

STALAG MASONS - FREEMASONRY IN THE GERMAN PRISONER OF WAR CAMPS 1939-1945

by Bro. Jeff Allan, SD

Introduction: Early in my masonic life I heard an anecdote about World War II masonic prisoners of war who, having been captured before completing their three degrees, were surreptitiously whisked away during the middle of the night by their captors and passed or raised. This seemed to be one of the finest examples of the tenets of Freemasonry - *Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth*, transcending bigotry, politics and war. There seemed no finer example of the universality of the Craft and this example would be a continuation of the masonic brotherhood documented in the Seven Years War (1756-63), the Napoleonic Wars (1793-1814) and the American War of Independence (1775-1783) ¹. However, various researchers who have examined masonic interactions between the Axis and Allied forces in the two World Wars have failed to demonstrate such examples. Part of the reason was the changing nature of warfare. Traditionally prisoners of war were a valuable asset to acquire, with good re-sale value in the form of ransom.

The advent of gunpowder created visual confusion on the battle field and by World War I the act of surrendering, or even accompanying prisoners back to one's own lines, became a risk fraught exercise.

The Second World War was perhaps the most unique, as it demonstrates not so much a lack of masonic feeling on the part of German freemasons who interacted with Allied masonic prisoners of war but rather the ruthless persecution of the Craft by the totalitarian Nazi regime. An admission of Craft membership by any camp guard would have, at best, led to a transfer to the Russian Front or more likely, incarceration in a Concentration Camp and execution.

Examination of the political climate that existed in Europe up to and including the period of World War II demonstrates the trials of all European freemasons, explains the extreme difficulty the German freemasons would have had in helping their captured brethren and raises the masonic activities of Allied prisoners of war to a unique plane of masonic courage.

The persecution of European Freemasonry 1930-45: Hitler publicly announced his plans long before he took power in Germany. In *Mein Kampf*, his autobiography written while serving a prison sentence for attempting to overthrow the democratic government in Germany in the early 1920s, Hitler wrote that Freemasonry had succumbed to the Jews, had become an excellent instrument to fight for their aims, and to use their strings to pull the upper strata of society into their alleged designs. Hitler continued: 'The general pacifistic paralyzation of the national instinct of self-preservation, introduced into the circles of the so-called intelligentsia by Freemasonry, is transmitted to the great masses, but above all to the bourgeoisie, by the activity of the great press, which today is always Jewish.'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.'³

Hitler came to power in Germany in January, 1933 and began the destruction of continental Freemasonry. The Craft in Germany at the time was a robust and vibrant, if somewhat fragmented, organization. There existed no less than nine Grand Lodges, viz;

Name No.Lodges No. Members

The Grand National Mother Lodge of the Three Globes 177 22,700
The Grand Lodge of Freemasons in Germany 173 22,300
Grand Lodge of Prussia 104 11,400
Grand Lodge of Saxony 45 7,200
Grand Lodge of Hamburg 54 5,000
Grand Lodge of the Sun 44 4,000
Grand Lodge of the Eclectic Union 24 3,500
Grand Lodge of Fraternity 10 1,910
Grand Lodge of Unity 10 900
Total 641 78,910 4, ⁵

Like all dictatorial regimes, the Nazis were terrified of what the Craft represented - for much of its history membership of the Craft was an admission of being a champion of human dignity, political freedom and democracy. This was best stated when, in 1938, Hitler's publishing house issued *Freemasonry, Its World View (Weltanschauung), Organization and Policies*, by Dieter Schwarz, with a preface by Reinhard Heydrich, second in command of the Gestapo. To demonstrate why every new Nazi member must confirm, by his word of honour, that he does not belong to a masonic lodge, it says: 'Masonic lodges are ... associations of men who, closely bound together in a union employing symbolical usages, represent a supra-national spiritual movement, the idea of humanity ... a general association of mankind, without distinction of races, peoples, religions, social and political convictions.'

This is perhaps one of the greatest backhanded compliments ever paid to the Craft.

National Grand Master, Dr. Otto Bordes, stated that if Goering's intentions should find general approval in the German cabinet, 'there need be no question of the



Figure 1: In a number of popular public exhibitions, the Nazis created mock lodge rooms, as above, in Munich, Germany and other displays to inflame anti-masonic feeling. Photo National Archives, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

continuance of our Grand Lodge of freemasons.' In 1933 a group of German masonic leaders said they were told the Nazi government did not intend to prohibit the activities of the lodge, but that they demanded the masonic Order discontinue the use of the words freemason and lodge, break all international relations, require that its members be of German descent, remove the requirement of secrecy, and discard all parts of the ritual which are of Old Testament origin.

Dr. Hordes and his fellow Masonic officers changed the name of their organization from the 'Association of German Freemasons' to 'The National Christian Order of Frederick the Great' and ended all ritual work. They informed Nazi leaders Frick and Goebbels that they were no longer freemasons, but apparently they continued some ritual work - but with several very significant changes, and allowing Nazi officials who were not members to be present.

Dr. Bordes felt that these actions prevented more masons from 'deserting our cause,' since those who continued to call themselves freemasons were often boycotted in their business.⁶ Even so, by June 1933 the leaders of what was now the National Christian Order of Frederick the Great and the German Christian Order of Friendship (formerly the Grand Lodge of Prussia) told their members they had been unable to obtain from Nazi officials recognition of their organizations.

We have to assume that in the years 1934/35 the National Socialists confiscated all the possessions of the freemasons. Everything, packed in boxes ended up in cellars, air raid shelters and other storerooms. A few items were hidden by freemasons hoping for better times to come and some of these have appeared in antiquarian bookshops and in the antique trade. Most of the missing documents and other material are still kept in Moscow, confiscated from Berlin in 1945 and today there is no justifiable reason to hold them back any longer.⁷

In October, 1934 a young Austrian named Adolf Eichmann took a lowly job with the rank of sergeant in the Second Bureau of the SD Haptant, a section of Heydrich's SD, (*Sicherheitsdienst*; the secret security branch within the SS, the Nazi storm troops). Eichmann's secret job was to type index cards listing prominent German freemasons. His work on the international character of the freemasons brought him into contact with what the Nazis called 'the Jewish Question,' and Eichmann soon developed a reputation for steady industry and as an expert on Jews.⁸

Also in 1934, Leo Muffelmann, the Grand Master and founder of the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, died as a direct result of his incarceration in a concentration camp. His Grand Lodge established itself in Palestine until after the end of World War II.⁹ With the establishment of the Israeli Grand Lodge (1953) the four lodges relinquished their charters and were immediately re-chartered under the new Grand Lodge. These four lodges were still practising their Schroeder ritual in the latter part of the century.

On 18th August, 1935, Hitler's newspaper, *Voelkischer Beobachter*, announced the final dissolution of all masonic lodges in Germany, blaming Freemasonry for incidents such as the assassination in Sarajevo in 1914 which led to World War I, and for supposedly seeking another war to create a world republic. President von Hindenburg issued a decree charging that masonic lodges had engaged in subversive activities. The Minister of the

Interior ordered their immediate disbandment and confiscation of the property of all lodges.

in the period leading up to the outbreak of war the Nazis did all that was possible to inflame public opinion against the Craft. A Nazi party court in Berlin published a decree barring from membership those who had been freemasons for a number of years or who had received the higher degrees of the Order. Masonic lodges were attacked for having borrowed much of their doctrine and ceremonies from 'Semitic sources'; those who felt at home in such an atmosphere were said to be not wholly trustworthy as Nazis.

Once war broke out in 1939 the Nazis were to extend their campaign against the Craft into the countries that fell under their occupation. when the German forces entered Czechoslovakia in March 1939 they had the names of 34,000 freemasons, who were arrested quickly and some of whom were sent to concentration camps. Dr. J. Sedmik and Dr. V. Glavac were tortured for two years and then killed. Less than 5% of freemasons escaped, some finding exile in England where they formed a Grand Lodge Comenius in Exile.¹⁰

The island of Jersey was occupied by SS troops, who sacked the Jersey Masonic Temple, which had been built 1862-1864 and was equipped with remarkably beautiful masonic furniture and a library of considerable value. A squad of specially trained men sent from Berlin sought material for an anti-masonic exhibit in Berlin, and built a bonfire to destroy everything else. Later that year the Nazis forced the local Parliament in Jersey to pass an Act transferring all masonic property, if any was left, to the government. 11

When France was defeated by Germany in June 1940, the Vichy government dissolved the Grand Orient and the Grand Lodge of France and seized and sold their property. Their headquarters were sealed, with a death penalty for anyone who entered. Anti-masonic museums were arranged, as in other countries. Individual masons had their residences searched and they were banned from positions of command and often put out of their businesses and professions. Bernard Fay, who had written *Revolution and Freemasonry*, an anti-masonic book before the war, was put in charge of antimasonic activities by the Vichy government. He caused the arrest of thousands of freemasons, the deportation of almost 1,000, the death of almost 1,000, and the seizure of much property. After the war he was tried and found guilty for his wartime actions, escaping a long prison term only by fleeing to Switzerland.¹²

This litany of atrocity goes on ad nauseum throughout all of occupied Europe – a story of Grand Lodge officers being tortured to reveal lists of freemasons, masonic property being confiscated and brethren sent to concentration camps. The amazing thing that comes out of this holocaust is the number of Grand Lodge officers who resisted torture, even though they were advanced in years, and the fact that masonic activity was even conducted inside concentration camps. The Netherlands Grand Master Hermanus van Tongeren, an ex-Major General, refused to compromise and was arrested in October 1940 without any reason being given. After being kept six months in an Amsterdam jail he was taken to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp near Berlin (or Buchenwald), where he died of exhaustion after three months, on 29th March, 1941. When he had been offered safe passage to England he said, 'I have enjoyed the pleasures of being Grand Master, now I must also carry the burden.'¹³ How many contemporary masons would be willing to adhere to their 3rd Degree Obligation, particularly the reference to the F.P.O.F, unto death?

Nor did the anti-masonic fervour diminish during the war - when German Field- Marshall Paulus surrendered to the Soviet Union in 1943 he was denounced as being a high-grade freemason, despite the prohibition on masons being in the armed forces. ¹⁴

This then was the political climate that the captors of Allied prisoners of war found themselves in. Any overt display of sympathy towards the Craft was in effect a death warrant but as will be shown, tyrannies can kill an organization but they can never kill an ideal.

Allied Prisoner of War Masonic Activity (Europe) 1940-1945: Although a number of articles exist on the masonic activities of Commonwealth and British servicemen in German Prisoner of War camps, perhaps the most authoritative are by W.Bros. A.R. Hewitt, ¹⁵ FLA. and K. Flynn 16 OBE, PDAGDC. They record masonic activity in fourteen camps in Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Italy. The best documented involve activity in Oflag VIII F in Mährisch Trubau, Czechoslovakia, Oflag 79 at Brunswick, Oflag VII D near Salzburg, Oflag VI B in Warburg, Oflag II B in Eichstatt, Stalag 383 in Hohenfels and Stalag 18 A in Wolfsberg.

There are a number of commonalities that exist in the recollections of those who were unfortunate enough to be captured, the first being, and because of age not unexpected, the dearth of Past Masters entering captivity. As an example, at Hohenfels (Stalag 383) from among 82 captive masons (23 United Grand Lodge of England, 4 Grand Lodge of Ireland, 29 Grand Lodge of Scotland, 24 Australian and 4 others including one unnamed New Zealander) only one brother held the rank of Past Master. ¹⁷

It is not surprising therefore that much of their activity revolved around trying to reproduce the ritual from memory. It is not stated in the literature whether or not active duty servicemen were advised not to carry evidence of masonic association, but only one brother, H. Walwork, entered captivity with a copy of the Emulation book of ritual. ¹⁸



Figure 2: Sites of the major masonic activity in German Prisoner of war Camps in World War II

The second point is that their Masonic Associations could not be constituted as lodges as they were not warranted, therefore neither could they work degrees. They tended to be styled as Lodges of Instruction, but in their formative years must have devoted a fair amount of time to recollection.

Secrecy was practised to an extreme degree as can well be understood. Potential brethren were rigorously proved before being allowed entry to the lodge. In fact Bro. Selby-Boothroyd spent eighteen months in Oflag VII B without being aware of the extensive masonic activity that went on there (1942-1945).

Oflag VIII F (Mährisch Trubau, Czechoslovakia): By 1944 some forty brethren, transferred from an Italian camp, were holding a regular Society of Improvement with the word society used as a blind. Initially their activity consisted of the opening and closing under the Preceptorship of Bro. Cliff Downing, one of the few Past Masters in the camp. The senior chaplain of the camp was also a member of the Craft and allowed the brethren the use of the chapel for their meetings, ostensibly to listen to theological lectures.

After a while they met in a small room that could only be accessed through another room where Indian prisoners rehearsed their 'noisy and incomprehensible dramas'. 9 Minutes of all meetings were kept and brought back to the United Kingdom after the war but they were often so cryptic, obviously to confuse the guards, that often the secretaries had difficulty deciphering their own work after the war.

The whole camp was moved out of Czech territory to Oflag 79 near Brunswick in May 1944.

Oflag 79 (Brunswick, Germany): The camp was situated between a Luftwaffe operational airfield and an aircraft engine factory and so, not surprisingly, the inmates became very interested in the activities of the 8th USAAF. It was here that the lodge really cemented itself with a membership of about seventy brethren from England, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa and the USA. Initially they met in the cellars of the camp, which also served as the air-raid shelter, and when the electricity went out they had to resort to margarine oil-lamps.

After one air raid, Bro. Selby-Boothroyd records sardonically that 'rough ashlar and the emblems of mortality were plentiful.'²⁰

Working tools carved from wooden beds, and water-coloured tracing boards the size of post-cards were invariably small enough so that they could be immediately hidden in coat pockets should they be interrupted by the guards. In fact this was a common practice in all camps in both Europe and the Far East. While no attempt was made to fashion aprons, the brethren did endeavour to attend their regular meetings in the best clothes they possessed.

The fact that they had two Tylers who would raise the shout 'Goon up!' did not arouse the guards' suspicions as they elicited this call wherever they went in the camp. If the guards did enter they would find a group of earnest young men listening to a discourse on some subject totally divorced from Freemasonry.

As air raids increased towards the culmination of the war, regular meetings became impossible. Eventually the lodge regalia was distributed among the brethren and can be found in various masonic museums scattered across the globe. On 10th April, 1945 they met for the last time and it was up to Bro. Selby-Boothroyd as JW to have the final word:

'And it is closed accordingly until time or circumstance shall bring seven or more of us together again, of which meeting every brother shall have notice at his last known address'²¹

The Brunswick Lodge of Improvement has never met again.

Oflag VII D (Tittmoning, Germany): The Tittmoning camp was situated in an old hunting schloss previously owned by the Prince Bishop of Salzburg. In the courtyard

was a marble trough with a bas-relief depicting the pillars, the square and the plumb rule, dated about 1781/22. The three masonic brethren, who had transferred in from Laufen, were by chance all put in the same room. Conversation naturally led them to identifying each other and they set about to identify other brethren in the camp. Within three months they had enough to consider a meeting and approached the senior British officer, Colonel Gamble, for permission to use the camp library for the purpose. The Colonel demanded to know the purpose of the intended meeting and when this was disclosed he gave his permission on the condition that he could also attend. Another member of the Craft had been found 23

They met on a weekly basis with a membership of about twenty that included two Past Masters and a number of Chaplains. While they realised they were acting without a warrant they felt that this would be excusable under the circumstances and immediately formed a Lodge of Instruction. The two Past Masters, assisted by Bro. Sidney Brown, set out to recreate the ritual from memory. At a later date, when this ritual was checked, very few corrections were found to be needed and it now resides in the Leicester Provincial Museum with its accompanying *Gepprüft* (German inspection stamps), one genuine and one forged. While they had the room to conduct the ritual floor work, security precluded the use of gavels, the left forearm being struck instead, and multiple Tylers were used.

In September 1942 the whole camp was moved to Oflag VII B in Eichstatt, Bavaria where they remained until the end of the war.

Oflag VII B (Eichstatt, Bavaria): Upon arrival they immediately set about to find a suitable room to continue their masonic activities. After finding the hospital unsuitable, one of the dentists, Bro. Greenslade, SW, Otago Lodge No.7, offered the use of the dental surgery. Thus their activities continued even though the room was too small to conduct floor work.

Over the next two and a half years the membership increased so much that they decided to split into four lodges to give all members work. Two worked under the English Constitution, one under Australian and one under the Scottish. Eventually most of the brethren from the latter were moved to other camps and the lodge was disbanded.

Meetings were held on a monthly basis except for the summer - covering of the windows to conceal their activities would have attracted too much attention. In the period after D-day Allied prisoners in all camps became too agitated with the thought of impending freedom to memorise ritual (understandable after many years of imprisonment), and activities diminished. However, at their last meeting after the Allies crossed the Rhine, the brethren composed and signed a greeting to the Grand Master, United

Grand Lodge of England. It is signed by forty-three brethren and reads:
'Greetings to the MW the Grand Master and Brethren of the United Grand Lodge of England from the undersigned on their return from captivity in Oflag VIIB, Eichstatt, Bavaria who, while in Germany, have endeavoured to make a daily advancement in

masonic knowledge'.

Unfortunately they were a bit premature and it was several months before it reached the intended recipient, M.W. Bro. the Earl of Harewood. The greeting, which has the bas-relief from Tittmoning on its cover, is now in the Great Queen Street museum.

Stalag 18A (Wolfburg, Austria) and Stalag 383 (Hohenfels, Germany): In early 1942 the brethren incarcerated at Wolfburg began to organize themselves to form a meeting. Many of the prisoners had been captured in Greece and Crete and, as a result of their long journey, they were ragged, hungry and verminous by the time they reached Austria.

Their initial move was to contribute one cigarette each to a common fund which was used to bribe a guard to allow them to meet in a new hut currently being erected. At this meeting they decided to elect a representative from England, Scotland, Australia and New Zealand whose job it was to prove everyone present. Next they made contact with one of the camp doctors, who was in fact a Canadian Past Master serving in the British Army. He arranged for the group to meet in the medical inspection room but, after attending the first meeting, excused himself from involvement on the grounds that, if any disciplinary action was taken due to his involvement with the group, it would be those in the camp who needed his services who would suffer the most. Consequently the group went on to form a Lodge of Instruction and to write the first degree ritual.

At the end of 1942 the bulk of the camp was moved to Stalag 383 at Hohenfels in Germany. This was a new camp, with prisoners of war coming from various parts of Germany, Austria and Poland, but by early 1943 the brethren had begun to meet in the storeroom of an old stable, formerly used by a troop of boy scouts in peace-time and therefore dubbed the Scout Den.

Attending brethren signed a register and then each was proved. The I.G. placed a chair against the door as the only means of preventing the guards from entering had they chosen. This method of tiling was adopted because it was felt that an external Tyler would have attracted too much attention. The VSL was always opened at the Book of Ruth although no one ever seemed to know why.²⁴ (Author's note: this is rather strange, as the Book of Ruth is primarily the story of Boaz and contains one of our Reasons for Preparation). Business then proceeded in the usual manner, with the Treasurer's report being presented in the currency of cigarettes, which were used to purchase tea, sugar and milk for after proceedings, or used by the two Charity Stewards for distribution among the sick.

The brethren represented twelve different Constitutions and many interesting activities, aside from ritual practice, took place. One memorable one recorded in the minutes was a lecture on the life of Mozart, presented by a Hungarian brother. Often a meeting ended with a substantial toast list, all of course drunk in tea from the various personal drinking receptacles that each brother brought to the meeting, and the spreading of any news from home. One brother had received notice by letter that he had been appointed as Steward of his lodge in his absence. His brethren, with much

ingenuity and scavenging around the camp, fabricated a Steward's collar and he was invested by the Master at the next meeting with the same dignity he would have received in his mother lodge.

The camp was dispersed at the end of hostilities in 1945, with a membership of eighty-two and an average attendance of sixty, and the minute book, accounts and other relics are held at the Library of the United Grand Lodge of England.

It is worthy of note that a Bro. Carpenter reported the masonic activities of another group in the same camp known as the Chess Club, with a membership of twenty, mostly from the Grand Lodge of Scotland in Australia. Because of the level of secrecy required for these groups to operate under the noses of their guards, it is possible that neither group knew of the existence of the other.

While masonic activity existed in various other camps, often on a smaller scale, the theme remained the same - brethren endeavouring to make a daily advancement in Freemasonry under very trying conditions. Bro. Iggulden (later W. Bro. Lt-Col Iggulden, DSO, TD) summarized his feelings in this manner:

'The impression left with me as a result of my own experience is very strong as to the beneficial effect which members of the Craft must have had on other people, both by example and by individual acts of kindness. whilst in no way implying that there were not others who set a good example, it was noticeable to me that the freemasons amongst us behaved in a most exemplary and charitable way, under circumstances which all too frequently brought out less praiseworthy traits in human nature'. 25

Conclusions: The period 1939-45 is a dark period in the history of Freemasonry, with the decimation of the Craft in those territories captured by the Axis powers. The fortitude and commitment of masonic prisoners of war in Europe was amply imitated by the brethren unfortunate enough to be captured in the Far East. Of necessity most of those captured were young men whose masonic experience would be considered limited, few having been installed into the Chair of King Solomon. The above examples clearly demonstrate however, that these brethren were exemplars of our masonic principles - Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

What is also evident is that these clandestine groups operated under a regime totally hostile to the Craft at a political level and yet there is no recorded evidence of any prisoner of war freemason being punished by his captors for his activities, nor of any group being disbanded. It is inconceivable that camp authorities were completely unaware of their activities as one Italian example demonstrates. At Viano Camp in Italy an Italian officer sent a bottle of brandy to the supposedly secret meeting with his best wishes for an enjoyable meeting²⁶.

This paper has described the declination of German Freemasonry in the pre-war years and Bro. H. Solf, in his paper *The Revival of Freemasonry in Post-war Germany*, *Ars Quatuor Coronatorum*, Vol.97, 1984, describes its equally rapid resurrection in the post-war years, the major hindrance being the Occupation Powers fears of any secret

German society. Perhaps the Nazi regime succeeded in driving the allegory and symbols temporarily out of existence, but it may well be that the morality lived on among some of the captors in the form of convenient loss of sight.

In this country there is currently a rising level of respect among the younger generation, as evidenced by increasing attendance at Anzac Day services, for our servicemen and women who gave so much to defend the principles of this country. I would like to think that this paper in a small way pays similar respect and admiration to our brethren who also served, made the ultimate sacrifice or, if captured, upheld in the face of adversity the principles that we all hold so dear. However there are no finer closing words than those used by Bro. Keith Flynn:

'What is clear is that our Brethren in captivity were true masons, they lived by masonic teachings and trusted their masonry to alleviate their sufferings. They were faithful to the masonic code of virtue and thereby revealed in their work a constant faith, a never-extinguished hope and charity to all. They honoured themselves, they honoured the Craft and we honour them as masons,'²⁷

References:

- 1 Hewitt A.R. *Craftsmen in Captivity - Masonic Activities of Prisoners of War*, Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, Vol. LXXVII, 1964, pp.79-105
- 2 Lunden S.G. *The Annihilation of Freemasonry*, The American Mercury, Vol. LII, No.206, Feb 1941
- 3 Gilbert M. *The Holocaust*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1985 p.30, citing Morley, *The Brown Book of the Hitler Terror*, page 234.
- 4 Solf H. *The Revival of Freemasonry in Post-war Germany*, Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, Vol.97, 1984, p.4
- 5 Ulrich W. Editor in Chief of the freemasonic periodical ELEUSIS, The Supreme Council 33° Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry of Germany, Stuttgart, actually quotes ten but doesn't identify them.
- 6 Hamilton, *Freemasonry. A Prisoner of War*, in The New Age, September 1949, at pages 552-554, and Anti-Masonry citation in Coil's Masonic Encyclopaedia, page 60. Coil refers to Dr. Bordes' letter saying the objectives of Freemasonry and Nazism were the same, as being 'one of the most remarkable statements ever emanating from anyone who had ever been connected with Freemasonry.'
- 7 Ulrich W. op.cit. - It is of interest that at the time of writing this paper an announcement was made that documents pertaining to the French lodges of the Grand Lodge of Scotland have been returned by the Russians to the Grand Orient of France.
- 8 Wighton C. *Eichmann: His Career & Crimes*, Oldham Press 1961, pp. 48- 51; and Schleunes K., *The Twisted Road to Auschwitz*, University of Illinois Press 1970, pp 201-202.
- 9 Denslow R. *Freemasonry in the Eastern Hemisphere*, published by author 1954 p.109.
- 10 Cohn N. *Warrant for Genocide*, London: Serif, 1996 pp.246-248.
- 11 Jackson, *Freemasonry in Jersey*, in Ars Quatuor Coronatorum, London, Volume 26, 1973, pp.210-214.
- 12 Anti-Masonry article in Coil's *Masonic Encyclopaedia*, page 61; Cerza, A

Masonic Reader's Guide, Transactions of the Missouri Lodge of Research, volume 34, 1978-1979, page 164; and Denslow, *Freemasonry in the Eastern Hemisphere*, page 178.

13 Information about Nazi attacks against Freemasonry in the Netherlands was supplied in 1994 by Richard W. Lodge, from Mark Sandstrom and Allen Elliott, all active participants in the Masonry Forum of the CompuServe computer on-line

Discussion on the paper 'Freemasonry in the Prisoner of War Camps in World War II by Bro. Jeff Allan, S.D.

In opening the discussion, the Master W.Bro. Alan Bevins, said: It was a pleasure to witness Bro. Jeff Allan's presentation. Three factors are worthy of comment. The personal style, the method of display and the subject matter. All can be numbered amongst the best we have seen in recent years. The age group which experienced the German invasion is now very small in number, and first-hand experience is difficult to find, but their feelings remain. In general, the feelings are of disappointment rather than anything more drastic - disappointment that their early history of Freemasonry has been lost, by the sacking of the centres and removal and destruction of property, more so than the loss of life and ill-treatment. Masonry in those Islands began in the mid 1750s , mostly of Ancients Lodges. The oldest current lodge, Mariners No.168 was founded in 1784. So by the time of the German entry to the Islands, much of the original equipment and records will have been in existence. The first Provincial Grand Master, Bro. Thomas Dobree, was appointed in December 1753. At least three Lodges would have petitioned Grand Lodge in London for an appointment to be made, though John Lane's Masonic Records 1717-1894, an authoritative list of early English Constitution lodges, only gives one, at Lily Tavern founded in May 1753. This lodge ceased to work before 1807 as its Charter was purchased by No.84 Doyle's Fellowship Lodge in that year, and still exists today. It may be that as the Prov.G.M.'s warrant said 'For Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, Sarke and Anne in ye British Channell', it tells us that there were some military units with travelling warrants in the Islands. There are several quite substantial castles around to defend England against the perpetual enemy, the French, not least that in St. Helier which was converted some years ago into a magnificent events centre. I now ask for further comments. St Helier has no's', I am sure you know that!

Bro. Kershaw said: I enjoyed Bro. Allen's paper as it brought to our minds what some members of our Fraternity endured during the last War. The first half of the paper showed us the build up to the persecution that followed. It is amazing that after fifteen years of such savage suppression that German Freemasonry was able to re-establish itself so strongly after the War. There is another story to tell in the sufferings of Prisoners of War in Japanese camps. There too, in conditions of great hardship, masonic meetings were carried out in the greatest secrecy. Lt. General Perceval - the British Commandant at Changi in Singapore, though not a mason, gave his permission for these clandestine meetings as he believed that Masonry ... supplied yet another means of preventing the deterioration of character and morale... and anything to assist in the preservation of discipline for which he believed the Craft was universally noted, would undoubtedly prove valuable.' These remarks could equally be applied to the freemasons held in Germany. This paper is a salutary reminder to us all that the comfort and ease with which we enjoy our meetings is founded on the sacrifices of others in the last two

World Wars.

R.W. Bro. H. Wyatt wrote: I would like to congratulate Bro. Jeff Allan on his most interesting research paper. On p.181 he mentions the sacking of the Jersey masonic temple. It may be of interest to the brethren to know that after the war in April 1946 some twenty-five packing cases containing masonic material from Jersey were discovered in the American Occupation Zone of Germany. This material was shipped back to Jersey, although with improvised regalia and letters of authority in lieu of Warrants (none of which have been recovered). The first meeting after the war was held in September, 1945. Twelve months after the liberation the temple had been restored to an approximation of its former glory and Freemasonry was back stronger than before.

V.W. Bro. A.H. Busfield said: Bro. Allan has made an interesting addition to the number of papers presented relating to masonic activity during active service and in Prisoner of War Camps. In reference to Jersey, I understand that some items of importance were buried. Apparently the invaders did not remove the two portraits of Past Provincial Grand Masters. No doubt, like us, they were scared of such exalted beings. A past member of Lodge Howick No.314, the late Bro. Jim Howells, was shot down over Europe in 1942. As all the Air Force Prisoner of War Camps (which had more stringent security) were full, Jim was delighted to be placed in Stalag 8B as he believed he would have more opportunity to escape. To assist that he twice swapped identity

with infantry members in the camp. As 'Warren Brown' he became friendly with an older guard, Hans Arnold, who Jim became convinced was a freemason. In an injudicious moment

he told his guard that his real name was Jim Howells from New Zealand. Hans response was:

'You have not told me.' They remained friends and corresponded after the war.

Bro. H.E. Kracke said: Bro Allan has produced a paper of high quality and of a standard worthy of our traditions. I would like to add a few comments on some of the points

made. We have to distinguish between Prisoner of War camps and Concentration Camps. Military prisoners were usually kept in Prisoner of War Camps administered and guarded by

enlisted soldiers. Here I could imagine special situations of sympathy and understanding. Concentration Camps were guarded by SS and run by the infamous Kapos, often persons with a criminal background, who behaved with extreme brutality and disregard for human

life. Masonic activities in those camps were rather unlikely unless the Kapos were heavily

bribed. Masonic documents did not remain in Russia. In 1989, shortly before German reunification,

the Russian government returned most of the Prussian State Archives, together with extensive masonic files, to the German government

Bro. Goodall said; I particularly enjoyed Bro. Jeff's paper and the means by which he presented it. The use of technology, to support a presentation or administer affairs, is widely

used and accepted as an effective means of conveying information. His good use of power point, not only added to the interest of this paper, but also provided a valuable insight into the range of possibilities such a tool might be used for on masonic occasions. He undoubtedly has developed a wide knowledge of military history and I think made good use of it to demonstrate the underlying reasons for the circumstances in which our Prisoner of War brethren found themselves. On p.187 he mentions a Brother who was made a Steward by this lodge during his absence. The practice of promoting Brethren while on active service appears to have been recommended to lodges by Grand Lodge early in the War and this may well have become widespread. In my own lodge, three such Brethren were progressively elected to the next higher office during their time overseas. One was killed in action, but the other two, having left as Stewards, returned to be invested as Assistant Director of Ceremonies and Inner Guard respectively. Food parcels that were sent by the Red Cross to augment the meagre rations supplied by their captors were of vital importance to the prisoners. At home it seems to have been the practice for lodges to send food parcels to members serving overseas. In one instance in my lodge, when it was reported that one of our Brethren had been captured and incarcerated in a Prisoner of War Camp in Italy, the Master said that he was unable to find a way of getting a parcel to him, but that his mother was able to make arrangements on our behalf, which she apparently did on at least two separate occasions. Whether he received them before his subsequent escape and safe return home is not mentioned, but from reading Bro. Jeff's paper we can now understand the very real need for subterfuge by lodges and their Brethren when trying to communicate with each other. My congratulations to Bro. Jeff for adding to our knowledge of Brethren in time of War. **In reply**, Bro. Allan thanked the brethren for their comments and information.