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FREEMASONRY UNDER THE NAZIS

(including Nazi occupied territories, their allies and fellow-travellers)

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INTRODUCTION

It is a sine qua non, or inevitability if you will, that Freemasonry cannot thrive or even survive in countries that deny their citizens freedom of speech and religion, freedom of association and ability to publish or disseminate ideas which are contrary to those of their rulers. It is, therefore, inconceivable that it could flourish in Nazi Germany, their occupied countries, Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy, Salazar's Portugal, the Emperor's Japan or Stalin's Russia for that matter.

This paper is intended to give you an idea of what happened to the brethren under the National Socialist (Nazi) regime. It is NOT a pretty story!! I must stress that it is not an essay on the "Jewish Question" (as the Nazis called it), the Holocaust or related subjects. That having been said it must be clearly appreciated that the Nazis and their adherents clearly and unequivocally associated Freemasonry with the Jews in a concocted, illogical and alleged conspiracy theory which attempted to prove they both intended to rule the world and oppose the Nazi party.(21) This is obviously ridiculous but it was perceived as such by Hitler and his thugs. You will hear more about this conspiracy theory later and see it occurring in other areas. It is said that one picture is better than 1000 words. This is amply illustrated by the French anti-semitic poster in your programme. The figure on the right is a Jew (who surprisingly is holding a bag of money shown as Pounds Sterling) and on the left is a Freemason with his apron – the

two obviously being linked together in the minds of the proponents of this conspiracy.

Just for starters it is estimated that many thousands of Freemasons perished by execution or ill-treatment in concentration camps both in Nazi Germany and their occupied and allied territories. Accurate numbers are elusive as many widely varying estimates exist and it depends on which one you espouse. For example- The Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) wrote recently “more than 200,000 Freemasons were sent to the gas chambers by Hitler as he saw Freemasonry as a threat”.(10). In “The Star” recently a muslim, strangely not a Holocaust denier, wrote that there were 80.000 Freemasons killed. Whatever the case it is sadly a large number. We cannot be sure, though, if they were killed just because they were Freemasons or because they were not only Freemasons but were also Jews, communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, members of the Resistance, “enemies of the party” or other “Untermenschen”(as they were classified along with gypsies, lunatics or people who were mentally or physically disabled).(12). Masonic concentration camp prisoners were graded as political prisoners and had to wear an inverted red triangle (with the point down) in contrast with the Jews who wore the Star of David.(20) (as shown in your programme).

The Judeo-Masonic Conspiracy Legend

Whilst anti-Semitism has been around for millennia, anti-Masonic activities first emerged in the 18th century. In 1738 Pope Clemens XII issued a bull “In Eminenti Apostulatos Specula”condemning Freemasonry and ordering that any Catholics who were members should be subject to excommunication.(20) This continued over the next two centuries as the Roman Catholic Church remained a rabid

opponent of Freemasonry. Pope Leo XII continued in 1884 in his encyclical "Humanum Genis" in which he branded Freemasonry as an enemy of religion and society. (13) It culminated in the papacy (from 1939) of Pope Pius XII (1876-1958) who was an enthusiastic supporter of the Nazi philosophy and their views on Freemasons and Jews. As a result he was known as "Hitler's Pope". In 1933 when he was Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli in Germany he entered into a "Concordat" with Hitler which muzzled political protest by his community in return for protection and emasculated the Catholic Centre Party which was the main opponent of the Nazis (and shortly after closed down).(3) One commentator said that he was "the most dangerous churchman in modern history". Perhaps one should reflect that, over sixty years later, a recent incumbent of the Vatican, -now retired- who himself is a product of the Hitler Jugend, contemplated beatifying or sanctifying Pius XII!! He referred to him fondly as "My Pope". This is a classic example of "Plus ca change, plus ca la meme chose"!

In 1797 Abbe Augustin Barruel published "Memoires pour servir a l'histoire du Jacobisme" and John Robinson, in the same year, "Proofs of a conspiracy.....carried on the meetings of freemasons". These were published independently of each other. (21) Many more were published in 1848 including an anonymous pamphlet entitled "Clarification of the Great Freemason Lie" in which the 1848 Revolution was attributed to influence by Jews. The conspiracy legend appeared several times in the 19th century, principally in Germany and France and a number of books were written on this subject. They usually included the archetype "Perfidious Freemasons" (21)

The most famous publication of this kind was the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion" which was an infamous Russian racialist forgery which

linked Jews and Freemasons in a conspiracy to control the world.(21) They were studied in German classrooms after the Nazis came to power. They were said to serve as the Nazi's "warrant for genocide". It was claimed to have been produced on the orders of the Russian Secret Service despite the objections of Tsar Nicholas II. (22) It was published world-wide and some think that Hitler used this as a basic manual for the Holocaust. Ironically the American publication in 1920 of 500,000 copies was financed by a Freemason, one Henry Ford, who was a rabid anti-semite and a strong supporter of Nazi ideals. I was told that when this became public, the film studios, many of which were owned by Jews, got together and arranged that in every film where there was a car crash or breakdown it was clearly shown as a Ford !

He eventually was ordered to apologise by a court in 1927 but later was given an important decoration by the Nazis for his continued support. His factories in Germany continued to supply their armed forces.

In 1919 a retired army officer, Muller von Hausen together with Theodor Fritsch in the "ReichsHammerbund" attacked "Weltfreimaurerei" meaning International Freemasonry, which was alleged to be dominated by Jews. It was a best-seller and maintained that Jews and Freemasons were responsible for Germany's defeat in 1918. The Treaty of Versailles, whilst being very controversial, had no input from or reference to Freemasonry but it was harsh and caused considerable resentment in the Weimar Republic. (21) It was referred to by General Jan Smuts, the South African delegate, as a Carthaginian Peace, equating it to the Romans after the Punic war of 201 BC when they stripped Carthage of its army and navy among many other impositions. He warned Lloyd George that "for the sake of the future Germans should not be made to sign at the point of a

bayonet” He was, of course, ignored and it was then signed but with no Masonic or Jewish input. This, naturally, was disputed by the Nazis. Not surprisingly the deposed Kaiser Wilhelm II, in exile, stated that his throne “had been stolen by Jews and Freemasons“!! (2) The conspiracy theory provided a facile explanation for Germany’s humiliating defeat in 1918 but this was kept alive long after Freemasonry was dead and buried there.

Before going any further it is necessary to outline the structure of German Freemasonry at the time that the Nazis emerged as a political force. Due to historical circumstances, understanding that Germany was not a united country until 1871, there were no fewer than nine regular Grand Lodges working in the country. There were no exclusive territorial restrictions. (21) Out of a population of about 63 million, Freemasons numbered about 82,000. They originated from French, English and Swedish antecedents and originally French was the lingua franca used. (21)

There were three Grand Lodges in Berlin called the “Old Prussians”, The Grand Mother Lodge of the Three Globes, The National Grand Land Lodge of Freemasons in Germany and the Grand Lodge of Prussia, called Friendship. They comprised about 75% of German Freemasons and were all very conservative and exclusively Christian. They owed their existence to Frederick the Great who gave them royal protection and privileges. He was a keen Freemason and all his successors but one were Freemasons which tradition finished with Wilhelm I. His son, Wilhelm II, was very antagonistic towards the Craft and was joined by Bismarck so the royal influence waned thereafter. Incidentally it was said that Frederick the Great’s command of German was worse than that of King George I’s command of

English! He preferred to speak French to his family even though his father did not approve.

There were six so-called Humanitarian Grand Lodges in Hamburg, Bayreuth, Dresden, Frankfurt, Darmstadt and Leipzig who were more liberal and admitted men of any religious denomination. They exchanged representatives with the UGLE and the Old Prussians were outraged about this and immediately withdrew their own representatives! (21)

As early as 1922 the Old Prussians withdrew from the German Grand Lodges' Alliance, founded in 1872, explaining that "There is a border which strongly differentiates humanitarian from Old Prussian National Freemasonry. We, the three Old Prussian Grand Lodges, refuse to take part in the general humanitarian fraternization movement between people in the world". Consequently relations between the two groups were very fractious and they were barely on speaking terms.

There was another Grand Lodge, which was very liberal and was not recognised by any of the others, The Freemasons' Federation of the Rising Sun which had, in 1925, 180 lodges and 3625 members. They were the basis of the Supreme Council, founded in 1930 and The Symbolic Grand Lodge which was constituted by the Dutch Supreme Council in 1930. (2)

The ultra-conservative National Union of German Officers stated that membership of Freemasonry was incompatible with a "correct patriotic attitude" and urged the Old Prussian Grand Lodges to eliminate "alien racial elements" and to wage a battle against Jewry.(21) They demanded of them, inter alia, to:

1. Abolish all international signs of recognition

2. Resign from all international Masonic bodies
3. Delete from the rituals any conceivable Old Testament or Hebrew connotations
4. Expel all Jews from their Lodges
5. Reject any "humanitarian" expressions
6. Eliminate any impression that Freemasonry seeks to establish a state within a state (21)

This nationalistic pressure was only incidentally anti-semitic but groups of so-called "volkisch" proponents were very influential. It is difficult to define "volkisch". Cassel's dictionary defines it as "national, pure German and anti-semitic". (21) Whatever the case it is part of an irrational, hyper-chauvinistic form of nationalism which defined the Nazi philosophy which arose during the 1914-18 war. The Land Grand Lodge summed it up by stating that "we can offer no fraternal hand to our Fatherland's enemy...we know that our enemies sit in English lodges" - now we know exactly where they stood! (21)

The membership of Masonic lodges in Germany at that time comprised mainly the middle-class and intellectuals. Senior civil servants, judges and magistrates, accountants, doctors, wealthy merchants, university professors and bankers were attracted to masonry as it was considered it to be advantageous and influential for their social and professional standing apart from the known superior moral standing of the masons. (2) The cost of membership virtually excluded the lower rungs of society so the middle class prevailed. Until the anti-masonic propaganda grew the military and the aristocracy were also involved but latterly they fell away under the pressure as did civil servants.

In his only reference to masonry in 'Mein Kampf', written in 1924, Hitler said that Freemasonry had "succumbed to the Jews and had become an excellent instrument for their aims and to use their strings to pull the upper strata of society into their alleged designs.... and the general pacifistic paralysis of the national instinct of self-preservation begun by Freemasonry is then transmitted to the masses of society by the press". (18) He also said "Our party must be an Order, the hierarchial Order of a secular priesthood. Ourselves or the Freemasons or the Church- there is room for one of the three and no more. We are the strongest of the three and shall get rid of the other two". (16) Strangely he did not ban Freemasonry in 1933 when he came to power but waited until 1935 to do so but he did give them a great deal of trouble in the meantime. (21) He was very antagonistic to the Weimar Republic whose Chancellor, Gustav Stresemann, was a Freemason. (2) Hitler said that Germany's participation in the League of Nations "delivered Germany to the Freemasons". (2)

In January 1933 the Supreme Council and the Symbolic Grand Lodge were convinced that their days were numbered so they dissolved forthwith. The Humanitarian Grand Lodges held out for a while, hoping that some sort of accommodation could be negotiated. They cooperated to the extent of removing Old Testament references in their rituals, excluding Jewish members and changing their names but in fact they signed their own death warrants.(21) They had a problem explaining why the reference to the fourth chapter of St. John (4.22) was not deleted from their ritual! It reads "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews"!!

The Hamburg Provincial Grand Lodge of Lower Saxony lost many members who were not permitted to join the party or retain their

jobs. In order to do so they were required to sign a declaration that they were no longer Freemasons. They formed a Grand Lodge of Germany in exile in Palestine. The Hamburg Grand Lodge became a charitable organisation “The German Order Registered Association.” They were regarded as being ‘perfectly respectable’ and survived in exile in Chile. The Grand Lodge of Beyreuth dissolved and founded a profane “Society for Culture and Knowledge” which excluded Jewish members. In 1932 a mother lodge circular stated “It unfortunately cannot be denied that the number of candidates seeking admission to our lodges has become very scanty. The reasons are very apparent.” i.e, Financial losses, reduced incomes, and job losses as they were not accepted into the Nazi Party (21)

An anomaly which has never been explained is that Hjalmar Schacht, the economics minister, was a “closet Grand Lodge Freemason”. Surely Hitler must have known about this? (2)

The Minister of Agriculture, Dr. Walter Darre, declared that “Freemasons are the arch enemies of the German peasantry” and “Planned to sabotage Nazi policies”. (18)

Some lodges sent their valuables out of the country but many of them were confiscated when the recipient countries were invaded. One lodge buried their artifacts which were recovered after the war by a group of English masons. Some lodges sold their buildings to unaffected businesses but the Nazis confiscated them when they found out.(18)

In the meantime, the Nazis invaded, looted and desecrated lodges all around the country. (11) In Berlin during a brownshirt parade masons were hauled through the streets in a cage like animals. Presumably they did not survive. (4) In Dusseldorf in 1933 five

storm-troopers in uniform invaded Lodge Zu den drei Verbundeten and demanded the lodge files. These were kept in a locked cupboard which they smashed open and removed all the papers. When asked for their identities they said “loaded pistols were their authority”. The lodge protested to the Prussian Ministry of the Interior but they, themselves, were no longer masters in their own house as the rule of law was rapidly ceasing to exist in Germany. To illustrate this, Hitler’s decree of 28 February 1933 reads:

“Articles 114-18, 123-4 and 153 of the Constitution of the German Reich are for the time being nullified. Consequently, curbs on personal liberty, on the right of free expression of opinion including freedom of the press, of association, and of assembly, surveillance over letters, telegrams and telephone communications, searches of homes and confiscation of as well as restrictions on property, are hereby permissible beyond the limits hitherto established by law.”(1&7)

Only fifteen years earlier in 1918 the communist martyr Rosa Luxemburg said “Without general elections, without unrestricted freedom of press and assembly, without a free struggle of opinion, life dies out in every public institution, becomes a mere semblance of life in which only the bureaucracy remains as the active element.....such condition must inevitably cause a brutalisation of public life”. (1)

Subsequent decades proved how right she was and what she said is still valid today.

Plundering of wealth from their enemies played a major role in the financial sustainability of the Third Reich. It was, in fact, a state-

sponsored campaign of grand larceny. Many lodges had substantial inventories of property and liquid assets. Some of their buildings were very grand and were beautifully furnished which was very tempting for the regime. The decree mentioned above suspended all rights and civil liberties which applied especially to “enemies of the state”. Dr. Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of the Interior, declared the lodges as “hostile to the state”. SA storm-troopers wearing civilian clothes invaded lodge premises ostensibly “to protect them from the enraged population”. (21)

In Mecklenberg, Schlesien, Königsberg and Schleswig-Holstein so-called “excesses” were committed against lodge buildings so the police took them over to prevent further attacks. In Königsberg twenty Gestapo officials spent six days reading every document, including mail as yet unopened, in the premises of Totenkopf und Phoenix Lodge. (21) In one lodge a portrait of Hitler hung between those of Kaiser Wilhelm I and King Friedrich II both of whom were portrayed in full Masonic regalia. The members found the Kaisers’ portraits turned to face the wall and there was a note saying “Beware of bringing our Führer between two Freemasons again”. The two portraits were subsequently stolen.

Another incident with a portrait occurred when the Grand Master of Lodge Munster presented a portrait of Field Marshal Blucher to General Bloomberg (a strong supporter of the Nazis) for his 40th birthday. Blucher was shown in full Masonic regalia which was then removed from the painting. A photograph of the original was sent to Rudolf Hess for his adjudication who was quite clear. It should have been confiscated and destroyed!

While not all lodges were wealthy some had valuable properties, large cash reserves, charitable funds, funeral funds, insurance

policies and even pension funds. Sales of the properties could and did realise large sums of money. Estimates of the value of the property looted from German lodges vary between 45 and 200 million Reichmarks!. (12) Some of the furniture was “given” to party members and others sold by public auction. At that time the exchange rate was about four Reichmarks to a Pound Sterling. Silverware was melted down and Masonic items sent to Goebbel’s “living museums of masonry” which were situated in Nuremberg, Hannover, Berlin, Dusseldorf, Erlangen and several other cities. They were open to the public so the citizens could see what awful people the masons were. (5) The confiscations were controlled by Himmler but apparently not much money went into the treasury. This policy extended to all countries under Nazi occupation and the loot sent to Germany.

Whilst the Nazi vultures swarmed all over the properties of lodges, it seems that, for some reason, they did not, generally, confiscate the property of individual Freemasons probably to avoid the masons becoming bitter or angry about this.(2)

Eventually the Humanitarian lodges went into voluntary liquidation but the Old Prussians held out hoping to be permitted to continue under new names and membership. Ellic Howe said in his seminal paper that they “played cat and mouse with what amounted to a corpse”. So it continued: Reinhard Heydrich said the masons, along with the Jews and the political clergy were the “most implacable enemies of the German race and must be rooted out”. (5)

The Prussians tried to contact Hitler, Goering, Frank and the Ministry of the Interior direct without any success. Eventually they did get to meet Hermann Goering. He banged on the table and shouted “You damned Schwein!! I need to throw you and your Jew-band in one

pot. There is no room for Freemasonry in the National Socialist State!" (18) In 1934 Dr. Wilhelm Frick, the Minister of the Interior, said rather menacingly "It is inappropriate that a secret society with obscure aims should continue to exist in the Third Reich. It is high time that the Freemason's lodges should disappear in Germany just as they have in Italy. If this is not realised in Masonic circles, I will soon help them in this direction". (21)

The Old Prussians selected Otto Bordes, a Berlin dentist and Grand Master of the Three Globes, a fervent supporter of Hitler, to represent them and he presented the excuse that they were Christian Orders and never admitted Jews. He wrote to Frick:

"Together with the whole German people we have suffered under the terrible 'war guilt lie' which the Versailles Treaty imposed on us. The brethren of the German Christian Orders have fought against this defamation. It is now our loss that the very party whose aims we share will banish us for the rest of our lives from the ranks of good Germans, and deny us the opportunity to prove that the reasons for this are groundless." He said "We are without redress and are being treated as second-class citizens." (21) He also reported to the Grand Masters that "Reich Chancellor Adolf Hitler has reserved the final decision about Freemasonry for himself.(18)

Initially these Grand Masters did not take the hint but now were beginning to be extremely nervous as there was conclusive evidence that the regime would not scruple to use terror when it suited their purpose. (21) They were very frightened despite their avowing that "We are no longer Freemasons" and saying "Make the way free for 20,000 patriotic men who feel the call to collaborate in the building of the National Socialist State". (Now only 20,000 – down from 57,000!!). Jointly the Grand Masters concluded that "the great

danger for us is not the regime will banish us but the party will destroy us".(21)

They were right and in May 1935 there was an order under the Enabling Act, 'Ermächtigungsgesetz' for the immediate dissolution of the three orders, confiscating their property and rendering Freemasons ineligible for public service or in the Wehrmacht.(18) Gestapo officers were present at the relevant meetings at which no discussion was allowed. (21) That was the end of Freemasonry in Germany until after the defeat of Hitler.

In 1943 Himmler claimed that espionage against Germany was carried out by Jews and Freemasons but by then they were no longer in existence as both groups had virtually been eliminated.

Freemasonry in German and other Prisoners of War camps

Bro. Keith Flynn in his book said there was evidence of Masonic activity in fourteen camps in Germany and also Austria, Czechoslovakia and Italy during the war.

In Stalag 383 In Hohenfeld in Bavaria the Nazis linked the publication of the installation of the Earl of Harewood as Grand Master in England as propaganda against Britain and the USA maintaining the both the King and the President were Freemasons. This was published by them but only stiffened the resolve of the brethren to continue their Masonic activities.

In Oflag VII the Nazis published a weekly newspaper "The Camp" to prove that Freemasonry was a political organisation backed by Jewry. The brethren responded by giving a talk explaining the true objectives of the Craft.

In 1943 in Emslandlager VII in Esterwegen, a concentration camp in Germany, seven Belgian Freemasons formed one of the very few new lodges in POW camps, the Loge Libertie Cherie. They held several meetings including initiations and a Catholic priest acted as tyler. They stopped working due to deaths, transfers, illness and harassment in 1944. Only two of the members survived the war after having been imprisoned in Oranienberg/Sachsenhausen concentration camp and being involved in the death march which resulted in thousands of deaths.(9)

Victims or collaborators?

Regular Freemasonry is universally opposed to discussion of politics or religion in lodges. Whilst there is no doubt that many well-known personalities who were masons were involved in revolutions and political and religious events, to my knowledge none of them acted in their capacity as masons but purely in their individual and private capacities. For instance, Winston Churchill, General Douglas McArthur, King Leopold I of Belgium, Simon Bolivar, Franklin Roosevelt, Salvador Allende of Chile, Harry Truman, Garibaldi, King Victor Emmanuel I of Italy and Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia and many others influenced their various political scenes without overtly doing so as Freemasons.(21)

It follows that a controversy exists concerning the role of Freemasons and Freemasonry in general during the Nazi regime. In questioning the actions of German freemasons in the 1930s, it is clear that there were both victims and collaborators amongst them. In Bro. Ellic Howe's authoritative paper "The Collapse of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany 1933-35", he dealt with this aspect quite fully. What I find fascinating is that his paper was due to be

published in *Ars Quatuor Coronati* volume 86 in 1973 but in a typewritten note on the advance copy he wrote "The UGL of England, for reasons best known to its 'Rulers of the Craft' has refused publication of this article". I join him in wondering why.(21) Did they fear to offend the German Grand Lodges with the truth and if so why? Perhaps they were worried that some lodges still had a hard core of Nazi sympathisers in their ranks? This is a mystery as it was eventually published in 1982 (AQC95). I just wonder what could have occurred to change their minds nine years later? We will never know. (7)

Dr Otto Bordes, claimed, in a letter to Nazi party headquarters, that the majority of their Order's members were in complete sympathy with the aims of the party. Richard Brose, Grand Master of the Grand Lodge in Hamburg said "We support our Reich Chancellor, Adolf Hitler." He also sent a personal letter to Hitler applauding his efforts. Comments erupted all round the country condemning Brose on the grounds that he had abused his office.

Bro Karl Busch of Bielefeld, a Gestapo informer, became a party member and started spying for the regime in 1933 and said he "helped to bring the lodge down".(2) Another informer was a 33rd degree mason of the Scottish Rite. Bro Paul Theodor Ott turned against his lodge 'Zu den Drei Golderen Schlussen' because they refused him a loan so he made a derogatory statement to the Gestapo against Freemasonry.

Among the many victims was the Grand Master of the SGvD, The Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, Leo Muffelmann, who repeatedly condemned National Socialism. He commented on Bro. Brose saying "How is it possible that someone who rose so high

can fall so low?" (2) Bro. Max Tucker said Brose's letter was 'grotesque'. Muffelmann was arrested with two founders of the Symbolic Grand Lodge and sent to the Sonnenberg concentration camp. He was released due to intervention by the Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the USA and left the country and went to Palestine.(19) He returned to Germany- a big mistake- but his time in the camp took its toll and he died in 1934 aged 54 from the brutal treatment he had received. One freemason in Uelgen committed suicide claiming that continual harassment was more than he could bear.

A mason in Lubeck, Walter Plessing, whose grandfather and father were also members of his lodge, Zum Fullhorn, resigned in order to join the party.(21) They rejected him and he committed suicide leaving a will in which he bequeathed his modest fortune to the Fuhrer. He left a letter in which he said, inter alia, "By what right can we who are alive be branded as traitors when the names of thousands of freemasons are recorded in the annals of German history....the party proves that we are to be treated as third-class Germans". (2)

Bro. Bruno Schuler from Westfalia resigned from his lodge and explained that he only joined to become a spy for Josef Wagner, Gauleiter of Westfalia.

The German Grand Lodges have been severely criticized for their inability to keep aloof from politics but often their involvement was basically involuntary.(25) Whatever their individual views, the brethren were under great pressure and undoubtedly there were many very frightened men amongst the masons in Germany. In some respects they are due some sympathy but it must be said that a number of them certainly acted directly contrary to regular

Masonic principles as we know them. There never will be a definitive view of this matter.

In 1938/9, paradoxically, Hitler granted an amnesty to all freemasons who had not risen above the third degree or who had not held high office in their lodges. They began to realise that the talents and expertise of the many qualified public servants were being missed. This was extended to the civil service provided they had previously resigned from their lodges. An SS report said “they are proving well suited to their jobs” but they were not allowed to be promoted or hold any acting rank in the Wehrmacht.

To sum up on Germany I quote US Supreme Court Justice Robert H Jackson, the chief prosecutor at the Nuremberg war crimes trials who said

“It is not generally understood that among the earliest and most savage of the many persecutions undertaken by every modern dictatorship are directed against the Free Masons.....Dictators realise that its membership are not likely to support the police state, which lays so heavy a hand on the freedom of the individual”. Q.E.D! (18)

The Blue Forget-me-Not Question: Das Vergissmeinnicht (8)

A fascinating story arose from the myth concerning German Freemasons wearing of this badge. In 1926 the Grand Lodge of Beyreuth commissioned a forget-me-not pin to be given to all delegates at their annual general meeting. In 1934 the Nazis promoted the so-called ‘Winterhilfwerk’ which was a street collection to raise money, ostensibly for charity to assist the indigent and poor in winter, but, in fact, the funds were used to finance re-armament. Their pins were used as a form of receipt

for the so-called 'voluntary' donations to this charity making the wearing of these pins highly advisable especially as they were changed every year to demonstrate to the party that they had contributed! Various designs were used in many parts of the country including the Forget-me-Not. They used the same factory in Selb, near Bayreuth, to produce them just as the masons had!
(17)

During the suppression of Freemasonry it was alleged that the brethren used this symbol as a means of recognition. In the following years some brethren of the Grand Lodge of Bayreuth who had kept in contact, despite their lodges being dissolved, used this little blue flower as a symbol of defiance claiming it to be jewellery which was permitted whereas any display of any tokens or symbols apart from that of the Nazi party being strictly forbidden.

The little blue flower later became well known and was soon wrongly perceived as the official Freemasons' badge in Germany. It was also widely used in other countries. My badge was given to me by a lodge in Toronto. The story became completely blown out of proportion as it was alleged that this symbol was used in the Nazi era by German Freemasons to identify themselves as brothers. It was also alleged that it was used in concentration camps. However nothing could be further from the truth as only the brethren in Bayreuth knew about this connection to Freemasonry. In any case nothing could have been more frightening for the brethren to make themselves identifiable to the Gestapo. Would you have worn one if you had been a mason at that time?(17)

Nazi Kultur (culture)

In the first three months of Nazi rule there were tumultuous changes in German cultural life, particularly amongst the musical fraternity.

A whole swathe of prominent musicians were forced out of work and many left the country. Amongst them were Fritz Busch, the distinguished conductor, Kurt Weill, Bruno Walter, producer Carl Ebert and the prominent Mozart scholar, Alfred Einstein.

Although Richard Wagner was a favourite of Hitler and was acknowledged to be the composer whose work and philosophy was closest to Nazi ideas, (some say he was the very first Nazi!), the Nazis wanted to raise Mozart to this level as an example of a 'Good German'.(24) They took one of his choruses from the opera 'Konig Thamos' and had it re-written as a nationalistic Hymn. Ironically the arranger was Max Friedlander, a scholar of Jewish descent, who, of course, received no credit for his work!

However they had a problem. Mozart was well known to have been a Freemason and his librettists were also tainted. Emmanuel Schikanader who wrote the text for the "Magic Flute", (generally regarded as a Masonic opera), was a Freemason and was regarded as "a product of the Jewish mindset" and Lorenzo da Ponte, who wrote many of his libretti, was an Italian Freemason with a Jewish background. This caused them considerable anguish which was never fully resolved,

Another problem for the Nazis was the Salzburg Festival which opened in 1920 and was devoted to performing Mozart's works. The party considered that this was an anti-Nazi organisation controlled by Jews. (24)

Additionally relations with Austria were chilly as the Austrians had banned the Nazi party there and from 1933-1937 the German

government actively discouraged their citizens from attending. They refused to allow German musicians to participate and in 1933 imposed a tax of 1,000 Reichmarks on any German wanting to visit Salzburg. (24) They arranged a competing festival in Wurzburg.

They initiated the idea to translate all of Mozart's Italian libretti into German but unfortunately for them the most accepted available versions were written by Alfred Einstein who was Jewish. To overcome this they commissioned a number of "Aryan" versions but the Magic Flute was still regarded as a Freemasonic opera. But Baldur von Schirach said "Anyone who calls Die Zauberflöte a Masonic opera is not taken seriously by our people". Of course the "Aryan" versions were amended to remove any possible Masonic connotations.

This lunacy was given a further dimension in Mathilde Ludendorff's book "Der ungesühnte Freve an Luther, Lessing, Mozart and Schiller" (The unatoned crime against Luther, Lessing, Mozart and Schiller.) She asserted that Mozart's death was due to poisoning by the masons! By 1936 55,000 copies had been published!

She, of course, was the wife of General Erich Ludendorff who was also a bitter opponent of Freemasonry (and allegedly senile) who wrote a book in 1927 entitled "The Destruction of Freemasonry through the disclosure of its secrets." (21) Sales of this book were enormous and the 23rd edition was published in 1939. (18) She was subsequently denounced by Goebbels as the Fuhrer objected to her writings. In 1937 at the Nuremberg party rally Hitler said "The great artwork (The Magic Flute) bears in itself an absolute value....only a disrespectful man would condemn Mozart's Zauberflöte"

The enmity between the two German-speaking countries continued with many acts of sabotage following. Bruno Walter was dismissed

in 1933 as conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra but continued to appear in Salzburg where he was very popular. He was silent about his views of the Nazis but the great conductor Arturo Toscanini was not. He personally cabled Hitler to condemn the regime's anti-semitic policies. He then resigned and refused to take any further part in the Salzburg Festival.(24) After the "Anschluss" in 1938 when the Nazis took over Austria, Walter left along with Fritz Busch, Carl Ebert, Adolf Busch, Rudolf Bing and many other prominent musicians and took up residence in England where some of them collaborated with John Christie to establish the Glyndebourne Festival. The Nazis then assumed full control of the Festival and its participant musicians and singers. (24)

I would now like to discuss the situation in Nazi occupied territories and their Axis allies

I will start with GREAT BRITAIN not because the Nazis occupied the country but if they had done so, they intended to persecute and murder the Freemasons (and the 'usual suspects') there. In 1940 the S.S. published a 'Black Book', the " Sonderfahndungsliste GB" which was a list of prominent figures, institutions and organisations to be arrested or occupied after a successful Nazi invasion of Britain. Several Masonic bodies and lodges were listed in this book.(10)

It must be remembered that there were a number of prominent fascist supporters and appeasers of Germany in Britain at the time, led by the Cliveden Set which met at the home of Nancy, Lady Astor and included senior politicians, influential business executives, newspaper editors, including Geoffrey Dawson of "The Times" and Montague Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England and one of their directors Frank Cyril Tiarks. They were also allied with the Anglo-German Fellowship who strangely included in their membership the communist spies Guy Burgess and Kim Philby (presumably to disguise their left wing leanings). They were grossly pro-Nazi and anti-semitic and were vehemently attacked and eventually shamed and silenced by Winston Churchill. Another of this scum was Sir Oswald Moseley the British Fascist leader who was married, in Goebbel's home with Hitler present, to Diana Mitford (the "most hated woman in England" at that time). Her fascist sisters were well known to be sympathetic to the Nazis.

The Channel Islands

In 1939 Jersey had a number of lodges and the main lodge room was large enough to seat 150 in comfort. It had beautiful furnishings. In 1940 the Germans invaded this, the only British territory to be occupied by them. All meetings were suspended by arrangement with the Germans and, as agreed with them, everything was left in place provided the building was locked up. However, naturally, the Nazis betrayed them and sent in some SS 'wreckers' from Berlin who sacked the temple in January 1941 and confiscated and shipped all materials including the valuable library to Germany for their anti-masonic exhibitions. This was the oldest masonic library in Britain preceding that of Grand Lodge by six

years.(6) Specially trained Gestapo agents systematically destroyed and made a bonfire of everything there that was left.

(25) The main temple was converted into a wine store. In 1941 the German Commandant, Colonel Schumacher, was seen with the chequered carpet rolled up and tied to the roof of his car! He then shipped it to Germany.

Guernsey was similarly treated and Alderney was converted into a forced labour camp.

In 1945 the Germans surrendered and some artifacts were found in the Offenbach Archival Depot and returned but a great deal was missing and was never recovered.

Austria

In 1934 a young sergeant in Heydrich's Sicherheitsdienst (SS), Adolf Eichmann, was given the rather menial job of typing index cards listing all prominent freemasons. His work led to the "Jewish Question" and developed his expertise on that subject. We all know what that lead to!!

Due to the social emancipation of the Jews at that time, many of them joined masonry and it is estimated that three-quarters of the 1200 masons in Vienna at that time were Jewish. (24) However the majority Roman Catholic community were antipathetic to Freemasons.

In 1938 the Grand Lodge in Vienna was plundered by a mob destroying the archives. The Grand Master, Dr. Richard Schlesinger, was arrested and died shortly after his release as a result of brutal treatment. 90% of the masons including the masters of the various Vienna lodges were either shot or sent to the living hell of the Dachau concentration camp. (11) Hundreds of

Freemasons were sent to concentration camps and many died there but the exact number is difficult to determine. Some also fled abroad. All lodges were looted and closed.

Hungary

In 1919 Bela Kun took power and all Masonic lodges were vandalised and closed and their contents confiscated. In 1920 a decree outlawed Freemasonry and this continued when the Nazis and later the communists took over. They described the lodges as “meeting places of the enemies of the people’s democratic republic, of capitalist elements and of the adherents of western imperialism”. (20)

Italy

In 1923 Mussolini decreed that fascists who were also Freemasons must decide between the two. There followed a period of violence against masons and destruction of their property. The Grande Oriente continued until 1925 but persecution increased and some leading masons were assassinated. In 1926 the government appropriated the Grande Oriente building which had already been looted. General Cappello who was a prominent fascist and who had been Deputy Grand Master of the Grande Oriente decided to give up fascism. For his trouble he was arrested on a trumped up charge and sentenced to thirty years imprisonment. (20)

Blackshirt strong-arm gangs looted the homes of masons in Milan, Florence and other cities and murdered at least 100 of them.

Domizio Torrigiani, the Grand Master of the Grande Oriente who had protested against the violence was tried in a secret court and exiled to the Lipari Islands to starve to death. (11) He went blind and died soon afterwards. Several other prominent masons shared his fate. In 1940 Giovanni Preziosi was appointed By

Mussolini as Inspector-General of Race. He asserted that Italy was in the hands of Freemasons acting for the Jews despite the fact that there were no more Freemasons (or Jews) there by then! In 1945 he committed suicide to avoid being killed by the mob!

The Nazis congratulated Mussolini for his anti-masonic activities.

It is interesting to note that Lucio Gelli, the grand master of the clandestine, irregular and infamous P2 Lodge was an intelligence officer with the Hermann Goering Division in the Wehrmacht during the war.

France

When France was invaded in 1940 the Socialist President of the Council of the Grand Orient, Arthur Groussier, wrote to the Prime Minister, Paul Reynaud, assuring him of his full support. This was not universally accepted by the Masonic fraternity. The Germans confiscated Masonic property, looted lodge funds, imprisoned many masons and shot a large number. They confiscated the Grand Orient's extensive Masonic library and took it to Berlin where it was burned. (4)

When Marshal Petain took power in the puppet Vichy government he was regarded by many of the French as 'un capitularde' who preferred capitulation to the Germans rather than fighting them. They were certainly active collaborators and purged the civil service of 'anti-national' elements namely Freemasons, communists and Jews. Paxton said that they were not a nation of resisters but a nation of collaborators. After the war Petain was convicted of treason and sentenced to death. His sentence was commuted by De Gaulle to solitary confinement for life in prison. He later died just after being released on health grounds. His

commander-in-chief, Maxime Weygand, issued a statement against freemasonry and Petain issued a decree suppressing "secret societies". Both of them were virulently anti-masonic (and of course anti-semitic). The chairman of the Service for Secret Societies, Bernard Fay, was a fervent supporter of theirs and was an active collaborator with the Germans. Petain wrote to him telling him that "Freemasonry is chiefly responsible for our misfortunes" and that "Freemasons are worse than the Jews". Fay (and Laval) caused the arrest and deportation of about 1000 masons and the death of at least another 1000. (18) After the war he fled to Switzerland to escape a long prison sentence when he was convicted of treason.

An interesting side issue was the participation of the United States ambassador to the U.K., one Joseph Kennedy, (whose son later became President). He was a Nazi supporter and arranged to meet Goering in Vichy. He donated a "considerable amount of money" to the German cause.

Many freemasons were active in the Resistance and of 50,000 freemasons in France, 6000 were arrested, 989 sent to concentration camps and 545 executed or died in German camps. Jean Moulin, a resistance hero, was tortured and died at the hands of the Gestapo in Lyons and Eduard Ignace Engel, Master of the Goethe Lodge, was arrested and executed in Buchenwald in 1943. The Nazi sympathisers there stated that "the hour has come when Free Masonry must be struck down. A struggle to the death has been begun against it and the national forces must now fight without truce or respite". And they did! (21)

Netherlands

In 1940 after the German invasion, Masonic buildings, archives and funds were confiscated including the golden hammer of the Grand East and their valuable library. (2) The hammer of pure gold was valued at 3000 Reichsmarks. The library "Biblioteca Klossiana" was in 470 crates and was purchased by Prince Hendrik and presented to the Grand East about 1900.

Freemasons in the USA had offered five million dollars for this library. Other masonic items were either destroyed or sold at auction. Their Grand Master, Hermanus van Tongeren, was arrested and kept for six months in an Amsterdam jail before being sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp where he died of exhaustion in 1941. In 1939 there were about 4100 masons in the country and many were imprisoned and died in German and Japanese camps. Many did not survive but the exact number is difficult to assess.

Belgium

The Nazis believed that the Belgians were related racially with the Germans and so imposed a relatively soft occupation. They closed all lodges in 1941. (18). One of the officials of the SS assigned to deal with Freemasonry actually apologised to his superior officer for delaying action against the Jews as all his efforts were concentrated on fighting Freemasonry! About 112 Belgian masons were recorded as having died in concentration camps during the war. Raoul Engel, Past Grand Master of the Belgian Grand Lodge and Georges Petre, Grand Master of the Scottish Rite, were among twelve elderly 33rd Degree Masons murdered.

Apparently there was some Masonic activity in concentration camps there. There were two lodges which collaborated with the German sponsored Masonic League which was responsible for murdering some masons even though they were all old men.

Norway

When Norway was invaded in 1940 the Masonic temple in Oslo was converted to an army barracks and the order dissolved. Major Vidkun Quisling, the Nazi collaborator, had Freemasonry as point no. 1 for action on his agenda and emptied Masonic buildings and destroyed some of them. The main Temple in Oslo was converted to officers' quarters but, according to one brother who visited it recently, amazingly it was not vandalised -- the only one in Europe known to have been left untouched by the Nazis. A number of masons were murdered. When he was tried after the war his trial, ironically, took place in a former Masonic temple before he was convicted and shot. (4)

Romania, Bulgaria, Denmark and Poland

Their puppet governments prohibited Freemasonry which was quite active at the time, to prove their subservience to the Nazis and carried out suppression, confiscation, imprisonment, torture and execution of masons. All lodges were closed. (4)

Yugoslavia

When war broke out masonry was dissolved by decree and its property confiscated. Its members were dismissed from public service and many masons imprisoned. Two university professors were shot for belonging to Freemasonry.

Czechoslovakia

There were two Grand Lodges there, one of which was largely Jewish and German-speaking (about 5000 members) and the other Czech-speaking (about 500 members}. When the Germans invaded they produced a list of 3-4,000 alleged freemasons and many were arrested and sent to concentration camps. (11) A number of them were in the Resistance and paid for this with their lives. Dr J Sedmik and Dr V Glavac were tortured for two years and then killed. Less than 5% of freemasons escaped, some finding exile in England where they formed a Grand Lodge Comenius in Exile. Some of them belonged to the Mozart Lodge in London which I have visited.

Greece

During the Nazi occupation all Greek Masonic lodges were closed and archives destroyed and many masons shot. Hundreds of masons were arrested and some Grand Lodge officers committed suicide after torture. The Chief Rabbi of Salonika, Dr.Zvi Koretz, was imprisoned for nearly a year not because he was Jewish but because he was accused of being involved in a Masonic conspiracy. He was subsequently released and they attempted, unsuccessfully, to use him for propaganda purposes. The Jewish population of Salonika was very large (estimated to be about 60% of the total population) and some of them were masons but most did not survive the German concentration camps. Their numbers are unknown as all the records were destroyed.

Japan

Although Jews were completely unknown there, the Judeo-Masonic conspiracy was used to suppress Freemasonry and one Japanese delegate to a world conference in 1938 said “Judeo-Masonry is forcing the Chinese to attack Japan. Japan is not at war with China but with freemasonry, represented by Chiang-Kai-Shek the successor to his master, the Freemason Sun-Yet-Sen”

In all Japanese controlled territories Freemasons' lodges were closed, buildings destroyed and the Freemasons were even more brutally treated than other POWs. Deprivation, hunger, disease, torture and executions were common.(4) Despite this in 1942 forty-seven masons met in the infamous Changi Jail with a multitude of 'assistant tylers' to warn of any approaching Japs. Many did not survive and they had to suspend activities in 1944.

Communist and Muslim states

Freemasonry is banned wherever communists rule with one exception- Cuba.

It was said that when Castro was on the run he took refuge in a Masonic temple and so he never banned them. Today there are 116 lodges there with 29,000 members who work with government approval and, of course, strict supervision.(14)

In Russia Freemasonry had been prohibited throughout the 19th century and they continued with this policy after the 1917 revolution. They confiscated and sent to Moscow a number of Masonic documents and other items captured when they over-ran Germany. I believe they still retain them .

Freemasonry is illegal in most Islamic countries. Turkey, Lebanon and Morocco were the exceptions. Spanish masons used to go to Morocco to conduct their meetings

Portugal

Salazar suppressed Freemasonry in 1931 and lodge doors were sealed. The Grand Master, John Martin de Matos, was “secretly” imprisoned in a hospital “for his health”. Masonry ceased to exist in Portugal.(21)

SPAIN

I HAVE LEFT THE WORST FOR THE LAST!! - Spain- where unbridled butchery occurred.

In 1928 there were two Grand Lodges in Spain, the Grand Orient and the Grand Lodge Espanola. The Grand Orient was closed and many masons arrested allegedly for plotting against the government. The Grand Master and five other senior masons were imprisoned.

Although General Franco was a fascist and completely in league with the Nazis, he was clever enough to avoid becoming directly involved in the war. He was, though, virulently anti-Masonic and wrote a number of articles, (said to number about 50), under an assumed name, depicting Freemasonry in the worst possible terms. It is alleged that he was refused membership of a lodge in North Africa of which his brother was a member which sparked his anti-masonic views. (15) He established a Judeo-Masonic section of Military Intelligence for the “punishment of enemies of the government”.

This was part of the alleged “Judeo-Masonic-Bolshevik conspiracy” called Contubernio , a theory very similar to that promoted by the Nazis. (15) This was supported by the Catholic Church. (15) There were very few Jews in Spain at that time but they took the blame nevertheless.

Following his military coup in 1936 many Freemasons were arrested and summarily executed.(15) The Falangist Primo de Rivera believed that violence was legitimate against Jews and Freemasons. Death squads were rampant in every town in Spain. (20) Although there were only about 5,000 masons in Spain they produced a list of 80,000 suspected masons. The result was horrific. Simple accusations were enough for torture, imprisonment and execution. The slightest suspicion of being a mason resulted in a certain visit to a firing squad if not long terms of imprisonment. In Madrid General de Benito ordered the immediate execution of all Freemasons including the Mayor. Masonic buildings were destroyed in Cordoba and Tenerife and others were shelled by artillery. In Salamanca thirty members of a lodge were shot including a priest. Fifteen masons were shot in Logrono, seventeen in Cuala, thirty–three in Algeciras, and thirty in Valladolid including the civil governor. (20) In Malaga eighty masons were garrotted to death. In Lugo, Zamora, and Cadiz many more were killed and in Granada masons were marched out of the city and killed after digging their own graves. Many masons were arrested and shot around the country. Franco said “We have to extirpate these evils from our land”.

In 1939 Franco officially outlawed Freemasonry and condemned any Freemasons that survived to ten years imprisonment. In 1940 a special military court was created to suppress Freemasonry. About 2000 men were imprisoned for up to 30 years.(This was only repealed in 1963!!)

All this to eliminate all communists, anarchists and Freemasons!!
(15)

Postscript

In conclusion, having related the awful degradation of their brutality and inhumanity to man I conclude with quotations which came from the Nazis themselves.

In 1938 Hitler's publishing house issued "Freemasonry, its world view and organisation and policies" (Weltanschauung) written by Dieter Schwarz with a preface by Reinhard Heydrich, who was second-in-command of the Gestapo. Heydrich wrote:

"Nordic is the Nazi conception of the world. Jewish-Oriental that of the Freemasons in contrast to the anti-racial attitude of the lodges the Nazi attitude is race-conscious"(11)

Also:

"Masonic lodges are associations of men who, closely bound together in a union employing symbolical usages, represent a supra-national spiritual movement, the idea of Humanity.....a general association of mankind, without distinction of race, peoples, religion, or social and political convictions" (11)

Although this was written by a vicious enemy, it is a very graphic and accurate description of the purpose, value and importance of Freemasonry in the world. It is almost unbelievable to think that it could come from one of these evil and brutal thugs!!

I did tell you that it was not a pretty story!! But I think it needed telling.

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