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GERMAN FREEMASONRY AND ITS ATTITUDES TOWARD THE NAZI REGIME
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This paper is not, in any way, written against Germany or German Freemasonry. On the contrary, it is meant as an expression of gratitude toward a handful of German brethren who, in my eyes, saved the honour of German Freemasonry during the most difficult period of its history, and as a contribution to a better understanding between Masons. Although arrested in Paris 1943 by the Gestapo as a twelve-year old Frenchman, I chose to live in Germany since 1960. I was made a Mason in 1963 and belonged from 1977 to 1991 to the jurisdictions of the United Grand Lodges of Germany and to that of the German Supreme Council.

Some ten years ago, the question of ascertaining the responsibilities for Hitler's accession to power was brilliantly analyzed by Barbro Eberan in *Luther ? Friedrich «der Große» ? Wagner ? Nietzsche ? ... ? ... ? Wer war an Hitler schuld ?*, a thesis submitted in Stockholm. It showed that many years after the end of the Second World War, the history of Germany under the Nazi regime remained a difficult theme to approach. After 1945, it took Germany thirteen years of efforts to achieve its masonic unity, which was completed in 1958 with the foundation of the United Grand Lodges of Germany (Vereinigte Grosslogen von Deutschland). However Germany's masonic history after 1918 was so sensitive that very few brethren dared to tackle it. The task was not only a difficult one for reasons related to the different traditions of various German Grand Lodges, founded over a period of 200 years. What made it almost hopeless was the attitudes of these Grand Lodges toward Hitler and the National Socialist regime. A remarkable book of 300 pages published in December 1962 by Friedrich John Böttner, *Zersplitterung und Einigung*, described how German Grand Lodges were founded from the start and how they managed to get united in 1958, but it devoted one single page to the years 1930-1945. In *Freimaurer in Deutschland*, printed in 1964, Manfred Steffens was the first German Brother bold enough to quote from masonic documents issued during the 1930s. Fifteen years later, *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus*, a thesis of nearly 700 pages, was written by a non-mason, Helmut Neuberger, who dedicated it to our mutual friend Fritz Bolle (1908-1982), an active member of the German Supreme Council and the Editor of its bimonthly magazine, *Eleusis*. Neuberger's book included many unknown 'hot' masonic documents whose authenticity was never questioned. German brethren realized so well the quality of Neuberger's essential research that his two volumes were published in 1980 by the masonic Bauhütten Verlag.

GERMANY'S GRAND LODGES UP TO 1930

At the beginning of 1930, Germany comprised some 75,000 Masons and nine regular Grand Lodges, the numerical importance of which was very different (see Table 1). About two-thirds of the brethren belonged to the three oldest, always Christian-oriented and at that time strongly nationalistic Grand Lodges founded in the 18th century which were called 'Old Prussian' because they were founded and had their seats in Berlin. They never initiated 'non-Christians', the then usual expression to designate Jews. Along the 19th century, five more German Grand Lodges were founded and a further one in 1924. They were called 'humanitarian' and initiated men of any religious denomination (see Table 2). In 1922, the Old Prussian Grand Lodges decided to withdraw from the German Grand Lodges' Alliance founded in 1872, explaining: « *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.* » (Steffens, p. 332)

(+) Figures from van Dalen, 1930 and 1932 editions, except for Rising Sun.

(*) Royal York of Friendship initiated "non-Christians" between 1872 and 1924.

(§) Dates from Böttner, p. 113.

Some brethren believe that there was only one type of German Freemasonry which was indifferently persecuted by Hitler. In fact, several masonic spiritual families existed side by side in Germany, which reacted and were treated differently by the Nazis. In 1994, Melzer stressed the fact that men like Kurt Tucholsky (1890-1935), or Carl von Ossietzky (1889-1938), who received the Nobel-Prize for Peace in 1935, are often cited as famous German Freemasons of that period, but that it is seldom mentioned that they both belonged to the FzaS (Masonic Union of the Rising Sun) founded in 1907, which German and most foreign Grand Lodges termed 'irregular' (for an English appreciation of the FzaS, see Jowett). Melzer also remarked that the name and deeds of one of the most remarkable brethren of that time, Leo Müffelmann, tend to be slowly forgotten.

SUPREME COUNCIL, SYMBOLIC GRAND LODGE, AND THE NAZIS

Ede [Edward] Janos Byng and Leo Müffelmann received the 33° from the Supreme Council of Austria, November 29th, 1929. On February 10th, 1930, they founded in Berlin the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite for Germany. Byng (1894-1962), its first Grand Commander, was a thirty-six years old journalist, born in Budapest, who worked in Berlin as correspondent of the New York Herald Tribune since 1921, then for United Press. At the beginning of World War II, he left for Zurich and went afterwards to the United States where he was naturalized an American citizen, April 14th, 1947 (see Richert). Müffelmann (1881-1934), his Lieutenant Grand Commander, was a German Dr. in philosophy born in Rostock. The Supreme Council for Germany was installed by the Supreme Council of the Netherlands, April 18th, 1930. The contemporary report of the Dutch Grand Secretary Nieuwenhuis, 33°, ended with the following description of the spirit of its founding members: « *Summing up the impressions of all we lived, heard and saw [during the days we spent in Berlin], we are convinced that serious and honorable men have begun to fight with enthusiasm, good will, energy and self-confidence, against the nationalistic, dogmatic-Christian spirit in German Freemasonry. They are determined to fight to the end until they succeed, even if their success lies possibly hidden in a distant future.* » In June 1930, some 600 members separated from the Masonic Alliance of the Rising Sun and were regularized by the Grand Lodge of France. On July 26th, 1930, in Hamburg, they founded the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany. Its first Grand Master was Leo Müffelmann who resigned his office in the Supreme Council shortly afterwards.

>From October 1930 to March 1933, the Symbolic Grand Lodge published a monthly magazine, *Die alten Pflichten* (The old Charges). Grand Master Müffelmann wrote in its November 1931 issue: « *The present aim of true Freemasonry is to fight against Bolshevism, Fascism and National Socialism. In spite of all contradictions, Freemasonry stays here side by side with the Roman Catholic church as fighter for individual freedom, for humanity and mankind [...] The fight has begun. The common defense of the Western civilization is at stake* ». In the February 1932 issue, he wrote: «*Discussions within the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany resulted in a completely unanimous position against National Socialism. National Socialism is the enemy of Freemasonry. Freemasonry fights and must fight against National Socialism.* »

In the March 1933 issue, the last one to be printed in Germany, the Symbolic Grand Lodge announced that on March 28th, it had resolved to become dormant. That issue also included the text of a resolution in support of Hitler, adopted toward the end of March by the National Mother-Lodge, The Three Globes. It was followed by an article from the *Nationale Zeitung*, Essen, dated March 30, 1933, declaring: « *The Grand Lodge of Saxony [at Dresden] sent a telegram expressing its faithful support to Dr. Goebbels. The three [Berlin] Grand Lodges even sent a congratulatory address to the Reich chancellor Hitler. [...] Such addresses will land by us where they belong proper* » words which, at best, likely meant the waste-basket. On March 31st, 1933, the Supreme Council also resolved to become dormant. On his return from a trip to London, September 5th, 1933, Bro. Müffelmann was arrested by the Gestapo and brutally interrogated during four weeks, after which he was detained in the concentration camp of Sonnenburg, together with Bro. Fritz Bensch, his successor as Lieutenant Grand Commander, and Bro. Raoul Koner, another founding member of the Supreme Council, who were both arrested on August 28th. All three were set free in November, most likely because Ill. Bro. Cowles, the then Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States, had intervened in their favour (see Annex). Fritz Bensch was taken prisoner by the Russians and died in Berlin, August 28th, 1945. Raoul Koner died March 29th, 1977. I met him personally. He was a great friend of France.

The Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile was founded in Palestine by two local lodges, November 15th, 1933. Bro. Müffelmann went to Palestine in March 1934, founded a third lodge and, herewith intending to assure the perennality of the Supreme Council for Germany, elevated four brethren to the 33°. One of them was Bro. Propper to whom, on April 24th, Bro. Müffelmann delivered the appropriate patent. Its wording showed that in June 1933, Bro. Müffelmann had been named commissary Grand Commander (I unearthed a copy of that patent about 1980 in the archives of the German Supreme Council. Its existence and the facts it disclosed were hitherto unknown). Against the advice of his brethren, he returned to Germany where he died aged fifty-three, August 24th, 1934, from the sequels of bad treatments inflicted on him by the Gestapo.

OTHER GERMAN MASONIC BODIES AND THE NAZIS

A pamphlet (*Denkschrift zur Klarstellung des Verhältnisses der Grossen National-Mutterloge [...]*, present writer's archives) privately printed in 1951 by the Grand National Mother-Lodge of the Three Globes, shows what was then its attitude toward its recent past: The pure working of the Mother-Lodge of the Three Globes was disturbed by the National Socialists' assumption of power on January 30th, 1933. The Grand Lodges working in Germany dissolved under the pressure of circumstances, with the exceptions of the Grand National Mother-Lodge, of the Grand National Lodge, and of Royal York. These three Grand Lodges, called Old Prussian, relying on their old rights, attempted to keep on existing. However the ideology of National Socialism found an echo even in the ranks of the brethren, which manifested itself in the activity of Bro. Bordes, Master of the military Lodge 'Star of Brabant', and in that of daughter-lodges of the western part of Germany which created the Bielefelder and Wetzlarer Circles. This resulted in Bro. Bordes being elected Grand Master by a majority of Grand Lodge members from western Germany, present at the general assembly held on April 9th, 1933 [...]. Bro. Bordes, a follower of Hitler, was fascinated by National Socialism. In 1970, for the 200th anniversary of its foundation, the Grand Land Lodge issued *Zur Geschichte der Grossen Landesloge der Freimaurer von Deutschland zu Berlin 1920-1970*, a book of 300 pages sketching separately the existence of each body which belonged to its hierarchical pyramid, namely the Grand Chapter of the Order, eleven Chapters, six Provincial Lodges, twenty-one St. Andrews' Lodges and seventy-five St. Johns Lodges. One had to read the book carefully to find out, page 17, that on April 23d, 1933, « *a gloomy day in the history of the Order* », the Grand Lodge Assembly adopted a decree of the "highest section of the Order" changing its name into "*National-Christian Order*", a decision commented thus: « *One should not condemn lightly the brethren who took that decision* », described page 5 as « *the last desperate attempt to save the Order* ». On page 5, a few words mentioned without details that under the government of OrdensXMeister Friedrich Bolle «*rituals and catechisms were revised anew* ». Since the reader is told, page 7 that twenty-eight brethren who received the VIIIth and IXth degrees of the Order on July 11th, 1935, asked to receive them a second time in 1948, they may have questioned the validity of the 'revised' rituals. Excerpts of a circular letter issued in March 1940 by the same OrdensXMeister are quoted page 40: « *During its existence, the Order never was in opposition with the ideology [Weltanschauung] of our nation* ». However, the book does not mention that in 1954, the Grand Land Lodge expressed its "regrets" for its "deviations from masonic basic principles", a declaration reproduced by Steffens, page 531.

In 1990, The Three Globes published *250 Jahre Grosse National-Mutterloge*, a 500 pages book covering all of its history. It included some documents issued in 1933, when it decided to change its original name into that of National-Christian Order Frederick the Great, and reproduced (p. 56) excerpts of the General Principles of the new Order, drawn up in April 1933, which however had already been disclosed by Neuberger (vol. II, p. 296): *Although our Order originated historically with the masonic Grand National Mother-Lodge of the Three Globes founded by Frederick the Great, the following points differentiates us from Freemasonry:*

1. *The rejection of any ties with foreign bodies.*
2. *The rejection of any member within our ranks who is not of German origin.*

3. *The rejection of secrecy concerning the custom and fixtures of our Order.*
4. *The rejection of everything un-German in the symbolic cult of our Order.*

April 12, 1933, three days after his election as Grand Master of the National-Christian Order Frederick the Great, Dr. Bordes sent a letter to the direction of the National Socialist party in Munich in which he wrote: «[...] *During its almost two hundred years of existence, our Order has constantly refused to admit Jews, and their request for admission was constantly rejected [...] we believe that there can be no reasons now to refuse the admission of our members into the National Socialist party. We are not Freemasons ! Open the doors to 20,000 patriotically-minded men who wish to take part in the edification of the National Socialist country.*»

(Neuberger, vol. II, pp. 304-306. Partly quoted in Howe, p. 31)

On the same day, Dr. Bordes sent a circular letter '*To all previous members of the former Grand Lodge*', which included the following: « *We are not Freemasons anymore. This must be said immediately by each member of the Order to every person who is not. [...] For the time being, changes in the rituals of the first four degrees consist in the following: the words Tubalkain, Schiboeth, Acacia are stricken out. The words Jakin, Boas, M.B., Jehovah, are replaced (until further) with Light, People, He lives in the Son, Faith. [...] In the Master's legend, Solomon's Temple is replaced with The German Cathedral, and Hiram with The Architect. [...]* » (Neuberger, vol. II, pp. 309)

These "rituals", approved in September-October 1933, were printed for the use of the National-Christian Order Frederick the Great as well as for that of the German-Christian Order of Friendship, the new name which the Grand Lodge Royal York of Friendship decided to take. (However Nazi authorities declined to acknowledge the new names of both Grand Lodges, see Neuberger, vol. II, p. 90). Their respective Grand Masters declared in writing, January 31st, 1934, that the Gestapo assured them that nothing would be attempted either against the three Old Prussian Grand Lodges or their members, a declaration which ended with: « *We support our Reich chancellor Adolf Hitler*» (Steffens, p. 530).

In various letters sent to Hitler, Rosenberg and others, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Hamburg, Richard Bröse, tried without success to convince his correspondents of the loyalty of his Grand Lodge toward the Nazi regime (Steffens, p. 376. Neuberger, vol. II, p. 75). Toward the middle of April 1933, the Grand Lodge of Hamburg dissolved and transformed itself into a charitable organization, the 'German Order Registered Association' whose statutes comprised a paragraph excluding Jewish members (Neuberger, vol. II, p. 73). On April 12th, 1933, the Grand Lodge of Bayreuth called upon its members to keep on meeting. Six days later, it decided to dissolve and founded a profane 'Society for Culture and Knowledge' whose statutes also included a paragraph excluding Jewish members. However, its Deputy Grand Master called upon the lodges to join one of the German-Christian Orders, which, it seems, only a few lodges actually did (Neuberger, vol. II, p. 75). The three Old Prussian Grand Lodges - or German-Christian Orders - were compelled to dissolve, July 16th, 1935. The Dresden and Leipzig Grand Lodges, after having also adopted German-Christian Orders' names, had to do the same, August 10th, 1935 (Neuberger, vol. II, pp. 101). What happened to German Freemasonry once World War II was over is another story.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bro. Henning Wolter, 32°, belongs to those few German Freemasons who, for the past twenty years, made successful efforts to recover documents considered as hopelessly lost. He was kind enough to put at my disposition many copies of original documents, among which the personal diary of Bro. Müffelmann.

A copy of the ritual used in 1930 by the Supreme Council of the Netherlands when it installed the Supreme Council for Germany in Berlin, and a copy of the certified German translation of the original contemporary report of the Dutch Grand Secretary, were given to me by Ill. Bro. Heinz Lott, 33°, Past Grand Commander of the German Supreme Council.

A full set of *Die alten Pflichten*, the monthly publication of The Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, was copied for me by Ill. Bro. Franz Starey, 33°, Emeritus Member of the German Supreme Council.

ANNEX

"The Symbolic Grand Lodges [sic] of Germany - the last one organized - has some two or three Lodges in Syria and Palestine, and it has transferred its headquarters to Jerusalem - its letterhead carrying the following: "*Symbolische Grosloge [sic] von Deutschland im Exil*" (Symbolic Grand Lodge in Exile), Jerusalem.

"I do not see how this latter is going to work out very well, but those Brethren certainly deserve credit for trying to keep alive the flame of Freemasonry under such adverse circumstances. "Dr. Müffelmann, the Grand Master of this Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, with two other members, was arrested and cast into prison in Berlin in the latter part of 1933. I received a communication from the Grand Commander of the Supreme Council in a country near Germany, who wrote that those Brethren were in prison and were being cruelly treated, and he asked if I could not do something in their behalf. I called, with Illustrious Brother Keiper, the Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, upon the German Ambassador here, and was referred to the Secretary of the Embassy who had charge of foreign matters, to whom we put up an appeal for those Brethren in prison. We told him that there were three million Masons in the United States, a large number of whom were either Germans or of German descent, and we knew of nothing that was destroying the natural love of those people in this country for the Fatherland as the action of his government in suppressing Freemasonry. "The Secretary said he would inform the Ambassador of our appeal and it would be forwarded to Germany. "In the meantime those Brethren had been released from prison, but it was some two or three months afterwards that the Secretary of the

Embassy called and told me that they had been released, and also that they had a statement from each of them that they had not been cruelly treated.(+) I hope that such is the case, nevertheless Dr. Müffelmann died not long afterwards; how long, I do not know, but from rumors heard, I think that he may be justly known among the martyrs of the Order.(*). "I have received pamphlets from the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany and a copy of the Ancient Charges, as they understand them in that country, and to which, as far as their soundness is concerned, no one could find objection. "I was requested, however, by my personal friends in Germany to cease sending them The New Age and any other Masonic matter, as it was somewhat dangerous for them to receive such." (Transactions of The Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction, 1935)

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(+) The manuscript diary of Bro. Müffelmann shows that all three brethren were forced by the Gestapo to sign a statement to that effect before they were released.
(*). Underlined by the present writer.
(+) Bibliography bearing upon 20th C. German Freemasonry includes much more material than it was possible to mention here. The present bibliography includes only German books and papers quoted or alluded to in this paper. However, for the sake of brethren unfamiliar with the German language, it also mentions papers published in *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* (London) and a book written by Sir James Stubbs, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England, 1958-1980.

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Alle Menschen werden Brüeder

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