

A warning against the ideological mind: Karel Čapek, *The White Plague* (1937)

**This film from 1937 (!) is uncannily topical in the current times of the coronavirus pandemic. Čapek was a prophet! Well, judge for yourselves: In the overall situation of populist authoritarianism rising, a pandemic spreads from China, killing people over fifty years of age... We all know what happened a couple of years later... Let us discuss...**

*The White Plague* can be construed as an openly political play in which Karel Čapek warns against the danger of impending Nazi totalitarianism. The plot is simple: people who have reached middle-age and are most likely in positions of power and influence become victims to a pandemic of an infectious disease: an incurable white plague. In a war-mongering dictatorship very much like Nazi Germany, a heroic doctor, Dr. Galén, discovers a cure for the disease, but he refuses to make it generally available unless the country's dictator and its military-industrial complex abandon their militarism and pledge themselves to eternal peace. This allows the author to examine several complex ethical dilemmas.

**The film is based on a Karel Čapek play of the same name:**