

The year is 1941 -- the height of the Second World War when the article of this week's ezine appeared in print in the USA.

The Annihilation of Freemasonry

by Sven G. Lunden

The American Mercury, Volume LII, No. 206, published in February 1941.

There is only one group of men whom the Nazis and the Fascists hate more than the Jews. They are the Freemasons. In Italy, indeed, the anti-Jewish feeling is of recent vintage and largely artificial, whereas the blackshirt hatred of Freemasonry is old and deep. In their own countries Hitler and Mussolini Inaugurated their respective reigns with outrages against Masons and Masonic institutions, and they have never relaxed the systematic persecution. Now Nazi conquests of other European nations -- whether by invasion or forcible "persuasion" -- are followed automatically by hostile measures against Freemasons. From Norway to the Balkans, the progress of the Swastika has brought outlawry, and often vandalism and death in its wake for all Masons. The anti-Semitic excesses have been widely reported, the anti-Catholic outrages have had considerable publicity, but the merciless totalitarian assaults on Freemasonry have not receive a tithe of the world-wide attention they richly merit. They are practically an unknown chapter.

Nazi and Fascist publications leave no doubt of their belief that all evil in the world, from the high mortality rate among the dinner guests of the Borgias down to the Versailles Treaty, has been the work of Freemasons, alone or with the help of Israel. In "Mein Kampf", Hitler merges his twin phobias:

"The general pacifistic paralyzation of the national instinct of self-preservation, introduced into the circles of the so-called 'intelligentsia' by Freemasonry, is transmitted to the great masses, but above all to the bourgeoisie, by the activity of the great press, which today is always Jewish."

And one of the first official statements made by Hermann Goering in his capacity as Prime Minister of Prussia, when the Nazis took over power in 1933, was that "in

National Socialist Germany there is no place for Freemasonry.: That view was not news. It had run through all the Nazi propoganda and had been an intrinsic part of the Fascist attitude in Mussolini's realm.

After the German debacle of 1918, the frustrated man who had been the virtual master of Germany's destinies, General Erich Ludendorff, sought an outlet for his bitterness in diatribes against Freemasonry. Right up to his death, Ludendorff devoted himself wholly to propoganda intended to prove that the war, the ensuing German revolution, and most other world ills had been the doing of the Masons. He published a pamphlet entitled "Annihilation of Freemasonry Through the Revelation of Its Secrets" wherein the so-called secrets of Freemasonry were "revealed" for the hundredth time since the foundation of the Order in 1717, without, however, annihilating Masonry. The senile general's main thesis was that Freemasonry is a Jewish device intended to make "artificial Jews." On one page the hand that had led Germany to disaster in 1918 wrote: "It is cheating the people to fight the Jew while allowing his auxiliary troop, Freemasonry ... to function."

The Nazis continued where Ludendorff left off. But others had preceded them in Mason-baiting. In 1917, as one of their acts, the Bolsheviks dissolved all lodges in Russia. In 1919, when Bela Kun proclaimed the dictatorship of the proletariat in Hungary, one of his first decrees ordered the dissolution of Masonic lodges. In 1925, Spain's first dictator of this generation, General Primo de Rivera, ordered the abolition of Freemasonry in his country.

Benito Mussolini went about the same business more methodically. Having established his regime, Il Duce proceeded step by step to exterminate the lodges and the influence of Italian Freemasonry. Even the Nazi apostle, Dr. Alfred Rosenberg, has admitted in his book "Masonic World Policies" that the Freemasons had been the creators of the united democratic Kingdom of Italy. But this did not win them any mitigation of horrors at the hands of ultra-patriotic Fascists. In 1924, Mussolini decreed that every member of his Fascist Party who was a Mason must abandon one or the other organization. Thereupon General Cappello, one of the most prominent Fascists, who had held the post of Deputy Grand Master of Grande

Oriente, Italy's leading Grand Lodge, gave up membership in Fascism rather than betray his Masonic ideals. He was to pay dearly for this loyalty. Less than a year later, he was charged with complicity in an attempt on Mussolini's life. It was a palpable frame-up by an OVRA stoolpigeon name Quaglia, but General Cappello was sentenced to thirty years in prison, where he probably still lingers.

In the summer of 1925 Mussolini got around to dissolving Italian Freemasonry. In an open letter to Il Duce, the Grand Master of the Grande Oriente, Domizio Torrigiani, had the courage to stand up for democracy and freedom of thought. The price he paid was exile to the Lipari islands. After nearly going blind there, he died soon afterwards. Hundreds of other prominent Masons shared the harsh Lipari exile with him. At the peak of the anti-Mason agitation, in 1925-27, blackshirt strong-arm squads looted the homes of well-known Masons in Milan, Florence and other cities, and murdered at least 100 of them.

The Nazis acted more swiftly. Immediately on Hitler's rise to power, the ten Grand Lodges of Germany were dissolved. Many among the prominent dignitaries and members of the Order were sent to concentration camps. The Gestapo seized the membership lists of the Grand Lodges and looted their libraries and collections of Masonic objects. Much of this loot was then exhibited in an "Anti-Masonic Exposition" inaugurated in 1937 by Herr Dr. Joseph Goebbels in Munich. The Exposition included completely furnished Masonic temples.

The persecution was carried over into Austria when the country was captured by the Nazis. The Masters of the various Vienna lodges were immediately confined in the most notorious concentration camps, including the horrible living hell at Dachau in Bavaria. The same procedure was repeated when Hitler took over Czechoslovakia, then Poland. Immediately after conquering Holland and Belgium, the Nazis ordered the dissolution of the lodges in those nations. It was also Point One on the agenda of Major Quisling in Norway. It may be taken as part of the same ugly picture that General Franco of Spain in 1940 sentenced all Freemasons in his realm automatically to ten years in prison. When France fell last June, the Vichy

government caused the two Masonic bodies of France, the Grand Orient and the Grenade Loge to be dissolved, their property being seized and sold at auction.

The countries which are still ostensibly independent, but actually under the heel of Germany, must prove their conformity to the Nazi pattern by taking harsh measures against Masonry. In Hungary the dissolution of the lodges was unnecessary because they were never allowed to resume after Bela Kun was overthrown. Mason-baiting is one "principle" on which White Terrors and Red Terrors have always agreed. Rumania recently prohibited Freemasonry to prove its subservience to Germany. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, inhabited by levelheaded and tolerant peasantry, were also obliged to enact the twin sets of laws -- anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic -- that demonstrate "friendship for Hitler".

The summary does not begin to convey the full terror of the Calvary to which Freemasonry has been subjected wherever the totalitarians took power. Murder, imprisonment, economic looting, social outlawry have been the bitter lot of individual Masons. Rapine has been the fate of their organizations, their treasures, their institutions of charity.

II

Why does this implacable and fanatic hatred of the Order obsess the totalitarian mind? The answer is in the whole history and temper of Freemasonry. For more than two centuries its leaders have been consistently on the side of political freedom and human dignity, reaping a harvest of persecution at the hands of tyrants. Before going into that, however, we must distinguish clearly between two things: Freemasonry and Freemasons. The chief trick of mason-haters through the generations, a trick followed by the Nazis, is to direct their accusations not against Freemasons personally but against the whole Masonic Order.

Freemasonry is made up of Masonic bodies: lodges, Grand Lodges and other groupings. All of these scrupulously refrain from meddling in politics or any other subject not directly related to Masonic matters or charity. The Constitution of the Order stipulates that every member must be a loyal citizen of his country, and it

professes adherence "to that religion in which all men agree" -- that is, belief in a Divine power, in morality and in charity. In contrast to narrow nationalism, it believe in serving Humanity as a whole. That is all that the Masonic Order itself professes and is interested in. What individual Masons do as citizens of their respective countries to serve the ideals they personally believe is, is their own business.

This attitude is no subterfuge. On the contrary, the enlightened Freemason not only admits but prides himself in the fact that modern democracy and human progress owe so much to the heroism and idealism of individual Freemasons. Unless he is a very naive person he will also admit that the lodge is a place where congenial people meet to gather that moral strength which they need to stand up for the ideals of liberty and equality outside the lodge. At the same time, however, to true Masons the lodge is hallowed ground, and inside its gates politics and the other concerns of the market-place are taboo.

Some of the less critically-minded Masons like to trace the origins of the Order back to ancient Egypt. But in its present form, Freemasonry originated in England, probably in the Seventeenth Century, while the first Grand Lodge was founded in London in 1717 and the regulations, by-laws and constitutions of Masonry were laid down in what is known as Anderson's Constitutions in 1722-23. The spiritual elements underlying these precepts were decidedly "advanced" for their time, emphasizing as they did tolerance for other men's religions and the brotherhood of all human beings.

The intellectual and spiritual foundations of modern democracy, including the American Revolution and the American Constitution, are to be found in large part in the teachings of Jean Jacques Rousseau and in the ideas cemented into the great first Encyclopedia. And it is a fact that most of the authors of that epoch-making Encyclopedia -- Diderot, D'Alembert, Condorcet, the famous Swiss philosopher Helvetius, etc. -- were Freemasons. The envoy to France from the rebellious American colonies, Benjamin Franklin, also was an ardent Freemason. So ere George Washington, sixty among his generals, John Hancock and a great many of

his co-signers of the Declaration of Independence. Both Washington and Franklin long held the post of Grand Master.

The most distinguished among the Masonic lodges of Paris in the Eighteenth Century was the "Lodge of the Nine Sisters" -- that is, the nine Muses -- and its membership included the intellectual cream of France. When Voltaire paid a visit to Paris in the year of his death, at the age of 79, he was initiated into Freemasonry in this lodge. The climax of the ceremony came when Brother Benjamin Franklin of Philadelphia handed to Voltaire the Masonic apron which the great Helvetius had worn before him. Voltaire raised the apron to his aged lips.

Six years before that memorable day, something even more memorable happened in Boston. It has come down in history as the Boston Tea Party. And it is no secret that the "Indians" who dumped the cargo on December 16, 1773, had emerged from the building which housed the St. Andrews Lodge, the leading Masonic body in Boston. Their job done, the "Indians" were seen to troop back to the lodge building -- and no Indians ever again emerged from the lodge. Instead, a lot of prominent Bostonians, known to be Masons, did emerge. And in the book which used to contain the minutes of the lodge and which still exists, there is an almost blank page where the minutes of that memorable Thursday should be. Instead, the page bears but one letter -- a large T. Can it have anything to do with Tea? It is perhaps the only instance in the History of Freemasonry where a lodge, as a body, has taken an active part in politics.

III

Practically everywhere, INDIVIDUAL Masons have thus been in the forefront in movements of liberation. Goethe, who considered himself a European more than a German and so often criticized his fellow-Germans, was a fervent Freemason, as was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. Mozart's opera "The Magic Flute" is full of allusions and symbolism relating to Freemasonry. In fact, its theme is the search for truth and the victory of tolerance over the fanaticism that springs from ignorance, a theme which Mozart shared with his brother Masons. But few Masons today, listening to

the delightful tunes of Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro", realize that they are enjoying a "revolutionary" play, set to music by a Mason who believed in the "revolutionary" principle of the equality of all men. Beaumarchais' Figaro comedy was written and staged under Louis XV of France as an attack against the prevalent feudal social system. Mozart's choice of this play, at a time when the success of the young American democracy was firing the imagination of the world, was not accidental.

Hebert, Andre Chenier, Camille Desmoulins and many other "Girondins" of the French Revolution were Freemasons. The Masonic ideal of freedom was strong in the heart of a Frenchman who became a Mason while in the youthful United States of America -- the Marquis de Lafayette. He remained an enthusiastic Mason all his life, and was until his death in 1829 Grand Master of the Grand Orient de France. And during the whole of the Nineteenth Century, to be a Freemason was tantamount to being a champion of democracy. Many of the leaders in the great year 1848, which saw so many uprising against feudal rule in Europe, were members of the Order; among them was the great Hungarian hero of democracy, Louis Kossuth, who found temporary refuge in America. Like Kossuth, another celebrated champion of democracy, Guiseppe Garibaldi, was a thirty-third degree Freemason and Grand Master of the Italian Freemasons. Most leaders of the Young Turkish Committee, which in 1908 forced Sultan Abdul Hamid "the Damned" to give his nation a parliamentary form of government, and who deposed the "Red Sultan" in the following year, were likewise Masons. In Latin America, too, the process of liberation from the Spanish yoke was the work of Freemasons, in large measure. Simon Bolivar was one of the most active of Masonry's sons, and so were San martin, Mitre, Alvear, Sarmiento, Benito Juarez -- all hallowed names to Latin Americans. Thus, while the Order as such kept out of politics, it attracted to itself the most democratically minded, the champions of human decencies -- and won for itself the undying hatred of those who feared progress. Yet Masonry has never been a subversive movement. In countries where democracy is a reality, even Royalty belongs to the Order. Both King George VI and the Duke of Kent are Freemasons;

so is the Duke of Windsor. His grandfather, Edward VII, was the chief of British Masonry, and he was succeeded in the post by the aged Duke of Connaught. King Gustav V heads the Freemasons of Sweden.

It is clear, consequently, why the Nazis and Fascist and Bolsheviks must hate an organization so steeped in humanitarian traditions. They know that Masons, as individuals, have founded a great number of modern democratic states, have drafted the Declaration of Independence and created liberal Constitutions the world over. But the totalitarian hatred for the Order is not merely emotional. It is clearly defined in the fundamental divergence between their creed and the Masonic ideal. In his book to which we have already referred, the Nazi Dr. Rosenberg writes:

"Without doubt the Masonic dogma of Humanity is a relapse into worlds of the most primitive conceptions; everywhere where it is put into practice it is accompanied by decadence, because it conflicts with the aristocratic laws of Nature".

Thus in his own dogmatic terms he indicts Freemasonry for what is its greatest pride, its ideal of equality.

In 1938 Hitler's own publishing house, which puts out both "Main Kampf" and the official "Volkischer Beobachter", issued a volume on "Freemasonry, Its World View (Weltanschauung), Organization and Policies". The preface is written by Herr Heydrich, second in command of the Gestapo, and hence an expert on oppression and violence, and hints openly at the seizure of libraries and property of German Freemasonry. The book itself, by one Dieter Schwarz, discloses that every new Nazi member must "confirm by his word of honor that he does not belong to a Masonic lodge." In outlining the official Nazi position on the subject, it says in part:

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

"Masonic lodges are... associations of men who, closely bound together in a union employing symbolical usages, represent a supra-national spiritual movement, the idea of Humanity... a general

association of mankind, without distinction of races, peoples, religions,
social and political convictions."

I have read several hundred books about Freemasonry and scores of original Masonic documents. But never have I seen masonry's basic ideals expressed more clearly than by its mortal enemies in the passage above. Herr Heydrich and Herr Schwarz are right -- the gulf between their "Weltanschauung" and the Masonic Ideals can never be bridged.