

are urged that nutrition is “not a private matter” and that the children of the Reich have “a duty to be healthy”; eating right will make healthy citizens and soldiers.¹⁶

The question of whether meat was good or bad for you was not an easy one, however. Vegetarianism was already caught up in several different nets of political intrigue, complicated not just by Hitler’s personal passions but by notions of sloth and gluttony, theories of personality (meat had been said to cause aggression), worries over the fate of the food supply (meat was a waste of agricultural resources), opposition to vivisection (see fig. 5.2), and much else as well.¹⁷ Health questions mingled with all these other issues, slanting how people thought about both cancer causes and cancer cures.

An earlier generation, after all, had been taught that cancer might well be caused by consumption of *too many* fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes in the nineteenth century were often said to be a cause of tumors (the belief apparently based on their resemblance to fungoid growths),¹⁸ as were fresh uncooked leafy greens like spinach or lettuce—often blamed for soaring German stomach cancer rates. This is odd from our point of view today, since we tend to believe that fresh fruits and vegetables are effective anticarcinogens—perhaps by virtue of (as Bruce Ames of Berkeley claims) the antioxidants contained therein. Stomach cancer is now more often said to have been the result of eating *too few* fresh fruits and vegetables, along with too many spoiled and/or highly salted and preserved foods.

Critics of the vegetables-as-carcinogens theory early in the century pointed out that one would expect countries where plant foods were a major part of the diet—like India—to have high stomach cancer rates, which was not in fact the case. Vegetarian peoples seemed to have very low cancer rates,¹⁹ a view endorsed by Liek and one that grew in popularity in the Nazi era.²⁰

Not everyone agreed, however. In 1942, the *Monatsschrift für Krebsbekämpfung* reported on the research of an Oslo physician, Arne Høgaard, claiming that the “pure race” Eskimos of eastern Greenland were entirely free of cancer, despite a diet consisting almost entirely of meat. The whale- and seal-hunting peoples near

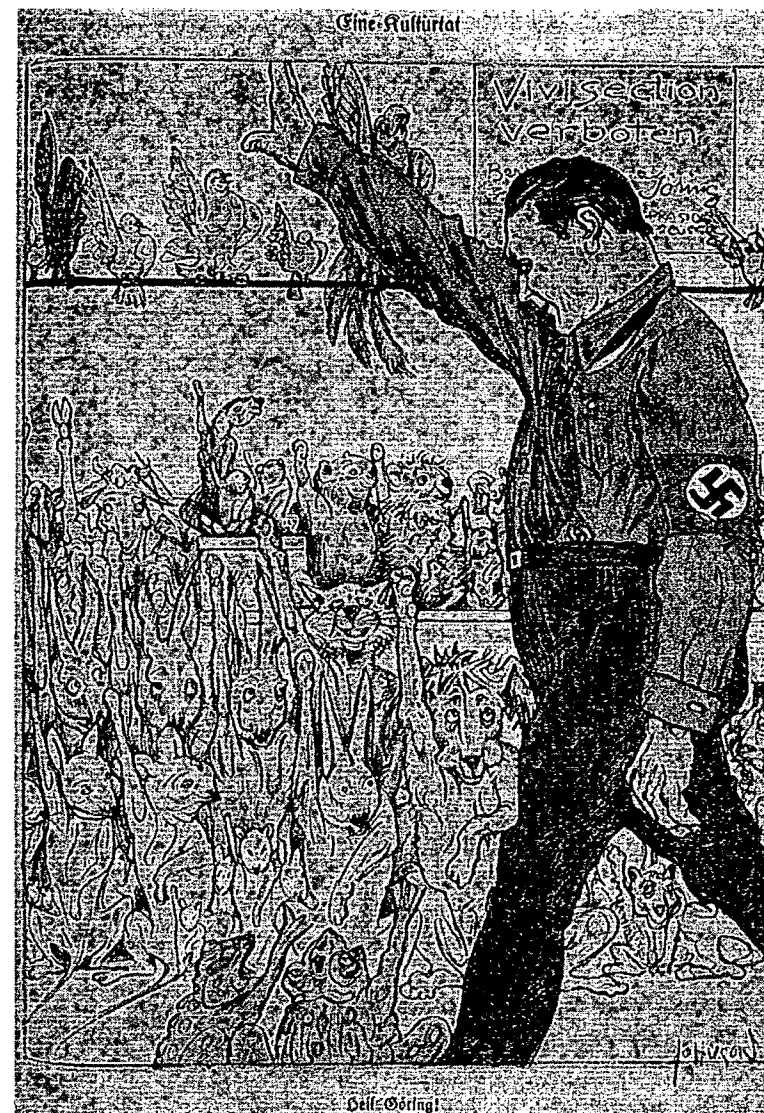


FIG. 5.2. “Heil Göring!” The lab animals of Germany saluting Hermann Göring for his order barring vivisection. The Reichsmarschall in August of 1933 announced an end to the “unbearable torture and suffering in animal experiments” and threatened to commit to concentration camps “those who still think they can treat animals as inanimate property.” Source: *Kladderadatsch*, September 3, 1933, with thanks to Phil Jenkins.