In honour of Wilhelm Doerr

On the occasion of his 70th birthday

On 25 August 1984 Wilhelm Doerr – em. o.ö. professor for general pathology and pathological anatomy and former head of the pathological institute of the University of Heidelberg – will be 70 years old.
The editors and the publisher would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the scientific merits and achievements of this many-sided personality. His intellectual strength and his great depth of knowledge have played a major role in the development of the journal.

Looking back over the work of Wilhelm Doerr one discovers that his two very first articles appeared in Virchows Archiv in 1938; he was 24 years old at the time and had just completed his inaugural dissertation, which, taking two malformed hearts as an example, provided a contribution to Spitzer's phylogenetic theory on heart development. This dissertation was published in Volume 301 [1]. In the same year, a further work was to appear, this time on the transposition of the great arteries [2]. In 1943, Wilhelm Doerr presented a thesis (published in Volume 310 [3]), which proved to be the climax of this stage of development. A masterly and comprehensive analysis of deformations of the human heart, this work represents an early example of Wilhelm Doerr's inimitable style, which is characterized by two outstanding features: a conciseness of presentation, founded on a broad classical education and a wealth of general and cultural knowledge in the Renaissance sense, in combination with the extravagance of a Baroque form. Wilhelm Doerr is genial in his formulation and a brilliant orator. To read his articles or listen to his lectures is always an aesthetic treat, for they are a veritable mine of profound insight into a wide range of complex problems.

By the time he became editor of *Virchows Archiv* in 1966, Wilhelm Doerr had published numerous other articles in the journal [4–11] on a variety of pathological subjects. When it was decided in 1968 that the journal should in future appear in two separate parts, Wilhelm Doerr became Managing Editor of *Virchows Archiv A* together with Erwin Uehlinger. From the latter's death in 1980 to the present day, he has performed this task with great discretion, tireless devotion and admirable resoluteness. In an extensive foreword to Volume 400, he outlined the further development of the journal [20].

On reviewing the articles by Wilhelm Doerr that have appeared in *Virchows Archiv* since he became Managing Editor in 1968, one is impressed by the variety of topics, the force of expression and critical analysis.

Even before the age of computing and electronic data processing Wilhelm Doerr was concerning himself with the important role of the autopsy protocol in the solution of problems concerning modern research into illness and indeed suggested new forms of plain text analysis [12].

Wilhelm Doerr's editorial on the pathogenesis of cardiac infarction appeared in 1977 [14]. In 10 guiding principles – comparable with the doctrines of Martin Luther – he gives a precise summary of both classical findings and questions on research into infarction that remain to be answered. In a fascinating manner, this article combines historical data with the then current results of basic research, demonstrating not only the extent of his personal experience but also his wide knowledge of the literature. The "small print" is just as important for an understanding of the problem dealt with in this article as the guiding principles with which it begins.