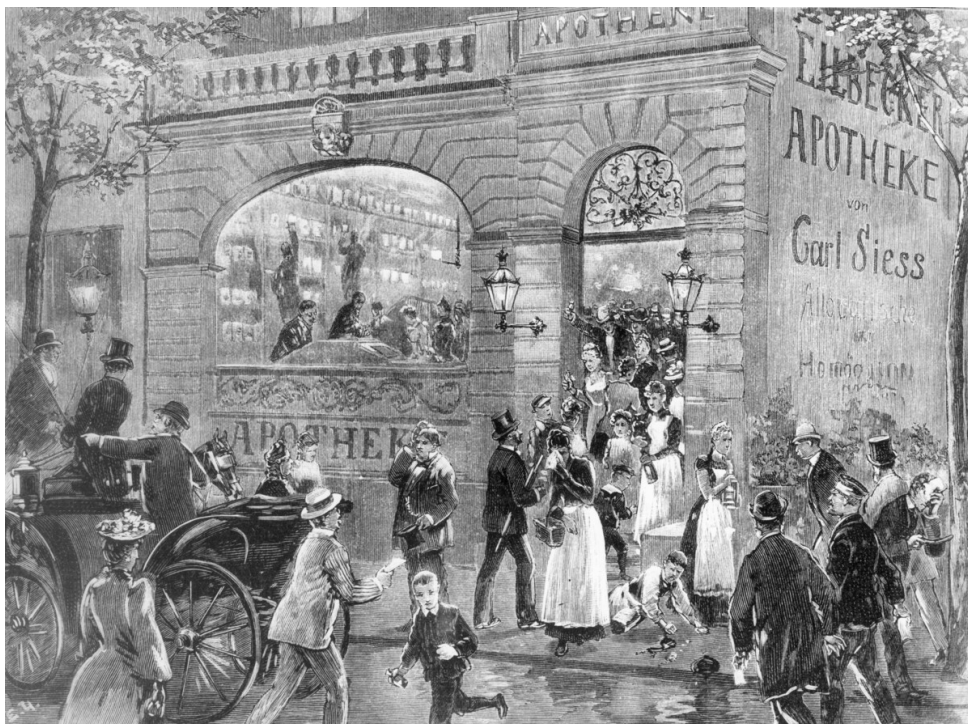


Cholera Epidemic in Hamburg (1892)

Abstract

Rapid population growth in Hamburg at the end of the nineteenth century presented municipal authorities with a wide range of problems, not least of which was public health. The great cholera epidemic of 1892, which was caused by contaminated drinking water, made the extent of the public health crisis horrifically clear. More than half of those infected died. Cholera raged through the port city for ten weeks, bringing all commerce and trade to a standstill. Epidemics of diseases like cholera struck big cities time and again in the nineteenth century; that they also spread over continents, across national borders, and from city to city was an unfortunate side-effect of the expansion of commerce and trade routes. These epidemics ultimately led to increased cooperation between the state and scientific institutions to improve public hygiene in cities. Robert Koch, who discovered the cholera pathogen, was called to consult on the Hamburg epidemic. He was appalled by the state of public hygiene, particularly in the city's slum quarters. The cholera epidemic in Hamburg led to the construction of the city's first waste incinerator, a sewage system, and a filtering plant for drinking water. The slum quarters, where buildings had been tightly packed together, were rebuilt. This woodcut, which was done after a drawing by Georg Ludwig Wilhelm Arnould, shows a pharmacy overflowing with Hamburg citizens, who have come to purchase disinfectants and elixirs with which to protect themselves from cholera.

Source



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Recommended Citation: Cholera Epidemic in Hamburg (1892), published in: German History in Documents and Images,
<<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/wilhelmine-germany-and-the-first-world-war-1890-1918/ghdi:image-1608>> [September 26, 2025].