

R. Pauling

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Caution to Ullrich

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

After the splendid presentation given by Bill Owen on the various kinds and intensity of social pressures on the smoker the question was put whether the industry should help the smokers to meet these pressures.

The answer is quite simple: Definitely yes.

If the smoker is not immunized against the attacks from the anti - smoking lobby he will sooner or later feel himself a social outcast. Insofar as people - except for some very rare species - always tend to live in harmony and peace with their environment they stick to the leading rules. If these rules are believed to be anti-smoking the smoker sooner or later will give up smoking in order to be a fully acknowledged member of the society again.

So, industry has every reason to help the smoker withstand such social pressures.

These were our guiding principles when we in early 1990 engaged ourselves in fighting a threatening smoking ban aboard LUFTHANSA aircrafts (Slide 2).

The "crane"-line in a press release of 22 August announced such a ban to be introduced on its domestic flights as from 26 October on, the beginning of the airline's winter schedule ( Slide 3).

There were already forebodings to this decision.

The year before LUFTHANSA had tried to persuade the government as its major shareholder that the responsible Minister of Transport should order a smoking ban on all domestic flights. The government, however, refused after some lobbying of the industry to do so arguing that this was a pure management decision.

Then LUFTHANSA started opinion polling on two minor flight connections from Nuremberg to Cologne and from Duesseldorf to Stuttgart. There was a formidable majority in favour of the ban.

For the industry there was only one answer to that challenge: KILL THAT BAN ! (Slide 4)

The odds against the industry were heavy and manifold (Slide 5).

First, LUFTHANSA rightly pointed out that it was only following international trends, with major foreign countries like the US, the UK or Italy having already a ban on domestic flights.

Second, LUFTHANSA argued that the non-smoking passengers needed protection against ETS.

Third, LUFTHANSA presented an opinion poll among its passengers the results of which showed a 90% majority in favour of the ban.

Fourth, LUFTHANSA pretended that it was only catching up with other local public transports where there existed already a smoking ban.

Fifth, the media at large welcomed LUFTHANSA's announcement as being overdue.

Sixth, with domestic flights lasting at maximum some 60 minutes only and with a mere million smokers or so per year being affected there was no big loss of consumption at stake.

And, lastly, we knew it was practically impossible to get smokers fight for their rights.



The step thereafter was to motivate allies to join us in our battle. We wanted to broaden our basis of protest to demonstrate to the LUFTHANSA management that it would come under serious economic and public pressure not only from the tobacco industry if it were to uphold its decision.

**Now, what did we actually do?**

As soon as LUFTHANSA had issued its press release we issued our own one, attacking the ban as unnecessary and unfriendly to its passengers (Slide 8). Exploiting the general despise of state monopolies like LUFTHANSA we outlined the poverty of services aboard its aircrafts citing SWISSAIR as a prime example for customers' service. A SWISSAIR spokesman had commented negatively on the idea of a ban.

Lastly, we used the Guy E. Oldaker study as a scientific testimony that there was no need worrying about ETS in aircrafts.

LUFTHANSA's decision, however, recieved much public applause. The media in general argued that even heavy smokers could be expected to refrain from smoking for such a short period as a 60 minutes' flight. The famous daily BILD-Zeitung made the announcement of the ban its title story on the front page talking of a "heavy blow against smokers".

Because of some good relationship to the editor in chief we ensured that BILD-Zeitung accompanied our campaign against the "crane"- line.

Five days after the ban's announcement the "First Smokers' Lobby", a grass roots organi- zation representing some 3,500 smokers in Germany, in a press release demanded smokers to

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boycott LUFTHANSA. Again BILD-Zeitung dedicated the front page to this event (Slide 9).

In a commentary of that same edition one of BILD's leading columnists supported the smokers' position by criticizing LUFTHANSA's medical reasoning in defence of its ban.

At the same time the industry mobilized its allies to write letters of protest to the LUFTHANSA management (Slide 10). They declared not to book LUFTHANSA flights anymore, whether domestic or international, if the ban would be carried out. Industry's top management returned its LUFTHANSA courtesy cards arguing that the ban was quite the reverse of what courtesy really meant.

The next escalation came with the publication of another opinion poll among LUFTHANSA passengers done by the renowned "infas" research institute (Slide 11). It revealed that not 90% of them, as LUFTHANSA claimed, but only 30% were in favour of the ban. It made clear that there were other important complaints like lack of service or punctuality that mattered more than annoyance about ETS. BILD-Zeitung gave this publication a front page story, the headline reading: "LUFTHANSA's Smokers Lie."

In parallel to this press campaign the industry tried to get political support for its endeavour. Such could be expected to come from liberal-minded, freedom oriented politicians. When the former Minister of Economic Affairs, Gerhard HAUSSMANN, a liberal, visited Reemtsma's newly acquired site NORTAK at Nordhausen in the new federal state of Thuringia he was asked to comment on the ban. He called it completely unnecessary (Slide 12). The media reported about this ministerial support.

Then BILD-Zeitung launched a spectacular front page article: "LUFT-HANSA threatens: Smokers in handcuffs" (Slide 13). It elaborated on the case of a smoker continuously disregarding the ban and the possibilities of disciplinary power of the crew. A LUFTHANSA spokesman confirmed that a passenger unwilling to abide the instructions aboard could at a last resort be put into handcuffs. This was somehow the turning point in the public debate. People felt that this was too much to be tolerable.

The ban became a high interest topic even on party gossip. At the occasion of a high society wedding festivity the chairman of a competing airline, called LTU, boasted that aboard his carriers smoking was permitted. Again, this statement captured the headline of a party's report in BILD-Zeitung (Slide 14).

Meanwhile industry tried by some very confidential connections to a member of LUFTHANSA's supervisory board to influence the management to reconsider its decision, based on legal considerations.

However, with B-Day - the Ban's introduction day - coming nearer and observing no signs of disruption of LUFTHANSA's firm stance, the industry prepared the next steps after the ban would have been introduced. We developed full page ads to be published in BILD-Zeitung the day after (Slide 15). One of them showed signatures of prominent persons testifying that they opposed the ban. The headline read: "Goodbye, Lufthansa. Without a smoke we won't enjoy your holdings either." The other ad depicted a cigarette in its center surrounded by spiralling holdings of a LUFTHANSA jet.

The headline read: "Dear LUFTHANSA. Without some tobacco your holdings are even worse."

Furthermore, the industry engaged a prominent person as its under-cover agent. On B-Day he was supposed to fly a LUFTHANSA domestic flight while smoking aboard. A BILD journalist would have accompanied him ready to document all the ensuing events.

Shortly before B-Day the BILD-Zeitung, once again, stroke at LUFTHANSA with a front page story on its bad economic results: "Nose dive into a multi-million marks' hole - yet, smoking ban", read the headline. The article elaborated on LUFTHANSA's losses connecting them mainly to bad service and handling. As a prime example of such bad service it mentioned the smoking ban (Slide 16).

Then, at last, came LUFTHANSA's surrender, a week before the ban would have been introduced. In a press release the airline announced that it had overthrown its original decision (Slide 17).

The most public response to it had given rise to fears of coming conflicts between crews and passengers. Instead, LUFTHANSA would advise its crews to only appealing to the smokers aboard to voluntarily refrain from smoking during the whole flight out of consideration. Commented BILD-Zeitung: "Let's Smoke The Peace Pipe!" (Slide 18)

Other big magazines, being normally rather critical of everything concerning tobacco, like DER SPIEGEL or DIE ZEIT commented, though somewhat reluctantly, with respect to the fighting spirit of the industry (Slide 19).

Even the INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE regarded the story worthwhile to comment on.

**Now, what did we learn from this lesson?**

First, even if a case looks as hopeless as this one, it is always worth fighting. He, who fights may loose. But he, who does not fight, has already lost.

Second, if the odds against industry are as heavy as they were in this case you need to do some working on a careful analysis and strategy, a good targeting concerning issues, ways, media, and target groups. And you must have a general preparedness to go on high profile even if the stakes are high.

Third, you have to combine all forces available in a joint effort.

Thank you for your attention!

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