



FIG. 6.14. Karl Astel, president of Jena University and director of Jena's Institute for Tobacco Hazards Research. Astel barred smoking on the Jena University campus and became known for snatching cigarettes from the mouths of campus smokers. A virulent antisemite and euthanasia advocate, Astel committed suicide in April of 1945. Source: Bundesarchiv Berlin.

that this was "as important as Aryan ancestry"; freedom from tobacco addiction was said to be necessary to guarantee the "independence" and "impartiality" of the science produced.¹³⁵

Astel's antitobacco institute promoted both medically informed propaganda and politically informed scientific work. One of the more ambitious activities was the making of an antitobacco film, *Genussmittel Tabak*, directed by Prague medical professor Emil von Skramlik and produced in cooperation with Bavaria Film. It is not yet clear whether the film was ever completed (I have been unable to locate a copy), but production consumed tens of thousands of reichsmarks from the institute budget and received a stamp of approval from the Propaganda Ministry (Goebbels's diary entry for June 24, 1941, notes his approval of the "propaganda film against tobacco abuse").¹³⁶ On November 4, 1942, Skramlik persuaded Dr. Hellmuth Unger, author and inspiration for the notorious euthanasia film *Ich klage an* to work on the project—yet another bond between Nazi criminality and the campaign against tobacco.¹³⁷

The scientific work of the institute embraced several areas. The radiologist Wolf Dietrich von Keiser investigated the influence of nicotine on the stomach, and the pathologist Eberhard Schairer compared the damage caused by nicotine to that caused by rheumatism. The institute funded the work of Günther Just, director of Greifswald's Institute for Human Genetics and Eugenics, and Karl Thums, director of Prague's Institute for Genetics and Racial Hygiene.¹³⁸ Cancer was a prominent focus, as illustrated by Horst Wüstner's 1941 medical thesis confirming the increased incidence of lung cancer and its likely connection to the growth of smoking. Analyzing pathological reports from 20,000 autopsies performed by the university between 1910 and 1939, Wüstner concluded that the number of lung cancers had increased by more than a factor of ten (from 8 to 88), even though the number of cancers as a whole had not even doubled (from 363 to 734). Lung cancers accounted for only about 2 percent of all cancer deaths in the earlier period, but autopsies for the years 1935 to 1939 revealed a much higher fraction, about 12 percent.¹³⁹

The most intriguing work of Astel's institute, however, was the astonishingly sophisticated 1943 publication by Eberhard Schairer