



GenMjr i.R. Mag. Norbert SINN  
Hauptstr. 41  
2263 Dürnkrot

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## **General Assembly and Conference of AMI 2017 - ROME**

### **Report of the President**

After the General Assembly means the next one ahead!  
Means working on the results give to them more precision, arrange all data's and select things to do next.  
That is was what we did.

Most important were four aspects or questions to be solved:

1. Of course, preparing the conference/General Assembly 2017.
2. Preparing all things in a way that a new presidency of AMI can proceed working without facing any short-term problems.
3. Looking especially for a new Secretary General, meaning people willing to work for AMI,
4. Working on the question where and when the next conference of 2018 could take place.

I was happy, last year in Vught, when military Bishop Marcianò took my arm and offered me to organize the General Assembly and Annual Conference in Rome this year. Much to my relief we had one worry less and could now start thinking about goals, themes and content of this year's conference.

Your Excellency let me once again express my gratitude and joy that we are here in Rome.

Beside of that I restarted my efforts have the opportunity work as a NGO.

In autumn I met twice Mons. Urbanczyk, head of the mission of the Holy See to the UN, OSCE and IAEA in Vienna, explaining to him our work and asking for support.

He too, recommended me to get into contact with the Order of Malta, which I did early 2017 several times. I had the opportunity to talk to the procurator, the chancellor and the ambassador to the International Organisations.

They were very friendly but it did not lead to any constructive results.

In late autumn I met the Austrian Minister of Defence, who is a Catholic too, to tell him about goals and work of AMI. I was there together with the president of the AKS, BGen Martin Jawurek, and he invited us to accompany him to the Kosovo, one of his Christmas visits at Austrian contingents abroad. We accepted his invitation and travelled there just before Christmas Eve. At this occasion I had also the pleasure to meet our military bishop, Werner Freistetter, again.

Still in autumn I assisted together with comrades from the AKS the celebration of the so called Blessed Jakob Kern-day, an Austrian priest who dedicated his life for the poor. He served as a young man during WW I in the Austrian-Hungarian Armed Forces (18 years young). 1916 heavily wounded, he started studying theology and became frère with the Order of Premonstratensians in the monastery of Geras, Lower Austria. His name Jakob goes back to the martyrs of Gorkum(1572). He died after a complicated operation necessary due to his heavy wounding during WWI and became beatified by Pope John Paul II on June 21, 1998.

I met my SecGen once in Vienna, during the Enquête of the IRF, and later in Rome, visiting the Vatican and discussing this year's conference together with the Military Bishop of Italy and the persons responsible of the Military Ordinariate. Nelleke will explain you more about this in her report.

In January all data for the conference DVD were collected and I started organizing the printing of the DVD, thanks to my comrades at the Military Academy. This time AKS-president Martin Jawurek made it possible to send all DVD's to our AMI members and all interested military ordinariates. Thank you very much for it!

Influenza handicapped also me and made it impossible to travel to Cologne to assist the World Peace Day of the German Armed Forces.

In March, we travelled to Rome again for appointments with the Military Ordinariate concerning details and organization of the conference. Already during our meeting in Rome in November we met Col Domenico D'Ortenzi again and asked him, to think about becoming SecGen of AMI for the period starting from 2018 on. We also met his wife and were happy to find two excellent persons, Catholic, and integrated in their home parish as well as the military one. Later the year he was able to say yes, after having asked his Military Bishop. Again I was happy because, finding a new Secretary General was another concern we had, the last two years. I say thank you to you Domenico, to your wife Paola, also your Military Bishop again, and, I suppose, your superiors too.

The whole year I stood in contact with the Austrian delegation, because the problem, not to find a state ready and willing to take the responsibility for the AMI Secretariat General, weighed heavy on me. Much to my relief I was able now to inform Brigadier General Jawurek that he could stop thinking about possibilities to support the solution of this heavy problem. I am grateful that it was Austria showed at least will and backing thus our efforts.

In February I assisted a symposium, organized by the IRF concerning migration and refugees, feeling it to be important for our next conference. I had the opportunity to listen to a broad spectrum of contributions, opinions and not so well known special things.

Due to the fact that it was not possible to organize meetings at the Vatican and the MOD of Italy during our meeting in March, I travelled again to Rome from 1 to May 4, 2017.

This time well prepared and having meetings with:

- Cardinal Peter Turkson,
- Cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi
- Cardinal, Secretary of State, Pietro Parolin,

- The head of Cabinet of the MOD and
- The Austrian Defence Attaché

I invited them to come and talk to us or to support at least our organisation. What we face here during our conference are the results of these talks.

When travelling to Lourdes, assisting the International Military Pilgrimage, I tried to get into contact to as many persons responsible (and others) as possible. I talked to several bishops and met many friends there. All these activities are important to bring AMI again into the mind of responsible personalities.

Early June I started editorial work on our booklet. All contents were now available. I read all texts and started organisation for editing it. I am grateful to our Military Ordinariate, the Austrian Military Printing centre and the lay-outer for preparing again an excellent, well-done, booklet about our conference in Vught, the Netherlands. I hope to have brought enough for everybody and you can find it already in the background. But, before printing it, I read again the first-print, finding again some spelling mistakes, and after that we had it printed by the Austrian Armed Forces. Thanks to all people responsible for making it possible.

Mid of July Nelleke came to visit me for talks about the conference again. We discussed open questions, and there were a fistful of it, how to react if something would not work as intended or how the roll-ups we intended to produce, could be designed and which contents we wanted to transfer with it.

Short time later I discussed all questions with our lay-outer. We selected pictures and prepared texts, controlled it several times to finally agree on different themes and subjects with the goal to use it during our conferences or at other occasions.

Anyway, to use it more often and for a longer period – and again – to make AMI more visible! Mid August it was possible to show it first time in the public, meaning my wife Ida and our grandson Corvinus. One week later it was already in Rome. Today you can see this new means of publicity and information in front of you.

Already during the Enquête in October last year, I started talks with Military Bishop Jure Bogdan from Croatia with the idea to make a conference in Croatia possible. In March I announced again that I would like to meet him, and spoke, finally, some words to him during the IMP at Lourdes. Of course he had quite a lot of obligations there, because beside others, as the most very important person, the state president of Croatia was present in Lourdes during the pilgrimage. We agreed to meet later in summer.

In July it was possible to travel to Zagreb for a meeting with Bishop Bogdan.

It took place in an atmosphere of friendship and good will. After a two hours talk we agreed that I would write again an official letter to him, and to inform at the same time the MoD, ChoDS and Minister of Interior of Croatia.

Honestly, I left with the feeling that it could become reality... and in the midst of August I got the official answer by Bishop Jure Bogdan saying that he would be willing to organize the conference of 2018 somewhere, to be defined later, in Croatia.

And that I feel is the best news I have for all of you. Thank you Military Bishop Jure Bogdan for being prepared to receive us next year!

Let me please come back again to the main topic of our conference: Title and content.

When we started our discussion about this year's conference, we designed first a conference under the umbrella of "Just War – is it still possible" having in mind some mentioning and insinuations of a possible changing of a capital question of Catholicism.

I was not really convinced of it, but accepted it because we reached an agreement on it.

While falling ill in January I found time to rethink it again, a time in which especially the term "fake-news" became more and more important and thinking about another concept of content started to grow in my head.

I called it at first "Diving for roots", but after talks with my SecGen and the Austrian Military Bishop Werner Freistetter, I named it "**Searching for Roots**".

The reasons were:

- Democracy and Christian Values,
- Presidential election in the USA,
- Social unrest and development worldwide,
- Especially the worsening situation in Africa, Asia, some countries in Latin America,
- Long lasting wars and new arising conflicts worldwide,
- Decline of International Law (especially in times of war/civil war/.....),
- Cruelties done by several groups wearing uniforms (or not),
- Necessity for correct and Christian military leadership,
- Finally the question what is truth.

I am convinced to put with our conference's agenda our finger directly on the pulse of our world and its challenges for Christians.

I feel it an extremely and urgent problem and challenge for the International World and especially Christianity and its Believers. I feel it as one of the main challenge of today's world.

Let me come to an end. Beside AMI there is life too.

So let me show you some pictures of events important for me and my family and how we passed summer time.

- We took care for our grandchildren,
- We were with the older hiking in the mountains and visiting some attractions like this limestone cave,
- We started our next year of marriage,
- We rode our road bikes,
- I met my classmates of 1967,
- And we travelled in our region. On this picture you can see St. Andrews Church somewhere in the Weinviertel.

Let me come to the end.

I hope and wish that we all can assist and actively participate in an interesting General Assembly 2017. With these my words I conclude my report.

Thank you for your attention!