REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY
TO THE Xth INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

Introduction

Being assembled here in South Africa for the Xth International IAMS Conference, and thinking of the Buenos Aires Conference in April, 1996, I am stricken by the impression that time is moving fast. May things have happened since Buenos Aires, and it is my duty and privilege to report on at least some of the activities and concerns of the IAMS Executive Committee and the General Secretariat. As I move on in my report and address some issues related to the future of IAMS, it will become apparent that we stand today at a very crucial juncture in the history of the Association.

Since Buenos Aires the Executive Committee has met four times: January, 1997 in Birmingham, England; January, 1998 in Hamburg, Germany; January, 1999 in Rome, Italy; and just prior to the General Meeting here in South Africa. In Mission Studies, particularly in the No. 27/28 issue of 1997, we provided some report on major deliberations and decisions of the Executive Committee. I will briefly recall them here and move then to some of the hard issues related to the future.

1. MISSION STUDIES

Shortly after our last General Meeting in Buenos Aires, the editor of our journal Mission Studies, Professor Horst Rzepkowski, SVD, fell sick. In May, 1996 he was hospitalized for several months, but in October his health had improved again so that he was able to present a paper to the Conference of the German Association for Mission Studies which took place in Halle. At the time he felt still weak, but he was confident that his health would improve. His sudden death on 25 November, 1996 thus came as a great shock to his friends. We all have lost in him a friend and a source of inspiration. We should pay tribute here once again to Fr. Rzepkowski, and also express our gratitude to the Missiological Institute at St. Augustin, Germany, for providing the resources for editing Mission Studies so competently and faithfully as Horst Rzepkowski and his assistant, Mrs. Ludwig, did for more than six years.

The sudden demise of Fr. Rzepkowski confronted the Executive Committee with the task to look for a successor who could take up the

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responsible work of editorship for the journal. We were glad when Dr. Stephen B. Bevans, SVD, Professor at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago and Director of the Chicago Center for Global Ministries, accepted the invitation of the Executive Committee to become Mission Studies’ editor. We were grateful to him and also to Professor Robert Schreiter, who became associate editor, because these two persons are well known and excellent theologians; and moreover their willingness to take up the editorship for our journal meant that the third institutional base of IAMS--now in Chicago, besides the Secretariat at the EMW in Hamburg and the Treasury at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham--remained a Catholic one. We, who receive and read the journal, appreciate the work of Steve, and the Executive Committee was thrilled about his great interest he has taken to develop the journal further.

2. IAMS Treasury

We should also place on record here our gratitude to Dr. Martin Conway. He has served IAMS, together with Dr. Andrew Kirk, for many years as Treasurer. When he retired as President of the Federation of the Selly Oak Colleges in July 1997, he also gave up his responsibility for the IAMS Treasury. We are glad that Martin Conway is here aiding us in Hammanskraal, and that we have the chance to thank him here personally once again for his dedicated services for the Association. The Executive Committee expressed also gratitude to Selly Oak Colleges for continuing to host the IAMS Treasury and to the person of Dr. Andrew Kirk in particular, who looks now--with the assistance of Ms. Stefka Ritchie--to the finances of our Association.

3. IAMS Homepage

In order to enhance communication within IAMS globally the Executive decided to set up a webpage on the Internet. We are very thankful to John Roxborough who, with the assistance of others, has set up this page and also looks after it. John, as the convener of the IAMS Interest Group on Documentation, Archives and Bibliography (DAB), is also the person who encourages us to look for new ways of a more meaningful global communication within the IAMS network. I also feel that a lot more should be done; that we did not achieve as much as we ourselves desired in this area is mainly due to a lack of resources, particularly a lack of capacity in the IAMS Secretariat. I will return to that issue later.