

Germany had the world's strongest antismoking campaign and the world's most sophisticated tobacco disease epidemiology. Nazi medical and military leaders worried that tobacco might prove a "hazard to the race," and Hitler intervened personally at several points to combat the hazard. Antitobacco activists pointed to the fact that while Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt were all fond of tobacco, the three major fascist leaders of Europe—Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco—were all nonsmokers. Hitler was the most adamant of the lot, characterizing tobacco as "the wrath of the Red Man against the White Man, vengeance for having been given hard liquor." The Führer even suggested that Nazism might never have triumphed in Germany had he not given up smoking! German epidemiologists meanwhile managed to prove, securely and for the first time anywhere, that smoking was the major cause of lung cancer. This, along with its subsequent neglect by chroniclers of medical history, is surely one of the most astonishing aspects of the Nazi war on cancer.

The final chapter looks at wartime and postwar science, the main point being that wartime urgencies compromised much of the public health optimism of the early Nazi era. Organic impulses (e.g., the push for whole-grain foods and natural herbal medicines) were justified as economical and therefore war-worthy—but long-term public health concerns of nearly every sort were placed on back burners (a notable exception being the killing of "racial inferiors," which continued unabated throughout the war). Here we also explore the mysterious case of the Reich Institute for Cancer Research established near Posen in occupied Poland in 1942: no one knows exactly what went on there, but there is evidence that the institute functioned as the nerve center of Hitler's biological warfare program, a sop thrown to the army's general staff to compensate for the emasculation of the atom bomb project.

I should note that I have organized the chapters loosely around the kinds of things that we today recognize as causes of cancer (genetics, radiation, diet, alcohol, and tobacco, etc.), well aware that some of my more puritanical colleagues may accuse me of "Whiggism"—reading the future into the past. I do this, I hope, not out of any subconscious desire to inflate the intellectual

achievements of my native informants—a common seduction among ethnographers—but rather from a desire to say something about what cancer itself was really like at this time (and after). Did the Nazi war on cancer influence German cancer rates? Were some strategies more successful than others? When was Nazism carcinogenic, and when did it manage to prevent some cancers?



ONE thing historians do is look for patterns in jarring juxtapositions; out-of-place oddities can be keys to larger truths.* My focus is therefore not so much on Nazi horrors (though there are several we shall have to face) as on substances and practices we do not normally associate with fascism: food and drink, chemicals and radiation, efforts to clean up factories and to detoxify the German lifestyle. This is the lesser-known "flip side" of fascism—the side that gave us struggles against smoking, campaigns for cleaner food and water, for exercise and preventive medicine.

Nazism itself I will be treating as an experiment of sorts—a vast hygienic experiment designed to bring about an exclusionist sanitary utopia. That sanitary utopia was a vision not unconnected with fascism's more familiar genocidal aspects: asbestos and lead were to be cleansed from Germany's factory air and water, much as Jews were to be swept from the German body politic. Nazi ideology linked the purification of the German body politic from environmental toxins and the purification of the German body from "racial aliens." Accurate and absurd fears blended promiscuously in the Nazi view of the world: there is a kind of *homeopathic paranoia* pervading the Nazi body ethos, a fear of tiny but powerful agents corroding the German body, a fear that is sometimes cruel and vicious, sometimes eerily on target.

This jarring mix of the sensible and the insane is surely one of

* Not every oddity is significant: surely one of the strangest is the fact that, in October of 1919, the *American Hebrew* decried the "holocaust" of "six million men and women." The oddity has been exploited by Holocaust deniers but is simply a remarkable coincidence and nothing more; see Martin H. Glynn, "The Crucifixion of Jews Must Stop!" *American Hebrew*, October 31, 1919, p. 582.