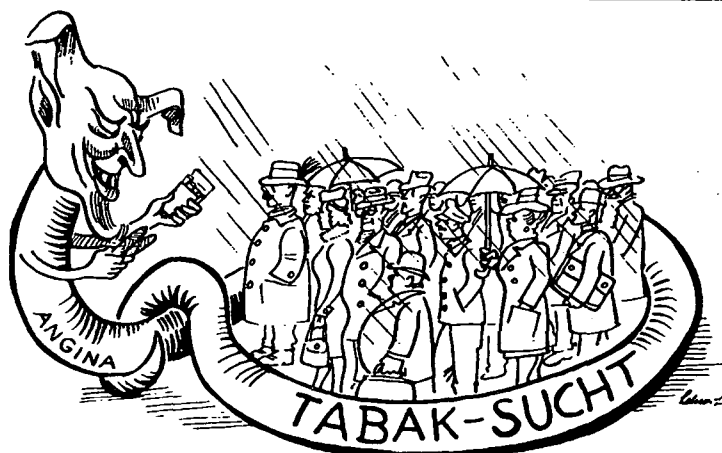




Die Schlange läßt „Schlange“ stehen

FIG. 6.5. A devil-headed snake labeled “Angina” and “Tobacco Addiction” tempts its victims with cigarettes and cigars; the Nazi medical community by the end of the 1930s had recognized nicotine as both an addictive drug and a major cause of heart attacks. Source: *Reine Luft* 23 (1941): 145.



FIG. 6.6. “Every cigarette is a shot into your heart.” Source: *Reine Luft* 23 (1941): 99.

Martin Staemmler, an influential Nazi physician, argued that tobacco use by pregnant women was responsible for the growing incidence of stillbirth and miscarriage.⁵⁵ A 1943 article in Germany’s leading gynecology journal reported that women who smoked three or more cigarettes per day were almost ten times as likely to be childless as women who did not smoke.⁵⁶ Agnes Bluhm, Germany’s most prominent female racial hygienist, argued in a 1936 book that smoking could cause spontaneous abortions. This was especially disturbing to Nazi authorities who placed a premium on ensuring a high birthrate among healthy German women.⁵⁷

Smoking was also said to interfere with male sexual performance. A 1941 health manual published by the Hitler Youth told how tobacco had been used by sailors to suppress their sexual desires; the same text cited a nineteenth-century French proposal that smoking should be encouraged in French schools to combat *Onanie* (masturbation).⁵⁸ Tobacco was sometimes said to rob men of their masculinity, but this does not seem to have implied a transformation into feminine delicacy. Sexual degeneracy was the more common image: tobacco was said to make women barren and men impotent. Women who smoked were often portrayed as sexually loose, but smoking was also said to be a cause of frigidity.⁵⁹ The problem for antismokers, of course, was that tobacco advocates were, by far, the more cunning image makers (then as now, I might add). Advertisers cultivated an image of smoking men as masculine and smoking women as feminine; tobacco was portrayed as a sexual stimulant, while antismokers were depicted as sexually ambiguous (the males effeminate, the females prudes—see fig. 6.7).

For antitobacco activists, however, health was the primary issue. The dangers of tobacco were magnified, in the Nazi view of things, by the fact that tobacco was addictive. This was the view of Reich Health Leader Leonardo Conti in 1939, and many shared his judgment.⁶⁰ Tobacco created an alien allegiance in an era when both mind and body were supposed to belong to the Führer (fig. 6.8). The charge was a serious one, given that addictions were often seen as hereditary and hereditary ailments were said to be incurable.⁶¹ The impression broadly shared was that while anyone might become addicted, the genetically weak and degenerate were