

1989 was declared the European Year of Information about Cancer, and at the same time it was the 25th Anniversary of the German Cancer Research Center in Heidelberg. A Special Issue about Cancer was an obvious subject, as the German Institute had offered to contribute many articles and to distribute a large number of copies. However, the great difficulty remained for me to write an intelligent Editorial about Cancer, a subject about which I knew fortunately nothing. I therefore considered the great human diseases historically, how many had, through devoted medical and scientific research, been investigated and finally cured. I might thus be justified in forecasting that if the same effort was applied, it would also lead to an eventual cure of cancer—in fact my Editorial was a declaration of faith in the Scientific Temper.

I briefly outlined the large contemporary cancer research effort world-wide, and its great interdisciplinary character, the 'bio-psycho-social approach', with its massive human Genome map search. I compared this macro-research with Robert Koch's single-handed discovery in 1882 of the tubercle bacillus and a few years later, of the *Vibrio cholerae*, the causative agent of cholera. The cures for both are well known today, and the same is true for bubonic plague, malaria and yellow fever. Now massive treatment depends more on political, economic and social factors than medical and scientific knowledge. The greatest success story so far in medicine is the total eradication of smallpox, achieved in 1979 by the 12-year long WHO Eradication Program.

Although cancer represented a totally novel challenge, our medical and scientific research instrumentarium had grown out of all recognition in size and diversity during the last century, so that I felt justified in my faith, forecasting the eventual conquest of cancer.

I had been present 18 years earlier, in June 1971, when the building of the Deutsches Krebsforschungs Zentrum, DKFZ, was nearly completed. Its initiator, Professor K.H. Bauer, then 81, showed it proudly to a group of British Science Writers and explained that the seven-floor concrete structure would soon house 800 scientists and have its own atomic reactor, to prepare for research and therapy on site its own short-lived isotopes.

Professor Bauer said that the building would cost DM 62.5 million, of which the Federal Republic would pay two-thirds and the remainder would come from the state of Baden-Württemberg. The research policy would be very wide in the nine Institutes, as no one could predict which branch of science would find the answer. I found it all very impressive, too impressive perhaps, a giant 'white elephant', but of course only a factual report was written and published in the *Daily Telegraph* of 7 June 1971.