cab driver today, where is the exit? [...] I mean, you can call it a conspiracy theory, but I think it goes towards control. This Corona app for example, is primarily about surveillance. I mean, of course we're already under surveillance. My cell phone here, theoretically one can already listen in. But I think we are now in a time when we have to think about where this is going, how do we want to live? Do we really want to force people to vaccinate when

this vaccination is introduced? This won't stop with SARS-CoV-2. Then there will be SARS-CoV 3, 4, 5 ... 98. That's a business model. [...] And the government is fooling us. Because if it were a matter of health, people would not be left to die alone, that is, the elderly in the nursing homes. One would also not force children to wear masks in school. Because that simply makes no sense. It makes no sense in terms of infection control. I also work a bit in the medical field. We have to live with viruses, germs, bacteria! But what the government constantly conveys is: you have to eradicate this virus, you have to fight it, you have to defeat it, it has to go away. But it's not going away. That's a wrong approach. We are a viral bacterium. So, 80 million inside of us. We have to live with viruses and bacteria!

[...] We all know that we are no longer governed by the government, but by corporations. We all know about this lobbying. We all know that, actually. Horst Seehofer [Federal Minister of Health from 1993-1998] already said that in an interview in 2006, that the pharmaceutical industry has so much power that he can't even express it. And that was in 2006! And I believe that these power relations, this imbalance, must stop. It has to stop that the rich get richer and richer, which is also happening now during the crisis: the middle class will disappear and the poor will have nothing. And this is happening all over the world. The whole planet is ruined by consumerism, by globalization, by 'higher, faster, further, more and more'. Financial crisis. It would have happened anyway, because the whole system is fucked. We've known that since 2019 or even since the crisis in 2008. And then Corona came, for whatever reason, and now you can blame everything on the virus. But the financial crisis would have come anyway. There is this Ernst Wolf, he is a financial expert and economist, he explains it fantastically. He was also once at a demonstration of Klardenken [a local offshoot of the initiative Querdenken in southwestern Germany]. And this thing with the PCR tests is bullshit. They always talk about infected people. But it is simply a positive PCR test. Positive does not mean infected and certainly not sick. People are not being properly informed. Let's put it this way: they're being fooled. And if you don't get other information, through other platforms, then you believe that. That's what I believed at the beginning. If Mr. Wieler [the head of the Robert Koch Institute] says that, then that is how it is. But they work with propaganda. And then they repeat it over and over again: the second wave, the third wave, the fifth

wave. Where is it going to lead? Lockdown forever? That's quite a cause for concern. And I find it alarming that people don't find it alarming. I sometimes ask myself: Am I the one who is disordered, or are you? Where is the disorder? I mean, sure, there are just different opinions, but I think that the extreme power corporations have over governments has to come to an end. You just have to be able to make money in a normal way again, a cook has to be able to cook again, a singer has to be able to sing, and so on. Should we live in permanent isolation? Or go for vaccinations three times a year to keep our jobs? You have to be vaccinated to be allowed to go to the supermarket? It's already going in that direction: without masks, you can't even get into certain stores. You're kicked out because you don't wear a mask, because you're an endangerer [Gefährder]. Just the word alone is already outrageous to me. I had a discussion like that with our mayor in our village. I called there, because we have a village store and I wanted to know who is responsible for the mandatory wearing of masks in the store. Whether the mayor can influence that or whether that is determined by the Land [province]. And then I ask what would happen if I don't want to have any vaccinations and don't want to take a test, and then he literally says to me, 'Then you are an endangerer [Gefährder]!' That was at the beginning of June. And then I said, 'We have to be careful now, the term comes from a completely different area, it's very thin ice!' That's how I put it. Because these terror terms are being used to describe the critics. That is an inappropriate mixture. One is being criminalized. You are a bad person if you take part in these demonstrations. And I think that's really bad. And this is called democracy. And then the demonstrations in Belarus are celebrated because they represent democracy, and in the same breath, the demonstration in Berlin on August 29 is defamed. By the same politicians! The same thing is happening in our country as in Belarus. But only the others are the bad ones. The evil Russian. The evil American. All of them bad. Only we are good. No, that's not true. I have to say, I was never much interested in politics, but that has all changed. I also look for other platforms. I have Russian neighbors, for example, and I get information from them, so that I can get different information about Russia. Because in our normal media world, if it's not the evil Americans, it's the evil Putin. All evil, only we are the best democrats. But that's not the way it is. When you are defamed like this, as a Querdenker, like Michael Ballweg, who is

being slammed in such an extreme way, then this has nothing to do with democracy anymore.

[...] What I find very alarming is this restriction of freedom. I'm someone who likes to travel, I'm abroad a lot, I like to travel, and now I'm not even allowed to stay in a hotel in Leipzig. It's getting tighter, tighter, tighter. You're supposed to work and stay at home, but meeting friends and having a beer in a pub, that's not possible at all. Just isolate yourself, stay alone. Well, there are different ideas about what kind of agenda is behind it. One thing is for sure, it's not about health anymore. Let me put it this way: if the government were interested in health, they wouldn't be implementing these measures. Then they wouldn't be putting up signs saying 'Wear a mask!' Then they would say: 'Warm water helps against viral diseases. Go out into the fresh air! Take care of your contacts! Take people in your arms! That will support your immune system.' But the opposite is happening. I work in the health sector. And everything that only tends a little bit in the direction of alternative medicine is slowly being dismantled. The point is that, I'll just put it this way: a few corporations are simply making an insane amount of money. With illness! Not with health! Because these measures make people sick. First by the fear of the virus, then by the fear of punishment, then by the fear for their existence. That's it. The middle class is being wiped out. And everything is being moved to digital. Amazon made 15% profit during the first lockdown. In those couple of weeks. Because people were at home ordering everything from Amazon. These are the global players, these are the giants. And these are the powerful ones. [...] And that has to stop! [...] We have managed to maneuver ourselves into this dependency. Sure, I also have a laptop, but all these Amazon orders have become so massive in the last few years that the stores are also going down the drain. I'm usually someone who buys in retail shops, I'm an Amazon refusenik, but now it is made extremely difficult for me to shop in stores due to these perverse measures. [...] And the middle class? When I walk through Neustadt, which is a small town near my home, it's just desolate and dead. And I ask myself, is this the way people want to live? Where is this going to lead? I don't want to live like that. I mean, I once said, 'I'd rather die than get vaccinated. Before I take part in this nonsense.' But of course, that's no solution either. For me, to come back to Querdenken, this movement is a way to find people with whom you can develop alternative ideas. People are always accusing you of

worshipping a guru: Michael Ballweg [the founder of the so-called Querdenken movement]. I think he's a great man because he's an organizer and he just did what he had to do and organized the demos and that's great. But without the people, the movement would be nothing.

[...] This fight against Querdenken has existed from the very beginning. And I also heard from friends who know me really well that only Nazis go to the demonstrations. You can speak as you like, but when SWR [the abbreviation for Südwestrundfunk, which means Southwest Broadcasting – a regional public broadcaster that mainly serves the states of Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate] says that, then that's what it was like. And I say, 'Hey guys, I was there at the demonstrations. The people there are totally normal people, just go there, make up your own mind!' But no, there are only Nazis, conspiracy theorists, and you name it. My favorite term: bewildered right-wing esotericists, that was the best. But that's nothing new, really. I've never been in a situation like that before, but it's like this: in Germany, if you have a different point of view, then you're right-wing. Because that always works, you're a Nazi and that makes you all bad. It's pretty simple, but it works.

[...] There are many different groups of critics, even small ones, and I don't think it's all about the big demonstrations. But they were great, it was really an experience. It is also about the individual, that one questions oneself, how is my consumption behavior. How do I want to live? Do I want to leave it all up to the state? Do I want the state to say, 'Okay, go for vaccinations twice a year, then you can work and pay your taxes; otherwise stay at home?' Is that how we want to live? And then you have to ask yourself, do I want that or not? And if you don't want that, you have to go out on the street. I don't think that everyone in Germany will understand this. People always talk about the critical mass, they talk about 15%, and that we have already exceeded it. I have friends who are critical of the measures, but who would never go to such a demonstration, they say, that's not my thing. But for me, it was. I have to go there, I want to be visible, I have to go there.

[...] In the meantime, many things have already happened. Among other things, through the Foundation Corona Committee [founded in mid-July 2020 by four lawyers who regularly discuss global Corona politics critically with invited guests in live broadcasts lasting several hours, see [\[na-ausschuss.de\]\(https://coro-na-ausschuss.de\)\]. I think what they're doing is absolutely fantastic. They have my utmost respect. And you can see that a lot is happening in the background, for example their lawsuit against the PCR test. And I think that – you know, it's called the narrative – that this narrative of this so-called Corona crisis, that that's going to collapse. Like it did with the swine flu back then. That it will just become obvious to everyone that there is no pandemic. That people have just been put in fear and alarm and fooled. And then I'm curious, I don't like this term, but I have to use it now, then I'm curious what will happen when Germany wakes up, when it becomes clear that it was all just fake, that the whole story is exaggerated. I mean, the virus exists, that's for sure, the term 'Corona denier' is just impudence. But this dramatization of the virus is wrong, we don't have piles of corpses. And it's not because these measures were so great. We could have done that without a lockdown. And if we didn't have PCR testing, we wouldn't have a pandemic. And you can see that in the people. For example, when I ask in stores if they are adhering to the measures because they are afraid of the virus, I often hear, we are not afraid of the virus, we are afraid of the punishment. I mean, what kind of pandemic is it when people say something like that? \[...\] But of course there are also people who are afraid and I don't blame the people who believe in the story for the way they have behaved, with what kind of aggression, with what kind of anger they wish me dead. I think I can understand that. Because they also got me with this propaganda at the beginning. And then these pictures from Italy and New York. In the Corona Committee, doctors from Italy reported on the situation there. You have to know that in Italy, the health care system is different from here; they are in a much worse situation, also with the intensive care beds. For them, every year when a normal influenza appears, it's a disaster. They experience that every year. And the pictures of all the coffins from Bergamo, those were partly fake pictures; they were from the refugee tragedy. And the pictures from New York with the mass graves on the island, that was also nothing special, they've been around for a long time, they're graves for poor people. And when you film in a crowded emergency room, well I worked in intensive care, too, that always looks dramatic, always, always! You can get dramatic images from anything. And in the hospitals there was partly mistreatment. That the patients were intubated too early. The people then died from the intubation. Because intubation is](https://coro-</p>
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a difficult procedure. And when someone is older, the body can no longer cope. So, different things play a role in Italy: that they don't have so many beds, then this overloading of the hospital staff, an old population. And then avoidable mistakes were made, in some cases infected people were brought back to the old people's homes, which then infected everyone else. So, it was several factors. And then the cremation pictures: usually there is mainly earth burial in Italy, but then the WHO recommended that you cremate the bodies. And Italy was not prepared for that. And then you kept seeing these pictures with the military trucks taking the bodies away. Those were these shock images. But that was just because they just weren't prepared. And then they say it's so bad, you already have to take the bodies away with the military. But that's a distortion of the truth.

[...] There is this much-used term 'elite'. I think that they have so much power and so much money that they also buy up the corporations. Because the conformity is obvious. ARD and ZDF, too. The Gates Foundation finances *Der Spiegel*. I mean, it's clear that they report in a certain direction, which is the desired direction. And people like Dr. Wodarg and the demonstrators are defamed. And the people then believe that.

In her village, she lives with five other parties in a condominium building. Most people there are also critical of the measures. But it is difficult among her friends, there is only little understanding. There is only one friend with whom I went to my first demo in Stuttgart, then Ulm, Berlin, Constance, preferably to the relatively large demos. I have also been to Freiburg, which was a bit smaller. My neighbors also go to the smaller ones. I thought the big ones were pretty good because, like in Berlin, you can't carry away a million people. I always try to engage people in conversation. In our village store, I have a coffee and then you get into conversation. But it's a pain. I was already a bit pissed off in May and then I had planned to have one good conversation a day. I mean, in the beginning I was also, like, 'Oh, here comes a killer virus and now we're all suffocating.' But insight only comes from yourself. That's why I don't want to evangelize, I'm reluctant to do that, and I can't do that anyway. I can only give my point of view, or facts. Because the figures we are talking about are from the Robert Koch Institute, they are official figures. You can see that from the curves: when the lockdown started, the famous R-value was already at 0.8. And the PCR tests have an error rate: we now

have four times as many tests as in May. That's why there are these insane infection figures. They test everything. People are perhaps becoming a bit more critical as a result of these conversations I have with them, but they certainly don't see it as radically as I do, if that's the right term. Well, you're exaggerating, they say to me. Even when I say that you can possibly lose something, like your job, if you don't get vaccinated. Well, that's not completely unrealistic, isn't it? This has already started with measles. This is the first compulsory vaccination in Germany and if the children do not have this vaccination, they are not allowed to go to kindergarten. It's that simple. Since March 1, 2020. The first compulsory vaccination in Germany. And SARS-CoV-2 is next. And then comes 3, 4, 5 ... 98. The immunity card was once very big topic at the beginning, then it was gone again. And now it's organized through the EU, which means if you can't prove immunity, you can't travel. And that's not about health, it's about control. Everybody has to have this thing, and if you don't have it, you're out. What I find difficult is this talking about the nanoparticles etc. in the vaccine, I don't believe that for now. But nevertheless, I don't want to get a Covid vaccination because I think it's bullshit. Whatever is mixed in there in the vaccine.

[...] The mayor of Tübingen was quite radical at the beginning, but in the end, he is right. We are doing all these measures so that people will not only live to be 93, but also 94. That's this pseudo-solidarity. I mean, you have to think about what these measures do to people: suicide, job loss, addiction, violence. That is ignored. All that counts are these Corona deaths: 'And if you don't wear the mask, you're going to kill somebody!' I think that's sick. It's brainwashing, I don't have any other term for it.

[...] The people who did everything they could for infection control in the summer, who invested and adapted their pubs, for example, are now being forced to close down again with the second lockdown. I don't understand why the resentment of entrepreneurs isn't growing. I don't understand why they're not all out on the streets already. I don't understand why a Tim Melzer, this TV chef, isn't on the streets. He says, 'Dear state, give me a little more money, I'll take out another loan, which I'll also pay you back.' I say, 'No, the measures have to be removed, then you can earn money again.' I mean, the banks are profiting from these loans again. That's insane.

[...] And all in the name of saving a human life. I can't get my head around that. And then sugar is not

banned, Julia Klöckner [parliamentary undersecretary in the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection] makes a big deal with Nestlé, they then produce diabetic children again, where you can then sell insulin again. They want to ban Vitamin D, which is important for blood formation. It is no longer about health. It's about getting sick so that you have to take medication. I am not against conventional medicine. I had chemotherapy, which helped me, but you need this balance. You can't let anybody get the upper hand like that. The corporations that say, 'This is good for you, take this.'

[...] I was never really interested in politics. I could always do everything, I have a nice job, I could travel. But Corona changed that. Now I also look at other platforms and media. I used to only watch normal television, I always thought talk shows were great. But I can't watch them anymore. I need a puke bucket. I still watch it sometimes and think, how could you do that to yourself for such a long time? But it's actually good when you get a different perspective or a different awareness.

[...] I had seen Bill Gates on the news and I thought that was weird. My neighbors are totally critical, and I know they were very critical of the Corona thing from the beginning. I knew of no websites. I then went on the Internet and googled what was out there, and then I came across KenFM. And Ken Jebsen had a video, I think it was the Joker. And he always has these videos where he has this wall of books in the background. And he always talks so fast. But I thought it was brilliant how he described what was happening in society. Then I always looked at what YouTube was spitting out. And then there's a YouTuber in Munich, his channel is called Kameratoms, and I used to watch him. I started watching it at the beginning of May, because they had already been doing demos for a while. And this YouTuber was on the Marienplatz in Munich at the demos and interviewed the people. And that's how it started. Actually, it was mainly Ken Jebsen and this Kameratoms with his interviews of people on the Marienplatz. I had never heard of Jebsen before. But my pedicurist, who is also totally critical, knew all about it. [...] People always talk about awakening, I find the term a bit difficult, but maybe it's really like that. I was already a bit in this Corona nap at the beginning. And as I said, my credo is that Corona uncovers. Even between friends and in the family, conflicts just come up like that. For example, a nephew of mine who is studying psychology and we've always

gotten along well, that was at the end of May, and I just said I'll be glad when this Corona madness is over. And he was like, 'Why madness?' And I had only mentioned Bakhdi and Wodarg and then it was over. Then I was a conspiracy theorist and disturbed and he broke off the conversation. That was really tough. And he's studying psychology, he's allowed to treat people. I found that really hard. Apart from that, we actually had a good relationship. But then a different opinion comes up and he immediately puts me in this corner. Without me being able to say anything else. And that's still the case today. I hope that this will change again sometime, when all the madness is over. So, my door is open. I mean, I understand that too, he works at Caritas, he works with the homeless, and so on. And he talked about people miserably croaking from Corona. Croaking. That's what he said. Where I say, sure, if you are already weakened, like a homeless person. But you first have to ask yourself why there are homeless people in Austria or Germany at all. And just this word 'croaking'. I have heard that so often. People are croaking from Corona. Where I think: Hey, I used to work in a hospital and I've seen really bad things, so there's always been that. And now suddenly only Corona is terrible.

[...] In the context of Querdenken, there is always talk of change, that a new era is needed, and so on. Also, in the mainstream, there is always talk of the new normal, the new normality, which goes in the direction of constantly repeated vaccination and constant quarantine. But I think we have to go back to the roots. I don't have Facebook, I'm not on Twitter, I'm happy if I can handle my Telegram group. I think we need to get back to analog. Not everything just through these Zoom boxes. We need to go back to direct contact and humanity. And at the moment, things are going in exactly the opposite direction. Working at home, everyone, everything digital, just don't touch anything, bacteria everywhere, everything is dangerous. And that has to stop. I don't have a car, I take the train a lot, and then you always had a nice chat. And now you only have that with people who are also Querdenker. The others just sit around isolated. I find that creepy. On April 26, the mask requirement was introduced in Baden-Württemberg. At that time, it made no sense at all.

[...] It seems to me that young people lack a healthy ability to debate. I still have four siblings and come from a conservative family. You're not allowed to do this and that, what do the people say, and so on. I've

always been a bit different and rebelled. But I think that these young people don't have this ability to discuss when they come across someone who sees things differently. Those who can't wear masks are the odd ones out, relegated to the corner, and so on. And then one protects the granny, but does not ask whether the granny wants to be protected at all. Not all grannies are in old people's homes or have dementia. We need a good culture of debate again. Like at the regulars' table in the past. Or like with the cab driver I told you about. He was of a different opinion, but we had a valuable conversation and he thanked me that it was a great conversation. No one can claim to know the truth. But you have a feeling where everything is heading. And when I think about it now, there has been this second lockdown. But why? Sure, the numbers are going up, but we're also testing like suckers. And we have so many false positives. And a positive PCR test doesn't mean infected, and infected doesn't mean sick, especially if you don't have any symptoms.

[...] I thought it was so blatant that the Europa Park [a popular theme park near Freiburg] opened and the kids weren't allowed to go to school yet. I mean, you can't do that. And it seems to be only me who notices that. And I don't even have children. People then say, that's just the way it is. It's like bread and circuses. The main thing is to be busy, but the children are supposed to stay stupid.

[...] I am glad that I live in a village. In the city today you only have the disadvantages of the city, the advantages are all gone. At least in my village I can still go into the forest without a mask. I hope that this madness will just stop soon. And this schism. That people are being driven into aggression because you don't wear a face mask. Madness. It's already unbelievable. When I woke up from that sleep I was in before Corona, it was unbelievable, I didn't recognize my country anymore. I walked through my village and really thought: I don't know my country anymore. These masks... And everything gone: social life. And 'OMG, I didn't even recognize them.' This communicative aspect, which is what life is all about, is gone. For nothing. Because they want to protect their grandfather. I don't want to devalue that. But it has nothing to do with infection control. And most of them now die lonely in their old people's homes. What is that? That's inhumane. At my first demo in Anstatt, there was an elderly woman in her 60s, sitting there with her folding chair, and she had a sign saying that she hadn't seen her mother since March, that she wasn't allowed

to visit her anymore. That was really tough, I started crying. Sitting there with her sign and her folding stool. And then you read in the newspaper that they're all Nazis. And then I think: 'Hey, guys, you're really nuts!' And these are these so-called collateral damages. And the government knows that. There is this one study by this guy called Kohn, who has a controller function in the government, who wrote that the damage of the measures is greater than the benefit; and he was suspended. That was also a point where it was clear to me, that the whole thing is intentional. Because if it's a mistake, then it could have been corrected. The man lost his job because he was just doing his job. That's what I think is so striking, that the measures are not appropriate.

[...] Most of those who don't think the measures are okay wouldn't take to the streets. I hope that this resistance, which comes from Querdenken and which has grown steadily, that it is enough to stop the measures and that this government is punished for what it is doing here, because this pandemic doesn't exist, Corona is not a killer virus. We are not walking over piles of corpses and it is not because of the measures. The cab driver I was driving with earlier told me that we were doing so well in Germany because we had all these measures. And then I ask him how he gets his information. And then all he gets is the usual stuff: Tagesschau and so on. And then they swallow what they get presented. They don't read anything else, no other statistics, no other opinions. In these cases, it's always difficult to discuss, because you have to elaborate so much. The medication, for example, hydroxychloroquine, was simply dosed too high and then it was said that it didn't work. This guy from Kiel, a physician, Köhnlein, says that for example. There were massive treatment failures, especially in the beginning. [...] Wodarg also said in the summer that many deaths are due to taking the wrong medication. In a conversation with people who inform themselves through the mainstream media, it is very difficult to explain all that, because you have to explain it in such a long way. Also, what the PCR test does and what it is actually able to do. But then you quickly realize that people simply don't believe what I tell them. And many don't even think the measures are bad at all, you can just put a rag in front of your nose, there's nothing to it. I find that alarming, frightening, shocking.

“Forever state of emergency.” *Infection Protection Act*

The German Bundestag is scheduled to pass the third version of the Infection Protection Act on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. According to media reports, more than 10,000 demonstrators are gathered in front of the Brandenburg Gate today. Among them a couple from the state of Saarland with whom I strike up a conversation. Both are a little over 60 years old and have traveled especially for this demonstration. They have followed the protests with great sympathy from the beginning, but have never been to a demonstration before. But the passage of this act would be the straw that broke the camel's back. They themselves had already left “the system” as far as possible and were now living in a trailer on a campsite with the money from the sale of their house.

In conversations and on banners, many protesters compare the act to the Enabling Act of 1933, which gave unlimited power to the Nazis. The law's vague formulations regarding an imminent danger situation gave the government the possibility to declare a state of emergency at any time, to thus suspend fundamental rights, and to govern by decrees. The Weimar Constitution would also have continued to exist in the Third Reich and had only been replaced by decrees for twelve years. And this instrument would be in the hands of any future governments. A demonstrator expresses this scenario with his cardboard sign on which is written simply: “Forever state of emergency”. Another one carries a sign hanging around his neck, “If you wonder if you would have been a camp follower in 1933: Today you know!” A woman next to a man wearing an Anonymous mask asks on a cardboard sign, also handwritten, alluding to a quote by Joseph Goebbels, “Do you want total Corona dictatorship?” Another sign notes that today is the Day of Repentance and Prayer and alludes to Matthew 4:17, “Repent, the dictatorship is near.” Another demonstrator carries a sign with a quote from a song by the East German band Keimzeit from the time of the fall of the Wall, which at the time could be understood as a swan song for the GDR: “Irre ins Irrenhaus, die Schläuen ins Parlament! Selber schuld daran, wer die Zeichen der Zeit nicht erkennt.” [Lunatics to the madhouse, the smart ones to parliament! Your own fault if

you don't recognize the signs of the times.] And a woman wrote on a sign: “Please. No dictatorship under the guise of infection control.” A man shouts through a megaphone, *Merkel und Spahn, hört auf mit dem Viruswahn!* [Merkel and Spahn, stop the virus insanity!]⁴ and another woman carries the handwritten sign “Behind fascism is capital”. Another banner is so large that it has to be held by two people: “Corona hysteria camouflages class struggle. Super-rich ex-No. 1 W. Buffett says, ‘We're waging class war! My rich class wins.’” Over the last word is written in red: “No”.

Suddenly, a group of about 40 people appears, carrying posters with the faces of mostly German politicians and scientists, as well as Bill Gates, pasted on a body in prison clothing and stamped “guilty”. *Oh no*, says a woman next to me, *now these PEGIDA guys are coming again. And these are the photos that will be in the newspapers again later.* Her neighbor replies, *Well, but they're right somehow. And I also think the politicians have to be held accountable somehow.*



Fig. 20 Responsibility. Berlin. November 18, 2020.

A man walks by with a self-written sign, “I release the federal government from its self-proclaimed duty to protect me from Covid-19 and I take full personal responsibility for my life.” Another one comes along with an unsourced quote, “We citizens should remind ourselves daily that politicians are only our employees and not our guardians.” Another sign calls for a referendum “whether Sweden’s concept or pharma’s concept”; another states “The media is the virus”.

I get into a conversation with a woman who has hung a sign around her neck that says: “New infection protection act = dictatorship. Peace, justice, politics for people, not just lobbyists and corporations.” It’s all pretty awful, she says. She won’t get vaccinated and she won’t get locked up, she doesn’t want isolation centers; in Canada it’s already like that. She is 58 years old now; she would rather let herself be killed.

I see a man with a banner “Corona is a capitalist” and another one with “Inflation is coming”. I get into a conversation with an elderly woman who is carrying a flag with a Q on it. She stopped consuming mainstream media a long time ago, she says. At some point, she wondered what was wrong concerning Corona and asked the cosmos to give her some information. Then she went on the Internet and immediately came to a website with prophecies by Q. And she must say that he has been right quite very often, so she is taking it quite seriously.

In the afternoon, the police break up the gathering on the grounds that hygiene regulations are not being respected, and since the crowd does not move away on its own, the police begin to use water cannons. After a while, those present move away to the adjacent Tiergarten park. The comment that the police enforce compliance with infection control measures by drenching people to the bone with water cannons on a cold November day becomes a running gag among the demonstrators.

As it gets dark, about 200 people gather in front of Bellevue Palace, the seat of the German president. Most of them stand around in small groups. I hear someone complaining about the many German flags among the demonstrators. *Well, he is answered, I can understand that. You can see where internationalism has led. The German flag stands for everything that the globalists want to take away from*



Fig. 21 Better safe than sorry. Berlin. November 18, 2020.

us: the Basic Law, the fundamental rights, our freedom. I think we have to go back to smaller units like nations, that’s the only way we can assert our freedom.

I come across a small group who obviously know each other; they talk about conspiracy theories and one of them says, *Most people think conspiracy theories are not true because you can’t tell everyone at the same time to do this or that. ‘How is that supposed to work,’ they ask, ‘we don’t live in a dictatorship where people are told to do this and do that.’ But that is again far too simplistic. It’s not about someone sitting there ordering people to do this and that, even though they don’t want to. It’s about propaganda, it’s about getting people to want to do exactly what I want them to do. This is about long-term processes, it’s about something like agenda setting, and that’s set up over decades or even centuries. Most people don’t have an eye for that.*

A woman comments, *Well, maybe in Western Germany. In the East, there is a greater awareness of these manipulations. In the East, people don’t even as-*



Fig. 22 Washing hands and brains. Berlin. November 18, 2020.



Fig. 23 Media is the virus. Berlin. November 18, 2020.



Fig. 24 State of emergency. Berlin. November 18, 2020.



Fig. 25 Who to blame. Berlin. November 18, 2020.



Fig. 26 Freedom, hope, success, and cold water. Berlin. November 18, 2020.



Fig. 27 Class war from above. Berlin. November 18, 2020.

sume that they could be told the truth. People from the West can't even think that, they have total trust in the institutions and believe they are well informed when they watch the Tagesschau and read DIE ZEIT or the FAZ. 'Why should the government do something like that,' they always ask. It doesn't occur to them that the news and the newspapers might not be what they were 40 years ago, if they were different at all. I mean, I've always known that we're being manipulated, but I honestly didn't realize the actual extent of it. Most of all, I didn't realize that it doesn't really matter how bad a story is that you're being sold. That they actually get away with this Corona story, which is so blatantly bad. That most people apparently really believe what they're told here and that they just parrot everything that some think tanks have dictated to the press and politicians. To me, that's extremely frightening.

A little later, I meet a woman in her 50s who seems very excited. She says she heard from an acquaintance that all employees at Volkswagen have already been put on short-time work for the coming year, *Why is this already decided for such a long time? I don't understand; what's happening right now?*

A man of a similar age, whom she obviously doesn't know, answers her: *It's probably quite simple. There are simply too many people on this planet, that's why the number has to be radically reduced. Such considerations have been around for some time.*

She: *Why is that? And how does that have anything to do with Corona?*

He: *Well, the earth is ruined, fucked, screwed. Overpopulation is an extreme burden on the planet. That's why people have to vanish: to save the Earth, to save nature.*

She (cheerfully): *Oh, that's great!*

He (amused): *Well, of course that's great, but if you think that only affects the others, the people in Africa or wherever, then you're wrong. It is about you. You are too much and you have to leave. And as fast as possible. You are no longer needed. Most of the work can now be done by machines. And you only unnecessarily consume a lot of resources. Corona is not about health. The whole Corona thing is an attack on the Western world in particular. It's striking, isn't it, that the most blatant measures take place mainly in the rich countries, where the standard of living is the highest, where people consume the most resources per person. You simply don't need so many people who eat all day, drive around more or less pointlessly in their*

cars, and fly twice a year on vacation and either don't work at all or do some unproductive kind of stuff. Have you ever heard of the Agenda 2030 of the UN? How are the 17 goals that change the world to be achieved? The first point is poverty reduction. Most people probably think that fighting poverty means making everyone as rich as we are. But poverty and wealth are not clearly defined, they are relative terms. And to raise the whole world to our standard is not possible, the earth won't stand that. Then the only possibility is to bring everyone to a low level. Then everyone would be equally poor and thus everyone would be equally rich. And how to achieve this is quite simple, it works like everywhere in the world: you convince the countries to take some disastrous actions, thus plunging them into debt, and make sure that everything public gets into private hands, then it is no longer the politicians and the citizens who decide, but the private corporations and their owners, and all the profits go into the pockets of the rich. This procedure has been tried and tested in the third world for a long time and has proven successful many times over, and now it is just befalling the first world. Now the economy is being destroyed with lockdowns and the states are going into debt to an unprecedented extent. But that will probably not be enough. If you want to achieve the goals by 2030, you have to hurry. And there are still too many people on earth for that. And a prerequisite for being able to control populations and their numbers is the destruction of any democratic systems. People who claim to have a say only interfere with population control. I suspect the point is simply to create as much chaos as possible. We've been told in the media for some time now that there can and will be widespread power blackouts due to hacker attacks, etc., without saying who would do it and why. I think such things are part of the preparation. I think it's about inciting a civil war. Politicians and the media are agitating against a minority in such a way that the population is literally being set against each other. Of course, this is also a good distraction from the actual causes of the problems. Thus, people are distracted from the fight against the ruling powers. Divide and rule, the old principle. And if later all are fucked and starving and freezing, then they hold each other responsible for the situation and if they do not starve, they beat each other to death.

She: *Oh no, that's terrible. What can we do now?*

He: *Well, everyone would just have to refuse. If no one would participate anymore, Corona would be over*



Fig. 28 Paranoia. Berlin. November 2020.

tomorrow. But if so few people continue to stand up, then that's the way it's going to be.

Another woman in her 50s, who had joined in, agrees with him: Yes, I also always think that it has to be about more than just health. Otherwise, the whole thing doesn't make sense. And I'm afraid that this agitation that you mentioned indicates that in the system that awaits us, it won't matter at all what people think and want. I'm afraid that in the system that's coming, no one will have anything to say anymore. It doesn't matter if you defame 30 percent of the population as idiots and blame them for the progress of the pandemic. Who would have thought a year ago that politicians and journalists in Germany would be allowed to agitate in public in such a way and get applause for it? I think this is a real breach of taboo. I always wonder what the individual politicians know. What about Merkel? Or Wieler? I mean, they can't possibly themselves believe what they say. And sometimes I think maybe Merkel is being blackmailed, or she's being threatened personally. The tremors she had last year in public were pretty strange. Then they said she hadn't had enough to drink. That's ridiculous. Have you ever watched those videos? I can't imagine it's

from not having enough fluids. Perhaps she has been shown what can be done to her if she does not cooperate. Or maybe she's going along with it all because she actually wants to prevent damage to Germany. Like, 'Hey Angela, for now we'll just release a manipulated coronavirus. Either you manage to get your people to go along willingly with everything, which means that they will all be vaccinated and totally monitored through vaccination passports, a digital identity, and the abolition of cash, or we will get the next virus out of the drawer, and we promise you that it will no longer be as harmless as Corona.' Because I think it's all about surveillance. And of course, once there is hunger and civil war and chaos here, you will gratefully accept all surveillance techniques that promise you social order and thus security again. That's how you get everyone in Western democracies to agree to total surveillance. But maybe it doesn't need that at all. Look at the people, they are already doing everything they are supposed to do without any complaint.

In the meantime, several demonstrators have joined the discussion. Another man in his 50s says, Probably the whole hype about climate change in the last years was also already a preparation for

this idea that there is no alternative to the Great Reset, which is just another name for the Agenda 2030. Greta was hyped and is now speaking at the World Economic Forum. I was not aware before Corona of the extent of the power of the media and how the media is directed by corporate interests. And now I think, sure, Greta could never have become this big if that hadn't been wanted. Now we all know that we have to do everything to save the earth. And that we have to sacrifice democracy for that.

And that we need nuclear power, the woman adds to the laughter of the others.

He continues: Strange, though, that so few leftists seem to realize this. When the people on the left see that the people on the right see a new socialism emerging with the Great Reset, it may confirm them in the perception that this is a good thing. Then they don't realize that the people on the right are wrong in their assessment. Because we are not facing socialism, but feudalism. Because the property will not be collectivized, but there will be few holders, who keep the rest as slaves, who hold them on such a short leash that they just survive, or rather ensure the survival of the holders. You spoke earlier about the principle of divide and rule. I think that the whole identity politics thing, which has been hyped so much in recent years, already goes in this direction. Minorities are encouraged to play off against each other instead of going after the oppressors together. And with Bill Gates it is quite similar. I mean, he's one of the big players and somehow he's managed to make any criticism of his business practices seem like a conspiracy theory. Before Corona, it was common practice in the media to criticize his business practices and to point out what a danger they are to democracy, especially with the influence of private foundations. Today, you only have to say his name and you're considered a conspiracy theorist. He only wants to do good. He is a philanthropist. Anyway, only in Russia are there oligarchs, here we have only philanthropists. And the leftists buy it. A friend said to me the other day, when I tried to explain to him how the public health sector is dominated by philanthropic foundations, almost all of which are connected to Bill Gates, and how undemocratic that is, he said that he would still prefer an unelected Bill Gates to the elected Bolzonoras, Trumps, and Johnsons of this world. And he sees himself as a leftist. It's really amazing what kind of stories people are ready to buy. And above all the leftists. It's unbelievable how they

let themselves be harnessed to the elites. They make themselves useful idiots. Instead of fighting against the rich, they fight against those who fight against the rich. And then they accuse the demonstrators of being Nazis and anti-Semites who trivialize National Socialism and the Holocaust. I would rather say it's trivializing Nazism and the Holocaust to call the protesters Nazis. I mean, do they know what Nazis are? And then again and again this mantra, 'If just one human life is saved by the measures, then it was all worth it.' But, I mean, how many people die because of the measures? They all just have their own little world in mind and think that solidarity consists mainly of going shopping for their neighbors. How great we are to take care of our dear fellow human beings. I have to vomit. They have no idea at all about politics, about economics and global relations and about geo-strategic considerations. Most of the supporters of the measures I have met have no clue at all. And even in politics: the other day I talked to a young politician of the Green Party from my constituency. He had never heard of the Great Reset before.



Fig. 29 (No) Fear. Berlin. November 18, 2020.

My car is parked in front of the House of World Cultures. A sign in big letters above the entrance reads: “Haltet zusammen ----- mit ein bisschen Abstand” [Stand together ----- with a little distance]. As I’m about to get in my car, a couple of protesters who are also on their way back pass by and see my license plate. *Ah, hey, you’re*

from Leipzig?, says one of them delightedly. And referring to the big nationwide demonstration in Leipzig last weekend, he says appreciatively: *Leipzig has become a real brand! I guess you know next weekend there will be another demonstration in Leipzig. See you there!*



Fig. 30 “Stand together with a little distance.” Berlin. November 18, 2020.