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The truth behind the truck pictures from Bergamo Was the shock scene in the coronavirus era a perfidious staging?

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They were probably some of the most iconic and gruesome images of the coronavirus era: military trucks driving through the night in long columns, loaded with the coffins of the allegedly countless victims in Bergamo. These scenes swept the world like a tsunami of fear. They were shown everywhere, on all media channels, and they fueled a feeling of absolute helplessness in the face of an invisible enemy. I can still remember this feeling well.

Commentators outdid themselves with descriptions of the tragedy: a country at its limit, the catastrophe overwhelming even the military. No more capacity for the dead in the local crematoria. A macabre image that burned itself into the collective memory - and at the same time provided the legitimization for draconian measures. Lockdowns, school closures, contact bans - hardly anyone dared to contradict the dramatic scenes in Bergamo at the time.

But now, almost four years later, suspicions are growing that there was more staging than reality behind this shocking image. A hearing of the Italian COVID-19 Commission of Inquiry on November 19, 2024 shed a whole new light on the scenes from Bergamo. Antonio Porto from OSA Polizia, a high-ranking official, revealed a detail there that seems so incredible that it is hard to believe: each of the military trucks was only transporting a single coffin.

Excuse me? These kilometer-long columns, which suggested overcrowded capacities, were in fact grotesquely inefficiently loaded? What at first glance appeared to be a logistically necessary operation could turn out to be a perfidious PR stunt aimed not at the dignity of the deceased, but at frightening the population as much as possible. At the hearing, Antonio Porto asked the question that many are now asking themselves: "What did they want to convey to the population with these images?"

Technically speaking, each of these military trucks could have transported several coffins. According to the commission of inquiry, the loading area of the trucks used was 4.255 meters long and 2.20 meters wide - enough space to load at least six to eight standard coffins measuring 1.90 x 0.70 meters. Nevertheless, a conscious decision was apparently made to load each truck with only one coffin. Why? This question remains unanswered.

The images of Bergamo played a central role in the media and political staging of the pandemic. They were a wake-up call, a symbol of drama that politicians around the world used to justify their measures. However, it is now becoming clear that this image may not have been a spontaneous document of the crisis, but a deliberately choreographed event designed to achieve maximum emotional impact. The question is who directed it - and for what purpose.

These new revelations raise serious questions. If the images of Bergamo, presented to us all as unadulterated testimony to the tragedy, were in fact the result of staging, what does that say about the integrity of the entire pandemic coverage? And how much of what we have witnessed in recent years has been similarly staged? These questions are not just academic. They have the explosive potential to destroy what remains of trust in the media, politics and institutions that some people still have. The resistance to the urgently needed clarification is likely to be all the more fierce.

The reaction to the revelations from Italy has so far been - who may be surprised - sparse. Neither the Italian government nor those responsible for the missions at the time have commented on the allegations. The international media, which broadcast the images in an endless loop at the time, have also remained largely silent. Not to mention the German media. But this silence will not be sustainable in the long term. Citizens have a right to know whether they were manipulated at the time - and if so, by whom.

The images from Bergamo could go down in history as one of the biggest media scandals in modern history. They show how easy it is to influence the masses with emotionally charged images - an effect that was clearly deliberately exploited by politicians and the media. However, this scandal has the potential to permanently destroy any remaining trust in the responsible institutions. And in a democracy, trust is, or was until not so long ago, the most valuable commodity. If this trust is lost for good, even among those who still have it, society will be threatened with far greater damage than the virus - and even the measures taken against it - could ever cause.

What remains is bewilderment. You thought the worst was behind you, but the bits and pieces of truth about the coronavirus era that are now coming to light leave you stunned. What else will we learn? And what is being covered up? If it is confirmed that the pictures from Bergamo were manipulated or staged, it would be an unprecedented betrayal of the public.

Those responsible must now provide answers. The public has a right to know what was really behind the pictures from Bergamo - and not just behind them. And it has a right to finally demand tough consequences - for all those who have abused this trust.

There is also a ray of hope on the horizon. With the Trump administration, which is currently taking shape in the USA again, a fresh wind is blowing that gives hope for enlightenment. Figures such as Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has already appeared at one of the Berlin lateral-thinking demonstrations against the coronavirus policy, or the signatories of the Barrington Declaration, who have campaigned against lockdowns and for a differentiated approach to combating the pandemic, have been appointed to influential posts - as Secretary of Health and Human Services and head of the top health authority. This shows that The days of uncritical nodding off are over.

If this new movement for enlightenment really takes off, Karl Lauterbach and other protagonists of German coronavirus policy such as Christian Drosten will have to dress warmly. A transatlantic wave of transparency could also reach Germany - and raise the overdue questions that no one has wanted to ask so far.

One thing is certain: the Germans have hardly proven on their own that they are capable of critically examining their own coronavirus past (and others). It will probably take an impulse from outside to get the ball rolling. But if this impetus comes, it could change a lot in this country too - and ensure that those responsible are finally held accountable. In clean, constitutional proceedings - but without official bonuses and judicial blindness!