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Masonry in Latin America

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Part 1: Introduction

Selected portions of this publication were presented on 30th September 1995 at the Canberra Lodge of Research and Instruction Seminar organised by WBro. R.Nairn, Preceptor of this Lodge and Senior Warden of the Research Lodge of NSW No 971, on behalf of the Australian Masonic Research Council, and was specially compiled, with appropriate additions, from two papers discussed at the Research Lodge of NSW in 1986 and 1990.

This action was taken in view that the papers already presented, "Masonry in South America", (1986), and "Masonry in Argentina", (1990), complemented each other, and by presenting selected parts from each paper, it was hoped to reach a wider readership through the Australian Masonic Research Council and help the dissemination of knowledge about Masonry in another far away and relatively unknown continent.

It also contains updated information from other Latin American Grand Lodges, not available in the papers mentioned above.

Having recently returned from a trip to Latin America, where I had the opportunity to visit some of the Lodges in Mexico, Argentina and Chile, I was able to experience, once again, the differences that exist in Freemasonry.

We normally tend to think that Freemasonry is universal; the principles, tenets, and teachings are universal, but the practices, rituals and procedures, in most cases are very different; even some of the modes of recognition are not the same, and we are of course, referring to Regular Grand Lodges properly recognised throughout the masonic world.

In dealing with the complex and highly individual societies of Latin America, we can no longer be content merely with masonic history, but we must look also, even in a brief manner, into its political history and its area's social and economic environment. We must look at the struggles for political unity and the achievement of nationhood for a better understanding of the

introduction and expansion of masonry, so closely related to the factors mentioned above. We must also attempt to understand Freemasonry in the light of the times.

For more than 300 years the continent was under the paternalistic and repressive control of Spain and Portugal, which discouraged political self-government and individual initiative, and suppressed intellectual ambition.

The voyages of Columbus established the Spanish claim to Latin America but a Portuguese navigator, Pedro Alvares Cabral whilst en route to India in 1500 was blown off his navigation course and discovered Brazil. He claimed the land for Portugal, which was confirmed by the Treaty of Tordesillas, in the division of the unexplored lands of the world between Spain and Portugal.

The Spanish Pope, Alexander VI, on being asked by the Crowns of Spain and Portugal to solve any differences that may arise from the discovery of new lands, divided the New World, as it was then known, by the authority of three Bulls of Demarcation issued in May, 1493. It separated the area by a North-South line in the Atlantic Ocean running 100 leagues West of the Azores, with all lands east of the line granted to Portugal and all the territory west of this imaginary line, to Spain.

This arrangement did not suit Portugal as she lacked the necessary sea space to go around the African Continent; the Treaty of Tordesillas signed on 7th June, 1494 which moved the line westward to 370 leagues West of Cape Verde Islands, gave Portugal the room needed for navigation and though it was not known at the time, provided Portugal with a toe-hold on the eastern part of South America leading to the development of Brazil as a Portuguese colony.

During those colonial times in South America there existed complete intellectual isolation.

Any new or liberal idea was completely restricted as vouched for by the statutes of the "Recopilaciones de Indias" book 9 title 27 law 7 which stated "No Foreigner is allowed to travel to the Indias" (read America) or deal in commerce in it unless he is the holder of a Royal Licence".

However, in that particular time new ideas and philosophical and political concepts were moved around rapidly in a large area by the constant displacement of troops and population, compensating in many ways, for the

limited means of communication of the period, to help bring down the spiritual barriers or vacuum created by the regime.

These new ideas and concepts, and the liberal principles typical of this particular period of the 18th Century which brought a cultural awareness in many people who could not find an outlet for their inquietude or restlessness, was a catalyst for the tremendous surge of speculative lodges which spread rapidly through Europe and America after the foundation of the first Grand Lodge of England in 1717.

In the evidence presented and in the words of many historians, those were the days when plotting and intrigue were fairly popular pastimes, and it is quite evident that some of those early lodges provided a very convenient cover for political conspirators.

In perusing early documents, one could establish four very well determined currents, which gave form and structure to masonry in the continent:

a) The one that grew from the land and adapted to prevalent conditions after its introduction from Europe,

b) The one that arrived with the Spanish armies,

c) The legacy of the English occupation forces in 1806, and

d) The one that was brought and spread by the liberation armies of San Martin from the south and Bolivar from the north in the form of the Lautarino lodges.

Regarding point (a) above, it could be proved beyond doubt by researching documents from the Inquisition revealing the existence of "clandestine" (to Spanish authorities, that is) lodges working in Lima, Peru, prior to the revolutionary movement.

There was another lodge operating in Cartagena de Indias in the Vice-Royalty of Nueva Granada, now Colombia, named "Las Tres Virtudes Teologales" in about 1808 under a warrant issued by the Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica, English Constitution.

No trace of this warrant is now to be found, but it is reported by Americo Carnicelli in his treatise "La Masoneria en la Independencia de America" (Edt. Bogota, Colombia, 1970), that its record may have been among the

many documents destroyed in a fire when the Masonic Centre in Kingston, Jamaica, was burned down.

In respect to point (b), there are many facts documenting the activities of Officers of the Spanish Army engaged in masonic activities, also extracted from the Inquisition records and from other sources.

The oldest lodge in Lima operating at present, Paz y Perfecta Union No 1, may have been descended from these early masonic activities. There are some tenuous vestiges that a Spanish Army Travelling Lodge during the occupation of Peru, named "La Paz Americana del Sud", was remapped Paz y Perfecta Union after the Spaniards were defeated.

Points (c) and (d) are explained in detail later on in the text

We cannot possibly deal here in detail with masonry in all the Latin American countries, as it will be beyond the scope of this paper, so allow me to indulge with a region close to my heart, as due to a geographical accident, I was born in Buenos Aires.

The region of the Rio de la Plata aroused little interest, at least in contrast to Peru and Mexico with their mineral wealth and flourishing Indian civilisations, because the Spaniards from the very beginning were looking for El Dorado or the riches of gold. There was a legacy from the Aztecs, Mayas, Incas, and Chibchas, but the original motives for the conquest of the New World were the implementation of the three G's, Glory, Gold, and Gospel.

In the scheme of the Spanish Empire, the River Plate soon had to assume the role of supplying transport in the way of mules, food and textiles to the rich mining areas of Upper Peru (now Bolivia). Settlement, therefore was orientated towards the interior of the continent, and the area which became Argentina was considered as the stepchild of the Empire for more than two centuries, until the arrival of the English, who were more interested in raw material for Europe.

The industrialisation of Europe created a demand for raw materials, not bullion, and that was the edge of the English against the Spaniards.

This was the moment when Buenos Aires exchanged the tutelage of the Spanish administrative exploitation and trade monopoly for the English way of free trade, England being the investment centre of the nineteenth century.

The exchange was accomplished gradually, with British commerce and shipping succeeding where the Red Coats had failed during the invasion of Buenos Aires in 1806 and 1807.

The Invasions were a revelation to both parties, the English and the Argentines. To the British, it had revealed the potential markets and raw materials so badly needed in Europe, and to the Argentines, the lack of free enterprise and profits arising from the strict monopoly imposed on trading by Spain, even though a regulation promulgated in 1778, allowed Chile, Peru, and Argentina free commerce between the regions.

Special licences were granted to English merchants in 1809/10, stimulating trade and consequently the expansion of Freemasonry, so popular on the British Isles and other parts of Europe.

The results benefited England as well as Buenos Aires, as the economy of the region was now linked to the world's major financial power, and Buenos Aires continued to develop in a close relationship with British investments.

You may have noticed that constant reference has been made to Buenos Aires in the body of this work, because the political and geographical unit known today as Argentina developed over several centuries.

As the colonial period progressed, the settlements scattered in the north-west close to the mineral wealth of Upper Peru, now known as Bolivia, in the west across the Andes to Santiago in Chile, and in the East to the Rio de la Plata, the main entry to the colony, gradually acquired some kind of cohesion.

The main problem in the colonisation of Latin America was the political administration of vast areas with practically no political precedent available and the minimum political experience of Spain and Portugal.

Most of the territory conquered was not obtained in a spectacular fashion with great armies and plentiful supplies of goods and men, but was achieved by small bands of men assisted by the power of gunpowder, horses, and fierce dogs trained to fight, all unknown in the continent. They also employed what could have been the first chemical warfare by using blankets laced with smallpox and measles to spread disease among the natives.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century, the Spanish Crown unified these regions under the Viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata based at Buenos Aires. The Viceroy was the personal representative in America of the Spanish Crown.

The country which emerged in modern days is a tapering inverted triangle located in the major portion of South America's temperate zone, with the Northern boundary with Bolivia and Paraguay, and the southern tip being Tierra del Fuego Island.

For a better understanding of what is to follow, that is the inner workings of some lodges in South America, let us commence with a brief sketch of Masonry in the continent in the early period, from the time that the seed of Masonry was planted, to its actual form.

As it was explained in an early paper "Masonry in South America", discussed in the Research Lodge of NSW No 971 in May, 1986, the Spanish Rule was very repressive, discouraging individual and economic initiatives and suppressing freedom, a primary condition which must exist if the ideals of Freemasonry are to flourish. But this problem was balanced by the British influence, as they had inculcated in the British Colonies a sincere wish to propagate the masonic ideals.

On 2nd July, 1751 a Royal Edict issued by the King of Spain, Ferdinand VI declaring the practice of Freemasonry illegal in all the extension of his kingdom and pronouncing the death penalty for anybody engaged in it, made things very difficult, not only in Europe, but also for the colonials.

Father Jose Torrubia, a Franciscan friar, was at the time the "censor and revisor" of the Spanish Inquisition. He secured a special dispensation and under an assumed name he joined a masonic lodge. This enabled him to visit various lodges and to conduct an investigation into the practices of Freemasonry, and to ascertain the names of many members, who were arrested, tortured, and persecuted by the Inquisition.

The Inquisition (The Holy Office) originated in 1215 when Dominic was one of the special delegates sent to Languedoc and other parts of Southern France to inquire into reports of heresy.

In 1216 the Dominican Order was established to suppress heresy and its members were known as "the hounds of the Lord".

The Inquisition itself was not founded until 1246 when Pope Innocent IV entrusted its direction to the Dominicans and the Franciscan Orders.

The Inquisition was extended to Latin America on 25th January 1569 when the first Tribunals were set up at Lima, Peru (January, 1570), Mexico City (November, 1591), and Cartagena, Colombia (1610), where no one, except the Indians was safe from its jurisdiction.

The masonic lodges had to move underground to share the same fate with the patriotic secret societies, but the peculiar situation arose in which to be a revolutionary, prison or exile was the price paid to the authorities, but to be a mason the death penalty applied.

Perhaps those were the ideal conditions encountered years later leading to the formation of the Lautaro or Revolutionary Lodges, but more of that later.

The situation was chaotic and very disorganised until 1806, when Britain invaded Buenos Aires and in a very short time many local residents were initiated into the Travelling Military Lodges brought with the invading British Expedition force under Sir Home Popham on return from South Africa.

Within this limited force of 1700 men lead by Colonel Beresford, there were two Irish Lodges, Nos 895 and 356.

During their short occupation (two months), from June 1806 to August 1806, Britain instituted free trade and some lodges were formed, but when the British Army was expelled, Buenos Aires still welcomed the English traders as was pointed out before, furthering the development of Masonry.

A second British Expedition under General John Whitelocke occupied Montevideo, now today's Uruguay, from February to July, 1807 and attacked Buenos Aires in June-July of the same year, but the British were forced to capitulate.

It is not to be interpreted that the British introduced Freemasonry into the River Plate region, as masonry was already expanding not only in the form of regular lodges, but also as Secret Societies, Patriotic Societies, or under cover as Literary/Philosophical Societies, but it is certainly evident that the British, with their presence, stimulated the spirit of masonic association. This caused great alarm to the Spanish authorities as it was taken as an action against the Church.

It should not be taken that Freemasonry took the banner against the church to become anti-clerical, but there is no doubt it was against the despotism of the colonial power of Spain. There is a certainty that the English encouraged masonic lodges as a subtle weapon against Spain, but there is a strong possibility, at least in my mind, that masonic lodges in South America used the British influence in their support to form more lodges to be used in the Creoles's war against Spain.

Because masonry was closely related to the economic and political history of the country, especially regarding the Wars of Independence from the Spanish Rulers, we must separate masonic history in the River Plate into three main periods.

The first one would be better described as Masonry during the 18th century, the second one as the post-1810 Revolution and the third one, After Rosas.

The main point to note is that Latin masonry often tends to be more secretive than in most other places in the masonic world, to the extent that in many lodges, even today the brethren do not use their own names in Lodge documents such as the minute book, motions, etc, but adopt symbolic names such as Pasteur, Socrates, Plato, Mozart, etc., those names used for the term of their masonic lives.

Also as Grand Lodge issues a new password every six months to gain admission to any lodge, even to the lodge's own members, from this point on, you will appreciate the problems related to the research and investigation into the early history of Freemasonry on the continent.

We have also to remember that even today in South America the Craft more often than not assumes a more political role than English Freemasonry, which had pursued a simpler and more direct course, by exerting pressure on governments either directly or in conjunction with local or international organisations.

Let me give a clear example. In 1985 the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Chile, MWBro. Oscar Pereira Henriquez issued a joint declaration with the Catholic Church appealing to the government of General Pinochet regarding Human Rights, and the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil embarked in a national campaign against poverty and the rights of the individual to a better life.

You are now entitled to ask; is such a defensive position necessary? We can only point out that Freemasonry had suffered unjustified persecutions on many occasions, perhaps due to the Papal Bulls in a region of strong influence by the Catholic Church, and the close association of Masonry with the freedom movements of the 18th century.

Papal Bulls are official statements and the most important and solemn of all Papal pronouncements and are so called because they once bore leaden seals known in Latin as Bullae. A Bull is written in Latin and begins with the name of the Pope issuing it, followed by the words *servus servorum Dei* (servant of the servants of God). The first word or phrase of a Bull or any other papal edict becomes its title.

Papal Bulls, according to the legislation of the 18th century had to be ratified by the Catholic States before they became mandatory.

Freemasonry was condemned by many Papal Bulls and Encyclicals, the first Bull by Clement XII in 28th April, 1738, in his 8th year as a Pope. In *eminentis apostolatus specula* founded in "Masonry's infected principles" and alleged inflicting "very serious injuries on the tranquillity of the Temporal State".

It was followed by *Providas Romanorum* by Benedict XIV on 18th May 1751, during his 11th year, as a confirmation of the Bull "In eminentis" for it was being said that the Bull issued by Clement XII in 1738 was becoming a dead letter; and on the grounds that Freemasonry "assailed all legitimate authority" and "was opposed to civil no less than to Canonical and Ecclesiastical ordinances". There may have been another unexplained motive, as certain aspersions were cast that the Pope himself had joined a masonic lodge when he was young.

Eclesiam a Jesu-Christo another Bull by Pius VII in 13th September, 1821, during his 22nd year, alleging that Freemasonry was an active, political, and subversive organisation, and that the Carbonari were de facto Freemasons.

Quo Gravioro by Leo XII in 13th March, 1825, during his 2nd year; *Traditi humiitati nostrae* by Pius VIII in 24th March, 1829; *Mirari vos* by Gregory XVI in August, 1832; Pope Pius IX issued several encyclicals, *Qui Pluribus* in 9th November, 1846, *Syllabus* in December, 1864, *Ex epistola* in October, 1865, and *Apostolicae Sedis* in October, 1869.

Finally, Pope Leo XIII with *Humanum Genus* in 20th April 1884 during his 7th year, because of alleged subversive political activities.

In addition, an official declaration in "Observatore Romano" dated 19th March 1950, stating that the Papal Bull *Syllabus* of 1864 against the *Liberi Muratori* was still in full force.

On 25th January 1983 the Roman Catholic Church officially promulgated the new *Codex juris canonici* replacing the 1917 code of Pope Benedict XV which contained Article 2335 that ipso facto excommunicated those having any connection with "the masonic sect or other societies that conspired against the Church or against legitimate civil authorities".

One thing is evident from the Papal Bulls mentioned above, that is, that the common ground for the condemnations are mostly Freemasonry's alleged involvement with politics and not only on theological grounds, so we can discern or identify that political reasons may have been more important than doctrinal considerations. This is not to say that doctrine had not been taken into consideration, as it had been remarkable the coincidence that the first Papal Bull against Freemasonry on 1738 come with the revised Anderson's Constitutions of 1738.

It is very hard to reconcile the political equation of political freedom of the individual against dictatorship as Freemasonry normally prospers proportionally to the amount of democracy of each country, while it does not survive under totalitarian governments. Mussolini in Italy, Hitler in Nazi Germany, Franco in Spain, Salazar in Portugal, and all the communist countries behind the Iron Curtain, now thankfully removed, are good examples of this position. We are able to see today the proliferation of Grand Lodges in countries who were behind the Iron Curtain, such as Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Hungary, which is now recognised by the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales.

All those totalitarian examples were also followed in Latin America. In Colombia, in June 1953, the National Constitutive Assembly worked on a Government project to proscribe all secret societies including Freemasonry.

The presentation of this project brought a bloody campaign against Masonry, extending after a short time to the Protestant Churches and its parishioners. The persecutions ended with the fall of the dictator Rojas Pinillas, but still some attacks were perpetrated afterwards.

In Guatemala, a decree dated 26th August 1954, by the government of Castillo Armas declared illegal the Grand Lodge of Guatemala. In Bolivia, on the 9th November 1956, masonry was banned and its members were not allowed to work in the Public Service. In Argentina, under the Peron regime, masons were persecuted and bombs placed at the Grand Lodge building while the police kept continuously harassing its members by entering into the Lodge Rooms during regular meetings.

Masons were not alone in this madness, because during the period between 1953 and 1955, the clergy were also persecuted and many churches burned. Scarcely one year after the fall of Peron from power in September 1955, another bomb exploded at the doors of the Grand Lodge building on the 27th July, 1956.

In Chile, adepts of the official church were suspected and accused several times of burning masonic buildings.

We must also stress the fact that the Craft was not alone in suffering unjustified criticism; the Rotary and Lions clubs, together with the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association) among other organisations were the recipients of the wrath of church authorities. The Y.M.C.A. was condemned by the Vatican in 1920 (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1920 page 596) and called "White Masonry", on the grounds that "such organisation, while showing special concern for the youth, corrupted their faith, teaching them a conception of life dispensing with the Church and all religious teachings" and "The Y.M.C.A. is contributing to the decay of the youth's faith, by affirming that its purpose (of the Association) is to show them a conception of life without churches or religious confession".

The Rotary International was also criticised and condemned in 1928 for its laicism by the Spanish bishops of Palencia, Tuy, Leon, Almeria, and Orense. The charges were that the Rotary Clubs "are nothing else but a new satanic organisation with the same background and teachings of masonry" and that "according to documents and reliable sources, Rotary is a suspected organisation, and should be considered as execrable and perverse".

The Lions Clubs did not fare much better in their views than the two other mentioned organisations. (excerpts taken from *Masonry in Argentina and in the world, Rotarism and Catholicism*, by Anibal A.Rottjer 6th Ed. 1983 pages 193 to 195).

From this point on, you will appreciate the problems related to the research and investigation into both early and modern history of masonry on the continent.

Part 2: Masonry from the 18th up to the 20th century

Masonry during the 18th century

During the 18th century we have seen how speculative masonry raised from no cohesion at all to an organised body in 1717 with the formation of the Grand Lodge of England, and its rapid expansion throughout the world.

Regarding English masonry in the Southern South American region, or as was commonly known in the period, "The Virreynato del Rio de la Plata", judging by documents found in Buenos Aires and other papers in the archives of the United Grand Lodge of England, during the Grand Mastership of Thomas, the 2nd Viscount of Weymouth, Sir Randolph (or Randal) Took was appointed as Provincial Grand Master for South America by Grand Lodge on 17th April, 1735.

Because the Grand Lodge of England started to keep formal records of its members only from 1750 onwards, we do not have great details of Randolph Took, but his name was credited by some masonic historians as a member of Lodge Emulation No 21 founded in London in 1723.

In the "History of the Grand Lodge of England 1717-1967" page 253, he is recorded as "returned as a member of the Lodge held at the Queen's Arms, Newgate Street in 1730". In the official publication listing all Provincial Grand Masters, Sir Randolph Took appeared from 1737 until 1750, when his name failed to be listed, giving us a possible indication of his resignation or his death.

In some documents found in Buenos Aires, Sir Randolph Took was quoted as a businessman travelling between Buenos Aires, Brazil, and the Caribbean Islands during the years 1735 to 1737, but nothing more is known of Randolph Took, and many years were to pass before any lodge was established in South America.

As we had mentioned before, the lack of early masonic records in this part of the world, makes a very difficult task for masonic researchers, and leaves everyone open to different interpretations and conjectures some times very hard to refute.

As a result of the frequent persecutions of Freemasonry in Latin America, historical documents are not easy to find making it very difficult to reconstruct a complete and accurate history of the Craft in the continent.

Contrary to arguments presented by several masonic historians, Alcibiades Lappas, a prolific and renowned Argentinean historian, and a member of the Craft, in his book "Argentine Masonry through its members" asserted his ability to prove the existence of a lodge in Buenos Aires founded at the end of the 18th century called "Independencia" and warranted by the Grande Loge Generale Ecossoise de France in 1795.

As this Body was absorbed by the Grand Orient of France on 8th January, 1805, Lodge Independencia was left to its own devices and to act according to its preferences regarding its future allegiances. Alcibiades Lappas, claimed in his book, among other things, that about the same time a Portuguese by the name of Juan da Silva Cordero founded the Lodge St John of Jerusalem with a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Maryland, and that during the invasion of Buenos Aires by the British Forces, the Travelling Military Lodges under the Irish Constitution, formed the Lodges "Hijos de Hiram" (Sons of Hiram) and "Estrella del Sur" (Southern Star) initiating many creoles or local residents.

It may be coincidental, but about this time, in 1795, when this lodge was said to be formed, a Royal Decree permitted trade with colonies of Spain's allies and other commercial restrictions were further relaxed, reinforcing the argument that trade and free movement brought better conditions for the development of Freemasonry.

Masonry post-1810

Masonically speaking, this was the most important period in South America, as it was the beginning of a great masonic expansion leading to the Grand Lodges we find today, its policies, and the quality of its membership strictly imposed by the authorities and members of the lodges. During and after the May Revolution, which started on 25th May, 1810, there was great masonic activity. Unfortunately there are not many masonic records available because this period in the history of Freemasonry in South America was also characterised by extreme secrecy.

On the one hand the Royal Edict of 1751, pronouncing the death penalty for being a Freemason, and on the other, the activities of the Revolutionary

Forces attached to the Lodges, the Constitution of which provided for an absolute discretion from its members. It stated that “a Brother, who by word or sign reveals the secret of the existence of the Lodge shall be put to death by the means most convenient”.

Prior to the May Revolution there was a lodge in Buenos Aires presided over by Doctor Julian B. Alvarez. The name of this lodge still remains something of a mystery. Sometimes it was known as the Lodge of St John, and sometimes with the name of Lodge Independencia.

Because in this particular period most of the lodges were known as Lodges of St John, one would be inclined to suggest several possibilities regarding the two names,

- a) Was it Lodge Independencia formed by the Grand Loge Generale Ecosaise de France in 1795 ?
- b) Was it Lodge St John of Jerusalem founded by the Portuguese Juan da Silva Cordero with a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Maryland about the same time ?
- c) Were there two lodges operating and confusion existed due to the secrecy restricting its records ?
- d) The fact that these two lodges, driven by the same ideals, may have amalgamated to achieve a stronger force against the fight with the Spaniards. But so far nobody knows !.

This Lodge presided over by Dr Julian Alvarez had a fundamental importance in the history of Masonry in the Southern Cone of South America because it was the forerunner of the Lautaro Lodges formed in 1812 in Buenos Aires, Santa Fe, Cordoba and Mendoza in Argentina, Santiago in Chile, and Lima in Peru.

From these Lautaro Lodges, another was formed at Tucuman City called Logia Argentina, and founded by General Belgrano, Commander in Chief of the Northern Army in the War of Independence against Spain. This Lodge later changed its name to Unidad Argentina warranted by the Masonic Body in Nueva Granada, an area later becoming The Grand Colombia and what is known today as the countries of Colombia, Panama, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Many scholars are still researching the character of the Lautaro Lodges; if they were strictly masonic, political lodges or both, but one would tend to think that they really were both and possessed both aspects because all members had to be regularly initiated before they were eligible for membership to Lautaro with a view to political ends and under the Trilogy of Union, Faith, and Virtue or Victory. No one is certain regarding this trilogy, as documents were found at variance.

Some historians assuming Virtue, and some Victory. One would be more inclined to interpret the word Victory, as it may be more in tone with the period and the circumstances.

As an example, the Oath of membership was:

“ We will never recognise the legitimacy of any government of our land if it is not duly elected by the free and spontaneous will of the people and being the Republican system the most appropriate to govern the Americas, we will work with all our efforts to convince the people to adopt it.”

It could be argued that Masonic Initiation was simply a formula used by the Lautarinos to maintain or preserve the secret of the meetings. Personally, I do not agree with this theory because in the first instance, for them to pass through the ritual of initiation was absolutely unnecessary, it could have been much easier to have a simple Oath, and in regards to the masonic signs, tokens and words, they could have adopted their own, without having to resort to masonic knowledge.

One thing to remember, is that in this particular period there were many informal lodges that in Anglo-Saxon Masonry were known as Travelling Lodges. In South America they were known as Logias Volantes (Flying Lodges) or Ambulatory Lodges. These lodges were constituted for certain and determined purposes, for example, on board ships in a foreign land or place.

They were formed by a minimum of three regular masons and their function was only for the time and transient motive by which they were formed. The Doctrine of Exclusive Jurisdiction had not been yet established.

This practice is known even today in Latin America and some parts of Europe as Masonic Triangles, although regulated by special edict from the Grand Master; they must operate within their own jurisdiction where no other lodge is operating in the area, for the purpose of working towards the

formation of a new lodge. These Masonic Triangles are stringently controlled by Grand Lodge and are allowed to operate for strictly limited periods; they must meet at least once a month, and are inspected by the Grand Master at least once a year.

Having said that, it becomes much easier to understand how the Lautaro Lodges took hold in the continent in a very short time.

Another point to be considered, specially when one is researching history, is to be able to set one's mind, not to the present times and conditions, but to try to live in the period one is researching. It is simpler to understand the problems facing Freemasonry at that particular time, if one understands the problems associated with the political and economical situation of the period.

In these circumstances, lodges needed no regular formation or the standards of recognition prevalent today, or even the need to be recognised by another Masonic Body. It would be beneficial to remember that all of America, with the exception of the United States, was not occupied territory and in such a large continent with a complete lack of transport and communications, any lodge could have been formed and dispersed after the purpose of the formation of the lodge became obsolete.

It is true that in those early days there were no masonic lodges, as we know them today, because so long as the Spanish Regime lasted, such organisations were prohibited.

It is quite possible that there were many masons scattered throughout the different countries and that they met occasionally as masons.

The question is now repeated; were the Lautaro Lodges exclusively political or exclusively masonic ? I have to let you decide, but let me observe that the immediate founding of masonic lodges throughout Latin America as soon as the bonds with Spain had been severed and the immediate disbandment of the Gran Reunion Americana, a Body created by Francisco de Miranda, with headquarters in 27 Grafton Street, (today under the number 58 Grafton Way, London) and the alma mater of the Lautarino Lodges in Spain, and the Lautaro Lodges in the South American Continent, is strongly indicative of their giving place to another organisation. This is of course in addition to other currents leading to the formation of masonic Lodges.

The Great Reunion Americana, from where the Lautaro Lodges sprang, was not necessarily created in a masonic sense. During the Napoleonic Wars, the Spaniards felt great concern about the end of Spain and their own fate. Many societies (semi-secret societies) were formed to deliberate and to plan the best way to defend themselves and the future of their respective provinces.

As the South Americans were not represented, and the Colonies were a big part of the kingdom as a source of income and of increasing political importance, they grasped the opportunity to create their own society and formed the Gran Reunion Americana. I would like to suggest that besides believing in forming a protective association, they saw the chance that if Spain was going to succumb to France, then the Americans would be free to choose their own destiny.

General Miranda, the founder of the Society, was the brain of the beginnings of the South American Revolution against Spain, but he was somewhat theoretical in his plans and approach; had he been a little more practical, he would have attained success.

He ran all over Europe in exile from his country and his sword was offered to half a dozen nations. The certain fact is that he started the most famous Spanish American revolutionary society that ever existed, although it was not original, since two years before in 1795, a similar organisation existed in Madrid, the capital of Spain. It was named Junta de Villas y Provincias (Junta or Council of Villages and Provinces), but it was soon surpassed by Miranda's creation in London.

When introduced into Spain, the seat chosen for it was at Cadiz, the chief commercial centre of Spain in those days; then the name was changed first to Caballeros Racionales (Rational Gentlemen), next to Sociedad de Lautaro, and later when transferred to South America, adopted its final and most permanent name, Logia de Lautaro.

Two Lodges Lautaro under the Grand Lodge of Argentina are working in Buenos Aires with the number 167, and in the Mendoza Province with the number 368.

There is another under the Grand Lodge of Chile with the number 58 in Talcahuano and one under the Grand Lodge of Peru working with the number 62 in Lima's metropolitan area.

Miranda's masonic career is somewhat obscure and with some controversy, but many scholars will hold that he was initiated in a regular lodge in Philadelphia, others in Virginia towards the end of 1783, and still others sustain that he never had the chance to become a mason because of his constant travelling.

He had many opportunities to become a mason as he was in very good standing with many public figures who were masons, and made acquaintance with George Washington, Lafayette, and William Pitt, the English Prime Minister, who perhaps anticipating war with Spain may have thought that a timely revolution in the Spanish Colony of South America might not be without its advantages. In actual fact, it was William Pitt who provided a governmental pension to Miranda when he became destitute.

In any case, Miranda was the instrument in the creation and propagation of a whole system of political pseudo-masonry used as a cover for the revolutionary wars in South America.

The way that prominent men in Latin American politics during the last century referred to and associated these organisations more or less together with Freemasonry, suggests that the Lautaro Lodges was simply another name temporarily adopted by members of masonic lodges to band together for specific purposes.

It is also quite possible that masons were forced to form societies of a cultural/philosophical character as a wedge towards the formation or survival of masonic lodges.

There was a proliferation of Patriotic and Literary Societies where the themes discussed were the injustice of the Spanish conqueror, of being like slaves under the tyranny of the Royal Crown, the sovereignty of the people, and the rights to have its own constitutions and rules. However, the enthusiasm of the young members leaning towards Jacobism, by alarming the conservative Creoles determined the dissolution of some of the societies in 1811.

The themes selected for discussion on these societies may seem to be harsh today without knowing the prevalent conditions in the colony in that particular period, but let me say that there was a strong movement towards independence because of the totalitarian and centralist government of the Spanish Crown in addition to the arrogance of its administrators and the total exclusion of Creoles from administrative positions of responsibility.

It was seen in the eyes of many historians as the liberal's rejection of the Church's temporal powers versus the conservative's acceptance of church authority over all aspects of life.

Another factor was the distinct groups of inhabitants formed due to regional circumstances, such as;

a) A group formed by intellectual Creoles and the Lower Clergy such as Creole Clergy and Jesuit Clergy, seeking separation and autonomy.

b) the Spanish authorities, the High Clergy such as highly positioned priests sent from Spain to minister in the colony, and other privileged people wishing to preserve the continuity of the regime.

c) and a third group composed of Creoles and Spaniards, businessmen and industrialists, complaining of the difficulties imposed by the Spanish administrators and in favour of reforms, but with fear of revolutionary innovations.

At the top of the social scale were the whites born in the Iberian Peninsula, who were known as the Peninsulars and were frequently of noble birth and very proud of their heritage. Because of their arrogance they were strongly detested by the other social groups.

The Creoles, just below the Peninsulars in the social scale were pure-blooded whites born in the colonies. Although the law provided for equal privileges with the Peninsulars, their rights were often denied by the ruling Peninsulars bringing general friction and animosity.

Then we find what were known as Half-Breeds; Mestizos, a mixture of Whites and Indians, Mulattos, the mingling of Negro and White blood, and the Zambos, being part Indian and part Negro.

At the bottom of the scale were the Native Indians, such as the Araucanians of Chile, Patagonians of Southern Argentina, Guaranies of Paraguay and Brazil, and of course the descendants of the great civilisations of the Incas, Mayas, Aztecs, etc. and finally Negroes, who were imported as slaves.

There is another point worthy of investigation, and that is why were the members of the Lautaro Lodges so strict in maintaining such a high degree of secrecy?

Could it be proved that by disclosing the existence of the Lodge meant the death penalty because of the Edict of 1751 by King Ferdinand VI ? To be a Mason in this period was a “Major Crime” to the Inquisition, but to be a revolutionary, a lesser crime. There were some penalties such as prison or exile, but to be a Mason incurred prison, torture, and in most cases death.

Masonic procedures and rituals were adopted and one of the requirements was to be a “regular” mason before one could be accepted for affiliation. Some masonic historians sustain that the Lautaro Lodges consisted of a system of five degrees; the first three degrees in the same regular manner as the symbolic lodges, in which profanes were initiated, passed, and raised, and two other degrees distinctly separated from the others and available only for political purposes, to be conferred only on the very elite, or brethren selected for the revolutionary cause. In view of that, I would like to suggest that even if the Lautaro Lodges were politically orientated, their members were regular masons.

One question that may come to your mind now is, would it have been natural for these old companions in the struggle for freedom to have continued their organisation and thus preserve the principles of Freemasonry to be enjoyed by their children and grandchildren? The answer must be a categorical yes, but if it was not achieved let us remember that the majority of the most influential members had to move on with the fortunes of war.

For the masonic researcher, one of the great incentives is the appeal of the relationship of masonry with government history, and so much of this appeal comes from South American masonry, especially during the Wars of Independence.

Many scholars would affirm that masonry was the cause of the revolution against Spain, but others also believe that the Wars of Independence would not have been successfully begun, continued, and ended, were it not for the aid of that body of patriots safeguarded by the secrecy of masonry of the time.

By extensive reading of Spanish documents of the period, a line of thought reached us from these Spanish documents. In Napoleonic times, the formation of non-military lodges in Spain were encouraged in an endeavour to reconcile the Spanish people to an imposed monarch, Joseph Bonaparte. This period however lasted only until about 1820, after which Freemasonry was prohibited and its brethren persecuted until after the revolution of 1868.

Spanish Freemasonry at this particular period, and in opposition to the country's colonial policy, tried to emphasise its mission to foster peace, nationally and internationally, by stating that "Masonry is a school of tolerance, peace, brotherhood, and democracy". This longing for tolerance, freedom and peace no doubt stemmed from Spain's own authoritarian and violent history.

From this arises the question of whether the revolution was the incidental result of masonic teachings, or masonry was the organisation used by the leaders of the movement, because secrecy was necessary for their operations, or for mutual protection.

Masonic membership was perhaps another evidence in their minds of a man's reliability and fitness for trust as silence and circumspection had been taught to him.

If there were some important business to be transacted in the interest of the colonial army, it was natural that it should be safeguarded by those fraternal bonds; if a council was necessary, it would be better protected by the privacy of a military lodge. There was a test of safety in the membership in the order and the position in the army. One can only wonder, if this concept was also behind the Irish Military Travelling Lodges.

Another relevant question you may care to ask is what kind of attitude had the Catholic Church clergy towards the Lautaro Lodges. It was an attitude very different to the one they held against the regular lodges banned and proscribed by the Spaniards and the Church of Rome. The Creole clergy (and it must be stressed that the word Creole in this case does not imply mixed blood, as many imagine, but was descriptive of those born in the Americas similar to the Sabras in Israel) was against the power of Spain in the colonies, and of being treated as inferiors with respect to the clergy in Rome or in the European Continent.

There were two classes of clergy, the Secular Clergy, who were brought from Spain for the purposes of religious control and were engaged in preaching, teaching, and in the administrative duties of the Church, and the Regular Clergy, or those who lived by the rule of a religious and monastics Order, such as Jesuits, Franciscan, Dominicans, Carmelitas, Capuchins, etc. and were generally in charge of the missionary activities.

There was a strong contingent of Jesuit priests among the clergy sent from Spain in the early stages of the colonisation of the region. In 1613, the

Jesuit College of Cordoba, 800 kilometres north west of Buenos Aires was inaugurated, later reorganised as the University of Cordoba in 1762. However, later on, they were expelled from the Spanish realms.

In 1767 the Spanish King Charles III expelled the Jesuits from Spain and their colonies, as they taught the natives the useful trades and the practice of agriculture, the Jesuits became rich from the fruits of Indian labour, engaged in trade, and organised the Indians into military forces to defend themselves from other Indian tribes, until eventually they were seen as a threat to the colonial government.

It can be seen from the above that the Jesuits were inclined towards the Creole clergy to be more independent from Spain.

There were also petty squabbles between the Creoles/Jesuits and the high clergy, such as the benefit and the obligation to celebrate Baptism with warm instead of cold water for health reasons.

There was also a breakaway movement in 1813 to constitute an Argentine National Catholic Church because of the interference of the Spanish Church. The movement held the premise that if all were equal in the eyes of God, there must be equality in the eyes of the law. The Creole clergy were sent to small towns and backward rural areas whilst the Spanish Clergy were in charge of the big churches and important administrative centres.

Because of these conditions, the local or Creole clergy embraced the cause of the liberation from Spain, and by association their own liberation.

As a good example, Canon Calvo, a Jesuit Priest, founder of the Grand Lodge of Costa Rica in 1865, and the first Grand Commander of its Supreme Council 33§, fought with his church to allow the catholic clergy to become masons. He did not succeed in his enterprise, but he kept his public association with masonry until his death without suffering excommunication.

The Lautaro Lodges were named after the Indian Chief Lautaro, who fought against the Spanish Conquistadors in Chile during the 16th Century and apparently the name was suggested to Francisco Miranda, the Venezuelan Revolutionary Leader by O'Higgins, the eminent Chilean, due to his admiration for Lautaro, the Araucarian Indian.

The first Lautaro Lodge in South America was founded in Buenos Aires in 1812 by General San Martin, the hero of the Argentine War of Independence.

It was said that as the army constituted the armed power of the liberation, the Lautaro Lodges constituted a very valuable political power. This was the reason why General San Martin and the Chilean General Bernardo O'Higgins were especially interested in the creation of new Lautaro Lodges as the liberation army kept advancing and gaining territory.

The fundamental objective of these lodges was the indoctrination of citizens, and to study the political and social possibilities of the newly formed nations and were the siblings of the Gran Reunion Americana.

The relationship of Lautaro Lodges and Masonic Lodges was once described as "the initiation in the mysteries of Freemasonry was a compulsory requisite before one could be affiliated to a Lautaro Lodge". So, even if their objectives were political, their members were masons fighting for the freedom of their land.

There is no doubt that there existed some kind of connection between South American Leaders because it must be remembered that the rebellion of all Spanish-American colonies began at practically the same time, about 1811, and the names of the "Caudillos" in each country were among those enrolled in the Grand Reunion Americana or its branches.

At this stage I would like to explain the word "Caudillo", which originated in the turmoil of the Independence Period, although subsequently the meaning was extended to include any leader who captured the imagination and support of the masses and normally used to describe the strong man that brought local order and stability. A very good example was Juan D. Peron, Caudillo and Ruler of Argentina from 1945 to 1955.

A very interesting point from the research into the Lautaro Lodges comes from some parts extracted from its very draconian statutes and handwritten by Bernardo O'Higgins, the first Wor. Master (President) of this lodge in Chile.

It prescribed the death penalty for any member betraying the secrets of the lodge and laid down that no member could make an important official decision without first consulting his brethren, except in an emergency when he must report it to them as soon as possible.

It is natural that we should find few records of these lodges; in fact the wonder is that we find so many. Vicuna Mackena, a very well known Chilean historian has been able to publish a copy of the Constitutions and By-Laws of the Lautaro Lodges, and in its condensed form, reads like this:

“The mother lodge is to be composed of 13 Caballeros (Gentlemen) aside from the President, two secretaries; one for South America and one for North America” (no doubt referring to Southern and Northern parts of South America),”an Orator, and a Master of Ceremonies. The number cannot be increased. No Spaniard or foreigner can be admitted and no more than one ecclesiastic”.

“Whenever a brother is made Governor or Magistrate in a section of the country, he shall assist in forming a subordinate lodge”.

“When one of the brothers is elected Supreme Governor, he shall plan nothing of grave importance without having consulted the Lodge”.

“The objects of the institution are to assist and protect each other in the conflict of civilian life and to support the opinion of others, but when it is opposed to the public, they should nevertheless preserve silence”.

“Every brother should support, at the risk of his life, the determination of the Lodge”.

“Two thirds constitute a quorum. A brother who by word or sign reveals the secret of the existence of the lodge shall be put to death by the means most convenient.”

It will be seen that there is no mention of any connection with the masonic order, and no stipulation that the members must be Freemasons, but it is quite possible that these By-Laws were found incomplete, or for the exclusive use of the members of the two top degrees, the 4th and 5th.

The lodge provided for five degrees or grades; the first three were identical to those as exemplified in the “Scottish Rite”, constituted as the “Blue Chamber” and they were so rendered as a probation of the candidate in order to impress on him the habit of keeping secrets and developing discipline and solidarity.

The proper degrees of the lodge were the upper two, given as Rose Croix and Kadosh, which made a superior “Red Chamber”. In the fourth degree,

the obligation was very plain; the member swore, by all means, to defend the independence of the Spanish Colonies; and in the most secret fifth and last degree known as "Grand Lodge of Buenos Aires", a democratic credo was exposed, the member taking the oath of never accepting as a legal government any one that was not the resultant of popular election, and this to be de facto and de jure republican.

Maybe this was the reason behind Simon Bolivar, the Liberator, when he tried to banish the Craft in Northern South America when he was in power, to become a dictator. A decree was issued on 8th November 1828 prohibiting all secret societies in Grand Colombia including Freemasonry.

It does not necessarily mean that the ban applied and was directed against Freemasonry in particular, as there were other plots against Bolivar at the time, but using it as a tool for the researcher, it clearly shows that Freemasonry was firmly entrenched with a very extensive and great influence, otherwise Bolivar would not have been concerned. It can also be argued that the political situation in Colombia at the time, and a strong state of fanaticism and religious prejudice would have raised objections and censure against Bolivar's leadership, or it could have been for the sake of expediency in maintaining peace.

The attitude of Bolivar towards the Craft, was the key of the failure of the Lautaro Lodges in Venezuela and Colombia.

General Simon Bolivar, in charge of spreading the Lautaro Lodges in his own country, failed to attain this, and had to content himself with starting the Sociedad Patriotica (Patriotic Society), an almost public revolutionary society, of course inefficient and having a very short life.

In contrast, the Lautaro Lodge in Chile effectively governed the country for three years leading to the creation of the Chilean-Argentinian army to liberate Peru, but when the main members left with the army in 1820, the lodge influence declined severely and virtually died out.

That General Simon Bolivar was a Mason had been proved beyond doubt, but it remains to be seen if Bolivar was greatly influenced by Masonry in his revolutionary endeavours, as many scholars believe. The common denominator of most revolutionary leaders fighting against Spain in South America was that they were Spanish Army Officers born in the Americas, acquired liberal ideas in Europe, perhaps from Miranda and his Great

American Reunion Society, and had a deep admiration for Napoleon's military genius and his early republican principles.

However, those principles were compromised on 18th May, 1808 when France under Napoleon adopted an Imperial Constitution leading to an Imperial Crown, similar in many ways to the Spanish Crown, aggravated with the invasion of Spain and forcing King Ferdinand VII to abdicate in favour of Napoleon's brother, Joseph Bonaparte.

The revolutionary seed was perhaps planted, at least as far as Bolivar is concerned, by the German philosopher, Baron Alexander Von Humboldt, who in meeting Bolivar in Paris, after returning from a journey to South America, intimated that in his opinion, Venezuela appeared to be ready for emancipation provided the right leaders could be found. There was also no doubt that Freemasonry played a great part in the revolutionary wars of independence and the value of its influence, but it was not necessarily the main force behind the leaders.

The early 1820s was a period of great turmoil in politics and by association, the struggle for freedom and the increase in pseudo-masonic activities.

In 1821, a group of Spanish Constitutionalists, a term applicable to the Non-Royalists, arrived in Buenos Aires to form Lodge Aurora and Lodge Liberty warranted by the Grand Orient of Spain.

In December 1824, General Valero arrived in Peru from Grand Colombia as Sovereign Grand Inspector General 33§ to regularise, establish and create Capitular and Symbolic Lodges.

The Grand Orient of Colombia or Neo Granadino was then obviously well established and structured, as to achieve an organisation so powerful requires many years of hard work and skills, in a time in which communications were rather primitive.

He accomplished the task by founding in 1826 the Rose Croix Chapter "Regeneracion Peruana", helped by a Chilean Brother, Vicente Tur, 29§.

In 1825, suggesting that there was a connection between lodges General Valero blockaded the port of El Callao, seat of the Northern Spanish Administration, while General Blanco Encalada, possibly a member of Lautaro

Lodge in Chile, blockaded the Port by sea until Callao finally surrendered in January, 1826.

Blanco Encalada was a very distinguished military man with a career in the Army and the Navy, held public office, and was a mason of the 18§. He was born in Argentina of a Spanish father and a Chilean mother. He was elected first President of the Republic of Chile in July 1826 but resigned two months later due to lack of support from the Parliament. Shortly after, in 1827, he founded the Symbolic Lodge Filantropia Chilena, chartered by the Grand Orient of Colombia and Rose Croix Chapter Regeneracion Peruana.

These properly documented facts show that in 1824 there existed a very strong and close masonic connection in all South American countries fighting for independence, and an organisation capable of commissioning the creation of chapters and lodges in territory not occupied.

We have to remember that Grand Orients were different from what they are today, in so far as they were organisations that controlled both Supreme Councils and Symbolic Lodges.

In 1835, a group of American nationals organised in Argentina Lodge Estrella del Sur with a warrant from the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania. This was the Lodge to which Bernardino Rivadavia, the first President of Argentina was to become a member. Incidentally, this Lodge continued to work until the persecution by the dictator, General Juan Manuel de Rosas. It was a bloody regime and the surviving members migrated to Uruguay to form the Lodge Asilo de la Virtud, also under the jurisdiction of the Grand Lodge of Pennsylvania.

During these oppressive years, numerous lodges were still founded under the generic name of Logias Unitarias, because the members of those lodges were united in their opposition to the Rosas tyranny. Some of those lodges are still operating today, e.g. San Juan de la Frontera, Constante Union, and Jorge Washington in various provinces of the country.

Masonry after General Rosas

Rosas was such a controversial figure, that even today he dominates Argentina's historiography in a manner that admits little chance for dispassionate historical analysis. Eventually Rosas was deposed in the Battle

of Caseros by a mason, General Urquiza in 1852; by 1853, the United Grand Lodge of England managed to charter Excelsior Lodge No 617 and several of the earlier Spanish-speaking lodges were revived about this time - Lodge Concordia in 1853, Constancia in 1855, Union del Plata in the same year, and Confraternidad Argentina in 1856.

These lodges were warranted by the Grand Orients of Brazil and Uruguay. There was also a French Lodge by the name "Amie des Naufrages", sponsored by the Grand Orient of France and its membership composed almost entirely of French nationals. Years later more French Lodges were formed - "Amis de la Verite", and "Humanite Fraternelle". There were also Italian Lodges founded by Italian immigrants - "Lodge Italia", "Union Italiana", "Roma", "Sette Colli" and "Leonardo da Vinci".

On 11th December, 1857, seven of the existing lodges meeting in Buenos Aires and most holding warrants from the Grand Lodge of Uruguay formed a sovereign Grand Lodge in Argentina. The Lodges were Union del Plata, Confraternidad Argentina, Consuelo del Infortunio, Tolerancia, Regeneracion, Lealtad, and Constancia, electing Dr. Jose Roque Perez as its first Grand Master. At this stage a Supreme Council was erected, also sponsored from Uruguay.

In 1860, the U.G.Lodge of England entered into a Treaty of Amity with the Grand Lodge of Argentina, similar to the one promulgated with the Grand Orient of Brazil. In return for perpetual English recognition, Argentina gave England the right to warrant and maintain English-speaking lodges in its jurisdiction.

In 1904, there were 190 Lodges working under three main Bodies, The Grand Orient of the Blue Rite, The Grand Orient of Argentine Rite and the Grand Orient of the Confederated Rite.

In 1935, another Scottish Rite Supreme Council was formed, called Federal Argentino. This body claimed control over the Craft degrees, and developed Craft Lodges. It suffices to say that this Body was completely irregular, using the ritual of the Grand Orient of France, which excludes the V.S.L. and the omission of the G.A.O.T.U. from its rituals, and, by becoming a refuge for every exiled Spanish Mason, it provided a forum for political and anti-clerical subjects. Those exiled masons were escaping from the dictatorship of General Franco, and his banning of Freemasonry in Spain, penalised with a minimum term in prison of 12 years and one day.

In 1957, the Grand Lodge of Argentina merged with this Federal Argentino Supreme Council, thus forming one Sovereign Grand Lodge for the whole of the country. The French Ritual was adopted with the inclusion of the use of the V.S.L. and the references to the G.A.O.T.U.. The Grand Master of the new amalgamated body was Agustin Jorge Alvarez, a Past Grand Master of the Federal Argentino irregular body and the son of Agustin Enrique Alvarez, a Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Argentina during 1905-1906.

At its Centenary, by the end of 1957, the Grand Lodge of Argentina held under its jurisdiction over 400 lodges and about 60,000 members. The Fraternity was very strong and powerful.

From its beginning up to 1957, fourteen members of its Lodges had the honour of occupying the Chair of President of the Nation, many masons were involved in the Draft of the National Constitutions of 1853, which with slight alterations are still in force, and its members were involved in many of the democratic reforms and important initiatives such as the organisation of the Masonic Commission to help the victims of the cholera epidemic in 1868, and of the yellow fever in 1871 and the huge relief donation towards the reparation of the damages caused by the earthquake in the Province of Mendoza, in the Andean foothills.

During the internal armed conflicts of 1874 and 1880, where many lives were lost, they organised a Masonic Body of "Help to the Wounded", which later was to become the Argentinian Red Cross. The Grand Lodge initiated the first Public Libraries, the first School of Arts in the country, the Rural Society, the first Centre for Indigent Persons, founded several hospitals including the Children's Hospital, an association for the protection of animals based on the same principles as the R.S.P.C.A., and a large Home for Orphans.

Part 3: Latin America Grand Lodges

Brazil, Venezuela, Chile, Peru, Jamaica, Mexico
and Grand Lodges' proceedings

Brazil

The first independent and autonomous Masonic Grand Body in Latin America was the Grand Orient of Brazil, founded on 17 June, 1882 in Rio de

Janeiro. Its first Grand Master was Jose Bonifacio de Andrada y Silva, the patriarch of Brazilian independence.

During the Napoleonic Wars (1803-1815) French troops invaded Portugal in 1807. They reached Lisbon, but not in time to prevent the Regent Joao, who was acting for his demented mother Queen Maria, together with his mother, his wife Carlota, some 15,000 members of the Portuguese nobility and 50 million dollars of State funds to be taken away on board of English and Portuguese ships to Brazil. On January, 1808 the refugees reached Bahia, but finding that region's climate too tropical, they moved on to Rio de Janeiro, arriving on March 8, 1808.

The Regent Joao found his colony too backward for his liking and took immediate steps to modernise it and to ease colonial restrictions. When the demented Queen Maria died on 1816, the Regent became King Joao VI.

Rio de Janeiro served as the seat of the Portuguese government from 1808 to 1821, when King Joao VI returned to Portugal leaving his son Pedro de Braganza as Regent of Brazil.

Prince Dom Pedro, who later refused to return to Portugal, was initiated in Freemasonry and was a member of Lodge "Commerce and Arts" in Rio de Janeiro, which is still working and is now the oldest lodge in Brazil, when he declared Brazilian independence from Portugal on September, 1822. He was crowned three months later Emperor of Brazil as Pedro the First and became the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Brazil when Jose Bonifacio, the then Grand Master and Prime Minister of the Empire, graciously gave way to the Grand Mastership in his favour.

Ever since its foundation in 1822, the Grand Orient had a most uneven and difficult existence. The problems have been due mainly to the reluctance of many brethren to accept the separation of the three basic degrees in Freemasonry from the 33 degrees of the Ancient and Accepted Rite.

For many years, it has been customary, (it was an unwritten law) for the Grand Master of the Grand Orient to assume the Office of Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council 33°, as it was in many other South American Constitutions, that the Grand Master ought to be a 33° Mason before he could become eligible for the position of Grand Master (another unwritten law).

This matter brought continual problems and quarrels leading to conditions for the setting up of rival bodies, thus delaying the fraternal recognition of the Grand Orient from other masonic bodies outside of Brazil.

A separation of the Supreme Council and the Grand Orient occurred in 1925 when Dr Mario Bhering, who at the time was Grand Master of the Grand Orient elected to give up his office so as to continue as Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council only.

This situation did not last long as two years later, in 1927, when Dr Octavio Kelly became Grand Master, he insisted on taking also the position of Sovereign Grand Commander, thus causing an immediate split between the two bodies.

This caused a large number of lodges to secede from the Grand Orient and within few months the establishment of several State Grand Lodges.

There was not a restoration of friendly communication between the Grand Orient and the State Grand Lodges, until the futility of these disagreements began to be fully appreciated by many brethren.

In 1960, during the Grand Mastership of Dr Cyro Werneck de Souza e Silva, Treaties of Mutual Recognition and Fraternal Friendship were celebrated between the Grand Orient and many State Grand Lodges.

Today many of these treaties are said to be in existence, although we in New South Wales are aware of only the one signed in the State of Rio Grande do Sul.

There are now 25 widely recognised State Grand Lodges in Brazil, mostly by Jurisdictions in the USA and members of the CMI (Confederacion Masonica Interamericana) and all are members of the CMSB (Confederacion Masonica Simbolica de Brazil).

There are two other State Grand Lodges not very well known, but widely recognised by other State Grand Lodges in Brazil, namely, the Grand Lodge of Acre, founded in 1973 at Rio Branco, Acre, and the Grand Lodge of Amap.

The last two State Grand Lodges to be formed were the Grand Lodge of Sergipe on 15 November, 1983 by the Grand Lodge of Alagoas, and the Grand Lodge of Tocantins in 1989 as the Federal Government of Brazil

divided the State of Goias and created the State of Tocantins, the Grand Lodge of Goias chartered it on 5 November, 1989.

There is also in existence a District Grand Lodge Northern Jurisdiction with 10 lodges under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England, operating under a Treaty formulated in 1935 with the Grand Orient allowing the English lodges to operate in Brazil in return for the Grand Orient's perpetual recognition by the United Grand Lodge of England.

Venezuela

The second Grand Lodge established in South America was in Venezuela, founded on 24 June, 1824. Its first Grand Master was Diego Bautista Urbaneja, a lawyer of good repute, who held the Grand Mastership for 20 years, and at one stage became the Vice President of the Republic of Venezuela.

Many historians claimed that Masonry first appeared in 1798, brought from Spain by Picornell and Gomila, helped by a group of local masons who had returned from Spain having been initiated in the Mother Country.

Between 1809 and 1811, the National Grand Orient of Spain, granted three warrants to form lodges in Nueva Granada, in 1814 the Grand Lodge of Vermont warranted Lodge Patria, and there had been claimed that the Grand Lodge of Maryland also warranted a lodge. Unfortunately extant proof appears to be lacking, but this is understandable, as in 1827 a total ban on Freemasonry was imposed by the government until 1838 when it was lifted.

Shortly after, two Bodies were formed, a Grand Orient and a National Grand Lodge. Both Masonic Bodies amalgamated in 1865 to form the National Grand Orient of Venezuela which continued its operation until 1916, when it voluntarily split into the Grand Lodge of Venezuela and the Supreme Council for Venezuela.

These two Bodies are working in perfect amity, with the normal Treaty of Friendship as in so many Latin American countries, in which Grand Lodge controls the three basic degrees of Symbolic Masonry, and the Supreme Council the degrees from the 4th to the 33rd.

Peru

Jose Toribio Medina in his "History of the Inquisition" and Ricardo Palma in "Peruvian Traditions" provided some information in regards to the first steps in Peruvian Masonry during the Spanish domination.

When the liberation armies entered Peru in 1812, there was in Lima a Spanish Lodge named La Paz Americana del Sur, later renamed Paz y Perfecta Union, as was mentioned earlier.

In 1822 Lodge "Orden y Libertad" was founded followed by "Virtud y Union" in 1823, and two more lodges, "Constancia Peruana" and "Orden y Reforma" in 1824. With the arrival of General Valero in 1825 from Nueva Granada, all these lodges became dependent and under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of Colombia. From this date, many other lodges were formed in several areas of Peru.

On 2 November 1830, due to the initiative of Jose Maria Monzon, Chaplain of the Peruvian Navy, an autonomous masonic Body was constituted, with the election and installation of authorities taking place on 23 June 1831. This Body was called Grand Orient Peruano and its first Grand Master was Tomas Ripley Eldredge.

This happy situation did not last long, as shortly after a revolution took place in the country, with the winners declaring a bitter war against Freemasonry. The members of the Craft had to go underground during the next 12 years and continued to work clandestinely.

In 1845, the situation stabilised and Freemasonry went back to work in a normal manner. On 13 June 1852, the Grand Orient was reorganised under the leadership of Dr Matias Leon, but it suffered many vicissitudes and fluctuations. Only on 25 March, 1882, masonry became stable with the creation of the actual Grand Lodge of Peru, under the leadership of Dr Antonio Arenas, who was a lawyer, magistrate, professor, rector of the University of San Marcos, president of the Parliament Lower House, senator, and Minister for Foreign Affairs. As he was 73 years old when he took the Grand Mastership, he brought to the Masonic Order in Peru, his great experience and prestige, being a good stabilising factor in the chequered existence of Freemasonry in Peru.

Chile

Organised Freemasonry as we known today came to Chile in 1850. Lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique was founded in Valparaiso on 7 August 1850 by French masons, chartered by the Grand Orient of France after gaining the support of a lodge in Bordeaux, one of whose members had moved to Chile.

The formation of this lodge, the intense activity by intellectuals, the opposition to liberal ideas by the authorities, and the legacy of the revolutionary lodges, were the facts that constituted the solid foundation of masonry in Chile.

To be able to achieve this, it was necessary for a congregation of a nucleus of foreigners, completely divorced from the political and religious infighting so popular in this period, to be able to amalgamate in a common cause.

A French lawyer, Bro. Gent, arrived at Valparaiso and together with other resident French masons, decided to form lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique under the Obedience of the Grand Orient of France.

On 12 November 1851 Bro Lucien Charles Murat, Grand Master of French Masonry issued the authorisation for this lodge to install its first Wor.Master, Bro Gent, and commence work. Shortly after, a number of masons from the USA, residents of Valparaiso, wishing to form another lodge requested a Warrant from the Grand Lodge of California. As no reply was received during a reasonable period of time, another request was directed to the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, which agreed to the application and sent the appropriate Charter. This lodge, chartered from America held its first meeting of installation on 14 December 1854 under the name of Bethesda, at present still in operation under the same name.

At first, these two lodges did not have Chilean members, mainly because they worked with French and English rituals respectively, but about that period there arrived in Valparaiso Bro. Manuel de Lima, a mason from Curacao, who joined Lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique.

After a period, Bro. M. de Lima seeing the need to spread masonic light to fellow Chileans, took the initiative and in agreement with the Wor. Master, his Lodge proceeded to initiate Chileans. Soon after, the brethren,

with genuine fraternal concern, saw the possibilities of helping the Chilean Masons to form their own lodge and work in their own language.

So they set about the foundation of Lodge Union Fraternal in which the first Master elected was Bro. M.de Lima, who was installed in Valparaiso on 27 July, 1853 with a Charter from the Grand Orient of France. The lodge requested permission to work in Spanish, which was granted provided correspondence with the Grand Orient was maintained in French. Eight brethren joined this lodge as foundation members.

From Lodge Union Fraternal a Past Master, Bro. Enrique Pastor Lopez moved to Concepcion where he contributed to the foundation of a new Lodge "Estrella del Sur" (Southern Star) which allegedly due to problems of distance and communications, did not request a Charter from the Grand Orient of France but instead from the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Rite for Peru. Shortly after, the lodge surrendered its Charter with the sole purpose of changing its obedience to another jurisdiction, in this case to the Grand Orient of France under the name of Aurora de Chile on 12 September 1860.

In Copiapo on 11 January 1862 another Lodge, "Orden y Libertad" was formed under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient of France. At this particular time, perhaps a little earlier, there was in Copiapo a lodge named "Hiram", of obscure and unknown origin. The only certain fact today is that it was not chartered by the Grand Orient of France and both lodges had close fraternal association until it was completely absorbed by Lodge "Orden y Libertad". Paradoxically, Lodge "Orden y Libertad" never had the chance to obtain its charter from the Grand Orient of France under whose auspices it was formed because just about that particular time a severe crisis took effect in France that put an end to the jurisdictional rights of the Grand Orient over the Chilean lodges.

To summarise, at the beginning of 1862 there were three lodges exclusively with Chilean membership and functioning regularly;

a.Lodge Union Fraternal with Manuel de Lima as Wor.Master working in Valparaiso,

b.Lodge Aurora de Chile whose Master was Enrique Pastor Lopez working in Concepcion, and

c.Lodge Orden y Libertad in Copiapo with Guillermo Gotschal as Wor. Master.

Ten years earlier certain events occurred in France that were to have lasting and permanent effects in Chilean Masonry. It was a case of the direct influence of political upheaval and the power struggle within the Grand Orient of France.

In 1851 Napoleon the Third declared himself the dictator of France and apparently pretended to use Freemasonry as a tool for his own purposes. Using the pretext that the Grand Master's position was vacant, he exerted pressure to see that Prince Lucien Murat take charge of the Grand Orient.

As Grand Master, Murat was extremely partisan and biased in the conservation of the temporal power of the Pope. This was extremely disliked by the masonic membership of the Grand Orient who had proposed as the candidate for the Grandmastership Prince Jerome Napoleon when Murat's term expired in 1861.

The Grand Master Murat reacted angrily, calling the police to clear the Assembly Hall of the Grand Orient headquarters and named a commission to control the fraternity until the date of the next elections.

The members refused to obey such a resolution and in view of this disorder, the Emperor himself decided to intervene and designated Marshal Bernard Pierre Magnan as the new Grand Master on 8 February, 1862, a position he held until 29 May, 1865.

One of the things that incensed the brethren was the fact that Magnan, who was not even a Mason, received all 33 degrees in a single day. This very unconstitutional move and so blatant a breach of masonic tradition and protocol produced very strong reactions in Chile.

When the news of these events reached the country, Manuel de Lima, by then a great influential member in Chile's masonry consulted with all the lodges before taking the radical step of severing relations with the Grand Orient of France, and no longer recognising their authority.

The members of Manuel de Lima's Lodge, Union Fraternal, were the real motivators behind the move towards the formation of a new Grand Lodge. In their regular meeting of 9 April, 1862, all of the members were present and voted in favour, except four to approve the following resolution against the unconstitutional move by the Grand Orient of France;

“ Considering that the appointment of the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France by a power extraneous to Masonry, is an affront to the Constitution and Statutes that we have sworn to observe, this Lodge, Union Fraternal, withdraws its obedience to the Grand Orient of France, to whom until now we had sworn allegiance and now we will be constituted as an independent Lodge, until such time that a new masonic power regularises its works.”

The next logical step was to form an autonomous body and set up a new independent Grand Lodge. It is noticeable the strange coincidence of these facts in 1862 with those which occurred in Spain in 1808, when another Napoleon, Bonaparte, imposed a rule of his own choice causing the beginning of the Emancipation of the Spanish Colonies in South America.

There were two other lodges working in Valparaiso, Lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique, and Lodge Bethesda but they did not want to participate. There were not many lodges in Chile at the time and two other lodges, “Aurora de Chile”, working in Concepcion, and “Orden y Libertad” of Copiapo decided to go along with Bro M.de Lima but three lodges were not considered a sufficient number constitutionally to form a new Grand Lodge.

It was decided then that Lodge Union Fraternal be split in two, forming a lodge under the name of “Progreso”, and on 29 April, 1862 representatives of these four lodges met in Valparaiso to create the Grand Lodge of Chile. Thirty members being the total number of brethren involved in this event.

The first Grand Master, Juan de Dios Artegui was formally installed on 24 May 1862 and Manuel de Lima, the instigator of the movement, was elected Junior Grand Warden.

The newly formed Grand Lodge was first recognised by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, Orient of Boston on 30 December, 1862; by the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia, Orient of Washington on 12 December, 1863, and then by the Supreme Council of the 33[§], Orient of Paris, France.

The split with the Grand Orient of France was promptly healed and they recognised the new Grand Lodge as a Sovereign Masonic Power two years later in 1864.

The first Constitution was promulgated on 18 December 1862 and the general statutes on 30th December of the same year. Both codes, with small alterations are still in operation.

Shortly after, they commenced to collect funds to purchase the land and build a temple in Valparaiso, that being the "Home of Chilean Freemasonry" from the date of completion in 1872 until August, 1906 when this beautiful building was destroyed by an earthquake. The Order then moved its seat to Santiago in October 1906.

This, in brief is the origin of Freemasonry in Chile during its post-revolutionary days, which are properly recorded, that being what is called by Chilean historians as the "real or second beginning", or what one could call organised and properly documented masonry.

Regarding its pre-revolutionary times, it was briefly mentioned with the general description of the Revolutionary Lodges.

There is a third aspect of Chilean Masonry, and this is called, "the first beginning" or the "Apparent origin of Chilean Freemasonry", coined by Past Grand Master, the late Rene Garcia Valenzuela.

Contrary to the common belief, as described above, that put the date of the beginning at 1850 with the formation of Lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique, a document was found recently that threw new light on the history of Freemasonry in Chile. This document was found in the Severin Library of Valparaiso, donated to the library by a Mr Juan Enrique Tocornal, who found the document together with many other papers and old effects of his maternal grandfather Don Francisco Doursther, in the bottom of an old chest.

Doursther was one of the foundation members of the Lodge "Filantropia Chilena" constituted by Bro. Manuel Blanco Encalada, who was discussed earlier on in this paper, on 15th March, 1827 under the jurisdiction of the Grand Orient North Colombiano and commissioned by the Rose Croix Chapter (18§) "Regeneracion Peruana" from the Grand Orient of Lima, Peru. This document brought the foundation of the first lodge in Chile 23 years forward from 1850 to 1827.

The document, which is the Constitutive Charter (Original Warrant or Charter), consists of a thick linen paper measuring 35.5 x 48 cm. with a watermark in the top left hand corner "J. WHATMAN" and the date "1823"

also in watermark. The writing is in strong black ink but the signature of Blanco Encalada, however, was made with ink of inferior quality but perfectly legible. Roberto Orihuela (Revista Masonica de Chile, 1980 Vol. 17, page 58) deduced from this that the secretary or another person from either Colombia or Peru drafted and sent the Charter to Chile and Blanco Encalada appended his signature to it.

Some scholars are divided with respect to the value of determining if Lodge Filantropia Chilena was the “Real” of the “Apparent” origin of Freemasonry in Chile and there are some doubts, not as far as the legitimacy of the document found, but related to its intrinsic value.

Historians are asking if Filantropia Chilena was a regular Lodge, or if the document really proves the existence in Chile of a true, regular masonic organisation in that era. Questions are asked why, if it existed, was the life span of that lodge so short that it left no traces or any form of tradition, or its formation was so irregular and brief that it could not flourish after its formation. Historians concluded by saying that up to this day there is no proof that any masonic authority had the proper authorisation to form a regular lodge at that time.

There seems to be a reluctance to view the situation in its global aspect. Of course there were proper authorities to form lodges. The Grand Lodge of England had been operating in an organised form since 1717 and up to 1823 no less than 30 Grand Lodges and Grand Orients were regularly operating, including many Grand Lodges in the United States, Italy, France, and near to home, the Grand Orient of Brazil founded in 1822.

The fact that Simon Bolivar banned Freemasonry in 1828 was proof that Masonry was well entrenched and organised to warrant this attack, otherwise it would not have been necessary.

Another important consideration is the time in which this lodge came into operation, very rugged times indeed, as the revolution was in full swing, with many of the leaders displacing constantly, it may have been another revolutionary lodge, in a similar fashion as the Lautaro Lodges, but with another name. This lodge may have not been the beginning of regular Freemasonry in Chile as known today, but it was another of the seeds planted for Freemasonry to flourish in years to come.

Jamaica

In 1739, when war was declared between Spain and England, the Grand Lodge of England chartered a lodge in Jamaica. The name of Jamaica, being a corruption of the word "Xaymaca" in the native Arawak language. This lodge was numbered No 182 and was unnamed until 1776 when it became known as the Mother Lodge.

Facts regarding this lodge are unknown as the major part of masonic records were destroyed in a conflagration which also destroyed most of Kingston.

Only five lodges, four English and one Scottish were founded during the next 31 years from 1739 to 1770 showing the slow progress of Freemasonry on the Island. However, after this period Freemasonry started to flourish, specially English Freemasonry as from 1784 all lodges operating in Jamaica were under Warrants of the Grand Lodge of the Antients, constituted in London after a split with the original Grand Lodge founded in 1717 and known as the Moderns. This separation continued until 1813 when all come under the name of the United Grand Lodge of England.

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica extended its masonic influence abroad by chartering in 1774 Lodge L'Union (Provincial) no 12 in Curacao, Netherlands Antilles, with Bro. John Jones signing the petition in addition to several brethren with a mixture of English and French names. This Lodge remained under the jurisdiction of the Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica for less than a year before transferring its allegiance to the Grand East of the Netherlands. The reason for mentioning this lodge in particular is because it may have been the lodge from which Manuel de Lima originated before moving into Chile to become a member of Lodge L'Etoile du Pacifique and be a major influence in the formation of the Grand Lodge of Chile, as explained previously.

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Jamaica was also instrumental in the formation of Freemasonry in Colombia by founding the Lodge Las Tres Virtudes Teologales, as described previously, in about 1808 in Cartagena, Nueva Granada. The exact date for the issue of the warrant or the date of this lodge's foundation is not known for the causes mentioned previously destroying the majority of the records in Kingston, Jamaica.

However, what is known, are the names of some of the members as in 1811, names associated with revolutionary activities, including two members

of the clergy. This Lodge appears to have been a highly political lodge and the centre of revolutionary plotting which preceded the liberation of Cartagena from the Spanish in 1812.

Mexico

In Mexico the arrival of Freemasonry and its spread across the country have a different story from the other parts of Latin America, although it developed in a similar and chequered fashion.

The first lodges chartered in Mexico for which we have extant evidence were introduced from Spain, New York, and Pennsylvania early in the 19th century.

Early in 1825 many of the masonic lodges working the York Rite throughout the country were under the influence of liberals, republicans, and supporters of federalist policies, whilst the monarchists, conservatives, and adherents of a central system of government organised themselves into lodges working the Scottish Rite.

This was the period when the two main factions in politics, the “Yorkinos” and the “Escoceses”, or as they were called “The Masonic Parties” emerged to influence the politics of the country.

The term “York” serves to distinguish those rituals in which the type of ceremonial becomes identified with the Craft as practised in the United Kingdom and transmitted to regions with Anglo Saxon traditions, whilst the term “Scottish” is applied to those rituals originally developed in France, now widely used in Continental Europe and Latin America.

There are considerable differences between “York” and “Scottish” degrees, not only in ceremonial and in the administration of its lodges, but also in small doctrinal points. The “York” practice keeps a considerable distance from politics and sectarian religion, with the exception of some masonic orders that demands of its members to profess the Christian Faith. On the other hand, the “Scottish” system is more inclined to lean towards politics and the absolute freedom of the individual. This is clearly defined in its motto, “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity”.

In 1826, when the Congressional Elections were held and the Yorkinos won the majority of the seats, the Escoceses revolted, calling for the suppression

of all secret societies, the overthrow of the government, and the dismissal of the United States Ambassador to Mexico, Joel Roberts Poinsett, who supported the Yorkinos and aroused the antagonism of the Escoceses because of his interference in local political activities.

In the General Elections of 1828, the Escoceses won the leadership and the right to the Presidency, but the Yorkinos at once rebelled under the leadership of General Santa Anna and the President-Elect Pedraza was forced to leave the country. The Congress then declared the election null and void and elected General Vicente Guerrero as President.

This, in my opinion, set the conditions for the events which were to occur in 1910 and which was to cause once again of a division in organised Freemasonry leading to the schism of the York Grand Lodge and the Grand Lodge Valle de Mexico.

All Grand Lodges in existence today are mostly related to the geographical boundaries of the States but not necessarily by their name, making its identification somewhat confusing to Australian Freemasons, for example, Grand Lodge Benito Juarez in the State of Coahuila, Cosmos of Chihuahua, Del Pacifico in Sonora, Occidental Mexicana of Jalisco, Unida Mexicana of Veracruz, Oriental Peninsular in Yucatan, etc.

The two Mexican Grand Lodges best known in the masonic world are the York Grand Lodge of Mexico, a widely recognised small Grand Lodge of 13 lodges and just over 300 members, and the largest, the Grand Lodge Valle de Mexico with 228 private lodges and over 10,000 members spread over 9 States of the Republic, namely Aguascalientes, State of Mexico, Guanajato, Guerrero, Morelos, Puebla, Tlaxcala, Zacatecas, and the Federal District.

The history of the Valle de Mexico is very complicated, but it may be simplified by saying that at one stage this was the Grand Lodge most widely recognised, with a strong influence from the United States of America Grand Lodges, having acquired a strong English-speaking membership. In 1910, however, as it was partly explained above, there were many members opposed to the "Foreigners" and the foreign language used in their lodges, who withdrew and continued as a separate Grand Lodge using the same name. Those remaining changed the name of the Grand Lodge to "York Grand Lodge". To this day the York Grand Lodge still operates in the English Language although they are in the process of translating its rituals into Spanish.

This particular incident occurred during the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, when the country was in complete turmoil and because of Diaz's policies of granting generous concessions to foreign capitalists. They were seen as the real masters of Mexico and were severely disliked by the Escoceses.

These two Grand Lodges do not recognise each other, but in the last few years they have agreed to enter into Intervisitation Treaties, allowing members from either allegiance to visit lodges under the other's Constitution.

Grand Lodge proceedings

Grand Lodge proceedings in South America vary from country to country, but in general there are some small variations and the description that follows is of a general nature.

Grand Lodges in Latin America normally recognise officially the Supreme Council of the 33[§] of the Ancient and Accepted Rite to work the degrees from the 4th to the 33rd. It somewhat resembles the recognition of our Grand Lodge to the Royal Arch.

The majority of Grand Lodges have a treaty of Friendship and Non-interference with the Supreme Councils operating in their territory.

Grand Lodge Communications are held in the 3rd degree, and the quorum required for business transactions is 10% of its members. If no quorum is reached at the time of the meeting, another date will be fixed to within 60 days, and then no quorum is required for that particular meeting.

Grand Lodge members are classified as permanent members and temporary members. Permanent members are all Past Masters who have completed a full term as Wor. Master of a private lodge.

Temporary members are the Wor. Masters of lodges while they are occupying the Chair. Members are entitled to vote in Grand Lodge proceedings, but their right to do so could be cancelled if they fail to attend without a valid reason two successive Grand Lodge Communications, or if their attendance at their own lodge is less than 50%. Lodge meetings are normally held weekly.

Elections are held every three or four years for the position of Grand Master and Officers. The votes are by secret ballot or by mail.

If it is not feasible to vote by mail, the members attending the election meeting will cast their vote by filling in the appropriate form before entering Grand Lodge and handing it to the scrutineers.

Private Lodges

In private lodges the election of officers may take place every two years, and in some cases its officers could be re-elected indefinitely. The Middle Chamber of the lodge, viz Master Masons' Lodge, will select from its members, all officers of the lodge in addition to three members to form the Lodge Tribunal; a position in the Tribunal is incompatible with any other office of the lodge and their duty is to control any conduct against or contrary to masonic teachings, morals, or principles.

The election is conducted by secret ballot and separately for each position, never in block. In the case of equal votes for any office, the member with more uninterrupted years after his raising to the Third Degree, will take the position for which he was proposed.

To be eligible for any office, it is an essential requisite that the member must have attended a minimum of 60% of the weekly meetings of his lodge in the past two years.

To be eligible for nomination as Worshipful Master, the Master Elect requires a minimum of 5 years as a Master Mason in addition to the minimum attendance requirements as already mentioned.

The meeting of the officers of the lodge is called Lodge Council, should meet once a month, and their first meeting should take place within eight days after the Investiture of Officers, after which, they will propose a Program of Work for the ensuing year or the next two years, to be submitted to the Middle Chamber for consideration and approval. Once approved, it is presented at the first available meeting to be conducted in the first degree.

Private Lodges normally held regular meetings once a week in addition to any emergency meeting called by the Wor. Master or by written petition by a minimum of seven Master Masons.

The program of meetings for each lodge should consist of two meetings in the First Degree, one in the Second Degree, and one in the Third, to be repeated every month.

Each lodge will determine each year, two days of compulsory attendance to be held on a date nearest to the Solstice of Winter and Solstice of Summer, each lodge to determine the theme for each meeting.

Each lodge must also celebrate a Funeral Meeting, or hold a Lodge of Sorrow or Mourning once a year for members that have reached the "Eternal Orient" during the year. Several Lodges can arrange this meeting conjointly.

In deference to the Grand Master, the brethren will stand to order whenever a communication or letter signed by the Grand Master is read in the lodge. In the case of the Grand Master's visitation to a Private Lodge, he will be received in the Porch by a special reception committee and introduced to the Lodge Room under an arch of steel.

The history of many Latin American Grand Lodges since their foundation is an almost continuous succession of internal conflicts, however, one must look into this perpetual turmoil with a clear understanding that it may reveal the magnitude of the obstacles to be overcome in a region of so much adversity. It must be remembered that whatever progress people have made, it must be gauged not by the criteria used to judge the advancement of the more fortunate, but by the significance and enormity of the hurdles that must be conquered.

It must also be remembered that the Craft origins in South America were decidedly different from those in other parts of the world, and it is hoped this paper has shown that it certainly did play a large and important part in the continent's history and revealed the struggle during colonial times to overcome the handicaps of adverse environmental and racial diversity, as well as the inheritance of an autocratic concept of government.

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