

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2003

**Report of the Secretary General of the AMI**  
**Given at the General Assembly in CELJE / Slovenia**  
**on 23 September 2003**

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

as AMI Secretary General it is my pleasure to also welcome you at this year's AMI General Assembly and Conference here in the St. Joseph Spiritual Center in Celje - for the first time in one of the so called new democratic countries in the south-east of Europe, in Slovenia.

As in previous years in 2003, 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 will indicate the great guidelines and aims for the future which are right now extremely challenging in a time of changes in the political and military life, but also in the life of our church. 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.

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 have already been 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 2002 in EL ESCORIAL - Madrid/ Spain**

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 El Escorial, Madrid, Spain, from 14 to 20 September 2002.

The AMI Conference and General Assembly centered , in continuation of the AMI Declaration of Rome 2000, (which you can find in the blue book in the five AMI languages) on the theme:

**The Christian Soldier of the Third Millennium and International Terrorism**

**- Ethical aspects and limitations concerning the implementation of Armed Forces -**

We have to thank our Spanish friends, the military people and members of the Apostolado Castrense, very much for their support, organisation and excellent work before, during and after the conference.

12 participating delegations came from:

- Austria
- Belgium
- Congo-Brazzaville
- Germany
- Portugal
- Slovenia

- United Kingdom
- Ukraine
- The Netherlands
- The Philippines
- Spain
- Switzerland

The various lectures, discussions, prepared contributions of the different countries, and working groups on the subject mentioned before were very impressive and colorful as well as really hard and by this very fruitful and successful. All these contributions were included in a CD ROM about that conference and at the end given to all participating delegations for further use in their countries - that is one of the main aims of our annual meetings. The CD was afterwards also distributed to all Military Bishops and those countries which had been unable to participate.

During the General Assembly we held the elections for the new Executive Committee which will be in charge for the three years period from 2003 until end 2005. Let me mention this new Executive Committee here again since all members, with one exception, are also present and, as I hope, successfully acting here:

- General de Brigada (R) D. Miguel Alonso Baquer, AMI President
- Vicealmirante (R) D. Julio Albert Ferrero, Vice President
- Capitán de Navío (R) D. Rafael Bittini Escrivá de Romaní, Vice President
- AMI Secretary General Colonel Jürgen Bringmann
- AMI Vice Secretary General Colonel Franz Thiele
- AMI Vice Secretary General Lieutenant Colonel Ralf Wittkamp.
- AMI Ecclesiastical Assistant Mons. Prof. Don Luis Martínez Fernández.

Our Ecclesiastical Assistant will remain in office until he arrives at the bishop's age of 75 years which will happen in 2004. Therefore the General Assembly unanimously voted for Mons. Dr. Werner Freistetter from Austria to become his successor during the GA 2004; till this he will act and is doing so as Deputy Ecclesiastical Assistant. Also still acting as Deputy Ecclesiastical Assistant for the General Secretariat is Mons. Walter Theis, Germany, on whom we also count until the end of this election period.

## **2. AMI Conference 2003 in CELJE - Slovenia**

In EL ESCORIAL we had decided to accept Slovenia's invitation to host this year's conference here in Celje. We are very much obliged and thankful to our Slovenian friends that they were able to take over and prepare our conference in such a tight time frame and under quite difficult conditions. In this context I may already especially thank the representative of our host country, Vicar General Colonel Dr. Joze Plut who did until now - and certainly will until the end of the conference -, a great job.

I am really happy to see delegations from many different member or associated countries at this year's General Assembly here in Slovenia. We regret to see that for example Ghana, Columbia, France, Italy, Portugal, the Philippines, the United States, the Swiss Guard, 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 12 participating delegations:

- Austria
- Belgium
- United Kingdom
- Congo-Brazzaville
- The Netherlands
- Croatia
- Germany
- Bosnia-Herzegovina
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Slovakia

And I am - certainly in the name of the President, the Executive Committee and all members present or absent here - very happy to see countries here for the first time: Slovakia and Croatia. Welcome again. In this context I like to announce that the Military Bishop of Croatia in a letter dated 2 September 2003 has officially requested that his country be accepted as a full member of AMI during this GA. The Executive Committee strongly supports this request.

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

A contribution to the first theme of the conference which from the point of view of each country describes the actual situation, the existing problems and possible solutions (no more than 10 minutes speaking time but, if prepared, some more lines on paper for the discussion and the minutes). These contributions will be part of our discussions in the Working Groups in Slovenia. The contributions should also report on activities during the last year thereby giving examples and ideas on the possibilities of lay work within the Armed Forces.

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 Slovenia are English, Spanish, and German. As long as the text of the respective contribution is available in these languages, at least in English and Spanish, we will distribute the papers before the speech and not translate further with the exception of the discussion- or question-period. I believe that we will be able, as always, to make ourselves understood. We will have Working Groups in two languages - one German, one English.

### **3. Subjects of the AMI Conference 2003 in Celje - Slovenia**

**The Main Theme:** The Christian Soldier of the Third Millennium and his Responsibility for International Peace

will cover three sub-themes

1. Support of lay activities in connection with Military Chaplaincies in the New Democratic States
2. Peace on Earth – Mission of Christian Soldiers in their Countries and united in AMI (40 years *Pacem in Terris*)
3. Ethical aspects of Military Missions/Interventions (UN mandated or others) in the context of
  - Peacekeeping
  - Peace Enforcement
  - Humanitarian Intervention
  - Preventive Action

These themes will be presented to us by the following lectures:

- Presentation by the AMI President: “40 years since *Pacem in Terris* – current situation of the Christian Soldier and of the AMI”
- Theological Intervention of the AMI Ecclesiastical Assistant, Mons. Prof. Luis Martínez Fernández  
“The current challenges and mission of the AMI in the light of *Pacem in Terris*”
- Presentation of AMI to New Democratic Countries' Delegates
  - Overall presentation of AMI mission and activities (Secretary General)
  - Possible Support to and Cooperation with lay activities within the Armed Forces on the Base of Experiences (Msgr. Dr. Werner Freistetter (Austria), Msgr. Dr. Joze Plut (Slovenia), Msgr. Walter Theis (Germany))
- Intervention: Humanitarian Intervention - Is Preventive War a legitimate means of fighting terrorism?  
(Theological approach - Bishop Dr. Anton Stres, Slovenia;  
Juridical approach - MA Ales Weingerl, Slovenia)
- Intervention: Ethical aspects of Military Missions/Interventions (UN mandated or others) in the context of
  - Peacekeeping
  - Peace Enforcement
  - Humanitarian Intervention

- Preventive Action  
based on examples/experiences of the last ten years  
(Manfred Eisele, Assistant Secretary General UN as LtGen (ret.))

We cannot decide yet if we will have a final concluding and summarizing document. But in any case we intend to give you at the end of the Conference or very soon thereafter a CD with all documents in the three (or even four, with Slovenian) languages for your work on these subjects in your countries. We try our best

#### 4. 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 March and in May 2003 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 2003 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) is going on.  
During the last year we have participated in the Working Groups of the CICO: "International events" and "Our responsibility for the third age (including the network CRESCENDO in which we have become members)". We will continue this and in addition will further 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). We will also participate in a new project on "Children soldiers" which will certainly be created during the next CICO GA in Rome in December 2003. LTC Josef Schroefl who is our representative for these subjects will give a report on this after my report. We have again applied for the Presidency of CICO nominating General Prof. Ernest König as President and me as Secretary CICO.
- Information about the **Financial Situation of the AMI:**  
AMI budget: Sources are membership fees, national special contributions, and donations from the Vatican. Details will be published in the minutes of this conference. The next and further budgets will be in €.
 

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 have to bear the costs for our organisation and representation at the General Assemblies, 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.

- **Commemoration of the Deceased**

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

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.

## **5. 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