

would have to learn to combat cancer fear, a special weakness "of the female sex." Winter predicted that cancer physicians of the future would move through the countryside in autos specially equipped with X-ray and other diagnostic equipment, ferreting out uterine and cervical cancers. He also proposed two annual "cancer awareness months," perhaps March and September, during which women would be urged to submit to cancer exams. The campaigns would begin with a barrage of publicity—including lectures, radio announcements, and articles in local newspapers—during which time clinics, hospitals, and counseling stations would gear up for the flood of examinations. Persons found afflicted would immediately be sent to a hospital for treatment, free of charge.<sup>77</sup>

There were many in the German medical community who took this need for early diagnosis quite seriously. A 1939 article in the Viennese medical weekly, by the antitobacco misogynist Robert Hofstätter, argued that all German women over the age of thirty should be required to undergo a semiannual gynecologic cancer exam. Hofstätter reported that a nationwide cancer-screening program of this sort would require a staff of 5,760 physicians at a cost of 35 million reichsmarks per year, a significant but tolerable sum. He also claimed that women who failed to submit to such exams should be punished for placing an extra financial burden on the insurance bureaucracy. Women who refused the exams and chose to "go it alone" were to be awarded only half the normal insurance coverage in the event that they became sick from cancer.<sup>78</sup> Hofstätter, I might note, was not particularly astute when it came to political timing: he joined the Nazi party in August of 1944, only months before the collapse of Nazi rule in Austria. His party number—10,078,751—put him near the last in that long line of infamy.<sup>79</sup>

Despite general agreement on the need for screening, opinions differed on the utility of the various techniques to be used. Most radiologists supported the mass use of X-rays, but there were also those—notably Fritz König, head of the Reich Anticancer Committee's science advisory board—who argued that the value of the rays had been exaggerated.<sup>80</sup> There was also a great deal of debate

over the value of colposcopy for cervical cancer screening. At a 1937 meeting in Berlin, a number of gynecologists suggested that the device was superfluous, given that the experienced specialist could identify suspicious cervical changes using only a speculum and the unaided eye. A more common objection was that proper use of the device took a great deal of time. The cervix had to be examined both before and after it was bathed with iodine and acetic acid if precancerous growths were to be detected. In the most commonly expressed view, the colposcope could be profitably used in cases already identified as suspicious but was inappropriate for mass screening.<sup>81</sup>

Criticisms of this sort may be one reason Hinselmann collaborated with Auschwitz physicians in a project to test how well his beloved (and much-hyped) colposcope might serve in detecting cervical cancer at a very early stage. Hinselmann was assisted in this project by Eduard Wirths, the physician-commandant of Auschwitz, who had studied gynecology with Hinselmann. Eduard and his brother, Helmut, a gynecologist colleague of Hinselmann's in Hamburg-Altona, used the colposcope to collect samples of cervical tissues from camp inmates, which were then sent back to Hamburg for examination by Hinselmann and Helmut.<sup>82</sup> The exact purpose of the experiments is not yet clear (postwar testimony suggested Helmut was the instigator), but the studies may have been part of an effort to bolster the reputation of colposcopy for identifying early-stage cancers. The experimenters may have caused the deaths of several Auschwitz inmates, since the entire cervix was generally removed, even in ambiguous cases where cancer was not obvious, causing not infrequent bleeding or infection. After the war, a physician formerly imprisoned in the camp characterized the Hinselmann experiments as equal in brutality to many of the more notorious experiments at the camp.<sup>83</sup>



NAZISM was supposed to set the world in motion, to redraw the map of Europe in harmony with the German-imposed "New World Order." The spirit of the times was utopian and millenarian,