

28<sup>th</sup> September 2005

**Report of the Secretary General of AMI**  
**Given at the General Assembly in VILNIUS / Lithuania**  
**on 28 September 2005**

**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 Military Advanced Training Center of the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

As in previous years in 2005, 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. 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. This first report will not be very long since I, leaving my appointment as AMI Secretary General by the end of this year, will have the chance to give some kind of a farewell lecture on Friday with the theme "What was, what is AMI - History and Future".

What I am going to give you now is:

- A short look back at the Conference of last year in Slovakia
- A look forward to our Conference here in Lithuania including some information concerning this year's Conference themes and the forthcoming elections
- Remarks on recent, current and future activities of AMI.

**1. AMI Conference 2004 in BRATISLAVA / Slovakia**

The last General Assembly of the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI), the international association of catholic militaries respectively soldiers coming from more than 35 countries on four continents, met in Bratislava, Slovakia, from 20 to 26 September 2004.

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 Soldier and his/her Family today**

- **Situation and Problems**
- **Challenges to be met by Armed Forces and Pastoral**

The various lectures, discussions, prepared contributions of the different countries, and working groups on these subjects were very impressive and colorful as well as 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 in 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 - might be English, German, Lithuanian - but only your preferred language.

We have, again, to thank our friends from Slovakia, the Military Ordinariat, especially Vicar General Colonel Marko Trochan, and the military people of, may I say, AMI Slovakia, very much for their support, organisation and excellent work before, during and after the Conference.

16 participating delegations came from these countries:

Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Kenya, Lithuania, Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Vatican.

Decisions concerning Membership were as follows:

-The request of the United Kingdom of Great Britain to become again a Full Member of the AMI was received by the Secretary General on 23 September 2004. The Military Bishop of the UK has agreed to this request.

The GA of AMI has discussed this request and voted on it on 25 September 2004.

All Full Members present (with right of vote) and all Associated Members (expressing their opinion) accepted the UK as Full Member of AMI (as of 2004).

- The request of the Ukraine from 24 September 2004, to accept the Military Ordinariat of the Ukraine, who is also responsible for catholic lay activities in the Pastoral Service of the Ukraine and intends to foster it, as Associated Member of the AMI, was received by the Secretary General of AMI. The request is signed by the Military Bishop of the Ukraine.

The GA of AMI has discussed this request and voted on it on 25 September 2004.

All Full Members present (with right of vote) and all Associated Members (expressing their opinion) accepted the Ukraine as Associated Member of AMI (as of 2004).

- Slovakia expressed her opinion that for the time being neither a full nor an associated membership in AMI would be appropriate for this country. First intention is to create an active lay organisation. Slovakia sees herself as a friendly country to AMI participating in all activities and following the same intentions.

The Ecclesiastical Assistant, Mons. Prof. Luis Martínez Fernández, retired after 20 years in this function. The "Nihil Obstat" for the new Ecclesiastical Assistant of AMI, Mons. Dr. Werner Freistetter (Austria) was granted by the Vatican on 13 September 2004.

The "change of command" from Mons. Martínez Fernández to Mons. Dr. Freistetter was celebrated by the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop Józef Henric Nowacki, in a ceremony during the closing Mass.

## **2. AMI Conference 2005 in VILNIUS / Lithuania**

This year's **General Assembly and Conference of the Apostolat Militaire International (AMI)** is now taking place here in **VILNIUS / Lithuania, from 27 September (arrival) to 2 October 2005 (departure)**.

We have to thank the Military Ordinariat of Lithuania, especially Vicar General Colonel Juozas Grazulis, for the excellent preparation and, as we expect, conduct of this Conference.

I am really happy to see delegations from many different member or associated countries at this year's General Assembly here in Lithuania. We regret to see that for example Ghana, Columbia, France, Italy, the Philippines, Croatia 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 Columbia, Croatia, the Philippines, and Ghana. Please let me name once again the 14 participating countries:

Austria, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Germany, Kenya, Lithuania, Netherlands, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vatican.

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.

The AMI Conference and General Assembly will have the following theme:

**40 Years Apostolat Militaire International (AMI) - Our Mission goes on**

- **Who are we?**
- **What did we do and accomplish?**
- **What are we expected to do and to achieve in the future (point of view of the Holy See and of our members)**
- **Challenges and chances to be met by AMI, Armed Forces and Pastoral**

Main speaker will be the Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, Bishop Josef Clemens, on the subject "How does the Holy See assess the work of the International Military Apostolate - What do we expect from you?" (Point of view of the Secretariat of State and of the Pontifical Council for the Laity).

There will also be contributions by the President, the Ecclesiastical Assistant and the Secretary General as well as Plenary discussions on the Conference theme. The main purpose of all this is not only a look back at what we have done and achieved - that might after 40 years be appropriate - but in main a new look at our ideals and mission as well as an orientation for our future aims and activities.

If possible we will - at the end of the Conference - vote on an AMI position concerning the theme of the Conference which will be published. You have received the program of the Conference and some general information in the issue 1/2005 of "AMI to ..." and in your information folder.

I have 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 the respective 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, especially on Friday.

You also have been asked to prepare an activity report concerning the lay activities in your organisation / country. These reports will be included in the minutes of the Conference.

The Conference language in Lithuania is English, a simultaneous translation to/from German and Lithuanian is foreseen.

I have to inform you that Ghana has asked on 25 February 2005 to become a full member of AMI which the Executive Committee supports unanimously. We will vote on this request on Saturday.

During this General Assembly we will have elections for the Presidency and the Secretariat General of AMI for the time period 2006 - 2008. All countries had been asked in my letter dated 10 Dec 2004 to apply for one of these important posts by letter/fax/e-mail to the Secretary General. In this context I may say, that "post" does not really explain what is expected from the candidate (country): It means more -: duty, obligation, (a lot of) honorary work. You will hopefully be paid for it in heaven.

I have to give you the following information in this context - as of 17 September 2005:

- Germany has - with the agreement of the Military Bishop - applied for the AMI Presidency 2006 - 2008. Candidate is Colonel GS Reinhard Kloss.
- Kenya has - with the agreement of the Military Bishop - applied for the AMI Presidency 2006 - 2008. Candidate is Lieutenant General Augustine Njoroge.
- Austria has - with the agreement of the Military Bishop - applied for the AMI General Secretariat 2006 - 2008. Candidate is Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Josef Schroefl.

The Holy See has been informed on the applications for Presidency and been asked for agreement.

The biographies of the candidates can be found on the information table.

The elections will be conducted by Lithuania. For the Secretariat General an open ballot is proposed, for the Presidency a secret ballot is foreseen.

**3. Further General Assemblies**

- For the year 2006 Bishop Rotich from Kenya has officially invited AMI to hold its GA in this country, 23 September (arrival) to 30 September (departure), in Nairobi. The GA in Bratislava 2004 has already agreed unanimously to this offer and thanked the Military Bishop of Kenya for his invitation. The general theme of the Conference 2006 has to be decided here in Vilnius.
- The Ukraine has indicated the intention to hold the AMI Conference 2007 in this country; no decision yet.
- Nigeria has offered to host the GA 2008 (ore thereabout) in that country (Lagos). Decision to be taken in Kenya 2006.

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

- The cooperation with other International Catholic Organisations (ICOs) under the umbrella of CICO is of predominant importance, it is necessary that AMI is and remains engaged in this international super organisation of which some members are by tradition sceptical if not negative concerning our military service for peace.
- Earlier this year I visited the Holy See in order to report concerning our last General Assembly in Bratislava. I met with the Secretariat of State (Mons. Caccia, 1<sup>st</sup> Section, Mons. Parolin, 2<sup>nd</sup> Section), the Pontifical Council for the Laity (Archbishop Rylko, President, Bishop Clemens, Secretary), and with the President of COR UNUM (Archbishop Cordes). All of them expressed their appreciation for the work of AMI and urged AMI to remain engaged in the cooperation within the Conference of International Catholic Organisations.
- And it is astounding and therefore the more relevant that AMI has been entrusted with the Presidency of CICO for four years now - to be noted by secret vote - and by this has received even more chances to safeguard its objectives and aims as a community of catholic soldiers.
- The Executive Committee has, in accordance with Art. 6 of the Statutes, made provisions for the further cooperation with the CICO. In which Working Groups we will participate can only be decided after the next General Assembly CICO that will take place in Jerusalem in November 2005.
- The Executive Committee has again nominated the former President of AMI, General Prof. Ernest König, Austria, who in December 2001 was elected President CICO, for a third period of 2 years (2006-2007) in that office. The GA is asked to accept this nomination formally and to support it.
- The GA is also asked to formally accept and support that the acting Secretary General AMI, Colonel Jürgen Bringmann, takes over the office of Secretary CICO which he already held in the past four years - but only in case of the re-election of Ernest König.
- It has to be mentioned again that this engagement in the leadership of CICO does not cause further financial burdens for AMI. In the contrary: The costs for President and Secretary CICO (who remain also representatives of AMI) are paid by CICO.

**5. Budget**

- For the year 2005 the auditors where elected in Bratislava: Vice Lieutenant Leopold Ganster, Austria, and Staff Sergeant Andreas Koppers, Germany. They intended to execute the budget balance check for the year 2004 and to present their report to the GA 2005 here in Vilnius. Unfortunately this was until now impossible since military duty reasons hindered the auditors to come together.
- The audit 2004 will now be executed in Bonn on 2 December 2005. At this time we will also have the hand-over of the German Secretariat General to the to be elected Austrian Secretariat General. After that I will - as my final action as Secretary General - distribute a last AMI to... 2005 with the results of the General Assembly 2005. Annexes will be the then final version of the Conference CD and the Budget Balance 2004 with the Audit Report.

- The Budget Balance 2005 will be checked by the auditors in early 2006, the Audit Report should be presented to the GA 2006 in Kenya.
- Some words concerning the AMI Budget: Sources are membership fees, national special contributions, donations from the Vatican, and Conference fees which do not only cover the direct costs of the Conferences but always become part of the entire Budget. With the money of this Budget we do not only support the work of the Executive Council, i.e. the Presidency, the General Secretariat and the Ecclesiastical Assistant, including office and mailing costs, but we mainly have to bear the costs for our organisation and representation at the General Assemblies, 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 most 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. And I have to underline that without even a small amount of money from the member countries, especially those who are represented in the Executive Committee or are hosting a Conference, AMI can't survive. Money is not all but without money all is nothing, sorry to say so.

#### 6. **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 November 2004, in Madrid in January and in Vilnius in February (only the Secretary General) 2005. These meetings particularly focused on the evaluation of the General Assembly in Bratislava, 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 in Vilnius.
- The **Information Magazine AMI to ...** was and will further be used as our means of communication by which we try and maintain and intensify contacts between the member countries and with the Executive Council also in-between the Conferences. The first edition 2005 was the invitation for this Conference, the second one will be distributed, as I mentioned before, at the end of this year. Please use this means of information to inform other AMI members about your activities and to keep connection with each other during the year and between the Conferences.
- **Commemoration of the Deceased**  
We will have a commemoration service for all our deceased friends during Holy Mass on Friday. 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 on Friday please give them to me.

#### 7. **Final Remarks**

This year for the last time after six years as President and nine years 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 assistants 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 our societies.

Jürgen Bringmann  
Colonel  
AMI Secretary General