

FREEMASONRY IN GERMANY

Introduction

When you start to research a topic such as this, you never quite know what you will find next. This time I found a fairly credible article on the web that challenges all the traditional views about the British origins of Freemasonry. The author describes a Masonic Congress in Strasburg as early as 1275, Masonic Statutes written in 1459 and Ordinances written in 1563.

The reviewer of this article¹ states that it “*supports the theory that the seed of modern Freemasonry was not linked to Knights Templar or English Freemasonry, but originated with the Masonic Institutions of Germany, who in turn, had received their Masonic knowledge from earlier Masonic organizations. This claim is supported by 7 main points of evidence.*

- *That the Regius Manuscript, the Oldest (reputable) surviving Masonic text in Britain, makes reference to the four crowned martyrs, which are unequivocally linked to the legend of Masons under the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, a Masonic tradition originating in Germany not Britain.* . . (and the patron saints of German Stonemasons Author)
- *The existence and earliest recorded use of the square and compasses (the fraternal sign of Freemasonry) on the arms of German Masonic Bodies.*
- *The existence of highly organized Masonic institutions in Germany in the 13th century, such as the Grand Lodge of Strasbourg and Cologne, and several subordinate Masonic lodges, which not only worked in stone but also included allegorical Masonic teachings within their guilds.*
- *The election of a Grand Master of Masons in the 13th century and the establishment of grades of apprentices, fellows and master masons In Germany in the 12th century and earlier,*
- *The establishment of printed Statutes and Rules of the Masonic Order in Germany before the establishment of written Masonic statutes In Britain, .*
- *The inclusion of non-operative (or speculative) members, such as King Rudolf 1 into Masonic Lodges in Germany in the 13th century.*
- *The first large-scale recorded requirement for Masonic lodges to utilize a secret method of greeting and a grip.*

The article also analyses the use of the square and compasses, as allegorical moral symbols of masonry, in works of art within German culture of this period, further evidence of Masonic philosophy within German culture and continental Europe in this period.”

There was no mention of non-operative membership and I cannot pursue this topic further in this paper but leave it to the reader to ponder what can be defined as the beginning of Freemasonry. However the early Masonic ties between Germany and Britain were strong and it is worth recalling that **Frederick Lewis**, Prince of Wales (1707-1751), a grandson of George I, a Hanoverian, became the first British Royal Freemason. He died before his father, thrusting George III onto the thrones of England and Hanover in 1760 at the age of just 20. Three of George's brothers followed **Frederick Lewis** into Freemasonry, including **Henry, Duke of Cumberland** (1745-1790) who, in 1782, became Grand Master of the Premier Grand Lodge of England. George III never became a Freemason himself. However, he did father seven sons, six of whom became Freemasons, with strong Masonic histories.

Due to the Nazi persecution of Freemasonry and the subsequent wartime destruction many records are lost although some are now available in Russia where they were taken after the War.

¹ Bro Henning A. Klovekorn “The Formation of the first Grand Lodge of Freemasons, Germany 1250”

German History

I was in Germany at the time that Bonn celebrated its 2000th year and when I ask what event created Bonn I was told at length that in AD 9, three Roman legions led by Varus were defeated by the Cheruscan leader Arminius with the capture of several Eagles. Yet it was many years before the multiple German States warred against anyone but themselves.

After the invasion of the Huns in 375, and with the decline of Rome from 395, several large tribes formed in what is now Germany but it was not until after 920 AD that the Holy Roman Empire was formed, whose territory stretched from the Eider River in the north to the Mediterranean coast in the south. By 1100 AD the Holy Roman Empire absorbed northern Italy and Burgundy. In 1517 Martin Luther challenged the Roman Catholic Church and a separate Lutheran church became the official religion in many German states after 1530. Religious conflict led to the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which divided the empire into numerous independent principalities.

Following the fall of Napoleon I of France the German Confederation, a loose league of 39 sovereign states, was formed. The rise of Germany into a World power really began with the unification of the Prussian States under **Frederick the Great**, a time which coincided with rapid growth in German philosophical thought and in music and the arts in which German people and German Freemasons contributed a great deal to world progress. When King William I of Prussia appointed **Otto von Bismarck** the new Prime Minister of Prussia, a Prussian victory in the Austro-Prussian War of 1866 enabled him to create the North German Federation and to exclude Austria, formerly the leading German state, from the federation's affairs. After the French defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the German Empire was proclaimed 1871 in Versailles, uniting all scattered parts of Germany except Austria. Prussia was the dominating constituent of the new state and Berlin became the capital.

The assassination of Austria's crown prince on 28 June 1914 triggered World War I. Germany, as part of the Central Powers, suffered defeat against the Allies in one of the bloodiest conflicts of all time. An estimated two million German soldiers died in World War I. An armistice ended the war on 11 November 1918, and Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

The continued rise of Prussia and the unification of the German States into one Nation gave rise to great national progress and pride, which was shattered by Germany's defeat in World War I and the devastating reparation payment entailed in the Treaty of Versailles. The indignant resentment caused by this Treaty among German nationals of the day cannot be understated and led directly to the rise of National Socialism. The National Socialists kindled German pride and economic effort to restore prosperity and loyal Germans flocked to their banner to help in the restoration of their country.

Some Famous German Freemasons



Justus Möser (1720–1794) was a German jurist and social theorist. From 1762 to 1768 he was chief justice of the criminal court in Osnabrück, and in 1768 was made privy councilor of justice. For 20 years, he was the legal adviser of Bishops and Princes including **Prince Frederick, Duke of York and Albany**. In addition to being a statesman and administrator, **Möser** was also a publicist, historian, and social analyst. **Möser's** “*Vermischte Schriften*” balances its insights into human nature with humor and witty sallies. He was also a poet of some repute, and in 1749 published a tragedy, “*Arminius*”. His Masonic acquaintances included **Goethe, Herder, Lodtmann and Gruner**. **Justus Friedrich Lodtmann** (1743-1808) succeeded **Möser** in 1794 in the Government.

He was a lawyer and author and the oldest founder of the later lodge “Zum Goldnen Rade” He did all three degrees from 8th to 11th August 1770 in Brunswick during his honeymoon.

Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, (1742–1819) is best remembered for his role as a Prussian General in the Battle of Waterloo and as a fearless and aggressive military leader. It is told that, after his defeat at Ligny (1816), he lay trapped under his dead horse and was unable to resume command for some hours until, after bathing his wounds in brandy, and fortified by liberal internal application of the same, he was able to rejoin his army. He was cheered when he appeared at Ascot Races. In 1801 an attempt was made by Prussian officers to form a lodge with **Blücher** as WM. He later became WM of a Lodge in Münster.



Karl Justus Gruner (1777-1820) was the Royal Prussian Privy State Councillor , senior statesman and first Chief of Police of Berlin. As Governor-General of the Middle Rhine he was involved in the restoration of German rights after the Napoleonic wars and in moderating the reprisals against those who had collaborated with the French. **Gruner** also established the Berlin city council and the Berlin magistrate. During the Napoleonic wars he opposed the reluctant Prussian King to oppose France. He is said to be one of the most important Masons in German history.

The first British Lodge in Germany was founded in 1737 in Hamburg and is now named "Absalom zu den drei Nesseln" and will soon celebrate its 275th anniversary.

The Catholic Archbishop of Osnabrück, **Clemens August** (1700-1761) became a Freemason in 1730 but resigned following the papal bull of 1738.

Johann Wilhelm Kellner Zinnendorf (1731-1782) was a Military Doctor in the Seven Years' War who rose to General's rank in the Bavarian Succession War of 1778/79. He founded the Great Landesloge the Freemasons of Germany in 1770 and built the Berlin War invalids home.



Zinnendorf was said to have a impatient nature and pugnacious personality. He took a more significant role in the Masonic system fight of his time.



Frederick the Great was one of the most colourful personalities in Germany but somewhat of an enigma. He was a gifted musician, played the flute and challenged J S Bach to compose a hitherto impossible fugue for six instruments. He was a generous patron of the arts and a military genius who expanded Prussia to become a significant power in Europe. This picture shows **Frederick** as a not unhandsome man but a bronze bust in Berlin, said to have been cast from his death mask, tells a very different story. **Frederick the Great** joined “Absalom zu den drei Nesseln” Lodge in 1738 two years before he became King in Prussia. He was titled “*King in Prussia*” because this was only part of historic Prussia. He was to declare himself “*King of Prussia*” in 1772 after acquiring most of the Prussian scattered territories, including Cleves, Mark, and

Ravensberg in the west of the Holy Roman Empire; Brandenburg, Hither Pomerania, and Farther Pomerania in the east of the Empire; and the former Duchy of Prussia, outside of the Empire bordering the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Frederick espoused religious tolerance but was pragmatic about the role of Jewish traders. He corresponded with **Voltaire** and invited mathematician-philosopher Joseph-Louis Lagrange to succeed Leonhard Euler at the Berlin Academy. Immanuel Kant published religious writings in Berlin which would have been censored elsewhere in Europe.



Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) was a German writer, pictorial artist, biologist, theoretical physicist, and polymath. He is considered the supreme genius of modern German literature. His works span the fields of poetry, drama, prose, philosophy, and science. His “*Faust*” has been called the greatest long poem of modern European literature. He visited **Frederick the Great**.

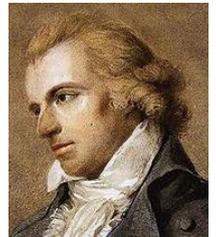
Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) was a German writer, philosopher, dramatist, publicist, and art critic, and one of the most outstanding representatives of the Enlightenment era. His plays and theoretical writings substantially influenced the development of German literature. He spoke up for tolerance of the other world religions.



Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) was a German philosopher, theologian, poet, and literary critic. He is associated with the periods of Enlightenment, Sturm und Drang, and Weimar Classicism.

He met with and inspired **Goethe** and worked with **Justus Moser**. **Herder** gave Germans new pride in their origins by emphasizing the value of the German language at a time when French was the Court language.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) was a German poet, philosopher, historian, and playwright. He struck up a productive friendship with **Goethe**. They frequently discussed issues concerning aesthetics, and **Schiller** encouraged **Goethe** to finish works he left as sketches. This relationship and these discussions led to a period called the Weimar Classicism. They also worked together on “*Xenien*”, a collection of short satirical poems in which both **Schiller** and **Goethe** challenge opponents to their philosophical vision



Karl Gotthelf, Reichsfreiherr von Hund und Altengrotkau (1722-1776) was an important German freemason. He was admitted into Masonry in 1741 on the occasion of the coronation of Charles VII in Frankfurt and, in France, it is alleged, that he was presented to Prince Charles as the Grand Master of Knights Templars. In 1751, he founded the Rite of Strict Observance. He always promoted the idea of a line of development of the Templars to the Freemasons and in 1755 he created an operational plan for the expansion of the community of the Knights Templar.

Franz Anton von Sporck, Count (1662-1738) was a German-speaking patron of the arts who lived in the province of Bohemia in what is now the Czech Republic. He was one of the most notable cultural and intellectual figures in central Europe in the early 18th century. **Count Sporck** founded a branch of Freemasonry in Bohemia, but this aroused suspicion with the Habsburg ecclesiastical authorities. In 1729, his entire collection of books was carted away for investigation on the orders of the emperor Charles VI and he himself was temporarily arrested but cleared of all wrongdoing in 1734 after a great deal of political maneuvering.



Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814) was a philosopher and one of the founding figures of the philosophical movement known as German idealism. **Fichte** is often perceived as a figure whose philosophy forms a bridge between the ideas of Kant and Hegel, who were both accused of being Freemasons. **Fichte** is known due to his original insights into the nature of self-consciousness or self-awareness. Like Descartes and Kant before him, he was motivated by the problem of subjectivity and consciousness. **Fichte** also wrote political philosophy and is considered one of the fathers of German nationalism. He was a member of Lodge Pythagoras of the Blazing Star.

A Prussian defeat against Napoleon results in his Freemason brother **Jerome** (1787-1860) becoming the King of Westphalia. 1807 sees the founding of "Zum Goldenen Rade", including some members from the previous French Lodges, as a Prussian Three World Globes Lodge. The Grand Lodge of Hanover was proclaimed in 1828.

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was a German composer and pianist. A crucial figure in the transition between the Classical and Romantic eras in Western art music, he is one of the most famous composers of all time. He is believed to have been a Freemason. Born in Bonn, then the capital of the Electorate of Cologne and part of the Holy Roman Empire, Beethoven moved to Vienna in his early 20s, studying with **Joseph Haydn** and quickly gaining a reputation as a virtuoso pianist. His hearing began to deteriorate in the late 1790s, yet he continued to compose, conduct, and perform, even after becoming completely deaf.



Giacomo Meyerbeer (1791–1864) was a noted German opera composer, and the first great exponent of "grand opera." At his peak in the 1830s and 1840s, he was the most famous and successful composer of opera in Europe, yet he is rarely performed today



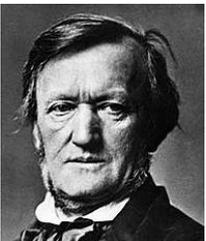
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791) was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical era. He composed over 600 works and is among the most enduringly popular of classical composers. He composed from the age of five and performed before European royalty. He went to Vienna in 1781, where he achieved fame but little financial security but composed many of his best-known symphonies, concertos, and operas, and portions of the *Requiem*, which was largely unfinished at the time of Mozart's death. The circumstances of his early death have been much mythologized. **Beethoven** wrote his own early compositions in the shadow of **Mozart**, and **Joseph Haydn** wrote that "posterity will not see such a talent again in 100 years."



Johann Christian Bach (1735–1782) was a composer, the eleventh and youngest son of Johann Sebastian Bach. He is sometimes referred to as 'the London Bach' or 'the English Bach', due to his time spent living in the British capital. He is noted for influencing the concerto style of **Mozart**.

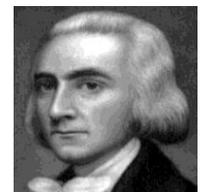


Given his popularity with the National Socialists, it is interesting to note that Richard Wagner applied to join Freemasonry but his application essay was not considered sufficient and he was refused entry. His son-in-law **Franz Litz** was a member of the Craft.



Despite his musical genius his life was one of political exile, turbulent love affairs, poverty and repeated flight from his creditors. His pugnacious personality and often outspoken views on music, politics and society made him a controversial figure.

John Jacob Astor (1763-1848) was a famed German-American industrialist. When **Astor** left Germany in his late teen years, he worked his way to London and eventually to America. During his voyage across the Atlantic, he met a man who was a fur trader. That acquaintance convinced him to explore the fur trade, and with determination he amassed a fortune from his fur empire. At one time, he was considered the wealthiest man in America.



Astor was Master of Holland Lodge #8, New York City in 1788 and later served as Grand Treasurer for the Grand Lodge of New York.



Gustav Albert Lortzing (1801–1851) was a German composer, actor and singer. **Lortzing** composed the music for Christian Dietrich Grabbe's "*Don Juan und Faust*", playing the role of Don Juan himself, with his wife as Donna Anna. **Lortzing** was a regular visitor from 1827 to 1833 to the Lodge Zum Goldenen Rade and writes especially composed songs. These were rediscovered in 1907.

Prussia, with its capital Berlin, grew in power and under Prussian leadership unification of Germany was achieved with the formation of the German Empire in 1871 under Prussian Chancellor **Otto von Bismarck**. The Reichstag, an elected parliament, had only a limited role in the imperial government. German universities became world-class centers for science and the humanities, while music and the arts flourished.

Otto von Bismarck is reputed to be a Freemason by many. He was a Prussian-German statesman who unified Germany, made it a major player in world affairs, and created a balance of power that kept Europe at peace after 1871. As President of Prussia from 1862–1890, he oversaw the unification of Germany. In 1867 he became Chancellor of the North German Confederation. Bismarck designed the German Empire in 1871, becoming its first Chancellor and dominating its affairs until he was removed by Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1890. His diplomacy and powerful rule gained him the nickname the "Iron Chancellor".



Alfred von Tirpitz (1849–1930) was a German Admiral and Secretary of State of the German Imperial Naval Office, the powerful administrative branch of the German Imperial Navy. **Tirpitz** took the modest imperial navy and starting in the 1890s turned it into a world-class force that could threaten the British Royal Navy.

His navy however was not strong enough to confront the British successfully in World War I; the one great naval Battle of Jutland was a draw. **Tirpitz** turned to submarine warfare, which antagonized the United States.



Theodor Reuss (1855–1923) was an Anglo-German anarchist, police spy, journalist, singer, and promoter of Women's Liberation. **Reuss** travelled frequently to England, where he became a Mason in 1876. He also spent some time there as a journalist and as a music-hall singer under the stage name "Charles Theodore."

His marriage to Delphina Garbois from Dublin was annulled, due to bigamy. In England, **Reuss** joined the anarchists but was eventually expelled as a police spy in the pay of the Prussian Secret Police.

It is reported that **Westcott** provided **Reuss** with a charter dated July 26, 1901 for the Swedish Rite of Masonry and he was active with Illuminati, the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia and other quasi-Masonic orders. He was friendly with Engels. **Westcott** assisted **Reuss** in contacting the English Masonic scholar, **John Yarker**. **Reuss** activated the Masonic Rites of Memphis and Mizraim and a branch of the Scottish Rite in Germany with charters from **Yarker**.

John Yarker (1833-1913) was an English author, and occultist, who was made a freemason at the age of 21 in the Lodge of Integrity, No. 189, in 1854.



In 1872 **Yarker** established the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Masonry for England and Ireland under the authority of a Patent issued by the American Grand Master of that organization, **Harry Seymour**. **Yarker** also got involved with the Ordo Templi Orientis and is attributed as the link between this organization and regular Freemasonry and had the authority to confer degrees of the Scottish Rite.



Carl von Ossietzky (1889–1938) was a German pacifist and the recipient of the 1935 Nobel Peace Prize. He was convicted of high treason and espionage in 1931 after publishing details of Germany's alleged violation of the Treaty of Versailles by rebuilding an air force, the predecessor of the Luftwaffe, and training pilots in the Soviet Union. In 1933 when Hitler came to power, **Ossietzky** was one of a very small group of public figures who continued to speak out against the Nazi Party. On 28 February 1933, after the Reichstag fire, he was arrested and held in so-called protective custody in Spandau prison. The Nazi authorities were unable to prevent him being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize but would not release him from prison to travel to Oslo to receive it. He was a member of the “irregular” Rising Sun Grand Lodge.

Gerhard Fritz Kurt Schröder (1944-) is a German politician, and was Chancellor of Germany from 1998 to 2005. A member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), he led a coalition government of the SPD and the Greens. Before becoming a full-time politician, he was a lawyer, and before becoming Chancellor he served as Premier of Lower Saxony (1990–1998). Following the 2005 federal election, which his party lost, he stood down as Chancellor in favor of Angela Merkel.



Freemasonry in Germany

Most German Masonic lodges and their members affiliated with three Grand Lodges located in Prussia and known collectively as the “Old Prussian Grand Lodges.” These Grand Lodges and their subordinate lodges deliberately excluded non-Christians from membership. By 1922, they accounted for 70 percent of all Masons in Germany and numbered about 47,000 men. The Grand Landlodge did not require a member to be Christian, however the “*Rules of the Order*” demand that every member “recognize the teachings of Jesus Christ”.

Six other Grand Lodges in Germany were known as “Humanitarian” Lodges, because they accepted Jewish and Muslim males as well as Christians. Thus, a German Jew had to join a Humanitarian Lodge. In 1928, the Humanitarian Lodges had 24,000 members, and less than 3,000 of these were Jews. Two other Grand Lodges existed in Germany by 1930 but these were “irregular”. By 1930 the number of Lodges and members were as shown in the following table.

Group	Name of Grand Lodge	Ritual	Year	Lodges	Members	Non-Christians
Old Prussian	Three Globes	Strict Obs	1744	177	21,300	Not possible
	Grand Land Lodge	Swedish	1770	179	20,400	
	Royal York of Friendship	Strict Obs	1798	108	11,400	
Humanitarian	Hamburg		1811	54	5,000	Since 1841
	Bayreuth		1811	45	4,000	Since 1847
	Dresden		1811	45	7,300	Before 1845
	Frankfurt		1823	26	3,200	Since 1844
	Darmstadt		1846	10	900	Since 1873
	Leipzig		1924	10	1,900	
Others	Rising Sun		1907	62	2,000	
	Symbolic Grand Lodge	Scot Rite	1930	8	800	
Total				724	78,200	

Nazi Germany

The increasing spread of Freemasonry was interrupted through the ban of its organization by the National Socialists. Hitler's hatred of Freemasonry is clearly documented. Hitler is reported to have said:-

*"All the supposed abominations, the skeletons and death's heads, the coffins and the mysteries, are mere bogeys for children. But there is one dangerous element and that is the element I have copied from them. They form a sort of priestly nobility. They have developed an esoteric doctrine not merely formulated, but imparted through the symbols and mysteries in degrees of initiation. The hierarchical organization and the initiation through symbolic rites, that is to say, without bothering the brain but by working on the imagination through magic and the symbols of a cult, all this has a dangerous element, and the element I have taken over. Don't you see that our party must be of this character...? An Order, that is what it has to be — an Order, the hierarchial Order of a secular priesthood... Ourselves or the Freemasons or the Church — there is room for one of the three and no more... We are the strongest of the three and shall get rid of the other two."*²

In 1931 Nazi party officials were given a "Guide and Instructional Letter" that stated, "The natural hostility of the peasant against the Jews, and his hostility against the Freemason as a servant of the Jew, must be worked up to a frenzy." On April 7, 1933, Hermann Goering, who once considered becoming a Freemason, held an interview with Grand Master **von Heeringen** of the "Landlodge", telling him there was no place for Freemasonry in Nazi Germany.



This propaganda slide reads "Jewry, Freemasonry, Bolshevism" and featured a poisonous snake with bared fangs.

"The Nazi Primer, the Official Handbook for the Schooling of Hitler Youth", attacked Freemasons, Marxists, and the Christian churches for their "mistaken teaching of the equality of all men" by which they were said to be seeking power over the whole world.

The threat of persecution from the National Socialists at least had the effect of stopping the rivalries and squabbling over ritual that had marked the relationship between the old Prussian Lodges.

The three Grand Masters of the Old Prussian Lodges, **Dr Karl Habicht** (Three Globes), who was a Protestant clergyman; **Lieut.-Col. Kurt von Heeringen** (Landesloge) and **Oskar Feistkorn** (Friendship) together with many of their members all tried to assert themselves against the Nazi Party's generally hostile attitude towards Freemasonry and immediately tried to appease the Nazis so that they could express their ideologically motivated belief that the Freemasons had a right to play an adequate role in the "Third Reich."

When, in April 1933, Herman Göring, then Nazi Minister of the Interior and the Commander of the Gestapo, met with the **von Heeringen**, they passed a law regarding that Grand Lodge's reorganization which read as follows:-

1. "The order will return to its original shape. From today on, the term "Grand National Lodge of Freemasons of Germany", which was taken on in the 18th century will no longer be valid. The order will henceforth have the name that corresponds with its nature: "German Christian Order of the Grail of the Knights Templar".
2. With this decision, the order has ceased to be a Masonic corporation."

When the Grand National Mother Lodge was informed three days later, it immediately made a decision and called itself the National Christian Order of Frederick the Great.

² "Hitler Speaks", Hermann Rauschning. Andover: Chapel River Press, 1939; *Gespräche mit Hitler*, Paris, 1939

The Grand Lodge of Friendship also acted accordingly, and began to call itself the German Christian Order of Friendship. Their efforts were in vain and it took a long time for them to realize that this attempt at appeasement had failed and their fate lay in a different direction. In the spring of 1935, the Grand Lodge of Prussia, called "Zur Freundschaft", tried to find a solution for the situation. Their most prominent member, the Reich Minister **Hjalmar Schacht** was sent to talk to Hitler and found out that dissolution of German Freemasonry was inevitable.

The final blow was at last delivered in May 1935 when the Reich and Prussian Ministry of the Interior ordered the immediate dissolution of the three Orders. The fact that they did not admit Jews as members did not save them from being branded "*as a servant of the Jew*". There was to be no question of delay or negotiation. Each of the Grand Lodges was ordered to hold a general meeting at which the Grand Master would simply announce the Ministry's decision. There was to be no subsequent discussion.

Gestapo officials were present at the meetings held on 16th June and 7th and 14th July 1935 when the Mother Lodge, "Friendship" and the "Landesloge" were formally dissolved. The last vestiges of the Masonic Order in Germany now disappeared. German Freemasons, however, were not to be allowed to forget the "Masonic peril". Almost immediately there was a new and virulent wave of anti-Masonic literature in which all the old accusations and fabrications were repeated.

Not all German Freemasons submitted to the wiles of Adolf Hitler and his regime. Some of the more dedicated Master Masons went underground. The Humanitarian Grand Lodges immediately realized that Freemasonry had neither a place nor a future in the Third Reich and during the next two or three weeks voluntarily signed their own death sentences. Each of them, in its own fashion, went into liquidation. For identification they wore a little flower called a blue forget-me-not. This later became a national Masonic symbol in Germany.

The Holocaust

In the year 2000 the British Government set aside a special day to commemorate those who suffered and died during the Holocaust of World War Two. Freemasons also came into that category and were forced to wear an inverted red triangle. Freemasonry became a particular obsession of the chief of Security Police and SD, Reinhard Heydrich, who evolved the term "Final Solution" and who counted the Masons, along with the Jews and the political clergy, as the "*most implacable enemies of the German race.*" In 1935 Heydrich argued for the need to eliminate not only the visible manifestations of these "enemies," but to root out from every German the "*indirect influence of the Jewish spirit*" -- "*a Jewish, liberal, and Masonic infectious residue that remains in the unconscious of many, above all in the academic and intellectual world.*" Heydrich created a special section of the SS Security Service to deal specifically with Freemasonry. The SD was particularly interested, as its personnel believed that Freemasonry exercised actual political power, shaped public opinion through control of the press, and was thus in a position to provoke war, subversion, and revolution.

As Nazi Germany prepared for war in 1937-1938, the regime relaxed pressure on the rank and file of the dissolved lodges. Hitler amnestied members of the rank and file who renounced their former loyalties in April 1938 and efforts were made in the public sector to decide on continued employment of former lodge members on a case to case basis. Many civil servants who had been forced to retire due to their Masonic connections were recalled into service after the war began and the ban on former Masons serving in the German armed forces was relaxed. The Nazi party continued to ban former Masons from membership, though exceptions were made after 1938 in both the Nazi party and even the SS.

As they conquered Europe, the Germans forcibly dissolved Masonic organizations and confiscated their assets and documents wherever they established an occupation regime.

After a lodge was closed, it was ransacked for membership lists, important library and archival items, furnishings, and other cultural artifacts. Items seized would be sent on to the SD. The Vichy France regime issued a decree declaring Masons to be enemies of the state and authorizing police surveillance of them. The French wartime authorities even created a card file that identified all members of the Grand Orient of France, a leading French Masonic organization. Because many of the Freemasons who were arrested were also Jews and/or members of the political opposition, it is not known how many individuals were placed in Nazi concentration camps and/or were targeted only because they were Freemasons. Some former lodge members, as individuals, participated in or were associated with German resistance circles and some were arrested and murdered during World War II.

It is not accurately known how many died but a conservative estimate is that 80,000 Freemasons died in concentration camps. The records of the concentration camps will show the actual numbers of German National Freemasons who maintained their Membership and were interred as political prisoners in concentration camps but numbers had dropped substantially through understandable resignation before the axe fell.

A Lodge in a Prison Camp

On the 15 November 1943 seven Belgian Freemasons and resistance fighters founded the Masonic Lodge "Beloved Liberty Lodge" inside Hut 6 of the prison camp "Emslandlager VII". The name of the lodge was derived from *La Marseillaise*. They initiated, passed and raised one other member – a Belgian in a simplified ceremony. The Brethren met for Lodge Work in Hut 6 around a table, which was otherwise used for cartridge sorting. A Catholic Priest stood watch, so that the Brethren could hold their meetings; and protected their secrecy. After the first ritual meeting, with admission of the new brother, further meetings were thematically prepared. One was dedicated to the symbol of the Great Architect of the Universe, another "The future of Belgium", and a further, "The position of women in Freemasonry". The Lodge stopped working at the beginning of 1944.

Post-war Reconstruction

Immediately following the end of World War II preparations were made for the reestablishment of the Grand Landlodge. **Dr. Hans Oehmen** was elected the first Master in the Order of the post-war period. **Paul Rosenthal** became the Landlodge's first Grand Master. Then at Hamburg on 26th May 1945, hardly three weeks after Germany's unconditional surrender, nine members of the "Absalom zu den drei Nesseln" Lodge (Three Globes), which was the oldest in Germany, met for a preliminary discussion and a week later assembled again to reconstitute the Lodge.

Soon after World War II ended, Square and Compass clubs sprang up in almost every major area of military concentration of occupation forces in Germany. One such club, located in Frankfurt, soon petitioned the Grand Lodge of Oregon for permission to establish a Lodge. The petition was granted and on 11 July 1946 the Oregon Military Lodge U.D. was consecrated in the presence of some sixty-six Brethren.

During the next nine years following its formation in 1947, Stuttgart American Lodge (GL Connecticut) raised some 1,750 Master Masons all over Germany with a travelling warrant. The Stuttgart Lodge's Brother, **R.W.Bro. P. M. Rasmussen** later became the first Provincial Grand Master of the American-Canadian Provincial Grand Lodge in Germany. In 1987 I attended a meeting of the American-Canadian Grand Lodge in Berlin with my son who was studying music there and was impressed that the candidate not only recited his catechism but also his lengthy obligation.

The United Grand Lodge of Germany

In 1958, the (reconstituted) lodges that had formed the United Grand Lodges of Germany after 1945 merged. The negotiations that finally led to the establishment of the United Grand Lodges of Germany, were led by the 19th Grand Master of the Landlodge **Dr. Fritz Pauk**. However, Freemasonry continued to be prohibited in the GDR (East Germany). In 2004, there were about 14,000 Freemasons in Germany. The United Grand Lodges of Germany have about 470 Lodges and over 14,000 members. There are five Grand Lodges under the United Grand Lodges of Germany as follows:-

- Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Germany
- Grand Landlodge of Freemasons of Germany
- Grand National Motherlodge "To the Three Globes"
- American Canadian Grand Lodge
- The Grand Lodge of British Freemasons in Germany

In 2005 Grand Masters from 44 jurisdictions met in London. This was followed by an historical exchange between representatives of the European Grand Lodges and the EU Commission President Barroso together with the President of the European Parliament (Buzek) and Council of Europe (van Rompuy) to exchange views on combating poverty and social exclusion. **Prof. Rüdiger Templin**, Grand Master of United Grand Lodges of Germany, emphasized in the discussion that an equal opportunities for education and integration is a necessary measure to prevent and reduce social exclusion and poverty. German Freemasonry sees itself as part of a global humanistic values Federation, whose members have always made a contribution to society. In the future it is obvious that members would use their capabilities for social harmony and exclusion, both through donations and through personal effort. As example, he mentioned include the collections of Masonic Relief for victims of the earthquake and flood disasters in Chile, Haiti, Ethiopia and Pakistan, or the foundation "People for people" of Freemason **Karl Heinz Böhm**, a film star.

Conclusion

The unification of the German states and their rise to become a significant member of the cultural and economic community of Europe was shattered by their defeat in World War I and the harshness of the reparation expected in the subsequent Treaty of Versailles.

Resentment in Germany to this Treaty cannot be understated and is the most direct cause of the rise of National Socialism, who sought to restore German pride and economic prosperity. All of Germany wanted to help in the restoration of their country. It must have been a rude shock to loyal Freemasons, eagerly wanting to join this effort, to be told that they could not join the party and were regarded with suspicion.

It took a long time for some of them to understand that the ultimate future for owning yourself a Freemason was a concentration camp and probable death. I do not know that I would have the courage of Hiram Abif in these circumstances. It is one thing if a threat comes from outside your country from a known enemy but loyal citizens cannot take easily to their own country turning against them.

But it really was not courage that was needed but foresight and prudence. Hitler's attitude was well known and, even given his bent for extreme crowd-numbing rhetoric, and his untrustworthy attitude to appeasement, the future was imminently certain.

No matter how great Freemasonry's principles are, they were ignored in the face of the economic and nationalistic necessities of the time. No amount of resistance could have changed this, even if it were attempted. It is certainly not enough to trust in your own intentions and to just hope for the best. We need a total awareness of our political and social environment to safeguard the principles that we hold. Hope lies in the knowledge that, like a Phoenix, Freemasonry will always rise from the ashes, no matter what catastrophes it must face, as it has in Germany.