

15<sup>th</sup> September 2002

**Report of the Secretary General of the AMI**  
**Given at the General Assembly in El Escorial / Madrid, Spain,**  
**on 15 September 2002**

**Excellencies, Generals, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,**

as AMI Secretary General it is my pleasure to also welcome you at this AMI General Assembly and Conference here at San Lorenzo de El Escorial, close to Madrid, in the very heart of Spain, historically as well as geographically.

As in previous years in 2002, too, the General Assembly of the AMI is an extremely welcome opportunity but also an obligation for the Secretary General to give information on developments, activities, subjects discussed and concerning the future of the military apostolate in our armed forces and to show perspectives for the time ahead. The President has indicated the great guidelines and aims for the future which are right now extremely challenging with AMI for the first time being the Presidency of the Conference of International Catholic Organisations; I will come back to this item later. As you all know the AMI Secretary General is responsible for showing how AMI's day-to-day affairs in the past, right now and for the future could and should be handled and what has happened since the last Conference and General Assembly.

And let me underline the background as we did before - we are pronouncing AMI as AMI which means friend in French - not only because the French language is the original language of our association but because this feeling of friendship and comradeship in arms and in prayer is the most important link within AMI and between its members.

Let me repeat something in the very beginning of my report which I hope will not last too long: You may have the impression that I am repeating more or less some things I have already said in the years before. You are right. It is necessary and important to repeat the basic principles and main guidelines of our organisation and of our work every year - not only because, fortunately, we have always newcomers and new members in AMI but also because the main ideas of AMI have to be hammered into and stuck in all our minds and hearts.

**1. AMI Conference 2001 in ERFURT / Germany**

The last General Assembly of the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI), the international association of catholic militaries' associations coming from more than 35 countries on four continents, met in Erfurt, Germany, from 15 to 21 September 2001.

The AMI Conference and General Assembly centered on the themes:

**1. "Cooperation in the area of ecumenicity  
and between different religions in the Armed Forces"**

and, in continuation of the AMI Declaration of Rome 2000:

**2. "The Catholic Soldier of the third Millennium:  
How does he see himself? What does he stand for?  
How can he make his self-perception be accepted by others?"**

We have to thank our German friends, the military people and members of the GKS as well as the German Catholic Military Ordinariate, very much for their support, organisation and excellent work before, during and after the conference.

15 participating delegations came from:

- Austria
- Belgium
- France
- United Kingdom
- Columbia
- Nigeria
- The Netherlands
- Canada
- Germany
- Portugal
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- The Philippines
- Spain
- Latvia
- Switzerland

After very impressive and colorful as well as really hard discussion the conference resulted in the unanimous acceptance of an AMI Position Paper which was intended to give guidelines for the next years. Since it is short and well condensed I liked to read it to you again because this year's discussions will have to include last year's results:

### AMI Position

#### AMI General Assembly 2001 in ERFURT, Germany

#### “Christian Soldiers at the Beginning of the Third Millennium - Cooperation between Christian Churches and between different Religions in the Armed Forces”

20 September 2001

1. AMI, the International Catholic Organisation of soldiers from more than 35 countries on four continents has, during its conference in Rome by the end of 2000, issued a basic declaration "The Catholic Soldier of the third Millennium: How does he see himself? What does he stand for? How can he make his self-perception be accepted by others?" Main points of this declaration are the human dignity, the educated conscience, and expectations with which we confront Church and Society.
2. Based on this declaration meanwhile the work went on and was discussed during the AMI General Assembly in September 2001 in Erfurt - with 15 nations participating -; continuation of this work was decided.
3. "Specific ethical criteria and their application by soldiers in military operations who have to deal with operational dilemmas" were discussed. There was unanimous agreement that the ethics of military service has to be an integral part of training in the Armed Forces; AMI member countries will support this idea within their own area in the appropriate way. This being a long term process it was decided to install in AMI a system of communication using today's technical means. Institutes of the respective countries that are in charge for themes like peace, security, justice, religion, and ethics will be included in this process; responsible coordinator is Prof. Fred van Iersel, Netherlands. There will be a yearly report on progress in the General Assemblies.
4. "Ethical questions and remarks in the context of international employment of Armed Forces - Humanitarian Intervention" were subject of considerations. AMI will continue to participate in the discussion on ethical and religious implications concerning the employment of Armed Forces for peace keeping and peace fostering missions taking into account that even national defense remaining the main task of Armed Forces peace missions abroad become more and more important.

5. "Ecumenical cooperation and cooperation between different religions in the Armed Forces" are of great importance in the light of an ever more globalised world and of growing international cooperation of Armed Forces. Solid theological and pastoral knowledge as well as applicable rules are requested as a basis for this objective; AMI will continue to make these basics better known in the future, too.
6. The realisation of ecumenical and interreligious cooperation becomes a predominant mission of AMI. Members of AMI from different countries and cultures will contribute to this with their experiences. The following main points are considered to be of great importance:
  - Cooperation without loss of ones own identity
  - Respect for human basic values and for basic values of all religions
  - Respect for human dignity and for freedom of conscience in all questions of faith
  - Cooperation in the personal, social, and spiritual area - based on a solid knowledge of each other
  - Unlimited and open discussion of the problems caused by different opinions in the different religious systems concerning not only religious but also political law
  - Search for a common basis of all religions participating in the dialogue in order to further develop the idea of the Christian soldier laid down in the declaration from Rome 2000
  - Critical observation concerning the problem of fundamentalism and fanaticism religion motivated
  - We must not blame whole nations or religions for criminal or terrorist actions of certain groups.

We were very happy that our office in Erfurt was able - with the outstanding support by our Vice Secretary General Lieutenant Colonel Ralf Wittkamp - to provide all participants on the very last day with a CD containing almost all conferences and contributions to our themes. A final version on CD was distributed in spring 2002. We intend to repeat this administrative success here in Spain, too - we are convinced that our Spanish friends do their very best.

## **2. AMI Conference 2002 in El Escorial / Madrid - Spain**

In Erfurt we had decided to accept Columbia's invitation to host this year's conference in Cartagena de los Indios. Unfortunately the political situation in this long time and appreciated member country - a situation we all hope should be stabilized within a not to long time frame - made a change of country necessary. But we will go to Columbia as soon as possible - if we are still invited. We are very much obliged and thankful to our Spanish friends that they were able to take over and prepare our conference in such a tight time frame. In this context I may especially mention Captain Rafael Bittini who did until now - and certainly will until the end of the conference -, a great job.

I am really happy to see delegations from so many different member or associated countries at this year's General Assembly here in Spain We regret to see that for example Ghana, Columbia, France, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, the United States and Hungary are not able to participate in this year's conference but we appreciate that all of them have expressed their intention of participating again in the future. Please let me name once again the 13 participating delegations:

- |                     |               |
|---------------------|---------------|
| • Austria           | • Germany     |
| • Belgium           | • Portugal    |
| • United Kingdom    | • Slovenia    |
| • Congo-Brazzaville | • Spain       |
| • The Netherlands   | • Switzerland |

- Ukraine
- The Philippines
- Nigeria

And I am - certainly in the name of the President, the Executive Committee and all members present or absent here - very, let me say almost overwhelmingly happy to see countries here for the first time: Slovenia, Ukraine, and Congo-Brazzaville. Welcome again.

The AMI Executive Committee is represented during the Conference by

- AMI President General Ernest König
- AMI Vice President Lieutenant Colonel Martin Jawurek
- AMI Vice President Vice Lieutenant Leopold Ganster
- AMI Secretary General Colonel Jürgen Bringmann
- AMI Vice Secretary General Colonel Franz Thiele
- AMI Vice Secretary General Lieutenant Colonel Ralf Wittkamp
- AMI Ecclesiastical Advisor Mons. Prof. Don Luis Martínez Fernández.

As you know we will have elections for the Executive Committee of AMI for the next three years, that is 2003 to 2005.

Because of the reasons our acting President mentioned Austria will not be available for another term as Presidency.

Spain has offered to take over the Presidency with the following candidates:

- General de Brigada (R) D. Miguel Alonso Baquer
- Vicealmirante (R) D. Julio Albert Ferrero
- Capitán de Navío (R) D. Rafael Bittini Escrivá de Romaní.

I have asked the Secretariat of State of the Vatican on 8 July for the NIHIL OBSTAT concerning this candidature and have received the following answer on 12 September 2002:

I am pleased to let you know that corresponding to your demand the Secretariat of State has the pleasure to agree to the respective candidature. (Signed: Msgr. Pedro López Quintana, Secretariat of State)

Germany is prepared to take over the Secretariat General for another period, there are no objections from the Vatican. The new crew will be the old one if you agree.

Our Ecclesiastical Assistant will remain in office until he arrives at the bishop's age of 75 years. Therefore we should already here choose his deputy from 2003 on who in 2005 should become his successor - if the Vatican agrees what I certainly would expect. The proposal of the Executive Committee is to nominate Mons. Dr. Werner Freistetter from Austria who is the Director of the Institute for Religion and Peace in Vienna and will certainly successfully contribute to all our efforts in the context of our service for peace, justice, freedom, and security.

I had asked all delegations to prepare the following for this conference:

1. A contribution to our theme "International Terrorism" which from the point of view of your country describes the actual situation, the existing problems and possible solutions (no more than 10 minutes speaking time). This contribution will be part of our discussions here<sup>44</sup> in El Escorial.
2. A report on your activities during the last year on which each delegation has up to 10 minutes to report - and this and even a longer paper will be included in the minutes.

I believe you agree that this exchange of information is important in order to better come to know each other, to harmonize national activities and to develop new initiatives.

The conference languages here in Spain are English and Spanish. I believe that we will be able, as always, to make ourselves understood - and, as experienced many times before, by the support of our Spanish oriented Deputy Secretary General Franz Thiele, not to forget our French oriented Deputy Secretary General Ralf Wittkamp.

### 3. Subject of the AMI Conference 2002 in El Escorial / Madrid - Spain

As I have said before the theme of our conference has been chosen because of obvious reasons, it is:

**“The Catholic Soldier of the Third Millennium and international Terrorism – ethical aspects and limitations concerning the implementation of Armed Forces”.**

I think that as an introduction to this theme the letter we received from the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Bishop Stanislaw Rylko, an engaged supporter of our activities, is an important guideline. It reads as follows.

28 June 2012

Dear Mr. President:

The Pontifical Council for the Laity is pleased to send most cordial greetings to you as President of the *Apostolat Militaire International* (AMI), along with the General Secretary and all the Members of the association gathered in El Escorial for the General Assembly to be held from 14 to 20 September 2002.

The theme chosen for your assembly “The Catholic Soldier of the Third Millennium and international Terrorism - ethical aspects and limitations concerning the implementation of Armed Forces” is of great interest at present for all and in particular for the members of AMI. As soldiers you have to face a very serious issue, but you are Christians before being soldiers. Your identity as baptized in Christ leads you to consider carefully your commitment.

Today more than ever, in front of very cruel and extreme situations claiming innocent victims, you are called to reflect in the light of the Gospel and to look at the world from the viewpoint of the Lord. Jesus did not let Himself be taken in into systems, religious or social categories. He looked at every human being as a person, as a creature of God called to Salvation.

Shortly after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attack, during his visit to Kazakhstan in his address at the Palace of Congress, the Pope launched a strong appeal affirming: “Hatred, fanaticism and terrorism profane the name of God and disfigure the true image of man” (Astana 24.IX.2001). Terrorism tramples down, in a radical way, on the dignity and vocation of the human being, be it the terrorist or the victim of his action.

The moral judgment on terrorism is unambiguous. No reasons can justify it. However the ways to combat it should also be planned in such a way as to respect the same moral laws. It is valuable to listen again to the Holy Father’s prayer after September 11: “...that the fundamental good of peace may reign. May people everywhere in the world, strengthened by divine wisdom, work for a civilization of love, in which there is no room for hatred, discrimination or violence.” (Angelus, 23 September 2001).

Your assembly gives you a good opportunity to reflect in depth on your responsibility: you are called to make your awareness of being Catholic military people grow also in this field.

To penetrate more profoundly in this perspective, the Holy Father at the beginning of the new millennium invited us to contemplate the face of Christ, who is “At the same time, God and man that he is, he reveals to us also the true face of man, “fully revealing man to man himself” (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 23). Keep your eyes fixed on Christ, on the face of the Risen Lord. This is the program presented to you for the new millennium, for your permanent search for peace. It is not a ‘magic formula’ undervaluing the great challenges of our time. In fact, in His Apostolic Letter the Pope continues: “we shall not be saved by a formula but by a Person, and the assurance which he gives us: *I am with you!*” (n. 29). With this certainty, I wish that AMI may continue his daily commitment to build peace, in full respect of each human being.

I take this opportunity, to thank you Mr. President for the mission you carried out during your term and I wish you success in your present tasks! At the same time I want to extend my most cordial greetings to the new leaders that will be elected during the Assembly.

In Christ,  
Bishop Stanislaw Rylko  
Secretary  
Pontifical Council for the Laity

Concerning our main theme we will have the following contributions:

- Lecture by Don Luis Martínez Fernández, our Ecclesiastical Assistant, with main emphasis on theological aspects
- Lecture by General José Luis Rodríguez-Villasante y Prieto, Spain, with main emphasis on (international) juridical aspects
- Lecture by Major General Alphart von Horn, Germany, with main emphasis on military and ethical aspects
- Contributions of the participating nations' delegations
- Results of three working groups.

We cannot decide yet if we will have a final concluding and summarizing document. But in any case we intend to publish a booklet on the subject of "International Terrorism and our Point of View as Catholic Soldiers" which will contain all the above mentioned contributions.

This booklet could be an important AMI working paper for the coming years - not something you have to store in your files but something you have to work with, reconsider, widen, use for your daily work as a catholic soldier and possibly make it known within your military and political communities.

Please let the General Secretariat know the number of copies you need for your Country (we try to send them to you via the Embassies since mailing cost is nowadays more or less supernatural - something in which even non-believers certainly believe). I am convinced that, after thorough analysis, the results of our work can and should be used for the benefit of lay work in the armed forces of our member countries - and this is the very objective of our conferences and of our cooperation. This is true both for our statements on various subjects and for the information on our work in the different countries, information which can surely help to intensify and structure lay work where this is still required - and that means everywhere.

#### **4. AMI Apostolate and Lay work in the Armed Forces**

Through its activities, the AMI promotes mutual understanding and exchange of information throughout the world and thus actively contributes to integration and solidarity. Regular meetings of delegations from various countries serve to create a climate of trust and a network of personal relationships which facilitates and enhances the work of Catholic soldiers in the armed forces of their countries and on the international level.

Over the past 37 years, our experiences and influence in all of these areas have grown. As the AMI's positions and tasks become increasingly known and accepted, an ever growing number of countries apply for membership.

The AMI derives its strength from the concepts it subscribes to and from those who represent it. Our first objective must therefore be to accept new members countries and to intensify our contacts with observers and occasional participants in such a way that they will become full members. Actually, all countries with an organized Catholic Military Chaplaincy should be AMI members. And, always in close cooperation with its Military Chaplaincy, each member country should set up its own organisation to ensure the lay apostolate in the armed forces - that means, in my opinion, that in an ever more de-christianized world lay people not only have to support the so called official church but also and more and more have to be a stable pillar of our church or, putting it this way, are the church. Such an organisation should, if possible, be

comprised of soldiers of all ranks and age groups serving in the armed forces of the respective country.

The vocation towards the lay apostolate is not new and it did not only find its way into the Armed Forces after the Second Vatican Council. The lay apostolate has its roots in the Christian calling of every Christian.

It was therefore only consistent that the Second Vatican Council addressed the lay apostolate and identified its goals and tasks in great detail. It was clearly pointed out that laymen do not only have the right but the duty to carry out the apostolate.

The Second Vatican Council identifies among others the following areas of activities relevant for us:

- young people must be supported as they grow into adulthood and into responsibility,
- the social environment (workplace, residence, leisure time) where the attitudes, morals, laws and structures of the community must be shaped in the spirit of Christ,
- international cooperation where we have to learn from each other through working together.

The reports on the activities in the different countries which we will soon hear shall also provide assistance and new ideas in this context. Just as important in this area, however, is the personal conversation between the delegations, which I would like to encourage strongly.

## 5. Remarks about AMI Work Now and in the Future

- Last and this year, too, of course, the Executive Council addressed the tasks and problems described above. This was done both in its day-to-day work and in **two conferences** in January 2002 in Bonn and in May 2002 in Madrid. These meetings particularly focused on ways to improve the communication within the AMI, on means to attract new members, on methods to intensify the contacts with our Military Bishops and on the preparation of the General Assembly.
- The **information magazine AMI TO...** was and will further be used as our means of communication by which to maintain and intensify contact between the member countries and with the Executive Council also in-between the conferences. The first edition 2002 was the invitation for this conference, the second one will hopefully be distributed by CD at and after the end of the conference, containing the minutes and results of the conference. I regret to say again that the General Secretariat did not receive any information from the member countries, except from Germany and Austria, which we could have published in AMI TO... Please use this means of information to inform other AMI members about your activities and to keep connection with each other.
- We are still intending to update the **AMI list of names and addresses** but since our working capacity is limited we have not succeeded yet. Anyway all delegations are kindly requested to give all necessary information to LTC Wittkamp - that is Military Bishop, Vicar General, Military Ordinariate, AMI point/person of contact. Please include telephone, fax and especially e-mail since we more and more use this means of communication therewith gaining time and density of information.
- **ICO Conference:** Our intensive and engaged cooperation with the Conference of International Catholic Organisations (CICO) has resulted in a great success. During the last General Assembly of CICO in Bangkok, Thailand, December 2001 AMI was elected for the Presidency of CICO with General Ernest König as President and me (confirmed afterwards in Paris in March 2002) as Secretary. This is the first time in the history of CICO - CICO was founded 75 years ago, in 1927 - that an organisation of military people was accepted as Presidency. It resulted clearly from our ongoing efforts to make it understood by all ICOs that we view and perform military service as a service for peace, freedom, security and human rights. We will use this chance also in the future and it deems appropriate that our President, certainly remaining an AMI representative, now concentrates on this challenging new mission. As Secretary CICO I intend to and do support him as best I can - but I have to say that for the next three

years, should you reelect Germany for the Secretariat General, my first obligations remain with AMI.

During the last two years we have participated in two Standing Working Groups of the CICO: "Ways towards the third millennium" and "Our responsibility for the third age". We will continue this and in addition will support the new Working Group "Violence against Women" which was created in Bangkok by AMI and the World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations (WUCWO).

- Let me announce already right now that the **AMI Conference 2003** will take place in October 2003 - host, place and subject of the conference will have to be decided during this conference. We wait for offers - you can be sure that the Secretariat General will support every chosen host.

- Information about the **Financial Situation of the AMI:**

The 2001 AMI budget totaled 82.091,13 German Marks (for those thinking in US \$ you should remember that 1 US \$ was about 2,2 German Marks). The next budget will be in €. The last financial year closed with a credit balance of 3.287,21 German Marks. The auditor reviewed our account on 19 August 2002 and confirmed proper budget administration. For details please refer to the budget review which will be handed out on request and will be included in the minutes of the conference, as last year. The auditor recommends that the General Assembly 2002 in El Escorial / Madrid accept the Secretary General's account and give a release to him concerning Fiscal Year 2001.

Besides the money required to support the work of the Executive Council, i.e. the Presidency, the General Secretariat and the Ecclesiastical Assistant, we mainly had to bear, in 2001 the costs for our organisation and representation at the General Assembly in Erfurt / Germany (which was supported by additional 15.000,00 German Marks from Germany), the ICO Conference, for providing support to financially weak AMI members in the early stages of their cooperation and for developing, printing and mailing the AMI TO... and the general information like our CD about the last General Assembly. For an International Catholic Organisation, which works only on an honorary basis and which, unlike all other comparable organisations, has only a part-office of its own and no full-time Secretary General, we still manage with a surprisingly small amount of money. Germany and Austria have in addition to their membership fees spent more than 24.000,00 German Marks - thus covering, as it is expected, costs for the Presidency and the General Secretariat.

- **Commemoration of the Deceased**

We will have a commemoration service for all our deceased friends during Holy Mass on Tuesday.

In this context I would ask all our members to inform the Secretary General in case that any of our friends has died. We should not let it happen that friends who have worked together with us for our Military Apostolate be forgotten by our community. And if you want names mentioned in our commemoration service please give them to me.

#### **4. Final Remarks**

International co-operation in the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI), that is the international association of Catholic soldiers from many countries and four continents, is important for our armed forces and for our Church. Neither the Church nor military Chaplaincy or military service are national properties and peculiarities. Our Church is a global church and there are Catholic military Chaplaincy organisations in more than forty countries all over the world by now. Military service is, and we say so time and again, a service in support of the security, freedom, and peace of the peoples. International cooperation in this area is therefore indispensable if not vital for Catholic soldiers. I think we must face this challenge also in the future. We must stand up for and spread our views of military service from a Christian perspective. And that, exactly, is the aim of this year's conference as of all the conferences before.

As Secretary General I thank all of you for the work you have done within and for the AMI. I also express my thanks to the Military Bishops, the Vicar Generals, and all military chaplains who actively support our work as ecclesiastical advisers or in their respective functions. Without their assistance our work would be impossible - and we do want to work with and support them.

I am sure that the great number of members, friends and supporters of the AMI will continue to accomplish their important mission in the armed forces of the different countries, in our Church and in society.

Jürgen Bringmann  
Colonel  
AMI Secretary General