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A Diphtych – The History of Freemasonry in Serbia
Freemasonry on the eve and during World War II

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A DIPTYCH

THE HISTORY OF FREEMASONRY IN SERBIA

FREEMASONRY ON THE EVE OF AND DURING WORLD WAR II
POLITICS IS NOT OUR CHOICE, BUT WE ARE ITS.

The purpose of the text that follows is to familiarize Freemasons with a two unique events in the history of Masonry, a thing that had never happened anywhere, until then.

THE FIRST SIDE OF THE DIPTYCH

THE BEGINNING OF THE STORM AND THE OCCUPATION OF THE LAND

With the rise of Fascism in Italy and National Socialism in Germany in the 1930s, anti-Masonic campaigns and propaganda started to gain momentum. The Grand Lodges of many countries (e.g. Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, Hungary, and Austria) discontinued their activities. Such influences also reached the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, where increasingly prominent social, religious and political problems affected Freemasonry there and it’s Grand Lodge Jugoslavija (Yugoslavia), which comprised 25 active Lodges in cities and towns throughout the country.

Even though the large majority of the Masons in Yugoslavia were pro-Yugoslav, there were some who advocated the establishment of independent national Grand Lodges. The most vociferous among them were the Croatian Freemasons. On the pretext that too much power was in the hands of a group of people in the Grand Lodge in Belgrade and that all decisions were made there, three Zagreb Lodges, Ljubav bližnjemu (Love to the Neighbor), Prometej (Prometheus) and Amicitia, founded in 1927 the independent Simbolička Velika Loža Libertas (Symbolic Grand Lodge Libertas).

The annexation of Austria to the Third Reich in 1938, the occupation of the Balkans by Fascist Italy in 1939, the accession of Hungary and Romania to the Tripartite Pact in 1940 and Bulgaria in 1941, left Yugoslavia completely surrounded by enemies.
The Prince Regent Paul Karadordević was under great pressure to join the Pact. A number of measures were taken to demonstrate goodwill towards Germany and Italy, such as passing regulation on limiting the rights of Jews or constant pressure aimed at disrupting the work of masonic Lodges. From 1937 to 1940, bans were imposed on the magazines and newspapers published by the Freemasons: Javnost in 1937, Krug in 1938, and Vidici, Britanija, Čovečanstvo and Danica in 1940.

In his 1940 New Year’s Address, Anton Korošec, former minister for the interior in Milan Stojadinović’s government (1935–1939), leader of the Slovenian Clerical Party and probably an active collaborator of the German intelligence service, dumped Masonry together with Communism and foreigners in Slovenia, as “the three concerns that are bothering me at the beginning of the new year”.

The Grand Lodge Jugoslavija responded in a statement published on the front pages of newspapers by saying, among other things: “In these fateful moments for humanity and our homeland, the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija is convinced that all its members, as they have always done, will now fulfill their duty and, if need be, lay down their lives in doing so. Thus they will demonstrate that they have embraced Principle VI of the Constitution of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija ... The Grand Lodge Jugoslavija most resolutely dismisses the insinuations of Dr. Korošec in the hope that he will change his opinion on the patriotism of the Yugoslav Freemasons, because he himself, as a clergyman, should be well aware of the Lord’s commandment about respecting the truth and not sinning against it...”.

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1 Statement issued by the Freemasonic Grand Lodge Jugoslavija at a session of its Council held in Belgrade on Jan. 3, 1940, Beogradske novosti, No. 24, Belgrade, Jan. 8, 1940. A facsimile of the pages containing the original text is found in the Addenda section of this paper.
After that, there was silent pressure that all the Masons employed with state institutions be sent to early retirement or forced to resign. On May 17, 1940, the Ministry for the Interior issued an order banning assemblies and gatherings and on August 2 of the same year it said the Order would also most strictly be applied to the Lodges of the Freemasons. Thereafter the premises of the Grand Lodge and the lodges under its protection began to be searched by the police.

In this situation, on August 1, 1940, the Council of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija issued a decision on suspending all activities and disbanding all the Lodges in the territory of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. A Liquidation Board was founded and liquidation activities were carried out by Bros. Milan Podgradski, Janko Šafarik and Aleksandar Bogojević. It was stated in a letter of the Grand Lodge to all the union Lodges that a decision had been made “under the pressure of the present circumstances” to discontinue the operation of all the workshops under its protection. The Grand Lodge pointed out that the decision had been made “with great pain” and that the Free Masons had in no way failed to fulfill their patriotic duties and all of them had always been ready to make any sacrifice for King and Homeland.²

Yugoslavia acceded to the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941. Serbian Freemasons actively organized themselves against the pact and, together with the rest of the putschists, on March 27, 1941, toppled the Cvetković-Maček government, deposed Prince Regent Paul and proclaimed the underage Peter Karadorđević King Peter II. An active part in the organization of the coup was also played by the British Special Operations Executive (SOE). The putchist government included nine Masons. Following the German bombing of Belgrade of April 6, 1941, the new government, headed by Colonel Dušan Simović,

was unable to put up much resistance to the ensuing German invasion. With the fall of Belgrade on April 12, 1941, the government moved to London via Greece and Palestine and resumed its activities as the legal government of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.

The occupying authorities were very interested in the Freemasons, as was the new state administration established in Serbia, that is, the Commissioner Administration which existed from April 30 to August 29, 1941 and was headed by Milan Aćimović, and subsequently to the Government of National Salvation, headed by General Milan Nedić. In the second half of April 1941, Abwehr agents arrested a large number of people marked as “anti-German elements”, including several Masons: Viktor Novak, Vladeta Popović, Petar Struve, Anton Bilović, Dragan Milićević and others. The investigation was conducted by Hans Richter. In May 1941, a special commission was formed in order to establish who had been responsible for the military coup of March 27 with the sole purpose of proving that the responsibility for the outbreak of the war lay on England, Masons and the Yugoslav government in exile. On this occasion, the Freemasons Viktor Novak, Slavko Dukanac, Ljubomir Tomašić and others were once again detained and interrogated.

The Council of Commissars of Milan Aćimović was tasked with supplementing and putting in order the police database on Freemasons that had been formed as early as 1938 by the German Intelligence Service headquartered in Vienna. In early August 1941, the Council of Commissars issued an ordinance on removing nationally unreliable employees from public services. According to the Ordinance, “unfit to stay in employment are: 1) all individuals belonging to international organizations – Communists and Masons – as well as their sympathizers, collaborators and helpers; 2) all

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3 „Službene novine“ (Official Gazette), No. 5, Belgrade, Aug. 6, 1941.
employees who spread rumors and stun the normal development of the people’s national sentiment; 3) all those who by their actions contributed to pushing the country and the people into the unfortunate and suicidal war with the German Reich”.

In order to prove that any resistance to the occupiers was futile, the Government of National Salvation, headed by General Milan Nedić, was formed on August 29, 1941. Nedić promised to those who had installed him that he would be loyal to the German occupying authorities and that his government’s main task would be the fight against Communists, Jews and Freemasons, as well as punishing all those who, through their actions, contributed to the cancellation of the agreement on Yugoslavia’s accession to the Tripartite Pact.

In such circumstances, Freemasons were being detained, interrogated and arrested. The major arrests occurred on November 4 and 5, 1941, when around 200 prominent Belgraders were arrested, including about 60 Masons. From the detention center at Dedinje they were sent to the Banjica camp. The majority of the Masons arrested were released in early 1942. Among other things, the release of the Masons was at the intervention of Franz Neuhausen, the German special plenipotentiary for economic affairs in Serbia, as well as at the intervention of Abwehr Captain Joseph Mattel and Gestapo chief Ernst Weinmann, who, as former members of the Masonic movement and after it had been banned, gathered together as part of the Herren Club.

In such circumstances, Freemason brethren were handed a questionnaire with 33 questions which they had to answer within three days of receipt and personally hand in to the Personal Affairs Commissioner Tanasije Dinić. Besides the common questions

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related to biographical data, the time of joining a Lodge, its internal arrangement and hierarchy, there were also questions about the respondent’s attitude towards the Jews, the work of the Jewish Lodge B’nei B’rit, the Concordat, Serbo-Croat relations, Yugoslavia’s foreign relations, etc. The questionnaire was designed by the Germans, but, based on the answers, Tanasije Dinić was the one who decided what would happen to a Brother Mason (whether he would be dismissed from work, retired, denied a right or remain employed). The majority of those who were dismissed from work were judges, teachers and clerks. Twenty-four professors of the Belgrade University retired.

Here is a brief summary of the answers of one of the arrested Brethren to the 33 questions in the document Conf. No. 114 of November 25, 1941, handed in on November 28, 1941. The Brother is Dr. Dimitrije D. Đurić, a National Bank clerk (a member of the Lodge Dositej Obradović in Orient, Belgrade). He attended the Higher School of International Trade in Vienna for two semesters and went on to study law at Belgrade, Vienna and Fribourg, where he graduated in 1925 and then took his doctorate in 1926-1927. He validated his doctorate with Belgrade University in 1929. He had been married since 1928 and at the time of the questionnaire he had three children: a daughter of 11, a son of eight and another daughter aged six. He stated: “I am helping my aging parents, since my father and youngest brother are refugees and the other brother is severely ill.”

Besides its historical importance, this document also has a profoundly human value as it demonstrates the courage of a Brother who, in the fateful year 1941, spoke out positively and succinctly about Freemasonry, knowing that he would be either arrested, or lose his job, or be made to retire, or be banished or liquidated. Particularly bold is his answer to the questions related to Masonic principles, the names of other Brethren and
the names of the Lodges, as what he said was: “I cannot answer this, because, when I joined Freemasons, I gave an honest man’s Word that I would keep the society’s secrets.”\(^5\)

When asked about his attitude towards his country and nation, he answered: “A Freemason’s duty is to love his country and nation and even lay down his life for them if necessary.”\(^6\)

His answer to the last, 33\(^{rd}\) question was: “When I joined Freemasons, I was told that it was a community of honest and well-meaning people; that Freemasons do nothing against God, Religion, State and Social Order, that King and Homeland are sacrosanct to the Masons and that any politicizing is forbidden within Masonry. Besides, I gave my word that I did not belong to any secret organization and that I would keep the society’s secrets. I have always abided by these principles and for this reason my conscience is clear.”\(^7\)

These answers probably led to Brother Dimitrije D. Đurić’s dismissal from work and loss of all rights, including the right to a pension. His later fate was lost in the mists of history, but this document could be a basis for another true Masonic story – the one that follows:

**QUESTIONS for Masons**

**COMMISSIONER EXTRAORDINARY**

**FOR PERSONAL AFFAIRS**

Conf. No. 33

\(^5\) See the end of this chapter for the translation of the poignant document from the interrogation of the Brother and his wise and brave, above all, Masonic answers (the original document is in a private collection of the Regular Grand Lodge of Serbia).

\(^6\) *Ibid.*

\(^7\) *Ibid.*
March 18, 1942, Belgrade.

To Dr. ARON PEŠIĆ, Chief of County Office Physicians, retired

Pursuant to Para. 6 of the Ordinance on the Exclusion of Nationally Unreliable Employees from Public Service you shall appear in person in the cabinet of the official signed below within three days of the receipt of this writ and submit, in addition to the writ, answers, in writing, to the following questions:

1) Personal information: Name and family name (including your parents’ names), time and place of your birth, schools that you have finished and their location, marital status, number of children and their gender and age, and the persons you support.

2) Your motives for and the time of your joining a Masonic lodge (specify which one) and your membership registration number. The course of your progress within the Masonic hierarchy, specifying the time when you achieved each degree, what your present degree is and what duties you performed in the lodge and at what times. If you transferred from one Lodge to another, specify that as well, including the following information on each Lodge:

3) Who admitted you into the Lodge and the name of the Lodge?

4) Who were your contacts before you joined the Lodge?

5) Who and how long (from-to) was the head of the lodge and who performed other duties in the Lodge?

6) Who were the other members of the Lodge (specify the degree and occupation of each member of the Lodge)?

7) Where the Lodge was located and when were sessions of the Lodge held?
8) What were the novices at the Lodge taught and what were the requirements each novice had to meet in order to be promoted to the degree of Warden?

9) What were the Wardens at the Lodge taught, with what means and what was required of the Wardens to be promoted to the degree of master?

10) The structure of the Masonic hierarchy and the requirements that had to be met before promotion to a higher degree, for each individual degree.

11) What are the signs and slogans – passwords for mutual recognition of members of the Masonic community?

12) What is the attitude of the Lodge towards the Jews and were there any anti-Jewish speeches in the Lodge?

13) Was *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* mentioned in the Lodge in any context and what is your personal opinion of The Protocols?

14) What do you know about the B’nei B’rit Lodge, who were its members and what was the relationship between that Lodge and the Lodge to which you belonged?

15) What was the subject of discussion at Lodge sessions and what decisions, if any, were made regarding the stance of the Lodge on political, economic and other activities in the country?

16) What was the stance of the Lodge on major political issues in Yugoslavia, such as the act of January 6, 1929, the act of September 3, 1931, the issues of the Concordat, the Serbo-Croat Agreement, etc.?

17) What was the stance of the Lodge on Yugoslavia’s foreign policy, specifically in the period until 1936, in the period before the outbreak of the war in 1939, and during the war?
18) What was the stance of the Lodge on the state, religion and nation?

19) Were political issues discussed within the lodge and what stance was taken regarding democracy, Communism, Fascism and National Socialism? Which members were particularly zealous in advocating some of the said ideologies?

20) Was the Lodge visited by delegates of foreign lodges: who, when, why? Who gave lectures and on what topics during these visits?

21) Which foreign Lodges do you know of? Are you familiar with the operations of foreign Lodges and, to your knowledge, which of our statesmen belonged to a foreign Lodge?

22) Which of the members was a representative of a foreign Lodge (specify the name of the Lodge)?

23) Were any members invited by a foreign Lodge to provide answers about their profane work and did any members stand trial before the Lodge and why?

24) What contributions were collected at Lodge meetings and for what purpose? What were Lodge funds and the funds collected at Lodge meetings spent on? Were members informed about it and how?

25) What was your employment status when you joined the Lodge and the course of your career? Specify the posts you have held since the day you joined the Lodge until the present?

26) Which of your superiors was also a member of Masonry? Were you encouraged during your employment to use your position for anyone’s personal benefit?

27) In addition to your regular duties, were you engaged in other jobs in state or private institutions – which ones, when and for what fee or income?
28) Were you a member of a political party or public organization and which duties did you perform for it?

29) What were your personal assets prior to yours’s joining the Lodge?

30) Are you materially comfortable now – do you or your family members possess any property and how much do you or your family members earn now in addition to regular income?

31) Did you, at your own request, stop being a member of Masonry (specify the time and reason)? Do you have proof of termination and in what form – a letter or certificate? (If you have a document on this, enclose a copy, and if you do not, quote the text of the document from memory.)

32) Do you possess any official documents of the Lodge: minutes, architectural boards, circular letters, etc.?

33) Describe your personal observations and all the typical activities of the Masonic community.

Defaulting on this summons, or incomplete or untruthful answers to the questions, shall result in full application of the above Ordinance.

These proceedings are confidential and you are therefore advised against speaking of them with anyone or showing this questionnaire to any person.

ANSWERS by Brother. Dimitrije Đ. Đurić

TO THE COMMISSIONER EXTRAORDINARY FOR PERSONAL AFFAIRS

BELGRADE

Concerning your esteemed writing of the 25th of this month, Conf. No. 114, I am honored to reply as follows:
1) My name is Dr. Dimitrije Đ. Đurić; father’s name: Đorđe; mother’s name: Olga Branković. I was born at Dvor na Uni. I graduated from the First Real-Gymnasium in Zagreb in 1920, attended the Higher School of International Trade in Vienna for two semesters, studied law at Belgrade, Vienna and Fribourg, where I graduated in 1925 and took my doctorate in 1926/27. I validated my university degree with the Tabula Banalis in Zagreb and my doctorate with the University of Belgrade in 1929. I have been married since 1928 and have three children: a daughter of 11, son of eight and another daughter of six years of age. I do not support anyone, but I do help my elderly parents, because my father and youngest brother are refugees and the other brother is severely ill.

2) My motive in joining Freemasons was purely to be able to serve as best I can the society in which I live and work, particularly on the social and human planes, according to my ability. I do not know my membership registration number. I joined Freemasons in 1932/33, but I do not remember when I was granted any of my Degrees; they are acquired after one or two years. When the Masonic community was disbanded, I held the Third Degree and was not aware there were more of them. I held no special honors, nor did I transfer to any other Lodge.

3) to 6) I cannot answer these, because, when I joined Freemasons, I gave an honest man’s Word that I would keep the society’s secrets.

7) In Garašaninova Street, in official premises. I gave lectures on the history of the National Bank and its role in economic life. Other members also gave lectures, either related to their own profession or the history of Freemasons.

8) And 9) As far as I know, novices and Wardens underwent no training, apart from their initiation in the society itself and familiarization with it.

10) I am not familiar with Masonic hierarchy.
11) Same as 3).

12) Jews were not discussed in the Lodge, nor outside of it.

13) The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was never mentioned. As for me, I am not familiar with it enough to form an opinion on it.

14) I do not know anything about the B’nei B’rit Lodge. I only heard in a private conversation unrelated to the Lodge that Jews had their own national Masonic community, but I do know not details.

15) Discussions in the Lodge were always within the bounds of a lecture given, but these were never allowed to deal with politics, either foreign or local, nor with any religion (church), as it was explicitly forbidden.

16) And 17) the same as 15).

18) A Freemason is obliged to love his country and nation and even lay down his life for them if necessary. With respect to religion, it was required that a person admitted to the Lodge believed in God (no atheist was allowed to join Freemasons) and with respect to faith (church membership), there was broad tolerance.

19) The same as 15).

20) I have no knowledge of this.

21) I am not familiar with foreign Lodges, nor do I know our citizens who are members of foreign Lodges.

22) I have no knowledge of this.

23) I have no knowledge of this.

24) Contributions were collected for widows, the premises and newspapers and they were spent on humane causes, on the maintenance of the premises, expenses of
Šestar magazine, etc., but I do not know the exact details. The Treasurer reported on the finances at Annual Assemblies.

25) When I joined Freemasons, I was a trainee clerk under the old ordinance on clerks, and after nearly two years of traineeship (instead of just one), I was appointed clerk as if I were a trainee under the new ordinance, which in effect means a difference of 700 dinars a month less for me.

26) The fact that I have been regularly and conscientiously performing my duties at the Bank for nearly 10 years now, and have never been reprimanded or penalized and my work has been assessed as excellent by my immediate superiors, who have never been Masons, and yet have remained only a clerk who works well, with no high position or title, and who has been surpassed in rank by many younger colleagues, I believe is a sufficient answer to this question.

27) Other than my regular job, I have never worked for a fee. The Bank has never given me any extra reward, not even for working overtime. I have never received a single daily allowance or anything of that kind.

28) I have never been a member of any political party.

29) Before I was admitted to the Lodge, my personal assets were the same as today.

30) I have no personal property. My wife owns her own real estate, which she inherited from her mother and father. The income from this property, due to unfavorable circumstances, is modest and uncertain, while dues are high and mandatory.

31) and 32) I did not ask for a proof of termination and therefore do not have it.

33) When I joined Freemasons, I was told that it was a community of honest and well-meaning people; that Freemasons do nothing against God, religion, state and social
order, that King and Homeland are sacrosanct to the Masons and that any politicizing is forbidden within Masonry. Besides, I gave my Word that I did not belong to any secret organization and that I would keep the society’s secrets. I have always abided by these principles and for this reason my conscience is clear.

I take the freedom to note that, as far as I know, there were people in the Lodge who adhered to diverse political principles and parties, people of various religions and views of life and its organization, and this a priori excluded any possibility for an official “political” stance of the Lodge, even if it were allowed. However, if it is a matter of some higher Degree Masons and their activities, I know nothing about it, as I was not even aware that they existed.

Respectfully,

November 28, 1941  [signature illegible]

Belgrade  clerk at the National Bank
Even though a group of anti-Masonic activists had previously had the idea to organize an exhibition of an anti-Masonic character, they were able to implement it only after the creation of favorable circumstances in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the formation of collaborationist governments. In mid-July 1941, a working committee for the organization of an anti-Masonic exhibition was formed. It included proven anti-Masonic fighters: Dr. Lazar Prokić, Dr. Stevan Kluić, Đorđe Perić, Milan Banić, Milovan Popović, engineer Miroslav Vasiljević, Miodrag Đorđević et al. Soon, they came up with the idea that, in addition to Masons, the public should be familiarized with the activities of Jews and Communists as parts of the same machinery. For the sake of simplicity, the generally accepted title “Anti-Masonic Exhibition” was adopted. In the process of collecting materials for the exhibition, the Working Committee was greatly supported and assisted by the Amt Rosenberg in Berlin and the German propaganda department S. Even though exhibitions of this kind had already been held in Berlin and occupied Paris, neither of them dealt with Freemasonry, Jewry and Communism together, but rather concentrated on only one theme, which makes the Serbian exhibition unique.

During preparations for the exhibition, the necessary information was collected from sequestered Masonic archives and on the basis of analyses of arrested Masons’ answers to a questionnaire which they had to fill in. Used at the exhibition were the complete archives, objects, regalia and furniture belonging to the Prince of Wales Lodge.
from the island of Jersey in the English Channel, which the Germans had confiscated when they invaded the island.

This exhibition was peculiar because of the quantity of the material that had been utilized. This is attested by the following note: “Printed for the needs of the exhibition were several different brochures and other publications amounting to 207,000 copies, then the propaganda service of the exhibition printed 60,000 copies of 20 different posters, 100,000 flyers were handed out in the streets, there were 1,000 public announcements, nine types of postcards, with 108,000 copies each, 176 cinema and radio advertisements, four postage stamps (so far the only ones with such imagery in the world), etc.”

This whole outcry was also backed by the Naša borba daily, which carried the following article on October 19, 1941:

The propaganda section of the exhibition of the activities of Masons, Jews and Communists has these days published a number of interesting brochures, which every Serb should read. The first that deserves to be highlighted among the brochures published is The Protocols of the Elders of Zion, followed by Milorad Mojić’s book, Srpski narod u kandžama Jevreja (Serbian People in the Claws of Jews). Another rather interesting book is Slobodno zidarstvo ili Masonerija (Freemasonry), as well as Jevrejsko pitanje (The Jewish Question) by Jaša Tomić, Vjerozakonsko učenje Talmuda (The Religious Teachings of the Talmud) by Vaso Pelagić and Karel Čapek’s essay “Why I Am Not a Communist”. All of these brochures are rather topical today and very useful for every awakened and enlightened Serb.

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The grand opening of the anti-Masonic exhibition took place on October 22, 1941 in the building at 8 Garašaninova Street in Belgrade, which, until the war, had housed the seat of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija. The exhibition was conceived in such a way that each theme was allotted its own space or section. The first and largest section was devoted to Freemasonry, both local and global, the second to Jewry, local and international, the third to the Comintern, the fourth to the Soviet Union, and the fifth to the results of the New Germany in the fight with Freemasonry and the country’s economic and social revival.

The Freemasonry section included the reconstructed hall of the Grand Lodge “Jugoslavija”. Displayed on the chairs were pictures of renowned Masons and a pair of white gloves. Showcases contained Masonic props and regalia. Hanging on a wall was a huge panel with a list of all Masons and their positions. There was also a room with archival documents, as well as portions of the Jewish Masonic Lodge B’nei B’rit in Belgrade. On display on the first floor was the Prince of Wales Lodge from the island of Jersey.

The exhibition used the services of 15 guides, who had undergone one-month training. A tour of the exhibition with the guides’ descriptions and explanations lasted around two hours. During the 86 days of the exhibition, from October 22, 1941 to January 18, 1942, there were 80,800 visitors. There would have been more of them, but the Rail Directorate declined to transport citizens from the interior of the country for free. Companies, public institutions, faculties, schools, theaters and others organized visits to the exhibition. As the winter was cold, visitors came to the exhibition to warm up, but they were also attracted by the alluring presents that were given to every thousandth
Describing its impressions of the exhibition in its issue of December 16, 1941, the monthly Srpska scena obsequiously states: “On Wednesday, the 10th of this month, at 10 o’clock in the morning, the whole drama, opera and ballet troupe visited the anti-Masonic exhibition. The troupe was accompanied by the entire administrative staff of the theater...

Our artists were highly impressed by the numerous documents on display, which provide a clear picture of the intimate link between Communism and Judeo-Masonry, the two dark global political factors of huge proportions and power that have brought our beautiful country to the edge of the abyss. Our troupe had the pleasure of being accompanied by Dr. Lazar Prokić, chief of Active Propaganda in the Propaganda Department of the Presidency of the Serbian Government.”

The same Dr. Lazar Prokić states his views on the course of the exhibition in the weekly Ponedeljak of November 10, 1941: “The exhibition of the work of Masons, Jews and Communists at 8 Garašaninova Street is increasingly proving as uniquely instrumental not only in informing the public, but as a means of national edification, training and education. This is not what we, its humble and anonymous organizers, are saying, but the vast crowds of visitors, whose number is approaching 30,000.”

This kind of propaganda at the exhibition and surrounding the exhibition was aimed at finding the culprits for the great suffering of the Serbian people under the occupiers, and, according to it, they were Masons, Jews and Communists. Namely, the exhibition was intentionally held immediately following the atrocities the German

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occupiers committed in Kraljevo on October 14, 1941 and in Kragujevac on October 20, 1941, when 7,000 citizens were executed by shooting in line with the order that 100 Serbs be murdered in retaliation for every German killed. According to historian Milan Koljanin, “one of the main objectives of the exhibition was to provide an ideological justification for the mass repression, including that aimed at Jews”.10

The Masons in Serbia were closely monitored by all the security services of the occupiers and their local allies. However, an OZNA (Department of National Security) report of November 22, 1944 states: “No Freemason was executed because of his allegiance. Several Freemasons were executed, but for quite different reasons, e.g. Vladeta Milićević, charged with being an English spy; Dr. Milorad Đorđević, former minister and president of the Belgrade Cooperative Bank, so that the huge assets of the bank, whose main stockholders were the Karađorđević family, could be snatched by the Germans (Neihausen); and Dr Milivoje Pavlović, editor of the Politika daily, because of his anti-German activities at Arilje, etc.”

The statement made at the time that Freemasons, despite all the outcry, fared “well” sounds cynical even today. This was supported by a further statement that they succeeded in convincing German investigators, especially experts in the field, such as Dr. Nasserstein, that our Freemasonry was of a predominantly national character and that it essentially contained no international elements. This is also confirmed by the following note made by the new, communist authorities in the first years following the liberation of the country. It states that under the German administration Freemasons acted as patriots

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and the huge majority of them did what was right. They always sided with their three allies, even though most of them were known as “confirmed Anglophiles”.11

Even today, we cannot but feel a historical irony in the above statements. The irony is even greater given that both of these authorities were totalitarian and that both of them, each for their own reasons, suppressed Freemasonry in Yugoslavia, particularly in Serbia. To ascribe only national and patriotic character to Freemasonry is not a complete but only a single sided assessment. Being such, it cannot be true. It is a political assessment of the behavior of victims under persecution and terror.

The described events from the not so distant history of the Serbian Freemasonry have a great value even today. They are testimonies to a hard time, but also serve as a lesson for Freemasonry at large. They once again demonstrate that politics is not the choice of Freemasons, but that Freemasons are its choice.

11 Izveštaj OZNE, Slobodni zidari – Masoni za vreme okupacije u Beogradu, 22. novembar 1944. (OZNA Report, Freemasons in Belgrade during the occupation, Nov. 22, 1944), (in a private collection).
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Addenda

Statement of the Freemasonic Grand Lodge Jugoslavija

The Grand Lodge of Freemasons Jugoslavija has issued the following reply to the statement Dr. Korošec made on New Year’s Eve:

On the occasion of the New Year 1940, Dr. Anton Korošec addressed Slovenians extending his good wishes and also expressing his views on the three concerns that are bothering him at the beginning of the New Year. These three concerns are Communists, Freemasons and foreigners in Slovenia.
Leaving the first and the third concerns of Dr. Korošec to relevant authorities, whose surveillance does not exclude Freemasons either, it is the duty of the Freemasonic Grand Lodge Jugoslavija to say a few words about his second concern. For, this concern, by his judgment the same as the other two, is raised by an internal enemy against which there is everywhere a front of weakness, indecision and, above all, of course, huge immaturity.

Dr. Korošec said the following about Freemasons: “It is incredible how Freemasonry is gaining an ever greater impact in Yugoslavia. And this spells unpreparedness and danger for our homeland. Who does Jewish Freemasonry serve? Who does Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian Freemasonry serve? That some are primarily self-serving, this we know only too well. But how they serve the community and the common cause, this we do not know, because we do not know the commitments of individuals. Therefore, let us be wary of the black moles.”

First of all, it should be said that the reply of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija is to Dr. Korošec, politician and statesman, who has held the most important portfolios in seven governments since 1918, including three terms as minister for the interior and one as prime minister. This means that the reply of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija is not to Dr. Korošec, a priest of the Catholic Church. Namely, Dr. Korošec, as a clergyman must by all means already have fixed views on Freemasonry as prescribed by his church, from Pope Clement XII (with his encyclical of 1738) to Leo XIII (with his encyclical of 1884). We neither wish, nor dare address this view of his, nor do we wish to oppose him, as we do not desire to engage in discussions on historical truths or fallacies, because we wish to respect everyone’s principled views, including those held by opponents of Freemasonry as long as they refrain from derogating the honor and dignity of Freemasonry.
As politician and statesman, Dr. Korošec has had a prime possibility of familiarizing himself with the Yugoslav Freemasonry and getting all the answers for himself and the Slovenians he has addressed, because he has read the Constitution of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija, as it has been approved by the Ministry for the Interior and a copy of it is found in the Ministry archives. Besides, as Minister for the Interior, Dr. Korošec, with his power to monitor all associations, was well acquainted with their work, including the work of Freemasons. Thus, Dr. Korošec the politician and Minister for the Interior could have provided the most exhaustive answer to Dr. Korošec the priest, the principled church opponent of Freemasonry. Then again, both these Drs. Korošec were unable in 1936, following interventions that are well known to him, to establish that even a single one of the Yugoslav Freemasons had committed a crime against his homeland or failed to do any of his duties as its son and patriot. Since Dr. Korošec had the opportunity of familiarizing himself with the general statement of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija when it was published in the Politika daily on April 29, 1934 (and reprinted by all important dailies in the country), which, for the sake of the uninformed and, above all, its many opponents, expounds the character of Freemasonry and who and how it serves in Yugoslavia and to the humanity – the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija believes it must reply to Dr. Korošec – for the sake of all our patriotic public imbued with democratic sentiments, before which Dr. Korošec has laid such severe suspicions about Freemasonry.

The Grand Lodge Jugoslavija cannot provide any information about Jewish Freemasonry. The Grand Lodge Jugoslavija does not know of nor has any connections with such an organization. However, the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija can easily and readily answer the second part of the question, i.e. who the Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian Freemasonry serves and what the obligations of individual Freemasons are towards the Yugoslav state.
When joining a Lodge, Freemason members give their word that they do not belong to any illegal organization and take an oath regarding all the principles laid down in the Constitution of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija, that they will adhere to them all their life and be loyal to them. What these principles are like will be plain to the uninformed from only the three most important ones, namely Principles IV, V and VI.

“Four: Masons honor the Great Creator of all the worlds and tolerate everyone’s creeds. However, the Union does not belong to any sect or dogma; therefore, it does not perform any religious or church rites. In it, every brother is equally appreciated regardless of his religion.

“Five: As an open opponent of restricting the freedom of conscience, religion and thought, the Masonic Union defends these unalienable rights of individuals with all lawful means. And, as an advocate of personal rights and convictions, it also opposes any pressure on and suppression of religious or political beliefs.

“Six: The Masons of Yugoslavia love their Homeland: they are loyal and committed to it. They deem it their highest obligation to defend its freedom, independence and inviolability of its borders and cooperate on maintaining internal peace and order – by word, letter and deed. Accordingly, they are free to participate in any public business, but in doing so they must at all times be guided by Masonic principles. For, by acting in this way in their Homeland, they also contribute to the welfare of all humanity.”

It is, therefore, clear that all Freemasons, adhering to these principles, today as well as in the past most devotedly served their people, whether they were leaders or ordinary men, from the renowned Freemasons such as Prince Sigismund Gundulić and Count Kazimir Drašković (c. 1740) to the two latest Grand Masters, Brother Đorđe Vajfert, a Catholic, benefactor and patriot, who built both Orthodox and Catholic foundations, and Dušan Miličević, an Orthodox, who Belgrade learnt about at his funeral.
on September 1, 1939 from a large number of speakers, including those that are not Freemasons, outside the Cathedral Church and at his grave, but also in the Church of St. Nicholas at the 40-day memorial service from the mouth of the upright old priest, about who and how Dušan Miličević had served. How, however, the legions of Freemason writers and scholars, soldiers and statesmen, Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, acted in the 170 years since the foundation of the first Lodge in the Yugoslav territory to the current union of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija, whose ranks, besides secular people, also included priests, bishops, both Catholic and Orthodox, Slovenes, Croats and Serbs – Dr. Korošec, and all our patriotic public, will be able to find out from a major historical work that will, we hope, be published this year by the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija, which is waiting with clear conscience the judgment of both its contemporaries and the generations to come.

The Grand Lodge Jugoslavija has the courage to say that all those Freemasons who, due to human weakness, at any time breached one of the principles laid down in its Constitution, also suffered the consequences provided for in the Constitution and could no longer remain among the ranks of Freemasons. However, if such former Freemasons were to be used to come to the conclusion that Freemasonry is an organization that does not serve ethical, human, cultural and national interests, it would be a great error.

Mr. Anton Korošec rightfully watches over his reputation and his civic and ecclesiastical honors and will therefore be able to understand how difficult it is for the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija when its members are so badly hurt, suspected and accused by such a respectable and responsible person as if Freemasonry – Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian – belonged among internal enemies (the same as Communists and certain foreigners) even though, we state boldly, Dr. Korošec, except for his ecclesiastical principles, intolerance and dislikes, has absolutely no concrete information on which to base such a harsh judgment on the Freemason organization.
In these fateful moments for humanity and our homeland, the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija is convinced that all its members, as they have always done, will now fulfill their duty and, if need be, lay down their lives in doing so. Thus they will demonstrate that they have embraced Principle VI of the Constitution of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija.

While the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija may find comfort in the fact that, in the moments when a global cataclysm is threatening to push humanity into the biggest disaster since the creation of the world, the First Citizen of the United States of America, President Franklin Roosevelt, who the world public knows is a Freemason, is extending his hand to the Roman Pontiff, the Holy Father Pope Pius XII, in an attempt jointly to save humanity and the old civilization, at that same time, unfortunately and for no obvious reason, the Yugoslav prelate and statesman Dr. Korošec is attacking the Yugoslav Freemasons, hurling at them severest suspicions regarding their patriotism – placing them on the same plane as Communists and foreigners – i.e. spies.

Therefore, the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija most resolutely dismisses the insinuations of Dr. Korošec in the hope that he will change his opinion on the patriotism of the Yugoslav Freemasons, because he himself, as a clergyman, should be well aware of the Lord’s commandment about respecting the truth and not sinning against it.

(From a session of the Council of the Grand Lodge Yugoslavia held in Belgrade on January 3, 1940).
Facsimile of the document Conf. No. 33 of March 18, 1942, containing 33 questions for Freemasons (two pages):
Facsimile of the answers of Brother Dimitrie D. Đurić to the 33 questions, Nov. 28, 194 (three pages):
Facsimile of the statement of the Grand Lodge Jugoslavija published on pp. 1 and 2 of the Beogradske novosti daily on Jan. 8, 1940:

NOTE: Next Presentation relates to Masonic Exhibition; all pictures are divided in following groups: Posters; Post cards; Stamps. All presented documents, Post cards,
Stamps and old and rare books, used as a source for our writings, are collection private properties of a member of Regular Grand Lodge of Serbia.

Posters:

Inscription: You still do not know... Beware!
Inscription: Who will outweigh? None. But Jew is holding the balance… Visit ANTI-MASONIC EXHIBITION and you will be convinced.
Inscription: His Tools: Democracy, Masonery, Communism, Capitalism.
Inscription: His Tools: Democracy, Masonery, Communism, Capitalism.
Inscription: How come?!? Inscription: Even with Bolsheviks Jews feel good! And with Plutocrats Jews feels good! Why?! Cause Bolshevism and Plutocracy are JEWISH DEEDS!
Inscription: …but this Jewish dream of ruling the world is now disappearing under the blows of awakened nationalism! How? - find out on ANTI-MASONIC EXHIBITION.
Inscription: Jewish Balance.
Inscription: His Tool: Democracy, Masonery, Communism, Capitalism.
Inscription: “I have obeyed your Will, Comintern is disbanded”; Plans for Bolshevization of England and Amerika.”
Inscription: ‘‘Look-out” They are coming…”
Inscription: English Judas Kiss.
Inscription: “One that is Guilty”.
Inscription: “The Finance system in USA is 98% in Jews hands”.
Inscription: “The Press in USA is 97 % in Jewish hands”.
I
nscription: “Jew is holding the strings in his hands.

Whose, and How? – You get the answers on Anti-Masonic Exhibition…”
Post Cards:
Inscriptions:

- Will of fortune is running, it never stops. Who was upside, is now downside.

- Play with dolls. Puppet Theater.

- Jew measured – and all were busted for his survival.

- Jew governed the Globe – but the Globe will revenge.

- Who made a mistake – will safer now.

- Not to the abyss (General Nedić to Serbian Nation).

- There is no Principal, neither needle, nor thread for tattered Bolshevik creation.
Post letter Envelopes:

- Jubilee envelope in gold-letters print, with numeration.
- Post cachet in gold print.
- Ordinary envelop.
- The same day, month and year are on the all cachets: 1.1.1942.
Post Stamps:

- Special edition with surcharge for Anti-Masonic Exhibition in Belgrade (1.1.1941).
- Unsold quantity of stamps - destroyed. They were due up to 31.3.1942.

(Data source: Katalog poštanskim maraka u upotrebi na teritoriji Srbije od 1840-2011, Vol. 1., Šafar Zoran).
ANEX

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