

# Long Lauterbach

Germany prepares to extend the legal basis for containment indefinitely.

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*From Lauterbach's pinned tweet—a vision of terror.*

On 20 March, in just fifteen days, Germany's Infection Protection Act expires. If nobody does anything, the whole legislative basis of containment will simply disappear. That is how easy a Freedom Day could be in Germany, and with the entire attention of the press on Ukraine, you'd think nothing could be easier than letting that happen. Alas, Karl Lauterbach is our health minister, and we have the worst government since the war. On 16 February, we learned that the plan was to replace the Infection Protection Act and its "more intrusive protections" with "simple, basic protection measures to contain infections and protect at-risk groups."

Today, in a very bad interview with the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung, Lauterbach finally explains what he hopes that these "simple, basic protection measures" will amount to. They are anything but simple or basic:

German states must have the capacity to react early to future waves. This includes mask mandates and contact restrictions. It should be possible to set limits on the size of private meetings and public events, as well as access rules for restaurants, for example [vaccination and testing requirements.

To this end, we must still have the capacity to implement testing requirements for businesses and public spaces. All these instruments should only be used if they are actually necessary. The state parliaments would then have to determine this.

All of this will remain necessary for a very long time. Lauterbach counts on a summer wave, and a fall wave after that. In fact, he envisions just wave after wave, forever:

Corona will occupy us for a long time, a decade or more. HIV appeared 40 years ago, and it's still there. We'll always have to deal with Corona variants, perhaps also dangerous variants. There will also always be outbreaks. That's what you call the endemic phase. And there will always be a group of people, who are not adequately vaccinated, whose vaccine protection is waning, and for whom the vaccine protection is insufficient, because of weak immune systems.

Aways new little problems for the new little Lauterbachs of our government to solve.

This new law will be pushed through parliament with as little discussion as possible. Olaf Scholz's coalition is supposed to present draft legislation to a parliamentary subcommittee by 16 March. A full vote is then planned for the 18th, preceded by a mere 70 minutes of debate. Two years ago, when the law was first passed, things went much the same way; it was all so urgent, you see. Now the reasons are of course much different. The last thing any member of parliament wants to be, is on the record supporting these indefensible rules and the continued destruction of Germany society. So the most minute aspects of our everyday will continue to be regulated in relative silence, by unreasonable people, for unattainable ends.

As attention wanders from Corona and the virus becomes less dangerous, other countries have found it convenient to end restrictions. Germany, thanks to Lauterbach, will choose a different path. He's an unbalanced man of limited mental capacity, who ended up in the cabinet because nobody else wanted to touch it. For him, a spotlight on Ukraine is an opportunity not to fold up the tables and go away, but to pour more poison into the law. Corona will never end in Germany as long as this man is health minister, because the virus is a very large part of who he is. Before March 2020, Lauterbach was a nobody, but ceaseless freaking out about SARS-2 has turned him into one of Germany's most prominent politicians.

As long as Lauterbach is allowed to preserve the legal basis for containment, pressure will build on state governments to impose closures every time there is a new Corona headline. Every new variant, every infection spike, every rise in hospitalisations or deaths, will see renewed calls to bring out more masks, more vaccines, more tests, more capacity limits, and more closures. These measures don't even have to be implemented to do their damage; the mere possibility disrupts business models and future plans. The longer these restrictions hang over us, the more deeply they change every aspect of our social and political existence, from music concerts to Oktoberfest to restaurants to schooling to public transit.

Almost as enraging as the continuation of the containment regime, are the near-total absence of good arguments for it. Future variants won't matter as much as Lauterbach pretends, because almost all Germans have antibodies of one kind or another. A wealth of respiratory viruses, including many varieties of influenza, surge seasonally every year. Many of them are no more dangerous than SARS-2 is right now, and none of them ever inspired any restrictions. The regulatory regime that Lauterbach hopes to continue has become a bizarre superstition, something approaching a collection of religious observances. They are increasingly removed from any stated goals, from any basis in evidence at all, and even from the expectation that they might do anything. It's just a habit now, stuff we have to do whenever cases rise, because rising cases mean we have to do this stuff.

If we can't end this now, we may not be able to end it for years or even decades. That seems at least as great a threat, as events in Ukraine.