

## **Society and Church; the Environment of Christian Soldiers** Servants of Security and Freedom of the Peoples

Your Excellencies, dear Presidents, Presiding Team, members of AMI and Friends,  
As you well know, mental and personal ties to AMI are still functioning; we had a good time working together almost ten years ago. Therefore thank you for this opportunity to express some open-minded thoughts, here in this beautiful environment.

How to start something like this? Maybe by quoting; with Card Schönborn<sup>1</sup> I shouldn't be on the wrong side: *".....This Church is so magnificent and so terribly human. How to solve? One may try by dividing the invisible from the visible Church. Then the visible Church will be even more miserable and the invisible one will evaporate. The only way is to see this Church as complex reality, divine and human elements growing together. The Devine in this Church appears in human outfit, which will always be annoying. Neither the most outstanding Pope, the most sympathetic Bishop nor the most exciting Parson will change this."* . I have to add: *".....and the most responsible, most engaged lay/wo)man<sup>2</sup> ..."*

Our still young appearing retired Vicar<sup>3</sup> General in brief: *"The Pilot<sup>4</sup> is super, but the ground personnel make troubles"*. – **Tensions.**

But, why not change? Why not reduce this field of tensions? This is the purpose of further reflections – not casual talking and grouse, but learning from mistakes and then – perform better.

We in the military are familiar with the following systematic: it is the "Estimate of a Situation", a pragmatic approach. Eventually we should end up with efficient leadership and a "Company Culture". We in the Church have a clear, thrilling Mission, a "Missio"; but the implementation is at least questionable; why not apply this method in order to achieve more promising results? Maybe, because there is a tendency to solve a problem before identifying it; lacking willingness to take reality into account. The higher the hierarchy the more preferred is this approach. In case of an undesirable outcome, one will select somebody<sup>5</sup> who will be made responsible. No recipe to succeed.

Naturally each of us has a **position**, my understanding is:

**Acting** in a **Christian** spirit inevitably has a **political** dimension<sup>6</sup>; Christian being in privacy is a "contradiction in se"

Whether the activity is popular or not is of secondary importance, essential is the **accomplishment** of our Mission:

Our mission, the **Missio**, is founded in our faith with its secrets and the supreme Commandment of **"Love"**<sup>7</sup>; not as rhetoric redundancy but as aim of our endeavours. Together with Albert Schweitzers' theme "Awe before Life" and focussing on a more humane society, we would have the best **Concept** – at least I do not know a better one. It has to be applied not only in the "large" global or nationwide setting but also in the "small" environment at home, at work, in the community. We don't have a Commandment "Love your next but one...." The "But...."

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<sup>1</sup> Schönborn, Wer braucht Gott?, ecowin, Salzburg, 2007

<sup>2</sup> Apostolicam Actuositatem, II. Vaticanum

<sup>3</sup> Militärgeneralvikar i. R. Prälat Mag Rudolf Schütz

<sup>4</sup> Our Lord

<sup>5</sup> While preparing a perfect defence on the right side, the evil enemy attacks from the left side – the latter is responsible

<sup>6</sup> Prof Pollak, theol. Faculty, Uni Vienna, Feb 8, 200

<sup>7</sup> Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est; his first Encyclical – and for sure not by chance.

Additionally we have a clear **guideline** in the preamble of the Sermon of the Mount; no future oriented wide directive, but a conditional congratulation: “Beatified are those, who....”.<sup>8</sup> Something unique – eight times! With this we should have everything, what soldiers - I dare to say everybody - needs: A Mission, a Concept and a clear Guideline. Do you need more? But.....the “But” was treated already at the very beginning.

The theme of this **AMI** General Assembly „The Christian Soldier: Servant of Security and Freedom of the Peoples“ asks for leaving the small world and for understanding us as **part of** a larger, **bewildering entity**. This is inconvenient, but the larger world has an impact on us, we cannot ignore.

If so, we have to draft briefly the **environment of Lay Organizations**, of AMI: The Church, the society and around 100 years. Let’s have a closer look on five periods<sup>9</sup>:

- the penultimate “fin de Siècle”
- the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century
- the time from the end of the First to the end of the Second World War
- the Fifties and
- the Eighties

What was decisive, the parallel- respectively the differing developments between Church and Society.

- End 19<sup>th</sup>, beginning 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Liberalism, Republic and Democracy on the way up, Civil Society<sup>10</sup> emerged. The powerful alliance between throne and altar in defensive position. Pius X, highly engaged in social matters, was against this development and stood for “**Antimodernism**”, the “performer” was the Cardinal Secretary of State; a harsh time for Catholic Lay Organisations<sup>11</sup>. Tendencies in Society and Church were contra-rotating.
- Beginning 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Growth of Civil Society organizations after the US also in Europe, more Catholic NGOs<sup>12</sup> emerged. Benedict XV, the peace Pope, was highly engaged trying to avoid the outbreak of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War; positive to the **opening** of the Church. Similar development in Church and Society. International Catholic Organizations allied in the COIC<sup>13</sup>
- End 1<sup>st</sup> World War to end 2<sup>nd</sup> World War: The power switched from Monarchies over fascist systems to democracies. Pius XII, an outstanding elegant personality and former Nuncio in Berlin was an opponent of the National Socialist regime, saving life of many pursued, denounced by an Intelligence Service mainly through a misinformed author<sup>14</sup>; still discussed today. In the Church he promoted a strict **hierarchy**, on the top the “Deputy” and at the very end the lay(women). The discrepancy in the inner development of states and Church lasted till the end of his period. Nevertheless Catholic NGOs played a key role during the Conference in San Francisco 1945, where the UN Charter<sup>15</sup> was drafted
- The second half of the Fifties – a thrilling period. The ECCS<sup>16</sup> changed with the treaty of Rome 1958 in the **EEC** and developed significant **dynamics** – together. Surprisingly, Pope John XXIII started the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council – **Church in the**

<sup>8</sup> Reflections triggered by Prelate Hoffegger

<sup>9</sup> Many regional cooperation endeavours are ongoing in Asia, America and Africa. As Europe had the greatest progress it is taken mainly but not only for comparison purposes.

<sup>10</sup> Originally designed as balance against the allied power of State and Church. Socially engaged persons were organized in Lyons, Scouts, Service Organisations. The Rotary Constitution still stipulates the incompatibility between being part of the power instrument and member of Rotary. A Church refraining from executing power changed this situation.

<sup>11</sup> Emerged especially in frankophone regions. The first one was the Association Catholique Internationale des Services pour la Jeunesse Feminine, founded in 1897 in Fribourg, Suisse.

<sup>12</sup> Non Governmental Organizations

<sup>13</sup> Conférence Internationale des Organisations Catholiques, at the very beginning a conference of the Presidents; represented 10 Mio Catholics, using military terms - this independent umbrella organization” was integrated into a “Major Subordinate Command” under the Secretary of State of the HI. See.

<sup>14</sup> F. i. Rolf Hochhut „der Stellvertreter“.

<sup>15</sup> Catholic Lay Organizations made up around 50 % of the represented NGOs; an explanation why you will find Christian values in this document. Today the portion is less than 1 %.

<sup>16</sup> ECCS (EGKS) the European Community for Coal and Steel with the aim to avoid further wars by collectivizing basic armament material. The EEC (EWG) European Economic Communities exploded from 6 memberstates to 27 today.

**World**<sup>17</sup>, Liturgy of the People and People of God were the future oriented guidelines. Hopeful awakening in Church and society.

- **Eurosclerosis** defined the 80ies. Nobody believed in Europe any more. The HI See officialised a new Constitution, the Canonical Code 83, economical tailoring and „reintroduction“ of „Law and Order“ are the significant features. Again something like accordance in stagnation between society and Church, basically overcome in the states; not yet in the Church
- 1989 – Change<sup>18</sup> and **transformation**; independence for former Soviet satellites, maybe also the dawn of the unleashed so called “Free Market Economy”.

Tensions and tendencies with conclusions but no a prognosis will be the next:

**Tensions** exist since ever, horizontal, vertical, especially between human beings; and this in a huge network. Nothing exceptional; decisive is how you/we get along with them.

**Society:** In 2003, the **EU** f. i. presented a “Draft for a Constitutional Treaty”; hundreds of pages, extremely specialised, detailed and heavy even for specialists, and had public voting on it in a few countries. After it was rejected, the paper was taken apart and the paragraphs were squeezed into the already existing laws under the title “Treaty on the Working Method in the EU”. This is either naïve or **ignoring public will**. In any case an indicator of a huge distance to the EU citizens. In Laaken in 2001 the chiefs of the governments agreed on acting closer to the citizens; obviously they did not. Nevertheless people feel that they would be lost not **being part** of a larger entity in the competitive world. Crises and measures against them make people more apt for getting closer; the treaty has good chances to be accepted – now<sup>19</sup>. Probably it is easier to be against something rather than to stand for something; only in the society or also in our Church?

**Societies** are like trees taking their capability to live from their **roots**. These roots are

- the unity with nature – almost dead
- The brick of the society, the family and
- The relation to eternity. All three are endangered.

The dynamics of progress are triggered by research and strive to detect; necessary and desirable if ethic standards are applied. Three **disturbing behaviours** might have significant negative impact and stand for retrogression rather than progress: The greed for more<sup>20</sup>, the fear to lose it and the jealousy the other might be better off.

Here we have a link to and tensions with the issues Ethics, **Values**, Responsibility and **“higher” Responsibility** towards.....Especially intellectual liberals do not want to accept the regulating aspects of it. But there is a need for regulation; therefore we people get **many laws** instead of behavioural standards; and additional laws to close the gaps in the laws. The Declaration of Human Rights 1948 was an exceptional achievement, almost nobody dares to question them. But, if it does not fit into technocratic intentions (embryonic stem cells, euthanasia etc), words should be redefined, for instance “Man” – would be only a specific species of “human beings”, “Man” is a human being, capable to decide. Again we are in conflict with the “Awe before Live”. How about a one year old child or a retired person forgetting the keys three times? Dignity of human life is on stake. At the beginning of live with the demand to utilize embryonic stem-cells and abortion, in the middle by trafficking and towards the end through euthanasia; roughly generalized, but not less dangerous. It might be realistic to state that “a specific combination of politics and technocracy has an inherent potential of inhumanity”.

<sup>17</sup> B. Helmut Krätzl was witness

<sup>18</sup> The implosion of the Soviet Empire did not begin with the Fall of the Berlin Wall by End Oct 1989, but in summer 1989 with the „PickNick“ t the AustroHungarian boarder, permitting officially GDR citizens to go to West Germany via Austria.

<sup>19</sup> But the Human Rights Declaration was sacrificed in three counties, which is more than sensitive; the “Awe before Live” became 2<sup>nd</sup> priority.

<sup>20</sup> Hedonist desires from highlife to sex to shares. Martin Luther, 500 yearas ago: People just don’t like to work. They want to earn money with money. – the sale of indulgences.

Tensions you also may find in **our Church**:

The desire for the well structured world of “**yesterday**” is quite understandable, but its reestablishment is unrealistic. Additionally this was “disturbed” by the **2<sup>nd</sup> Vatican Council** with its Mission, the Apostolate in the World, the intention to exert influence “You are the sourdough....”

The next field of tensions is derived from the first one. A military terminology might be helpful. During and after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vaticanum a tendency to a **mission** oriented tactics could be identified, as did our Lord 2000 years ago. Unity in diversity is a consequence. Since about 25 years on may sense a creeping return to a “**Order tactics**”. It is just a technique, but its positive influence in the situation today is questionable. It is authoritarian. Additionally it creates side effects: Those, who say “Yes”, the pre-emptive obedient, the opportunists may be the praised ones, those who question are suspects and those who keep distance can be identified in the “Church exit statistics”, assuming a mirroring of the spirit of the time, which might be wrong – to bad.

And – there is now doubt that a lot of extraordinary work is performed at **grass root** level. The endeavours in the social – and development aid, the parish community councils, the “spirituals”, the inter religious dialog, the Catholic Lay organizations are recognized and praised. It might be that other interests prevail in the “**Olymp**” – the human factor.

Additionally and naturally we have fields of **tensions between Church and Society** because of differing orders of values. If Christian values are defined as absolute and democracies through compromises, a Christian Politician must withdraw in case of a critical issue, mainly connected with the value of life. Then we would have decisions ignoring our values at all – a horror vision.

Furthermore some Liberals claim the inability of the Church for democracy. On the other hand a functioning **democracy** presumes **values** which she can not create on its own<sup>21</sup>. But who else in the cultural region of Europe should introduce them if not the Christian community?

Now to the decisive tension: Agnostic and atheistic thinking trends to a view of **men** as the **capstone** in the universe. Hybris together with economic-technocratic acting as consequence is and will be to the detriment of human dignity; man degraded to an object. As faithful feel responsible to **something Higher**, call him/her/it Lord or have a symbolic empty chair in the chamber of decisions; thinking and acting in humility should be the result. Not easy, but turn around, withdraw and disappear would be refusal and not contribution.

Apart from differing positions, a few **tendencies** can be recognized.

- In the **Village “World”** the manifold threat for Economy, Society, Welfare ....are realized. Nebulous threat may result in resignation, panicking but also in getting closer together.
- In former times men had a life expectation of about forty years and afterwards **eternity**. Today people make average ninety years; afterwards – they believe – there will be **nothing**. A collective ego-individualism is the consequence, laws adapt to this behaviour and ends up in a general **hedonist** attitude. Today slogans like “The bad news – here is no God; the good news – we don’t need him”, reflect a primitive atheism, supporting our consume oriented society, good for shopping, but especially a **threat** not only for our faith, but also for the humane society in the future.
- For sure, not all hold such an opinion, one may assume this to be a unqualified Minority, but loud. Many are missing something, the soaring question “**This is all...?**” is raised. Many offers are on the market to close this gap. The best one would have, as already detailed, our Church. “Sheppard and Sheep” together in fulfilment of their already mentioned Mission according to the Guidelines would have their chance.

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<sup>21</sup> Carl Jaspers

### Tendencies in the Church:

For instance to **control**<sup>22</sup> and to overrule - the higher in the hierarchy, the more preferred - is not promising. It can not be excluded that fear to lose control is the motive; as we know – fear is a bad adviser. An indicator is the difficulty authorities in the Church have with an open dialog; the “Enlightenment Privilege Syndrome”: In case of the slightest inconvenience, just don't answer. Only naïve ones believe in a dialogue on equal terms.

We have furthermore the under current of a backward orientation, the “**good old times**” or “conservative”, but also some “New Movements” develop such an attitude. There are also ideologically infected Liberation Theologies- and movements. Both envision a kind of “peoples Church.

Times are in an accelerating change with a global view, the small village with five informed people does not exist any more – almost. Information can be picked up everywhere from TV to Google. Beyond and before all we got the **freedom of decision**, which we will lose again only, when we are disinterested or opportunistic. Honestly, we are living in a thrilling, wonderful world of faith. Each one, who decided for the Church, did it voluntarily. We are witnesses as baptised priests in the spirit of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vaticanum<sup>23</sup>. The result might be a **smaller**, not small, more compact **Christian Community**: This is no Euphemism but reality, if we want – together<sup>24</sup>. Part of it is to recognize human attitudes and weaknesses<sup>25</sup>, not only of the others, but also ours; in order to subordinate them to the grand design.

If this all is consistent, it has consequences; each Christian has to take **responsibility**; just to delegate upwards is no solution; even being appreciated from both sides.

It is not easy for Catholic soldiers, because they have to do away with two prejudices: First of all – **Catholics** are not permitted to think and secondly – soldiers are under the average IQ, because they have chosen this job. Both prejudices are, what they are - prejudices: First of all there are many convinced Catholics, who did not deposit their brains and capabilities at the “supreme Command's Office”. Secondly **soldiers** generally have a clearer view, they are used to live “in the situation” and they learn from the very beginning to act in direction objective; to a certain extent they are authority minded, which is increasingly overstressed in the Army as well as in the Church. In general soldiers are acquainted to exceptional situation, which we actually might have; therefore soldiers should be specifically called in the society<sup>26</sup>

That's the **frame for AMI**. Ten years ago I learned to know the inherent capacities in AMI. Our meetings were quite productive, in some countries rather inhumane practices could be influenced in a positive way. Nine years ago the document “The **Catholic** Soldier at the Threshold to the Third Millennium” was derived, developed with creativity, written together and accepted by all representatives. It was the base for a paper of our protestant friends in the military, “The **Christian Soldier**.....”, if we want to say so, an ecumenical undertaking.

It is a logical, but nevertheless fascinating decision to study this paper again and adapt it to the **world of** today and of **tomorrow**.

<sup>22</sup> „trust is good, control is better“ is rather an attitude than a success strategy

<sup>23</sup> Not to be mixed up with the issues of married priests or women as priests

<sup>24</sup> These two paragraphs were inspired by Stephan Turnovszky

<sup>25</sup> „Lord, who ist he most imporant one of us::::?“

<sup>26</sup> „ As they have sued me, they will sue you“. This was saie 200 years ago, and became realitiy in the future quite frequently. Today it is believed that openness and tolerance are predominant. At least it is not as dangerous as it has been in the past, but nevertheless “Civil – Courage” is necessary.

Let me **summarize**: Our Church and with this we are challenged to a large extent. A position that the evil in the world is responsible and because of this to “bunker” and resign is seemingly the wrong way; this was not the example of our Lord. It will be decisive that we learn from the mistakes in the past and tackle upcoming issues together. There is no doubt that the society of **today** will decide how the **world of tomorrow** should look like – **with** or without **our participation**. We should participate!!!

Therefore it is indispensable that we work together and **cooperate** in the Church in order to have real dialogue; having this, we will earn trust. And we will be demanded, because we have **something to offer** – an Aim, a Concept and a Guideline; this is something.

Much luck EK/ 031109