

lize tobacco science. It will now be possible to counter the broad impression, created with the help of the industry's research institutes in Vienna and Forchheim, that they alone have the right to speak the truth about tobacco, and to shape or even dominate public opinion concerning matters of tobacco.¹²⁸

The April 5–6, 1941, conference celebrating the opening of the institute, comprising two days of lectures, featured many of Germany's foremost antitobacco activists. Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel proclaimed that the struggle against tobacco was necessary to keep the German working man healthy and strong; Reich Health Leader Leonardo Conti pointed out that tobacco was an addictive drug, weakening the ability of leaders to serve their nation. Karl Astel, the SS doctor who founded and directed the institute, denounced the health and financial costs of smoking, but also the "ethic of apathy" fostered by the habit. Hans Reiter of the Reich Health Office emphasized the harms to female fertility and called for research into the possible connection between tobacco and stomach cancer. The chief of Germany's National Accounting Office outlined the economic costs of smoking—approaching four billion reichsmarks per annum—while the deputy director of the Bureau against the Hazards of Alcohol and Tobacco (Reichsstelle gegen die Alkohol- und Tabakgefahren) attacked the tobacco industry for popularizing deceptive terms like "tobacco enjoyment" (*Tabakgenuss*) and "tobacco abuse" (*Tabakmissbrauch*).¹²⁹

Johann von Leers, editor of the journal *Nordische Welt* and a rabid antisemite, added a "comical" tone to the meeting, accusing "Jewish capitalism" of having helped to spread the tobacco habit in Europe. Leers described how Jews had brought the first tobacco to Germany and still controlled the tobacco industry of Amsterdam, the main port of entry for *nicotiana* into Europe. The French Revolution had spurred the uptake of tobacco (*Der liberale Revolutzzer rauchte*), as had the ambient salon culture. Leers's talk was one of only two to mention a link to "the Jewish question"; his was also the only speech characterized by the *Deutsches Ärzteblatt* as "humorous"—the amusement apparently lying in his ridicule of Jews.¹³⁰

The conference featured other high-profile representatives of German medicine and academe. Otto Schmidt, director of the Forensic Medical Institute of Danzig's Medical Academy, described the toxic effects of carbon monoxide, and Fritz Lickint trotted out his by-now-familiar tally of hazards. The director of Dortmund's Institute for Labor Physiology (a Prof. Dr. Otto Graf) argued that tobacco should be entirely banned in the workplace, owing to the dangers of "passive smoking." Germany's leading medical journals reported at length on the conference, and Hitler sent a telegram wishing those assembled "best of luck in your work to free humanity from one of its most dangerous poisons" (see figs. 6.12–6.14). There may never have been a more august assemblage of antitobacco activists, anywhere in the world.

Jena by this time was a center of antitobacco activism¹³¹—mainly through the labors of Karl Astel, director of the new institute and president, since the summer of 1939, of the University of Jena. Astel was head of Thuringia's Office of Racial Affairs and a notorious antisemite and racial hygienist (he had joined the Nazi party and the SS in July of 1930); he was also an energetic advocate of "euthanasia" who toured local hospitals to encourage physicians to kill their psychiatric patients. (Astel was so vocal in his support for murdering the mentally ill that at one point he had to be reminded that the operation was supposed to be kept secret.)¹³² Astel helped organize the dismissal of Jews from university posts and later helped organize deportations to the death camps.

Astel was also a militant antismoker and teetotaler who once characterized opposition to tobacco as a "national socialist duty."¹³³ On May 1, 1941, he banned smoking in all buildings and classrooms of the University of Jena, and the following spring, as head of Thuringia's Public Health Office, he announced a smoking ban in all regional schools and health offices. Tobacco in his view had to be fought "cigar by cigar, cigarette by cigarette, and pack by pack"—hence his notoriety for snatching cigarettes from the mouths of students who dared to violate his Jena University tobacco ban.¹³⁴ Tobacco abstinence was understandably a condition of employment at his Institute for Tobacco Hazards Research: the proposal for the institute—authored by Gauleiter Sauckel—noted