

had once been commonly misdiagnosed as emphysema, tuberculosis, pleurisy, or chronic bronchitis, and it was only now, he claimed, in 1935, that cases were being properly identified.⁷¹

Part of what has to be understood in this context is the romantic Right's more general fear of "civilization." The racial hygienist Fritz Lenz had argued in a widely read essay of 1917 ("The Renewal of Ethics"—which he once claimed to have anticipated the leading elements of Nazi philosophy) that the growth of technology had brought with it an alienation from nature. Lenz felt that society's abundance of goods had only led to abuse; he cited Kant and Nietzsche in support of his thesis that suffering was an inevitable accompaniment of progress. Civilization was "merely technical"; culture, by contrast, was the patterning of human relationships according to values. Civilization had to do with means, culture with ends. Yet culture could not be the highest value; that honor went to biological "race"—hence the moral imperative of racial hygiene.⁷²

Many of the attitudes toward health at this time can be seen as flowing from this distrust of "civilization." Reich Health Office president Hans Reiter pushed for the elimination of carcinogenic food dyes, urging a return to diet more closely approximating that to which our ancestors had adapted (see chapter 5). Reich Health Führer Leonardo Conti advocated the construction of Nordic-style saunas throughout the Reich, the purpose being to combat colds and other "diseases of civilization."⁷³ Civilization was blamed for nervousness, for the growing use of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal narcotics, for countless other diseases—including cancer.

The romantic Right was never able to gain exclusive control over German medicine, even at the height of Nazi power (see also chapters 5 and 7). This is no doubt one reason preventive health initiatives fell short of what many Nazi ideologues had once hoped. Alternative medical journals began to express some irritation at the slow pace of progress; one gets the sense in reading *Hippokrates*, for example, that interest in cancer in the late 1930s was not what it had been in previous years. Gearing up for war may have been one reason; Liek's death in 1935 also seems to have slowed the movement. A 1937 remembrance of Liek lamented a "notable stillness"

surrounding the question of what causes cancer and what to do about it.⁷⁴

One reason naturopathic healers were disappointed was that the orthodox medical community reasserted its power in the later years of the Nazi regime. Part of this has to do with the fact that the ambitious medical initiatives launched by the regime—mass X-ray screenings, sterilizations, racial surveys, vaccinations, the "euthanasia operation," just to name a few—required the talents and authority of orthodox practitioners. Alternative healers lost one of their major supporters in 1939, when Reich Physicians' Führer Gerhard Wagner died; the outbreak of war that same year also made it less fashionable to talk about the once-hailed "New German Science of Healing" (*Neue Deutsche Heilkunde*).⁷⁵ The alternative impulse was not lost, but naturopathic practices were henceforth more likely to be folded into the orthodox, allopathic, sphere rather than vice versa.

Yet another element slowing the spread of natural medicine was the Rudolf Hess *Fallschirm* fiasco, one of the oddest events of the oddity-filled Third Reich. Hess had been Hitler's right-hand man since the Nazi party's "time of struggle": it was he who, in Landsberg prison in 1923, had taken down the dictation that later became *Mein Kampf*, and the Führer had rewarded his secretary by naming him his second-in-command and successor. Hess had long been a follower of homeopathic methods, and his was the name given to the nation's most ambitious naturopathic hospital—the Rudolf Hess Krankenhaus, founded in Dresden in 1933. Hess had always fought to establish natural healing on a par with "academic" medicine, and many of the leaders of the natural health movement—Reich Physicians' Führer Gerhard Wagner, for example—owed at least some of their political success to his patronage.

Hitler's right-hand man had parachuted dramatically into England in the spring of 1941, apparently to try to negotiate some kind of end to the war with Churchill (he seems not to have had the Führer's permission—though the story remains somewhat mysterious). Hess was arrested and imprisoned in the Tower of London, and Germany's political elite were embarrassed, to say the least. Goebbels in his private diaries derided Hess as a "nut,"