

prompted by drink may also have insulted the spartan sensibilities of the era. Hitler himself summarized these associations at the 1935 Nuremberg party congress:

There were times—they now seem far away and almost incomprehensible—when the ideal German was the man who could handle his beer and hard liquor. Today, we no longer look to the guy who can handle his drink, but rather to the young man who can tough it out in rough weather, the hard young man. The point is not how much beer you can drink but how many blows you can take (*Schläge aushalten*), not how late you can stay out but how many miles you can march. We look no longer to the beer drinker as the ideal German, but rather to the men and women who are healthy, erect, and tough.⁹⁹

Nazism was not unique in opposing drunkenness, of course, but it did tend to be rather intolerant of people defined as indolent or antisocial. Chronic alcoholism, especially if you were homeless or otherwise socially deviant, could get you into serious trouble. After 1939, homeless drunks branded anti- or asocial could easily end up in a euthanasia institution.¹⁰⁰ Prior even to the war, though, unsavvy alcoholism could land you in a concentration camp, especially if your political connections were weak or your inebriation interfered with your work.

Why did the campaign fail? The flip side of the economic argument, of course, is that alcohol was a cash cow for the state. In 1937 alone, the Reich treasury took in RM 840 million in alcohol taxes.¹⁰¹ But alcohol was also a convenient way to drown sorrows. Many an evil deed must have been forgotten by perpetrators who drank themselves into a stupor (recall Gumpert's "opium" equation). Many concentration camp guards and euthanasia managers were notorious drunks, perhaps seeking alcoholic oblivion to quell their consciences. During the war, alcohol came to be used as both an enticement to encourage productivity and a bonus to those who carried out the "dirty work" of extermination. Members of the SS received special rations, but so did workers in less murderous trades.¹⁰² On February 1, 1942, Joseph Goebbels ordered workers at high-performing factories to be given special rations of ciga-

rettes and alcohol. He also barred the public sale of alcohol in Berlin, insisting that all available liquor be used instead "as a reward for outstanding performance in the factories." Two weeks later he ordered the diversion of 150,000 bottles of schnapps to soldiers on the northern front, confiding in his diary that "the Berliner will simply have to get along without."¹⁰³

The different fates of alcohol and tobacco under the Nazis are revealing. Both were seen as harmful to health and as financial drains, but there were also important differences in how these two kinds of danger were viewed. Alcohol was the more obviously incapacitating intoxicant, and racial hygienists were far more ready to believe that alcohol might be a mutagen. (Alcohol today is known to cause *congenital* damage to the developing fetus, but there is no evidence of a *mutagenic* effect that might be passed via the germ-line into subsequent generations). The 1933 Sterilization Law allowed for the vasectomizing of alcoholics, though comparable steps were never taken against smokers. Drunks were confined to concentration camps as early as 1934, but, again, no such measures were ever taken against smokers (though tobacco withdrawal among female prisoners was studied). Smoking was regarded as a health threat, but strong punitive steps were only rarely taken against smokers as a group.

Nazi leaders were never in fact confident about how to proceed against alcohol. Beer had long been a staple of the German diet, and it was not at all obvious how to wean the German workingman. Temperance advocates took pains to argue that beer was not "a food"; the nutritionist Wolfgang Kitzing disputed the myth "propagated by the beer industry" that beer was simply "liquid bread."¹⁰⁴ America's repeal of Prohibition was a frequent topic of conversation, and German temperance advocates worried that their movement, too, might encounter a backlash. Nazi leaders often expressed concern about appearing overly "puritanical" when it came to alcohol or tobacco restrictions: a 1939 essay on the "health leadership of the German youth" pointed out that total bans—"like the Prohibition laws in America"—had done "more harm than good" in the struggle against alcohol.¹⁰⁵