



20th September 2004

Report of the Secretary General of AMI
Given at the General Assembly in BRATISLAVA / Slovakia
on 21 September 2004

Excellencies, Generals, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Friends,

as AMI Secretary General it is my pleasure to welcome you again at this year's AMI General Assembly and Conference here in the Hotel Bôrik Conference Center which was just some years ago a communist government hotel and has now - at least for the days to come - been taken over by the Christian believers - as Christianity has survived so many regimes and will certainly survive some more.

As in previous years in 2004, 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. 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 will - sorry about that - last a bit long: Some of you may have the impression that I am repeating more or less some things which have already been said in the years before - they are right and they are not. It is necessary and important to repeat the basic principles and main guidelines of our as of any organisation and of our mission and 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. And we need agreement in this context.

What I am going to give you now is:

- A short look back at the Conference of last year in Slovenia
- A look forward to our Conference here in Slovakia
- Some information concerning this year's Conference themes
- Remarks on the future activities of AMI
- Some questions to be answered or at least to be considered until and by the end of this year's Conference - Where does AMI go - or being military people - Where does AMI march?

1. AMI Conference 2003 in CELJE / Slovenia

The last General Assembly of the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI), the international association of catholic militaries' associations coming from more than 40 countries on four continents, met in Celje, Slovenia, from 14 to 20 September 2003.

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 and which will remain our guideline for some more conferences) on the Main Theme:

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

We have, again, to thank our friends from Slovenia, the Military Ordinariate, especially Vicar General Joze Plut, and the military people of, may I say, AMI Slovenia, very much for their support, organisation and excellent work before, during and after the conference.

12 participating delegations came from:

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

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

covered 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

The various lectures, discussions, prepared contributions of the different countries, and working groups on these subjects were very impressive and colourful as well as really hard and by this very fruitful and successful. All these contributions are included in a CD ROM about that conference which was at the end of the Conference given to all participating delegations for further use in their countries, later in an updated version (by LTC Ralf Wittkamp) sent by me to all Military Bishops and all AMI members and friends, and you can find it also on the information table at the end of this room where we will also put all documents during this Conference for you. If the documents exist only in one language you have to be happy with that, if it is in more languages please do not take all three or for - might be English, Spanish, German, Slovak – but only your preferred language.

A final document which is also on the CD was published at the end of the Conference in Celje with some results which I repeat in short, adding the status as of today:

1. Membership of the Republic of Croatia

The request of 2 September 2003, to accept the Military Ordinariate of the Republic of Croatia, who is also responsible for catholic lay activities in the Pastoral Service of Croatia, as member of the AMI, was received by the Secretary General in Bonn on 10 September 2003.

The GA of AMI in Celje/Slovenia has discussed this request and voted on it on 25 September 2003.

The 5 full members present (with right of vote) and the 6 associated members (expressing their opinion) accepted unanimously Croatia as full member of AMI (as of 25 September 2003).

We are happy to have Croatia as a full member and would certainly appreciate a request for membership from our host Slovakia and the last host Slovenia.

2. Standing Order

The following new version of the article 8, no. 4, of the Standing Order was accepted:

4. The Ecclesiastical Assistant

The General Assembly elects one clergyman as Ecclesiastical Assistant of the AMI. The Secretary General requests from the Holy See the "Nihil obstat"; this being granted, the election will be officially valid.

The Deputy Ecclesiastical Assistant AMI, Mons. Dr. Werner Freistetter, was asked to prepare a letter to the Vatican indicating that AMI assesses itself as a private organisation of the faithful and has changed the above mentioned article. This was done during the first meeting of the Executive Committee AMI in Bonn in February 04.

The Ecclesiastical Assistant, Mons. Don Luis Martínez Fernández, in a letter dated 25 July 04 to the Secretary of State of the Vatican indicated his wish to retire having reached the age of 75 years. The agreement to this request was given by a letter of the Secretariat of State dated 5 August 04. On 8 August 04 I wrote a letter to the Secretariat of State indicating that the General Assembly of AMI in Erfurt/Germany 2001 had elected Mons. Dr. Werner Freistetter, Austria, to become the new Ecclesiastical Assistant of AMI, and asking for the NIHIL OBSTAT for him.

On 13 September 04 I received a call from Mons. Xavier Désiré, Vatican State Secretariat saying: "I just want to let you know that the NIHIL OBSTAT is granted to Monsignore Freistetter". Just yesterday I got here in the Hotel Bôrik a fax from the Substitute of the Secretariat of State, Bishop Sandri, which I like to read to you all – it is the written confirmation of the NIHIL OBSTAT. Therefore the change of post will take place here in Bratislava during the closing mass, executed by the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Nowacki.

3. Next AMI General Assembly

The next GA AMI will take place - based on an invitation by the Military Bishop of the Slovakian Republic - from 20 September (arrival) to 26 September 2004 (departure) in Bratislava in Slovakia.

As theme for the GA is accepted:

"The situation and problems of soldiers' families today - What do we expect from Pastoral and Armed Forces?" (working theme).

As a second theme which can be made more current and precise during the preparation phase the following was fixed:

"Current issues and activities of AMI" (working theme).

The result of this decision is this years Conference program.

4. Further General Assemblies

- Depending on the final agreement of Spain the GA "40th Anniversary of AMI" in 2005 (2nd half of September) will take place in Santiago de Compostela where AMI was founded in 1965.
- As an alternative in 2005 a GA either in Switzerland or in the United Kingdom is possible.
- In the years 2006 and 2007 GAs either in Switzerland or in the UK should be possible.

It seems that here in Bratislava we will have to discuss this subject again and come to a final solution for 2005 and 2006. This has to be decided in the final session on Saturday.

5. Cooperation with the Conference of International Catholic Organisations (CICO)

The Executive Committee has, in accordance with Art. 6 of the Statutes, made provisions for the further cooperation with the CICO.

AMI will further participate in the following Working Groups CICO:

- „International Events“
- „Third Age - Network CRESCENDO“
- "Violence against Women (in war-torn societies)"
- "Children Soldiers" (from 2004 on)

The Executive Committee has nominated the former President of AMI, General Prof. Ernest König, Austria, who in December 2001 was elected President CICO, for a second period of 2 years (2004-2005) in that office. The GA accepted this nomination formally and supports it.

The GA also formally accepts and supports that the Secretary General AMI, Colonel Jürgen Bringmann, takes over the office of Secretary CICO which he already held in the past election period - but only in case of the re-election of Ernest König.

During the General Assembly CICO in November/December 2003 in Rome AMI was re-elected as Presidency for the years 2004 and 2005 with Ernest König as President and Jürgen Bringmann as Secretary. The main document "Orientation for the future" was accepted; you have already got it and heard about it in the presentation of the President CICO.

6. Languages for General Assemblies

The GA decided:

- Conference language for GAs is English.
- The language of the host country is the second conference language; the host country is in charge for the translation.
- Should a country need translation in its respective language it has to take care for the translation and/or interpreter.
- There will be only simultaneous translations using installations or in round table interpretations.

In the preparation of this Conference we agreed to have simultaneous translation in plenary sessions – English, Spanish, German- since it is not possible to have only English speaking participants. For next year this will have to be reconsidered during the preparation phase.

7. Budget

For the year 2004 the following auditors were elected: Vizeleutnant Leopold Ganster, Austria, and Hauptfeldwebel Andreas Koppers, Germany. They will execute the budget balance check for the year 2003 and present to the GA 2004 in Bratislava their report.

The Secretary General will present to the GA 2004 a draft budget for the year 2005 based on the final balance for 2003.

The audit was executed in Bonn on 7 August 04. The Auditors will give their report during this Conference. The audit report and the Balance of the budget 2003 are on the information table. The budget for 2005 will be comparable with that of 2003 since the situation has not changed.

8. Executive Committee AMI

Let me mention this Executive Committee here again since all members, with two exceptions, are also present and, as I hope, successfully acting here:

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

2. **AMI Conference 2004 in BRATISLAVA - Slovakia**

In CELJE we had decided to accept the Military Bishop's of Slovakia, Mons. Frantisek RABECK, invitation to host this year's conference here in Bratislava. We are very much obliged and thankful to our Slovakian friends that they were able to take over and prepare our Conference under quite difficult conditions, especially concerning the place of the Conference, not talking about the costs. I will not go into details but I am prepared to answer questions concerning this all in our discussion time. In this context I may already especially thank the representative of our host country, Vicar General Marko TROCHAN, 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 Slovakia. We regret to see that for example Ghana, Columbia, France, Italy, the Philippines, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the United States, the Swiss Guard are not able to participate in this year's conference but we appreciate that many of them have expressed their intention of participating again in the future, especially Bosnia-Herzegovina, Columbia, Hungary. Please let me name once again the 16 participating delegations:

- Austria
- Belgium
- United Kingdom
- Ukraine
- Kenya
- The Netherlands
- Croatia
- Nigeria
- Germany
- Lithuania
- Slovenia
- Vatican
- Spain
- Switzerland
- Slovakia
- Portugal

Here, and also during the Conference, there is no order of delegations or countries, neither alphabetical nor hierarchical - I try to handle this like a lottery with no winner.

With the invitation that was distributed with our information letter AMI TO ... number 1/2004 I had asked all delegations to prepare the following for this conference:

A contribution to the 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 Slovakia. 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.

3. Subjects of the AMI Conference 2004 in Bratislava - Slovakia

The Conference Theme is:

The Soldier and his/her Family today

- Situation and problems –

- Challenges to be met by Armed Forces and Pastoral -

1. Political and social situation and challenges
2. Military implications
3. Challenges for Religious Services and Lay Apostolate

In addition we will get information on the subject "European Armed Forces – Military, ethical, and religious implications". The background for this additional theme is that, when I visited the Vatican in early 2004 to inform them on the results of our General Assembly in Celje, three dicasteries, that is ministries of the Vatican (the Secretariat of State, the Pontifical Council for the Laity, the Pontifical Council COR UNUM) have asked AMI to not only be informed but to follow and, if even possible, to influence this process so that the Catholic Military Chaplaincy does not get lost, or better said, that our sight of military service for peace be considered and accepted. These themes will be presented to us by the following lectures:

- Introduction by the AMI President, Gen. Miguel ALONSO BAQUER "The Christian Family today"

- Report of the Ecclesiastical Assistant, Prof. Luis MARTÍNEZ FERNÁNDEZ, Spain
"Experiences and outlooks after 20 years as Ecclesiastical Assistant of AMI"

- Social/Political Intervention on the theme "Soldier and Family" by
Christa REICHARD, Member of German Parliament

- Military/Theological Intervention on the theme "Soldier and Family" by Mons. Dr. Werner FREISTETTER, Austria
- Presentation of AMI Delegations on the theme "Soldier and Family"
- Presentation SK Ministry of Defense on the subjects of Family and the Professional Environment
- Presentation "Program of Cooperation between Armed Forces and Soldiers' Families"
- Briefing and discussion "Psychological Support to Soldiers and their Families"
- Lecture "European Armed Forces? Military and ethical implications" by General Karl MAJCEN, Austria, Honorary President AMI
- Intervention "European Armed Forces? Religious implications", Mons. Walter THEIS, Germany

We cannot decide yet if we will have a final concluding and summarizing document – and possibly it will not be necessary. 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 Slovakian) languages for your work on these subjects in your countries. We try our best.

4. Remarks and information 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 three meetings in Bonn in February, in Bratislava in April (only the Secretary General), and in Madrid in May 2004. 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 2004 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. Please do also update the list of participants here in Bratislava – we will circulate a main list for this purpose.
ICO Conference: Our intensive and engaged cooperation with the Conference of International Catholic Organizations (CICO) is going on. I have talked about that before. And you have heard the presentation of the President CICO, Gen. Prof. Ernest König. If you agree the Executive Committee will handle this subject as before, also concerning the next General Assembly of CICO which will take place in Jerusalem in late 2005 - with elections.
- Information about the **Financial Situation of the AMI:**
 AMI budget: Sources are membership fees, national special contributions, and donations from the Vatican. Details can be seen in the Balance of the budget 2003. The budgets for the future will be in €. If you want more detailed information, please ask the auditors, Staff Sergeant Koppers.
 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 organization 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 Organization, which works only on an honorary basis and which, unlike all other comparable organizations, has only a part-office of its own and no full-time Secretary General, we still manage with a surprisingly small amount of money. And I have to underline that without even a small additional amount of money from the member countries, especially those who are represented in the Executive Committee or are hosting a Conference, AMI cannot survive. Money is not commanding the world – hopefully – but without money only God can reign the world and also AMI.

- **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 organizations 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, human rights 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 them 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