

Book: "Correction! - It Was Never Wrong to Think Differently"

This is an excerpt from the book "Correction" for an English edition:

<https://www.amazon.de/Richtigstellung-noch-falsch-quer-denken/dp/3910972020>

Note: The translation was done by AI and was not manually checked. It is only intended to provide a quick overview of the content.

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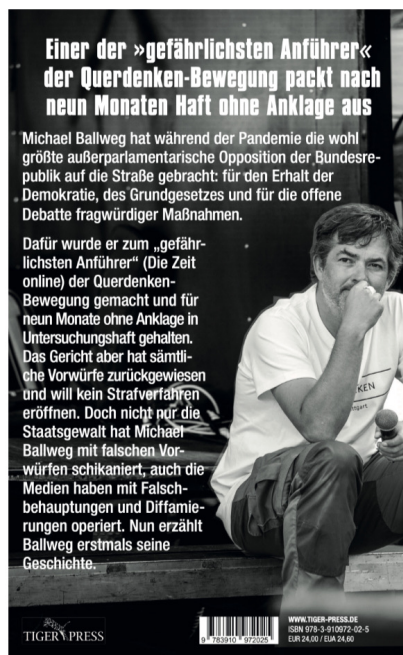
Cover Text



Michael Ballweg, geboren 1974, ist ein deutscher Unternehmer und Softwareentwickler aus Stuttgart. 2020 begann Ballweg, Proteste gegen die ausgereiften Pandemie und die Einschränkungen der Grundrechte in Deutschland zu organisieren. Im Juni 2022 nahm die Staatsanwaltschaft Stuttgart Ballweg mit dem Vorwurf des Betrugs und der Geldwäsche im Zusammenhang mit Querdenken-711 fest. Nach 9 Monaten Haft (davon 6 Wochen in Isolationshaft) wurde Ballweg entlassen, nachdem sich die Vorwürfe nur noch auf einen „unzulässigen versuchten Betrug“ reduzierten. Im Oktober 2023 lehnte dann das Landgericht Stuttgart die Eröffnung eines Hauptverfahrens wegen versuchten Betruges und Geldwäsche ab, da kein hinreichender Tatverdacht bestehe.



Ralf Ludwig ist Rechtsanwalt. Er hat zu Beginn der Coronapandemie über das Bundesverfassungsgericht erwirkt, dass Demonstrationen auch in Krisenzeiten nicht pauschal verboten sein dürfen. Er hat die große Querdenken-Demonstration am 29. August 2020 an der Siegesallee vor den Verwaltungsgerichten durchgeführt. Er gehörte zum Verteidigerteam von Michael Ballweg in dessen Haftzeit. Im Juni 2021 hat er das Zentrum zur Aufarbeitung, Auflösung, juristischen Verfolgung und Verhinderung von Verbrechen gegen die Menschheit aufgrund der Corona-Maßnahmen (ZAAV) gegründet.



„2020 war das Jahr, in dem die Menschen auf Großdemos zusammengeführt wurden, um sich zu verbinden. Also festzustellen, wir haben eine gleiche Idee und vernetzen uns dann dort vor Ort persönlich. Und 2021 dann schwärmen diese vernetzten Menschen aus. 2020 war bewusstseinssteigernd eine ganz wichtige Phase, weil uns allen bewusst geworden ist, dass hier etwas Größeres schief läuft. Nicht nur das Corona-Problem.“

Viele waren ja, so wie ich auch, das erste Mal auf Demos oder haben Demos organisiert. Und haben dann praktisch gemerkt, wie die Presse reagiert, wie die Politik reagiert und nur draufhaut. Und haben praktisch gemerkt, okay, das Problem ist viel größer. Und haben begonnen, auch andere Dinge kritisch zu hinterfragen und sich Informationen darüber zu holen.“

Michael Ballweg

(Front)

"2020 was the year when people came together at mass demonstrations to connect with one another. It was a realization: we share the same idea, and we are building personal networks on-site. By 2021, these connected individuals began spreading their reach.

2020 was a key phase in raising awareness because it became clear to all of us that something much bigger was going wrong—not just the issue with COVID policies.

Many of us, myself included, attended demonstrations for the first time or organized them ourselves. We realized how the press reacted, how politics responded by relentlessly attacking us, and we understood that the problem was far greater. This inspired us to critically question other aspects of the system and seek out information about them."

– Michael Ballweg

(Back)

One of the "most dangerous leaders" of the Querdenken movement speaks out after nine months of pre-trial detention without charges.

During the pandemic, Michael Ballweg organized what was arguably the largest extra-parliamentary opposition in Germany: fighting for democracy, the German Constitution, and open debates about questionable measures.

For this, he was labeled the "most dangerous leader" (*Die Zeit Online*) of the Querdenken movement and was held in pre-trial detention for nine months without any charges. However, the court has dismissed all allegations and refused to open criminal proceedings.

It wasn't just state authorities that harassed Michael Ballweg with false accusations—the media also operated with misinformation and defamation.

Now, for the first time, Ballweg tells his story.

About the Author and Contributors

Michael Ballweg (November 23, 1974, in Wertheim) is a German entrepreneur from Stuttgart. In 2001, he founded the software company *media access GmbH*, whose software allows global companies to reactivate highly specialized retired professionals for specific projects. In February 2020, he sold his company's flagship product to pursue a long-planned world trip. However, the pandemic disrupted his plans, and Ballweg began organizing protests against restrictions on fundamental rights in Germany (such as assembly bans), initially in Stuttgart and later in Berlin and other cities across the country. To facilitate this, he founded the group *Querdenken-711* in April 2020 and built a nationwide network of similar initiatives.

In June 2022, the Stuttgart Public Prosecutor's Office arrested Ballweg on allegations of fraud and money laundering related to *Querdenken-711*. Over 9,000 people had given Ballweg financial gifts for himself and the movement, yet not a single one of them felt defrauded. After nine months in custody (including six weeks in solitary confinement), Ballweg was released. By November 2022, the charges were reduced to an "unviable attempted fraud," while new accusations of tax evasion were fabricated. In October 2023, the Stuttgart Regional Court dismissed the opening of a main trial for attempted fraud and money laundering, citing insufficient evidence. The tax evasion charges remain, as Ballweg did not file tax returns during his imprisonment.

Ralf Ludwig (July 21, 1972, in Osterode am Harz) has been a lawyer since 2005, specializing in social law, administrative law, and constitutional law. He has always been committed to supporting society's vulnerable and defenseless. At the start of the COVID pandemic, he successfully argued before the German Constitutional Court that demonstrations could not be universally banned even during a crisis. He was instrumental in securing the legal approval for the large *Querdenken* demonstration at the Victory Column on August 29, 2020, through administrative courts. Ludwig was part of the defense team for *Querdenken* founder Michael Ballweg during his imprisonment. In June 2021, he founded the *Center for the Processing, Investigation, Legal Pursuit, and Prevention of Crimes Against Humanity Related to COVID-19 Measures (ZAAVV)*.

Rudolph Bauer is a German social scientist, publicist, and visual artist. From 1972 to 2002, he was a professor of social pedagogy specializing in welfare policy and social services at the University of Bremen.

Foreword (Pages 7-9)

Michael Ballweg, an IT entrepreneur and founder of the *Querdenken* movement, was arrested in June 2022 and taken into pre-trial detention. He was accused of fraud and money laundering, with claims that he had used gifts intended for *Querdenken* for personal purposes. Evidence showing that he had spent more on organizing *Querdenken* demonstrations than he received through gifts was ignored, as was the fact that none of the over 9,000 donors felt defrauded or filed complaints against him. Despite this, Ballweg was held in pre-trial detention at Stuttgart-Stammheim Prison for nine months on charges of "ineffective attempted fraud" before being released in early April 2023. Shortly before his release, the Stuttgart Public Prosecutor's Office filed charges with the Stuttgart Regional Court, which dismissed the case on October 6, 2023. The court's 10th Economic Division

found neither victims of fraud nor any evidence of a fraudster and declined to open a trial. However, the prosecutor's office has filed an appeal against this decision with the Higher Regional Court.

Here is a man who organized the largest demonstrations of extra-parliamentary opposition in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany, simply to demand the reinstatement of fundamental rights to freedom of assembly and speech—rights suspended by questionable COVID regulations—and he ends up in prison for it? That cannot be true. It seems, however, that alternative methods were employed to sideline Ballweg: an accusation of fraud that was later downgraded to "attempted fraud" and eventually to "ineffective attempted fraud," as there were neither victims nor a perpetrator. Absurd, yet this accusation remained valid under prosecutorial scrutiny. The claim? Ballweg didn't actually defraud anyone, but—so the accusation goes—he intended to, and was simply incapable (or incompetent?) of doing so. This renders it an "ineffective" attempt at fraud—a thought crime, in essence. Yet, it was sufficient to justify nine months of pre-trial detention and the seizure of Ballweg's entire personal assets, which he had earned over more than 20 years as an independent software entrepreneur.

In September 2023, I met with Michael Ballweg and his attorney, Ralf Ludwig, to hear this unbelievable story. It is the story of a man who was "apolitical," someone who had never attended a protest until he registered the first one of his life. A man who was hired and handsomely paid by major corporations as a "lateral thinker" because he could think outside the box of their organizations and systems. A man who invested his own money to initiate the Querdenken movement, inspiring millions to demand their democratic rights—rights that had fallen victim to arbitrary emergency measures like a sledding ban for children. A man who aimed to reopen public discourse spaces closed off by censorship and "cancel culture," and to organize nonviolent resistance against an increasingly authoritarian cleansing of the public opinion spectrum.

Has such a person been guilty of "delegitimizing democracy," as the Office for the Protection of the Constitution suggests? Or is he, in fact, one of democracy's exemplary defenders? Is he, as *Die Zeit* described him in August 2023, one of the "most dangerous leaders" of the Querdenken movement in Germany? Or do *Die Zeit* and other mainstream media outlets, which unanimously extolled the deadliness of the virus and the effectiveness of vaccination, pose a far greater danger? Does genuine democracy—not to mention its media and political institutions—need more lateral thinkers like Michael Ballweg? Or is it better to preemptively sideline and silence such individuals before the next "pandemic" inevitably arrives?

A "new normal" of this kind is something no one who values freedom, democracy, and the rule of law can possibly wish for.

QUERDENKEN? (Pages 24-26)

This is how the unique mix within QUERDENKEN came together—later labeled as "right-wing esotericism" by the press. From the very beginning, many participants were people who practiced yoga, attended "Mother Earth Gatherings," and had already undergone some level of spiritual development. They emphasized that our path is a spiritual one, and I had to master the challenge of transforming anger into constructive energy rather than letting it turn into aggression. Aggression would have given the state every opportunity to respond with force. That's why it was always clear to me: we remain an absolutely peaceful movement, and we ensure that our demonstrations are nonviolent.

In that sense, we followed a tradition that started in the early 1980s in the United States. Protests against the Vietnam War began when someone at Berkeley University simply sat on the steps with a sign that read: "Make love, not war." That was essentially the birth of the sit-in, which later spread to Europe—and 50 years later, it has been taken up by the "climate activists" who've added their own twist to it...

Whether you meditate, sit, lie down, or stand doesn't matter, but the key is remaining absolutely nonviolent, making you essentially untouchable.

Interestingly, this approach brought a kind of unity across Germany. People like Kai Stuth and Ken Jebsen in Berlin began meditating, sitting on top of motorhomes, and saying, "This is our form of protest." This energy wasn't centrally directed from Stuttgart; people all over Germany spontaneously adopted this peaceful protest method. In Leipzig, even dancing as a form of protest was banned. Using police force to suppress dancing as a protest? That was beyond absurd.

Our protests developed organically, starting with a demonstration at Schlossplatz. That's when I began reflecting on how we could apply the strategies in *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu—how we could turn the supposed disadvantages, such as the strict regulations imposed on us, into our strengths. For example, we had a requirement to maintain 1.5 meters of distance and a steward-to-participant ratio of 1 to 10. I immediately realized the ratio was a huge advantage because it meant no passive demonstrations. The protests could only happen if people actively participated. We needed enough volunteers to step up and say, "Okay, I'll be a steward!" That's how we grew so quickly—people had to connect and get involved instead of just standing on the sidelines like spectators. Unlike football, where there's offense, midfield, defense, and spectators, we wanted to motivate as many spectators as

possible to get involved. I always said I played defensively, focusing on defense and with a sense of humor.

In a way, we were accused from the start of what they now call "delegitimizing the state." We didn't take the opposition seriously. When *Bild* published a headline saying, "Crazy COVID Demo in Stuttgart," I realized the assembly authority had set a trap for us. They gave us an extremely small area for the demonstration, even though we had registered 500 participants. According to their own rules, the designated space was far too small. So I sat down and calculated: if we needed 1.5 meters of distance in every direction, based on Pythagoras, each participant required 6.25 square meters. That meant we could organize massive demonstrations! That's how we ended up at the Cannstatter Wasen.

With immense effort, we marked crosses on the ground with chalk to ensure the required distancing. Since the assembly authorities had imposed such absurd restrictions, we made sure to fulfill them—no matter the cost. I even went so far as to equip the entire Wasen with sound systems and screens to ensure good audio and visuals for such a large area.

So, I invested my own money to make it happen. By May 9, 2020, around 25,000 people gathered at the Wasen. Ken Jebsen came from Berlin to speak, and Stefan Homburg was also there. My priority was to use the demonstrations to reopen the space for debate—making the topics that were being censored online accessible offline.

Guilt by Association (Page 48)

Michael Ballweg:

This concept of guilt by association, which has been around for a long time, really gained momentum during COVID. And that's exactly what this so-called "scandal" was about. Some people chose to duck away and said, "I'm no longer part of QUERDENKEN; now I'm a Clear Thinker, a Forward Thinker," or whatever other labels they came up with—like *Germany Stands Up* or *XYZ for Transparency*, and so on. But for me, it was clear: if I had ducked away, I wouldn't have been authentic even in the first year of the movement because I wouldn't have stayed true to my own values.

I've always said that QUERDENKEN means talking to everyone who acts peacefully and nonviolently, no matter what others may call them. That was the framework within which we opened the space for discussion. We stand for debate, because only through discourse can new solutions emerge. For me, one other principle holds true: I always have the opportunity to convince the other person of my position.

One illusion that many in the movement fell for was the idea that if we wanted to grow, we needed to align ourselves with the mainstream narrative. Then we'd gain acceptance, and the newspapers would write positively about us. Sure, the mainstream writes positively about you—if you demand mainstream things. If, however, you suddenly say, "I want money," or you distance yourself from QUERDENKEN and let yourself be divided into small boxes, then maybe you'll get a little treat from the press. And those people were surprised when their demonstrations kept getting smaller...

Kennedy gave a speech on stage, didn't he? (Page 57)

Ralf Ludwig:

The police wanted to detain Kennedy on August 29. They claimed he had violated entry regulations because, according to their interpretation, he should have gone into quarantine upon arriving in Germany and therefore wasn't allowed to speak at the demonstration. It almost came to the point where JFK's nephew ("Ich bin ein Berliner!") would have been detained by the Berlin police. We managed to prevent this backstage. After he gave his speech, the police approached him and said, "Mr. Kennedy, why are you here? You're supposed to be in quarantine." That's when I stepped in and said, "Well, if he's not in quarantine, that's an administrative offense. You can take his address and send him the German fine notice in New York."

I verbally pressured the police quite heavily, and they focused entirely on me. Meanwhile, others whisked Kennedy away, helping him climb over a wall and escape through the park. By the time the police wanted to detain him, he was already gone. It felt like a proper James Bond scene.

Reichstagssturm (Pages 66–68)

Michael Ballweg:

In some interview, I once said that there are no real Nazis in Germany because all the "real Nazis" are undercover informants for the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.

The "Reichstagssturm" (storming of the Reichstag) found an uncanny parallel in the "Capitol Storm" in Washington last year: Trump supporters who came to listen to a speech were lured to the Capitol, where—as is now documented—undercover agents and FBI operatives led the charge, broke windows, and invited people into the building.

Yes. And the guy with the buffalo horns? An unemployed actor. The fact that these people were even allowed to hold a demonstration at the Reichstag on that day, that the police were absent, didn't intervene, and made no preparations to protect the Reichstag—that doesn't add up. It was clearly designed to produce the exact outcome that followed: striking images portraying an "attack on democracy." Plan A was certainly to ban the demonstration, but when they realized that wouldn't hold, they implemented an alternative plan involving neo-Nazis and QAnon conspiracists on the Reichstag steps to smear QUERDENKEN.

Still, that massive demonstration was a major milestone for the QUERDENKEN movement. From just a few dozen participants to over a million in only a few months...

Yes, and afterward, my team and I were completely drained. With a core group of maybe 25 people, we organized two massive events within a month—much bigger than something like the Wacken Festival, which is organized annually by an 80-person team. We needed a break. Looking back, I have to say those two Berlin demonstrations had a huge impact. Many people became active afterward. We could have doubled the number of initiatives, but we simply couldn't manage it anymore. The team was completely exhausted.

At the same time, I also launched a campaign for the mayoral election. Not because I wanted to become the mayor of Stuttgart, but because I wanted to put up my promotional posters for the demonstrations. That's why I registered as a candidate. One of our success factors was professional marketing. For example, I booked every advertising column in Stuttgart. It cost nearly €12,000 per booking. Then, as the press narrative took hold, we were told: "We don't want your money anymore."

We had a TV station, LTV, broadcasting our demonstrations until the media regulators tore them apart. In August 2020, there was a real sense of awakening in Germany. Our idea of QUERDENKEN had taken on a life of its own. Initiatives sprang up everywhere, and people started using our materials. There was a strong energy—stemming from joy. The joy of exposing the absurdity of the state's

measures.

Ralf Ludwig:

Michael and I knew from the beginning that eventually, they wouldn't be able to handle our humor. That's the hallmark of totalitarian regimes—they can't deal with humor. It became especially clear when shows like the *heute-show* and Jan Böhmermann stopped mocking the increasingly absurd COVID measures and started using satire to serve the state's agenda. That's when we knew: humor would drive them crazy.

And it did. You could write an entire book about how the rules kept changing—like the ever-shifting conditions for mask exemptions. In the end, you practically had to carry a doctor with you to confirm, backed by another doctor, that your exemption certificate wasn't from some "quack" doctor and that you were genuinely exempt from wearing a mask. Eventually, the regulations required certificates to include the Latin term and ICD code for the medical condition—because, of course, a police officer could easily interpret a medical diagnosis.

For every absurd rule, we found a workaround, forcing them to make the rules even more absurd. That was our goal because we knew the majority would only start questioning things when it became completely ridiculous. And that's exactly what happened.

Arrest (Pages 94-96)

So suddenly there's a whole squad of police at your door...

Yes. I had a relatively large house with 500 square meters of space. About 120 square meters of that was office space, and there was also a small separate apartment. They actually showed up with a battering ram, probably because they knew I had a dog. Luckily, they didn't harm the dog; they just sent him out into the garden. I said I was willing to cooperate and would show them everything, etc. From that point on, I wasn't allowed to move freely in the house and was always accompanied by an officer, even to the bathroom. At some point, the prosecutor and her representative arrived. Everyone walked around my house wearing masks, while I wasn't wearing one. They confiscated my medical exemption certificate, even though it had already been reviewed by the prosecutor's office.

The whole thing took about three hours. They emptied my safe, took my laptops, computers, and all the technical equipment—basically everything that wasn't nailed down. I had already cleared out most of the house, but they even took an old box of electronic scrap with outdated hard drives and other junk, which they inventoried with enthusiasm.

It all went relatively smoothly, not as aggressive as some others have experienced. They handled the dog well, but then, around 12:30 pm, they informed me: "You have to come with us." That hadn't been mentioned before. They didn't come with an arrest warrant, just a search warrant. The arrest warrant was clearly issued quickly based on what they saw on-site: the house was already cleared out, so they assumed I was planning to disappear, like *Dr. Kimble on the run*.

They put handcuffs on me and took me to the Stuttgart-Vaihingen police station. I had to sit on the floor in a windowless room for two hours before being brought before the magistrate. Fortunately, by then, a lawyer from our network was already there—someone connected to Ralf Ludwig or Dirk Sattelmeier and the "Lawyers for Transparency." My lawyer advised me to say nothing. All I could have said anyway was that what they were doing was absurd.

Later, we found out that the judge didn't have time between the issuance of the arrest warrant and its announcement to review all the documents, which is actually his responsibility (!!). But the arrest warrant was announced without proper review, and I was immediately transferred to JVA Stammheim. When they took me from my house, they advised me to pack a small suitcase with clothes. I wasn't allowed to use any of it in the prison, but when I was released, it was good to have it, as my house was gone, and I had nothing left.

At JVA, you have to strip completely before being processed. Later, I wrote a humorous letter saying that I had "checked into the Stammheim Monastery" and that I'd always planned to take a retreat, which I was now doing there. Upon arrival, you quickly learn that "the last shirt has no pockets" because you have to give up everything.

I was placed in an observation cell with video surveillance—a single cell with 24-hour monitoring to prevent suicides. The officer was very kind, as were the staff in general, who always treated me well.

The observation cell isn't exactly comfortable, and the regular cell I was later moved to was like a cheap Etap Hotel, except everything was made of sturdy, fireproof metal instead of plastic, so nothing could be set on fire. The room layout includes a small toilet, a sink with only cold water, and a narrow bed, maybe 80 or 90 cm wide, placed against the wall so you can't stretch out in both directions. The mattress was very uncomfortable. The most common complaint in Stammheim was that people's shoulders kept going numb from sleeping on it...

The First Days in Prison (Pages 100-102)

After spending one night in the observation cell, I had to spend two weeks in quarantine. The only two COVID tests I ever took were during my time at JVA—one upon arrival and another a few days later. For two weeks, meals were slid into my cell (which doesn't change after quarantine either), and I was allowed one hour a day in the solitary yard. In quarantine, you can't go out with others. The yard, located in Stammheim's high-security area, was a fenced-in space of about 10 square meters, where you could walk in circles. I still had a pack of tobacco with me, but I had already decided upon arrival to quit smoking. As a replacement, I started exercising, which turned out to be a very good decision.

In prison, you're allowed to shop, but only for a maximum of 250 euros per month. You can use this for food or tobacco. The first two weeks are the hardest, of course, because you're not familiar with the routines yet, everything is new, and your cell is practically devoid of personal belongings. On the cell wall, there was a small built-in radio where you could listen to the news. You could apply for a TV for an additional fee, but I politely declined. I didn't pay broadcasting fees before, and I certainly wasn't going to start in prison.

The prison layout is similar to what you see in American TV shows—long hallways with cell doors on both sides. Stammheim is a high-security prison, so there's a strong focus on separation. Between the different sections, there are large, secured electric doors, as well as additional doors at the entrance area where the correctional officers are stationed. By the way, they don't like being called "guards" because, as they say, they're not working in a zoo. But there's a popular saying among inmates about the correctional officers: "We'll get out of here eventually, but you're in for life."

In the hallway, there's a phone like the ones you see in movies, but you first have to apply for a phone card. It costs money, but the 300 euros they didn't confiscate from me were helpful for that. Later, I was able to order a small fridge for my cell. What I should've ordered earlier was a fan, as the cell essentially has no proper

window. The window is fitted with a grill that only has tiny pinhole-sized openings, so there's no airflow. In the summer, temperatures inside can reach 29°C (84°F) at night, which is extremely uncomfortable. Thankfully, there's very cold water, and you can use wet towels or compresses to cool yourself.

Because of COVID measures, all the usual activities available in pre-trial detention were canceled. No study groups, no sports groups—only half an hour of church per week, which was just starting to be allowed again.

So essentially, there was nothing to do. You're locked up alone for 23 hours a day. My advantage was that the prison staff didn't like additional work, and in the first week, I received 400 letters. It's common knowledge that prisons are full of drugs and that prison staff are supposed to carefully inspect the mail because drugs often come through the postal system. Not cocaine, but primarily synthetic drugs sprayed onto paper, which, as I was told, can even have an effect just by touching the paper. This often left the officers slightly disoriented...

Since I received so much mail, the prison director told me I could sort it myself. They put me in a small room used by the social workers. I did this diligently, and eventually, they told me, "Mr. Ballweg, you don't need to use a separate room anymore. You're receiving so much mail that you can now sort it in your cell."

Release from Prison (Pages 149–152)

So now we've reached the end of this surreal legal chapter, and Michael is released from JVA Stammheim on April 4th. How did that happen, and how did you feel about it?

Michael Ballweg:

I didn't know I was getting out on April 4th. I didn't even know that morning when I was on the phone with Ralf, as usual. Then, around 1:30 or 2 p.m., when dinner is usually distributed, a corrections officer I had a good rapport with came to me with a strange grin and said, "Mr. Ballweg, I've got bad news for you: no dinner for you today." Because of the grin, I suspected something was up. Then he told me to call my lawyer.

I immediately called Ralf Ludwig, who was already on his way to Stuttgart, and he gave me the great news that I'd be released that day. The prison director was about to come by to discuss a few details, and I could start packing my things. I actually had quite a lot in my cell—probably around 30 books and several files. I had received so much mail and items that I'd been regularly sending things to my parents. Just a week earlier, I'd sent out a few boxes, and I had started clearing out

my cell a bit. Somehow, I must have sensed that the end was near.

Even so, there was still so much stuff that, when the lawyers arrived with the car, not everything fit inside—letters, mail, books. Even in prison, I lived in abundance, not in deprivation. It was always important to me to maintain a positive mindset. I never felt like I was lacking anything or that I was suffering. I appreciated what I had. Gratitude became a major theme—being thankful for the small things in life, like receiving a letter, being able to buy avocados or apples, staying healthy, and not having a dental filling fall out. I did lose weight, though.

When I was released, some people immediately remarked that I looked too good. “He can’t have been tortured; he probably wasn’t even in prison.” But I took good care of myself during that time. I exercised every day, meditated every day, and read every day. I wrote many letters, which are now available on the [QUERDENKEN-711 website](#), where I reflected politically and processed the many books I read.

In the end, what I wrote in one of my first letters turned out to be true: this was a political punishment meant to prevent an extra-parliamentary movement from further establishing and organizing itself. It was all about the structures I had built with my organizational skills and IT expertise—structures the state absolutely doesn’t want. From the start, it was clear they wanted to dismantle functional and effective structures. To this day, my assets are still confiscated. I was released, but nothing was returned to me. Over a million euros, all my businesses, and my bank accounts remain seized. Technically, I should apply for basic social benefits now.

So you left with your suitcase and the clothes you had brought to JVA. Where did you go, since your house had been sold?

Ralf Ludwig and Dr. Reinhard Löffler picked me up. I stayed on a farm near Stuttgart for a while because I wanted to be in nature and breathe freedom. Before that, we stopped by Dr. Löffler’s office, where I reunited with my dog, Dee Dee. She greeted me a bit coldly—she was clearly upset.

Before heading into nature, I gave an interview to Julian Schuler, the former politics editor at *Bild* who now works for *Team Reichelt*. That interview was immediately deleted by YouTube. The team at *Reichelt* was completely surprised—they’d never experienced having one of their videos deleted. Suddenly, they realized: if they talk to me, it gets censored. Even Dr. Löffler, a CDU representative and mainstream lawyer, saw what was happening in my case and told me while I was still in prison: “This is North Korea 2.0.”

How were you feeling, apart from the obvious relief of being out of prison?

I was in great shape. I immediately attended a demonstration the following Saturday and launched a petition for better prison conditions at JVA Stammheim. The petition addressed issues like being locked up 23 hours a day and the cancellation of all recreational activities due to COVID—programs that still hadn't been reinstated and weren't even planned to return.

Were you able to say goodbye to your fellow inmates?

No, because I was released in the afternoon, and my yard time was always at 10 in the morning. But I said goodbye in a way by sending the petition to those I was in contact with during yard time. I wanted them to know I was keeping my promise to address prison conditions. I had always told them, "As soon as I'm out, I'll work on this issue."

Even though the COVID restrictions outside were long over.

Exactly. The prison director once told me, "Mr. Ballweg, the mRNA vaccine is a gift from God." I was only allowed to meet with my lawyer behind a glass barrier—for my protection, of course. He insisted it was for my safety. Whether I wanted that protection or not didn't matter to them.