Communications from the General Secretary

Having an Executive Committee meeting in January in central or northern Europe can be an wintry and cold affair. But in spite of icy weather - the first full-fledged Executive Committee meeting after the Buenos Aires Conference, taking place in January at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham - was a pleasant and constructive one.

There were quite a number of issues to deal with, from the evaluation of the Buenos Aires Conference to reflections on the possible agenda and date of the next Conference, and in between these two items we had to wrestle with questions about the future of our journal for which we had to find a new editor, the review of the project work, the financial situation of IAMS and much work on redefining the nature and objectives of the Association.

From among the various issues we dealt with I would like to report at least on a few in a little more detail.

1. One of the most pressing tasks was the reflection on the future of MISSION STUDIES. The sudden and untimely death of our editor, Prof. Horst Rzepkowski SVD, meant a great loss for the Association as a whole, and in particular of course for the journal which Father Horst had edited so well. Preliminary inquiries and talks with various IAMS members from all over the world soon led us to look for a new editor and an institutional base for the journal in the United States of America. We are very grateful and also proud that Prof. Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, Chicago, has accepted the invitation of IAMS to become the new editor of MISSION STUDIES. Since he may not want say much about himself, I should perhaps introduce him here once more to the audience, even though he is known to many of us in person through his participation in IAMS Conferences and probably to all of us through his various publications. Stephen Bevans is, as Horst Rzepkowski was, a priest of the Society of the Divine Word (SVD). Ordained in 1971, he was missioned to the Philippines in 1972 where he served until 1981. He holds an STL from the Pontifical
Gregorian University and a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame, and is currently Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and director of the Chicago Center for Global Ministries. Besides being the author of over fifty articles and reviews, he has published *John Oman and His Doctrine of God* (Cambridge, 1992), *Models of Contextual Theology* (Orbis, 1992); Dr. Bevans also is the editor of the Orbis "New Directions" Series, and the co-editor of the forthcoming *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives* (Orbis, 1997). He is a contributing editor of "International Bulletin of Missionary Research", and associate editor of "Missiology", and he is on the editorial board of "New Theology Review".

We feel also privileged that Prof. Robert J. Schreiter was willing to serve as an associate editor of MISSION STUDIES. Robert Schreiter, too, is a very prominent figure in the IAMS context. He is a priest of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, and is currently Professor of Doctrinal Theology at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. He holds a doctorate in theology from the University of Nijmegen in Holland and is an internationally known speaker and scholar. His book *Constructing Local Theologies* (Orbis, 1985) has been translated in numerous European and Asian languages, and his book *Reconciliation* (Orbis, 1992) has been hailed as a true breakthrough in mission theology. Recently he has published *The New Catholicity: Theology between the Local and the Global* (Orbis, 1997). Dr. Schreiter is the former editor of "New Theology Review", a former associate editor of "Missiology", and serves on the editorial boards of "Theological Studies" and "The International Journal of Practical Theology".

IAMS indeed feels privileged to have these two prominent scholars as editor and associate editor of MISSION STUDIES. And we also remain deeply grateful to the Steyler publishing house in Nettetal where for the time being the journal continues to be printed.

2. In the light of the evaluation of the Buenos Aires Conference, our own observations and the review of the evaluation sheets, we felt the necessity to engage ourselves once again and more systematically in the - perhaps perennial - quest for the self-understanding, identity