

German actors provide fodder for far-right propaganda against lockdown measures

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The online campaign “#allesdichtmachen” (“#closeitalldown”) and the reactions to it have underscored a fundamental reality.

Resistance is growing among German workers and youth to the murderous “reopening” policy being carried out in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic in the economic interests of the banks and corporations, already at the cost of over 82,000 lives in Germany alone. Yet representatives of all of the parties of the political establishment have welcomed statements by actors supporting demands for the immediate lifting of even the completely inadequate social distancing measures still in place.

What has occurred?

Last Friday, 52 more or less well-known German actors posted short video statements under the hashtags “#allesdichtmachen” (“#closeitalldown”), “#niewiederaufmachen” (“#neveropenagain”), and “#lockdownfürimmer” (“#lockdownforever”) cynically attacking the government’s measures to curb the virus.

Here are some examples. Felix Klare claimed that home schooling leads to more domestic violence against children. Volker Bruch suggested that the warnings about the coronavirus were pure scare-mongering. Ulrich Tukur sarcastically called for “closing down every human place of activity and every shopping centre without exception,” thus rendering “everyone stone dead” in order to deprive “the virus, together with its devious mutant baggage, of its basis of life.”

Others made fun of particular virus-related incidences (Miriam Stein), mocked social distancing measures (Heike Makatsch) or ranted, in the style of the extreme right, about the media being controlled by the same interests and not allowing any “critical dispute” (Jan-Joseph Liefers).

Shortly after the first videos were published, a storm of indignation arose on social media. Under the hashtag “#allenichtganzdicht” (“#notallthere”), tens of thousands criticised the repulsive intervention, which in the midst of mass death on a global scale aided the anti-lockdown propaganda around which the most right-wing forces were

being mobilized.

On Twitter, the cochair of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) parliamentary group, Alice Weidel, congratulated the actors for their “great action.” Another well wisher was the ex-president of the Office for the Protection of the Constitution, as Germany’s secret service is called, Hans-Georg Maassen, who in 2018 publicly backed the witch-hunting of immigrants in Chemnitz.

Opposition continued to grow throughout the weekend. Many artists condemned the action, including many actors. The president of the German Film Academy, Ulrich Matthes, told the news agency dpa that his colleagues’ “supposed satire” was “indirectly aiding and abetting the contrarians [coronavirus deniers] and the AfD.”

Others noted that the pandemic was having a devastating impact on cultural workers, who faced the loss of their careers and financial ruin. But the predominantly wealthy actors of “#allesdichtmachen” did not criticise the government for handing out the vast bulk of its “emergency aid” to large corporations. Instead they mocked the victims of the pandemic.

Doctors and hospital staff expressed their anger under the hashtag “#allemalneschichtmachen” (“#trydoingashift”), tweeting about their dramatic experiences in hospital emergency wards. This was initiated by the well-known emergency room doctor and blogger Carola Holzner (“Doc Caro”).

She challenged the artists involved in “#allesdichtmachen” to work a shift in the emergency service or an intensive care unit. “You have crossed a threshold,” the senior consultant at Essen University Hospital explained in an Instagram video that quickly received several hundred thousand hits. “Namely, a pain threshold of all those who have been doing everything for over a year.”

Nineteen of the actors originally involved in Friday’s video event have since retracted their videos and apologised. Most have explicitly distanced themselves from the AfD and the far-right demonstrations of coronavirus deniers. This does not make their intervention any less reprehensible. The

videos are all stupid, repulsive and cynical, and the artists involved have either consciously supported a right-wing campaign or allowed themselves to be utilized by it.

One of those pulling the strings behind the action is the director and scriptwriter Dietrich Brüggemann, who has previously promulgated slogans and song lyrics (“Stick your duty to wear a mask up your a***”) of right-wing extremist coronavirus demonstrators.

One would have expected at least a little more intelligence from some of the actors and hoped that they would not only perform their better roles on screen, but also think about them. Tukur, for example, who was born in 1957, became known to a wider public through the 1982 film *Die Weisse Rose* (*The White Rose*), in which he played Willi Graf, a student and member of the student resistance circle that opposed the Nazi dictatorship. Volker Bruch has since 2017 been playing the lead role of Nazi-critical detective Gereon Rath in the series *Babylon Berlin*, which is set in Weimar Germany. Now they both find themselves—perhaps unintentionally—in the company of the AfD and the extreme right.

However, the most repulsive role in this spectacle is being played by Germany’s leading politicians. They are the ones responsible for the mass death and the social consequences of the pandemic, including in the cultural sphere. In the end, in their supposedly “critical” videos, the actors have only reproduced what bourgeois politics and the media have been propagating since the outbreak of the pandemic. There is not a single lie or provocation in their videos that has not been previously voiced in a similar way by a representative of the establishment parties.

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was Health Minister Jens Spahn (Christian Democratic Union, CDU) who played down COVID-19 as an “ordinary flu” and spoke out against making wearing a mask compulsory in Germany. When it came to ending the first lockdown in the interests of big business, Bundestag (federal parliament) President Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU) declared—to the applause of AfD honorary leader Alexander Gauland—that the right to life was not “absolutely” protected by the Constitution.

Subsequently, representatives of all Bundestag parties supported the far-right coronavirus demonstrations, which, in contrast to most of the population, demanded the immediate ending of all restrictions and social distancing measures. Now the same politicians and parties are using the actors’ action to further push the “profits before lives” policy.

In *Bild am Sonntag* at the weekend, Finance Minister Scholz (Social Democratic Party, SPD) called for a definitive end to all pandemic measures by summer. “I am also tired of this pandemic and its restrictions,” he said,

adding that he wanted “us as a government to define clear and bold steps for opening up things by the summer.” One needed, he declared, “the roadmap back to normal life, but one that is not revoked after a few days.”

In addition to the head of the AfD, leading representatives of the other Bundestag parties also explicitly backed the actors’ action. “That there is criticism of the measures, I find that completely normal,” said Health Minister Spahn at a press conference on Friday. He added that he could “well imagine holding talks with the initiators.”

Speaking to *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, the cochairman of the Green Party, Robert Habeck, excused the action with the brusque statement, “After more than a year of pandemic, many people are exhausted.” He said that while the video contributions were “inappropriate,” there was a need for “space for a critical and contentious debate about something that so deeply affects all of our lives and all of our freedom.”

The Left Party’s top candidate for the state elections in North Rhine-Westphalia and former leader of the party’s federal parliamentary group, Sahra Wagenknecht, described the videos as “a classy playlist in which well-known actors express their outrage at current coronavirus policies in a wonderfully ironic way.”

On the WDR programme “3nach9,” CDU candidate for chancellor Armin Laschet expressed solidarity with Jan-Joseph Liefers, one of the few actors who still publicly defend their actions.

“One is allowed to say that in a free country,” Laschet said. “In crisis situations, the minority opinion of artists and intellectuals in particular is important.” Even if Laschet could not say it openly due to the enormous opposition within the population: The “minority opinion” that he and the entire ruling class share in relation to the pandemic is that of the fascist AfD.



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