

COMPASS, SQUARE AND SWASTIKA: FREEMASONRY IN THE THIRD REICH

A Dissertation

by

CHRISTOPHER CAMPBELL THOMAS

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

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ABSTRACT

Compass, Square and Swastika: Freemasonry in the Third Reich. (August 2011)
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Nazi persecution was not uniform and could be negotiated by the groups being targeted based on a number of factors including the racial status of the group being persecuted, the willingness of the group members to cooperate with the regime, the services and skills the group had to offer and the willingness of the regime to allow cooperation. The experience of Freemasons under the Third Reich provides an example of the ability of targeted groups to negotiate Nazi persecution based on these factors. As members of the educated and professional class, Freemasons belonged to the demographic that most strongly supported Hitler from the late 1920s until war's outbreak in 1939. For Hitler, the skills these men possessed as doctors, lawyers, businessmen and bankers were essential to the success of the regime. So what would have otherwise been a mutually beneficial relationship eagerly sought after by both parties was prevented by the fact that the men were Freemasons and thus had ties to an organization whose ideology stood in complete contrast to that of National Socialism.

However, because the identifier "Freemason" was not one based on biology or race, Freemasons had the ability to shed their identity as Freemasons by leaving the

regime, an ability that they willingly and eagerly exercised. In return, the Nazi Party had to decide to what extent former Freemasons, whose professional skills and talent were so essential, could be allowed to work with the regime. Thus began the complex dance of compromise as each side tested the limits of what it could and couldn't do in order to cooperate with the other. For former Freemasons, the goal was trying to prove loyalty to the regime in the face of their previous lodge membership. For the regime the goal was finding a balance between ideological purity and practical necessity. Though the Nazis destroyed Freemasonry as an institution, the success of former Freemasons in aligning with the party as individuals shows the ability of Germans, even those in targeted groups, to escape persecution and even benefit from the regime that had previously targeted them.

NOMENCLATURE

AMI	L'association Maconnique Internationale
BArch	Bundesarchiv
ERR	Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg
GSStA PK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussicher Kulturbesitz
DAF	Deutsche Arbeitsfront
DDP	Deutsche Demokratische Partei
DVP	Deutsche Volkspartei
KSCV	Kösener Senioren-Convents-Verband
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
NSDStB	Nationalsozialistische Deutesche Studentenbund
NSV	Nationalsozialiste Volkswohlfahrt
OKH	Oberkommando des Heeres
OKW	Oberkommando der Wehrmacht
RFSS	Reichsführer-SS
RM	Reichsmark
RMdI	Reichsministerium des Innern
RSHA	Reichsicherheitshauptamt
RuPrMdI	Reich und Preussicher Ministerium des Innern
RUSchIA/USCHLA	Reich Untersuchung und Schlichtungs-Ausschuss

SA	Sturmabteilung
SD	Sicherheitsdienst
SGvD	Symbolisches Großloge von Deutschland
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
SS	Schutzstaffeln
IOBB	Independent Order of B'nai B'rith
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
VB	Völkischer Beobachter

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hitler based his hatred of Freemasonry on the belief that through it, Jews side-stepped the racial and legal barriers that marginalized them in European society.¹ Consequently, one of Hitler's first acts after seizing power was to shut the lodges down; a task that was completed in just two years. When war broke out four years later, Hitler's anti-Masonic attitude spread along with his invading armies, prompting Sven Lunden, a correspondent with the *American Mercury*, to proclaim that "there is only one group of men whom the Nazis and the Fascists hate more than the Jews. They are the Freemasons."² Though an intriguing declaration, to be sure, Lunden was wrong; the Nazis did not hate Freemasons more than Jews. In fact, Nazis didn't hate Freemasons at all; the Nazis hated "Freemasonry," but not necessarily "Freemasons." The ideology was what the Nazis hated, not the men. On the contrary, the men who made up the bulk of the German Masonic lodges were very people that had increasingly gravitated toward the regime during the Weimar Republic and supported it after the seizure of power. They were established, educated, middle-class and professional men of good German-stock. The only thing keeping the Nazis from welcoming these men was their

This dissertation follows the style of *American Historical Review*.

¹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1939), 433.

² Sven G. Lunden, "Annihilation of Freemasonry," *American Mercury*, February, 1941, 184-190.

membership, either past or present, with a fraternity that, in the words of Alfred Rosenberg, “work[ed] for the loosening of state, national and social bonds.”³

I first stumbled across the idea of studying Freemasonry in the Third Reich while writing my masters thesis. I was reading Robert Herzstein’s *The War that Hitler Won* and came across the cartoon in Figure A1. Note that in the caption, Herzstein identified the symbol above Stresemann’s head as the Star of David; however, closer inspection revealed that the symbol wasn’t the Star of David, but the compass and the square; symbol of the Freemasons (to which Stresemann belonged). Now, separately, the subjects of Nazi Germany and Freemasonry occupy entire bookshelves of printed material and thousands of hours of movies and documentaries, but surprisingly there is practically nothing that examines the two together. Survey texts on the Third Reich and the Holocaust mention Freemasonry, but only in passing.⁴ Often the most information that can be found in secondary literature comes from books about the Christian churches under Hitler,⁵ which is both misleading and unfair. Though requiring its members to

³ By “social” he means “racial.” Alfred Rosenberg, *Myth of the Twentieth Century: An Evaluation of the Spiritual-Intellectual Confrontations of Our Age* (Torrence, CA: Noontide Press, 1982), 47.

⁴ Michael Burleigh’s recently published *The Third Reich: A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), for example, devotes only two paragraphs (one for German Freemasonry and one for Freemasonry in France) of its near 1000 pages to the topic. Ian Kershaw’s two-volume study of Hitler has a half-dozen references to Freemasons throughout its almost 2000 pages, most of which are only cursory. Richard Evans three volume study of Nazi Germany devotes less than a paragraph to Freemasonry, again only mentioned in passing.

⁵ Ernst Christian Helmreich, *German Churches Under Hitler* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), Guenter Lewy, *The Catholic Church and Nazi Germany* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964) and John Conway, *Nazi Persecution of the Churches, 1933-1945* (New York: Basic Books, 1968) offer the most information. Christine Elizabeth King occasionally mentions connections between the Freemasons and non-mainstream churches in *The Nazi State and the New Religions: Five Case Studies in Non-Conformity* (New York: E. Mellon Press, 1982).

believe in God, Freemasonry is not, nor has it ever claimed to be, a religion. General histories of Freemasonry likewise suffer from the same dearth.⁶ Of all the available literature on the Freemasons in Nazi Germany, what is scholarly isn't in English and what is in English isn't scholarly. Additionally, with the exception of Ralf Melzer's *Konflikt und Anpassung*, everything had been published by a Masonic publisher.⁷ Next to Melzer, only Helmut Neuberger's *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus* was written by an author who was not also a Freemason, though Neuberger's work was published by a Masonic press.⁸ Their two contributions represent the scholarly literature available, and both are only available in German. In English, there are about a dozen or so short articles published since the end of the war, all written by Freemasons and published in Masonic journals. The earliest was a report from the Masonic Service Association's Committee on European Freemasonry on its six-week fact-finding mission in 1945.⁹ In

⁶ In 1962, Friedrich John Böttner, a Mason, published *Zersplitterung und Einigung: 225 Jahre Geschichte der deutschen Freimaurer*, (Hamburg: "Absalom zu den drei Nesseln" lodge press, 1962), which gave a history of Freemasonry in Germany from its founding until 1958, but devoted just a single page of its 300 pages to the Third Reich. Two years later, Manfred Steffens, also a Mason, published *Freimaurer in Deutschland; Bilanz eines Vierteljahrtausends* (Flensburg: C. Wolff, 1964), which again devoted very little of its considerable length to the Third Reich. Robert Freke Gould, in his multivolume history of Freemasonry, devotes almost a hundred pages to the history of Freemasonry in Germany, and then ends it with a single sentence stating that in 1932 [sic] Hitler suppressed the lodges and ended Masonic activity in Germany.

⁷ Ralf Melzer, *Konflikt und Anpassung: Freimaurerei in der Weimarer Republik und im "Dritten Reich"* (Vienna: Braumüller, 1999). An article-length summary of Melzer's work was published in 2004 in Art DeHoyos and S. Brent Morris, eds., *Freemasonry in Context: History, Ritual and Controversy* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004).

⁸ Helmut Neuberger, *Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus: die Verfolgung der deutschen Freimaurerei durch völkische Bewegung und Nationalsozialismus 1918-1945* (Hamburg: Bauhütten, 1980). In 2001, Neuberger published an updated and condensed version of his book, *Winkelmass und Hakenkreuz: Die Freimaurer und das Dritte Reich* (Munich: Herbig, 2001).

⁹ "Freemasonry in Europe: Report of the Committee sent abroad in August, 1945, by the Masonic Service Association to ascertain the conditions and needs of the Grand Lodges and Brethren in the Occupied Countries" (Washington: Masonic Service Association, 1945). The

1959, Irvine Wiest presented a paper at the annual meeting of the Society of Blue Friars writing a history of Freemasonry under the Nazis based exclusively on the documents of the Nuremberg Trials.¹⁰ Following publication of Neuberger's dissertation in 1980, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, the journal of the most exclusive Masonic research lodge in the world, published two articles on Freemasonry in the Third Reich, one simply repeated what had already been published, the other was more devoted to a ritual history and said little about the Nazis at all.¹¹ It wasn't until Alain Bernheim published "German Freemasonry and its Attitude Toward the Nazi Regime" and "Blue Forget-Me-Not: Another Side of the Story" that there was something in English that used primary sources and didn't simply repeat what previous authors had already stated.¹² Bernheim

excursion began on August 12, 1945 and ended on September 28. It must have been a whirlwind of a tour because in that time the participants visited Sweden, Finland, France, Norway, Denmark, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Austria (essentially everywhere that wasn't under Soviet occupation). The Masonic Service Association undertook the mission to ascertain how the US lodges could best help the lodges of war-torn Europe, but concluded the best course of action was for the lodges to support government aid agencies and programs already in place in order to avoid resentment that would surely arise if the association only helped other Masons.

¹⁰ Irvine Wiest, "Freemasonry and the Nuremberg Trials" (paper read at the Fifteenth Annual Consistory of the Society of Blue Friars, Washington, D.C., February 22, 1959), available online from website of the Grand Lodge of Scotland, accessed January 3, 2011, http://www.grandlodgeofscotland.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=100&Itemid=126.

¹¹ Eric Howe's "The Collapse of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany, 1933-1935" *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* vol. 95 (1982), is a reader's digest version of Neuberger, though Neuberger is not listed among the four footnotes included in the paper; in "The Masonic Union of the Rising Sun" *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* vol. 97 (1984) J. A. Jowett gives the history of this short-lived lodge including its forced closure, but devotes half of the six-page article to ritual comparison between the Rising Sun and other regular lodges. By admission of the author the entire article is based on two booklets published by the Rising Sun.

¹² Alain Bernheim, "Freemasonry and its Attitude Toward the Nazi Regime" *The Philalethes* (Feb 97), available from Available from Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry, accessed January 3, 2011, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/bernheim12.html>. In "The Blue Forget-me-not: Another Side of the Story," Bernheim had an interesting run in with a flawed memory of Freemasonry and Nazi Germany. A small group within German Freemasonry

later published “Tarnung und Gewalt: Karl Höde, die Freimaurer und die Nazis” further supporting the arguments he made in his previous article, but unfortunately not available in English.¹³ In 2002, an edited volume on European and American Freemasonry included a chapter on the persecution of Freemasonry, although the article on Freemasonry and Nazism examines the response of American Freemasons to Nazi persecution of German Freemasonry, rather than a study of the persecution itself.¹⁴

Minimizing the already scant amount of available material is the unfortunate fact that nearly all these authors are mired in debate over whether Freemasons ought to be classified as victims or collaborators. While all authors acknowledge the persecution of German Freemasons, only Bernheim and Melzer point out that the majority of Freemasons, both as institutions and individuals, actually tried to align with the regime, failing at the institutional level but succeeding remarkably as individuals. Bernheim tempers his argument with the statement: “This paper is not, in any way, written against

wanted to induct Bernheim into the order of the Blue Forget-me-not, so named for the a flower that the group claimed was used during the war as a secret symbol of Freemasons who vowed to continue to meet and work as Freemasons, despite being outlawed. After doing some research, Bernheim had to inform the order that the flower was *not* a secret symbol of clandestine Freemasonry. It was used by Freemasons, but not officially, and then not until the war ended. Additionally, the Nazi *Winterhilfswerk* sold Blue Forget-me-not pins in March, 1938 to raise money. Some lodges used the flower, but the flower was not a Masonic symbol. The article is available from Pietre-Stones Review of Freemasonry, accessed January 3, 2011, <http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/bernheim3.html>;

¹³ Alain Bernheim, “Tarnung und Gewalt: Karl Hoede, die Freimaurerei, die Nazis,” *R.E.F.O.R.M. Jahrbuch 03* (2001), 47-57.

¹⁴ Aaron T. Kornblum, “The *New Age Magazine*’s Reportage of National Socialism, the Persecution of European Masonry, and the Holocaust” in R. William Weisberger, Wallace McLeod and S. Brent Morris, eds. *Freemasonry on Both Sides of the Atlantic: Essays Concerning the Craft in the British Isles, Europe, the United States and Mexico* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 2002). In his footnotes, Kornblum suggests Melzer’s book over Neuberger’s, which is surprising given that Melzer is less kind in his treatment of Masonic reaction to persecution than Neuberger.

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 honor of German Freemasonry during the most difficult period of its history, and as a contribution to a better understanding between Masons.”¹⁵

The debate carries on because, to a degree, both sides are right. The Nazis relentlessly attacked Freemasonry as an institution both before the seizure of power and continuing until the last lodge shut down in 1935. Some lodge brothers lost their jobs, others lost money and possessions that they had invested in the lodges, and some even spent time in a concentration camp. At the same time, cries of collaboration are equally valid. Many Freemasons willingly joined the Nazi party and its affiliates. One lodge brother joined the Schutzstaffeln (SS) and then helped it shut down his former lodge; others served as informers for the Gestapo and *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD – Security Service). Many lodges officially barred Jews, adopted “Aryan clauses,” and openly sought “coordination” with the regime. Hitler even appointed a Freemason, Hjalmar Schacht, first as president of the Reichsbank and then as Minister of Economics. As for the *Symbolisches Großloge von Deutschland* (SGvD - Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany), the lodge that had been praised in many of these short articles for openly criticizing Hitler, it was deemed “irregular” (not officially recognized) and looked down upon by mainstream German Freemasonry at the time. Even Freemasons outside of German disputed the legitimacy of the SGvD.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bernheim, “Freemasonry and its Attitude Toward the Nazi Regime.”

¹⁶ For example, Arthur Schramm, a German-American Freemason who maintained correspondence with the German grand lodges, rejected the SGvD as Masonic. Arthur

Rather than grab one end or the other in this victim-collaborator tug of war, I hope to make a new departure by exploring *why* Freemasons acted the way they did and trying to ascertain what motivated tens of thousands of men to abandon the lodges and seek to align with the very regime that was out to get them? Or, for the few who didn't, why did they risk continued persecution instead of simply denouncing the lodges and moving on? The answer, I argue, is that the men *in* the lodges who sought to align with the regime were cut from virtually the same cloth as the men *outside* the lodges who sought to align. They came from the demographics that increasingly supported the Nazis throughout Weimar and into the 1930s,¹⁷ as well as serving in those professions that willingly “worked toward the Führer.” Or, as Peter Fritsche more bluntly put it, “Germans became Nazis because they wanted to become Nazis and because the Nazis spoke so well to their interests and inclinations.”¹⁸ The one obstacle to an otherwise perfect match between former lodge members and the Nazi Party was the fact that these men had belonged, or continued to belong to the lodges. Freemasons were thus unique among the “victims” of National Socialism.

The Nazis targeted dozens of groups, but one cannot lump all these groups into

Schramm, “Freemasonry in Germany” (speech delivered at a meeting of the Liberal Arts Lodge, No. 677, Westwood California, May 7, 1931); Hans-Heinrich Solf also challenges the validity of the SGvD, calling it “more or less irregular” in comparison to the “perfectly respectable Hamburg Grand Lodge” after its exile to Chile. Hans-Heinrich Solf, “The Revival of Freemasonry in Postwar Germany,” *ArsQuatuor Coronatorum* 97 (1984), 5.

¹⁷ The two most significant studies of German voting, Richard Hamilton’s *Who Voted for Hitler?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982) and Thomas Childers, *The Nazi Voter: The Social Foundations of Fascism in Germany, 1919-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983) both concluded that while the petite bourgeoisie made up the backbone of the NSDAP in its infancy, the party swelled to become the largest party in Germany by 1932 because of increasing support from the upper and upper-middle classes; the very demographic to which the majority of Freemasons belonged.

¹⁸ Peter Fritsche, *Germans into Nazis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998), 8.

one, label it “victims” and move on. Every group shared the forms of persecution (theft, slander, imprisonment, murder) with at least one other group, so separating victims by what they suffered is insufficient as well as insulting. Instead, motive and endgame are a better way to separate one victim group from another. Holocaust scholar, Yehuda Bauer, for example, distinguished between victims of persecution, victims of genocide and victims of holocaust by focusing on the purpose or intended outcome of persecution.¹⁹

Victims of persecution were pursued until the members of that group severed ties with the group and its ideology, choosing instead to conform to the Nazi standard. Bauer puts political and religious groups (communists, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Freemasons) into that group. The most important difference between victims of persecution and victims of genocide or holocaust was that their status as a target was not dependant on race, biology or “blood.” For communists the problem was political, for Jehovah’s Witnesses it was religious and for Freemasons it was ideological; all three of which are voluntary and controllable by the victim. Victims of genocide and holocaust included Jews, Gypsies, Slavs, homosexuals and the mentally disabled: groups whose “threat” lay in their blood and could therefore “taint” the blood of good, Aryan Germans through marriage and children. Classification lay with the persecutor. What separated genocide from holocaust, according to Bauer, is that victims of genocide were pursued until their racial/ethnic community was destroyed, which, though necessitating mass

¹⁹ Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale, 2001), 1-13. Bauer differentiates between “holocaust” and “Holocaust.” The former is the attempt at completely eradicating a racial group, the Holocaust is the specific instance of the former.

murder, did not necessitate the murder of *all* members.²⁰ That fate is what remained solely for the Jews; complete, total and utter extinction, not only in Germany, but worldwide.²¹

Freemasons are thus unique in that they were among the Nazis' ideological enemy, but what set Freemasons apart from other non-racial groups? Like Freemasons, communists could, and did, leave the Communist Party to avoid persecution; some even joined the Nazi Party.²² In fact, when former Freemasons were denied membership in the party they pointed out that former communists were being allowed to join, so why not them?²³ What separated Freemasons from communists was education and class. Communism appeals primarily to uneducated workingman, whereas Freemasonry appealed to the educated social elite. Former Freemasons thus had skills to offer, not just party dues. As doctors, lawyers and professors, Freemasons could serve as legitimizers and perpetrators of Nazi ideology. Furthermore, as bourgeoisie, former Freemasons shared the Nazis' detest of communism.

Freemasons differed from Witnesses in several ways; first, religious affiliation, and the changing thereof, had to be registered with the government. Freemasonry was a social organization and thus not a part of ones official identity. Freemasons could join

²⁰ Bauer, for example, points out that Nazis distinguished between varying degrees of Gypsy blood as well as separating nomadic and sedentary Gypsies, ruthlessly pushing both out of Germany, but allowing the sedentary Gypsies outside of Germany to continue to live so long as their status as an community had been destroyed, see *Rethinking*, 60-62.

²¹ Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 12.

²² Bauer states that the number of ex-communists in the Nazi Party numbered in the millions, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 11.

²³ January 19, 1939, SD Lagebericht for 1938. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 15.007M, Records of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), reel 5, folder 30.

or leave the lodges without government paperwork, which meant that when the Nazis took power they had complete lists of Jehovah's Witnesses in Germany, but not of Freemasons. This is one reason why the Gestapo tried so hard to acquire membership lists from lodge administrators; without them there was little proof of a man's membership. This ability to change one's spots has another facet; religion plays a much larger role in a person's identity than do their club memberships. As for the Jehovah's Witnesses, they too had the possibility of denouncing the church and escaping persecution, which a few did,²⁴ but to denounce one's religion under persecution is to jeopardize one's salvation. For most Witnesses, persecution for their belief was preferable to escape by denying the faith. It was choosing the higher calling. In Freemasonry, the bonds of ideology and belief are nowhere near as strong as bonds of faith, and that assumes that the individual joined the lodge for the ideology in the first place (which most didn't). Whereas the minority of Witnesses forsook ideology, it was the minority of Freemasons who stuck to it and risked continued persecution. Severing the mental connections to a lodge was almost as easy as severing the physical ones. A third area that greatly separates Freemasons from Witnesses is nationalism. A Witness is forbidden to salute the flag, serve in the army, or do anything that might be construed as violating the Second Commandment. This was one of the reasons the Nazis hounded the Witnesses in the first place. Freemasons, on the other hand, were intensely national, very patriotic, and many of them had already served in the military, as officers no less.

There is one other group that warrants comparison and shows the uniqueness of

²⁴ Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 11.

the lodges and helps explain the difficult path the Freemasons had to follow to achieve compromise; the university student *Korps* (fraternities). These college fraternities shared a great deal in common with the lodges; they are equally as old, equally as exclusive, and both declared themselves to be politically and religiously neutral. As professionals, many Freemasons belonged to the *Korps* during their days at the university, introducing them to the world of voluntary associations and social exclusivity. Members in both the *Korps* and the lodges held their membership dear (some even held concurrent membership in both), but belonging to a *Korps* or lodge was not as defining as political or religious affiliation, leaving a willingness to abandon the association if necessary. After the seizure of power, the *Korps* responded like the lodges; some sought coordination while others resisted it as long as possible, eventually choosing to close down rather than align.²⁵ Where they *did* differ, however, was that Nazis accepted the coordination of the *Korps*, but not of the lodges. The difference was institutional; as an organization the *Korps* had something to offer the regime; the lodges did not. The lodges numbered doctors, lawyers, and businessmen among its members, but the party already had associations for doctors, lawyers and businessmen. True, the party had a student association, the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Studentenbund* (NSDStB – National Socialist German Student League), but that’s exactly the point, by absorbing the already existing *Korps* the NSDStB made its job that much easier. There was no Nazi equivalent to the Masonic lodges, thus to accept them was to incorporate an entirely new organization that, in its previous incarnation, held a worldview completely

²⁵ For a brief but succinct study of the German *Korps* and the Nazi regime see R.G.S. Weber, *The German Student Corps in the Third Reich* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1986).

opposite National Socialism.

Freemasons are thus a unique victim group to study because not only was cooperating with the regime possible, it was desirable; however, because of the history and ideology of the fraternity the regime only wanted to accept the members and not the organization. As an organization made up of the very demographics that the Nazis sought to co-opt, Freemasons were in a unique position among non-racial victims of persecution to essentially negotiate the terms of their dissolution. Conversely the regime had to decide how strict to be in enforcing its policies, choosing either shutting out very skilled and influential men, or maintaining ideological integrity. A study of the Freemasons will explore the dance between regime and lodge, examining how the Freemasons tried to reconcile their membership, and how the Nazis sought a way to reject Freemasonry while still accepting the Freemason.

In addition to making a scholarly contribution to the history of Freemasonry in Nazi Germany, an examination of the persecution of Freemasonry in the Third Reich will also contribute to the growing literature on nature of Nazi Terror and persecution. In the fifty years since the fall of the Third Reich the history of Nazi persecution has already gone through numerous changes and reevaluations, many of which are more than a simple tweaking or fine tuning of previous theories. For the first two decades following the end of WWII, Nazi Germany, and thus Nazi Terror, was depicted as a well-oiled machine; it was German efficiency put to the most nefarious use. Hitler was

undisputed,²⁶ the regime was absolute, and the Gestapo was everywhere.²⁷ Former cabinet minister Hjalmar Schacht described it as a situation in which “there was no freedom of assembly. There was no freedom of speech. There was no freedom of writing. There was no possibility of discussing things even in a small group. From A to Z one was spied upon, and every word which was said in a group of more than two persons was spoken at the peril of one's life.”²⁸

Over the next decade the “well oiled machine” argument gave way to one of power struggle; the “strong dictator/weak dictator” argument. Scholars demonstrated that the Nazi government, like all governments, was anything but smooth and efficient, implicating more people than just the “Hitler Gang.”²⁹ Continuing into the 1980s,

²⁶ For studies that argue for Hitler as the “evil genius” whose personality and skill at oratory mesmerized a nation while the Gestapo terrorized those who weren’t entranced, see H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The Last Days of Hitler* (London: Macmillan, 1947); Alan Bullock, *Hitler: A Study in Tyranny* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1953); William Shirer *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of Nazi Germany* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1960); and Joachim Fest, *Hitler* (London: Widenfeld and Nicholson, 1974).

²⁷ For discussion of the Nazi police state, see Edward Crankshaw, *Gestapo: Instrument of Tyranny* (New York: Putnam, 1956); Gerald Reitlinger’s *SS: Alibi of a Nation* (New York: Viking, 1957), though he says the SS was not alone in being responsible for the Holocaust, Reitlinger does limit responsibility to government agencies and powerful men; and Helmut Krausnick, Hans Buchheim, Martin Broszat and Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, *Anatomy of the SS State* (London: Collins, 1968). In a short article Robert Gellately confirms that during the regime and shortly after, the Gestapo built up this myth through careful manipulation of the press, see “Denunciations in Nazi Germany” in F. C. DeCoste and Bernard Schwartz, eds., *The Holocaust’s Ghost: Writings on Art, Politics, Law and Education* (Edmonton, Alberta, Canada: University of Alberta Press, 2000). In *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1951) Hannah Arendt argues that Hitler, along with Stalin, were the only two men to ever successfully establish a totalitarian state, and that in Germany the terror of the secret police was absolute.

²⁸ Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal: Proceedings Volumes (Blue Set), vol. 12, 452-53. Full text available online from the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, accessed January 3, 2011, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/imt.asp.

²⁹ William Sheridan Allen in *The Nazi Seizure of Power: The Experience of a Single German Town, 1922-1945* (New York: F. Watts, 1984) shows how Nazism was built up at the

scholars demonstrated that disharmony in the upper echelons of Nazi Germany also existed among the general populace. While Aryan middle-class men were generally happy with the new regime, the working class, women and the churches were not.³⁰

More recent scholarship has examined the degree to which the regime and the population negotiated cooperation through a mixture of voluntary and compulsory means. Professor Eric Johnson's decade long research project on the Gestapo in Krefeld has shown that contrary to popular perception, the Gestapo was *not* omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, and in fact the Gestapo relied on the general public to police themselves more than they did on an army of agents, focusing the attention of agents toward specific groups that posed a more serious threat to the regime than an average German making jokes about Goering's weight.³¹ Of course, target groups like received more attention from the police, but for the general public who didn't belong to any suspect group the Gestapo mostly left them alone; the Terror wasn't terrible for

municipal level, rather than being wholly handed down from above. His thesis was taken even further by Anthony McElligot in *Contested City: Municipal Politics and the Rise of Nazism in Altona, 1917-1937* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1998). Furthermore, enough time had lapsed since the end of the war that German scholars were able to contribute to the growing literature. In *The Hitler State: The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich* (New York: Longman, 1981) Martin Broszat refers to Nazi Germany as a "polyocracy" rather than a totalitarian dictatorship. Albert Speer's memoir *Inside the Third Reich* (New York: Macmillan, 1970) likewise reveals the infighting between departments and upper level government figures. Ralf Dahrendorf attacks Nazi Germany as a matter of socio-political structure, arguing that Nazi Germany was less a question of what Hitler had, as it was a question of what German society lacked, see *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1967). Karl Dietrich Bracher also approaches Nazi Germany structurally in *The German Dictatorship: The Origins, Structure and Effects of National Socialism* (New York: Praeger, 1970), arguing that a combination of existing factors and conditions, coupled with Hitler's skill at manipulation, led to the Nazi state.

³⁰ See Ian Kershaw, *Popular Opinion and Political dissent in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); Detlev Peukert, *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

³¹ Eric Johnson, *Nazi Terror: The Gestapo, Jews and Ordinary Germans* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

everyone. Other scholars have demonstrated that the Nazis employed “carrot-and-stick” methods more than they did terror and intimidation.³² Some groups didn’t even require any “stick” and “coordinated” more-or-less on their own shortly after the seizure of power.³³ A study of Freemasons in the Third Reich will contribute by examining a previously overlooked group that aptly illustrates the interaction between this unique group of Germans and the Nazi government, showing that the degree a group suffered persecution rested on a number of factors: was the group deemed a racial threat? If not, did the group or its members have something specific to offer the regime? If so, could the group as a whole simply be “coordinated”? If not, how are the individual members to be dealt with in comparison to the organization? Lastly, were the members of the targeted group willing to take the necessary actions to avoid persecution? The reaction of Freemasons shows how answering these questions led to compromise and conflict

³² Robert Gellately, *Backing Hitler: Consent and Coercion in the Third Reich* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) shows how the public were well aware of the existence and operation of the camps, which served a dual purpose. On one hand it built support among the populace by showing that the regime was a regime of action, working to imprison criminals, asocials and other elements of society that most citizens would be happy to see locked up. The second purpose was to show the populace what happens to those who challenge the regime or refuse to conform to its standards. Adam LeBor and Roger Boyes, *Surviving Hitler: Choices, Corruption and Compromise in the Third Reich* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000) makes similar argument but throws in economic factors, demonstrating that by supporting the regime one could benefit financially, while challenging the regime, or being numbered among its enemies, lead to loss of livelihood and property.

³³ Michael Kater’s, *Doctor’s Under Hitler* (Chapel hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) describes how the medical profession aligned with the regime for social, economic and political reasons; Steve Remy, *The Heidelberg Myth: the Nazification and Denazification of a German University* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002) does the same for German academia, showing that universities took the initiative in coordinating with the regime and then using their status as intellectuals to put an academic seal of approval on Nazi ideology; Ingo Müller, *Hitler’s Justice: The Courts of the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991) explores the gradual steps by which the entire German legal system, from law schools to aging judges justified upholding the racial and persecutory laws of the Third Reich and, like the medical and academic professions, began preempting the regime.

from both the lodges and the government, providing a reinterpretation of how Nazi persecution and cooperation worked, especially in regards to non-racial groups. It will show that Nazi Terror was not uniform, persecution (at least for non-racial enemies) could be mitigated or even totally escaped, and that the degree to which an individual could lessen or avoid persecution relied on a system of give-and-take with the regime. The more a specific group or individual had to offer, the more likely the regime would make concessions, either at the institutional or individual level. In the case of Freemasons, they had everything to offer; knowledge, reputation, wealth, skill, experience and influence. The only drawback was association with a group whose ideology was fundamentally opposite that of National Socialism, which was the reason why the regime was unwilling to allow a general “coordination” of Freemasonry while still leaving the door open for individual Freemasons.

At this point it is necessary to establish boundaries and define “Freemasonry,” at least as far as this study is concerned. When the Nazis took power and began investigating Freemasons they soon thereafter opened investigations into *Winkellogen* or “lodge-like” organizations like the Schlaraffia, Rotary Club, Druid Order, International Order of Odd Fellows, and Independent Order of B’nai B’rith (IOBB).³⁴ Although these other societies were referred to as “lodge-like” and had similar hierarchies, rituals and vocabularies as the Freemasons, they are not actually “Masonic” organizations. It was not uncommon for a member of these “lodge-like” organizations to also hold

³⁴ NSDAP circular, January 31, 1934, National Archives and Recorded Administration (NARA) Captured German Records (non-biographical records - Schumacher Collection) National Archives Microfilm Publication T580, 267 I.

membership in a Masonic lodge, the significance of which will be discussed in a later chapter. Nevertheless, these organizations and societies did not call themselves “Masonic” and were not recognized by any of the nine German grand lodges. My scope then is limited to those lodges that identified themselves, and were in turn identified by other lodges, as Masonic, which by 1933 numbered just over 70,000 members in over 700 lodges scattered throughout Germany (see Fig. A2).

The one exception is the SGvD. This particular lodge will receive more attention in a later chapter, but for now it is enough to say that while not recognized by other German grand lodges, the members of the SGvD considered themselves Freemasons, called themselves Freemasons, and were recognized as Freemasons by other Grand Lodges outside Germany. Even Nazi reports bounce the SGvD back and forth between classification as a part of mainstream Freemasonry and a fringe group, unsure of where exactly they belonged. Additionally, though other German grand lodges scorned and rejected the SGvD in its day, postwar Freemasonry both inside and outside Germany held up the SGvD as the poster child of Masonic victimization and courageous resistance. Thus if the enemies and critics of the SGvD are willing to identify it as “Masonic” then so shall I.

The archival material for this study came primarily from three sources. The *Bundesarchiv* (BArch) and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) provided many of the documents produced by the Nazi bureaucracy, in particular the records of the *Schutzstaffeln* (SS), the *Reichsicherheitshauptamt* (RSHA – Reich Security Main Office), the Reich Chancellery and the Main Archive of the

Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP – National Socialist German Workers Party).³⁵ As the Nazis debated among themselves as to the fate of former lodge members the files piled up, giving me a glance at how the government struggled with this problem from within. These archives also provided and documentation seized from the German grand lodges, as well as correspondence between the grand lodges and the government, providing a glimpse into the links between lodge and party. The third source, the *Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz* (Secret State Archives Prussian Cultural Heritage – GstA PK) provided the documents generated within the lodges as the fraternity struggled with the same problem the regime was dealing with. The *Bundesarchiv* and USHMM provided a fair amount of material on mainstream Freemasonry, so I used the Secret State Archive primarily for the papers of the SGvD and its Grandmaster, Leo Müffelmann. After the archives, the internet demonstrated how powerful a tool it could be in research, allowing me to examine the records of the Nuremberg Trials, the Eichmann Trial, German legal texts and the Shoah Foundation, all without having to step out my front door.³⁶

Structurally, this study is organized into seven chapters. Chapter II provides a brief history of Freemasonry in Germany with an emphasis on the kind of men who joined the fraternity and the reasons why they did so, showing first that by the seizure of power the majority of German Freemasons belonged to the very demographics the most

³⁵ Respectively found in BArch NS19, R58, R43 and NS26. Other record groups consulted include the Part Chancellery (NS6), the Personnel Staff, Reichsführer-SS (NS19), the Sturmabteilung (NS23), the Special Staff Reichsleiter Rosenberg (NS30) and the Ministry for People's Enlightenment and Propaganda (R55).

³⁶ Eighteen interviews from the Shoah Foundation were consulted as part of this study, a list of which can be found in the References section.

actively supported the Nazi Party and would therefore have been welcomed by the Nazis were it not for each man's membership in the lodges. Second, Chapter II will show that many joined out of ambition, opportunism and as part of bourgeoisie joiners culture, helping to why the men joined such an organization in the first place, and how they could be willing to so easily discard it, even after decades of membership. The lodges provided social and professional benefits. Once the Hitler came to power and banned Freemasonry, the party and its auxiliaries supplanted the lodges as a vehicle for social status and career ambition, former members simply had to find a way in.

Chapter III, then, explores the reaction of the various branches of Freemasonry between the seizure of power and the final dissolution of German Freemasonry in 1935, illustrating the lengths the lodges went to reach a compromise with the regime as institutions. Hitler's desire to Nazify all aspect of society, coupled with the success of the Christian Churches to be accepted with complete assimilation, gave the lodges hope of achieving some degree of autonomy while still demonstrating loyalty to the regime and the nation. Criticism of National Socialism was limited to a small minority of Freemasons, who were in fact already ostracized by the mainstream. Such overwhelming gestures from the lodges created a conundrum for the regime. On one hand the regime very much wanted to accept individual Freemasons (and in many cases Freemasons were already in significant party and government positions), but on the other hand the party saw no possibility of simply absorbing the lodges and accepting Freemasons *en masse*. In addition, the small handful of Freemasons who were dedicated to the fraternity, critical of the regime, or both, demonstrated the danger of allowing

individual masons to either enter (or remain) within the party and civil service, thus Chapter IV looks at the actions of the party in trying to decide how to accept the Freemason, reject Freemasonry, and keep out those who had been critical of National Socialism. Demonstrating the difficulty the regime had in trying to decide who was a true “Freemason,” one who joined the lodges and adopted the ideology, and who was simply a man that joined the lodge for some reason other than sincere belief. By looking at Freemasons in the party, civil service and military this chapter shows how the Nazis tried to find a balance between party ideology and practicality.

Chapter V examines the party seizure of lodge property, showing the limits of Nazi persecution of Freemasonry. Because Freemasonry was not a racially-defined group, the regime never took the war to the individual Freemason. Instead the regime ruthlessly shut down and looted every lodge building in the country, but never once touched the personal and private wealth of the members, which could be considerable. Chapter VI provides a brief biography of Hjalmar Schacht as an individual case study of the preceding chapters, showing what kind of man became a Freemason, why he became a Freemason, and then how that same man put Freemasonry aside without much fight once membership became a liability more than an asset. Chapter VII is the epilogue and conclusion where we will briefly explore the rebirth of Freemasonry in postwar Germany, showing how quickly those who dropped the fraternity in the 1930s then returned to it once the Nazi threat was over, and then rewrote their history, imagining themselves as victims of Nazi tyranny.

CHAPTER II

WHO WERE THE FREEMASONS, REALLY?

In the eyes of Hitler and the Nazis, Freemasons were the quintessential cosmopolitans, humanitarians, and liberals, embracing the ideology that “all that has a human face is equal.”¹ The Nazis sought to remold social on national-racial grounds, creating the *Volksgemeinschaft*, but Freemasons, according to Nazi propaganda, rejected the *Volksgemeinschaft* by dismissing national or racial identity in favor of the “brotherhood of all men,” religious identity in favor of “the religion to which all men agree,” and social/racial identification in favor of meeting “upon the level.” By rejecting racial discrimination, the Nazis asserted that the lodges opened themselves up to Jewish infiltration and influence.²

Nazi propaganda accusing Freemasons of humanitarianism was pretty easy to generate since Freemasons willingly acknowledged their desire to break down national, social and religious barriers within the lodges. Accusations of Jewish influence, however, were a little harder to sell. Though France had adopted the epithet “Jews and Freemasons” (as opposed to “Jews” and “Freemasons”) by 1880, the phrase was absurd in pre-WWI Germany, given the history of Jews and the lodges.³ In fact, the acceptance

¹ Speech by Julius Streicher on June 26, 1925 in the Bavarian Diet, document M-30 in the Red Set, vol. VIII, 16-18. Streicher was speaking of the German education system, criticizing the curriculum for teaching “the Freemason principle” of humanitarianism.

² A general report on Freemasonry in Germany, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

³ The epithet “Jews and Freemasons” actually began in France where Catholicism was strong and the political/religious enemies of “Jews” and “Freemasons,” were easy targets, especially since Jews had so much more success in getting into French lodges, facilitating the belief that the two were in cahoots. In 1880, E.H. Chabouty, a Catholic priest, wrote *Franc-*

of Jewish members is what first led to the division between Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges, with further divisions following later.⁴ “Jews and Freemason” did not gain acceptance in Germany until after WWI, when Germany lay prostrate at the hands of nations where Jews and Freemasons were most established, especially Great Britain and the United States.⁵ The chaos of post war Germany provided fertile ground for enemies of the Jewish community and the lodges to point to both as colluding members in a traitorous conspiracy to stab Germany in the back, topple the kaiser, and install a new liberal-democratic government. The first German edition of the *Protocols*

Maçon et Juifs (Freemasons and Jews), which claimed that the two were intimately connected in a quest to take over the world, beginning with the French Revolution. The proof lay in the revolution’s battle cry; “Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.” Those three words not only sum up the fundamental philosophies of Freemasonry, but also ensured the full emancipation of the Jews in France. The conspiracy theories of Chabouty’s book birthed the term because it made almost no distinction between Jew and Freemason, painting the two groups as coworkers in the common cause of world revolution, Jacob Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe, 1723-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), 157-9.

⁴ In 1906, the same year that the first attacks of the Jews as a race appeared in the lodges, Freemason Karl Heinrich Löberich formed the *Freimaurerbund zur aufgehenden Sonne* (Masonic Brotherhood of the Rising Sun), which wholeheartedly accepted Jews and harshly criticized the Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges for letting religion and politics, the two subjects Freemasonry most vehemently avoided, enter the lodges and cause such discord. Additionally, Löberich lowered the admittance fees and monthly dues for his lodge, making it possible for men of lower social status to join, again arguing that the older lodges failed to properly adhere to the concept of the “brotherhood of *all* men,” Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *The Politics of Sociability: Freemasonry and German Civil Society, 1840-1918* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 162. It should be noted, however, that for the Freemasons, “Jewishness” was a matter of faith, not race or blood. When the lodges refused to admit a Jew it meant the candidate had never been baptized; however, following baptism the candidate was no longer considered a Jew and was welcomed into the lodges, The further development of Freemasonry up to right before the national census, no date (though most likely sometime around 1933), (BArch) R58/6113 part 1, 294.

⁵ Katz, *Jews and Freemasons*, 175-8; A Nazi anti-Freemasonry tract from 1944 included images of the coat-of-arms of the British Fraternity of Free and Accepted Masons, showing that not only did it contain an image of the Ark of the Covenant, but Hebrew letters as well, Erich Schwarzberg, *Freimaurerei als politische Geheimwaffe des jüdisch-englischen Imperialismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Welt-Dienst Verlag, 1944) 15-16. Schwarzburg was also quick to point out that a Jewish Freemason designed the emblem.

of the *Learned Elders of Zion* played a key role in creating the *Dolchstosslegende* and including Freemasons as major players.⁶ The *Protocols* seemed to have an answer for everything; the document explained why the war broke out, why each side chose the allies it did, why the Central Powers lost, and why the postwar world looked the way it did. Even the kaiser in exile used the *Protocols* to prove that his throne had been stolen by Jews and Freemasons.⁷ Since the document was first published before the war, its uncanny accuracy gave the *Protocols* an aura of prophetic authenticity. All one had to do was simply believe them, and be exonerated of any guilt for the way things had turned out.

During the Weimar Republic the conspicuous presence of Jews and Freemasons in the Weimar government, lent further support to the accusations made by the *Protocols*. Chancellor Gustav Stresemann was a Freemason with ties to Jewish community, making it easy for critics to point to Stresemann as a living example of how Jews and Freemasons rose to prominence in the wake of the war, the destruction of the

⁶ Ludwig Mueller von Hausen, using the pseudonym Gottfried zur Beek, published the first German translation of the *Protocols* in 1920 and added his own emphasis on the role of Freemasonry in the Jewish Conspiracy and cementing the epithet “Jews and Freemasons.” Additionally, zur Beek’s translation reworded the *Protocols* to be more applicable to the events surrounding WWI. The original *Protocols* (and all pre-WWI translations) refer to “universal” war culminating in “an association of nations,” suggesting that the Elders will expand their control over world governments after those governments have been sufficiently weakened by numerous wars which will ravage the earth. Zur Beek, however, capitalized on the recent past and replaced “universal war” with “world war” and “an association of nations” with “League of Nations,” focusing attention specifically on the Great War, the Treaty of Versailles, and the establishment of the League of Nations. For a brief but concise history of the protocols see Benjamin Segel, *Lie and a Libel: A History of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1995). For more discussion of the anti-Masonic additions by zur Beek see Katz, *Jews and Freemasons*, 180-1 and Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 284-285.

⁷ Segel, *A Lie and a Libel*, 61.

Kaiserreich and the establishment of democracy.⁸ Furthermore, Stresemann strongly advocated Germany trying to gain admission to the League of Nations. Other prominent Freemasons advocated the same.⁹ Most anti-Masonic propaganda accused the fraternity of trying to establish some kind of world government through their world brotherhood. It is easy to see why Hitler had a field day when Stresemann, a Freemason with ties to the Jews, strongly advocated Germany's participation in the first world-government organization.¹⁰ "All of Germany" Hitler declared, "is being delivered to the Freemasons through the League of Nations."¹¹

In their own eyes, Freemasons saw themselves as the moral elite of society. Discarding petty quibbles over race, nation and religion, Masonic brethren meet in lodges as social equals and sought to make the world a better place through self-improvement and sociability. The German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte praised Freemasonry as a forum where men gain a complete and rounded education by associating with men of other professions and backgrounds.¹² In society, Fichte argued, men devoted themselves to a single skill or profession, thus limiting their knowledge and

⁸ Adolf Hitler, Clemens Vollnhalls, ed. *Hitler: Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen, Februar 1925 bis Januar 1933*. (New York: K.G. Saur, 1992), vol. II/2, 706, taken from speech to NSDAP February 29, 1928. At the time of this particular speech, Wilhelm Marx was chancellor. As a member of the Catholic Center it is doubtful that Marx was a Freemason, as Hitler accused in the speech; however, the fact that Stresemann was a Mason made it easier to believe that there were others in high office.

⁹ An article in *Deutsche Freiheit*, a German newspaper in Paris, September 2, 1938, ran a story about Hjalmar Schacht and other Freemasons who had formed a group called the *Bluntschli-Ausschuss*, which stated that the goals of the league closely mirrored those of Freemasonry, BArch R58/6103b part 1, 14.

¹⁰ Hitler, *Reden, Schriften*, vol. II/2, 706

¹¹ Speech at an NSDAP meeting in Munich, February 29, 1928. Hitler, *Reden, Schriften, Anordnungen*, Vol. II/2, 706.

¹² Scott Abbot, *Fictions of Freemasonry: Freemasonry and the German Novel* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), 19.

experience. By joining a lodge, minds are expanded and ideas shared. Despite Masonic rhetoric of internationalism and humanitarianism, however, Freemasons remained loyal to their respective kings and countries, and were in fact told to do so by Masonic teaching (Freemasonry is even referred to as the “kingly art”).¹³ At the same time the Nazis pointed to prominent Freemasons as proof of a global Jewish-Masonic conspiracy, Freemasonry pointed to many of those same individuals as proof that Freemasons are the best sorts of people, leaders figures in government, economics and culture, demonstrating how “enlightened” men can change the world for the better.

So according to both Freemasons and Nazis, famous Freemasons provide evidence of the value (for the former) and danger (for the latter) of Freemasonry. In Nazi propoganda, men like Voltaire, the Marquis de Lafayette, Gustav Stresemann, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt show how Freemasons have always served the enemies of the German people. German Freemasons responded by pointing to Frederick the Great, Blücher, Goethe, Mozart and Alfred von Tirpitz to show that Freemasons have always been the vanguard in the protection of Germany and advancement of German culture.

What both sides miss, however, is that these giants of history represent the exception more than the rule, especially in the twentieth century. By the time the Nazis

¹³ The Regius Manuscript, one of the oldest Freemasonic documents and a founding source of Masonic teaching and lore, orders Masons “And to his liege lord the king, To be true to him over all thing” [sic]. Another passage states, “When thou meetest a worthy man...Do him reverence after his state” [sic]. Both of these quotes come in addition to the manuscripts assertion that the craft guild itself was established by a king and first filled with the children of the nobility. A copy of the manuscript was included as an appendix to Christopher Hodapp, *Freemasonry for Dummies* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Press, 2005).

came to power German Freemasonry boasted a little over 70,000 members, only a handful of whom became as influential as Hjalmar Schacht, Stresemann and Tirpitz. At the same time, however, while all Freemasons didn't become men of exceptional influence they were far from being average. Thus to fully understand why German Freemasons acted the way they did in response to Nazi persecution it is essential to look past the diabolical image portrayed by the Nazis and the saintly image presented by the lodges and understand who German Freemasons *really* were, both in relation to other European Freemasons and within German politics and society.

Since the founding of speculative Freemasonry in 1717, the majority of lodge members, both in Germany and throughout Europe, came from the social elite, primarily nobles, wealthy merchants and educated professionals. Speculative Freemasonry actually began because operative masons (i.e. actual stonemasons) stood in need of money and so allowed wealthy relatives of current lodge members to join the lodges and begin paying dues.¹⁴ Among these first non-operative masons were doctors, shipwrights, customs clerks, and, of course, landed gentry. By 1730, just thirteen years after the founding of the first Grand Lodge, there were more speculative members than operative.¹⁵ In Scotland, the Dundee lodge had over one hundred members, none of whom was an operative stonemason.¹⁶ In place of business deals, guild regulation and the sharing of trade secrets, lodge meetings served the dual purpose as a forum for

¹⁴ Margaret Jacob, *The Origins of Freemasonry: Facts & Fictions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 5, 12-13.

¹⁵ See Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth Century Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 32-46.

¹⁶ Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 84.

intellectual discussion as well as “a good deal of merrymaking;” every monthly meeting’s business and ritual activities were succeeded by a sumptuous feast and copious amounts of alcohol.¹⁷ There were also special celebrations for Masonic holidays such as St. John the Baptist’s Day; the day on which the first Freemasonic Grand Lodge was founded in London in 1717. The craftsman’s guild had been supplanted by an social club for elite men. Women were able to gain entrance into a few lodges once Freemasonry spread to the continent, but the overwhelming majority of Freemasons were, and still are, men.¹⁸

Since Freemasonry developed in post-Reformation and post-Civil War England, lodge members were Protestant and, if not Whigs, were at least Whiggish.¹⁹ When Freemasonry transferred onto the continent in the mid eighteenth century it did so through trade routes into the Low Countries and through aristocratic social channels into France. Thus members continued to come from the nobility, professions, merchant class and mid-to-upper civil service. Exclusivity in the lodges was maintained through the payment of dues, which were required upon initiation and granting of all subsequent degrees, in addition to monthly membership dues.²⁰ The high cost of membership

¹⁷ David Blackbourn, *History of Germany, 1780-1918: The Long Nineteenth Century* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 26; Jacob, *Origins*, 20;

¹⁸ Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 120-143. The lodges that admitted women were mostly in Belgium and France.

¹⁹ Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 85.

²⁰ Hoffmann provides a good illustration of the financial burden of belonging to a lodge. At the turn of the twentieth century the average laborer in the United States, for example, made around \$500 a year, while the entrance fee into the lodges was \$200 with an annual fee of \$50. In Germany lodge members spent 500 marks a year on membership at a time when the working class barely made 1000 marks a year. Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 107, 118-119. See also Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 20-21, 76-77 for similar examples in Belgium, France and

ensured farmers and servants were excluded, as well as lower civil servants (clerks) and small merchants. Not even artisans could afford to be lodge members, meaning that, ironically, stonemasons could not afford to join the fraternity that had once exclusively belonged to them.

Due to harsh condemnation by the Catholic Church, lodge members on the continent continued to come primarily from one of Europe's Protestant sects.²¹ Officially, a Freemason could come from any religion, so long as he believed in God. In practice, Freemasons remained overwhelmingly Christian, though Jews were able to join the lodges in small numbers.²² On even rarer occasion, Hindus and Muslims (from the ruling caste, of course) were able to join lodges in the colonies.²³ Politically, Freemasons in the Low Countries followed similar trends as their English brethren, preferring limited or constitutional monarchs, but in France many of the English nobles who transplanted the fraternity were Jacobites and thus supported a strong monarch over a constitutional one.

Freemasonry made it to Germany shortly after arriving on the continent. In 1737 the first German lodge, *Absalom*, was established in the port city of Hamburg, having been set up by English, Dutch and Swedish merchants. Soon after, more lodges cropped

England, where likewise the fees and dues of lodge members stood at over half the yearly wages of working men.

²¹ In 1738, Pope Clement XII issued the Papal decree "In Eminentissimi," condemning Freemasonry by name as a surrogate religion and thus heretical.

²² Masonic pocketbooks and almanacs vary from country to country in their religious tone. Some are overtly Christian (France), others make no mention of religion (Pennsylvania) at all. When I say overtly Christian I mean they contained poetry or short passages that were explicitly Christian. They all used the Christian calendar, but also included the Masonic one. Some included Saints Days, others not. See Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 30-32.

²³ In 1777, for example, the Nabob of Carnatica in India was admitted as a Freemason. See Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 38.

up in other port cities like Hanover, as well as Frankfurt am Main. German lodges received charters from Grand lodges in England, France, and even Sweden, making Germany almost as diverse in Masonic lodges as it was in political states. Freemasonry entered Prussia, with royal patronage at that, on the evening of June 14, 1738, when Frederick the Great joined *Absalom*, forging a very strong chain between German Freemasonry and the royal family. After Frederick, all but two of Prussia's kings joined the lodges, though not all remained active and participating brethren. Germany Freemasonry thus perpetuated the social exclusivity that defined the lodges previously.²⁴

Despite the similarities with other European lodges, German Freemasonry had some unique characteristics that play a role in the interaction between the lodges and the Nazi regime. First of all, although German Freemasons shared the social and religious characteristics of other European Freemasons, politically they were staunch supporters of the crown. True, English lodges had noble members and Grandmasters too, but the Prussian kings and nobles were far more authoritarian; a characteristic that transferred into the relationship between crown and lodge.

Another key difference lay in lodge administration. Unlike Britain, France, Sweden and the Netherlands, Germany never had a single, national Grand Lodge. For a time the first German Grand Lodge, *Große Mutterloge zu den drei Weltkugeln* (Grand Mother Lodge of the Three Globes, established in 1740), remained the only German Grand Lodge, but in 1764 another Grand Lodge, the *Großeloge Royal York zur Freundschaft* (Grand Lodge Royal York of Friendship), was established for those

²⁴ Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 20.

following additional rites that the *drei Weltkugeln* didn't recognize. Personality disputes within the *drei Weltkugeln* led to the creation of a third Grand Lodge, the *Große Landesloge der Freimaurer in Deutschland* (National Grand Lodge of Freemasons in Germany), in 1769.²⁵ In 1798, the Prussian monarchy issued an edict that gave these three Grand Lodges a monopoly on the granting of charters and the establishment of all new lodges in Prussia, strengthening the relationship between lodge and crown; however, the names of all lodge brothers had to be given to the police and updated yearly.²⁶

The French Revolution dealt a serious blow to the image and prestige of Freemasonry throughout Europe, though naturally the lodges in some countries suffered more than others. In the wake of the revolution, the first major, non-papal, conspiratorial attacks against the fraternity flooded the literary marketplace, pointing out that many of the republican and democratic ideas to come out of the revolution were already in practice in the lodges.²⁷ Enemies of both the revolution and the lodges quickly pointed out that the cry of “liberty, equality, fraternity” had already been expressed in the lodges and accused Freemasonry as being the source of the revolution. As centers of Enlightenment thinking the lodges definitely played a roll in hastening the

²⁵ For a more detailed account of the founding of the three “Old Prussian” Grand Lodges, see Robert Freke Gould, *Gould's History of Freemasonry Throughout the World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936).

²⁶ Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 162; Gould, *History of Freemasonry*, 118.

²⁷ Practices such as equal voting, equal taxation, a written constitution, and the election of leaders were examples of the links that anti-Masons and counterrevolutionaries saw between the lodges and the revolution. Abbé Barruel wrote the first of these anti-Masonic conspiracy theories suggesting that the roots of the Jacobins lay in the lodges. See Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 51 and Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 22.

revolution, but were not the cause of it.²⁸ Since the lodges included both those who would benefit and suffer from democratic reforms the social and political tension outside the lodges crept in, despite the fraternity's taboo against political discussion within the lodge.²⁹ As a consequence of the French Revolution the number of nobles in the fraternity, German lodges included, began dwindling, leaving the merchants, professionals and academics as the bulk of membership.³⁰ By the mid-nineteenth century Freemasonry was occasionally referred to as the "Internationale of the Bourgeoisie."³¹

From the Revolutions of 1848 through unification under Bismarck, German Freemasons continued to be much more conservative than their French, English or Dutch brethren. They supported the monarchy, rejected radical democratic reforms, absolutely abhorred socialism and Marxism, and above all were nationalists who supported German unification. For these reasons, Bismarck found it advantageous to form a temporary alliance with the National Liberal Party, which would have been the primary party for any politically active Freemasons, and began pushing progressive legislation through in an attempt to stave off the rising threat from socialism and communism, as well as advancing his wars of unification.³² The Liberal Party also proved a useful ally during the *Kulturkampf*. Freemasons, having been officially condemned by the Church and

²⁸ Jacob, *Origins of Freemasonry*, 23.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 80.

³⁰ Robert Beachy "Club Culture and Social Authority" in Frank Trentmann, ed., *Paradoxes of Civil Society: New Perspectives on Modern German and British History* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), 163.

³¹ Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 53.

³² Hjalmar Schacht, for example, was a member of the National Liberal Party, and this was before he became *the* Hjalmar Schacht. Schacht, *Confessions of the "Old Wizard"* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1956), 86.

consisting mostly of Protestants, were useful allies in the Reichstag against the Catholic Centre Party.³³

Bismarck's turn against the National Liberal Party in 1879 was a blow to German Freemasons, who had strongly supported Bismarck's policies up to that point. The death of Wilhelm I in 1888, however, was an even bigger blow. Wilhelm I, had been a devoted member of the fraternity, but the new Kaiser, Wilhelm II, had absolutely no interest in the fraternity, despite his father's best efforts. With the ascension of Wilhelm II, Freemasonry lost its royal patronage and was, at the close of the nineteenth century, an almost wholly bourgeois institution. It is worth noting that while both Bismarck and Wilhelm II despised Freemasonry they both belonged to a *Korps* while at university, so it wasn't fraternities in general that they disliked.³⁴ Other than the age of its members and the presence of a university, the difference between *Korps* and lodge is one of nationalism; the *Korps* (and even more so in the case of the *Deutsche Burschenschaften*) were distinctly German (that is they were formed in the German states and had no ties outside German-speaking Europe), and the only university fraternity that wasn't distinctly German, the Student Orders (discussed below), didn't survive long and was repeatedly accused to being covertly Masonic. Freemasonry, on the other hand, was an

³³ For an accessible overview of German politics in the latter half of the nineteenth century see both Mary Fulbrook's *Concise History of Germany* (New York: Cambridge, 1990), 95-145 and Peter Wende's more recent *A History of Germany* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) 75-122. Neither one specifically mentions Freemasonry, but both discuss the demographics of German liberals and identify them socially and ideologically with the demographics of the lodges. The moderate liberals who favored monarchy were of the same professions as the lodge members (lawyers, professors, doctors and civil servants), whereas the democratic liberals that wanted sweeping reform came from the professions just outside lodge membership (artisans, small businessmen, farmers and laborers).

³⁴ Weber, *German Student Corps*, 22.

imported fraternity that had ties between international lodges, so it's easier to see how Bismarck and Wilhelm could view the *Korps* with approval and the lodges with skepticism, a pattern repeated by Hitler and the Nazis a half-century later.

From the dawn of the twentieth century until the outbreak of WWII, European Freemasonry in general continued to consist of professionals, businessmen, bankers and senior civil servants. The Belgian lodge *Les Frères Réunis*, for example, contained 50 men, among which were the town mayor and two deputy mayors, the police commissioner, six medical doctors, three architects, three businessmen, a chocolatier, three clerks, two officers, three engineers, one members of parliament, the porter at a school for girls, fourteen working the legal system as judges or lawyers, one law school dean and “almost all the professors at the Textile School.”³⁵ An SD report on the Grand Lodges in Greece showed similar demographics; of over 300 men listed, a full third were military officers and another third were categorized as “special positions of influence” (medical doctors, bankers and businessmen). About 20% were lawyers or politicians, 15% were professors, and the remainders were categorized as civil servants, or working in the press.³⁶ A collection of SD files on Freemasons in Yugoslavia show demographics similar to those in France and Greece.³⁷

³⁵ Letter from NSDAP Landesgruppe Belgien to the Sicherheitspolizei, August 9, 1940, reporting on the recent closing of the lodge *Les Frères Réunis*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 65.010M, “Selected Records Related to Anti-Masonic Measures in Belgium,” Reel 1, part 2, folder 526.

³⁶ Report on the activities of Sonderkommando Rosenberg in Greece, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 11.001M, “Selected Records from the Osobyi Archive in Moscow,” Sub-group 01, “Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA), Berlin,” Reel 131, folder 9.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

In Germany, Masonic lodges also followed these trends, drawing its members from the professions, business civil service and occasionally the military. In addition to doctors, lawyers and professors, Freemasons worked as school principals,³⁸ veterinarians,³⁹ post inspectors,⁴⁰ army officers, and one even served as a general in the army medical corps.⁴¹ The grandmaster of the *Große Landesloge* was Lt. Col. Kurt von Heeringen. Although it was less common, Freemasons occasionally came from artistic circles. In 1939, the SD-South office submitted a report of former Freemason who continued to work in “positions of influence.” According to the report, the Nuremberg Conservatory of Music and Theater had three professors of music, five concert directors, two opera singers, two stage actors and a concert pianist, all of whom were former Freemasons. The report also listed an architect who, at the time of the report, was not only a former Freemason, but also working for the party.⁴² What should be noted is that while Freemasons permeated the Nuremberg Conservatory, making it reasonable to suspect a similar Masonic sprinkling in other artistic schools, *none* of the famous modern artists of the Weimar Republic were Freemasons. There was not a single

³⁸ After the closing of the lodges the SD frequently submitted reports of former Freemasons still serving in positions that the SD deemed “influential.” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 15.007M, “Records of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (RSHA),” Reel 5, folder 32. Dr. Carl Happich was administrator of the Elizabethan Pedagogical Academy. USHMM, RG-15.007 Reel 5, folder 33, Herr Bunnemann of Marburg was also listed as a school administrator.

³⁹ USHMM, RG-11.001M, Reel 72, folder 310, The *meister* of the Stettin lodge *Temple of Peace* was veterinarian Dr. Auerbach.

⁴⁰ USHMM, RG-15.007, Reel 5, folder 33. A 1939 SD list of former Freemasons who are still in influential positions in government list Walter Baumgarten as a post inspector in Erfurt who previously had been General Post Inspector.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* The same report for Erfurt listed Walter Wulfinghoff as “holding significant positions in the OKH” and Johannes Bluhm as *Generaloberarzt*.

⁴² USHMM, RG-15.007 Reel 5, folder 32.

Bauhaus architect, modern filmmaker or DaDa artist who also belonged to the lodges, suggesting that while artistically inclined, German Freemasons clung to traditional art and were culturally conservative, something the Nazi Party could look upon favorably.

Gestapo interrogation reports also reveal a little more about what kind of men belonged to the lodges in twentieth century Germany. Robert Pehl was born in 1870 in Grabow. At the time of his interrogation (1935) he was married with two children (both in their mid to late 30s) and worked as a head teacher in Essen. In 1908 he joined the lodge *Glückauf zum Licht*, a small lodge of around 25 active brethren, though Pehl claimed that well over a hundred came and went throughout any given year. Pehl remained an active brother until the lodge closed in 1933, by which time he was serving as its *Meister vom Stuhl*, the highest administrative position in a local lodge. Pehl gave his religious affiliation as “non-denominational” and claimed that with the exception of a one-month relationship with the Social Democratic Party, he was apolitical. That brief relationship, he argued, came about accidentally. In 1919, Pehl was elected as president of the Hansabund in Essen. The Hansabund, Pehl claimed, acted on behalf of the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland* (SPD – Social Democratic Party of Germany), and after finding this out four weeks into the job, Pehl resigned as president.⁴³

⁴³ The police files of all three men discussed here, Pehl, Dinger and Kress, came from the same folder in USHMM, Record Group 37.001, “Selected Records from the Nordheim-Wesfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Relating to Freemasons,” folder 1. Unfortunately of all the reports I gathered at the USHMM, most of them were about Freemasonry in foreign countries, hence all the general information about lodges in Belgium and Greece and so little over Germany. Part of that was because, as the Report on Karl Dinger indicates, many lodges burned or otherwise destroyed their records after the seizure of power.

Karl Dinger was another former Freemason living in Essen. He was born in 1882 in Solingen, and at the time of his interrogation worked as a manager in a printing office. Dinger was married and had one child, aged 28. He joined the *Freie Forschung und Duldsamkeit* lodge in Essen in 1924 and remained active until the lodge the lodge voluntarily closed in 1933. Upon joining he served as First Warden, and in 1930 became *meister*. The report had no information regarding membership in any political party, but *Freie Forschung und Duldsamkeit* was a daughter lodge of the *Zur Sonne* Grand Lodge in Bayreuth. *Zur Sonne* was a Humanitarian lodge and therefore if Dinger was not left of center, then at least he was left of Old Prussian. As for his religious affiliation the report didn't specify a denomination other than to say "evangelical."

Under the files on Pehl and Dinger was an incomplete file on Fritz Kress of Krefeld. Though incomplete there is enough information to tell that Kress was born in 1877 in Krefeld, was married, religiously classified as "evangelical," and belonged to the lodge *Eos*, which a letter included later in the file identifies as an Old Prussian lodge.

In the cases of all three men there are notable similarities. All were born in the late nineteenth century. All three were Protestant and married. Pehl and Dinger's records show that they had small families and started having children at about the same age as well (Pehl at 28, Dinger at 26). Both men worked in respectable jobs that, while not glamorous or politically influential, afford a comfortable living (comfortable enough to afford lodge dues). Both Kress and Pehl belonged to additional organizations outside the lodge; Pehl in the Hansabund and Kress in the German Red Cross. Pehl and Dinger's records also show that both joined the lodges at approximately the same age

(Pehl was 38, Dinger was 42). In a separate file there was a eulogy delivered at the funeral of Julius Hiller, the *meister* of a lodge in Dortmund who died in 1934. Hiller too joined the fraternity at 36.⁴⁴ Hjalmar Schacht joined at 31, but he was not the youngest Freemason in this study.⁴⁵ That honor goes to Alfred Arndt, a bank director in Breslau, who joined *Zu den drei Totengerippen* in Breslau at the ripe old age of 26.⁴⁶ There were some men who joined while in college, but for the most part the social clubs and associations of college life provided more than enough to satisfy the social needs of students.⁴⁷ A report published by the SD in 1934 shows that Pehl, Dinger and Kress were fairly typical Freemasons in regards to age, profession and habit of being joiners. The average age was 35 at the time of joining, came from the professional elite, and joined before WWI.⁴⁸ Looking at the similarities in the demographics of twentieth

⁴⁴ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Record Group 68.041, "Selected Records from the Collection Hauptstaatsarchiv NSDAP," Reel 5. Documents for lodges outside Germany show similar trends, though in some French lodges men as young as 24 were admitted, but since the German lodges were more traditional and conservative it can be assumed that most German Masons were at least in their 30s when they joined, see USHMM, RG-11.001M, Reel 11, folder 790.

⁴⁵ Schacht, *Confessions of the "Old Wizard,"* 105. The documents for Yugoslavian lodges, cited previously, also showed most men joining the lodges in their 30s, the age at which young men finished professional schooling and embark on their careers.

⁴⁶ USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, Folder 532.

⁴⁷ In his study of the German student *Korps* and National Socialism, Weber twice mentions that some members of the Student Orders in the early nineteenth century held membership in the lodges as well, a fact that brought down on the orders accusations of revolutionary ideology. In the 1930s, one of the largest associations of student fencing fraternities, the *Kösener Senioren-Convents-Verband* (KSCV), faced a forced closure for its refusal to expel Jewish and Masonic membership from its ranks, Weber, *The German Student Corps in the Third Reich*, 12 and 142.

⁴⁸ The report was titled "Direktoren und Aufsichtsraete usw. weiche als Mitglieder von Freimaurerlogen, des Rotary-Klubs, des Deutschen Herrenklubs und der Schlaraffia festgestellt wurden." (Directors and Administrators that have been discovered to have been members of the Masonic lodges, Rotary Club, German Gentlemen's Clubs or the Schlaraffia) and was alphabetized by last name. Unfortunately, the report was passed around piecemeal and I could only get my hands on "A" and "C;" however, those lists had the names of 80 men, scattered all

century Freemasons begs the question, “why, then, did they join?” In the nineteenth century the nobles joined for the mystery and exclusivity as well as a way for noble and the aristocracy to be both authoritarian and democratic; nobles meeting “on the level” with commoners, yet still recognized as political superiors.⁴⁹ Only the wealthiest and most influential men could join the lodge, ensuring social respectability, while the myths and lore of Freemason added a romantic and mystical element.⁵⁰ For non-nobles, the lodges were centers of philosophical and intellectual debate, as well as providing opportunities to network with other professionals and businessmen.⁵¹ German sociologist Jürgen Habermas likened the lodges in Germany to English coffee houses or French salons; institutions that helped create a public sphere in the midst of authoritarian society.⁵² The rising middle-class had brains and money, but not political power. Freemasonry thus provided a way for them to get involved in politics indirectly, and all in a strictly non-political forum, making Freemasonry non-threatening to the nobles.

over Germany and effectively provided a nice sample of the complete list. Each entry included the man’s name, occupation, birth date, address, date of lodge degree conferrals and a list of every other registered organization to which the individual belonged. “C” was found in USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 42, folder 519 and “A” was found in USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 532.

⁴⁹ Abbot, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 20-22.

⁵⁰ *Anderson’s Constitutions*, the first written attempt at penning the history of the lodges went so far as to argue that Freemasonry began in the Garden of Eden and identifying Adam as the first Freemason. See James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons: containing the History, Charges, Regulations, &c. of that most Ancient and Right Worshipful Fraternity*, in 1723. The copy referenced for this study was transcribed by Dr. Paul Royster at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as an electronic edition of Benjamin Franklin’s 1734 edition of Anderson’s original work. It can be found at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/25>, accessed January 6, 2011.

⁵¹ The *Berlinische Monatsschrifte*, for example, a major Enlightenment journal, was edited by Friedrich Gedlike and Johann erich Biester, both of whom belonged to the *drei Weltkugeln* grand lodge in Berlin.

⁵² Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeoisie Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), referenced in Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 23.

Masonic pocketbooks and almanacs frequently included the addresses and meeting dates of foreign lodges, showing not only that lodge brothers did a lot of traveling, but were able to extend their professional and business circle outside their own country. The expansion of the fraternity followed the trade routes.

Membership in the lodges also had a very practical benefit; association with influential men in business, politics and culture. In 1792, the philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte told a friend that the lodge was ideal “as a means to acquire acquaintances and helpful connections...for this purpose I recommend it strongly.”⁵³ Robert Beachy has argued that by the nineteenth century ambition and opportunism served as the *primary* reason for joining, concluding that “the lodges increasingly attracted ambitious members of the mercantile and liberal professions, who joined less for ideological reasons than the practical advantages of lodge affiliation.”⁵⁴ Beachy also cited the twentieth century sociologist Ernst Manheim, who called Freemasonry a Hanseatic League for its members. The benefits of association weren’t limited to the bourgeoisie. Karl Gotthelf von Hund created a new “higher” order within Freemasonry (Strict Observance), “to gain access to the richest courts of Europe.”⁵⁵

When the French Revolution chased out most nobles and philosophers, ambition remained a major factor in motivating men to seek entrance into the lodges. For the rising generation it was a way to expand one’s business as well being a rite of passage; only the social elite were allowed in the lodges, so admission was a way of saying to the

⁵³ As quoted in Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 18.

⁵⁴ Beachy “Club Culture and Social Authority,” 159.

⁵⁵ Abbot, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 31.

applicant, “you’re in.” This was especially true for Jewish communities in Europe, particularly in Germany. Jews had always faced stiff opposition to admission into the Old Prussian lodges because membership in the fraternity signified social and cultural assimilation.⁵⁶ As we will see, this trend continued into the twentieth century.

At the same time men joined the lodges out of ambition they also joined to be joiners. Lodge members often held membership in other social clubs as well as professional organizations, and that’s excluding membership in political parties. Voluntary association was (and remains) an important part of being bourgeoisie. Professionals form associations and societies to carve out an area of “professionalism” and ensure a quality and standard of work within that specific discipline. Most Americans, for example, would not trust a doctor or lawyer who had not been admitted to the American Medical Board or American Bar Association. At the same time, however, the associations also serve to rank professionals, establishing an unofficial hierarchy.⁵⁷ Freemasonry was one such organization that identified status rather than skill.

Gestapo and SD files on Freemasons all over Europe showed that, true to form, they often belonged to other voluntary associations, some professionally oriented, others purely social. In *Les Frères Réunis*, Robert Henneton was president of the Society of French-Belgian Reserve Officers as well as president of the Freethinkers of Tournai, to which his lodge brother Jean Baar also belonged. Another lodge member, named

⁵⁶ Hoffmann, *Politics of Sociability*, 98-99; Katz, *Jews and Freemasons in Europe*, 211.

⁵⁷ Konrad Jarausch, “The Perils of Professionalism,” *German Studies Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Feb. 1986), 107-137.

Heylmann, was president of the Young Liberal Guards. Fernand Vercauteren, a professor of medieval history, belonged to the Belgian Academy of Archaeology, the Belgian Committee for International History Research, the Utrecht Historical Society, the Hand History Society in Berlin and was director of the Tournai Institute for Social History.

In Germany, Max Meyer a professor at the Nuremberg Hindenberg-Hochschule also belonged to the International Statistics Office.⁵⁸ Robert Pehl belonged to the Hansabund and Fritz Kress to the Red Cross. The entire seven-man Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in Germany were composed of German Jews, five of which also belonged to the Independent order of B'nai B'rith.⁵⁹ A 1939 SD report from the North-West office reported that of the fifty-two members of the regional *Protestantenverein*, thirty-two were also former Freemasons.⁶⁰ There were even organizations that double-dipped; like the *Amis de Rabelais* – the International Freemasonic Doctor's Association.⁶¹ In addition to professional, religious and political associations, German Freemasons also belonged to purely social organizations like the Schlaraffia, the Rotary Club, the Druid Order, the International Order of Odd Fellows,

⁵⁸ SD-South, 1939 first quarter report on activities of former Freemasons. USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, folder 32.

⁵⁹ Overview of the Current Freemason Situation, December 20, 1935. USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, folder 28. Since these men are German Jews they lie outside the scope of this study; however, their simultaneous membership in the Masonic lodges and other fraternal organizations provides support for the claim that then men who joined Freemasonry tended to be members of other organizations as well.

⁶⁰ SD-Northwest Situation report for first quarter, 1939. USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, folder 32, PDF 139.

⁶¹ This association was mentioned in an SD report on Freemasonry in Greece. Given that the Freemason in question was Greek, and the organization had a French name, it seems likely that calling the association “international” was more than just rhetoric. USHMM, RG-11.001M Reel 131, folder 9.

and Kegel Klubs.⁶² The alphabetical list published by the SD in 1934 showed that over ninety percent of the men listed belonged to at least one other professional or social organization. Most belonged to two or three, though Eduard Cordes of Hamburg belonged to six. The grand prize, however, went to Heinrich Arnold, a lawyer in Dresden, who belonged to eighteen different clubs, societies and associations. Ironically, the only one he didn't belong to was the Masonic lodges. Arnold's name was included on the list because he as a member of the Rotary Club, the only one of his eighteen associations that the Nazis viewed a dangerous.⁶³

German Freemasons actually received their first lessons in joiner-culture while at university. Those Freemasons alive at the time of Hitler's appointment as chancellor would have attended university around the turn of the century when a university education in Imperial Germany was more than just an issue of learning or preparing for a career; it was a tool of social ranking and establishment. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century simply being able to attend was a sign of social status; fees, primary education and social pressures kept the lower classes out. For the propertied elite, a university education was expected of them as part of their social standing. For the professions and civil service elite a university education was necessary to maintain the social status currently held by the family. Sons were expected to attain an education at least equal to

⁶² SD-Northeast Situation report for first quarter, 1939. USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, folder 33. Due to the number of members who also belonged to these organizations, the SD began investigating each of them as well and SD documents and reports throughout the 1930s contain sections for each club, usually following the section on Freemasonry.

⁶³ "Direktoren und Aufsichtsraete usw. weiche als Mitglieder von Freimaurerlogen, des Rotary-Klubs, des Deutschen Herrenklubs und der Schlaraffia festgestellt wurden," list for names starting with "A," USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 532.

that of their fathers.⁶⁴ For the lower-middle class, college represented the doorway to a job in the civil service, which though not guaranteeing social mobility, made possible an upward trend for succeeding generations.⁶⁵ By the late nineteenth century, however, the success of the lower-middle class in the drive to upward mobility, coupled with educational reforms, increased the number of university students to the point that social exclusivity no longer rested on simply attending a university. The new social distinction became membership in a *Korps*. One historian described them as “embrac[ing] the sons of prominent citizens and officials of a given locality. Socially the members were snobbish, and, politically, they were loyal to the bureaucratic monarchies whose service they expected to enter.”⁶⁶

For students from lower-middle class families, money was incredibly tight and so the student lived in austerity and focused intently on completing his education as quickly as possible in order to take the civil service exams and gain employment. For the sons of nobles and professionals, however, money wasn't as big an issue and so the university experience was as much about social leisure as education. Thus, membership in a *Korps* became a symbol of one's social and financial status in the university hierarchy. One historian called the period from 1870 to 1914, “the heyday of exclusiveness in student social life, which centered upon the dueling fraternities and was characterized by repeated expressions of concern from student organizations about letting ‘inappropriate’

⁶⁴ Charles McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany, 1700-1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 251-252.

⁶⁵ Konrad Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Liberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 100-133.

⁶⁶ Rolland Ray Lutz, “The German Revolutionary Student Movement, 1819-1833,” *Central European History*, Vol. 4, No. 3 (September 1971), 216.

students (those of working class or Jewish background) into the university or student fraternities.”⁶⁷ Another scholar referred to the *Korps* as “the student fraternities for the sons of the higher echelons of society,” and the “epitome of respectability.”⁶⁸

German university fraternities came in several varieties, three of which are of particular significance. The *Landsmannschaften* were locally organized, apolitical, allowed Jews to join, and tended to function more like what Americans today expect from college fraternities (harsh initiation rituals, revelry, etc).⁶⁹ The *Burschenschaften* arose as nationalist (or at least pan-German) associations in the wake of Napoleon’s defeat, created by students who had fought Napoleon as members of the Free Corps. They had written codes, increasingly prohibited Jews from joining, and styled themselves as a Christian-German society. They also pushed for increased liberalism in Germany and many student leaders in the early *Burschenschaften* took part in the Revolution of 1848.⁷⁰

Finally, there were the Student Orders that, though short-lived, deserve some attention. The Orders enjoyed a brief career, appearing in reaction to the harsh and arbitrary treatment of students in the *Landsmannschaften* and then dying at the same time the *Burschenschaften* appeared, and for much the same reason. Each *Landsmannschaft* was organized on a religious and regional foundation and had no connection to *Landsmannschaften* at other universities, even if the members were of the

⁶⁷ McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany*, 245.

⁶⁸ Weber, *German Student Corps in the Third Reich*, 22, 47.

⁶⁹ For the *Landsmannschaften*, “Jewish” was a religious identifier and could be changed by baptism.

⁷⁰ Lutz, “The German Revolutionary Student Movement,” 241.

same sect or from the same region. The Orders, on the other hand, communicated between chapters and collected its members from those rejected by the *Landsmannschaften*. Furthermore, while activity in the *Landsmannschaften* stopped when the student completed his studies, membership in the Orders perpetuated beyond the university. These characteristics, coupled with the fact that the Orders referred to their chapters as “lodges” led to accusations that the Orders were part of a Masonic conspiracy to export revolutionary ideas into Germany through the universities. Though members of the Orders embraced the French Revolution, and some were indeed Freemasons, the Orders had no official connection to either. Still, the same surge of pan-Germanism that birthed the *Burschenschaften* also killed the Student Orders.⁷¹ After Napoleon’s defeat and throughout the nineteenth century, membership in either a *Landsmannschaften* or the *Deutsche Burschenschaften* symbolized elitism within elitism.

A university education was an essential part of joining the social elite, fraternities were an essential part of a university education, and by the turn of the twentieth century the core of university students were the sons of Protestant fathers who worked as professionals or in the civil service elite.⁷² Since the majority of German Freemasons were professionals it is reasonable to argue that most of them had probably belonged to a *Korps* while completing their studies. The *Korps* sought to “establish the student as an educated, refined gentleman and to assist him to develop the qualities of self-reliance

⁷¹ Weber, *German Student Corps in the Third Reich*, 2-13.

⁷² McClelland states that sons from the educated and professional class made up almost 75% of the student body by the beginning of WWI, McClelland, *State, Society and University in Germany*, 244.

and answerability for his actions at all times.”⁷³ Freemasonry likewise taught its members to “live faithfully, to make one’s actions lawful, and to unite brothers within certain boundaries.”⁷⁴ By the time German students finished their university education they had already been baptized into the world of sociability through association, as had their fathers and grandfathers before them. Family tradition added to the already heavy weight of social pressure since the father of professionals were often professionals themselves who had also gone to college and joined a *Korps*. Since the *Korps* experienced ended at graduation, membership in the Masonic lodges was a way to perpetuate one’s identity as part of society’s social and economic elite.

What we have then is a fraternity of professional and well established men who normally joined the lodges sometime in their mid-thirties and joined before the First World War. By the time of the seizure of power, are in their fifties, have solid and respectable jobs and are used to joining organizations and associations outside of church and political parties for the purpose of socializing and, more importantly, of sustaining or furthering their careers. The *Protocols*, one of the earliest and most savage attacks on Freemasonry acknowledged the role of joiner-culture in the popularity of the lodges, admitting that most Freemasons joined out of curiosity mixed with ambition.⁷⁵ An NSDAP report published shortly after the seizure of power admitted that many Freemasons joined “for purely economic reasons and do not subscribe to the philosophical and ideological tenets of the fraternity,” though the report still condemned

⁷³ Weber, *German Student Corps in the Third Reich*, 32.

⁷⁴ Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 24.

⁷⁵ Sergei Nilus, translated by Victor Marsden, *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion* (Reedy, WV: Liberty Bell Publications, 1922), 42-48 (Protocol XV).

such Freemasons for fostering economic favoritism (*Günstlingswirtschaft*).⁷⁶ One report simply stated, “Most members, have no idea of what they have gotten themselves into.”⁷⁷ Even Hitler during the later war years admitted his suspicion that most Freemasons joined out of curiosity or opportunism than out of sincere belief in the tenets of Freemasonry.⁷⁸

Religiously these men were almost all Protestants, and politically they straddled the center.⁷⁹ In other words, they belong to the very same demographics that most strongly supported Hitler after the Great Crash of 1929. During the declining years of Weimar, when politics in Germany began to polarize, Freemasons would naturally have tended toward the far right rather than the far left, as thousand of other non-Masonic professionals, academics, civil servants and businessmen did. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, some Freemasons began leaving the lodges and joined the Nazi Party. Others began looking for a way to reconcile Freemasonry and National Socialism, hoping to retain lodge membership and support the far right. Only a small minority rejected the Nazis, but it should be noted that those who did also rejected the far left.

⁷⁶ A General Report on Freemasonry in Germany, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁷⁷ RFSS-SD Situation report for May and June 1934, BArch R58/229.

⁷⁸ Adolf Hitler, H.R. Trevor-Roper, ed. *Hitler's Table Talk, 1941-1944: His Private Conversations* (New York: Enigma Books, 2008), 214.

⁷⁹ Of the two most prominent Freemasons of Weimar, Gustav Stresemann and Hjalmar Schacht, Stresemann stood right of center and belonged to the *Deutsche Volkspartei* (DVP – German People's Party) while Schacht stood left of center and was a founding member of the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP), though he later left the party when it supported a policy attacking private property. Though politically liberal, Schacht continued to support the monarchy.

CHAPTER III

LODGE CLOSURES AND REACTIONS

The Old Prussian lodges stood the best chance of making some kind of compromise due to their national character, historic ties to the monarchy and anti-Semitic restrictions and therefore made the most effort to actively cooperate with the regime; however, some Humanitarian lodges also made overtures to the Nazis. The only group that spoke out against the Nazis unequivocally were the irregular lodges, which had less than two thousand members at their peak.¹ But even in the SGvD, members who disliked National Socialism still found it preferable to communism. An examination of the reaction of lodge members not only shows how quickly Freemasons quit the lodges (supporting the argument that they joined for reasons other than ideology), but it also shows how quickly the lodges gravitated toward the party as the new primary association for personal and professional enrichment.

The Old Prussian lodges were the most adamant in their attempts to cooperate with the new regime. Throughout Weimar, the Old Prussian lodges had been trying to distance themselves from the accusations that Freemasonry was a revolutionary, liberal brotherhood that bore partial responsibility for the loss of WWI. In 1922, amidst the growing accusations that Freemasonry helped bring about Germany's defeat in the war, the Old Prussian lodges withdrew from the German Grand Lodge Association, stating,

¹ Irregular Freemasonry consisted primarily of the Masonic Union of the Rising Sun and the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany. The former dissolved itself almost immediately after the seizure of power, while the latter struggled on for a bit longer before going into exile in Palestine, thus this chapter will focus on the SGvD when speaking of irregular Freemasonry.

“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 and the world.”²

The September 1930 elections showed that the nation was polarizing politically in the wake of the 1929 crash. In response, all three Old Prussian lodges began amending rituals and terminology, as well as weakening ties with foreign Masonic bodies, in order to appear more national and shake off the stigmas placed on them in the 1920s.³ The *Große Landesloge* urged its daughter lodges to avoid any future connections with lodges of a “different teaching” (i.e. Humanitarian or irregular). A member of a *Große Landesloge* daughter lodges told the Gestapo that previously, visits between Old Prussian and Humanitarian brethren were quite common, but shortly before the seizure of power the *Große Landesloge* enacted a ban on associating with Humanitarian lodges as a precautionary measure brought on by “an awakening of the Christian conscience of the Old Prussian lodges.”⁴ After the seizure of power the Old Prussian lodges went into high gear, breaking all ties with Jews, internationalism, and even Freemasonry itself. “The most urgent task of the order,” one *meister* wrote, “is that

² As quoted in Bernheim, “German Freemasonry”; The further development of Freemasonry up to right before the national census, no date, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 294.

³ The further development of Freemasonry up to right before the national census, no date, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 294, describes the actions of the *Große Landesloge*, which added “German-Christian” to its official name and began removing Hebrew words from lodge rituals. “The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism,” no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1 and a letter from the *Große Landesloge* to *Totenkopf und Phönix*, December 16, 1930, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 158, reveal similar steps taken by the other Grand lodges.

⁴ Personal statement of Paul Theodore Ott, provided to the Gestapo during interrogation, September 4, 1935. USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 44, folder 548.

our order be seen as non-Masonic.”⁵ First, all three Grand Lodges changed their names, becoming Christian-National Orders and claiming to have totally separated from Freemasonry. The *drei Weltkugeln* became the National Christian Order of Frederick the Great, the *Royal York zur Freundschaft* became the German Christian Order of Friendship, and the *Große Landesloge* became the German Christian Order of the Templars.⁶ The *drei Weltkugeln* also pressured its current grandmaster, Karl Habicht, to resign and replaced him with Dr. Otto Bordes. Habicht had been a close friend and advisor to Gustav Stresemann and the grand lodge wanted a new Grand Master that had less of an internationalist reputation and didn’t consort with former Weimar statesmen who were married to Jews.⁷

Because the legal foundations of the lodges stemmed from a 1798 edict by the king, any official changes had to have the approval of the Prussian government. To that end the lodges began correspondence with Hitler, Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick and Prussian Minister-president Hermann Goering. To Hitler they sent a simple telegram, congratulating him on his appointment and paying homage, but also reminding Hitler of the longstanding relationships between the Old Prussian lodges and the Prussian

⁵ Letter either to or from *Totenkopf und Phönix*, May 11, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 130.

⁶ The former *Royal York zur Freundschaft* was sometimes also referred to as the German Christian order of Workmen, which, combined with the *Große Landesloge* reference to Templars, seem poor choices for names since they still use terms associated with communism and Judaism. Preliminary impact of the decree of Prussian Minister-president Goering of January 16, 1934 regarding the altering of lodge statutes, January 27, 1934, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 115; NSDAP circular for Bavaria, February 1936, Schumacher T580, 267 I. All three were eventually ordered by Goering to revert to their previous identity as Masonic lodges and drop the new names, thus for the sake of continuity and simplicity I will continue to refer to the Old Prussian lodges by their lodge names.

⁷ The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism, no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1.

government.⁸ As a backup plan, the grandmasters of the *drei Weltkugeln* and *Royal York zur Freundschaft* lodges had a meeting with Ludwig Müller, probing the possibility of recognition as religious organization should the legal overtures fail.

In his letters to Frick, Bordes blatantly admitted that the changes had been made “to meet the requirements of *Gleichschaltung* in the National Socialist state.”⁹ The new order, Bordes claimed, had absolutely nothing to do with Freemasonry and thus the party had nothing to fear from either the order or its members. Bordes also argued that the identifier “Freemason” was a term “passed down after the war” and not really indicative of the ideology of its members. Furthermore, Bordes pointed out, in the 200 year history of the convent (the term used in place of “lodge”) Jews had *never* been admitted. After assuring Frick that the members of the new order were wholly aligned with the National Socialist worldview he closed with a very poignant “we are not Freemasons!” and then pleaded for the party to “provide a way for 20,000 servants of the Fatherland...to help build the Nazi State.”¹⁰ The letter also contained copies of the order’s statutes, which essentially put in print what the lodge had previously supported in practice; Jews were officially excluded from membership. In fact, not only were Jewish men banned, but men who were married to Jews as well. The only exceptions granted were for Jewish

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Bordes to Frick, April 12, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I. The Grandmaster of the Old Prussian lodges were Dr Karl Habicht (*drei Weltkugeln*, replaced by Bordes), Lieut.-Col. Kurt von Heeringen (*Große Landesloge*) and Oskar Feistkorn (*Royal York zur Freundschaft*).

¹⁰ Bordes to NSDAP, April 12, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

men who had served at the front during the Great War. The statutes defined a Jew as any man with one or more Jewish grandparents.¹¹

During the meeting with the soon-to-be Reich Bishop, Bordes, along with Oskar Feistkorn, grandmaster of *Royal York zur Freundschaft*, promised Müller that “the majority of our members would stand on National Socialist ground...all of them are ready to work together with the NSDAP for the good of the Fatherland.”¹² The offer made an impression on Müller who promised that he would have a talk with Goering about the matter. Bordes summed up the meeting in a letter to a friend, commenting that “this meeting gives us hope, which has been lacking recently from all the bad news we get from the Brown House in Munich.”¹³ The *Große Landesloge* did not attend the meeting, preferring instead to “go its own way.”¹⁴ Since the seizure of power the *Große Landesloge* argued that pressuring the government too much too soon could backfire, suggesting that it was safer to play dead than to push the issue preemptively or prematurely.¹⁵ The *drei Weltkugeln* and *Royal York zur Freundschaft* countered that even if the government rejected the new orders, at least they, unlike the *Große Landesloge*, could say they went down fighting.¹⁶

¹¹ Statutes of the German-Christian Order, September 6, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 155. The definition of “Jew,” as well as the rules regarding mixed marriage and exceptions for service at the front are similar to the policies later defined by the Nazis in dealing with Jews.

¹² National-Christian Order of Frederick the Great to Martin Kob, May 6, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 131.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Preliminary impact of the decree of Prussian Minister-president Goering of January 16, 1934 regarding the altering of lodge statutes, January 27, 1934, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 115.

¹⁶ Feistkorn to National Christian Order of Frederick the Great, June 23, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 168; The further development of Freemasonry up to right before the national census, no date, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 294.

The Old Prussian lodges remained cautiously optimistic, trusting that their overtures to the government would yield fruit, and they had reason to believe it would. The Christian churches, like the lodges, were targeted by Nazi propaganda as ideological opponents to National Socialism.¹⁷ The Catholic Church received a double dose of abuse because not only did it have an ideology counter to National Socialism, but a political opponent as well (Catholic Center Party). All of these churches however, were able to survive without having to be fully absorbed as a Nazi auxiliary. Instead, the churches made their peace with the regime through compromise. The Catholic Church signed the Concordat in 1933, establishing separate ideological spheres for Catholic and Nazi ideology, each promising non-interference to the other. True, the Catholic bishop von Galen was one of the most outspoken critics of Hitler and Nazi regime, but he was a rare exception.¹⁸ For the Protestant Churches, the Nazis established the *Deutsche*

¹⁷ The Catholic Church received the most attacks because the Nazis saw it as an institution that, like Freemasonry, broke down racial barriers. Rosenberg, for example, referred to the clergy as “splendid Germans” that had been waylaid by Catholic doctrine, wanting to purge the church of “Syrian superstition” (i.e. Semitic influence), but at the same time fail to recognize that the church itself is an institution that rejects nationalism and racial distinction, see Rosenberg, *Myth of the Twentieth Century*, 135-136. Others tied the Churches international ties to Germany’s defeat in WWI, since France, Poland and Italy all stood to gain from Germany’s defeat, see Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke, *The Occult Roots of Nazism: Secret Aryan Cults and their Influence on Nazi Ideology* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 182. Theodore Fritsch even accused Catholics of aligning with Freemasons against Germany, see King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, 19. Reinhard Heydrich, on several occasions, included Catholics as one of the major enemies of Reich, often alongside Freemasons, see *The Persecution of the Catholic Church in the Third Reich: Facts and Documents* (London: Burnes & Oates, 1940), 290 and Reinhard Heydrich, “Fighting Enemies of the State,” *VB*, April 29, 1936.

¹⁸ For examples of Catholic leaders and figures that wholly embraced National Socialism, joining the party and the SA and the SS, see Kevin Spicer’s, *Hitler’s Priests: Catholic Clergy and National Socialism* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008). The church has also come under heavy attack, both for the Pope’s refusal to condemn Nazi atrocities during wartime, and for allegedly helping ODESSA aid the escape of Nazi war criminals to South America. See Simon Wiesenthal, *Justice not Vengeance* (New York: Grove Widenfeld, 1989).

Evangelische Kirche (German Evangelical Church), also in 1933, as a Nazified umbrella organization for all Protestant Churches under Reichsbishop Ludwig Müller. Even most of the smaller non-mainstream churches (Seventh-day Adventist, Latter-day Saints, New Apostolic Church, for example), were able to continue under the regime. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Church of Christ-Scientist were the only two Christian churches that did not survive after the seizure of power.

Thus when Bordes and Feistkorn met with Müller in 1933 they had reason to be optimistic, especially after Müller's warm reception to the idea. The churches posed an ideological threat to National Socialism, and indeed were investigated by the Gestapo. In fact, both the Gestapo and the RSHA combined investigations of Freemasons and the churches under the same sub-offices (Figs. A3 and A4). However, only those churches that absolutely refused any sort of compromise (Jehovah's Witnesses) or had teachings that were central to the faith but completely unacceptable to the regime (Church of Christ – Scientist) had to close. The rest were able to compromise and survive.¹⁹ By changing to more formal religious organizations, the lodges sought to gain the same concessions afforded the churches that likewise conformed and adopted pieces of National Socialist ideology. The *Große Landesloge* even sent a letter to its daughter lodges requesting that they stop panicking over the future of the order and spreading rumors of imminent closure. The *Große Landesloge* reassured its members that the

¹⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses, as part of their faith, refused to salute the flag, give the "Heil Hitler" salutation, or do anything else that they saw as violating the second commandment and putting graven images before God. This, of course, was seen as treasonous by the ultra-nationalist Nazis. As for Christian Science, the regime labeled them an occult group rather than a church, based on the Christian Science doctrine of faith healing, see King, *Nazi State and the New Religions*, Chapter I covers the Witnesses and II deals with Christian Science.

order stood on solid legal ground and that only the Ministry of the Interior could force a closure, which was something that the ministry “will *not* do.”²⁰ Rumors floated around that Herman Goering’s father-in-law was a Mason and suggested that through his daughter, the father-in-law could influence positive action from Goering, perhaps prompting the promise that Goering would not order the closure.²¹

Unfortunately the governmental silence was just the calm before the storm. Hitler spurned the congratulatory telegram, Frick rejected Bordes plea, the offer to Müller fizzled, and Goering never attended the scheduled meeting. When the grand lodges finally did sit down with Goering in 1934 the meeting did not go well. Goering banged his fist on the table and shouted, “You damned pigs, I need to throw you and this Jew-band in a pot!...there is no room for Freemasonry in the National Socialist State.”²² He rejected the Christian Orders and ordered them to revert back to Masonic lodges.

Without government protection the lodges stood little chance of surviving and members began leaving the lodges in droves. The loss of so many members put some of the smaller daughter lodges under financial strain, forcing them close simply because they lacked the funds to remain open. The *Totenkopf und Phönix* lodge, for example, implored all of its members, even those who disapproved of the name change, to stay

²⁰ Letter from German-Christian Order to all departments (not for publication!), June 15, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 165. The emphasis appeared in the original text.

²¹ Preliminary impact of the decree of Prussian Minister-president Goering of January 16, 1934, regarding the altering of lodge statutes, January 27, 1934, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 115.

²² Preliminary impact of the decree of Prussian Minister-president Goering of January 16, 1934, regarding the altering of lodge statutes, January 27, 1934, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 115; The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism, no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1.

because the lodge needed their dues to stay open, appealing to each member's sense of community and duty to each other.²³

The grand lodges limped on until May 1935, when Frick ordered all remaining lodges be closed voluntarily by the end of July or be closed forcibly by the police.²⁴ Realizing that institutional coordination was a dream, the Old Prussian lodges finally threw in the towel. All three passed resolutions promising to close by the deadline and left each daughter lodge to begin the process on its own. When the Freiberg lodge *Cornerstone* called its last meeting on July 22, they simply appointed the *meister* as liquidator and then adjourned. The meeting lasted less than thirty minutes.²⁵ In August a letter from the Bavarian Political Police stated quite simply, "Freemasonry in Germany is completely smashed."²⁶

Like their Old Prussian counterparts, the Humanitarian lodges also came under attack in the 1920s and 1930s as tools of the Jewish conspiracy and bearing responsibility for the war's loss, but the Humanitarian lodges were in a more difficult position because of their history of admitting Jewish members and having stronger ties with foreign lodges (the Humanitarian lodges received their charters from French or English lodges rather than from Prussia). This, however, did not dissuade the Humanitarian lodges from taking steps similar to the Old Prussian lodges after the 1930

²³ Letter from the St. John lodge *Totenkopf und Phönix*, April 13, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 136.

²⁴ Bavarian Political Police to local police and government, July 17, 1935, Schumacher, T580, 267 I; "Now the Freemason: not voluntary, but compulsory liquidation" in *Danziger Volkstimme*, August 28, 1935, R58/6117 part 1, 78.

²⁵ Report of the last meeting of the former lodge *Zum Fuerstenstein* in Freiburg, July 22, 1935, BArch R58/6103b part 1, 77.

²⁶ Bavarian Political Police to local police and government, August 29, 1935, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

elections, to distance themselves from foreign. The Bayreuth grand lodge *Zur Sonne*, for example, let its membership in the International Freemason League expire.²⁷

The most blatant overture, however, came on August 21, 1931, when Grandmaster Richard Bröse of the Grand Lodge of Hamburg sent a personal letter to Hitler, applauding his efforts and claiming that many of the men in the lodges were sympathetic to the Nazi cause. Surely, Bröse implored, there must be a place for such men in the party? Continuing with the letter, Bröse offered Hitler open access to the lodge's library and archives, commenting that the lodge's 200-year history had to have something of benefit to the Reich. Then, Bröse proposed the immediate closure of his lodge and urged all other Grandmasters to follow suit. In concluding, Bröse again implored Hitler to accept former Freemasons into the party because they were indeed loyal and true patriots.²⁸ In October, Rosenberg, not Hitler, responded to Bröse's letter, retorting that the letter simply proved the fickle and sneaky nature of Freemasons, who so quickly switched their loyalties. If Bröse was so willing to discard Freemasonry for National Socialism, would he likewise discard National Socialism for something else? "Now," Rosenberg charged, "we see every Freemason as a traitor."²⁹

Undaunted, Bröse responded to Rosenberg and so began a duel of letters between the two. In response to Rosenberg's accusation that Freemasons waffled in their

²⁷ The further development of Freemasonry up to right before the national census, no date, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 294.

²⁸ Richard Bröse, Grandmaster of the Grand Lodge of Hamburg, to Hitler. Originally published in *Hamburger Logenblattes*, reprinted in *Die Alten Pflichten*, 1 Jahrgang, Nr. 12, September 1931, GStA PK, 5.1.11 - Records of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, Nr. 48 – Issues of *Die Alten Pflichten*

²⁹ "Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus" by Leo Müffelmann, *Die Alten Pflichten* 3 (December 1931), 2 Jahrgang, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 48.

loyalties, Bröse stated that Freemasons don't waffle, but stay loyal to Germany and to tradition.³⁰ Rosenberg retorted that Bröse ought to read *Freimaurerische Weltpolitik* (written by Rosenberg himself) to understand that Freemasonry had no national loyalty. Bröse responded suggesting the Rosenberg ought to read *Die Vernichtung der Unwahrheiten über die Freimaurerei* (The Destruction of the Falsehoods about Freemasonry).³¹

What made this exchange significant is both its content and its date. For the lodges to send letters like this to Hitler *after* he assumed power would be understandable, but this letter was written a full two years before Hitler assumed power. True, the Nazis had been making unbelievable strides, both in popular opinion and at the polls, but a Nazi government was far from being a forgone conclusion. Bröse's overture could be driven partly by opportunism, but to suggest a complete closure of the Hamburg lodge, and call on all other lodges to do the same is more than just hedging one's bets. Arguments erupted in lodges across the country as word of the letter spread. Some condemned Bröse, but did so on grounds that he abused his office, not that his political views were wrong. Others supported Bröse and political tensions in the lodges began to rise, despite Freemasonry's taboo against party politics within the lodge. Karl Dinger recalled that within his own lodge, "politics slowly absorbed each member" until the lodge no longer played an important role in the lives of the lodge brothers and

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ This was the very same book that Bruno Schüler cited when submitting his resignation as a Freemason. The same author of *Destruction of Falsehoods*, Professor Heinrich Junker, also wrote *Der Nationalsozialistische Gedankenkreis: Eine Aufklärung für Freimaurer* (The National Socialist Circle of Thought: An Explanation for Freemasons) (Leipzig: Verein Deutscher Freimaurer, 1931).

members began leaving because of political disagreements with other lodge members. In the last days of the lodge, only a dozen men regularly attended.³²

After the seizure of power the Humanitarian lodges found their options limited. Most saw the handwriting on the wall and simply closed their doors. Robert Pehl and Karl Dinger, for example, both began shutting down their respective lodges almost immediately after Hitler's appointment. Pehl even did so without informing the general lodge membership so as to avoid arguments and protest.³³ When questioned by the Gestapo about his actions, Dinger replied "that to continue operating would be seen in opposition to the government. So rather than try to reconcile the Old Charges with our duties as citizens we began closing down..."³⁴ After the lodge closed, Dinger said he simply went on with his life and never looked back.³⁵

Pehl and Dinger were *meisters* of daughter lodges and responded by closing down. Some of the Humanitarian Grand Lodges, however, tried to conform to the new regime. On April 13, the *Großloge Deutscher Brüdernetze* (Grand Lodge of the German Chain of Brothers), headquartered in Leipzig, posted a notice officially announcing a dissolution of all ties to Freemasonry, an abandonment of all Freemasonic statutes, laws and rituals, and the adoption of a new name; Christian Order of the German Cathedral. The purpose of this new lodge was "to strive for moral-religious strengthening of

³² Police report on Karl Dinger, February 4, 1936, USHMM, RG-37.001, Folder 1. Dinger even claimed that the only reason he became *meister* was because all other worthy candidates had left the lodge out of disinterest or political conflict.

³³ Police report on Robert Pehl, October 30, 1935, USHMM, RG-37.001, Folder 1. Police report on Karl Dinger, February 4, 1936, USHMM, RG-37.001, Folder 1; letter from lodge "Hansa" to its members, April 19, 1933 Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

³⁴ Police report on Karl Dinger, February 4, 1936, USHMM, RG-37.001, Folder 1.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

German men on Christian grounds” and to “foster German identity and consciousness.” Most importantly, point five of the notice required members to be “men of Aryan descent and Christian confession. Jews and Marxists may not be members of the order.”³⁶ All daughter lodges had two weeks to either accept the changes or close. The National Grand Lodge of Saxony, headquartered in Dresden, was the largest of the Humanitarian Grand Lodges and also tried to adapt to the new regime, renaming itself the German-Christian Order of Saxony, with the accompanying clauses and statutes that banned Jews and communists from joining and emphasized the nationalist ideology of the order’s members.³⁷ Those Humanitarian lodges that tried to survive suffered from the same problems afflicting the former Old Prussian grand lodges. Membership loss led to financial problems,³⁸ and when Goering rejected the Old Prussian attempts to reorganize that too carried over, as did Frick’s August deadline for final closure.

After the closure, former lodge brothers of the Humanitarian lodges, like their Old Prussian brethren, wasted little time joining or forming new social organizations. The SD and Gestapo feared that these new organizations served as the foundation for the “work of Freemasonry” to continue clandestinely.³⁹ A kegel club in Elbing, for

³⁶ Official notice of the *Großloge Deutscher Brüdernetze*, April 13, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

³⁷ Memo from OKW to OKH, OK der Kriegsmarine, Reichsminister of Air Defense and Commander of the Luftwaffe regarding Masonic lodges and lodge-like organizations, August 28, 1939, BArch R43II 1308, 62-71.

³⁸ The treasurer of the Christian Order of the Cathedral in Bremen, for example, chastised members for not paying their dues. He acknowledged that, yes, there was an economic depression going on, but asserted that one could always find a way to pay one’s dues, Witte to members, May 1, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267I. Karl Dinger’s lodge had always had money problems and the member exodus exacerbated those problems, Police report on Karl Dinger, February 4, 1936. USHMM, RG-37.001, Folder 1.

³⁹ Elbe SD Situation report, June 5, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

example, consisted of twenty members, all of whom were former high-degree Masons. The club continued to call itself *Hansa* (the name of the former lodge) and, after its lodge building was seized, met in a private room in a local restaurant. With the exception of the waiter, nobody was allowed to enter the room whenever the club held meetings. An investigation by the Gestapo even reported that the club began to adorn the walls with Freemason paraphernalia and suspected that the club was merely a front.⁴⁰ The Elbing kegel club, however, proved to be the exception to the rule. Investigations of other organizations joined by former Freemasons stated that nothing suspicious was happening.⁴¹ The Gestapo and SD had simply displaced Freemasons, rather than removing them.⁴²

This behavior on the part of former Freemasons, both Humanitarian and Old Prussian, reinforces the argument that most of the men who joined did not do so out of ideology, but did so for ambition, opportunity, or simply for social exclusivity. They enjoyed the social aspect of association, which also brought with it economic opportunities. For the men to so quickly leave the lodges and then join other groups shows a continuation of the joiner behavior. Those groups like the Elbing kegel club,

⁴⁰ 1938 RSHA II 111 Situation report, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30.

⁴¹ SD North-West Situation report for first half of 1939, July 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33; The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism, no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1. SD Subsection Schleiswig-Holstein monthly report for August, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁴² Bavarian Political Police to police and government, April 27, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I; April and May Situation report for SD South-East, Breslau, June 5, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33. Similar processes between some of these organizations and the regime took place. The Schlaraffia, for example, had two branches, one accepting Jews and the other not. The party debated allowing the latter to continue while closing the former, but, like the lodges, decided to shut them all down. The Rotary Club also nearly avoided closure.

who appeared more mysterious and possibly threatening, simply retained the exclusivity of Freemasonry. The men had formed strong bonds of friendship (as well as business contacts), and if they couldn't meet as Freemasons, fine, they'd meet as something else, *just as long as they could keep meeting*. Adorning walls with Masonic memorabilia was more than likely done out of nostalgia than subversion, like at veteran's reunions. The men come wearing various pieces of their old uniforms, but that doesn't necessarily mean they want to re-enlist.

In the SGvD we see one of the few examples of Freemasons, like SGvD Grandmaster Leo Müffelmann, who belonged out sincere belief in Masonic ideology rather than ambition or social needs.⁴³ Sadly, Müffelmann's dedication to ideology is what made him such an outspoken critic of, and therefore target of, the Nazi Party. The irregular lodges, in particular the SGvD, were the only branch of German Freemasonry that didn't attempt to "coordinate." In fact, right up until its closure the Grandmaster of the SGvD, Dr. Leo Müffelmann, repeatedly condemned National Socialism, virtually guaranteeing closure after Nazis came to power. Part of the difference in attitude between the SGvD and the other grand lodges had to do with age. Comparatively speaking, the SGvD was a newborn, having only been founded in 1930, and as such had no ties or traditions involving the government. Because it was so young it remained the smallest of the German grand lodges, having a little over 550 members at its founding

⁴³ Alain Bernheim, in the preface to his first article on German Freemasonry under the Nazis, admitted that it was only a "handful" of Freemasons who remained true to the ideology.

and only growing to 800 at the time of closure, 679 of whom were considered active.⁴⁴

The SGvD had twenty-five daughter lodges, five of which were located in Berlin along with the lodges Grandmaster, Dr. Leo Müffelmann, even though the lodge was officially registered in Hamburg.⁴⁵ The SGvD stood very much in the shadow of the both the Old Prussian lodges and the Nazi Party.

Müffelmann and the others founders formed the lodge in response to the growing politicization of all other German lodges as well as the treatment of Jews within those lodges. Because of its criticism of mainstream German Freemasonry the SGvD had to get its charter from the Grand Orient of France, which was not recognized by most European lodges and hence gave the SGvD its label as “irregular.” Criticizing the hypocrisy of the other German lodges, Müffelmann and his followers called for a renewed and literal interpretation of the Old Charges. In its constitution the SGvD specifically stated that it accepted men regardless of race, class, religious confession or political leaning and fostered true brotherhood, humanitarianism, and social justice.⁴⁶ In response to the political polarization, the SGvD council planned to hold a lecture in 1931 entitled, “The Duty of Freemasons in Politically Charged Times.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Membership report as of February 28, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, No 27 – Lodge meeting minutes.

⁴⁵ The only other city to have more than one SGvD lodge was Dresden, which had two.

⁴⁶ GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 3 – General Ground Rules, pg. 1.

⁴⁷ Grand Council meeting, October 18, 1931, Schwerin, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 27; “The duty of Freemasons in politically charged times” no author, written in answer to the topic suggested in the council meeting of October 1931, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 20. Müffelmann’s personal papers contained a draft of the speech, which said, essentially, that Freemasons are encouraged to be politically active as individuals, but that as an institution the lodge must remain neutral. It isn’t known if or the speech was ever delivered.

From its birth until its death just three years later the SGvD struggled to gain new members.⁴⁸ Müffelmann once sent a letter to the lodge treasurer, Adolf Bünger, joking that membership remained so low that perhaps the SGvD should try Hitler's recruiting tactics.⁴⁹ Alongside finding new members, Müffelmann tried desperately to gain acceptance for the SGvD, both within Germany and in Europe. His efforts often met with frustration. Mainstream German Freemasonry spurned the SGvD as did German-speaking lodges in the United States.⁵⁰ Müffelmann tried to gain acceptance by applying to *L'association Maconnique Internationale* (AMI – International Masonic Association), one of the largest international Freemason organizations. In the opening line of a letter to friend and fellow council member, Eugen Lenhoff, Müffelmann bluntly stated, “we must get in the AMI.”⁵¹ Unfortunately the SGvD's application was met with a curt rejection and no explanation of why.⁵² When Müffelmann succeeded in getting into the Universal League of Freemasons he threw all his energy into planning the organization's annual conference, which was scheduled to be held in Berlin in 1933. He even cancelled his vacations because “there is just so much to do.”⁵³ With the Nazi Party

⁴⁸ In a letter to Überle, dated October 27, 1932, Müffelmann commented that the new grandmasters in some of the other lodges were strongly supportive of National Socialism and “will not look favorably on us at all.” The letter GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 23 – Private papers of Leo Müffelmann.

⁴⁹ Müffelmann to Adolf Buenger, December 21, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 21 – Private papers of Leo Müffelmann.

⁵⁰ Arthur Schramm, “Freemasonry in Germany” (speech delivered at a meeting of the Liberal Arts Lodge, No. 677, Westwood California, May 7, 1931).

⁵¹ GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 20 – Private Papers of Leo Müffelmann, Müffelmann to Lenhoff, January 26, 1932.

⁵² Letter from *L'Association Maconnique Internationale*, May 30, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 27.

⁵³ Müffelmann to Eugen, March 25, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 25 – Private Papers of Leo Müffelmann.

reaching its peak in the elections of 1932, Lenhoff bemoaned that the conference might have to be cancelled. Hitler's distaste for Freemasonry was well known, and with the Nazi Party now the largest party in the Reichstag a gathering of international Freemasons in Berlin seemed a losing prospect. The SGvD had already had a few run-ins with the Nazis. In July of 1932, Müffelmann received word that the party had been sending threatening letters to one of the daughter lodges. He told the lodge *meister* to simply disregard it, asking "where would it lead us if we responded to every rabble-rousing postcard that the Nazis wrote?" The Nazis, Müffelmann concluded, should be treated like the Tannenbergbund; ignored.⁵⁴ Müffelmann rejected Lenhoff's suggestion of cancellation outright, saying that he refused to sit around and wait for one party or another to ban Freemasonry, telling Lenhoff that the conference would go on as scheduled. Unfortunately the conference *was* eventually cancelled, though Müffelmann claimed the cancellation was due to economic hardship caused by the Great Depression.⁵⁵

Despite being the most tolerant and cosmopolitan of the German lodges, the SGvD was still not immune to political division. Articles in the SGvD's journal, *Die Alten Pflichten* (The Old Charges), discussed the political situation in Germany, and most articles on politics castigated the parties at both extremes, calling them "bearers of

⁵⁴ Erich Ludendorff and his wife, Matilde, established the Tannenbergbund in 1925, after relations with the NSDAP starting going south in the wake of the Beer Hall Putsch. The organization had an extreme-right ideology and was strongly anti-Masonic. Ludendorff wrote his two major anti-Masonic books for the Tannenbergbund. Müffelmann to Matthes, July 27, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22.

⁵⁵ Müffelmann to Erna Oloff, August 2, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22 – Private papers of Leo Müffelmann.

barbarism and coercion,” and the “mortal enemies of democracy.”⁵⁶ As editor of *Die Alten Pflichten*, Müffelmann made his opinion of the radical and reactionary movements in Germany known by allowing such articles to be published. The Bröse letter, however, exacerbated existing tensions and prompted Müffelmann to respond personally. He told the SGvD council that the letter would probably cause a split in the Grand Lodge of Hamburg and to prepare for an influx of members.⁵⁷ Then, the very next issue of *Die Alten Pflichten* carried Müffelmann’s, “Freemasonry and National Socialism,” as its main article, taking up half of the entire issue. The article was more of a compilation than an original piece; Müffelmann revisited previous articles and letters published by Freemasons, adding his own comments at the end, but made it very clear where he stood regarding Hitler and the Nazis.⁵⁸

Müffelmann began with the Bröse letter, reprinting the letter in its entirety and simply commenting afterward, “How is this possible, that one who rose so high could fall so low?” Nationalism, Fascism and Bolshevism, Müffelmann declared, were “all a step backwards towards the primitive, but done through the most modern of ideas.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Dr. Josef Loewe, “Kulturkrisis und Freemasonry,” *Die Alten Pflichten* 12 (September, 1931), 1 Jahrgang, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 48; Br. Condanhove-Kalergi, “Stalin & Co.,” *Die Alten Pflichten* 3 (December, 1931), 2 Jahrgang, Nr. 3, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 48.

⁵⁷ Grand Council meeting, October 18, 1931, GStA PK, Nr. 27.

⁵⁸ Leo Müffelmann “Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus,” *Die Alten Pflichten* 3 (December, 1931), 2 Jahrgang, Nr. 3, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 48.

⁵⁹ Müffelmann, “Freimaurerei und Nationalsozialismus.” Interestingly, historians debated whether Nazism was “modern” or “reactionary” from the end of WWII until Burleigh and Whippermann published their synthesis, *The Racial State* in the 1980s, in which they argued that the Nazi regime was both modern *and* reactionary by using modern methods to achieve an imagined utopia in the past. Müffelmann already understood this long before Burleigh and Whippermann, he just never had as wide a readership.

The goal of Freemasonry, he said, was to fight all three alongside any other group that condemned such radicalism, even the Catholic Church.

As could be expected, both Bröse's letter and Müffelmann's article generated quite a stir among the members of the SGvD. One brother interpreted Müffelmann's article as political encouragement, urging members to support parties that opposed fascism and communism. Müffelmann ended his article with "the struggle has begun" and this brother interpreted that as a call to political action. He wrote to the Grand Lodge expressing his concern that Müffelmann had broken one of the cardinal rules of the Old Charges and introduced party politics into the lodge. In the reply (which surprisingly did not come directly from Müffelmann) the brother was told that Müffelmann's call to arms was not urging political action, but calling for struggle against the fascist and Bolshevik worldview. The letter concluded that it would certainly be easier to follow the example of the Old Prussian lodges and abandon the true teachings of Freemasonry, but that the right path was seldom the easy one.⁶⁰

Br. Überle, another member of the SGvD, wrote "Dictator or Grandmaster?" an article he submitted to Müffelmann for publication in *Die Alten Pflichten*. It was a scathing rebuke of both Bröse and the Grand Lodge of Hamburg - Bröse for taking his office as Grandmaster too far, and the grand lodge for not beating Überle to the chastisement. Müffelmann, and all those to whom he sent the article for review, rejected the article as an emotional rant. One review expressed surprise at Überle's article

⁶⁰ Letter to Gaston Dermine, March 24, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 21.

because he had been informed that Überle himself held membership in the NSDAP.⁶¹ Although rejected for publication, copies of Überle's article still circulated among the brethren and caused arguments. Müffelmann even had to plan a special trip to Manheim to try and smooth feathers there that had been ruffled by its readers.⁶²

Überle graciously accepted his rejection. Others, however, were not so easily refused. At the same time Müffelmann sent Überle's article for review he also sent out an article by Br. Max Zucker, who wrote a response to the Müffelmann's "Freemasonry and National Socialism," as well as the previous articles condemning all radical ideologies. In his article, "Enemies and Comrades," Zucker attacked Müffelmann for bringing politics into the lodge, but more importantly for being too presumptuous and assuming that his status as Grandmaster gave authority to speak for the entire lodge in political matters. Furthermore, Zucker was upset that Müffelmann suggested any kind of alliance with the Catholic Church, stating that other than sharing some of the same enemies, Freemasonry and the Church had absolutely nothing in common. Finally, although Zucker agreed that Bröse's letter was "grotesque" and that Freemasons ought to dismiss a great deal of National Socialist rhetoric as derisive slander, Bolshevism was far worse and the two shouldn't just be lumped together. He continued, asserting that

⁶¹ Fritz Bensch to Müffelmann, February 1932; "Mozart" to Müffelmann, February 13, 1932; Müffelmann to Raoul Koner, February 11, 1932; Eugen Wahl to Müffelmann, February 11, 1932; Liebermann to Muff, February 11, 1932; Raoul Koner to Muff, February 10, 1932, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 20.

⁶² Müffelmann to Council, February 9, 1932, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 20.

many Europeans wanted the “tightly knit program” and that while National Socialism may not be good for Freemasonry, Bolshevism was bad for everybody.⁶³

Zucker’s reviews came back just as negative as Überle’s, calling the article a polemic and asserting that it would do much more damage than good. Surprisingly, Müffelmann actually wanted to print Zucker’s article. Perhaps Müffelmann thought that the rebuttal ought to be printed in the interests of fairness. In the end, however, Müffelmann agreed with the reviewers that with lodge tensions already strained publication would just cause more problems.⁶⁴ Zucker didn’t take the rejection as well as Überle, criticizing Müffelmann again, this time for stifling discussion on a controversial issue.⁶⁵

Zucker was not the only member of SGvD to express such views. Curt Porsig, wrote to Br. Matthes, the *meister* of his lodge, stating that anti-Masonic sentiment was on the rise and that Freemasonry, in response, needed to clearly express loyalty to *Volk* and Fatherland, as well as distance itself from left-wing groups. Matthes then wrote to Müffelmann, stating that many of the brethren felt the same as Porsig and suggested that the SGvD forbid its members from belonging to either the SPD or the Reichsbanner and condemn both as hostile to the state. Müffelmann’s rejected the idea and disagreed that

⁶³ Max Zucker to Muff, January 22, 1932, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 20; Max Zucker, “Kampfgegner und Kampfgenossen,” GStA PK, Nr. 23.

⁶⁴ Müffelmann to Council, February 9, 1932, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 20.

⁶⁵ Max Zucker to Müffelmann, July 21, 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 23.

the SPD and Reichsbanner were hostile groups, especially considering that both stood in opposition to the Nazis, which Müffelmann absolutely considered a threat to the state.⁶⁶

Other members went even further than Zucker, Prosig or Matthes. In an exchange of letters, Müffelmann learned from council member Alfred Dierke that one brother, named Ramms, left the SGvD entirely to secure a job in a National Socialist auxiliary. Müffelmann was shocked, commenting, “and to think this was the Ramms that we thought was one of our great comrades-in-arms.”⁶⁷ There was even a Jewish member of the SGvD lodge Jerusalem that supported the Nazis. Dr. Emmanuel Propper, the *meister* of the Jerusalem lodge, commented in a letter to Müffelmann that it was “amusing that a professor at the Hebrew University and son-in-law of an almost chauvinistic Zionist leader is a National Socialist. Oh well, the Jews are a paradoxical people.”⁶⁸

These examples show that even in the most humanitarian and tolerant branch of German Freemasonry one not only found dissenting opinions, but that the majority leaned toward the political right. Müffelmann recognized the stress placed on the lodge by politics. Among his private papers is the draft of an article, presumably written by him and possibly intended for a future issue of *Die Alten Pflichten*, that discussed the increasing propaganda attacks against Freemasonry. The attacks were becoming more of a concern because they had an impact on the brethren, convincing them that one could

⁶⁶ Curt Prosig to Matthes, July 10, 1932; Matthes to Müffelmann, July 19, 1932; Müffelmann to C. Matthes, 27 July 1932, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22.

⁶⁷ Müffelmann to Alfred Dierke, February 23, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 24 – Private Papers of Leo Müffelmann.

⁶⁸ Dr. Emmanuel Propper to Müffelmann, November 13, 1932, from Jerusalem, regarding the exit of Prof. Bodenheimer, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22.

not simultaneously be a patriotic German and a Freemason. Müffelmann then declared that those Freemasons who insisted on clinging to racial, class-based or ultra-national ideologies needed to quit the lodges and stop camouflaging themselves as Freemasons.⁶⁹

After Hitler became chancellor, Müffelmann and the SGvD had more reason to be concerned than any other grand lodge. In an effort to calm his fellow brethren, Müffelmann sent a letter to the SGvD council and to each of the twenty-five daughter lodges shortly after Hitler's appointment, acknowledging the fears that so many brethren expressed, but urging them to keep calm and not let rumor and speculation turn into panic.⁷⁰ While Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges scrambled to get into Hitler's good graces, Müffelmann watched it unfold, shaking his head as influential and distinguished men groveled at the feet of the "Bohemian Corporal." Müffelmann must have thought to himself that this was the very reason why he broke away and formed the SGvD in the first place; because German Freemasonry has forsaken the Old Charges in favor of racism, class struggle or nationalism. During a meeting of the SGvD council in late February, shortly after sending his letter urging calm, Müffelmann reported that the Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges were doing everything in their power to appear nationalist. "Now," he concluded, "only the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany is international."⁷¹

On March 28, Müffelmann received a letter from the Hamburg *Vereinregister* ordering the closure of the SGvD down and informing him that the registrar had already

⁶⁹ "Aus deutscher Freimaurerei," author unknown, no date, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22.

⁷⁰ Müffelmann to Council and Bauhütten, February 22, 1933, GStA PK 5.1.11, Nr. 52 – Lodge Correspondence and Meeting Minutes.

⁷¹ Council minutes, February 28-March 1, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 27.

recorded the lodge as officially closed.⁷² As if to rub salt in the wound, the SGvD received another letter four days later, this time from the AASR Supreme Council, stating that it too was closing down and that all SGvD ties to the AASR were severed as of April 1.⁷³ Still, that was not the end of the bad news. At the same time Müffelmann also received a disconcerting report from one of his daughter lodges; on March 27, the police conducted a search of *Zu den drei Sphinxen* in reaction to numerous tips from informers of suspicious activity within the lodge.⁷⁴ Not only were there NSDAP members within the SGvD, but police informers as well.

With international ties falling apart, local authorities ordering closure, the police conducting lodge raids and lodge members turning, Müffelmann and the SGvD council decided that there was little left to be done but to carry out what was already recorded by the state as *fait accompli*. On June 10, under the direction of the council and treasurer, the SGvD closed.⁷⁵ Some lodge members expressed their confusion and frustration at the decision to close the lodge. One member sent a personal letter to Müffelmann demanding answers, accusing the council of acting in haste and not putting up fight. Why, he asked, doesn't the lodge simply reorganize or try to preserve some kind of foundation so that it can be reestablished at a future date? "To go to sleep is easy," he said, "but to wake up is hard."⁷⁶ If Müffelmann responded there was no record of such among his papers. In September, Müffelmann was arrested and sent to the Sonnenberg

⁷² Müffelmann to daughter lodges, March 29, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 8 – Reports on the Closing of the SGvD.

⁷³ Supreme Council AASR to lodges, April 3, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 52.

⁷⁴ *Zu den drei Sphinxen* to Müffelmann, March 27, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 24.

⁷⁵ Abwicklungstelle der früheren SGvD, May 15, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 8.

⁷⁶ Letter to Müffelmann, March 30, 1933, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 25.

concentration camp. He was released in November and emigrated to Palestine where he joined the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany in Exile. His time in the camp, however, had taken its toll and Müffelmann died in 1934.⁷⁷

The Nazis suspected that the end of the lodges had not spelled the end of Freemasonry and so continued to investigate former Freemasons, as well as the organizations they joined. Government and police reports clear up to the beginning of war, however, show that Freemasons, despite some bitterness at the dissolution of Freemasonry, supported Nazi policies. Quarterly reports from regional SD offices all over Germany reported favorable reactions from former Freemasons to the *Anschluss* as well as the annexation of both the Sudetenland in 1938 and the remainder of Czechoslovakia in 1939.⁷⁸ Those who did criticize the *Anschluss* and annexation of the Sudetenland did so on economic grounds, fearing that the addition of Czech territory and industry threatened existing German companies.⁷⁹ Lodge reactions to *Kristallnacht* were mixed, while condemning the violence and the harm the pogrom caused to Germany's economy and image, former Freemasons supported Jewish dispossession and legal marginalization.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Bernheim, "German Freemasonry and its Attitude Toward the Nazi Regime."

⁷⁸ One report pointed out that even though the *Anschluss* increased Catholic influence in Germany, former Freemasons still supported it. Situation report for 1938, RSHA office II 111, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30; April-May 1938 Situation report from II/1 central office, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 28; Northeast Situation report, April 4, 1939; SD report on Freemasonry, April 14, 1939; April report from SD-East; SD Southeast Situation report, April 14, 1939; 1939 quarterly report from SD-Northwest, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

⁷⁹ First quarter report from Breslau SD on Freemasonry, April 14, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

⁸⁰ 1938 RSHA II 111 Situation report, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30.

Former Freemasons also supported Germany's claims to Danzig and the Polish Corridor, even through the use of force.⁸¹ Once war broke out, former Freemasons continued to make positive comments regarding Germany's foreign policy, including the Nazi-Soviet Pact, and also sought to join the military and take part in the campaign.⁸² By the end of 1939, SD offices across the country had "nothing new to report" in regards to former Freemasons, one report even stating that "it may be presumed that the majority of individual Freemasons, like the rest of the public, are caught up in the weight of recent events and are willing to be subject to political necessity."⁸³

Sadly, some former Freemasons didn't cooperate, acquiesce or criticize, instead choosing the most drastic response possible. One Freemason in Uelzen committed suicide, claiming that continual harassment by the party courts was more than he could bear.⁸⁴ Walter Plessing, a Freemason in Lubeck, also committed suicide, but for a very different reason. Plessing had left the lodges in mid 1933 and successfully joined both the party and the *Sturmabteilung* (SA – Storm Troopers); however, when the party implemented a policy of dismissing all former Freemasons who joined the party after the

⁸¹ January-June SD-Northeast Situation report, July 3, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33; Semiannual SD Situation report for Northwest, July 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁸² SD Subsection Südhannover-Braunschweig situation report, January-August, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁸³ SD Situation report for Southeast, September 3, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁸⁴ Unfortunately the documents mention him in passing and doesn't say why the individual was taken to court. There were no men ever specifically charged with "being a Freemason," so this individual must have been part of another group that was persecuted. RFSS in-house letter, October 29, 1938, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 14, Folder 198.

seizure of power, Plessing was stripped of both memberships. Heartbroken, Plessing committed suicide in 1934. In his will, he left everything to Hitler.⁸⁵

What then can be said of lodge reaction to persecution and dissolution? In general, the majority of Freemasons, though upset about the dissolution of the fraternity, nevertheless supported the Nazi party ends, if not its means. All three Old Prussian grand lodges sought coordination. Only two of the Humanitarian lodges did so, but one, the Grand Lodge of Saxony, was the largest of the Humanitarian lodges. If we include the Grand Lodge of Hamburg too (the lodge to which Bröse belonged) then the coordinating Humanitarian lodges represented over 65% of Humanitarian membership, meaning the majority of Humanitarian lodges also sought to align with the regime. Only the SGvD remained critical as an institution, but while its administration rejected National Socialism its members did not. Some belonged to the party, others sympathized, and even those who criticized the Nazis still favored National Socialism to communism. If the SGvD, the most humanitarian and tolerant of the German grand lodges, acted this way, and its grandmaster was anti-Nazi, what can be said of the lodges in which the leadership *led* the charge for coordination?

The speed with which the majority of grand lodges tried to coordinate with the regime shows that ideology was not the primary reason for joining the lodges. If so, members would not have sought coordination so assertively, nor would they have begun to do so as early as they did. Furthermore, the degree to which the lodges sought coordination shows that in the wake of the crash and the increase of Nazi influence, the

⁸⁵ Howe, "Collapse of Freemasonry."

lodges recognized that Freemasonry was one its way out and National Socialism was on its way in. Lodge reaction, then, shows the extent to which Freemasons as a group adjusted to align with the regime.

The existence of Masonic *Vertrauensmänner* (V-Men, informers) also shows just how much opportunism played a role in motivating men to both join and abandon the lodge. Karl Busch, an informer for the Gestapo in Bielfeld, provides one such example. He was a party member (No. 1,482,111) and started spying for the regime as early as August, 1933. During his debriefings, Busch continually expressed his desire to help bring the lodges down, so much so that the debriefer commented in his report that “without a doubt, Busch’s intentions are sincere and honest.” The report also pointed out that as a wealthy man, Busch sought no monetary gain for his efforts, only the opportunity to put his time and talents towards the movement. Busch even requested to be made a speaker or lecturer for the party, but the report nixed that idea, saying “what normal requires ten lines to say, he needs ten pages. Still, his ideas are in the right place and his principles are unswervingly opposed to the lodges.”⁸⁶ Another lodge informer was previously a 33rd degree Mason of the Scottish Rite, a position that takes years, if not decades, to achieve.⁸⁷

How, then, could men turn against the lodges so quickly? Opportunism and ambition provide one answer. The lodges provided social connection, business contacts

⁸⁶ SD report on former Freemason Karl Busch, V-Man in Bielfeld, August 2, 1934, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 533.

⁸⁷ This informant was mentioned in an in-house letter from the RFSS II 111-4 to SS Sturmbannführer Ehrlinger, October 29, 1938, RG-15.007M, Reel 14, Folder 198. His name was not given.

and an elite status. After the seizure of power it was the party that could offer those things. In the case of Karl Busch, family pressure and tradition most likely played a big role in his joining the lodges in the first place. The SD report on Busch mentioned that Hugo Busch, Karl's father and namesake, was also a Freemason.⁸⁸ Men who joined the lodges for the social status or to further their careers would be willing to quickly drop the fraternity for National Socialism if they saw that those two needs could be better met through party membership. Perhaps Busch's turn against the lodges was as much about his family as it was about the fraternity. Another explanation for such drastic changes of heart could be backpedaling; being overly zealous for the party and against the lodges in the attempt to atone for or cover up one's previous lodge membership.

The case of Paul Theodore Ott offers another reason why men turned against the lodges so quickly; they were offended by someone in the lodge and wanted revenge. Ott joined the *Große Landesloge* lodge *Zu den drei goldenen Schlüsseln* in 1912 (age 36). He was in the lumber industry and by WWI was, by his own admission, a very wealthy man. During the war, Ott claimed to have purchased almost 1 million marks worth of war bonds, all of which he lost. His business interests took a hit, and soon he and his wife were living on public assistance. He quit the lodge in 1932 out of economic hardship and the fact that he wanted to join the NSDAP. Before leaving the lodge,

⁸⁸ SD report on the Freemason Spancken, August 20, 1934, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 533. In the previous chapter we saw the pressure put on college students to equal or better their fathers in terms of education and career, so it would make sense that the sons of Freemasons would also be put under pressure to follow in their father's social footsteps as well as his collegiate and occupational ones. By way of analogy, think of the pressure some parents place on their children here in the United States to attend a specific college and study a specific subject because of family tradition.

however, he asked for a loan to help him get back on his feet. In response, Grandmaster von Heerigen sent him a kind letter and a money order for twenty *Reichsmark* (RM). Needless to say, Ott was deeply insulted, but that was just the beginning. After leaving the lodge, Ott received a letter from the lodge stating that his dues had been in arrears and owed the lodge RM 160. When Ott explained that he was living on welfare and couldn't possibly afford to pay, the lodge slapped a lien on him (*Zahlungsbefehl*). "The much-vaunted charity of the lodges," Ott wrote, "is just a store front for suckers." Ott described a lavish celebration to which the lodge once invited him. Brother's from all over the country came in as guests of the Grandlodge. The event, Ott estimated, cost between twenty and thirty thousand marks, yet they could only spare him twenty. Since Ott left the lodge before the seizure of power he couldn't be used as a V-Man, but his statement to the Gestapo is dripping with bitterness. Of the over 70,000 Freemasons in Germany, Ott cannot possibly be the only one to feel slighted, providing the Gestapo with a very willing man to serve as an informer.⁸⁹

Whatever the reason, these men show how easily a association that had existed for decades could be tossed aside. True, these extreme cases of former Freemasons actively working with the regime against the lodges was the exception more than the rule, but so too were cases like Leo Müffelmann, who openly criticized National Socialism and died as an indirect result of his opposition. The majority lay in the middle, having sentimental ties to the lodges, but still willing to discard them without too much prompting.

⁸⁹ Gestpo file on Paul Theodor Ott, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 44, folder 548.

By way of comparison, the student *Korps* also tried to survive under pressure from the new regime. When the NSDStB appeared in 1926 it tried to gain recognition and acceptance as a legitimate college association but had trouble because of its political underpinnings. The *Korps* (like the Masonic lodges) remained aloof from political and religious issues, but as politics polarized in the wake of the crash, more students were joining the NSDStB, and by 1933 the NSDStB had administrative control of Germany's student fencing associations. After the seizure of power, *Gleichschaltung* in the student *Korps* was simply a tidying up process, putting into law what was already in practice. The more nationalist *Deutsche Burschenschaften* threw out its Jewish and Masonic membership and was eventually incorporated into the NSDStB. The *Kösener Senioren-Convents-Verband* (KSCV – Kösen Senior-Convents Association), on the other hand, held out against pressure to expel Jews and Freemasons. When the moment of truth finally came, the KSCV dissolved itself rather than compromise, closing its doors in October 1935, just two months after the last Masonic lodge in Germany shut down. Some of these students continued to meet and practice swordplay as they were wont to do in the KSCV. Historian R.G.S. Weber argued that the continued meetings were examples of defiance and resistance to the Nazi regime, much in the same way that the Nazis saw the continued presence of the lodges, even as Christian Orders, as a semblance of Freemasonry and therefore a sign of resistance;⁹⁰ however, there is another possibility that Weber overlooks, which explains both the behavior of the KSCV and the Masonic lodges. To continue to meet may have been a gesture of resistance, but it could

⁹⁰ Weber, *German Student Corps in the Third Reich*, 102-141.

also have been a group of fencing buddies whose club had been shut down and wanted to continued fencing, but without having to join a Nazi sponsored club. The clandestine clubs thus continued out of political disinterest rather than cloaked hostility. Likewise with the Masonic lodges. The men had been members of a particular lodge for years, and even decades. When the lodges were dissolved they joined new groups (Schlaraffia, kegel clubs, etc.) out of a desire to keep meeting as friends, but without having to start each meeting with the *Horst Wessel Lied*.

It is also interesting to note that when the lodges changed to German-Christian Orders they started referring to individual chapters as “convents.” Only two other groups used that particular term. One was, obviously, the nunneries of the Catholic Church, the other was the university *Korps*. The lodges were seeking to redefine themselves as university fraternities, but without the university. The *Burschenschaften* succeeded in coordination with the regime, and perhaps the lodges thought by becoming a national-Christian fraternity like the *Burschenschaften* they could be extended the opportunity to coordinate like the *Burschenschaften*. But as discussed in the introduction, the student *Korps* had something to offer the Nazis that the lodges did not. The *Korps* had a strict honor code, were rooted in the German university, and incorporating them would make the job of the NSDStB much easier. The lodges, on the other hand, had their roots in a foreign country, held a cosmopolitan ideology, and had no direct equivalent in any of the NSDAP’s auxiliaries. Even after becoming Christian Orders the lodges had nothing to offer; the Christian churches had made their peace with

National Socialism, so if men wanted to associate in a national Christian order they could simply go to church.

The lodges were left with no other alternative but to close down, however, while the party rejected Freemasonry as an organization the door was still open to individuals. The new problem, at least for the party, was striking the right balance between ideological purity and practical necessity; letting Freemasons work with the regime without appearing to sacrifice party integrity. In the next chapter we will see how the regime tried to find this delicate balance in allowing former Freemasons to serve in the party, civil service and military.

CHAPTER IV

DEFINING “FREEMASON”

While the Freemasons maintained that the name changes and reorganization were done in the name of genuine nationalist support the regime remained understandably skeptical. Thus when scores of former Freemasons sought admission into the party and its auxiliaries the Nazis stood at an impasse: on one hand these men were educated professionals whose skills were essential to the success of the regime, but on the other hand these men belonged to an organization that, according to the party, fostered internationalism and was manipulated by the Jews. The majority of former lodge members seeking entrance had most likely joined Freemasonry in the first place for social and professional reasons, but the example of Leo Müffelmann demonstrated that some in the lodges truly believed in the ideology, and while the regime could make allowances for the former it dreaded accidentally letting in the latter.¹ For example, the SD had a letter from the former *Totenkopf und Phönix* lodge to one of its members, stating “We have gathered here in the new form but in the old spirit...we have closed down, but at the same time, we haven’t.” The letter continued to explain how words and terms may have changed, but the laws and principles behind the terms remained.² Such correspondence had led to the rejection of the Christian Orders and the dissolution of

¹ RFSS-SD Situation report for May-June, 1934, BArch R58/229; letter to Consul Reiner, NSDAP Verbindungsstab, January 20 1934, Schumacher, T580 267 I.

² *Totenkopf und Phoenix* to Br. Kaemmler, June 28, 1933, BArch R58/6163 part 1, 166. The SD had another letter from the a former member of the *Große Landesloge* that said “If we must put it down for a time, we will take it up again later,” see “The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism,” no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1.

Freemasonry, but while the regime had given its final answer to the lodges as an institution the matter of individual Masons posed a different problem; to ban all former Freemasons was foolish, but there still had to be some kind of straining process to weed out Freemasons who, the Nazi Party was so certain, would try to join the party and its auxiliaries with the intention of either destroying it from within, or acting to help other “questionable” Freemasons get in as well. The party needed a happy medium, but the problem came in trying to codify what separated “true” Freemasons (like Müffelmann), from the social joiners. Time and time again the party establish the limits of “acceptable” only to redefine those limits a year or two later, making them more inclusive. In less than a decade the party went from a total ban on Freemasons in the party, civil service or military, to granting amnesty to the majority of former Freemasons.

The issue of Freemasons belonging to the party started in the 1920s. In 1926, Hitler established the *Untersuchung und Schlichtungs-Ausschuss* (USCHLA - Committee for Investigation and Settlement) as a sort of party court to help settle internal disputes between party offices and avoid embarrassing either the party or the Fuehrer.³ After the seizure of power he added *Reich* to the title and it became the RUSchLA. Two of the issues that RUSchLA had to deal were whether or not former Freemasons should be allowed in the party as new members, and if former Freemasons discovered in the party already had to be expelled. By the early 1930s the RUSchLA

³ Initially abbreviated USCHLA, the “Reich” portion was, of course, added as the party grew large enough to actually spread across the country, becoming the RUSchLA, see Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, 122, 221.

urged a total ban, though allowing Hitler to grant exceptions.⁴ The *Völkischer Beobachter* (VB) echoed the general ban in an article titled “No Freemasons in the NSDAP.”⁵ As for the exceptions, Hitler stated that he only granted those in “very rare cases” to “men whose entire lives bear witness to their indisputably nationalist feelings.”⁶

The policy, however, was much easier to announce than enforce and enforcement varied by region. Some local offices began either admitting ex-Masons, or refusing to throw out former lodge members already in the party, while others strictly adhered to the policy. Those Freemasons denied admission appealed on the basis that if other Freemasons were being allowed to remain, why should they be excluded? Walter Buch, head of the RUSchLA from 1927 until the end of WWII, pointed out the paradox in an RUSchLA newsletter regarding Freemasons in the party. His letter reiterated the policy of banning all Freemasons, but argued that the acceptance of “honorable” (*ehrbar*) Germans who formerly belonged to the lodges and have forsaken lodge membership is “un-refusable.”⁷ The question, however, remained; what defined “honorable?” Some former Freemasons, Buch argued, joined for social benefits, seeking a sense of

⁴ Transcript from a USCHLA newsletter about Freemasons in the party, Schumacher, October 26, 1931, T580, 267I.

⁵ “Keine Freimaurer in der NSDAP,” VB, May 26, 1933.

⁶ Hitler, *Table Talk*, 214. This was a similar law passed for *mischlinge* in the armed forces. As a rule, *mischlinge* were excluded but could receive an exemption from Hitler to continue serving. During the course of the war Hitler granted thousands of these exemptions, some to men that were half-Jewish under the Nuremberg Laws. If Hitler was willing to make such an exception for men of mixed race, surely the plight of non-Jewish Freemasons couldn't be that difficult, see Brian Mark Rigg, *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002).

⁷ Transcript from a USCHLA newsletter about Freemasons in the party, October 26, 1931, Schumacher, T580, 267I. One of Buch's assistants was Hans Frank.

community like they found in the trenches of WWI. Others joined for the economic and social benefits of lodge membership. Some joined because simply because they were joiners. Only a few joined out of sincere belief in the Masonic ideology so detested by the Nazis.

Buch suggested that the party out to make distinctions between former Old Prussian, Humanitarian and irregular members. Since the fracturing of German Freemasonry occurred over national/racial issues it was a good place to start in deciding who was “honorable.”⁸ Additionally he proposed allowing exceptions on a greater scale than only to those with Hitler’s personal endorsement. The process should begin at the local recruiting level. All former Freemasons, whether applying for new membership or already found within the party, had to sign an *Erklärung*, a declaration of complete and total disassociation with the fraternity, both physically and ideologically. Genuine Freemasons, Buch argued, held their lodge loyalties above all else, including the nation, and thus would never willingly sign the *Erklärung*, a sample of which Buch included with the newsletter:⁹

“I hereby swear on my honor and conscience, that by my withdrawal I have forsaken my previously performed oath to the lodge _____, as well as any and all sympathies and associations.”

Signed

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

Buch hoped that by granting a little bit of leeway to the party's rigid "No Freemason" policy it could continue to keep out undesirable, ideologically-driven Freemasons while allowing the rest to join or continue membership in the party.

Buch was not the only party official that saw problems in the policy towards Freemasons. Alfred Rosenberg received a letter from Eric Hollenbach, a party officer in Berlin, arguing that not only should some former Freemasons be allowed to join the party, but also echoing Buch's argument that it was wrong to lump Old Prussian and Humanitarian Freemasons into the same pile. The party, according to Hollenbach, had been listening too much to the anti-Masonic propaganda of "dear old Ludendorff."¹⁰ In regards to Jews, the Old Prussian lodges were quite clear in their refusal to officially admit Jewish members, proudly boasting that in 200 years they had never admitted a single Jew into the lodge.¹¹ As for proving their loyalty to Germany, Freemasons fought bravely in both the Franco-Prussian War, as well as the trenches of WWI. The bottom line was that most German Freemasons considered themselves just that; *German* Freemasons, placing their national identity ahead of their lodge identity.

Hollenbach continued, arguing that the party suffered from ignorance of the fundamental tenets of Freemasonry, leading to the policy of labeling anything Masonic as untouchable, and turning all lodge brothers into dyed-in-the-wool Freemasons. He said the "spirit of objection," to Freemasonry (*Geist der Einwendung*) had grown too

¹⁰ Hollenbach to Rosenberg, March 9, 1932, Schumacher, T580, 219. In one of his most stinging anti-Masonic books, *The Destruction of Freemasonry through Revelation of their Secrets* (English edition, Los Angeles: Noontide Press, 1977), Ludendorff claimed that through Freemasonry, German men actually become "artificial Jews" - Jews in everything but blood.

¹¹ Helmreich, *German Churches Under Hitler*, 398.

large and created an unfair portrayal of good, nationalist Germans who just happened to also be lodge members. Hollenbach pointed out that within the Prussian lodges, the *drei Weltkugeln* in particular, there had been numerous sub-groups that had expressed the goal of making the Old Prussian lodges wholly German-Christian institutions, completely prohibiting Jews (even as visiting brothers) and basing the groups ideology on German nationalism rather than the “brotherhood of all men.” At the end of the letter Hollenbach argued that over ten thousand German-Christian Freemasons had expressed the willingness to discard all secretiveness, fully disclose the workings of the lodges and try to rebuild bridges between the fraternity and the party. As his last point, Hollenbach stated that the Old Prussian lodges had the same goals as National Socialism, and by co-opting them rather than persecuting them the party could gain the support of 60,000 influential men.¹² Hollenbach’s numbers are a bit inflated. By 1933 the Old Prussian lodges only had about 50,000 members. Still, Buch and Hollenbach made it quite clear that to dismiss Freemasons *en masse* was a foolish idea, suggesting that through a little work the party could separate the “honorable” from the rest. Both suggested using the three branches of Freemasonry as the dividing line. Bröse’s letter to Hitler demonstrated that some in the Humanitarian lodges supported the Nazis as well, so division by branch was insufficient. The party needed a more defined distinction.

The first step towards a new distinction came shortly after the seizure of power as more Freemasons sought entrance into the party, knowing their lodges couldn’t remain open much longer and not willing to wait on the fate of the Christian Orders.

¹² Hollenbach to Rosenberg, March 9, 1932, Schumacher, T580, 319.

Buch issued a mandate on May 15th; no Freemasons (this is, men who currently held membership in a lodge) could join or remain in the party; however, former Freemasons who had left the lodges before the seizure of power (with documentary evidence to prove it) and had signed the *Erklärung* could join/remain in the party, but were to be barred from leadership positions.¹³ Inquiries from the SA regarding the membership of current and former Freemasons yielded a similar decree. In November the SA issued a general memo stating that “according to the will of the Fuehrer, there shall be no objection to former Freemasons who left the lodges before January 30 simply joining the party; however, they shall be excluded from leadership positions.”¹⁴

Despite invoking the Fuehrer, the memo, and Buch’s decree, failed to settle the issue. Just five days after the issuance of the SA memo, a letter from Herr Kassenwart, the head of the party office in Hartmannsdorf, to the RUSchLA asked for clarification regarding the membership applications of Freemasons, pointing out that some of the surrounding towns were not following established policy and asking if Hartmannsdorf could thus be a little more selective in its own enforcement.¹⁵ Part of the confusion stemmed from an inconsistent definition of what a Freemasons was. To Buch and the SA, Freemasons were men who *currently* belonged to a lodge, yet a General Report on

¹³ An original copy of the mandate was unavailable, but it is referenced and quoted by a half dozen other documents in Schumacher file 267 I, such as the 22 May 1933 letter from Stuertz to Dortmund; letter of 10 June 1933 from the Dortmund USCHLA to the party lawyer in Dortmund, Herr Lüsebrink; letter from Dortmund USCHLA to the Munich USCHLA dated 13 June 1933; a letter dated 7 June 1933 from deputy Gauleiter Emil Stuertz to Dortmund NSDAP office; and a 27 May letter from the Dortmund to Stuertz.

¹⁴ SA General Memo, November 6, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

¹⁵ Letter dated November 11, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I. It’s worth pointing out that Kassenwart didn’t ask for the lax offices to be punished or forced to tighten up, but instead asked if he could relax the rules.

Freemasonry published by the party in 1934 stated, “A Freemason is *always* first and foremost a Freemason [emphasis original].”¹⁶ The statement caused confusion because it used the same word to describe two very different things; and person and an ideology. A less confusion rendition would have been “A member of the Masonic lodges is always first and foremost a follower of Masonic ideology.” To Buch, men who left the lodges and signed the *Erklärung* absolved themselves of any further ideological ties and thus made them ineligible to join the party, but were still denied leadership positions as punishment for joining the lodges in the first place. The deluge of letters requesting clarification came because party officials understood statements like that to mean membership at any time forever marked the individual as a Freemason, even if they left the lodges, and thus ineligible for party membership.

The same issues regarding former Freemasons in the party spilled over into the civil service where thousands of Freemasons were employed. As party and government melded together, belonging to the latter necessitated belonging to the former, meaning that former Freemasons not only came into the party, but held leadership positions as well. Once again the party found itself trying to decide how to define and deal with Freemasons. To keep them was wise in terms of practicality, foolish in terms of party policy and ideology. To dismiss them was the exact reverse. In April 1933, the government passed the Law on the Reestablishment of the Civil Service. In addition to dismissing all Jews, the law left the door wide open for further dismissals of “civil servants whose previous political activities afford no assurance that they will at all times

¹⁶ A General Report on Freemasonry in Germany, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

give their fullest support to the national State, can be dismissed from the service.”¹⁷

Though conservative in comparison to their European counterparts, Freemasonry in Germany carried a liberal stigma and many former Freemasons at one time belonged to the *Deutsche Demokratische Partei* (DDP – German Democratic Party). As a weeding-out tool the party applied Buch’s idea of the *Erklärung* and expanded it into a full-page form that, when completed, provided a socio-political resume and lodge curriculum vitae of the individual (Fig. A5). Unlike religious association, lodge membership was never officially recorded, so to avoid letting anyone slip through the net all civil servants were required to fill out a copy by September 1 of that year, and all new hires had to fill one out as well. A week later the *Berliner Tageblatt* printed a friendly reminder to all civil servants to complete the *Erklärung*.¹⁸ Authority to grant exceptions for individuals whose *Erklärung* was questionable initially rested only with Hitler, but was gradually delegated to others.¹⁹

In January 1934, the party issued a general report stating that Hitler had become concerned with party integrity (if it can be called that), especially in the admission of new members, after reminding the party of the need to maintain unity and racial purity the report turned to the question of Freemasonry, reminding readers that the Third Reich

¹⁷ “Law on the Reestablishment of the Civil Service,” April 7, 1933, available from the Austrian National Library Historical Legal Texts Online (ALEX), available from <http://alex.onb.ac.at/alex.htm> (accessed May 23, 2011).

¹⁸ *Reich und Preussischer Ministerium des Innern* (RuPrMdi – Reich and Prussian Ministry of the Interior) circular regarding Freemasons in the Civil Service, July 10, 1935, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 71; “Membership in the Lodges, an Investigation into the Civil Service” in *Berliner Tageblatt*, July 17, 1935, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 80.

¹⁹ In 1935 Hitler gave the ministers of finance and the interior power to make decisions regarding former Freemasons in the civil service, see Führer Decree over the Hiring and Firing of Civil Servants, February 1, 1935. Another decree in September then extended the authority to Deputy Führer Hess as well on September 24, 1935. Both decrees available from ALEX.

had no place for secret societies, but that former Freemasons who had signed the *Erklärung* and had not “discovered their National Socialist heart” after Jan 30th could be party candidates; however, they were to be excluded from holding office because any exposure to Freemasonry might affect their actions within the party. Any “camouflaged” Freemasons (those who tried to hide their membership or refuse to sign the *Erklärung*) are to be turned over to the party court.²⁰ A party circular sent to all *Gauleiter* later in the month as a reaffirmation of the declarations made at the beginning of the year.²¹ One party circular from the Bavarian party office even include a sample “Dear John” letter to be sent to any party member who would have to be expelled because of ties to Freemasonry, explaining that his admission had been a mistake and his membership was hereby annulled.²² The courts, naturally, received appeals for reinstatement by former party members and civil servants who had been dismissed because of lodge membership.²³

In 1935, due to these requests and petitions, Chairman von Moltke of the Bavarian *Gaugericht* sent out a newsletter answering questions concerning Freemasons and “lodge-like” organizations. Von Moltke tried to settle the issues, but in settling some questions he only generated others. To the existing requirements for allowing Freemasons into the party (leaving before 1930 and signing the *Erklärung*) he added two

²⁰ General Party Report Circular #12, January 8, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I. It is unclear if “party court” meant the RUSchIA or some other part of the Third Reich’s legal system.

²¹ NSDAP circular, January 31, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²² NSDAP circular, February 18, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²³ 1938 RSHA II 111 Situation report, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30.

more; candidates must never have gone above the third degree nor held a position of authority in the lodge.²⁴ Those who qualified could join the party, but not hold office. Those Freemasons already in party offices must resign. Then Moltke threw all of his carefully crafted clarification out the window in his next line, “exceptions can be made only through investigation by the SS Security Main Office and personal endorsement by a *Gauleiter*, the Führer makes the final decision.”²⁵ Moltke’s attempts only served to generate a new flood of letters from former Freemasons to *Gauleiter*, asking for personal endorsement.

The problem of throwing out qualified men over previous lodge membership still plagued the new policy. In mid 1937, the party even drafted a decree that would have officially allowed former Freemasons to fill certain municipal positions (mayor, community association leadership, etc.) “in emergencies,” but still bar them from more prestigious regional and federal positions (judge, ambassador or representative).²⁶ The document never became official, but its existence alone is significant, showing what kind of ideas the party was toying with in order to solve the dilemma of former Freemasons in the party and civil service. The SD echoed such sentiment, lamenting,

²⁴ The justification for remaining below the third degree ties in with the difference between “Red” and “Blue” Freemasonry. The Blue lodges, the ones that only worked the first three degrees, had few ties outside the country; national grand lodges granted charters that enabled a lodge to work the first three degrees. Red Freemasonry, the lodges that went above the first three, had much more international connections and thus fell under suspicion. The *Protocols* added further fuel to the fire, asserting that the majority of Freemasons were unaware of the true purpose of the lodges and that only a select group knew the truth. Since the Red lodges were fewer in number, as were the number of Freemasons with higher degrees, the Nazis assumed that the elite spoken of in the *Protocols* must also be the elite within the lodges; those that went above the first three degrees.

²⁵ Munich Gaugericht circular, August 17, 1935, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²⁶ Unsigned document, April 22, 1937, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

“as intellectuals, with above average education, they are put in [important] positions because of their knowledge... wherever there is a shortage of qualified people they make themselves irreplaceable.²⁷ The SD also noted that “a strengthening of Freemasonic influence has proven that the edicts [concerning them] are not consistent and at the same time are not even being carried out at all.”²⁸ The reasoning was simple; Freemasons were competent, educated and useful employees. One SS report acknowledged the continued presence of former Freemasons in public office but frankly admitted, “they are proving to be well suited to the jobs and removal really isn’t possible.”²⁹ Another stated that Freemasons remain “because there is no suitable replacement,” or it that keeping them was “more desirable for political reasons.”³⁰

The failure to effectively remove Freemasons from the party and civil service presented another problem; promotions. It was one thing to allow a former Freemason to hold office, but another altogether to allow him to climb the ladder. To solve the issue decisively, Hitler issued the decree over the Promotion of Civil Servants and the Ending of Civil Service in July 1937. Essentially, it gave power to Hitler and few others the power to hire, fire, stall or promote civil servants arbitrarily. Civil servants could be forced into retirement instead of promoted. If their services were again required they could be forced out of retirement and reinstated, but of course, without granting the

²⁷ Monthly SD reports, lodge chronicles, RFSS-SD Year Report for 1937, Section II 111, “Situation of Former German Freemasons,” BArch R58/6113 part 1, 11.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 13.

²⁹ 1939 first-quarter situation report from SS-Northwest, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 31.

³⁰ Undated, August Situation report for subsection Thuringen, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33.

earned promotion. Furthermore, all promotions had to pass through the Head of the Party Chancellery, Martin Bormann, for approval.³¹

When Germany annexed Austria in 1938 (an act that was supported by Freemasons in both countries) all the old troubles from the party's previous struggles over Freemasons in party and government threatened to return. Austria, like Germany, had a good number of Freemasons, many of who served in important political offices.³² Faced with the possibility of having to repeat in Austria the chaos suffered in Germany,³³ Hitler, on April 27, 1938, granted amnesty to all Freemasons that had never gone above the third degree, never served in a leadership position in the lodges, and left the fraternity before the seizure of power.³⁴ They were not guaranteed party membership, but their former ties to the lodges no longer served as an impediment to joining. German Freemasons greeted the announcement with jubilation, especially those in the Old Prussian lodges. Ever since 1933 the lodges had tried to demonstrate their nationalist leanings and loyalty to the Fatherland, and though the initial attempts and

³¹ Fuehrer Decree Over the Promotion of Civil Servants and the Ending of Civil Service, July 10, 1937, available from ALEX.

³² A 1939 SD report from Austria stated that numerous Freemasons still served in state and party offices, and until hearing otherwise from party courts, would be allowed to remain in their positions. Obviously the party in Austria was as hesitant to throw out former Freemasons as the party in Germany. SD report from Austria for April and May, June 4, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

³³ The RSHA declared in a their yearly report that Hitler decreed the amnesty specifically to facilitate the creation of the Greater German Empire. 1938 RSHA II 111 Situation report, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30.

³⁴ BArch R43II 1308a, 59-61 provides a list of positions that qualified as "leadership" and included everyone from past *meisters* to secretaries. Basically anyone who was anything other than a run-of-the-mill member was considered a "leader." Other notices and memorandum made provisions for *Volksdeutsche* in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, setting the lodge-exit date appropriate to the date of annexation or incorporation into the Reich, BArch R43II/820c, 42-45.

changing into Christian Orders failed, the amnesty finally gave Freemasons the chance to participate as members of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Shortly before the amnesty even the SS began to admit that former lodge brothers “have shed their previous connections to Freemasonry and are now ready to work for the building up of the nation.”³⁵ About a year after the decree the RSHA commented that many Freemasons took advantage of the “generosity of the National Socialist state” and could be found “striving earnestly to be full-fledged members of the greater-German *Volksgemeinschaft*.”³⁶ One SD report tempered the good news with a warning; some Freemason circles are spreading rumors that the amnesty was the first step in a general reevaluation of the status of Freemasons in the Reich, expecting the party “will one day see their complete mistake.”³⁷ Some Freemasons, however, rejected the amnesty, arguing that they had broken no laws and thus did not stand in need of amnesty.³⁸

A year later on 6 June, 1939, Wilhelm Frick, Minister of the Interior, reaffirmed Hitler’s April 27 decree and extended the amnesty to include the civil service.³⁹ Any Freemason already in the civil service who had been born before August 1, 1917, could remain in the civil service so long as they signed the *Erklärung*.⁴⁰ Former Freemasons

³⁵ Letter to Ehrlinger, October 29, 1938, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 14, Folder 198.

³⁶ 1939 first quarter situation report of section II 111, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

³⁷ 1938 Year Report, and April-May 1938 situation report from II/1 central office, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 28.

³⁸ April-May 1938 situation report from II/1 central office. USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 28.

³⁹ SD-Southeast Situation report, July 3, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁴⁰ Though the actual date may seem a bit arbitrary, the political situation in Germany at the end of July 1917 was not. With the war turning against Germany, many in the Reichstag suggested greater democracy through the expansion of suffrage in order to gain more public

in honorary positions were not under scrutiny, though future honorary appointments would be. The amnesty also declared that Freemasons in the civil service were eligible for raises and promotion on a case-by-case basis, so long as they met the above criteria.⁴¹ The amnesty even had something to offer those Freemasons who had gone above the third degree or held leadership position in the lodges. Such individuals were promised that they “would not suffer or incur any disadvantages” so long as they left the lodges before Hitler assumed power. Even if a lodge member left *after* January 30, 1933, he could be permitted in the civil service upon receiving a special dispensation from Hitler.⁴² The amnesty, one SD report stated, allowed the party to makeup for misjudging former lodge members, while at the same time allowing lodge brothers to atone for becoming Freemasons.⁴³ The compromise was complete. The two amnesty decrees covered almost every possible combination of Masonic degree, civil service status, and date of lodge membership termination, and the statement “exceptions permitted” took care of the rest. After announcing the amnesty, the party was, of course, swamped with new applications.⁴⁴

As with all previous attempts at settlement, the amnesty solved some problems but created others. Each time the party compromised to accommodate one group of former Freemasons it raised the hopes of another group. Freemasons who been

support for continuing the war effort, thus the summer of 1917 is a time when liberal-democracy, something inseparably associated with Freemasonry and hated by National Socialism, became closely tied to war policy, see Fritz Fischer, *World Power or Decline* (New York: Norton, 1974), part I, thesis 7.

⁴¹ *Reichsministerium des Innern* (RMdI – Reich Interior Ministry) circular, June 6, 1939, Schumacher, T580, 218. The circular also specified what constituted a “leadership” position.

⁴² RMdI circular, June 6, 1939, Schumacher, T580, 218.

⁴³ SD-Elbe Situation report, July 3, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁴⁴ 1938 Year Report, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 29.

hopelessly excluded under the previous limits, now lay just outside them. And since the party had re-drawn the line in the sand so many times already, it was not unreasonable to assume that continued pressure could get them to redraw it again.⁴⁵ Even the SD recognized that “the recent amnesty has made it possible for Freemasons, even those above the third degree and in leadership positions, to be allowed into the NSDAP,” despite the amnesty specifically excluding such men.⁴⁶ The Thüringen SD office went so far as to provide a list of six former high-degree Freemasons in Thüringen who continued to hold party membership, political office, military commissions or combination of all three, in an effort to demonstrate the problems of policy enforcement.⁴⁷

The cases of Bruno Schüler and Alfred Westphal provide specific examples of the problems encountered sorting out the party-civil service-lodge triangle.⁴⁸ Schüler joined both the fraternity and the party in the early 1920s. In 1932, he decided that it was impossible to hold membership in both and abandoned Freemasonry in favor of National Socialism. Schüler wrote a letter to Richard Foller, *meister* of his lodge, *Zu*

⁴⁵ 1938 April-May situation report of Central Office II/1, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 27; 1938 Yearly Report, USHMM RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 29; January 19, 1939, 1938 Situation report for II 111 (Freimaurerei), USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 30; July 3, 1939, SD-Northeast Situation report from January to June 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 30;

⁴⁶ July 1939, SD Süd Situation report for the first half of 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁴⁷ August Situation report for Unterabschnitt Thüringen. USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33. The six men; Karl Schulz, Gorndorf; Rudolf Bley, Eisenach; Dr. Konrad Hofer, Eisenach; Walter Baumgarten, Erfurt; Walter Wulfinghoff, Erfurt; Johannes Bluhm, Erfurt.

⁴⁸ Schüler and Westphal were not the only cases in Westphalia. Among the documents for both men are references to three other former Freemasons, Dr. Hollo, Mr. Nitschke and Mr. Appel, all of whom belonged to the party and held positions of leadership. Dortmund NSDAP to Munich USCHLA, June 13, 1933, Schumacher T580, 267 I.

den alten Linde, explaining why he was leaving. Schüler expressed his deep regard for both the fraternity and the close relationships he forged within it, stating that he had believed Old Prussian Freemasonry, being nationalist-minded, could eventually align with the party; however, after careful consideration, Schüler concluded that such a compromise was impossible and he must choose one over the other.⁴⁹ Schüler represented the type of man that Buch and Hollenbach did not want to see tossed out merely because he had once belonged to a lodge.

The May RUSchLA decree would have solved Schüler's problems...if he had only been a general party member. Unfortunately for Schüler, he had recently been appointed *Staatskommissar* in Dortmund, and therefore still found himself in hot water. Schüler considered himself a Nazi and had no desire to lose his position simply because he used to belong to a Masonic lodge. He gathered the documentation required by the RUSchLA to retain membership, but also began a campaign to retain his position as *Staatskommissar*.⁵⁰ Josef Wagner, *Gauleiter* of Westphalia, sent a letter to the RUSchLA in support of Schüler's campaign. As evidence, Wagner dropped a bomb of an explanation for Schüler's membership in the lodges: Schüler became a Freemason at Wagner's request in order to act as a spy. Wagner claimed that he wanted primary-source information on the fraternity, untouched by either Nazi or Freemasonic propaganda machines and asked Schüler to join the fraternity long enough to secure the information. "Everything in Schüler's case," Wagner argued, "is in absolute order."⁵¹

⁴⁹ Schüler to Foller, February 24, 1932, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁵⁰ Notice of membership termination, May 31, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁵¹ Letter from Wagner to Dortmund USCHLA, May 31, 1933, Schumacher T580, 267 I.

As for Schüler, he must have made an excellent spy. Foller's response to Schüler's letter of resignation ended, "we will always have loyal thoughts towards you."⁵²

If Wagner was telling the truth, then Schüler's case was exceptional indeed and illustrates the problem of Nazi policy regarding Freemasons. The policy was clear; no ex-Masons were allowed in leadership positions, but Schüler entered the fraternity at the party's request. How could the party reward faithful members by expelling them for carrying out orders? At the same time, by granting an exception for Schüler the party would be violating its own policy and establishing precedent. Ever since the seizure of power, men like Schüler, who had one foot in the party and another in the lodges, forced the party to re-evaluate its policy toward Freemasons. The RUSchLA's attempts to solve the problem had merely displaced it.

At the same time Schüler made his case to the party, his fellow *Zu den alten Linde* brother and party member, Alfred Westphal, also scrambled to prove his loyalty to the Nazi movement in spite of his long membership as a Freemason. Westphal stopped attending lodge functions in December of 1931, a year earlier than Schüler, but his official membership still remained in question. A letter from the RUSchLA to Bochum Deputy *Gauleiter* Emil Stuertz pointed out that Westphal's name still appeared in the Freemason almanac under the general membership listings. Westphal, like Schüler, also held a government job, he was *Kreisleiter der Beamtenabteilung* in Bochum and also

⁵² Foller to Schüler, March 3, 1932, Schumacher, T580, 267I.

served on the city council. The RUSchLA accordingly requested Westphal's immediate resignation in accordance with policy.⁵³

Stuertz appealed on Westphal's behalf, arguing that the listing was a mistake and that Westphal had the support of *Gauleiter* Wagner. Westphal, Stuertz claimed, officially broke ties with Freemasonry in 1931 and had signed an *Erklärung*. Additionally, Westphal had performed exceptionally in his duties as a civil servant. Stuertz's appeal naturally stated his support for the May 15th decree; former Freemasons must not be put in positions of leadership, but he also argued "it may be impossible, that party members who have held office for years in the movement, should now be dismissed because of a long-forsaken membership in a Freemasonic lodge."⁵⁴ Stuertz closed with a statement that there were no reasonable grounds for Westphal's dismissal. Obviously party policy was not reason enough.

The dangers of setting these kinds of precedents were not lost on the party. Three days after Stuertz's appeal on behalf of Westphal, the head of the Dortmund RUSchLA wrote a response to Stuertz, reaffirming the original party policy and quoting lines from the May 15th decree, which stated that *no* Freemasons were to be admitted into the party and that any party members found to have been Freemasons must be withdrawn from office regardless of what position they held. The letter concluded with a warning that applying the policy in pieces, letting some Freemasons stay while kicking

⁵³ Dortmund USCHLA to Stuertz, May 27, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I. The letter specified that in addition to providing written evidence of separation as well as signing an *Erklärung*, the individual's name must also be stricken from Masonic records. Westphal had only met the first two requirements.

⁵⁴ Stuertz to Dortmund NSDAP office, June 7, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

out others, rendered the whole policy invalid.⁵⁵ This letter helps illustrate the extent of the confusion over the policy, even in regards to the provisions of the May 15th decree. Stuertz interpreted it as typical political double-speak; the party stood firm on its policy, but recognized that the policy may not be completely enforceable.⁵⁶ Conversely, the Dortmund RUSchLA took the decree at face value.⁵⁷ Once again, the party could not agree on the issue of former Freemasons, and that could only work in the former lodge members' favor.

At the same time as the party dealt with Schüler and Westphal, rumors began circulating that President Hindenburg was a Freemason. Supposedly, Hindenburg joined the Hannover Lodge *Blühende Tal* as member #1002. Considering the strong historical ties between German Freemasonry and the aristocracy it was not a stretch of the imagination to believe that Hindenburg could have been a Freemason, and a rumor like this, if true, would have dealt a crippling blow the party. The party, therefore, quickly launched a thorough investigation. Fortunately for the Nazis, the rumor turned out to be false. There was no such lodge chartered in Hannover; however, the report also made excuses for Hindenburg, suggesting that even if he *did* join a lodge, it would have obviously been for reasons of protocol, like the Prussian aristocracy of old. That the party included this justification suggests that even the investigators themselves

⁵⁵ Dortmund USCHLA to Lüsebrink, June 10, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁵⁶ Letter from Stuertz to Dortmund NSDAP office regarding A. Westphal, June 7, 1933, Schumacher, T580, File 267 I.

⁵⁷ Letter from the head of the Dortmund USCHLA to Lüsebrink. Schumacher, June 10, 1933, T580, File 267 I.

weren't totally convinced. They had only proved Hindenburg didn't belong to *that* lodge, not that he never belonged to *any* lodge.⁵⁸

There are two possible explanations for the existence of this rumor: first, it derived from a case of mistaken identity coupled with over-exaggeration. In the mid 1920s, a lodge in Munich extended an invitation to Hitler, Ludendorff, and the Munich Chief of Police, Ernst Pöhner, to come to the lodge and discuss some sort of reconciliation between the party and the fraternity. Hitler refused the offer, but Ludendorff and Pöhner accepted. When they arrived they signed the guest book as was customary. Due to the close wartime relationship between Ludendorff and Hindenburg it is not difficult to imagine how Ludendorff's signature in a Masonic guest book could snowball into a rumor that Hindenburg was a Freemason.

The second possible genesis of the rumor may have actually come from an overzealous anti-Freemason named Dr. Engelbert Huber. Huber had published several tracts and pamphlets attacking the lodges and had approached the party, asking to be made a speaker, lecturer, or some other party expert on Freemasonry. In 1934 the SD submitted a twenty-two page report explaining why Huber should *not* be granted a position. The twenty-two pages were filled with comments and observations that suggested bringing Huber on board would make him a liability more than an asset. One particular section of the report claimed Huber had suggested to Otto Bordes that he and the grandmaster from the other Old Prussian lodges write a formal statement of defense (*Verteidigungsschrift*) for the lodges in which they would identify the late President

⁵⁸ NSDAP main office to all Gauleiter, October 28, 1932, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

Hindenburg as a Freemason. According to the SD report, Bordes and the other two grandmasters complied and signed their name to the defense. Though this explanation has more documentary evidence than the previous it seems just as farfetched; an anti-Freemason giving advice to the lodges on how to preserve their fraternity? The SD source for this fantastic story was a statement by Friedrich Hasselbach, another prolific anti-Masonic author, who claimed that Huber told him about the whole thing afterwards. Perhaps Huber had some sinister plan to use the rumor to discredit Freemasonry, but in the eyes of the party the result could only be disastrous. If true (or believed), Hindenburg's membership would add an aura of respectability and legitimacy to the lodges. If false, Huber had smeared the President's reputation. Either way, the party wanted no part of it, though they did launch the study to disprove the rumor.⁵⁹

Though Hindenburg's membership in the lodges was a myth, other high-profile politicians actually *did* come from the lodges. Arthur Greiser, a Great War veteran, *FreiKorps* member, president of the Danzig Senate and eventual *Gauleiter* over Wartheland was an ex-Freemason. He left the lodges in the 1920s and rose within the party despite attacks regarding his former lodge membership. As a *Gauleiter*, Greiser had a reputation for being ruthless in his duties, and always being fiercely loyal to Hitler, who had personally intervened and allowed him to hold the position.⁶⁰

Karl Hoede provides yet another example of Freemasons gaining entrance into the party, despite the numerous roadblocks. Hoede was in the *Stahlhelm* and the SA, but

⁵⁹ Report on Dr. Engelbert Huber, September 26, 1934, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 533.

⁶⁰ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945: Nemesis* (New York: Norton, 2000), 250-251.

had to leave both when they found out he was a former Freemason. He was likewise kicked out of the military for his connection to the lodges. By profession, Hoede was a doctor, a useful addition to any group, military or otherwise. Hoede submitted an application to the NSDAP on 14 July 1939, and was quickly rejected because of his previous ties to Masonry. He appealed and eventually received Hitler's personal endorsement. On August 4, 1942, Hitler declared that Hoede's membership in the party was effective immediately and without reservation.⁶¹

In 1939, the RSHA reported that in Nuremberg alone there were dozens of former Freemasons in positions of authority, some of who had gone above the third degree. One former Mason, an architect, even designed a number of buildings for the party.⁶² The Breslau SD for the same time period reported that a former Freemason was serving as a party judge (*Parteirichter*) despite previous decrees specifically barring former Freemasons from serving in the courts, even if they had been accepted into the party or civil service.⁶³ Even Dr. Otto Bordes, Grandmaster of the *drei Weltkugeln*, secured membership only a month after the seizure of power.⁶⁴ Each of these men demonstrated that Buch and Hollenbach were right; most former lodge members were

⁶¹ Bernheim never stated exactly why Hoede was rejected so many times prior to 1939. It could have been the increased need for doctors once war broke out, or it could simply have been his previous applications ended up in the hands of hard-line party officers instead of more lenient men like Buch or Stuertz, see Bernheim, "Tarnung und Gewalt" for a more detailed account of Hoede's history with Freemasonry and the Party.

⁶² 1939 first quarter situation report of section II 111, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

⁶³ First-quarter report from SD-Breslau on Freemasons, 14 April 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

⁶⁴ The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism, no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1.

not dyed-in-the-wool Freemasons and presented useful additions to the party and government once their lodge membership was overlooked.

There were, of course, cases in which a former Freemason exemplified the fears that Nazis had regarding Freemasons. Franz Scupin, deputy mayor of Mankerwitz, provided one such case of what Hitler called a “camouflaged” Freemason. In 1936 the party found that he had been a Freemason. Scupin was dismissed from his position when refused to sign the *Erklärung*, claiming that signing the *Erklärung* violated his oath as a Freemason. The Masonic oath really acted as a catch-22. By refusing to sign the *Erklärung*, Freemasons actually demonstrated a degree of loyalty that the party expected from its members. The SS, for example, had the motto “My Honor is Loyalty.” At the same time by signing the *Erklärung*, members demonstrated their willingness to coordinate, but also demonstrated how willing they were to break oaths. After Scupin’s removal, the Bavarian Political Police sent a general letter throughout the country, pointing to Scupin as proof that you could take the man out of Freemasonry, but you could not always take Freemasonry out of the man.⁶⁵ Scupin however, like Müffelmann, embodied the exception more than the rule.

When Hitler granted amnesty in 1938, most Freemasons applauded, although some still felt cheated. One such man, a Herr Überle, a 33° mason living in Karlsruhe, remarked to a colleague that he couldn’t understand the reason why January 30 became the pivotal date for leaving the lodges, claiming that he never knew the party was so anti-Masonic until after the seizure of power. He further commented that he only joined

⁶⁵ Letters from Bavarian Political Police to police and government, February 1, 1936 and April 27, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

the fraternity for business reasons and left immediately after discovering Hitler's distaste of Freemasons. Überle concluded that if only March 15 had been chosen instead, the Reich would have avoided punishing undeserving Germans.⁶⁶ Another example, Fritz Kress, expressed his own anger in correspondence with the German Red Cross. Kress, a resident of Krefeld received a card from the Red Cross, asking for an explanation of his lodge membership or else face expulsion. "I belonged to a Christian lodge," Kress argued in his response, "not one of the other ones. My loyalty is beyond reproach because I was not in one of the other lodges, and I resent that the amnesty only covered Freemasons up to the third degree. I resent being treated as a second class citizen."⁶⁷

Reactions to the amnesty within the party were mixed. Even before the amnesty, some party members and supporters chafed at the lax enforcement of party policy towards Freemasons. Albert Wilhelm Porsiel wrote a letter to the SS in which he bitterly resented the fact there were Freemason "scoundrels" who dared wear the emblem of an SS-supporter while still being a member of the lodge. "I spilled my blood at the front line," Porsiel exclaimed, "not for Jews and Freemasons, but for Germany."⁶⁸ After the amnesty, resentment continued. Some party members took offense to the idea that Freemasons had suddenly become cleansed and only calmed down once they learned that the amnesty had restrictions and still barred Freemasons from holding office, at least officially. Other critics complained that the amnesty stole employment

⁶⁶ Undated SD-Southwest Situation report, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

⁶⁷ Some of the Old Prussian lodges followed the Swedish Rite, which had four additional degrees after the standard three. Letter from Kress to German Red Cross, May 20, 1938, USHMM, RG-37.001 Folder 1.

⁶⁸ Porsiel to Grosse, May 19, 1935, BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 61.

and promotion opportunities by giving them to newly admitted Freemasons.⁶⁹ Still others objected that Freemasons never put down their Masonic oaths, thus letting them in the party was allowing an enemy in the back door.⁷⁰ Criticism based on conspiracy theories were in the minority, most party members who objected to allowing ex-Masons to join did so out of adherence to the party worldview, or out of jealousy. Some party members, however, simply did not care. A party report stated with a degree of shock “complete indifference in *party circles* stood in contrast to critical attitudes.”⁷¹ [original emphasis]

When war broke out the debate over former Freemasons in the party and civil service started all over again for former Freemasons in the military, its auxiliaries, and civil defense organizations. Many German Freemasons had fought in the First World War, and many of those had served as officers. With Hitler spouting rearmament rhetoric as part of the Nazi program the SD noted that many Freemasons preempted draft notices, hoping to “document their loyalty to the Fatherland with their enlistment.”⁷² Many former Freemasons had served as officers in WWI, but of course, the idea of “international Freemasons” leading the armies of the Third Reich was not exactly what the regime had in mind when building the Wehrmacht. At the same time, however, the military had the same problem as the civil service; Freemasons were qualified, capable

⁶⁹ April-May 1938 situation report from II/1 central office, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 28.

⁷⁰ Situation report for 1938, RSHA office II 111, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30.

⁷¹ 1938 Year Report, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 28.

⁷² September 1, 1939, SD-Northeast Situation report for August, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 33.

and, in some cases, already in. For example, the *Reichsführer-SS* (RFSS) commented that purging the German Red Cross of Freemasons is undesirable because the majority of Red Cross doctors were Freemasons.⁷³ Otto Bernsdorf, a former high-level Freemason made ripples when he appealed to an old WWI comrade, General Wilhelm Keitel, to pull some strings in the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW – Supreme Command of the Armed Forces) and get him a commission.⁷⁴ In June of 1936, army recruiters began asking for official clarification of policies regarding Freemasons in the military as early as 1936 due to the number of Freemasons trying to serve. With their hands still full dealing with Freemasons in the party, the Bavarian Political Police (under jurisdiction of the SS) said the problem should be turned back to the military and dealt with “through the established channels,” leaving the military to decide on its own.⁷⁵

The military decided to follow similar policies as the civil service and party, including the use of an *Erklärung*, though the military’s qualifications were a bit more strict. Whereas the party limited membership to men who left the lodges before the seizure of power and had never gone above the third degree, the military set the second degree as the maximum and said former Freemasons had to have left before January 10, 1932. The army stated that advancement to the third degree “could not be in accord with the strict sense of honor of a German officer,” and that “those already in the third degree have sunk deeply into the liberal-Freemason philosophy,” making possible, for example,

⁷³ Letter from RFSS regarding handling requests for information from the German Red Cross, February 26, 1939, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 4.

⁷⁴ Summary of a telephone conversation with a Captain Braun (Sacharbeiter for the Freemason question in the OKH), October 21, 1939, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 38-39.

⁷⁵ June 30, 1936, Bavarian Political Police, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

the field lodges of WWI.⁷⁶ For those former Freemasons who met the requirements, the military, like the civil service, had a long list of positions for which they were still barred, including serving as pilots, military court officers, seconds-in-command to any unit, or any position that dealt with matters concerning personnel or dealing with personnel information and decision-making.⁷⁷ The military, like the civil service, feared that allowing just one former Freemason into a personnel office would lead to a deluge of exceptions and special considerations being handed out to his former lodge brethren.⁷⁸ It is worth noting, however, that all discussion of Freemasons in the military was limited to their service as officers and leaders. There was almost no comment about them serving as enlisted men. Of course, the majority of Freemasons were a bit long in the tooth to be dodging bullets and storming bunkers, and most Freemasons, being professionals in civilian life, were probably too proud to accept anything less than a commission, but the fact remains that there were no restrictions regarding enlisted service, just as there were fewer restrictions on general membership in the party. Former Freemasons only ran into trouble when they sought leadership.

⁷⁶ Masonic lodges all over Europe are quite proud of the stories of the field lodges, which allowed enemy POWs to attend lodge meetings with their captors. To Freemasons, the field lodges were examples of the “brotherhood of all men,” demonstrating that even in the midst of war, men could serve their country *and* still be true brothers. Memo from Erich Ehlers (head of IIB1 in the RSHA) regarding the use of former Freemasons in the Wehrmacht (both as officers and civil service), March 18, 1940, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 21-30.

⁷⁷ OKW memo regarding mobilization of former officers and staff who were Freemasons, September 9, 1939, BArch R43II 1308a , 59-61; Memo from OKW to OKH, OK Kriegsmarine, Reichsminister of Air Defense and Commander of the Luftwaffe, regarding Freemason lodges and lodge-like orgs, August 28, 1939, BArch R43II 1308, 62-71.

⁷⁸ Memo from OKW to OKH, OK Kriegsmarine, Reichsminister of Air Defense and Commander of the Luftwaffe, regarding Freemason lodges and lodge-like orgs, August 28, 1939, BArch R43II 1308, 62-71; “Overview of the current position of Freemasonry,” December 20, 1935, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 28.

The SS faced similar problems with Freemasons seeking membership. An article in *Der Schwarze Korps*, the official journal of the SS, noted that any soldiers or civilians wishing to join one of the branches of the SS must fill out a questionnaire. One of the questions asked if the candidate had ever belonged to a Freemasonic lodge. Answering “yes,” however, did not automatically disqualify the candidate. There were enough applications that Heydrich himself had to step in and clarify that former Freemasons were only to be admitted in the most exceptional of cases where the individual had a long history of loyalty and service to the party. Like other party administrators, Heydrich realized that a complete shut out was not the answer and would deny the SS useful members, but at the same time he wanted to stress that exceptions were made on a case-by-case basis, specifically to avoid the exceptions being seen as setting precedent.⁷⁹ One former Freemason, who was even the *meister* of the *zur königlichen Eiche* lodge in Hamlin, left his lodge, joined the SS, and returned at the head of the SS group tasked with forcibly closing the very lodge to which he had previously belonged.⁸⁰ Another former Freemason, Dr. Heinrich Bütetfish, was also able to join the SS, despite the RSHA describing him as one whose “mentality was geared to international cooperation.”⁸¹ Thus even the most ardent and zealous Nazi auxiliary admitted former

⁷⁹ Letter to the SS Court regarding a clemency petition of former SS member Dr. Kurt Huschke, May 9, 1939, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 11.

⁸⁰ Neuberger, *Winkelmass und Hakenkreuz*, 258.

⁸¹ Heinz Hoehne, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS* (New York: Penguin, 2000), 142.

Freemasons, though to be sure there were also rejections of applications from former Freemasons.⁸²

The amnesty, as it did with Freemasons entering the party, affected policy regarding Freemasons in the military. The OKW decreed that in accordance with the amnesty, any Freemason who had never gone above the third degree, nor served in a position of authority in the lodges, could be used in war service and could even be accepted into the officer corps, with restrictions. Those who had served in lodge leadership, or went above the third degree, but left the lodges before January 30 would be examined on a case-by-case basis.⁸³ Those who left the lodges after January 30 and went above the 3rd degree were strictly prohibited.⁸⁴ The Luftwaffe implemented similar restrictions, although the Kriegsmarine refused to be so strict.⁸⁵

Masonic terminology caused a bit of problem in enforcement. The Masonic 3rd degree is “Master Mason,” the administrative head of a daughter lodge is *Meister vom Stuhl*, and “master” was commonly used to refer to both. Two soldiers were about to be thrown out of the military because when the men declared that they had been “masters” the *Oberkommando des Heeres* (OKH – Army High Command) thought the men meant

⁸² Dr. Huschke had applied for an exemption and been denied; however, he was denied on grounds that the officer reviewing his case did not have the proper authority or protocol to make the decision and was forwarding the case to Heydrich at the same time he issued the denial. Letter to the SS Court regarding a clemency petition of former SS member Dr. Kurt Huschke, May 9, 1939, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 11.

⁸³ Memo from Erich Ehlers (head of IIB1 in the RSHA) regarding the use of former Freemasons in the Wehrmacht (both as officers and civil service), March 18, 1940, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 21-30.

⁸⁴ OKW memo regarding mobilization of former officers and staff who were Freemasons, September 9, 1939, BArch R43II 1308a , 59-61.

⁸⁵ Summary of a telephone conversation with a Captain Braun (Sacharbeiter for the Freemason question in the OKH), October 21, 1939, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 38-39.

Meister vom Stuhl, rather than 3rd degree holders. The office of the RFSS had to send a page long explanation to the OKH, differentiating between the various “masters” of Freemasonry, leading to a brief exchange of letters over whether or not these men were 3rd degree and could stay, or were former lodge administration and had to go.⁸⁶

For those who met the qualifications or received an exception their war duties were limited. Any officer of the new Wehrmacht, argued the OKW, was more than just a civil servant. He was a leader of men and therefore had to be more rigid in his worldview and held to a higher standard than a civil servant. Additionally, the Wehrmacht recognized that the amnesty applied to former Humanitarian lodge members as well as Old Prussian, leaving open the possibility for pacifism, internationalism and humanitarianism to creep in.⁸⁷ To that end, officers who were former Freemasons were relegated to positions far from the frontlines (*Heimatdienststellen*). Part of this restriction was precautionary (again citing the WWI field lodges), but part was wholly justifiable on the ground that any Freemason veterans would have been in their forties and fifties and relegated to the rear based on general army regulations.⁸⁸ Furthermore, the ban on former Freemasons serving as commanding officers or seconds, personnel officers (especially regarding promotions, enlistment, or, of course, granting exceptions to petitioning Freemasons), be used in training officers; serve on military attorneys and

⁸⁶ The exchange took place over the winter of 1942-1943 regarding Reserve Officer Oberleutnant Franz Wagner and Soldat Richard Huber. USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 48, folder 589.

⁸⁷ Memo from Erich Ehlers (head of IIB1 in the RSHA), March 18, 1940, regarding the use of former Freemasons in the Wehrmacht (both as officers and civil service), BArch R58/6164 part 1, 21-30.

⁸⁸ Memo from Erich Ehlers (head of IIB1 in the RSHA), March 18, 1940, regarding the use of former Freemason in the Wehrmacht (both as officers and civil service), BArch R58/6164 part 1, 21-30.

pilots remained in effect. The great fear was that a single Freemason in a decision-making position could help other Freemasons enter, eventually overwhelming the system from within. Considering the number of Freemasons already in such positions, the fear was a little too late.⁸⁹

By 1940 the need for competent officers strained the available manpower pool and the OKW toyed with the idea of relaxing its restrictions on Freemasons further. Despite OKW documents stating previously that the amnesty made further compromises unnecessary, the OKW considered allowing those who had reached the 4th degree, and thus made to the jump to “high-level” Freemasonry, to serve as long as they left the lodges before Jan 30th. The OKW could justify the decision on grounds that the 4th degree in one system was equivalent to the 3rd degree in another, opening a loophole by which some “high-level” Freemasons could sneak in. Of course, this loophole was double-edged and pushed the limits of which degrees were considered acceptable or unacceptable. Additionally, this would put more pressure on the party to make a similar concession regarding membership in the party and civil service. With this in mind the OKW ultimately decided to reject the proposal in general, but leave the possibility of exceptions open for very rare cases.⁹⁰ In June 1942, however, a memo from the Chief of the OKW, General Hermann Reinecke, said that due to the war situation, former

⁸⁹ OKW memo regarding mobilization of former officers and staff who were Freemasons, September 9, 1939, BArch R 43II 1308a , 59-61; RFSS-SD Year Report for 1937, Situation of former German Freemasons, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 11.

⁹⁰ Memo from Erich Ehlers (head of IIB1 in the RSHA) regarding the use of former Freemasons in the Wehrmacht (both as officers and civil service), March 18, 1940, BArch R58/6164 part 1, 21-30.

Freemasons could be used as replacement officers at the front in exceptional cases.⁹¹

Once again, necessity and practicality trumped ideology.

Paramilitary organizations weren't as strict as the Wehrmacht. In 1939, long before the fortunes of war produced the need for manpower, the *Reichluftschutzbund* (Reich Aerial Defense League) issued a letter to all fifteen of its *Landesgruppen* laying down the guidelines for the admission and use of former Freemasons in accordance with the amnesty decrees. The letter stated that *any* former Freemason could join the *Reichluftschutzbund* without regard to degree, date of exit or office held. Those wanting to hold office within the *Reichluftschutzbund* had to jump through a few more hoops, but the letter mentioned several former Freemasons who were already in positions of authority and could remain as long as they completed an *Erklärung* and got a letter of approval from the appropriate *gauleiter* (with an underlined emphasis on *gau*). Obviously some men were trying to sneak by with only the approval of lower-ranked authorities.⁹²

Over the course of the Third Reich the policies regarding former Freemasons in the party civil service and government followed a rollercoaster of a career. In 1933, Freemasons were to be banned from the party and the government. By 1939, Hitler granted an amnesty that was already pretty much a *fait accompli*. The main reason for the compromise was the fact that former Freemasons were simply too valuable to reject because of an old association. Even the SS acknowledged several times that the policy

⁹¹ OKW memo regarding the use of former Freemasons, June 17, 1942, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 48, folder 589.

⁹² Letter from the executive committee of the Reichluftschutzbund to all Landesgruppen, October 17, 1939, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 48, folder 589.

of removing Freemasons was not only impractical, but also unnecessary. Furthermore, Freemasons had been pushing for years to work with the party, regardless of the fate of the lodges and Christian Orders. With the threat of war looming at the beginning of 1939, the RSHA office in charge of Freemasonry reported, “many Freemasons are worried that in case of war, all Freemasons will be put in camps to halt their corruptive influence. They fear that they won’t be able to show their patriotism and point out that many former communists and Centre folk now proudly wear the Party badge, while the majority of Freemasons are not allowed the same opportunity.”⁹³ Freemasons wanted in, and the party was hesitant to throw them out. By looking at the way in which the party tried to decide where to draw the line we can see the party’s struggle in balancing ideology with practicality. First, all Freemasons were banned, but then men like Buch argued a blanket policy was excessive, suggesting instead separating Old Prussian from Humanitarian. Bröse’s letter, however, showed that there were Nazi-minded men in the Humanitarian lodges and division by branch was insufficient. Buch then suggested the *Erklärung* as a means of straining out the “honorable” men, regardless of what lodges they belonged to. Next, the line was drawn according to when an individual left the lodges, arguing that those who left before the seizure of power did so honestly while those who left after did so to hurriedly put as much distance between themselves and the lodges. In 1935, *Gaurichter* Moltke added the restriction limiting exceptions to those of the third-degree or lower. Finally, Hitler’s declaration of amnesty came in 1938. At every step along the way, “exceptions permitted” accompanied each new policy, paving

⁹³ RSHA office II 111 Situation report for 1938, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 5, Folder 30.

the way for the next policy shift. What little restrictions remained (barring from office) were enforced so sporadically that “enforcement” isn’t even the right word. Those in charge of carrying out the policy recognized the value of keeping the men, even if they had belonged to a Masonic lodge, and either refused to carry out the order or campaigned vigorously to keep the man in his office.

CHAPTER V

LOOTING LODGES, LOOTING LIMITS

The plundering of wealth from enemies and conquered nations played a major role in the sustainability and perpetuation of the Nazi state. Historian Götz Aly argued that a “state sponsored campaign of grand larceny” not only garnered public support for the aggressive policies of the regime and its persecution of minority elements in society, but eventually became the driving force behind the regime. The financial benefits of conquest and plunder kept the regime afloat and maintained the standard of living. As the cost of war increased, plunder became even more essential to ensure the regime’s continued existence. In other words, the Nazis went on campaign to loot and rob, but looted and robbed to be able to go on campaign.¹ British scholar Adam Tooze takes Aly’s argument further. Whereas Aly paints Nazi war and plunder as work in progress, essentially snowballing, Tooze argues that plunder and conquest, though justified by ideology, were the driving forces behind Hitler’s plan for waging war and had been his intention since the seizure of power.²

As an organization composed mainly of the well-to-do, it is not surprising that lodges often had respectable, if not substantial, inventories of property and liquid wealth. One lodge building, for example, was a two-story building and was large enough to include two temple rooms, a museum, business offices, a library, a theater, three storage

¹ See Götz Aly, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries: Plunder, Racial War and the Nazi Welfare State* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007).

² Adam Tooze, *Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (New York: Viking, 2006).

rooms, and a guest room.³ The *Royal York zur Freundschaft* grand lodge building in Berlin and shows just how “grand” these grand lodges could be (Fig. A6). When completed, the spacious lodge building sat amidst almost 3 acres of manicured garden overlooking the Spree. It must have been quite a sight, in 1934 a young couple taking a carriage ride through the city passed by the lodge. The woman exclaimed, “What’s a palace doing here?” She was then informed the estate was not a palace, but the former *Royal York zur Freundschaft* grand lodge building, now owned by the *Allgemeine Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft*.⁴ Not only were the exteriors beautiful, but the interiors as well. Furniture, artwork, and interior architecture made the lodge buildings into beautiful, museum-esque structures, reflecting the standard of living of the lodge members; a tempting target for a regime that financed itself on the plundered wealth of its enemies. As a club for the social elite the lodges already had a reputation for possessing wealth. In some cases, however, the party got an inside view. One SA *Standart*, for example, knew very well what kind of wealth the lodges possessed; the *Standart* had been renting rooms in the lodge building for its own meetings for months.

As it was for all of Hitler’s other targets, the beginning of troubles and the first step toward property confiscation for Freemasons came with the Order of the Reich

³ Although this lodge was a Belgian lodge, it was not unique in its wealth and splendor. Grand lodges all over Europe, Germany included, possessed lodges like this one. USHMM, RG-65.010M Reel 1, part 2.

⁴ SD report, “Vermögensverschiebung bei der *Großloge Royal York zur Freundschaft*,” September 19, 1934, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 533. This anecdote not only provides further evidence of the splendor of the lodges, but also shows how fast the party worked to capture that splendor. It was just a year after the seizure of power and already the grand lodge building of one of the Old Prussian lodges had been confiscated and sold.

President for the Protection of People and State. The Reichstag Fire Decree, as it is more commonly known, suspended basic rights and civil liberties and allowed for the confiscation of property of any group in the name of safety and security and without due process. More specific decrees soon followed. On May 26 the Law over the Confiscation of Communist Property gave the government power to seize all assets of the communist party *and its affiliates*. No explanation was given of what constituted an affiliation. Then in July the Law for the Recovery of Property of Enemies of the State and Volk stretched the May 26 law to include the Social Democratic Party, as well as its help and affiliates, leaving the final decision of what constituted "help" or "affiliate" to the Minister of the Interior.⁵ Interior Minister Wilhelm Frick finally exercised that power in October of 1934, officially declaring the lodges as "hostile to the state."⁶ The lodge attempts at changing to Christian Orders and coordinating with the regime failed, leaving the regime free to plunder the lodges as *Reichsfeinde*.

Though financial gain was not the only motive for seizing lodge property it was the most obvious, both inside Germany and, once war broke out, in the rest of Europe. A letter from Alfred Rosenberg to Martin Bormann during the Balkan Campaign even mentioned that the only places in the Balkans that had anything worth confiscating were

⁵ Law for the Recovery of Property of Enemies of the State and Volk, July 14, 1933, available from ALEX; An article in the *Danziger Volkstimme* covered the lodge closings and confiscations, specifically citing the Reichstag Fire Decree and the Recovery Decree as the legal grounds upon which the lodge closures and confiscations were being carried out, "Now the Freemason: not voluntary, but compulsory liquidation," *Danziger Volkstimme*, August 28, 1935, BArch R58/6117 part 1, 78.

⁶ USHMM, "Freemasonry under the Nazi Regime," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10007187>. Accessed January 6, 2011.

the Masonic lodges.⁷ When confiscation were carried out it was done under the administration of two men: one from the federal customs office, the other from the lodge, usually either the *meister* or the lodge treasurer.⁸ Lodge wealth came in several forms. First of all, some lodges possessed substantial cash reserves. Lodges not only had bank accounts for lodge administration, but also for charity funds, funeral funds, insurance policies and even pension funds for the families of deceased brethren. The Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, the smallest of all German Freemasonic bodies, possessed RM 13,000 in liquid assets at the time of its closure.⁹ The *Flammenden Stern*, a daughter lodge of the *drei Weltkugeln* had RM 15,000 in its accounts at the time of closure.¹⁰

Of course, not all lodges had wealth. One Essen lodge, *Freie Forschung und Duldsamkeit*, had to rent rooms from another Essen lodge just to be able to hold its monthly meetings. None of the property within the lodge building belonged to *Freie Forschung*, and the lodge's archives were limited to membership records and meeting minutes, which occupied a single drawer in the building's office cabinet. The *meister* of *Freie Forschung* once commented, that, despite its name, the lodge did not even possess a library. Previously the lodges had made numerous attempts at purchasing books, but

⁷ Rosenberg letter to Bormann, April 23, 1941, replying to Bormann's letter of April 19, 1941, document 071-PS, Red Set, vol. III, 119.

⁸ Gestapo to RFSS, June 5, 1935, BArch R58/6140a, 174; Report of the last meeting of the former lodge *Zum Fuerstenstein* in Freiburg, July 22, 1935, R58/6103b part 1, 77.

⁹ GStA PK, 5.1.11 – Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, Nr. 31 – Meeting Minutes of the Grand Council, pg 3-4.

¹⁰ SD memo, September 6, 1934, BArch R58/6103a, part 2, Page 252.

the plans always fell through due to a lack of funds.¹¹ Despite high membership dues required of its members, rent, insurance payouts, funeral expenses and delinquent dues continually strained whatever liquid assets the lodge possessed. *Freie Forschung*, however, was the exception and in general lodges had a building to meet in and enough funds to operate.

For those lodges with enough wealth to steal, the seizure of liquid assets was not without its snags. Insurance policies, for example, provided one lucrative source of income, but upon closure many of the lodges expressed to the government the desire to be allowed to either maintain their Masonic insurance policy, or have it converted into private insurance. This posed a two-sided problem for the government, which estimated that most Freemasons would not be able to afford the premiums if the group policy converted to private insurance, resulting in the mass cancellations of policies and dealing a serious blow to the economy. At the same time, however, if the lodges were allowed to keep their Masonic group-policy that allowed semblances of a banned organization to remain officially intact, and even to continue to meet. The practical economics problems, however, outweighed the possible ideological ones. One lodge in Bavaria, for example, was allowed to maintain its insurance policy but all administration meetings

¹¹ Police report on Karl Dinger, February 4, 1936, USHMM, Record Group 37.001, "Selected Records from the Nordhein-Wesfaeliches Hauptstaatsarchiv Relating to Freemasons," Folder 1. Another lodge, *Zum Friedenstempel* in Friedland, rented a private room in a restaurant for its meetings and had less than RM 1000 in the bank at the time of closure, see Report on the liquidation of *Zum Friedenstempel* in Friedland, no date, BArch R58/6113 part 1, 163. Other lodges had no such problem acquiring books. The lodge *Alexius* had over 800 books in its inventory at the time of closure, BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 32.

had to include a police representative to oversee the meeting and ensure that discussion never veered from payments and premiums.¹²

After bank accounts, real estate stood next on the list of lodge assets. Every grand lodge oversaw dozens, if not hundreds, of daughter lodges. Two reports; one from the SD and another from the Gestapo, provide a glimpse of the potential wealth that could be gained by confiscation lodge real estate. Each document reports the selling of a building formerly belonging to the *drei Weltkugeln*. The first building, formerly the meetinghouse of *Durch Nacht am Licht*, was expected to fetch around 17,000 RM. The second, formerly belonging to *Zur Bestaendigkeit und Eintracht* in Aachen, had already sold for 19,000 RM.¹³ The *drei Weltkugeln* was the largest of the German grand lodges, boasting over 180 “Blue” daughter lodges scattered throughout the country.¹⁴ Even if each of the daughter lodges didn’t have its own building it is not exaggerating to estimate that *drei Weltkugeln* and its daughter lodges owned well over 200 buildings. With 200 buildings, each selling for 15,000 RM, generates 3 million RM from real estate sales alone.

¹² Bavarian Political Police to local police and government, April 4, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

¹³ Letter from Gestapo to RFSS, June 7, 1935, BArch R58/6140a, 165.

¹⁴ There are a myriad of different rites within Freemasonry, but all lodges share the first three degrees (Apprentice, Fellow, Master) in common. Some rites halt at the third, others go on to four, ten, or in the case of the Scottish Rite, thirty-three additional degrees. The first three degrees are referred to as “St. John” or “Blue” degrees, and the lodges that work only the first three degrees are therefore designated “Blue Lodges.” Lodges that carry on past the first three degrees are sometimes referred to as “Red” lodges. Some grand lodges, like the *drei Weltkugeln*, had daughter lodges that were both Blue and Red. For a more detailed description of the various rites and degrees, see S. Brent Morris, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Freemasonry* (New York: Alpha Books, 2006), Chapters 8 and 9; Hodapp, *Freemasonry for Dummies*, part III.

Next, assuming that most *drei Weltkugeln* lodges had around 15,000 in cash reserve (as *Flammenden Stern* did) and add that to the value of real estate the total comes to 45 million marks. Keep in mind, this total is only for the *drei Weltkugeln* and does not include bank accounts and property sales of the other Old Prussian lodges, the six Humanitarian grand lodges or the Symbolic Grand Lodge...and we still haven't said anything about the value of the property *inside* the lodges!

As for furniture, artwork and other lodge holdings, party and military leaders had first pick of the litter, sometimes leading to some amusing anecdotes. One lodge possessed a beautiful painting of Field Marshal Blücher that the party seized and presented to General Blomberg as a gift for his fortieth birthday. The painting, however, had one small problem; Marshal Blücher, who was Grand Master of his lodge in Munster, was painted in full Masonic regalia. So before presenting the gift the party had it "touched up," removing all the Masonic items from the picture and leaving only a beautiful portrait of a celebrated German war hero.

Hjalmar Schacht, who was both Minister of Economics, president of the Reichsbank and a Freemason, received a photograph from some Masonic colleagues showing the painting in its original state. Schacht sent the photo to Blomberg, thinking that Blomberg would take it in good humor. Instead, Blomberg was actually quite concerned and in turn sent the photos to Rudolph Hess, who had presented the painting on behalf of the Führer. In response, Hess sent a two-page letter to Blomberg stating that he had no knowledge of such alterations and stressed that the gift in no way changed the Party's current policy towards Freemasons. In fact, if the accusations were true the

touch-up was a good deed because it took an excellent portrait of one of Germany's military heroes out of the hand of the Masons and gave it to the military, where it ought to be. Hess's biggest concern was that the party had paid good money for the work, and being a Masonic painting it should have been confiscated without any compensation to the lodge whatsoever. Such a gross misuse of party funds would, Hess promised, be looked into forthwith.¹⁵

After property had been picked over according to the government and military pecking-order, what remained was divided according to established protocols. Furniture and benign art (i.e. art that lacked any Masonic symbolism or reference) was sold at public auction. Objects made of precious metal (silverware, candelabra, etc.), were to be melted down. Metal objects that were "wholly Freemason in character" (symbols, jewels, etc.) were eventually to be sent to Alfred Rosenberg's *Hohe Schule*.¹⁶ Eating utensils made from non-precious metals were given to *Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt* (NSV – National Socialist People's Charity) charities and hospitals.¹⁷

Naturally, corruption followed the confiscations and the government was plagued with party offices and individuals stealing from the Nazis at the same time they stole from Nazi enemies. Under the provisions of the Recovery Law, revenue generated from the sale of confiscated property was subject to taxes. By mid 1934 the Ministry of the

¹⁵ Hjalmar Schacht, *Confessions of "the Old Wizard,"* 310-311.

¹⁶ Rosenberg referred to the *Hohe Schule* as a "Seminary for National Socialism" to promote research and education on ideological enemies. It was to be created after the war and was based at the University of Munich in place of the Catholic Theology department. Bormann to Rosenberg, 12 December 1939, document 131-PS, Red Series, vol. III, 184; Memo from Hitler to all section of party and state, document 136-PS, Red Series, vol. III, 184.

¹⁷ Bavarian Political Police to police and government, April 23, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

Interior noticed that despite the vast amounts of wealth being confiscated and sold, little of it seemed to find its way into the treasury, thus the ministry issued a letter demanding that the tax laws be satisfied.¹⁸ Even after this chastisement, government and police authorities had problems getting local offices to follow confiscation policy. Some of it may have been due to over-enthusiastic party members acting out of un-checked fervor by, for example, destroying Masonic objects that could have been used otherwise, but more often than not the problem was simple greed.

Himmler jumped into the fray through his control of all German police. Less than a month after the Ministry of the Interior sent out a letter chastising party offices for evading taxes, the Bavarian Political Police stated that anything confiscated from the “disbanded anti-national organizations” (including Freemasonry) in Bavaria was under police mandate. All future seizures and confiscations were to be immediately reported and any party auxiliary or organization with interests in the confiscated property must indicate so to the police, along with a suggestion of compensation.¹⁹ In other words, Himmler wanted to act as a broker for the newly acquired property. Near the end of 1934, the Bavarian Political Police reasserted its jurisdiction over confiscated property by mailing out instructions and steps to be taken, specifically in relation to the seizing and selling of Masonic lodge buildings.²⁰ The SA and other auxiliaries largely ignored the demands of the Bavarian Political Police just as they did the Ministry of the Interior,

¹⁸ Letter from the Ministry of the Interior, May 19, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

¹⁹ SA special envoy in Bavaria to general SA leadership, June 11, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²⁰ Bavarian Political Police to police and government, November 8, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

prompting another letter from the police pointing out that confiscations were proceeding without proper notification and paperwork. The letter even appealed to the Reichstag Fire Decree as a reminder that the bureaucracy was in place and needed to be respected.²¹ The problem persisted well into 1936 and the police sent out another “reminder.”²²

Not all property confiscated by the government was earmarked to generate revenue, and though few German citizens had interest in purchasing lodge libraries or archives such items were far from being worthless. Freemasonry had always been shrouded in secrecy and the Nazis thought that perhaps, as a part of the “International Jewish Conspiracy,” lodge records held information that could be useful in the Nazi struggle against the Jews. While most lodge contents went to private homes, auction blocks or the smelter, documents and archive materials went to the *Geheimenreichsarchiv* where the police took pains to ensure that it remained under lock and key.²³

When Himmler entered the confiscation fray he did so out of both greed and ideology. He wanted to act as a broker, but he also had a special interest in lodge rituals. He was convinced high-degree Masonry involved a “blood ritual” in which “the candidate cuts his thumbs and lets a little blood drop into a cup. Wine is then mixed in the bowl. Next a bottle containing the blood of the other brothers (from when they first

²¹ Bavarian Political Police to local government and police, December 11, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²² Bavarian Political Police to police and government, April 23, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²³ Bavarian Political Police to local police and government, August 29, 1935, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

performed this ritual) is added to the cup. The candidate then drinks the liquid, thus imbibing the blood of all Freemasons, including Jews. Thus the triumph of the Jews is complete.’²⁴ Himmler pointed to this ritual as the means whereby Jews use Freemasonry to literally taint the blood of Aryans and desperately wanted proof of its existence. The truth of the matter is that Freemasons do indeed have rituals that involve drinking wine, but references to blood are symbolic, much like the rituals performed in Christian churches. Nevertheless, the SS had interest in non-negotiable lodge property in order to further their study of Freemasonry.

In 1935 the RFSS published guidelines to ensure the proper cataloging and organization of ideological materials. The ritual rooms themselves were to be carefully photographed before any materials were removed so as to preserve the lodge in its “natural” state. Before the final removal of ideological property, lodge buildings were frequently opened up to the public as living museums.²⁵ The party set up such “museums” in Berlin, Hannover, Nuremberg, Düsseldorf, and Erlangen among others. Like the 1937 Degenerate Art exhibit, the Masonic lodge museums served as powerful tools of propaganda, allowing the Nazis to exhibit genuine Masonic artifacts, but with the skillful twist of the propaganda ministry, creating that most powerful form of propaganda that contains enough truth to be considered authentic, but altered enough to serve the needs of the party. Once the museums were closed, crates containing ideological items were to be color-coded and shipped to the SD, which graciously

²⁴ Fundamentals of Freemasonry, no date, Schumacher, T580, 267 I; Bavarian Political Police to local government and police, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²⁵ 1938 Yearly Report, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 29.

offered to cover the shipping costs.²⁶ The SD wanted to gather all lodge libraries and archives, merging them into one massive repository that could be used for further research and study by “reliable” men.²⁷ Previously, most Nazi anti-Masonic propaganda relied on sensationalism, hearsay and questionable sources like the *Protocols*. The SS took such care in confiscating Freemason archives because they wanted to establish a more respectable standard of anti-Freemasonic literature.

For example, Dr. Günther Franz, professor at the *Reichsuniversität* in Strasbourg published a lengthy article on the history of Freemasonry in which he criticized anti-Masonic literature that portrayed Freemasonry as a kind of cult or crediting them with too much influence. At the same time he also attacked Masonic history books written by Freemasons as celebratory and wholly subjective. Franz stated that it was his duty to write the history of Freemasonry as an objective, non-Masonic researcher, a task that was only possible by the seizing of lodge records and libraries. Franz admitted that an objective, primary-source-based history would destroy many myths and legends treasured both by Masons and anti-Masons, but such was a necessary price to pay “in order to be able to clearly ascertain the ominous influence of Freemasonry.”²⁸ Note the objectivity.

A booklet published by the German Culture Watch provides an example of the kind of freelance, sensationalist and hearsay “scholarship” that the SS wanted to get

²⁶ RFSS to SD, May 28, 1936 and June 23, 1936, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²⁷ 23 Sep 1935 from Bavarian Political Police to local government and police, September 23, 1935, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

²⁸ Addendum to June 1944 RSHA Information Report of the Freemason Question, USHMM, RG-11.001M.01, Reel 11, folder 790.

away from. The booklet, *Hinter der Maske der Freimaurerei* (Behind the Mask of Freemasonry), by Richard Hannuschka, made attacks on Freemasonry that also challenged some of the core beliefs of Christianity.²⁹ By associating with Freemasonry, Hannuschka argued, Christians expose themselves and Germany to the communist revolutions that the Jews wrought in Russia and Spain.³⁰ Citing the Decree for the Protection of the German Volk (February 4, 1933) the Gestapo charged that the booklet was confusing in its content and would only serve to throw the public into disorder. The Gestapo then seized all copies of the booklet and banned any further publication. Accusing Jews and Freemasons of trying to dominate the world was one thing, but attacking Christian doctrine along with it went too far.³¹

Naturally, the publisher, Oscar Krueger, resented the ban, claiming that the booklet's goal was to help the regime in its struggle against the Jewish-Masonic conspiracy. Krueger not only claimed that the book's contents derived from scientific research, but the book has already received glowing reviews from scores of Nazi newspapers including the *Völkischer Beobachter*. Krueger thus demanded to know the *exact* reason for the ban and not just an appeal to a broad law. After signing the letter Krueger tried to pull rank by adding a postscript, "Member of the Old Guard since 1922," and claiming that both Goebbels and Hitler could personally attest to his loyalty

²⁹ In the booklet, Hannuschka argued that the Jewish god, Jehovah, was not the God of the Old Testament, the heavenly father of Jesus as believed in many Christian sects, but rather Jehovah is the demon Schaddai, whom Christians identify as the devil. Without going into too much detail, the title "God Almighty" in the Old Testament is sometimes translated from the Hebrew "El Shaddai." In Exodus 6:2-3, El Shaddai is named Jehovah. It is as ridiculous as it sounds.

³⁰ Official note of protest, May 17, 1935, BArch R58/907 Fiche #3, 103-104 .

³¹ Letter from Gestapo to Verlag Deutsche Kulturwacht, May 11, 1935, BArch R58/907 Fiche #3, 91.

and service to the party.³² Kreuger even retained an attorney to argue the legality of the ban, but after an exchange of letters the Gestapo reasserted its previous decision and the ban remained.

In place of party hacks like Rosenberg, senile old men like Ludendorff, and overzealous party members like Krueger the new research was based on the documents confiscated in the early years of the regime and written by scholars and academics; men who had credentials and respectability in the field of research and scholarship. As a result Freemasonry became an entire field of academic study. Beginning in the late 1930s and continuing until war's end, Nazi scholars published papers, attended conferences and symposia, and held lectures on the history and influence of Freemasonry in Europe and the world.³³ RSHA Section VII (Research and Analysis) held its own conference on the Freemason Question in 1942.³⁴ One of the first products

³² Letter from the Verlag to the Gestapo, May 14, 1935; Official note of protest, May 17, 1935; Issue of the *Deutsche Buchvertreter*, Nr. 7, Dec 1, 1934, review of the booklet, BArch R58/907 Fiche #3, 97, 103-104, 142-143.

³³ Dr. Franz Six, for example, taught a university seminar during the 1938-1939 winter semester on the history and development of Freemasonry, which the SD reported as well attended both by students and visitors, some of whom were themselves former Freemasons, 1938 RSHA II 111 Situation Report, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30. The report did not specify at which university the seminar was held; In September of 1941 the SD held one of its first new research conferences in Aachen. The conference invited SS and SD "Church Specialists" to meet and discuss their research; one of the scheduled papers was "The Present Problem of Freemasonry" by SS-Hauptsturmführer Kolrep, see Conferences, 1933, calling for the financing of military training of SA from Ministry of Interior Funds, document 1850-PS, Red Set, vol. IV, 478; On June 25-26, 1942, the RSHA hosted the Congress of Scholarly Researchers of Amt VII, a conference designed to bring together all research specific to Freemasonry since the founding of the RSHA in 1939. The special guest and keynote speaker was Prof. Georg Franz, who recommended publishing the conference proceedings as an edited volume. This collection, *Quellen und Darstellungen zur Freimaurerfrage*, grew to over three volumes. Franz also suggested holding a follow-up conference the following year Document dated April 15, 1942, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 23, Folder 298.

³⁴ By 1942, research on Freemasonry proved useful in painting Freemasonry as the reason for the reversal of Germany's war fortunes, pointing to the United Nations as a fulfillment

of the new scholarship was book published by Dieter Schwarz in 1938, *Freimaurerei: Weltanschauung, Organisation und Politik*, which Dr. Franz hailed as the foundational work of the new scholarship.³⁵

When war began, confiscation of lodge property outside Germany progressed under the direction of the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR – Special Staff of Reich Leader Rosenberg) in conjunction with the Wehrmacht. The official purpose of the ERR was to “explore” lodge archives and libraries in search of material that could aid in the ideological education of the party as well as scientific research on Freemasons.³⁶ In the Netherlands, for example, in 1940 the ERR confiscated the *Biblioteca Klossiana*, a large and famous library purchased by Prince Hendrik and presented to the Freemasons as a gift at the turn of the 20th century.³⁷ As a measure of

of Masonic internationalism, after all, both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill were Freemasons. After Italy fell in 1943, propaganda accused Mussolini of reaping what he had sown in refusing to crush Freemasonry in Italy, and even accused him of being a Freemason, see SD Information Report on the Freemason Question for April and May, as well as Franz’s supplement, USHMM, RG-11.001M.01, Reel 11, Folder 790.

³⁵ Schwarz wrote his book as part of a series of general text to be used by the SS in ideological education. It was first published in 1938 and went through a new edition every year until the end of the war. Heydrich wrote the preface for the first edition. The copy I used was the 1944 edition. Dieter Schwarz, *Freimaurerei: Weltanschauung, Organisation und Politik* (Berlin: Central Publishing House of the NSDAP, 1944). Franz’s comment comes from an addendum to the June 1944 Information Report, prepared Franz, who at the same time as his appointment as a professor was also an Obersturmführer in the SS. USHMM, RG-11.001M.01, Reel 11, folder 790.

³⁶ Hitler Order, 1 March 1942, establishing authority of Einsatzstab Rosenberg, documents 149-PS and 136-PS, Red Set, vol. III, 184 and 190. Rosenberg’s official title in his new capacity was “Commissioner for the Supervision of the Entire Spiritual and Philosophical Indoctrination and Education of the NSDAP.”

³⁷ Josefina Leistra, “A Short History of Art Loss and Art Recovery in the Netherlands” in *The Spoils of War*, ed. Elizabeth Simpson (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1997), 55. In “The Nazi Attack on ‘Un-German-Literature,’ 1933-1945” in Jonathan Rose, ed. *The Holocaust and the Book: Destruction and Preservation* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001) Leonidas E. Hill states that in addition to the Biblioteca Klossiana the libraries of ninety-two Masonic lodges were also confiscated that same month, 30.

its value the ERR pointed out that Freemasons in the United States had offered \$5,000,000 to purchase its collections.³⁸ A letter from the ERR in the Netherlands to Rosenberg in 1940, recounted the success of confiscations there, totaling 470 crates, including hundreds of thousands of books that the ERR estimated to be worth between 30 and 40 million Reichsmarks.³⁹ Such a claim may sound a bit exaggerated, but considering that Freemasonry itself was over 200 years old by the 1930s, and Masonic libraries had books that dated back even further, the estimate seems less farfetched.⁴⁰ By 1941 the ERR had provided the *Hohe Schule* library with a half million volumes, all confiscated and collectively worth a fortune. The seizure of lodge archives continued to fuel the new research as it had in Germany.

Some property seized by the ERR served as both a source of wealth and anti-Masonic education. The same report from the Netherlands mentioned a particular acquisition: the Master-Hammer of the *Grooten Oosten* (Grand Orient), made of pure gold, which some of its members had presented to the *Grooten Oosten* on its 60th Anniversary. “It is a piece of high quality,” the report stated, “whose money-value alone is estimated to be 3,000 RM.”⁴¹ Other ERR confiscations returned to pure wealth-looting. A 1944 progress report of the ERR reported tremendous success with its recent “M-Aktion;” The “M” stood for *Möbel* (furniture). The action was carried out in order

³⁸ Report on the Activities of the ERR in the Netherlands, document 176-PS, Red Set, vol. III, 203.

³⁹ USHMM, RG 15.007M Reel 44, folder 554, has over 600 pages of lists of confiscated books, organized by lodge. The lists are quite thorough, providing the title, author, publisher, year and sometimes even the number of pages.

⁴⁰ Bormann letter to Rosenberg, document 176-PS, Red Set, vol. III, 184.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

to help fight against Jews and Freemasons by “securing...all research material and the cultural effects of the groups indicated and to dispatch them to Germany...for the ideological instruction of the National Socialist Party.”⁴² It is difficult to understand how tables, chairs and silverware could have contributed to the ideological instruction of the party.

Some property was confiscated for entirely different reasons than generating revenue or enhancing Nazi education. In the room *Standart* 159 had been renting, three portraits adorned on of the walls; two of which depicted Kaiser Wilhelm I and King Friedrich II, both in full Masonic regalia. But what really disturbed the men of *Standart* 159 was the third picture that hung between the Kaisers; a portrait of the Führer. One day the lodge brothers entered the lodge the day after an SA meeting took place and found the Kaiser portraits flipped over to face the wall. The lodge complained to the SA, arguing that such an act was disgraceful; after all, those men were Kaisers, the “archetypes of love of the fatherland and honor.” At the next SA meeting the SA did not flip the paintings; they simply took them. In place of the paintings the SA hung a note: “Beware of hanging our Führer between two Freemasons again.”⁴³ The lodge was understandably outraged and wanted to recover the paintings, but without raising too much of a fuss. The theft took place in April of 1934, long after the Nazi Party had taken power. The lodge brothers knew that if they pushed the issue too much, perhaps by going to the press, it might cause greater problems than a couple of stolen paintings.

⁴² “Report of 8 August 1944, on confiscation up to 31 July 1944,” document L-188, Red Set, vol. VII, 1022.

⁴³ Klussman to National Christian Order of Frederick the Great, April 20, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

In a letter to Prussian Minister-President Goering the lodges urged that the SA be reprimanded, not only for stealing private property, but also for disgracing pictures of the Kaisers. The whole matter, the letter argued, was shameful, so shameful in fact that it really shouldn't be brought to the attention of the public and could be resolved quietly, "otherwise the foreign press might catch wind of it and harm Germany's image."⁴⁴ This may have been a subtle threat by the lodge, but with the Nazis securely in power it was more than likely that the lodges simply wanted their paintings back with a guarantee that the SA wouldn't steal anything else, while at the same time recognizing that they were not exactly in a position to make such demands.

Goering's response was as brief as it was definitive: "The actions of the SA men were, naturally, not to be seen as disdain for the Kaisers, but meant as a reactions against an undeserving portrayal of these men." Goering continued, stating that everyone knew Freemasonry was a shady organization, so when SA men saw the Führer flanked by Freemasons, of course they got angry, especially considering the Fuehrer's well-known opinion of Freemasonry. "It would have been better," Goering concluded, "if the lodge had just said nothing at all."⁴⁵ Goering had just rejected the lodge's request, but also let them know that he would turn a blind eye to any further problems. The only real action taken as a result of this incident was a reprimand from the RUSchLA to the SA chastising the SA for being stupid enough to rent rooms from *Reichsfeinde*.⁴⁶ The SA would never consider renting a synagogue for its meetings, so why did it rent a Masonic lodge?

⁴⁴ *Drei Weltkugeln* to Goering, April 23, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁴⁵ Goering to *drei Weltkugeln*, May 4, 1934, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

⁴⁶ USCHLA in house letter, August 18, 1933, Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

Some lodges were temporarily confiscated for their own “protection.” An SD report from 1934 asserted that the excitement over the seizure of power had led overzealous party members in Mecklenberg, Schlesien and Schleiswig-Holstein to commit “excesses” against local lodge buildings, a sort of *Kristallnacht*, but for Freemasons. The police, therefore, “temporarily [took] over the building” to prevent further attacks. The report was quick to state, however, that the building was returned shortly thereafter.⁴⁷

Though to modern readers the thought of Nazi “protective custody” is like hiring the wolf to guard the sheep, some lodge *meisters* genuinely believed it. After all, the Nazis were the government, and government would never just steal something. Wilhelm Ludwig, who served as the lodge representative during the closure of his lodge, thought that the material was being taken by the police for temporary safekeeping until the liquidation was complete, at which point the property would be returned. When the property was not returned Ludwig sent a letter to the police expressing his confusion because, he thought, the Old Prussian lodges lay outside the various decrees against Freemasonry, since they had converted into Christian Orders.⁴⁸

With the government and police against them the lodges had little avenues left open in trying to keep their property from being seized. There were, however, a few alternatives to letting lodge property fall into Nazi hands. The most obvious method of denying the Nazis their prize was to send it away, outside the reach of the government.

⁴⁷ RFSS-SD Situation report, May-June, 1934, BArch R58/229.

⁴⁸ Protest letter from Wilhelm Ludwig to Düsseldorf police, March 12, 1935, BArch R58/6140a, 172.

The Humanitarian lodge, *Sun*, packed up its records and shipped them off to the Grand Orient of the Netherlands. The *drei Weltkugeln* sent some of its records to a daughter lodge in Danzig, and the SGvD sent some of its records to France. The *Große Landesloge* began sending documents abroad in 1932, before the Nazis even came to power. Most of the records sent abroad, however, still ended up in Nazi hands once war broke out and these countries fell under German control.⁴⁹

A more drastic way to keep property out of Nazi hands was to simply destroy it. The lodges never destroyed furniture, art or buildings, but many lodges burned or otherwise destroyed their records before the police could confiscate them and use them to track down lodge members.⁵⁰ Overzealous police and party members exacerbated the problem by destroying lodge archives and libraries, thinking they were doing Germany a service by removing documents and books tainted by Masonic ideology. Destruction of ideological property at the hands of the Nazis themselves became such a problem that the government sent letters to party, police and other government leaders demanding that the destruction of property stop and reminding them of the previously issued regulations regarding seized records.⁵¹

Some lodge members tried to protect lodge property by hiding it. A lodge in Münster buried many of its artifacts because they had once been the property of the

⁴⁹ The situation of Freemasonry after the taking of power by National Socialism author unknown, no date, BArch R58/6167 part 1.

⁵⁰ Lodges kept detailed records of member's names, addresses, occupations, Masonic degrees, and lodge offices. Since lodge membership was not something that was recorded on official identification papers (like religion), these lists were one of the few ways the regime could identify current and former Freemasons. Workplan for SGvD lodge *Landmerken* in Breslau, March and April, GStA 5.1.11, Nr. 27 – Lodge meeting minutes.

⁵¹ Bavarian Political Police to police and government, January 28, 1935 Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

famous Marshall Blücher, who had once been master of the Munster lodge. When the war ended Brother E. Barrs, the man who buried the artifacts, dug them up and offered them to a group of English Masons on occupying duty. The Canadian Army was using metal detectors to search the city for hidden caches of weapons and Brother Barrs didn't know what might happen to the artifacts if they were discovered in that way. Ironically, after years of hiding the artifacts from confiscation by one group, the lodge had to give them away to prevent confiscation by another.⁵²

Some property, like furniture and lodge buildings, was simply too big to bury and members tried to deny the Nazis their prize by selling buildings and property to lodge members. The buildings were put up for general sale, but to keep it within the circle of brothers the asking price for a former member was significantly lower than the price required of non-Mason buyers. The lodges claimed that the lower prices for former members were in order to settle debts with members by deducting the amount owed from the asking price. The Gestapo feared, and rightly so, that if the lodge remained in the hands of former brothers it could still be used to carry on Masonic meetings in secret. To combat this the government required reports on all current and future buyers of confiscated Freemasonic property. Anyone with close ties to the lodge would be denied the ability to make the purchase.⁵³

⁵² Leo Maris, "English Freemasonry in Germany 1921-1929, 1945-1971", *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum* vol. 83 (1970), 277.

⁵³ Bavarian Political Police to local police and government, October 30, 1935; Bavarian Political Police to police following up on October 30 letter, November 15, 1935. Both letters from Schumacher, T580, 267 I.

To try and skirt this new law the *Zum Friedenstempel* lodge in Stettin sold their lodge building to a completely non-affiliated business. That way even though the lodge lost its building it could at least benefit from the sale and deny the Nazis both the building and the money from selling it. Unfortunately the Nazis responded with their own loophole, stating that the sale was invalid since it was completed after the lodge's closure, and organizations that no longer exist cannot conduct business. The party then re-confiscated the lodge and put it up for sale themselves.⁵⁴

The closing of *Alexius zur Beständigkeit* in Bernberg provides a good example of everything involved in lodge closures from property seizure and Masonic salvage attempts to inter-party fighting and police corruption. *Alexius* was a daughter lodge of the *drei Weltkugeln*. In May of 1935 it closed down and a few weeks later the lodge property was inventoried and taken to the town hall where it was sealed in the cellar and turned over to the Gestapo. Trouble arose when two of the police officials overseeing the confiscation, Albert Bornemann and Arno Heilmann, were found entering the sealed room without authorization.

The man who discovered them entering the sealed room, SS-*Oberscharführer* Willi Grosse, accused the two of stealing lodge property either for themselves or for a third party. The two men claimed they were only trying to "put things in order." Both men had "questionable" political histories, and Heilmann had even come under suspicion before for looting during the liquidation of another lodge. Furthermore, the

⁵⁴ USHMM, Record Group 11.001M.04, "Records of the Gestapo in Stettin," Reel 72, folder 310.

day after the incident, Heilmann was seen “engrossed in conversation” with a former member of *Alexius*.⁵⁵

As for the property in question, Bornemann said that he had “borrowed” three books from those confiscated, which he returned in short order. The greater question, however, involved the fate of a set of champagne glasses that had also gone missing, along with a page of the confiscation inventory report. The missing material and Heilmann’s conversation with the former lodge member led the SS to suspect that Heilmann had made some kind deal to retrieve the glasses. Police Chief Ernst Faust suspected that the glasses belonged to some secret lodge ritual that the lodge didn’t want to see discovered (perhaps the notorious “blood ritual” that Himmler was so sure existed).⁵⁶

The investigation reached a rather anti-climactic conclusion. The surviving documents are vague but suggest the glasses in question were the personal property of a lodge member and were only being used by the lodge at the time of the liquidation. The owner of the glasses had made an arrangement, at least with Heilmann, to retrieve them from the town hall. Bornemann’s roll in the whole affair was secondary, if he even knew at all. The final report, written almost a year after the initial liquidation, declared

⁵⁵ Letter from Oberabschnitt Mitte of the Security Main Office of the RFSS to the SD Main Office in Berlin, November 1935; Report regarding *Alexius*, November 3, 1935; Grosse Statement, November 3, 1935; Explanation of the political dependency of both men (sent as enclosure to letter from Oberabschnitt Mitte); Statement of city worker Karl Polland, November 4, 1935; Memo regarding the Bornemann, Heilmann case, October 26, 1935; Grosse Statement, November 3, 1935, BArch R58/6103a part 1, pgs. 8, 11, 13, 9, 15, 28, 13.

⁵⁶ Statement of Polizeihauptwachtmeister Ernst Faust, November 3, 1935, BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 14.

that “the handing over of the glasses was in complete accordance,” concluding that there was no reason for further investigation.⁵⁷

While the investigation over the missing glasses was going on the lodge building itself presented another problem. It was a large, beautiful, two-floored structure with a large conference room (the former temple), numerous offices, a library and manicured garden (Fig. A7). The interior was no less richly furnished, containing all the furniture one might expect in an elite social club (see Fig. A8). It even had a pool table.⁵⁸ After closure the city assumed ownership of the lodge.⁵⁹ The *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (DAF – German Workers Front), the sprawling Nazi labor organization, expressed interest in the building, but among the liquidation documents was a stack of short letters from local citizens, addressed either to the party or the DAF, asking that the lodge be turned over to someone else, most of them suggesting the SS.⁶⁰

At first glance, the nearly seventy-five letters in the stack suggest that the community was quite happy about the lodge closure and eager to see the building put to the use of the National Socialist movement, after reading through the letters, however one finds that most of the letters are carbon copies of each other and derive from five or six templates, changing only the name of the sender. It is difficult to say definitively what was happening, but since none of the letters are addressed to the SS, and the

⁵⁷ Letter from political police commander to political police in Dessau regarding the confiscation of property from *Alexius zur Beständigkeit*, April 1, 1936, BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 3.

⁵⁸ The confiscation inventory listed a billiard table and all the associated paraphernalia in the first truckload. BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 93.

⁵⁹ Report on the confiscation of archive, library and other property of *Alexius*, no date, BArch R58/6103a, part 1, 32.

⁶⁰ BArch R58/6103a, part 1, pages 49-85 contain the letters, averaging two letters per microfilm page.

majority suggest turning the building over *to* the SS, it appears that the SS was trying to organize some kind of scheme to convince the DAF and party that the public wanted the building turned over to them.

If this was the case, whoever was in charge of organizing the campaign, made a mess of it. It made sense to send two identical letters, one to the DAF and one to the party and indeed for each letter template there was one copy sent to the NSDAP and one to the DAF. But the while the party received a single copy of one template it received three copies of another. For another template the party and DAF received three copies each! The letters were very brief, often only a couple sentences, and it seems difficult to imagine that the recipient would not notice the exact same letter arriving from so many “different” authors, especially considering most the letters were dated within two days of each other.

Within the numerous copies, however, are a dozen or so unique letters that are often longer than the templates. Some of these seemingly authentic letters advocate turning the building over to the SS, but other suggest making it into a school, an *Hitlerjugend* office, or simply say it should be turned over to the party. Whether the SS included these distinct letters to lend an air of authenticity to the campaign, or whether these longer letters were also templates of which additional copies didn't survive is unclear. The whole fiasco, however, demonstrates the kind of inter-party competition for seized buildings that follow lodge liquidations.

The forced closing of the lodges and the subsequent seizure of lodge property was a mix of greed and ideology, though definitely more the former than the latter. By

seizing assets, and allowing the public to benefit from the confiscations through public auctions and sales, the government not only alleviated its financial burden at the expense of its enemies, but it also helped to gain support from the general public. Individuals and groups benefitted by being able to purchase furniture, buildings, and pieces of art that they otherwise may not have been able to afford, with the “legality” of the seizures helping to assuage any guilt that may have pricked the benefactor’s conscience.

More importantly what *was* confiscated isn’t as significant as what *wasn’t*.

While the Nazis swarmed all over the wealth and property of Freemasonry like a pack of vultures, not once did the party go after the private property of individual Freemasons. In fact, looking at the case of Bernberg, an individual was able to recover his private property after the lodge had been seized and locked up. The brother thought he would have to recover his champagne glasses on the sly, but at the end of the investigation the SS concluded that there was nothing wrong with the man simply recovering what was his.

Property seizure played a key role in Nazi Germany. It funded wars, stabilized the economy and generated public support. Freemasons had one foot on each side of the equation; they were members of a demographic from which the regime needed support, but also members of a demographic that offered a tempting target for Nazi plunder. By confiscating lodge property, but leaving the wealth of individual Freemasons alone, the regime was able to steal millions of dollars worth of cash, property and real estate, but avoid turning the individual Freemasons into angry or bitter citizens.

Gisela Wolters-Sajn, a Jewish child who hid under a false identity for much of the 1930s, lived with a couple in Berlin as a refugee. She does not disclose their names, but identifies the couple as part of the city's elite with the husband being a Freemason. Gisela recalled that after the Nazis closed down and destroyed the local lodge, they tried to go after him directly, but his social standing as one of the city's elite made it impossible for the Nazis to touch him.⁶¹ As a Freemason he was a target; as a citizen he was not.

⁶¹ Wolters-Sajn, Gisela. Interview code 32275. *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Accessed online at the USHMM on August 4, 2009.

CHAPTER VI

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. SCHACHT AND MR. HITLER

Robert Louis Stevenson's famous short story, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, tells the tale of Henry Jekyll, a brilliant doctor who makes a Faustian bargain out of a desire to do good for himself and mankind. As the story progresses, Jekyll struggles more and more to contain Hyde, but learns that it is impossible. In the end, Jekyll has to sacrifice himself in order to destroy Hyde.

Jekyll's story is similar to that of Hjalmar Schacht, a Freemason and one of the central figures of the Third Reich. Like Jekyll, Schacht collaborated with Hitler out of a desire to restore Germany to its former glory, as well as serve Schacht's own ambition. In fact, Freemasonry and National Socialism are a Jekyll-and-Hyde of German nationalism. Men flocked to both groups in hopes of gaining social status and furthering their own ambitions, as well as out of patriotism. Both organizations sought the betterment of Germany, but their means placed them at odds. Freemasonry improved the nation through the individual; Nazism improved the individual through the nation. Freemasons viewed Nazis as uneducated ruffians, while Nazis saw Freemasons as Jewish puppets. Freemasonry saw education, humanitarianism and philanthropy as the key to national health and improvement; National Socialism saw race and eugenics as that same key.

If Hitler is the Hyde of German nationalism, Hjalmar Schacht qualifies as Jekyll. Initially, Schacht viewed the party with contempt, but near the end of the 1920s, after

Germany adopted the Young Plan, Schacht began to see the NSDAP as a party with the right goals but the wrong methods and began sending out feelers to Hitler. After the seizure of power, Schacht became a part of the Third Reich, serving in key government positions and furthering his own career at the same time he was rebuilding his shattered country. With Schacht's help, Hitler gained the support of German big business, and more importantly, Schacht provided Hitler with the money he needed for rearmament; however, like Jekyll, Schacht learned that the monster he had unleashed could not be tamed or controlled, leading to Schacht's complete turn against the party and eventual imprisonment for conspiring to overthrow it.

Hjalmar Schacht's life and relationship to both the lodges and the party provide an individual case study of middle-class German Freemasonry and its response to National Socialism. Of course, Schacht went on to become much more than average, but by the establishment of the Weimar Republic he was known and respected, but had yet to become the "Old Wizard." As a nationalist, educated, successful, middle-class Protestant, Schacht personified the demographics of the Old Prussian lodges.¹ He embraced liberalism, but still maintain a healthy respect and desire for monarchy. Schacht also had a twinge of anti-Semitism in him, which was shared by other Old Prussian Freemasons. Through Schacht we will be able to see the many facets of the history between he regime and the lodges; motivation through self-interest mixed with

¹ By the late 18th century, especially in Germany, most lodge members were middle and upper-middle class. Initially the aristocracy played a large part in the lodges, and in France even some on the social fringes joined. See Hoffman, *Politics of Sociability*, 20-21 and Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 8. As for Schacht's nationalism, all of his biographers, and the Military Tribunal at Nuremberg for that matter, believed Schacht when he said his actions were always motivated by his desire for a stronger Germany, not because of National Socialist ideology.

nationalism, flexibility in party policy enforcement, and the willingness of Freemason to readily abandon a fraternity they loved so much. When Schacht began working for the government he did so out of an honest belief that the Nazis were in the best interests both of the nation, and of his own personal career. To his credit, Schacht never joined the party, yet received honors and promotions, one after the other until his falling out with Hitler in the late 1930s.

Though Hjalmar Schacht may have ended up an exceptional case of a former Freemason in the Third Reich he certainly didn't start out that way. In fact, a brief look at his childhood and upbringing reveal that he trod the very same middle-class road many other Freemasons did, making him a suitable case study. He was almost born an American citizen. When Schacht's mother, Constance von Eggers, became pregnant with the future financial wizard both she and her husband, William Schacht, lived in New York City. Schacht's two older brothers were born American citizens, and even Schacht's father took American citizenship.² Schacht's full name, Hjalmar Horace Greely Schacht, is indeed in tribute to the American Newspaper man and politician whose interest in politics arose ironically, over the issue of currency and financial reform in the United States following the chaos of the Civil War. Hjalmar Schacht, like his namesake, advocated major currency reform in the wake of a disastrous conflict.

William lived in New York for several years, during which time he applauded the liberal

² *Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal, Nurember, 14 November 1945 – 1 October 1946* (Nuremberg, Germany: The Tribunal, 1947-1949), vol. XII, 417. These records are also referred to as the Blue Set and will be hereafter referred to as such. The entire Blue Set can be found online line at the Avalon Project at Yale Law School, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/imt.asp, accessed January 13, 2011.

philosophies of Horace Greely, and taught them to his children. Schacht recalled, “My father, throughout his life, adhered to democratic ideals. He was a Freemason. He was a cosmopolitan... I grew up among these ideas and I have never departed from these basic conceptions of freemasonry and democracy and humanitarian and cosmopolitan ideals.”³

The family intended on staying the United States, but the pregnancy, coupled with other health problems and the family’s longing to see Germany again, led William to take the family back to Europe where Schacht was born on January 22, 1877, in the town of Tinglev in Schleswig-Holstein. In his memoirs, Schacht repeatedly refers to the poverty under which his parents struggled, claiming that the family’s finances were tenuous for a long time after the marriage. At the same time, however, the brief family history Schacht provides suggests that what he considered “poor” would have been quite acceptable by other’s standards. His father’s side of the family did indeed come from peasant stock along the German-Denmark border, but Schacht readily admitted that there was an old saying about his family; “A Dithmarschen peasant thinks he’s a peasant! He’s much more like a country squire.”⁴ Schacht’s great grandfather broke with family tradition and became a shopkeeper, earning enough money to send his son (Schacht’s grandfather) to college where he became a doctor. By the time William was born, the family had, in Schacht’s words, “outgrown the peasant class.”⁵

As for Schacht’s mother, she came from the aristocracy. At the time of the marriage her uncle was the Baron von Eggers. William Schacht must therefore have

³ Blue Set, vol. XII, 419.

⁴ Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 7.

⁵ *Ibid*, 19.

been more than a common peasant to be able to marry a woman of noble birth. Schacht claimed that a few generations prior to his mother's birth a foolish relative squandered the family fortune, leaving little more to pass on than the hereditary "von." At the same time, when she travelled to America to marry William she travelled first class and in the company of a maidservant. When she arrived, Constance and William enjoyed a "perfectly ordinary middle-class marriage."⁶

Upon returning to Germany, William worked in a number of different jobs. He worked at different times as a schoolteacher, journalist, newspaper editor, factory manager and bookkeeper; however, Schacht's mother, worked in a shop to supplement the family income. Having both parents working certainly lends credence to Schacht's assertion that his family struggled financially, but Schacht drops other hints that suggest otherwise. The family income not only paid the rent and put food on the table (of which Schacht said there was always plenty), the family could afford to send Schacht's oldest brother, and eventually Schacht too, to the Johanneum, a grammar school in Hamburg that Schacht boasted was the finest in Hamburg and "famous throughout Germany."⁷ Additionally, Schacht fondly remembers that his father was able to devote every evening to teaching and playing with his children. A family that can afford the necessities of life, education expenses, and still have time in the evenings, can't be as "poor" as Schacht claimed. When Schacht was eight his father got a new job with an insurance company that he would keep for the next thirty years, retiring as the General Secretary of the Berlin Office. They moved to a new part of Hamburg, staying in a building with "better

⁶ *Ibid*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid*, 29.

class tenants” and furnishing their “sparse” flat with glass front bookcases, wall paintings and lots of books. By the time Schacht began at the Johanneum the family was doing just fine.⁸

At school, Schacht excelled at his studies, and though his family was on sound financial footing he remembers that he was not allowed to join the sailing and rowing clubs, which were reserved for the student from more elite backgrounds. So while he was certainly not poor, he was also not elite, at least not yet. Perhaps his exclusion from the school’s prestigious clubs left a bad taste in Schacht’s mouth, for in his adult years, after establishing himself as a banker, we will see that Schacht showed particular displeasure at being excluded from another elite club.

Throughout his schooling Schacht continued to take after those of his father. Schacht considered himself a liberal and hoped that one day soon educated middle-class men like he and his father would have chances at jobs that were at the time open only to those of aristocratic privilege. When the Year of the Three Emperor’s witnessed the quick death of Frederick III, Schacht lamented the emperor’s passing as the last real opportunity for liberal reform (as well as the end of royal patronage for the lodges). From that time until the end of WWI, Schacht referred to Germany’s liberals as a “lost generation...sound enough in theory but in practice seldom have large numbers.”⁹ For

⁸ When he was 15 (1892), Schacht purchased a bicycle for 250 marks, a sum that “not so long since my mother had kept house for more than a month.” Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 48. Although Schacht doesn’t specify whether “kept house” meant total income, or simply the cost of monthly expenses, but either way it meant the family lived on an income somewhere between 1,500 and 3,000 marks a year. In 1905, almost a decade later, the average German farmer earned around 550 marks a year, industrial workers almost 1,000, see A. V. Desai, *Real Wages in Germany, 1871-1914*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968).

⁹ Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 33-34.

Schacht, liberalism was the logical choice for an industrializing nation. Once when speaking of his uncle, Schacht called him “one of those strictly logical sensible folk who find it hard to understand that people do not always act according to reason,” continuing with “as a result he belong to the Liberal political party.”¹⁰ Despite Schacht’s political liberalism he still revered the monarchy; a trend maintained by most German Freemasons. Schacht recalled the time he saw (not met, just saw), Emperor Wilhelm II, and recalled being totally awestruck, exclaiming that the aura and majesty of the emperor made a permanent impression on his mind. Schacht reacted similarly when first saw the Iron Chancellor (again, not meeting, just seeing).

After completing his primary schooling, Schacht’s stellar performance on his exams virtually guaranteed that he would be able to attend a university. While in college, Schacht belonged to the group of students who got to enjoy their college years, his father being able to provide him with a “modest monthly allowance.”¹¹ During his college career, Schacht attended five different universities all over the country in as many years and changed major every term for his first seven terms, jumping from medicine to literature, journalism and finally settling on economics. As one of his optional subjects he chose to study Hebrew. Years later he and his family often joked that Hebrew was a useful language to learn for one planning on embarking on a career in banking and finance.

Schacht’s allowance must have been more than just modest, for his recollections of college are full of picnics, drinking and dating rather than comments about the rigors

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 33.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 52.

of studying or working. Part of that can be attributed to his extraordinary intelligence, but his extracurricular “activities” suggest more. While pursuing journalism he interrupted his studies for a year to work at a small newspaper in Berlin as an unpaid assistant; again living off his allowance. Schacht took another year off later to spend a year in Paris because he wanted to learn French and attend lectures at the *College Libre des Sciences Social*; again “arrang[ing] for my allowance.”¹²

As a hobby, Schacht dabbled in poetry and literature and wrote on and off for the rest of his life. He never joined a *Korps*, but did become a member of the Academic and Literary Union, which “fought no duels, but gave me satisfaction.”¹³ Schacht never says that he was unable to join any of the prestigious clubs, like during his days in the Johanneum, but his comment about the literary society above suggests that lack of membership was due more to desire than ability.

After returning from his sojourn in Paris, Schacht went to Kiel to pursue his doctorate in political economy, completing his thesis on English economics a year later. After graduation, Schacht took a job with the Central Office for the Preparation of Trade Agreements, the only job, Schacht points out, to which he ever applied. Every job he held thereafter came by way of invitation. To feed his writing hobby (and supplement his 100 mark per month income), Schacht wrote articles on economics for the *Prussian Year Book*. In 1901 he transferred to the *Handelsvertragsverein* (Assoc. for Mercantile Contracts), which put him in direct, daily contact with the most powerful bankers and businessmen in the country. Part of job included editing the association’s bulletin and so

¹² *Ibid*, 67.

¹³ *Ibid*, 58.

Schacht felt it prudent to join the Berlin Press Union. Schacht declined an offer to run for a position in the Reichstag, stating that he had little interest in party politics; however, at the same time he served on the committee of the Young Liberals Association, an auxiliary of the National Liberal Party.

His time at the *Handelsvertragsverein* really set his career in motion. In addition to business contacts, Schacht shrewd business sense was earning him an annual salary of 6,000 marks a year in addition to the 2,000 marks a year he earned publishing articles on economics. In 1903 he accepted an offer with the Dresdener Bank (he was also courted by AEG and Siemens), becoming a branch manager at the age of 32. The year before his promotion, Schacht became a Freemason, joining the lodge *Urania zur Unsterblichkeit* (a daughter lodge of *Royal York zur Freundschaft*) in Berlin. Schacht cited tradition as his primary reason for joining. “Freemasonry runs in my family,” he stated, “my father belonged to an American Lodge. My great-grandfather, Christian Ulrich Detlev von Eggers, was one of the Masonic notables of the Age of Enlightenment.”¹⁴ While Schacht claimed he joined out of tradition, one can’t help but notice that he joined the lodges shortly after making the acquaintances of some very powerful men, and being well on his way to becoming one himself. Schacht admitted that he was a very ambitious man, but never hinted that his membership in the lodge was a doorway to, or acknowledgement of, that ambition. Still, he had learned during his days in grammar school and college the relationship between club membership and social status. When his grammar school rowing club denied him membership it was because he was on the

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 105.

lower half of the social order. By his thirtieth birthday, and his joining the lodges, he had climbed to the upper half.

Schacht's connections with Freemasonry led to other associations. As an administrator in one of the three "Big D" German banks, Schacht travelled all over the world as a financial consultant. Even Chiang Kai Shek requested a consultation.¹⁵ On a trip to Turkey, Schacht's lodge provided him with the name of a Turkish Masonic contact, in case Schacht wanted to attend a lodge meeting during his stay. Schacht made the acquaintance of this brother and other Turkish Freemasons, who told him "all of the Young Turks were Freemasons and their secret meetings took place under the protection of the Lodge – the only place where they were safe from spies."¹⁶ After returning from the trip, Schacht and the two men from the bank who accompanied him founded a German-Turkish Society, adding another club to Schacht's already substantial list of memberships.

When WWI broke out an army doctor rejected Schacht as medically unfit for service due to "acute myopia;" however, Schacht still served the war effort as an administrator in the Banking Commission for Occupied Belgium. During his time in Belgium there was an incident that demonstrates Schacht's attitudes toward exclusivity and his own place within exclusive society. One evening, Schacht tried to enter the Officer's Club for an evening drink and was refused on the grounds that, while an

¹⁵ Shek to Schacht, no date, Hoover Institution of War and Peace, Hjalmar Schacht Private Papers, collection 73009.

¹⁶ Schacht, *Confessions of the "Old Wizard"*, 105-106. Schacht recounted the incident in his memoirs for two reasons; first as an amusing anecdote, but more importantly as a comparison to show the reader that the Old Prussian lodges "supported the idea of the preservation of the state through the monarchy."

occupational administrator, he was still a civilian. Schacht became very bitter about the incident, blasting the officer's corps in his memoir for clinging so tenaciously to its exclusiveness. Remember, in college, Schacht was excluded from joining the elite rowing and sailing clubs, which he merely brushed off. That, however, was when Schacht still hailed from the lower middle-class. In 1915, however, Schacht was a much bigger fish, and not about to let military snobbery exclude him. Schacht went over the heads of the officers at the club, contacting the Governor General, Colmar von der Goltz, who Schacht knew before the war due to his banking contacts. Goltz invited Schacht to dine with him that evening at the club as a personal guest, taking extra pains to seat Schacht to his immediate right at the table.

In the wake of WWI, Schacht and the members of one of his social-business clubs (but not his lodge) founded DDP as a party that “without being extremist, [is] dissatisfied with the present conditions, a middle-class Left.” The chaos of defeat had led to a communist surge in Germany and the DDP sought to prevent bitterness from turning into Bolshevik Revolution. While supporting the DDP, however, Schacht still considered himself a monarchist and would have gladly seen the return of the emperor (albeit with some liberal concessions) instead of a republic. Schacht broke with the DDP in 1924 over the *Fürstenenteignung* referendum, a Marxist petition advocating the seizure and expropriation of royal houses and property.¹⁷ The DDP favored the measure, while Schacht supported private property, revealing that while his politics may have

¹⁷ SS report on Hjalmar Schacht, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 43 folder 533.

leaned left, his economic opinions rested squarely on the right.¹⁸ In 1930, economic disagreement led Schacht to quit his post as President of the Reichsbank over Germany's adoption of the Young Plan.¹⁹

As a man with an established reputation in banking and finance, Hitler always kept Schacht in his peripheral vision. Schacht in turn was familiar with Nazi ideology, and sympathetic with it in many areas; first, he hated both communism and the Treaty of Versailles; second, he agreed with the concept of *Lebensraum* arguing that an industrial power needed colonies for economic stability; third, Schacht strongly supported rearmament and fourth, Schacht argued that Jews, as a community, should be considered foreigners within Germany and subject to the laws governing foreigners in Germany.²⁰ As a sign of his growing support, In November of 1932, Schacht, along with several major industrialist like Thyssen and Krupp, sent a letter to President Hindenburg, urging him to stop calling for so many elections and form a new cabinet in collaboration with the Nazis and the German National People's Party (DNVP) in order to squelch the communists.²¹

Schacht met the future Führer for the first time during a New Year's dinner party

¹⁸ In one of the great ironies of Schacht's life he remained an enemy to socialism while his daughter, Inge, grew up to be an ardent socialist. She too earned a PhD in economics, but unlike her father, leaned further left during her college years, joining the SPD along with her husband. The liberal politics that the Schacht inherited from his father obviously passed down to his children, though somewhat amplified. Edward Peterson, *Hjalmar Schacht: For and Against Hitler: A Political-Economic Study of Germany, 1923-1945* (Boston: Christopher Publishing House, 1954), 242; SS report on Hjalmar Schacht, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 43 folder 533.

¹⁹ SS report on Hjalmar Schacht, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 43 folder 533; Report by SD Section I A 111, July 24, 1931, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 24, folder 304.

²⁰ Blue Set, vol. V, 376.

²¹ Letter written November 1932 by Schacht, Krupp and others to the Reich President, document 3901-PS, Red Set, vol. VI, 796.

hosted by one of Schacht's financial colleagues. Both Goering and Hitler attended. Schacht's first impression of Hitler was that "he was a man with whom one could cooperate," although very quickly Schacht learned of Hitler's garrulousness, recalling that he dominated "95 percent" of the dinner conversation;²² however, in all that speaking, nothing Hitler said about national issues contradicted Schacht's own personal beliefs. Schacht even sent a letter to Hitler in August of 1932, commenting that "Your movement is carried internally by so strong a truth and necessity that victory in one form or another cannot elude you for long," adding "Wherever my work may take me to in the near future, even if you should see me one day *within* the fortress – you can always count on me as your reliable assistant."²³ Two months later, Schacht wrote another letter to Hitler, stating that "I am quite confident that our present system is certainly doomed to disintegration...I have no doubt that the present development of things can only lead to your becoming chancellor."²⁴ In spite of all the praise he lavished on Hitler, Schacht still had some reservations. While on business to the United States, Schacht read *Mein Kampf* and said he found it "quite uninteresting" and demonstrative of Hitler's lack of understanding of the principles of economics.²⁵ Schacht most likely offered his expertise to Hitler out of a combination of opportunism mixed with fear of what might happen should Hitler one day direct economic policy.

As Schacht began warming to the party, the party reciprocated. In 1932, future

²² Testimony of Hjalmar Schacht, 20 July 1945, document 3725-PS, Red Set, vol. VI, 464.

²³ Roger Stackelberg and Sally Anne Winkle, *The Nazi Germany Sourcebook: An Anthology of Texts* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 117.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 118.

²⁵ Blue Set, vol. V, 375-6.

Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels referred to Schacht as a man who “absolutely shares our point of view. He is one of the few who stand immovable behind the Fuehrer.”²⁶ On the occasion of Schacht’s sixtieth birthday, the *Völkischer Beobachter* printed an article about Schacht’s early dealings with the party, praising him for “never fail[ing] to point at Adolf Hitler as the only possible leader of the Reich” and proclaiming that “The name of Dr. Schacht will remain linked with the transition of the German economy to the new National Socialist methods.”²⁷

On March 17, 1933, Hitler asked Schacht to reassume the presidency of the Reichsbank. Schacht accepted and held the post until 1939. Hitler wanted money for rearmament and employment, but the current Reichsbank president, Hans Luther, refused to grant Hitler more than 100 million marks. Hitler was upset that Luther refused to cooperate, and gave him a choice; he could either become ambassador to Washington and receive a generous pension, or Hitler would “break him.”²⁸ Luther chose the former and Schacht came in as his replacement. Nazi party member Gottfried Feder, whose ideas were far more socialist, was also in the running for the position. Schacht, though politically liberal, was ever the critic of liberal economics and accepted the position partly out of self-interest and partly out wanting to keep radicals like Feder out of power. Schacht’s appointment ruffled feathers within the party with members expressed outraged that Hitler selected an outsider for such an important position.

²⁶ Joseph Goebbels and Louis P. Lochner, ed. *The Goebbels Diaries* (London: H. Hamilton, 1948), entry for November 21, 1932; “Extracts from the Imperial House to the Reich Chancellery by Dr. Joseph Goebbels,” document 2409-PS, Red Set, vol. V, 83.

²⁷ “Dr. Schacht 60 years Old,” from *Völkischer Beobachter* 21 January 1937, document EC-499, Red Set, vol. VII, 576.

²⁸ Hitler, *Table Talk*, 325.

Schacht, however, was more than qualified for the position, and the Nazi party's economic and nationalist policies dovetailed with his own. He accepted the post and became president of the Reichsbank for the second time, declaring in an early speech, "the Reichsbank will always be nothing but National Socialist, or I shall cease to be its manager."²⁹

Despite such rhetoric, Schacht never officially joined the party. His membership in the Liberal Party and DDP demonstrated that his absence from the rolls of the NSDAP was not based on a desire to stay out of party politics, and by 1930 Schacht admitted that the Nazis were the party most closely aligned with his own ideology. The real reason remains a mystery. Schacht's first biographer, Dr. Franz Reuter, argued that Schacht was willing to join the party, but was refused because Hitler thought Schacht served a greater role as an "outsider," rather than being seen as another party lackey.³⁰ By remaining aloof from the party, Schacht could show influential figures, especially businessmen and industrialists, that National Socialism, though rhetorically opposed to capitalism, was indeed friendly to big business. Many industrialists were leery of the Nazis (after all, the ideology was called National *Socialism*) and the endorsement of a well-known and respected banker as Schacht carried a lot of, shall we say, capital.³¹

The closest Schacht ever came to actually becoming a member occurred in 1937, when the party awarded him the golden party emblem, "the highest honor the Third

²⁹ Blue Set, vol. XIII, 13.

³⁰ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 128-9; Blue Set, vol. V, 121.

³¹ Blue Set vol. V, 378; Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 134-5, supports the argument that Schacht was a lure for banking and heavy industry. Schacht's other biographers focus on his economic decisions and don't say much about why he never joined the party. He supported the regime until the late 1930s, does it matter whether he officially joined or not?

Reich has to offer,” for his long service.³² That recognition was not tantamount to joining the party and Schacht claimed that he accepted for fear of reprisal if he refused. Eltz-Rubenach, Minister of Traffic, had refused to receive the same award with Schacht and was dismissed from his post.³³ Schacht even appeared in numerous party propaganda movies, including *Triumph of the Will*, wearing the pin of party membership, but that was most likely a ruse to gain support from Germany’s banking and industrial circles.³⁴ Considering Leni Riefenstahl’s attention to detail it is reasonable to suggest that she had him wear the pin for party effect, even if he wasn’t officially a member. In the end it didn’t really matter, Schacht’s growing criticism of the war and government policy led to the party demanding the return of the award in 1943.³⁵ At his trial in Nuremberg, Schacht claimed that though he worked with the party, he was never particularly close to Hitler, and only served under him for the good of Germany.³⁶

In the meantime, Schacht’s status in the party skyrocketed. In August 1934, Hitler appointed Schacht as Minister of Economics, though he still retained his position as president of the Reichsbank. Less than a year later, in May of 1935, Schacht was appointed General Plenipotentiary for the War Economy.³⁷ With this appointment,

³² “A Proclamation by Dr. Schacht on occasion of presentation of Golden Party Badge,” from *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 9 February 1937, document EC-500, Red Set, vol. VII, 578.

³³ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 251.

³⁴ Red Set, vol. II, 14.

³⁵ Blue Set, vol. V, 377.

³⁶ Blue Set, vol. V, 396.

³⁷ Directive from Bloomberg to Supreme Commanders of Army, Navy and Air Forces, 24 June 1935, document 2261-PS, Red Set, vol. IV, 934; Statement of Governmental Positions Held by Dr. Schacht, document 3021-PS, Red Set, vol. V, 737; Amos Simpson, *Hjalmar Schacht in Perspective* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969), 179.

Schacht essentially became “dictator” of the German economy.³⁸ He controlled the Reichsbank, set economic policy, and could use his authority as plenipotentiary to influence business. Schacht’s appointment, however, raised a few objections. Though seldom mentioning Schacht by name, many SD situation reports raised concerns about Freemasons in influential economic positions, meaning that if war broke out, Germany’s capability to successfully wage it rested in the hands of Freemasons, a group that the party believed to be internationalist and pacifist.³⁹ One report that did specifically mention Schacht did so as evidence of ties between Freemasonry and the Jews, rather than as an attack on Schacht. A Jewish man in Erfurt opened a clothing store. When a local party member approached the mayor asking why the store hadn’t been shut down, the mayor, who was also a party member, said there were no legal grounds to do so, and besides that, the minister of economics (Schacht) encouraged small business as an essential part of economic recovery, regardless of who owned the store. That, the report concluded, proved Freemasons were “friends of the Jews.”⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Schacht’s influence and standing with Hitler never transferred over to any of his other associations, Freemasonry included. In 1935, just as the party delivered its ultimatum to the lodges, Schacht appealed personally to Hitler, asking that the lodges be allowed to remain open, but to no effect. Hitler listened politely to

³⁸ Blue Set, vol. V, 122. It was the prosecution that first called him economic “dictator,” but as the head of the bank, economics ministry, and war-economy planning, the label was not that far off.

³⁹ SD-Southeast situation report, July 3, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 33; RSHA II 111 situation report for 1938, January 19, 1939, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 30; Undated RSHA II 111 report, USHMM, RG-15.007M, Reel 5, Folder 31.

⁴⁰ SD report on Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, April 18, 1934, USHMM, RG 15.007M, Reel 43, folder 533.

Schacht's request, but then but insisted that in the interests of National Socialism the lodges had to be closed and were at liberty to do so voluntarily before the government stepped in.⁴¹ Schacht never brought up the subject with Hitler again, although he often had quarrels with other Nazi leaders over the treatment of former Freemasons, who accused Schacht of sheltering Freemasons within the Reichsbank and Ministry of Economics.⁴² Fredrich Karl Florian, a Gauleiter and member of the Reichstag, called the Reichsbank "the gas station for international piggy banks" and almost wholly dominated by Jews, while another critic in the party suggested that Schacht himself was a Danish Jew.⁴³ Others didn't go so far as to accuse Schacht of being Jewish, but did think of him as an elitist snob who was really good with money.⁴⁴

For Schacht, the honeymoon didn't last long. He first began to seriously doubt the wisdom of his decision to align with the Nazis after the Night of the Long Knives. Schacht abhorred such brutality and it proved to him that brute force and violent tactics were not reserved only for the SA. Schacht's creeping disillusion with the party did not go unnoticed. Heinrich Himmler began to keep a careful eye on Schacht and even recruited the Schacht family maid to spy on Schacht and conceal microphones in the

⁴¹ Neuberger, *Winkelmass und Hakenkreuz*, 257.

⁴² Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 244. The SD reports cited previously had pointed out the number of Freemasons in banking circles, lending support to accusations that Schacht played favorites. In reality, the connection was much less sinister. Freemasons only accepted a certain kind of member and the banking industry included such men. The Nazis saw conspiracy when in reality it was a matter of social and business association.

⁴³ Undated document, USHMM, RG-15.007M Reel 43 folder 533. criticize Schacht as a conservative and the man securing a "throat-slitting" (as the document quotes him) for the working people through the Young Plan. The accusation came from a "Reich Representative Vetter," most likely Heinrich Vetter, mayor of Hagen.

⁴⁴ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 130.

home.⁴⁵ At the same time, the Gestapo and the Ministry of the Interior began investigation Schacht's lodge, *Urania zur Unsterblichkeit* for supposed "reactionary, *staatsfeindliche*" actions.⁴⁶

That same year, Schacht met Hans Bernd Gisevius, a Gestapo officer and fellow critic of the regime, who informed Schacht of the maid-spy in his home.⁴⁷ Gisevius and Schacht began a long association in discussion and planning possible solutions to the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler, and both Schacht and Gisevius later took part in the 1944 July Plot. At one point, Gisevius suggested that Schacht use his position as minister of finance to create inflation and topple the German economy, thus also stopping rearmament and Hitler, but Schacht refused.⁴⁸ It is uncertain whether Schacht refused because he did not want to bring to Germany the very economic ruin he had saved it from in the 1920s, or if his pride and ego simply would not let him destroy the economy he worked so hard to build.⁴⁹ Most likely it was a combination of both. Schacht was both a nationalist and an opportunist; to purposefully collapse the economy would have been contrary to betray both his country and his ambition. Instead, Schacht preferred to see the country prosper under Hitler, hoping to influence the general course of events, than bring it all down to spite him.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 256.

⁴⁶ RFSS to Gestapo, September 14, 1934, BArch R58/6103a, part 2, 238-9; Prussian MdI to the Gestapo, June 1, 1934, BArch R58/6103a, part 2, 240. The letter does not mention whether Schacht specifically had anything to do with the increased interest in the *Urania*, but for both Schacht and his lodge to come under simultaneous suspicion has to more than coincidence.

⁴⁷ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 256.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 256.

⁴⁹ Ulrich von Hassell, *The von Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944: The Story of the Forces Against Hitler inside Germany* (London: H. Hamilton, 1948), 11.

Schacht's disillusionment grew to the point of open criticism. On August 18th, 1935, Schacht publicly ridiculed Nazi persecution during a speech he made at the German Eastern Fair held at Königsberg. It was traditional for a member of the Ministry of Economics to open the fair with a speech and Schacht used the opportunity to offer his first public criticism of the Party. It was a calculated move on Schacht's part. The first several pages of the speech addressed the horrible economic conditions that the Depression thrust upon Germany, thanks in large part to the Treaty of Versailles, which he referred to as "the most stupid peace treaty of all times" and "far worse than American lynch justice."⁵⁰ Schacht also made sure to pay homage to Hitler, praising his "boundless courage, statesmanlike skill [and] unerring sense of responsibility."⁵¹

Then Schacht went on the attack, castigating those who "heroically smear window panes in the middle of the night, who brand every German who trades in a Jewish store as a traitor, who condemn every former free-mason [sic] as a bum."⁵² The audience was shocked. Two SS officers, one of which worked directly under Himmler, got up and left in the middle of Schacht's comments.⁵³ Though the speech was a slap in the face, Schacht was careful. He did not couch his criticism in racial or social terms, but instead played the economics card, arguing that Germany needed fast economic recovery and

⁵⁰ "Königsberg Speech of President of the Reichsbank and acting Minister of Commerce, Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, at the German Eastern Fair," document EC-433, Red Series, vol. VII, 490. During his trial at Nuremberg, the prosecution cited Schacht's disdain for Versailles frequently as evidence of his support for Nazi aggression.

⁵¹ Königsberg Speech, Document EC-433, Red Set, vol. VII, pg. 488.

⁵² *Ibid*, pg. 489. During his trial, Schacht testified that the Propaganda Ministry, not having read the speech beforehand, was broadcasting it across the nation. Schacht also testified that he used the Reichsbank printing press to generate 250,000 copies and have them distributed to the 400 branches of the bank.

⁵³ Schacht, *Confessions of the "Old Wizard,"* 318.

such attacks against businesses and successful businessmen, even if they were Jews or Freemasons, were counterproductive. Schacht later followed a similar tactic in his criticism of the Nuremberg Blood Laws, attacking them on economic rather than ideological grounds.⁵⁴

Schacht quickly followed his critique with a statement that he agreed with the goals of these attackers, just not their methods. He even turned on his own beloved fraternity, stating “there is no place in the Third Reich for secret societies, regardless of how harmless they are” (And this was the same year he had personally appealed to Hitler on behalf of the lodges).⁵⁵ Schacht then returned to the questions of money and rearmament to complete his remarks. In spite of Schacht’s criticism, the entire speech had the general theme of trusting the government in all things (economic, political and social), rather than try to take matters into one’s own hands. It was a clever and relatively safe way to criticize the more brutal tactics of the Nazi Party while applauding and supporting the party in general. Schacht never criticized the party administration or policy and focused on those who acted outside the law and on individual initiative. When Schacht finished speaking and sat down, *Gauleiter* Erich Koch leaned over to him and said “*Mönchlein, Mönchlein, du gehst einen schweren Gang*” (Brother, brother, you've a hard road ahead of you).⁵⁶

Schacht never suffered any form of punishment for his speech. Goebbels and

⁵⁴ Otto D. Tolischus, “Nazis told to End Anti-Jewish Acts,” *New York Times*, November 5, 1935.

⁵⁵ Königsberg Speech, Document EC-433, Red Set, vol. VII, pg. 489.

⁵⁶ Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 318. Apparently, that same quote was said to Martin Luther after he nailed his thesis to the church door in Wittenberg. The appropriate English idiom would be “You’ve stirred up a hornets nest.”

Himmler were not particularly happy with his comments, especially when reports on the speech appeared in foreign papers, but Schacht escaped any sort of backlash for his criticism. Part of this was because Schacht's delivery was so perfectly diplomatic; he scorned the persecution of Freemasons, but supported the closing of the lodges. He supported the marginalization of Jews, but not outside the law. Another reason Schacht escaped punishment was because of his standing. As Minister of Economics he held a position too powerful to be dismissed simply because of a few negative comments at a speech in Königsberg. Under the Nazi regime, average German citizens, so long as they had no still-existing ties to communism, Judaism, or any of the Reich's other enemies, were indeed able to criticize the government and government policy, not in public of course, but the Gestapo had their hands full with other problems and simply did not have the time or manpower to go chasing down every citizen who supposedly uttered a discouraging word about Hitler or the regime. If "ordinary" Germans could criticize the Party without reproach, surely cabinet ministers could get away with it too.

If Hitler heard about the incident, he never said anything to Schacht about it and the two remained on good terms for most of the 1930s. Hitler even made jokes about how useful it was to have a Freemason as minister of economics because Schacht's time as a Mason had trained him in the ways of "Jewish banking" and thus prepared him to beat international Jewish capitalism at its own game. Hitler also remarked that Schacht's performance proved that "even in the field of sharp finance a really intelligent Aryan is more than a match for his Jewish counterpart."⁵⁷ Though on another occasion, during

⁵⁷ Hitler, *Table Talk*, 326.

one of Hitler's many dinner discussions, he praised Schacht's financial prowess in establishing Germany's exports, though in the same breath accused Schacht of lacking character because he was a Freemason.⁵⁸

Schacht's service in the Ministry of Economics continued for the next several years without incident, though tensions between Schacht and other government leaders, especially Hermann Goering, increased. As head of the Four-Year Plan, Goering constantly butted heads with Schacht over who really had the final say in economic matters. Hitler gave both men the task of facilitating rearmament and get the nation on a war economy, creating a power-struggle that relied heavily on each man's personal relationship with the Führer, but although Schacht had a better grasp of economic principles, Goering's ties to Hitler were stronger than Schacht's. Schacht favored rearmament, but only to the point of parity with the rest of Europe and for the purpose of national defense. When he learned that Hitler wanted to build an army for aggressive war, Schacht objective on both political and economic grounds, while Goering fully supported the idea.

Furthermore, Schacht and Goering fought over the necessity of autarky. Taking his lessons from the shortages of WWI, Goering wanted to make Germany as self-sufficient as possible. Schacht, on the other hand, argued that goods could be obtained through foreign trade at a fraction of the cost of developing the goods internally or creating *Ersatz* substitutes.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, Hitler supported autarky as strongly as

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 497-8.

⁵⁹ Simpson, *Schacht in Perspective*, 180-81.

Goering, wanting to prevent the shortages of the previous war at any cost.⁶⁰ In August, 1937, not wanting to be subordinate to Goering, Schacht resigned both as Minister of Economics and Plenipotentiary for the War Economy. It took over two months to procure the official release, and Hitler refused to let him depart the government altogether, making him Minister Without Portfolio.⁶¹

Although the feud with Goering cost Schacht two of his positions he still maintained the presidency of the Reichsbank. In 1938, Schacht received reappointment for another four years, though he only served one before being dismissed. It is ironic that just as Freemasons were on their way into Nazi confidence (the first amnesty decree was issued that very year), Schacht was on his way out. The press also started turning against the Old Wizard, calling him a “Jüden- und Logenknecht,” stating that in his earlier years of service, Schacht had been able to use “lodge intrigue” to get what he wanted in financial matters, but that recently he and the “Schacht Band” had become too powerful and needed to go.⁶²

As a humorous side note and testament to Schacht’s abilities in finance (or least his ability to remain sane under Hitler’s economic demands), Schacht’s successor as Minister of Economics, Rudolf Brinkmann, suffered a nervous breakdown shortly after assuming the post. When Brinkmann failed to appear to work one day he was found

⁶⁰ See Aly, *Hitler’s Beneficiaries*. Aly spends the first couple chapters explaining Hitler’s desire to never let the home front feel the pinch of war, and thus never turn against the war.

⁶¹ Testimony of Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, 11 July 1945, document, 3724-PS, Red Set, vol. VI, 463.

⁶² Article in *Deutsche Freiheit*, German newspaper in Paris, September 2, 1938, BArch R58/6103b part 1, 14.

directing an invisible orchestra in a Berlin bar. Additionally, he promised to pay all his clerks 1000 marks a month and in the days just before his mental collapse had begun writing some of his orders and memos in verse.⁶³

The speed at which Schacht went from willing collaboration to plotting Hitler's removal from office was quite rapid. In the early 1930s Schacht heaped praise on the regime, but by the beginning of WWII he referred to National Socialism as "a truly bestial *Weltanschauung*."⁶⁴ When he did make the final leap from cautious supporter to clandestine conspirator, it was over the pace of rearmament and economic stability, the very reasons he went to work for the Nazis in the first place. Schacht worked with the Nazis out of the belief that it was best for both himself and Germany, when that belief eroded, so too did his support of the party. Schacht even divorced his first wife because of his growing mistrust for the party. She was an ardent Nazi supporter and would sometimes share in public the criticisms of the regime and its leaders that Schacht had spoken to her in confidence. When she refused to stop, he divorced her.⁶⁵

The Blomberg-Fritsch affair, coupled with Schacht's dismissal from office, led to the final break with the party and Hitler. Some pieces of the scandal were genuine, but it was quite obvious that Hitler was cleaning house. Schacht testified at Nuremberg that the affair was the first time he suspected Hitler wanted rearmament for the purpose of waging aggressive war. Schacht held Fritsch as "the finest character in the whole army"

⁶³ Hassell, *von Hassell diaries*, 41.

⁶⁴ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 250; Blue Set, vol. XII, 472. Schacht also claimed to he only used the "Heil Hitler" salutation and referred to Hitler as "Führer" in official, written correspondence, but never in everyday speech. Unfortunately, such a claim is nearly impossible to prove.

⁶⁵ Schacht, *Confessions of the "Old Wizard"*, 106.

and “not willing to overdo armaments, and he certainly would never have agreed to an aggressive war.”⁶⁶ It was at this point that Schacht made the final step from critic to conspirator. After the Fritsch-Blomberg affair, Schacht approached various officials such as Admiral Raeder, Field Marshalls von Rundstedt and von Brauschtisch, and Minister of Justice Guertner, encouraging them to “take countermeasures against Hitler.”⁶⁷ Later in 1938, Schacht met with General von Witzleben, a man he called “a determined opponent of the regime” and convinced him to help plot Hitler’s overthrow in order to prevent inevitable war. General Brockdorf-Ahlefeld was added to the list of conspirators, as well as General Halder and General Beck. The plan was to arrest Hitler and bring him before a tribunal in Sept. 1938.⁶⁸ The plotters even made contact with Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and tried to convince him to boycott the Munich Conference, instead throwing his support behind the coup when it began. Chamberlain, however, was not convinced and went to Munich.⁶⁹ Oddly enough, the conspirators, if successful, planned on making Schacht the new head of state.⁷⁰ Unfortunately for the conspirators, the plan fizzled when the success of the Munich Conference made Hitler’s popularity soar. It was impossible to arrest the man who re-forged greater Germany without the loss of blood. Furthermore, Schacht lost a good deal of personal influence after Munich; he had predicted war, but it never came. Schacht continued to seek out

⁶⁶ “Testimony of Hjalmar Schacht, 16 October 1945,” document 3728-PS, Red Set, vol. VI, 485.

⁶⁷ Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 355.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 355-7. This was another reason Schacht divorced his first wife. Having an antagonistic wife with a big mouth while one is planning a coup tends to end in disaster.

⁶⁹ Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 317.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 314.

other individuals and plans that might bring Hitler down, but his resignation from the cabinet and his dismissal from the Reichsbank had essentially stripped Schacht of any power or influence that that made him valuable to any conspiracy. After 1939, Schacht's sounding brass had become a tinkling cymbal. Schacht even received warnings from American Ambassador Dodd that various elements of the regime wanted him dead.⁷¹

It was no surprise to Schacht when, in 1940, the Berlin chief of police advised him to be careful and tread lightly; he was now on the Gestapo's "Black List." Not only did the Gestapo keep an eye on Schacht, but anyone speaking with Schacht other than to doff his hat and say "how do you do" came under suspicion as well.⁷² Nevertheless, Schacht continued to criticize Hitler and the government for leading Germany on a collision course to war that would certainly doom Germany. The stunning successes of the Wehrmacht in Poland and France, however, simply amplified what happened in Munich. Hitler seemed infallible, further coup attempts had to wait until the later war years when the war had shattered Hitler's credibility and influential people were again willing to act against him.

That time arrived in 1944. Schacht's opposition to the regime culminated with his collaboration in the famous July 20th Plot, the aftermath of which witnessed Schacht's arrest and imprisonment for the rest of the war. There was no direct evidence linking Schacht to the conspiracy, but the assassination attempt gave Hitler an opportunity to clean house. Schacht was known to be critical of the regime, if not hostile, and so it was

⁷¹ Blue Set, vol. XII, 439.

⁷² Peterson, *For and Against Hitler*, 330.

only natural that he be rounded up in the manhunt that followed. The People's Court sentenced him to prison instead of execution with the direct collaborators. Hjalmar Schacht, the "Old Wizard" who salvaged the German economy twice and climbed to the top echelons of banking and government, went first to Ravensbrück, then to Flossenberg, then Dachau, and finally to South Tyrol where he remained until liberated by American forces.⁷³

Unfortunately for Schacht, he was pulled out of one prison only to be shoved into another. Once identified by his American liberators as Hitler's banker and economics minister, Schacht was sent to Nuremberg to stand trial before the International Military Tribunal. During the trial, Schacht's career, as well as his attitudes toward National Socialism, emerged in all their complexity and confusion. Was he a genuine nationalist who had teamed up with the wrong party? Was he a Nazi that simply never wore the party pin? Was he just an opportunist, willing to side with whoever was winning? Was his participation in the various plots against Hitler motivated by patriotism, greed, or the desire to back-paddle as the war turned sour for Germany? We have seen examples throughout his life that suggest an answer of "yes" to all these questions, but who was the real Hjalmar Schacht? How could a man prosper under both Weimar and the Third Reich? How could he be a liberal yet hold sway with ultra-conservatives like Hitler? Economically conservative, politically liberal, nationalistically minded, opportunistically driven, socially elite; *that* is Hjalmar Schacht. That is also the majority of German Freemasons.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 339-41.

The acquittal came as no surprise to Schacht, who was fully convinced of his innocence. Even during the trial he was so sure of an acquittal that he often came off as snobbish and arrogant, severely annoying the other defendants. Schacht was brilliant and he knew it. He always had a very large ego, and the Nuremberg courtroom was relatively small.⁷⁴ While languishing in his cell between days in court, Schacht wrote a book of poetry with a tone that crossed the Apostle Paul with self-pity, to the effect of, “I have fought the good fight, yet now I sit and bear my burden alone.”⁷⁵ It isn’t known if he ever joined a Masonic lodge again.⁷⁶

To return to the beginning, Hjalmar Schacht provides an intriguing case study of Freemasons in the Third Reich. When we look at Schacht we see that he (like thousands of other Freemasons) didn’t waffle, but made his decisions by weighing ambition and patriotism with opportunity. Through his life we see a man who represented a fairly typical Old Prussian Freemason. He grew up in a middle-class home, received an excellent education, and rose through the social ranks by excelling in his chosen career.

Though very liberal in regards to politics, Schacht maintained a love and respect for the monarch and strong central authority. He also remained solidly right-of-center in regards to economics and private property and absolutely abhorred communism. After WWI, Schacht identified himself as a moderate liberal, but leaned closer to the right as

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 365.

⁷⁵ Hjalmar Schacht, *Kleine Bekenntnisse (Small Confessions)* (Winsen, Germany: Buchdruckerei Gebrueder Ravens, 1949), included as part of the Hjalmar Schacht Papers Collection, Hoover Institution.

⁷⁶ Schacht’s own autobiography says nothing about it, and considering the respect in which he spoke of Freemasonry earlier in his autobiography one would assume that he would be proud to mention a reunion with the lodges.

the political situation in Germany polarized. Though he originally criticized the Nazis, Schacht began warming to them years before the seizure of power, seeing the party as the future of Germany and thus, of his future as well.

He was also a joiner and understood the relationship between association and social status. By the mid 1920s, Schacht had been, or was, a member of the a college literary club, the Masonic lodges, the Young Liberals Association, the National Liberal Party, the DDP, the Berlin Press Union, a local tennis club (where he met his first wife), the German-Turkish Society and the Nineteen-Fourteen Club, which Schacht described as a place for “kindred spirits – solicitors, journalists, businessmen, bankers.”⁷⁷ Yet while Schacht belonged to a dozen clubs and associations and held them dear, he also never fought to keep any of them alive. He ditched the Liberal Party for the DDP. He asked Hitler to keep the lodges open and, promptly dropped the subject when Hitler refused, then publicly condemned the lodges in his Königsberg address. In fact, almost none of Schacht half-dozen biographers mention his membership in Freemasonry. Even Schacht’s own memoirs say little about the fraternity, other than to say when he joined, and to recount a few anecdotes tied to his membership in the lodge. Like his other social memberships, Freemasonry was something easily discarded, its benefits found elsewhere. Schacht was a joiner, but a prudent one, joining organizations when they offered some kind of benefit and then dropping them when they didn’t. Schacht wasn’t flaky, he was practical.

Of course, there are some areas in which Schacht was *not* so ordinary in relation to

⁷⁷ Schacht, *Confessions of the “Old Wizard,”* 136.

his Masonic brothers. Due to his extraordinary intelligence and skill in financial matters, Schacht was one of the most powerful men in Germany, both under the Weimar and Nazi governments. His name was known across the globe as the “Old Wizard” of German economics. At the same time, Schacht never joined the Nazi Party, despite how high he rose within its ranks. These two factors together shed some interesting light on the way the party handled the issue of former Freemasons serving in government. Many Freemasons, like Schüler and Westphal, tried very hard to stay in (or get in) the party and civil service. While less-impressive former Freemasons heaped praise on the party in hopes of proving loyalty and gaining membership, Schacht was able to publicly criticize the party and still retain his office. When making decisions regarding the fate of former Freemasonry, time and again the party deferred to the skill and ability of former Freemasons to perform their jobs, warning that removing them would create more problems than it solved. In other words, the more useful a former Freemason was to the party, the better chance he had to succeed. In Schacht’s case, his skills were so necessary that he never joined the party, but held cabinet-level positions. While being ideological institutions, both Freemasonry and the NSDAP had practical sides, seeing the value in favoring the former over the latter.

With great benefit, however, comes great risk. Schacht may have been able to rise to prominence without joining the party, but that also meant he bore more responsibility for what Hitler did with the new army Schacht had provided the money to build. When Schacht turned against Hitler it was over the very issues for which he collaborated in the first place. Schacht, like Jekyll, had created a monster and his pride

and patriotism demanded that he try and stop it. Resistance, then, is another area where Schacht stands out among former Freemasons; however, by the time of the July Plot, Schacht hadn't been a Mason for almost a decade and to point to him as an example of Masonic resistance is more than a stretch. The last of the Freemasons who resisted out of genuine ideology, a sincere disagreement with the fundamentals of National Socialism, died with Leo Müffelmann. Schacht, like most German Freemasons, joined the lodges out of ambition, elitism, almost anything besides ideological belief, thus when the lodges ceased to be a benefit and became a liability, they made an attempt at cooperation, then left when the attempt failed. Since most Freemasons never reached the same level of benefit that Schacht did, they also never resisted as he did. Like Jekyll, Schacht had to sacrifice his own ambition and career in an attempt to stop a madman from letting loose on a murderous rampage. Unfortunately, Schacht failed where Jekyll succeeded.

CHAPTER VII

EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

An SD report issued in 1937 stated, “speaking of lodge members in general it could be said...that they use every opportunity to defend Freemasonry, and that they didn’t know the non-Germanness [sic] of the lodges, but would join the lodges again in a heartbeat.”¹ When the war ended that’s exactly what they did.

Freemasonry actually returned to Germany after the war in the exact same place it had first come to the German-speaking lands in the eighteenth century. Only weeks after Germany’s surrender, members of *Absalom*, the first of the German lodges, met informally in Hamburg and planned for an official reconstitution of the lodge a week later. In June of 1949, West-German Freemasons met in Frankfurt am Main and founded the *Großloge der Alten Freien und Angenommen Maurer* (Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons). Ironically, the Symbolic Lodge of Germany in Exile, the lodge that had been ostracized by all other German Freemasons, helped reestablish this new German grand lodge and bring Freemasonry back to Germany. The Symbolic Lodge was helped by the newly formed Grand Lodge of the State of Israel and the United Grand Lodge of England.² The *drei Weltkugeln* and *Große Landesloge* also revived, and in 1958 these three German lodges, along with the Grand Lodge of British

¹ Monthly SD reports, lodge chronicles, RFSS-SD Year Report for 1937, Section II 111, “FM influence in the economy,” BArch R58/6113 part 1, 13.

² In *Collapse of Freemasonry*, Howe attributes most of the recovery to the work of the United Grand Lodge of England; Ralf Melzer, “In the Eye of the Hurricane: German Freemasonry in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 4 (Autumn 2003), 132, Melzer gives the most credit to the SGVD.

Freemasons in Germany and the American-Canadian Grand Lodge (both of which were established by occupying armies) came together and formed the *Vereinigte Großlogen von Deutschland* (United Grand Lodges of Germany), which remains the governing body of Masonic lodges in Germany to this day.

A detailed explanation of why or how men who had previously abandoned the fraternity could so easily return to it is outside the scope of this study, but the fact that Masonic lodges began reappearing within weeks of war's end is worthy of note. It shows the persistent desire of the German middle class for sociability. With the death of National Socialism, all the societies, associations, clubs and organizations under the Nazi umbrella disappeared. If former Freemasons wanted to continue some kind of exclusive organization the simplest option was to reestablish the lodges rather than try to create something anew. There may have been some nostalgia or genuine desire to reestablish Freemasonry, but after looking at how quickly and easily the lodges collapsed it is more likely that the men wanted association, wherever it came from, and Freemasonry was the easiest to reestablish.

There was, however, another motivation to quickly reestablish Freemasonry. The majority of German Freemasons actively sought to collaborate with the Nazi regime in one way or another. As Nazi Germany fell to the Allies, the process of occupation and denazification began. Anyone who had any ties to the regime scrambled to find some way to distance themselves from National Socialism. For former Freemasons, reestablishing the fraternity was a convenient way to do so. There was no doubt that the Nazis persecuted Freemasonry, and so to be able to reestablish connections with the

fraternity gave former members something to point to and say, “See, I wasn’t a Nazi, in fact, I belonged to a group that the Nazis persecuted.” Before they could do this, however, the collaboration and willing cooperation of the previous decade had to somehow be explained in a way that acknowledged it, but excused it.

To that end, the lodges recreated their history under the Third Reich in a manner similar to that of the French regarding Vichy. Both Vichy and the majority of German Freemasons had made the same mistake and bet on the wrong horse. The nationalist, anti-Semitic Old Prussian lodges had gone to great lengths to distance themselves from the Humanitarian lodges, and both Old Prussian and Humanitarian had gone to great lengths to distance themselves from the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany.³ Yet with Hitler’s defeat, the tables were turned and the Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges stood on the wrong side while the small SGvD, which had previously been shunned by lodges on both sides of the Atlantic, could proudly boast of its activities under the regime. Men like Karl Hoede, who was initially rejected from the party because of his lodge membership and struggled for years to get in, ultimately receiving an exemption from Hitler, returned to the lodges after the war in full fellowship. In Hoede’s case, he returned and served in lodge administration until his death in 1973.⁴ Nobody challenged Hoede’s return because most other German Freemasons had similarly mixed histories.

³ The Nazis acknowledged their efforts. In *Die Wahrheit ueber die Freimauerei*, a Nazi tract, printed in 1932, the party distinguished the SGvD from Old Prussian and Humanitarian Freemasonry; all Masons were condemned, but some lodges were more condemnable than others, GStA PK, 5.1.11, Nr. 22.

⁴ I was unable to find exactly why Hoede was rejected so many times prior to 1939. It could have been the increased need for doctors once war broke out, or it could simply have been his previous applications ended up in the hands of hard-line party officers instead of more lenient men like Buch or Stuertz, see Bernheim, “*Tarnung und Gewalt*” for a more detailed account of Hoede’s history with Freemasonry and the Party.

Thus when German Freemason began talking about life in the Third Reich, they imagined their actions as undesirable but necessary, an attempt to voluntarily give in a little in order to avoid the forcing of greater concessions. Just as the French reinvented Vichy France as a necessary or lesser-of-two-evils, German Freemasons tried to justify their behavior in a similar fashion.⁵ In the interest of smoothing relations among German Freemasons, the *Große Landesloge* issued a declaration in 1955, stating that it formally regretted the actions it took during the 1930s, including the severing of ties with other lodges; however, the declaration asked for understanding from the other lodges, since these steps, though blatantly contrary to the basic tenets of Freemasonry, were taken in order to camouflage Freemasonry and escape the fate of other lodges.⁶ The myth of “collaborating to protect” was born. The declaration naturally caused a stir among the other Grand Lodges, which were not so quick to forget, but at the same time were themselves guilty of coordinating to one degree or another.

Once Neuberger, a “profane” (the Masonic term for a non-Mason), wrote his dissertation describing the Freemasons primarily as victims, Freemasons could begin to revisit the Hitler years and try again to reconstruct the history that the *Große Landesloge* suggested in 1955. Thus began the trickle of articles and short pieces on the victimization, persecution and small but noble resistance movements of Masonic

⁵ For a discussion of how this process worked in France see Robert Paxton, *Vichy France: Old Guard and New Order, 1940-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982). Paxton showed that, starting with Marshall Pétain’s postwar trial, the French have reconstructed Vichy France as a necessary evil, done in defense against even greater threats, when in reality the French began aligning with Nazi policy of their own accord, long before the surrender. Other countries resisted Hitler’s pressure to deport Jews and persecution Freemasons (Italy and Bulgaria for example), so certainly France could have resisted. Instead it chose to take the first step voluntarily, just like the lodges.

⁶ Bernheim, “Tarnung und Gewalt.”

brothers. The Symbolic Grand Lodge, which had been absolutely spurned by the Old Prussian and Humanitarian lodges, suddenly became the poster child for the experience of Freemasonry in the Third Reich as Freemasons fostered the image of the heroic minority struggling in the face of overwhelming Nazi pressure. Once Bernheim and Melzer blew the whistle on this version of Masonic history, pointing out the errors and inconsistencies of the Freemasons as heroic underdogs, the debate over Freemasons as victims vs. collaborators began.

More important than identifying Freemasons as one or the other is examining the significance of the paradox. If Freemasons could be identified as both victims and collaborators then there was interplay between the lodges and the regime. This means that Nazi persecution was not uniform and could be negotiated based on four factors: did the Nazis identify the group as a non-racial group (i.e. did an individual belong to the group by virtue of their birth)? Was the group willing to coordinate? Did the group have anything to offer the regime in exchange for coordination? Finally, was the regime willing to accept the coordination of the group? The more questions to which a targeted group could answer “yes” meant the more that particular group could negotiate persecution. In the case of Freemasons, all but the last question could be answered in the affirmative, meaning that the Freemasons had a substantial amount of wiggle room when it came to how they and the regime interacted, thus the dance of compromise began, and by looking at Freemasons we can see how this dance played out in regards to a particularly significant group. As seen in Chapter II, the Freemasons were those who were the most adamant supporters of National Socialism after the Crash of 1929, and

consisted of the professions that were necessary for the regime to survive. The only obstacle to an otherwise ideal match was the worldview of the association to which these men belonged.

Did the Nazis identify Freemasons as a non-racial group? Yes, and this is the most important of the four factors. Racial targets like Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and the mentally disabled were at a severe disadvantage because their identity rested in the hand of the Nazis, or as Karl Lueger, the Mayor of Vienna once put it, “I determine who is a Jew.” Non-racial groups, like Freemasons, had an opportunity to change their proverbial spots by disassociation. One could not change their blood or heritage, but one could change one’s ideology, worldview or associations.⁷ In the case of non-racial groups, identity rested in the hands of the individual instead of the regime. As non-racial group, Freemasons could disassociate themselves from the lodges and be free from further persecution as Freemasons. The fact that membership in a Masonic lodge was not something officially recorded (as was religious denomination), made disassociation that much easier. Joining the party and gaining the benefits of party membership posed a different problem, but as far as removing one’s self from Nazi crosshairs, former Freemasons had only to remove themselves from the lodge.

Next, if a group had the option of cutting ties and escaping persecution, were the members of the group willing to exercise that option? Jehovah’s Witnesses were a non-

⁷ Yehuda Bauer uses similar logic to argue that only ethnic and racial groups can be victims of genocide or holocaust. Political and religious groups cannot because they can “change their spots,” so to speak. Thus according to Bauer’s definition the Freemasons, along with communists and even Jehovah’s Witnesses, were not victims of the holocaust. Victims of persecution, yes, but victims of the Holocaust, no. Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*, 11-12.

racial group targeted by the Nazis, but they had no intention of dissolving, conforming or otherwise coordinating. Individual Witnesses may have collaborated, but the institution as a whole remained opposed. Freemasons, on the other hand, were more than willing to sever ties with the Freemasonry and work with the regime, and why not? It was the next big opportunity. As the Nazis themselves pointed out several times, most Freemasons joined the lodges out of ambition and opportunism. After 1933, career advancement and opportunity came through the NSDAP. The lodges were willing to coordinate, and took steps to do so, even before the seizure of power. The hornet's nest that the Bröse letter stirred up showed that some Freemasons strongly supported the Nazis, and even those that didn't certainly preferred National Socialism to communism. After the seizure of power, all three Old Prussian lodges and two of the Humanitarian lodges, representing over 80% of German Freemasonry, expelled all Jews, severed ties with Freemasonry, changed names, and then openly sought official acceptance under the Third Reich.

Third, if a group was willing to coordinate, did it have anything to offer the regime? Here the Freemasons could not only answer "yes," but answer with a resounding "yes." This is what made the Freemasons stand out among other non-racial targets. The Masonic lodges consisted of between seventy and eighty thousand wealthy, established and influential men. Freemasons were doctors, lawyers, politicians, businessmen, professors, administrators and bankers; the very professions that were crucial for the success of National Socialism as a government, a war machine, and an ideology. No other group, organization or association could boast such an impressive

membership since membership in the lodges was tied so closely to one's ability to become part of the social elite. Other non-racial groups were more socially diverse. They certainly had influential members, but also had "ordinary" members. The Communist Party, for example, consisted mainly of the working class and had little more to offer the regime than unskilled labor. So in the eyes of the Nazi Party not only was it possible to accept former Freemasons, it was desirable.

The willingness of most German Freemasons to so quickly abandon the fraternity and work with the party says something about their membership in the lodges. Hjalmar Schacht, for example, had been a Freemason for almost thirty years when the Nazis came to power, yet when Hitler rejected his request to let the lodges stay open, Schacht essentially shrugged it off and during his Königsberg Speech (which took place that same year), stated that there was no room in Nazi Germany for Freemasonry. Other Freemasons, many acting before the seizure of power, discarded a membership that had lasted for years, and sometimes decades. For most Freemasons, membership in the fraternity was just part of a long list of social and professional memberships that offered benefits, but was not a defining part of their character. For Jehovah's Witnesses, or even Freemasons like Leo Müffelmann, the ideology and the organization were intertwined and did make up a defining part of their character, thus they chose the concentration camps over acquiescence.

Finally, if the group was willing to coordinate, was the regime willing to accept them? Given the Nazi need for professionals and the Masonic desire to establish themselves under the new regime, one would think that the two would have made a

perfect match. Instead, Goering flatly refused to accept either the lodges or the Christian Orders. The reason given was that the new orders would serve as a means of secretly continuing Freemasonry, allowing the ideology of Freemasonry to continue; however, most members never bought into the ideology and were instead only interested in the other benefits of lodge membership. There must, then, have been another reason why a myriad of other social clubs and organizations were allowed to coordinate, but not the Masonic lodges. A return to, and comparison with the university *Korps* helps shed some light on why Freemasonry, an institution that had a valuable membership and was so willing to align with National Socialism, was unable to do so.

Consider the two; by the mid nineteenth century, like the majority of Masonic lodges, the *Korps* were very nationalist and also anti-Semitic, especially the *Deutsche Burschenschaften*. The Freemasons were the current professional and educated elite; the members of the *Korps* were the future professional and educated elite. Membership in the *Korps* was a sign of social and economic status, a sign that one was superior even to other university students. The lodges served a similar purpose after college. The *Korps*, like the lodges, also had a strict honor code and moral guideline, and expected its members to live by those standards. The *Korps* even used elaborate costumes during its formal ceremonies, like the Freemasons. By the 1920s, the *Korps* was a Masonic lodge in embryo, but when the *Korps* sought coordination with National Socialism, they got it. Those few *Korps* that didn't align were forcibly closed the very same year as the lodges. So what was the difference?

First, the *Korps* were 100% German. They were formed in Germany and had no ties to foreign fraternities, whereas Freemasonry was an English import. In addition, the largest of the *Korps*, the *Deutsche Burschenschaften*, formed against Napoleon, making it a group that was not only 100% German, but born out of nationalist struggle. The *Korps*, then, were immune to accusations of being international. Second, the *Korps* was a club that developed an ideology. Freemasonry, on the other hand, was an ideology that developed into a club. As Enlightenment philosophers and intellectuals sought venues to meet and discuss, they gravitated toward the lodges, turning a craftsman's guild into an elite intellectual and professional fraternity. For the Nazis to accept the overtures of German student associations that adopted a code of honor wasn't a task at all. To accept a foreign society that purported to embrace humanitarianism and reject differences of politics and religion was another matter altogether.

The final, and most significant difference between the *Korps* and the lodges was that the *Korps* had something to offer the regime *as an institution*. True, the Nazi Party had a student auxiliary, the NSDStB, but the NSDStB constantly struggled for legitimacy and acceptance among the other *Korps* prior to 1933. When Hitler came to power and enacted his policy of *Gleichschaltung*, the *Korps*, collectively, offered a ready-made organization made up of a group that he did not yet control. With a little political maneuvering, the NSDStB simply absorbed the *Korps*. Those who did not want to belong to the NSDStB could quit. The Freemasons, on the other hand, did not have an opposite number in the party that could just absorb it. As an institution, the lodge offered a worldview and social exclusivity, both of which the NSDAP itself provided.

After absorbing the *Korps* the NSDStB simply added the National Socialist worldview to the *Korps*' existing laws and codes. Since the lodges had a completely opposing worldview (at least in theory), National Socialism couldn't tweak or adjust Masonic ideology; it had to totally replace it. At that point there would no longer be Freemasonry, not even National Socialist Freemasonry. Instead the Nazis would have had an entirely new organization, the National Socialist Professionals Association, or something like that. But why bother going through all that trouble when the party already had the *NS Ärztbund* for doctors, the *Bund NS Deutscher Juristen* for lawyers, the *NS Lehrerbund* for teachers, and so on. If men became Freemasons to network and build their careers, joining the NSDAP and the appropriate Nazi professional association would serve the same purpose. As an institution, the continuance of Freemasonry had nothing to offer the regime but the possibility of clandestine humanitarianism, masquerading as a coordinated organization, the proverbial wolf in sheep's clothing. After changing to Christian Orders, the problem of having nothing to offer remained; why would the regime need to adopt the Christian Orders when it already had a Concordat with the Catholics, friendly relations with the Protestants, and compromises with the new religions? There was simply no way the lodges could manipulate themselves to make the regime willing to absorb them as a group; however, the end of the institutional battle signaled the beginning of the individual battles for coordination. Here the regime was much more accommodating.

At the same time as the regime couldn't co-opt the lodges, they also could not let them continue to exist as independent institutions, as had been done with the churches.

Doing so may have gained the support of more former Freemasons, and avoided some of the problems the regime encountered in weeding out “acceptable” from “unacceptable,” but the Freemasons were too influential to be left alone to serve as a potential rival or foundation of dissent in the future. The ideal situation was a compromise; closing down the institution but co-opting the men, which is exactly what happened.

Over the course of the 1930s, the dance between Freemasons and Nazis reached a successful conclusion; the amnesty made it possible for all but the most senior Freemasons to enjoy what National Socialism had to offer and avoid any negative consequences of former lodge membership. The regime had salvaged tens of thousands of educated and professional elites while still maintaining the institution of Freemasonry and its ideology as a convenient whipping boy. The Masonic boogeyman remained a staple of Nazi propaganda. In fact, as the war progressed and then turned against Germany, Freemasonry became an even bigger propaganda tool for the Nazis as a way to explain why the fortunes of war were turning. Anti-Masonic propaganda during the 1920s pointed to the WWI and the League of Nations as proof of a Jewish-Masonic conspiracy against Germany. In the later war years, with Britain, France and the United States again joined against Germany, the propaganda of Weimar-era National Socialism needed little revamping; the nations led by Freemasonry had returned to finish what they started in 1914. The fact that both President Franklin Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill were active Freemasons only lent further credence to the accusations. When Italy fell, Nazi propaganda quickly pointed out that Mussolini had never been as thorough in his attack on the lodges as Hitler, leaving room for them to strike back. The

SS made similar accusations regarding the military reversals in Africa, Hungary and Western Europe.⁸ Given the ease with which most Freemasons discarded the fraternity and the party insistence on keeping it alive suggests that the Nazis needed Freemasonry more than the Freemasons needed Freemasonry.

The pattern of compromise continued as Germany expanded. In Austria, for example, Freemasons received the same degree of compromise that German Freemasons enjoyed. Likewise in Czechoslovakia and the German lodges in Poland. In France the Germans had to do very little against the lodges because the Vichy government did it themselves. The most surprising example of compromise, however, came from Bulgaria, where the nothing happened to the Bulgarian Freemasons at all, both as individuals and as an institution. Gocho Chakalov lived in Bulgaria during the war, his father had become a Freemason while studying in the United States and continued his association with the fraternity upon returning to Bulgaria. As a known and respected Freemason, as well as having strong liberal politics, Chakalov's father represented a clear example of the "dangers of Freemasonry" of which Nazi propaganda continually warned. But when German troops marched into Bulgaria following Bulgaria's alliance with Germany, the Bulgarian lodges remained completely untouched, Chakalov recalled,

"There was no interference in the Masonic movement, in the Masonic lodges, during the Nazi era. The Germans didn't go that far, couldn't go that far, in Bulgaria. The lodges operated normally. They were closed down by the communists. There was absolutely no interference, nobody suffered for having been a Mason, but by the communists."⁹

⁸ May and June 1944, Information Reports, USHMM, RG-11.001M.01, Reel 11, Folder 790.

⁹ Chakalov, Gocho. Interview code 43811. *Visual History Archive*. USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Accessed online at the USHMM on August 4, 2009.

When the war ended, German Freemasons picked the fraternity back up even faster than they dropped it in 1933. They then rewrote the history of the lodges under the Third Reich, paint themselves in a more favorable light as underdogs struggling for survival in the face of the Nazi juggernaut. The truth is that the Freemasons had a substantial amount of agency. The Third Reich restricted that agency to a degree, but never completely eliminated it as it had done to groups targeted for racial reasons. Unfortunately, with that agency, the majority of German Freemasons acted under the same motivations as their decision to enter the lodges: self-interest and opportunism. From their decision to join the lodges, then to abandon the lodges for the Nazi Party, then back to the lodges after the war ended, ambition, opportunism and self-interest played a primary role. They cooperated with the Third Reich because they wanted to, and because they could.

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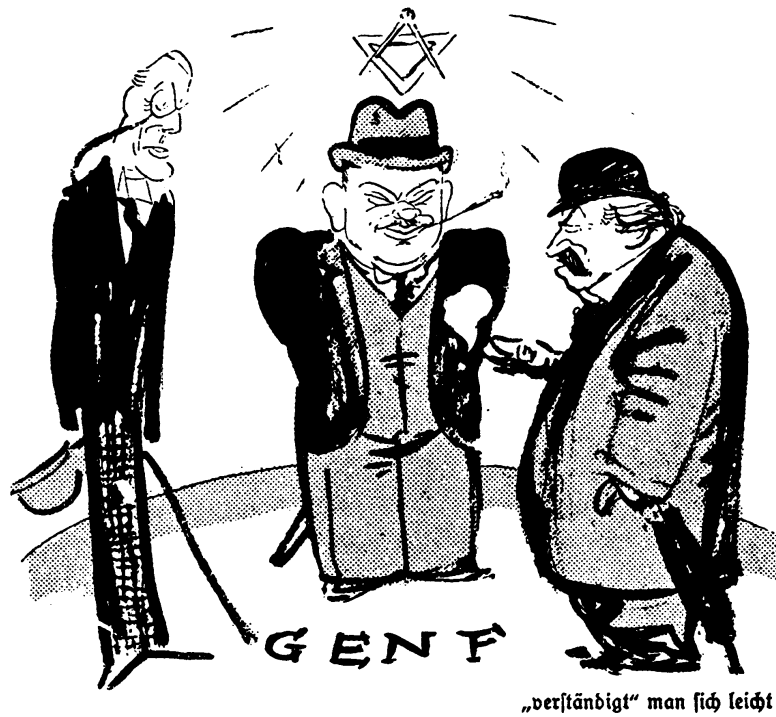
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Wichtl, Friedrich, *Weltfreimaurerei, Weltrevoltuion, Weltrepublik: Eine Untersuchung über Ursprung und Endziele des Weltkrieges*. Munich: I.F. Lehmanns Verlag, 1921.

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APPENDIX

Unter „Brüdern“ . . .



Goebbels' view of Weimar Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann: "Among 'brothers' one hits it off immediately." Austen Chamberlain, Stresemann, and Aristide Briand are at the League of Nations in Geneva. Instead of a halo, Stresemann wears a Star of David.

CREDIT: "Der Angriff"

Figure A1: "Among 'Brothers'." Source: Robert Herzstein, *The War that Hitler Won: The Most Infamous Propaganda Campaign in History* (New York: Putnam, 1978), 50.

	Founded	Seat	1920s Members (Lodges)*	1931 Members (Lodges)*	1933 Members (Lodges)*
Old Prussian					
Three Globes	1744	Berlin	22,700 (177)	21,300 (179)	21,000 (183)
National Grand Lodge	1770	Berlin	22,300 (173)	21,005 (177)	20,300 (180)
Royal York	1765	Berlin	11,400 (104)	11,422 (108)	9372 (108)
Total			56,400 (454)	53,727 (454)	50,672 (471)
Humanitarian					
Sun	1811	Bayreuth	4,000 (44)	4,000 (45)	3335 (41)
Unity	1846	Darmstadt	900 (10)	896 (10)	890 (10)
Grand Lodge of Saxony	1811	Dresden	7,200 (45)	7,344 (45)	6017 (47)
Eclectic Union	1823	Frankfurt	3,500 (24)	3,200 (26)	2574 (25)
Grand Lodge of Hamburg	1811	Hamburg	5,000 (54)	5,000 (54)	5000 (54)
Chain of Brothers [^]	1924	Leipzig	1,910 (10)	1,935 (10)	1800 (10)
Irregular					
Symbolic Grand Lodge	1930	Hamburg	NA	NA	800 (28)
Masonic Union of the Rising Sun	1906	Hamburg	--	--	1250 (50)
Total (Humanitarian and Irregular)			22,510 (187)	22,375 (190)	21,666 (265)
Total of all branches			78,910 (641)	76,102 (644)	72,338 (736)

Figure A2: German Grand Lodge Statistics. Sources: Schumacher collection, T580, 267 I; Schramm, "Freemasonry in Germany"; Solf, "The Revival of Freemasonry in Post-War Germany"; Bernheim, "Freemasonry and its Attitude Toward the Nazi Regime"; GStA PK record group 5.1.11; Gould, *History of Freemasonry*.

*Number represents Blue Lodges (St. John's) only.

[^] The German Chain of Brothers formed from a looser association of five independent lodges, whose first association began in 1883 when the five formed the Treaty of Alliance and Bond of Union. The name was changed to "Chain of Brothers" in 1924.

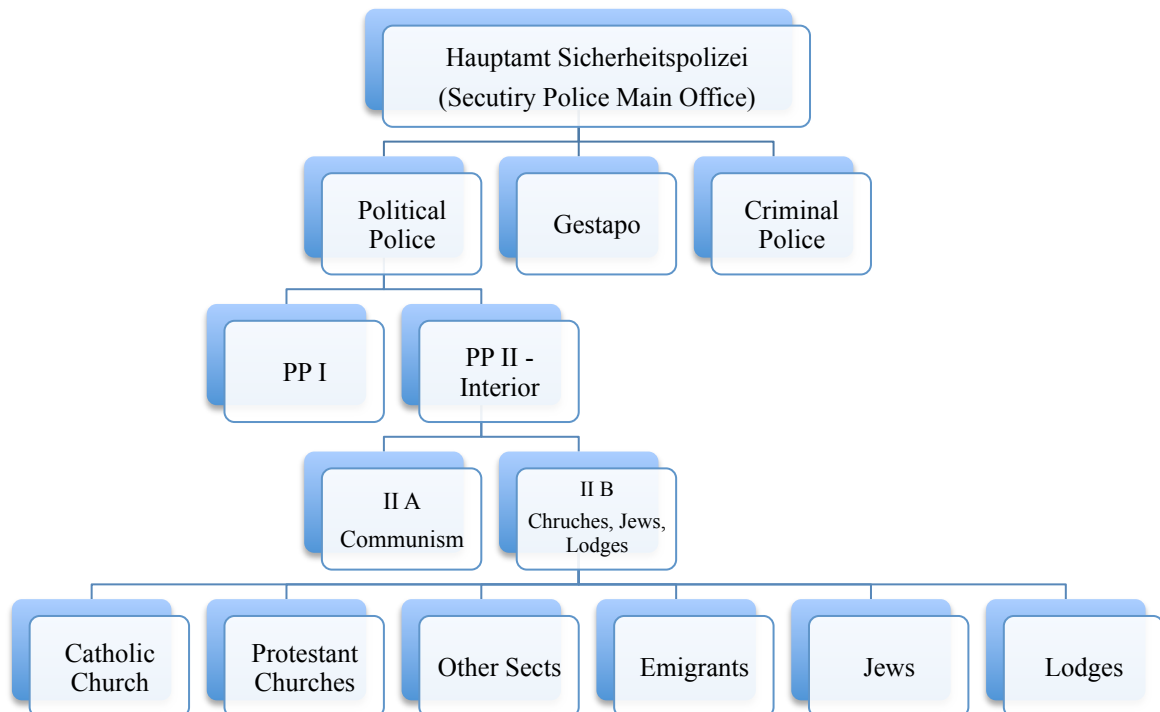


Figure A3: *Hauptamt Sicherheitspolizei*. Organization as of January 1, 1938, before the creation of the RSHA. Source: Security Police Main Office organization report, USHMM RG-11.001, reel 92, folder 221.

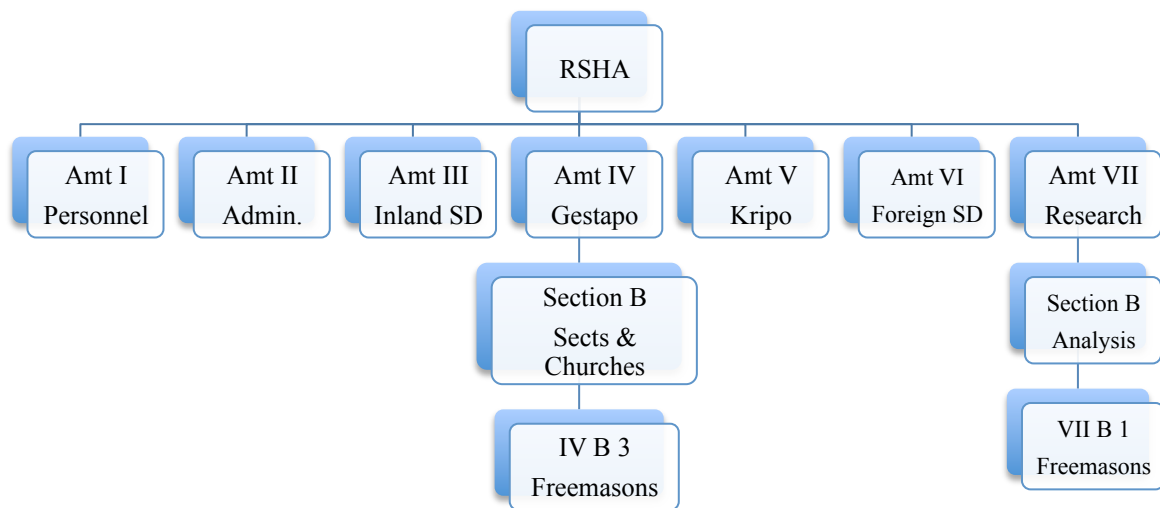


Figure A4: Organization of the RSHA after 1940. The Gestapo maintained its own Freemason section even after incorporation into the RSHA. Sources: Höhne, *Death's Head*, 144-145; USHMM RG-15.007M, reel 5, folders 36 and 44; Records of the Eichmann Trial, available from The Nizkor Project, www.nizkor.org, accessed June 21, 2011.

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Anlage 1zu l p 12.11 J(Ic)
3245/39E r k l ä r u n g

(Nichtzutreffendes streichen)

Ich versichere hiermit¹⁾, daß ich

- a) einer Freimaurerloge, einer anderen Loge oder logenähnlichen Organisation und deren Ersatzorganisationen niemals angehört habe,
- b) der Freimaurerloge²⁾, anderen Loge²⁾ oder logenähnlichen Organisation²⁾, - Ersatzorganisation²⁾ -
.....
vom.....bis.....
angehört habe,
und am.....durch.....
ausgeschieden bin³⁾;
- c) als Angehöriger der obenstehenden Organisation(en)
1) folgenden Grad.....erreicht habe,
2) folgende Ämter -Ehrenämter-.....
.....
bekleidet habe,
- d) keiner Vereinigung angehöre, von der mir bekannt ist, daß sie Beziehungen zu Logen oder logenähnlichen Organisationen des Auslands unterhält.

Ort:.....,den.....19..
Name:.....
Beruf:.....
letzter Dienstgrad:.....
Anschrift:.....
Geburtsdatum und-ort:.....

- 1) Es ist mir bekannt, dass falsche Meldungen nach den für die Wehrmacht geltenden Gesetzen bestraft werden.
2) Angabe, ob Johannis-oder Andreasloge.
3) Freiwilliger, schriftlich erklärter Austritt- Ausschluss durch Auflösung der Loge o.ä.
Es ist beizufügen:
a) Entlassungsschein oder ein anderer Beleg der Loge über den Zeitpunkt des ~~andgültigen~~ Ausscheidens aus der Loge.
b) ~~particiantiiche~~ Unbedenklichkeitsbescheinigung.

Figure A5: The *Erklärung* as it appeared in 1939. BArch R43II 1308a.

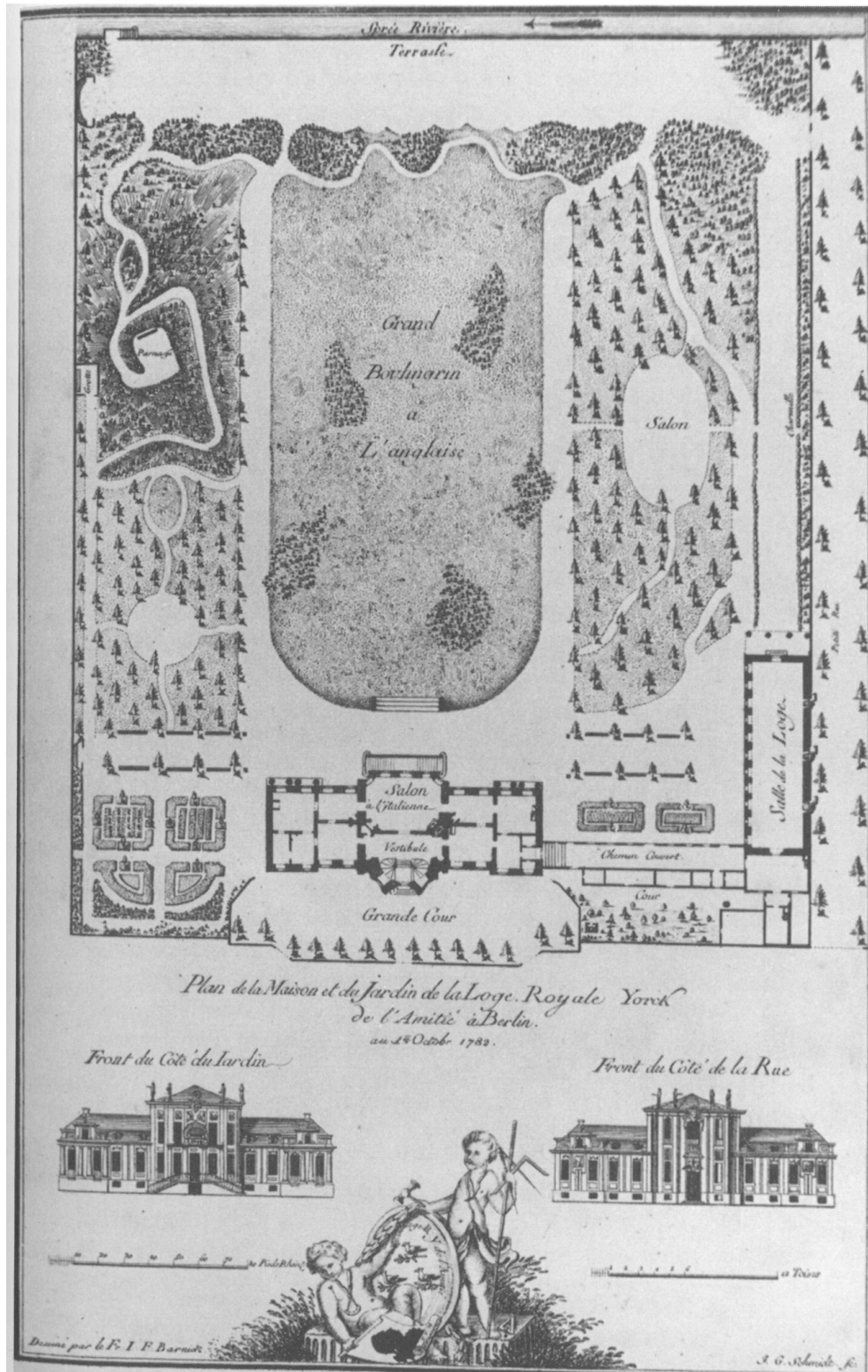


Figure A6: The 1782 design for the *Royal York zur Freundschaft* grand lodge in Berlin. Source: Abbott, *Fictions of Freemasonry*, 125.

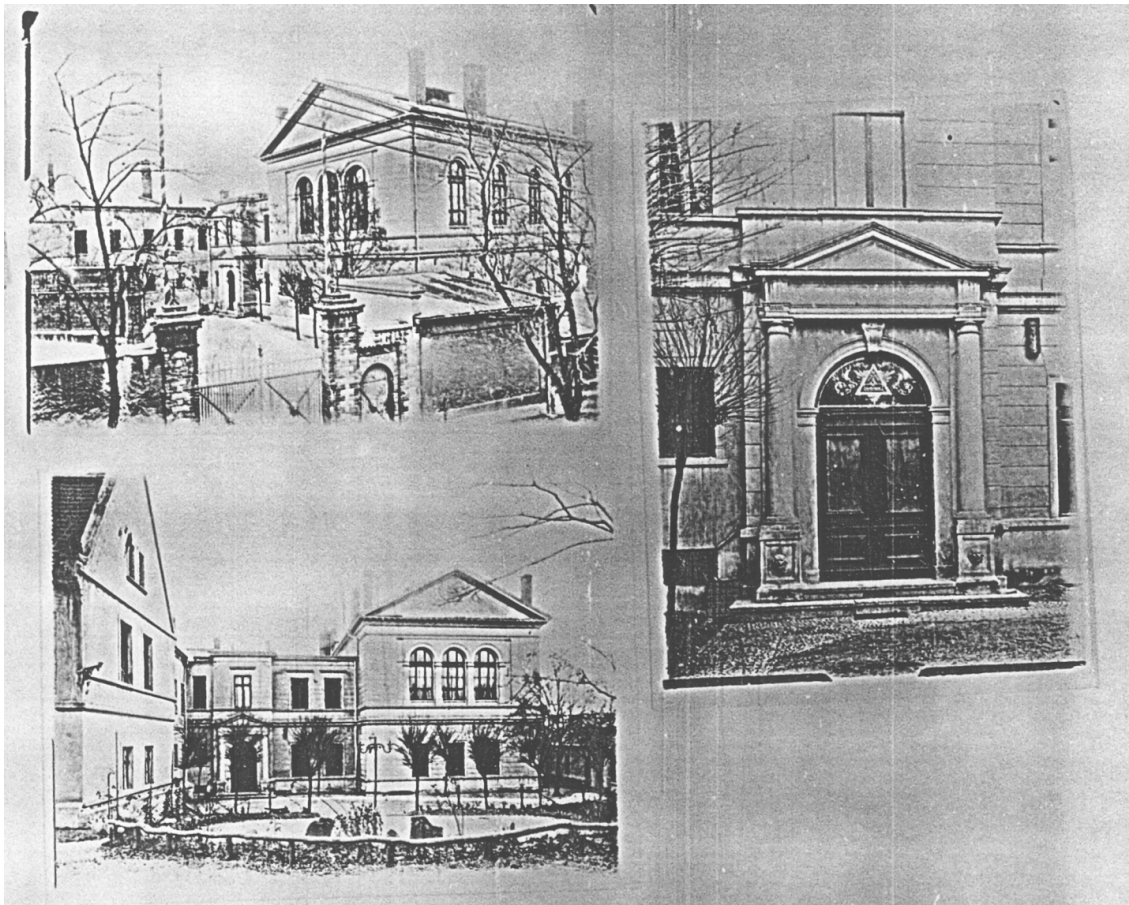


Figure A7: Exterior photographs of the *Alexius zur Beständigkeit* lodge building. Source: BArch R58/6103a, part 1.

III. Wagen.

5 Stühle
 Teile der Lade
 2 Säulen
 1 Säule
 1 Lade,
 1 Teil der Lade
 2 Träger zur Lade,
 2 kleine Säulen
 1 Pult
 1 Spiegel
 Decken,
 Vorhänge
 1 Säule 2 kleine S.
 1 Holzkasten
 1 Spiegel
 22 Sektkübel
 1 silberne Schale,
 1 Löwe
 1 Zylinder
 1 langer Tisch
 1 Marmorplatte
 1 Stuhl
 1 Stuhl
 1 Wehrachbecken
 1 silberner Leuchter 3armig
 2 Kissen
 1 Stange,
 2 Pulte,
 13 Säbel, 1 Bücherpresse,
 1 Konsole zum Spiegel.
 1 Kasten mit 17 Leuchter
 1 Kleiderständer
 3 Leuchter
 1 Bücherregal
 1 grosse Wachskerze
 1 Stab
 1 Bank zum Niederknien
 11 Leuchter
 Wehrachschale
 1 Kl. Kasten mit Utensilien u. Säbel
 1 Kasten mit Bücher
 1 Blitzlicht
 1 Untersatz,
 1 Säule
 Teile eines Pultes
 Diverse Kleinigkeiten
 Zylinderhüte
 5 Wachskerzen

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Figure A8: This inventory list for the third of four trucks carrying the contents of *Alexius zur Beständigkeit*, showing the amount of property a single lodge could contain. The pool table was in truck I. Source: BArch R58/6103a, part 1.

VITA

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