

of Germany's highest lung cancer rates—Chemnitz topped the list—and was home to the industry's most powerful critic, Fritz Lickint (1898–1960), whom we shall encounter in a moment.

One of the interesting things about these early antitobacco associations was their opposition to alcohol as well as tobacco. The situation was not unlike that in the United States, where “temperance” was intended to apply not just to alcohol but to other vices—idleness, gaming, and swearing, for example.⁷ The founders of the Dresden-based Antitobacco League were almost without exception advocates of alcohol abstinence; the same was true of Hanover's association, whose very name betrayed the link (Alkohol- und Tabakgegnerverein = Association of Foes of Alcohol and Tobacco). American-style Prohibition was applauded by many racial hygienists, who feared the power of both smoke and drink to corrupt the German germ plasm. Germany's antialcohol campaign would remain important for the antitobacco movement of the Nazi era.⁸

MAKING THE CANCER CONNECTION

Coincident with the organization of broad-based antitobacco movements was the emergence of a strong, medically oriented critique of tobacco. The military physician E. Beck documented the ill-effects of tobacco during his service on the front in the First World War, and J. F. Lehmann's antisemitic *Münchener medizinische Wochenschrift* in 1921 published a call “To All German Doctors” to combat smoking as both a cause of harm to the body and a financial drain on the impoverished German nation.⁹ Edgar Bejach in a 1927 medical thesis surveying German anti-smoking movements called for tobacco bans in trains, passenger ships, and public waiting rooms, and for Germany's health insurance agencies (the *Krankenkassen*) to publicize the hazards of the golden leaf.¹⁰ Louis Lewin, a prolific professor of pharmacology at the University of Berlin, argued that smoking overstimulated women's reproductive organs, reducing their ability to bear healthy children. Women were asked to cultivate “a different

flame: the fire that warms the hearth and home.”¹¹ Robert Hofstätter, the Viennese misogynist gynecologist, in his 1924 book *Die rauchende Frau* (The smoking woman) attributed dozens of female maladies—including menstrual cramps, uterine atrophy, and ovarian dysfunction—to the action of the evil weed, and called for the conversion of tobacco fields into fruit and vegetable gardens.¹² Hysteria was sometimes traced to smoking, though for the famous Viennese surgeon Theodor Billroth smoking itself was a response to the nervousness brought on by the hectic pace of modern life.¹³

Many of these same themes were featured in Nazi antitobacco rhetoric. Tobacco was opposed by racial hygienists fearing the corruption of the German germ plasm, by industrial hygienists fearing a reduction of work capacity, by nurses and midwives fearing harms for the “maternal organism.” Tobacco was said to be “a corrupting force in a rotting civilization that has become lazy,” a cause of impotence among men and frigidity among women.¹⁴ The Nazi-era antitobacco rhetoric drew from an earlier generation's eugenic rhetoric, combining this with an ethic of bodily purity and performance at work.¹⁵ Tobacco use was attacked as “epidemic,” as a “plague,” as “dry drunkenness” and “lung masturbation”; tobacco and alcohol abuse were “diseases of civilization” and “relics of a liberal lifestyle.”¹⁶ Smoking was, in Reich Health Führer Leonardo Conti's words, a deadly “pharmacological mass experiment, the largest in world history.”¹⁷ The Jews were sometimes blamed: Germany's Seventh-Day Adventist Church, for example, declared smoking an unhealthy vice propagated by Jews; the health-conscious sect denounced both alcohol and tobacco as “un-German” (*nicht artgemäss*).¹⁸

By the 1930s, the specter of cancer had also begun to figure in antitobacco rhetoric. Tobacco had been suggested as a cause of cancer as early as the eighteenth century: the English physician John Hill in 1761 had tied smoking to cancer of the nasal passages, and Samuel T. von Soemmerring in Germany three decades later identified pipe smoking as a cause of cancer of the lip.¹⁹ (Thomas Harriot, the English naturalist who brought pipe smoking to England from America, died of cancer of the lip in 1621; his is the first known cancer death thought to have been caused by smoking,