



Man and His Environment: Tropical Forests and the Conservation of Species



Foreword

Each of the two organizations responsible for this Study Week, the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, has a long history of active concern for the environment.[1]

It is in the last twenty year, however, that both institutions have initiated significant studies and other measures to counter the increasing threats to our planet's ecological balance, to quality of life and, indeed to the very continuance of life itself. Thus, the Pontifical Academicians, meeting in Plenary Session in 1970, concentrated their discussion on the topic of *Science and the Protection of the Environment*. [2] In 1974 the Swedish Academy of Science set up an Environmental Protection Committee which was subsequently reorganized and given wider scope as The Environmental Committee. [3] Both Academies have organized international conferences in recent years to examine specific environmental issues and to seek solutions to pressing problems. [4] By joining forces to arrange this Study Week, *Man and His Environment. Tropical Forests and the Conservation of Species*, the two Academies have demonstrated their recognition of the fact that problems on a global scale must be approached through combined, international efforts. The structure of the Study Week reflects this international approach, as does the geographic distribution of the participants. Accordingly, the many problems associated with the destruction of the world's tropical rainforests were examined in depth, as were certain possible models, regional and global, for future development.

One characteristic which distinguished this Study Week from many other international conferences on ecology and conservation was the emphasis on the ethical aspects of deforestation and on our

human responsibility.

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences and the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, through their joint organization of this Study Week, have taken a first step toward future cooperation in areas of concern to both institutions. The published results issuing from this Study Week are tangible evidence of this collaboration and demonstrate the priority both Academies give to the urgent need for the dissemination of information on the destruction now taking place in tropical forests worldwide and its consequences. Furthermore, the two Academies agree upon the need for action based on a worldwide policy – a policy which would involve the sound management of the natural resources of our environment, which would make provision for the basic needs of the populations involved, and which would make use of those economic instruments which are conducive to the conservation of biological diversity.

[1] The Royal Swedish Academy established a Nature Protection Committee as early as the year 1904.

[2] Marini-Bettòlo, G.B., *Science and the Protection of the Environment*. Pontificia Academia Scientiarum Commentarii, II, 25, 1971.

[3] It should be noted that the Secretariat of the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme – A study of Global Change (IGBP), which is a major worldwide collaborative effort established by the International Council of Scientific Unions, is actually housed in the premises of the Royal Swedish Academy.

[4] Study Week on *Chemical Events in the Atmosphere* and their Impact on the Environment (1983), Study Week on *A Modern Approach to the Protection of the Environment* (1987) and Study Week on *Agriculture and Quality of Life* (1988), all organized by the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Recent international conferences organized by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences include: *The Environmental Consequences of Nuclear War*, *Tropical Forests – Their Importance and Protection*; *Environmental Stress and Security* (all in 1988).

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