

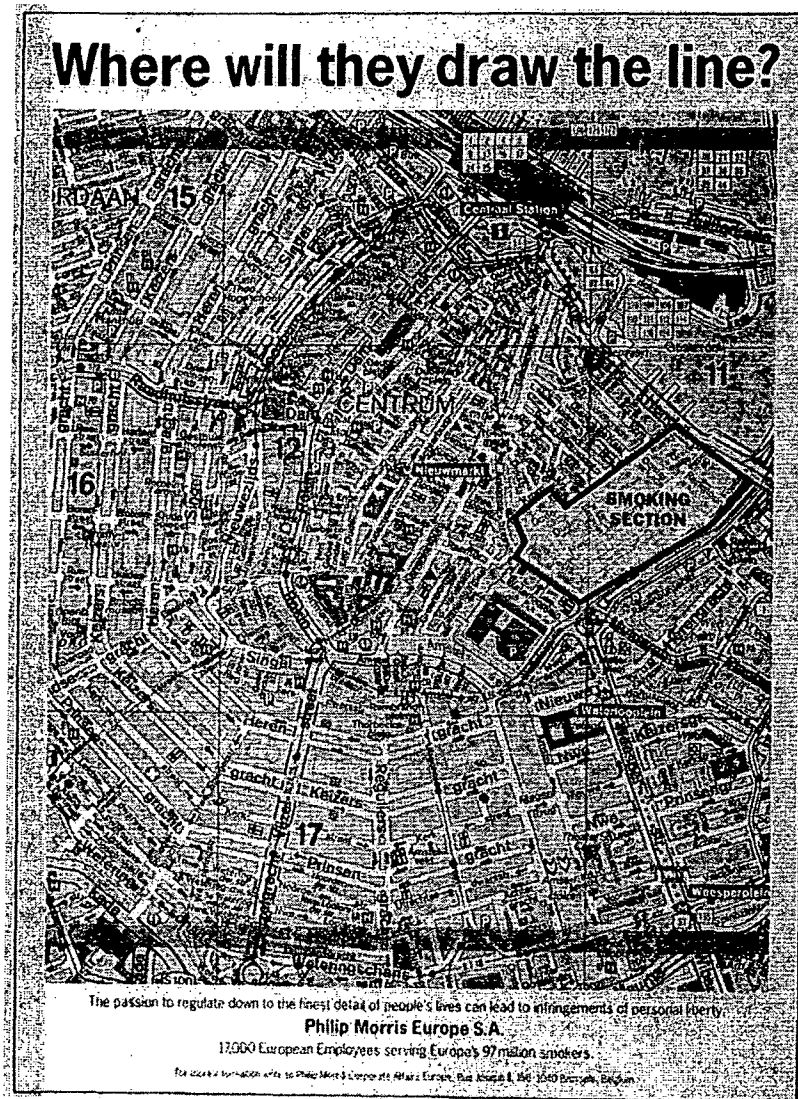


FIG. 7.1. "Where will they draw the line?" Philip Morris identifies smokers with Jews, and antismokers with Nazis. The company does not point out that the German tobacco establishment eagerly embraced the Nazi cause, nor that tobacco companies fought the antitobacco movement tooth and nail, then as now. Source: *Newsweek* (European edition), June 25, 1995, n.p.

defined, as if hidden gems of wisdom lie waiting, unexplored, in the archives of concentration camps. There is also the titillation value: in an era of fashionable interest in cover-ups and conspiracies, the imagination flies to the idea that people in high places have been sitting on great and potent secrets of one sort or another, barred perhaps from bringing them to light by military secrecy or some other lofty and powerful taboo.

Much of the discussion has been carried out with this tone, the idea being that unexploited "Nazi data" may harbor cures or treatments that could save lives. Use of "Nazi data" is therefore defended, according to this logic, as a kind of atonement: the argument is that people may not have died in vain if some medical use may be found for the tainted data.⁵⁷

The truth, I think, is rather less sensational. For one thing, it is not as if Americans were not interested from the beginning in Nazi scientific talent. Nazi science and technology became the object of American military attention prior even to the end of the war, when the Office of Strategic Services and other agencies began assembling files on Nazi science, art, and culture.⁵⁸ Spy missions were launched to find out how far along the Germans had come in their project to build an atom bomb,⁵⁹ and German work on biological weapons began to come under scrutiny. After the war, the U.S. government set up the FIAT commission (with help from the French and the British) to summarize and review the achievements of German scientists and engineers; the result was a veritable encyclopedia of German wartime science—some fifty volumes altogether—on topics ranging from biophysics to viral diseases of man.⁶⁰ One cannot question whether "Nazi data" should be used without recognizing that it *has* been used, from day one, by Allied military authorities.

There are admittedly cases, however, where the ethical question remains a real one. The most notorious example in recent years has been what to do about the *Pernkopf Atlas*, a widely used anatomical text that may have used victims of Nazi terror as subjects for its anatomical illustrations.⁶¹ The atlas is sometimes regarded as the greatest of its kind ever created, "the standard by which all other illustrated anatomical works are measured."⁶² Surgeons consult it