

# MERKEL: CLOSING GERMANY. THE CORONA-PANIC- DEMIC HAS ARRIVED IN OFFICE

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By **Uli Gellermann**.

Chancellor Merkel declares in regard to the Corona crisis "to refrain from social contacts wherever possible". What are social contacts? When the truck driver at the depot collects the pallets of toilet paper from the shift supervisor? When the machine operator goes from one colleague to another at the factory? When the caretaker at the hospital assigns the cleaning crew? There will be social contacts, which can easily be avoided: Every second meeting of the Bundestag committees, Bundeswehr and NATO maneuvers, editorial meetings of the Apotheken-Umschau.

### **Whoever plays dead can survive**

Merkel's declaration joins the general renunciation: We close, cancel, close, so nothing happens, is the message. Only those who prophylactically play dead can apparently survive. There is only one point that goes beyond the end-time messages: But the economy must now be helped as quickly as possible, with "credits without borders". A message to the healthcare system is missing.

### **20,000 dead from hospital infections**

The Robert Koch Institute reported up to 20,000 deaths from hospital-acquired infections last year. No alarm reports in the media. No statement from the health care system, no chancellor's statement. Above all: No financial aid for the hospitals. No reinforcement of hygiene personnel, no relief for the already completely overworked nursing staff, no increase in the number of doctors per patient.

### **Time of state irresponsibility**

Until 1985 it was forbidden by law to make profits in hospitals. In the following years the ban was increasingly loosened. The former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder contributed to the commercialization of hospitals. Right at the beginning of his government declaration on 14 March 2003, he called the paradigmatic sentence into the plenary session: "We will have to cut back on state services, promote personal responsibility and demand more personal contribution from each individual". The time of state irresponsibility, also and especially in the health care system, took its disastrous course.

### **Every third hospital is private**

Today, one in three German hospitals is already in private hands. Hospital groups determine the health care landscape. In hospital factories like the Helios Kliniken (6.1 billion turnover), it is no longer the doctors who decide how things are done, but the controller, the commercial director. Investments are not made in more personnel or new equipment. The Fresenius Group, for example, has parked its eight billion euros of untaxed profits in Germany in offshore accounts. The aim of the health system is not the health of the patients, but the greatest possible profit.

### **The market determines the path**

Instead of using the new threat from the coronavirus to change course, politicians and the media are panicking. The TAGESSPIEGEL, for example, compares German and Italian case numbers and is pleased that Italy has a death rate that is around 30 times higher than Germany. Without mentioning that Italy is home to hundreds of thousands of Chinese whose family contact with the Corona area had increased the number of infections. If you believe the SPIEGEL, the children should no longer go to grandpa and grandma's house while at the same time the day-care centers close. Existing problems and dangers are communicated or individualized without facts. As in hospitals, so in the media: the market determines the way, not the expertise.

### **Rather a media infection than a real infection**

There are glimmers of hope: Finland is cancelling its participation in the 'Cold Response' exercise because of the coronavirus. NATO, which is otherwise difficult to teach, has cancelled the military maneuver at the Arctic Circle in Norway for security reasons. Shortly afterwards Defender 2020 will be "frozen". Despite these good news, the German media are not asking about changes in the healthcare system. After all, medical diagnosis is slowly improving: Dr. Andreas Gassen, Chairman of the Board of The National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Physicians (Kassenärztliche Bundesvereinigung), considers the public reaction to the corona epidemic to be partly rampant and helpless:

*"This is more of a media infection than a real medical one".*

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*Thanks to the author for the right to publish the article.*

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