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# The Royal Art of Free Masonry in Poland and in Germany in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Relations, Differences, and Similarities

## The studies

The studies on the history and culture of freemasonry and co-masonry in Poland, currently carried out on an increasingly larger scale, not only offer some concrete research results, but are also matched by the growth of the academics who explore the topic. At this point, it needs to be stressed with some degree of pride that these studies also make up the subject of numerous dissertations that allow scholars to be awarded academic degrees. Of the numerous publications, shorter and longer biographic studies, exhibitions and conferences, a project was organised being a part of the research grant “Polish Culture in Relation to Western Esoteric Philosophy, 1890–1939”, financed by the National Programme for the Development of Humanities.<sup>1</sup> Apart from the grant as such, a number of independent studies were also conducted.

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.tradycjaezoteryczna.ug.edu.pl> [accessed: 2.01.2020].

This paper is the presentation and the result of the scientific interests of Doctor Waldemar Gniadek, who specialises in German freemasonry, and Associate Professor Anna Kargol from Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University, who has been delving into free masonry and co-masonry in Poland in the inter-war period. Before Waldemar Gniadek's doctoral dissertation, the subject of German lodges in Poland had been described solely in a chapter in one of the books written by Leon Chajn, a scholar researching freemasonry. Yet this issue had never been further developed in a form of a more extensive study.<sup>2</sup> Scholars are practically completely silent about the difficult subject of Polish and German freemasonry relations. This is the reason why the two authors of this study have decided to shed light onto this issue, which makes up a significant part of their daily research. However, given the limited framework, this paper only looks at the few basic facts and conclusions on the subject at hand.

## Freemasonry in Poland after the First World War

The inter-war period in Poland is marked by an evident dominance of the Scottish Rite freemasonry, represented by the Grand Lodge of London. At that time, the political scene of freemasonry was practically dominated by one obedience, although it must be stressed that there were obviously other obediences too, with a much smaller significance. Before the rebirth of the Polish state, there had been several attempts at the restoration of freemasonry, which had been illegal during Poland's partitions and thus, some requests for assistance were sent to France. It was a natural process, as many Poles residing in Paris, which was the seat of the Polish political emigration, belonged to the Lodges there. A few outposts were created on the Polish territory, yet the outbreak of war put an end to their existence. Numerous sources prove that only two of them had managed to survive the turmoil of the war. After the establishment of the Second Polish Republic, it turned out that the connections with France were not convenient for the Polish authorities, with which the freemasons had close ties. They played a significant role in regaining independence and in the creation of the first state structures, so their attitude can, by all means, be regarded as state-oriented. French masonry, especially the *Grand Orient de France*, was an organisation with a republican, democratic, secular and largely leftist profile. This might raise some controversies in Poland, even among the progressively oriented intellectuals, and, what is more, political connections with France with some likely political dependency did not suit Józef Piłsudski. On the other hand, the French freemasons had a very low esteem of the cosmopolitanism and modernity of their Polish fraters.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> L. Chajn, *Wolnomularstwo w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1975; W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry lodges in the Second Polish Republic* (doctoral dissertation written under the supervision of Professor J. Szczepański, defended at the Faculty of History of Pułtusk University of Humanities on 24 January 2019).

<sup>3</sup> See also: L. Chajn, *Polskie wolnomularstwo 1920–1938*, Warszawa 1984; W. Giełżyński, *Wschód Wielkiego Wschodu*, Warszawa 2008.

For this reason, the ties with the *Grand Orient de France* were loosened and were gradually replaced with the contacts with Italian freemasonry. It was the Italians who helped to settle, in accordance with the freemasonic rules, the Grand National Lodge of Poland, which represented a different trend in freemasonry: more deistic and conservative, traditionally represented by the Grand Lodge of London. This young Polish obedience had a very specific nature. First of all, it was a small, quite elitist and secret group. It had never been officially registered, and it acted in confidentiality, so the public opinion was not aware of its existence. For this reason, among others the Grand National Lodge of Poland could not be recognised by the Grand Lodge of England. However, the Polish Lodge gained the acknowledgment of other masonry jurisdictions – both European and American ones.

The status of the Grand Lodge of Poland was determined by the political atmosphere. The right-wing governments did not encourage it to disclose itself, whilst the authoritarian direction adopted after the May Coup was also far from being friendly for freemasonry. Paradoxically, many free masons who had connections with the authority held significant state positions or, at least, posts in the then state administration, which was also the reason why the secret was kept. Therefore, the Grand National Lodge of Poland had a clandestine existence and preferred isolation and distance even from other masonry obediences. The surviving sources suggest that the discretion and loyalty among Polish fraters were very high.<sup>4</sup> It is characteristic that, in contrast with Czechoslovakian, Austrian or Yugoslavian freemasonry, freemasons in Poland did not print their newsletters or journals informing about their current activity, organisation structures, or composition. A similar approach was taken with respect to all original documents produced by specific freemasonry institutions.

Apart from the Grand National Lodge, there was also another organisation – the third masonry organisation: the *le Droit Humain* Order, i.e. the Human Right Order, which accepted both men and women as its members. This was indeed exceptional at that time in the world of freemasonry. The French obedience, *le Droit Humain*, was founded in Poland, as the third one, in 1925 as a result of the efforts of general Tokarzewski and Wanda Dynowska. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, after the congress of theosophists, the *le Droit Humain* Order established close relations with theosophists, and the obedience was definitely esoteric in its nature.<sup>5</sup>

The freemasonry landscape in Poland at that time is completed also by co-masonry organisations, such as B'nai B'rith, Odd Fellows, or Schlarafia. The Jewish organisation by the name of B'nai B'rith, in particular, was widespread amongst Jewish intellectuals in Poland. It was officially registered as a charity association

<sup>4</sup> L. Chajm, *Polskie wolnomularstwo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 229–243.

<sup>5</sup> L. Chajm, *Wolnomularstwo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 431–441; D. Bargiełowski, *Po trzykroć pierwszy. Michał Tokarzewski-Karaszewicz. Generał broni, teozof, wolnomularz, kapłan Kościoła liberalnokatolickiego*, t. II, Warszawa 2000–2001. A few years before the aggression of the Third Reich against Poland, in 1937, a lodge "Piramida Północy" ("The Pyramid of the North") belonging to the occultist trend was founded in Warsaw thanks to the support of the Sovereign Sanctuary of France of Memphis-Misraim Rite from Lyon), led by Borys Smysłowski. L. Hass, *Masoneria polska XX wieku, losy. Łoże, ludzie*, Warszawa 1993, p. 135.

and effectively represented the interest and opinions of this social group in the Polish public life.<sup>6</sup>

## Freemasonry in Germany after the First World War

In Germany, freemasonry went through a slightly different path. First of all, it must be noted that from the moment of its foundation up to the times of the Nazi repressions, freemasonry in Germany could develop freely, and thus the activity of the lodges was epitomised by an unbroken continuity. A club-like form of a freemasonry lodge was much more popular in German culture than in Poland, both among the Catholics and Protestants. Undoubtedly, its popularity in Germany can be attributed to the flourishing bourgeois class, and their traditions.

In Germany, many lodges were founded, and they were all characterised by a strong particularism and autonomy in practising their various rites. This situation persisted for the entire eighteenth and the majority of the nineteenth centuries. Interestingly, this was indicative of the great strength of the movement, and its independent position. It was the time when the lodges, initially dependent on France and England, started to gain social recognition, and to work out their own characters that were typical of German freemasonry. Unification tendencies started to appear already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which in 1877 led to the creation of the *Vereinigte Großlogen von Deutschland*.<sup>7</sup>

Yet the innate particularistic tendencies – perhaps culturally connected with the “eternal” territorial division – finally prevailed; so in the 1930s, there were as many as nine Grand Lodges acting in Germany, and they were all independently from one another.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after the First World War, the German Grand Lodges joined their efforts and structures in the distribution of the humanitarian aid for women and children, co-operating in the process with the Grand Lodge of England, the United States, and neutral countries. In 1922, three Berlin Grand Lodges left the federation built half a century before, in which some tensions and conflicts between “Christian” and “humanitarian” lodges had occurred. The federation was further weakened by the departure of the Grand Lodge of Saxony.

In 1930, the freemasonry of the German Reich had about 75 thousand members, associated in nine Grand Lodges. Of this number, two thirds belonged to the most ancient Old Prussian Lodges with a Christian and strongly nationalistic orientation. It was still in 1907 that the *Freimaurerbund zur aufgehenden Sonne* (the Masonic Union of the Raising Sun) was created, which was an organisation regarded as irregular by the majority of the world Grand Lodges. The freemasons from this

<sup>6</sup> A. Kargol, *Zakon Synów Przymierza. Krakowska Loźa „Solidarność” 1892–1938*, Warszawa 2013, eadem, *Loża Solidarność i Zakon B’nei B’rith. Z dziejów parawolnomularstwa żydowskiego na ziemiach polskich, Przegląd Historyczny* 2008, no. 99/2, pp. 249–275.

<sup>7</sup> See: <http://freimaurer.org/en/united-grand-lodges-of-germany/the-founding-history> [accessed: 27.12.2019].

<sup>8</sup> As a rule, a Grand Lodge is in charge of so-called “obediences”, playing the superior role and grouping the subordinate lodges.

organisation became the members of the Supreme Council of Austria, where, in 1929, they gained the highest 33<sup>\*</sup> degrees, and then, in the following year, they founded the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. The above-mentioned Supreme Council was installed by the Supreme Council of the Netherlands, which considered it to be oriented at the struggle against nationalism and Christian despotism.

In June 1930, 600 fraters left the obedience of *Freimaurerbund zur aufgehenden Sonne* to set up the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Germany, recognised by the Grand Lodge de France. The first Master Mason was Leo Muffelman. These fraters started to edit a journal by the name of *Die Alten Plichten* (Former Duties), where they proclaimed the aim of the newly created Grand Symbolic Lodge to be the struggle against fascism, bolshevism, and national socialism. To meet this objective, the obedience was supposed to go “hand in hand” with the Roman Catholic Church.”<sup>9</sup>

These actions were carried out until 1933, when the Nazi authorities dissolved all the freemasonry lodges. Then, the majority of freemasons decided to go dormant, and to liquidate the lodges. However, the Grand Symbolic Lodge not only did not take the decision to go dormant, but it also sent telegrams with congratulations to Goebbels and Hitler.<sup>10</sup> The Grand Lodge in Vienna then got involved in the internal political games of German freemasonry by allowing young masons from Germany who were dissatisfied with the German lodges going backward to be affiliated with the Austrian lodges. One of the affiliated members was Leo Muffelman, the founder of the *Freimaurerbund zur aufgehenden Sonne*, and then of the Symbolic Grand Lodge.<sup>11</sup>

## German Lodges in Poland

Both for Poland and Germany, the year 1918 marked a great breakthrough. Yet it seems that it was also a threshold date for freemasonry in these two countries. After Poland had regained independence, Polish freemasons started a process of obedience formation, which led to the creation of the Grand National Lodge of Poland in 1920. However, on the territories that had previously been under the Prussian rule, Prussian freemasonry lodges were set up with largely developed structures. On these areas, German lodges and German lodges of Polish provenience

<sup>9</sup> A. Kargol, ‘Zapiski masona. Relacja Kurta Reichla z rozmowy z Andrzejem Strugiem w 1932 roku w świetle polskiej historiografii’, *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria i praktyka* 2017, no. 1, pp. 187–206.

<sup>10</sup> W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry..., op. cit.* A few Old Prussian Lodges set up the National Christian Order and wanted to develop relations with fascists, claiming that Old Prussian Lodges never admitted Jews. These lodges declared that they stopped being masons and modified the existing ritual. Other lodges dissolved and transferred into Christian charity orders. Yet the act of 1933 concerned all freemasonry and co-masonry organisations, forcing them all to be dissolved. See also: A. Kargol, ‘Likwidacja łóż B’nei B’rith w Niemczech i w Polsce (1933–1938)’, *Ars Regia* 2010, no. 19, XII, pp. 159–160.

<sup>11</sup> W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry..., op. cit.*, [quoting] L. Hass, *Zasady w godzinie próby. Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo Wschodniej 1929–1941.*, Warszawa 1987, pp 27, 28, 39–45; [www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/bernheim12.html](http://www.freemasons-freemasonry.com/bernheim12.html) [accessed: 4.02.2017].

had been operating since the moment of liquidation of Polish freemasonry in 1821. They operated under the power of three Grand Berlin Lodges, also named Old Prussian lodges, whilst their members remained under a strong political influence of the "Iron Chancellor", and his *Kulturkampf*.<sup>12</sup>

What is more, since 1915, German field lodges, i.e. military lodges, had been created on Polish territories. German army entered Warsaw in August 1915, and already in autumn of that year, a founding meeting of the first field lodge was organised. Within six months of setting the freemasonry lights in the first such outpost, the number of members grew to one hundred fraters. The growth of the German free masonry lodges can be evidenced by the list of its members, "Zum Eisernen Kreuz im Osten" in Warsaw, which was published in June 1918. The list included one hundred and seventy three freemasons belonging to eight German obediences who were the members of the lodge.<sup>13</sup>

After the war, German field lodges were gravely attacked, in particular by General Erich Ludendorff and his followers, who regarded these lodges as "the cradle of the traitors of the homeland." Yet the character of these accusations was mainly delusional and clearly devoid of realistic content. In 1926, the General published his first book by the name of *Vernichtung der Freimaurerei durch Enthüllung ihrer Geheimnisse* (The Destruction of the Freemasonry by Revealing its Secrets). He wanted to prove that "the secret of the masonry lay in the fact that Jews were everywhere," with which he followed very closely the NSDAP rhetoric.<sup>14</sup>

In the regions of Greater Poland, Pomerania and Silesia, there were sixteen German lodges, and a few freemasonry clubs. Professor Ludwik Hass describes the situation in one of his works concerning free masonry on Polish territories after the First World War:

[...] German lodges, active on the lands previously under the Prussian rule, and under the authority of one of the three strongly conservative Grand Lodges in Berlin

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<sup>12</sup> More than fifty freemasonry lodges operated on the area of contemporary Germany under the authority of the conservative Grosse National-Mutterloge "zu den drei Weltkugeln" (Grand National Lodge – Mother "Under Three Globes"), Grosse Landesloge der Freimaurer von Deutschland (Grand National Freemasonry Lodge of Germany) and Grosse Loge von Preussen, genannt Royal York "zur Freundschaft" (Grand Lodge of Prussia, called Royal York "Under Friendship"). See more: L. Chajm, *Wolnomularstwo w II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1975, p. 459.

<sup>13</sup> As a point of interest, the atmosphere in the Warsaw lodge must be mentioned. It can be evidenced by the symbolism of the badges worn by German freemasons. Most probably, this is the most beautiful badge of all the other badges found in the field lodges. It displays the Iron Cross against the background of a burning star and the Square and Compasses are bolted on the Cross. In the upper part of the compasses, there is the Warsaw Mermaid, and the symbol of the Polish White Eagle next to it. This was seen as a visible sign of the support and sympathy of the German lodge members for the Polish efforts for the restoration of the state independence. Criticism for this badge came from General Erich Ludendorff, who claimed that such ideas stood in contrast with the German national nature. He believed that the combination of mason and national ideas always led to abuses of the symbols sacred for many Germans, and employed these symbols for the purposes which, from ethical and moral points of view, were contradictory with the nationalistic feelings. He would say, with great indignation, that this was a sheer mockery of the Iron Cross combined with masonry symbols.

<sup>14</sup> W. Gniadek, *Niemieckie loże...*, *op. cit.*

(so-called Old Prussian Lodges) with significant nationalistic and monarchist attitude, were realised from the subordination after these territories had been included into the Polish state. These lodges thus found themselves in a situation of “independent lodges” i.e. not subordinate to any centre of authority.<sup>15</sup>

Given the findings of Leon Chajn, there was not one, but actually three Grand Old Prussian Lodges, which left their freemasonry outposts within the borders of the newly restored Polish state. Seven of them carried out their activity under the authority of the *Grosse National-Mutter Loge “zu den drei Weltkugeln”*. These lodges were located in Bydgoszcz, Chojnice, Gniezno, Inowrocław, Krotoszyn, Poznań, and Ostrów. Five other lodges – in Chełm, Grudziądz, Leszno, Starogard, and Tczew – were dependent on the *Grosse Loge von Preussen, genannt “zur Freundthafft”*, whilst four lodges – in Brodnica, Katowice, Rawicz, and Toruń – fell within the jurisdiction of the third Old Prussian Lodge: the *Grosse Landesloge der Freimaurer von Deutschland*.<sup>16</sup>

On 28 October 1919, a conference of the Master Masons of German Lodges in Poland was held. The effect of this meeting was a resolution to address the Old Prussian Lodges in Berlin to be released from the organisational dependence existing so far.<sup>17</sup> It was already on 25 November 1919 that the *Grosse Loge von Preussen, genannt “zur Freundthafft”* exempted from its authority the two lodges: “*Augusta zur Unsterblichkeit*”, working in the symbolic east of Stargard, and the “*Friedrich zum unausloschlichen Gedachtnis*” lodge in Tczew. Three other lodges falling under this obedience received such an exemption; if it was not together with the two first ones, it was definitely soon after. The two other Grand Old Prussian Lodges followed suit, exempting their subordinate freemasonry workshops from the dependence.<sup>18</sup> Leon Chajn also believes that this was the outcome of the pressure of the Polish government of these lodges.

## Frail mutual relations

In his doctoral dissertation, Waldemar Gniadek stresses the fact that German Lodges in the Second Polish Republic never really aspired to be unified with the Polish outposts subordinated to the Grand National Lodge of Poland, and never asked them for any formal or actual approval of their situation. The author points out that

[t]he majority of German freemasons and their superiors in Berlin, similarly as the minority remaining on the territories separated from the German statehood, had high

<sup>15</sup> L. Hass, *Masoneria polska XX wieku. Losy, loże, ludzie*, Warszawa 1993, p. 66.

<sup>16</sup> L. Chajn, *Wolnomularstwo...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 459–460.

<sup>17</sup> W. Gniadek, *Niemieckie loże...*, *op. cit.*, on the basis of the research at the State Archives in Bydgoszcz, *Loge zum Licht im Osten, Inowrocław, Verband und Satzungsänderungen 1933–1938*, Ref.: 4, p. 171.

<sup>18</sup> L. Hass, *Ambicje, rachuby, rzeczywistość. Wolnomularstwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej 1905–1992*, Warszawa 1984, p. 206.

hopes of a quick change of the Treaty of Versailles. These groups regarded Poland to be a “seasonal state”. Also the numerous co-masonry organisations active in Germany tried in many ways to preserve their close ties with their outposts remaining in Poland. In 1920, two German freemasonry lodges in Poland could apply to the Grand National Lodge, “Unified Poles” for the consent for the creation of their own Grand Lodge of Germany in Poland. German lodges in the interwar Poland were, from the legal point of view, in a much better and more stabilised situation than Polish orders, which, as it is known, remained outside the law for the entire period of their activity.<sup>19</sup>

In 1920, the “*Bund deutscher Freimaurerlogen in Polen*” (The Association of German Freemasonry Lodges in Poland) was created by fourteen lodges operating in Poznań and the Pomeranian regions, and the Katowice lodge was soon to join them.<sup>20</sup> The association operated as a legally registered association.

There were several causes for the above situation. First of all, close connections between the histories of both Polish and German lodges with the political situation in both countries must be emphasised. Polish freemasonry, mainly connected with the camp of Piłsudski’s followers, made up some kind of a political background of the “old guard”. They took part in the creation of the intellectual atmosphere, paving the way for the May Coup. In the 1930s, it shared the turbulent fortune of this incoherent group: internally in conflict, representing its various fractions and branches, which resulted in numerous departures and – to use the freemasonry jargon – so-called “dormitions” of the fraters manifesting antidemocratic attitudes. Undoubtedly, for the above reasons, i.e. on account of the connections with the authorities and the administration, Polish lodges remained officially not registered, they did not have the form of a legal organisation and kept their activity strictly confidential. This discretion not only concerned profanes, but also fraters from other freemasonry obediences. Therefore, it must be emphasised that Polish freemasonry deliberately alienated itself from German lodges, did not seek contacts with them and was far from treating German freemasonry movement as a potential partner for any forms of collaboration or joint activity.

The situation was similar for the German lodges in Poland, which, as discussed in Gniadek’s doctoral thesis, regarded their situation as temporary. They perceived the Second Polish Republic as a so-called “banana republic”, failing to believe in its historic continuity. Thus, they did not see any sense in the unification with the Grand National Lodge of Poland. It must be stressed here that getting rid of the authority of the German Grand Lodges was regarded as a form of loyalty towards the Polish state – at least officially – and assuming the position of the “wild lodges” from the point of view of freemasonry rules. Beyond all doubt, this was the outcome of the reticent attitude of the Polish administration towards all types of German organisations, and the German element.<sup>21</sup> The belief in their anti-Polish

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<sup>19</sup> W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>20</sup> Hass mentions the year 1921, Chajń – 1920. Cf. L. Hass, *Ambicje, rachuby...*, *op. cit.*, p. 206; L. Chajń, *Masoneria polska...*, *op. cit.*, p. 462. Chajń’s version seems to be confirmed by the articles of incorporation of the association presented in the Moscow Archives. A copy owned by the author of the dissertation. See more: W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry...*, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> W. Gniadek, *German free-masonry...*, *op. cit.*



propaganda or even espionage activity was not far-fetched. In the case of German freemasonry lodges, such actions were never proven, although it may be guessed that not all fraters were the apologists of the Polish state. However, it must be stated that these institutions, by all means, behaved neutrally, or even in an exceptionally loyal way.

## The Brothers: who were they?

The social differences between German and Polish freemasons also had some degree of significance here. As a matter of fact, Polish masonry originated from the elites: intellectuals and social activists. Many of them belonged to the ministerial administration staff serving there as counsellors and department directors, or even ministers, not to mention a few prime ministers too.<sup>22</sup> The social composition of the German freemasonry was more of middle class and bourgeois, rather than intellectual or elitist. As for numbers – both milieus were comparatively small. According to official data, in 1931–1932, the number of German freemasons associated in lodges on Polish territories was four hundred and ninety eight; amongst them only twenty three were younger than 35, one hundred and fifty nine were aged 35–50, whilst a definite majority, i.e. three hundred and sixteen, were over fifty.<sup>23</sup>

The social and professional status of the above group in 1932 differed significantly from the one before the First World War, which meant that German masonry in Poland was going through a wave of major internal changes. The group comprised seventy-six merchants, and seventy-four landowners and real property owners. There were also sixty-five company owners, forty-one craftsmen, thirty-one physicians, forty-seven engineers and technicians, twenty directors (banks, ironworks, factories), twelve teachers and academics; four superintendents and pastors, seventeen construction entrepreneurs, as well as seventeen proxies, agents and administrators, eighteen pensioners, three artists, the rest representing all the other professions.<sup>24</sup> With time, taking into account the baseline, the lodges had lost more than six hundred members since 1918. The regular censuses of the lodges revealed the disappearance of the army and police officers, civil servants, a large group of school headmasters and teachers. Only the few members who could perform a significant role in the intellectual development of the community remained in the lodges.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> A. Kargol, *Strug. Biografia polityczna*, Warszawa–Kraków 2016, pp. 201–225; W. Gniadek, 'Doktor Judym z Buska-Zdroju – biografia Szymona Starkiewicz', *Medycyna Rodzinna* 2014, no. 2; idem, 'Mieczysław Michałowicz – życie i działalność', *Medycyna Rodzinna* 2014, no. 3; idem, 'Rafał Radziwiłłowicz – wybitny psychiatra, działacz społeczny i wolnomularski', *Medycyna Rodzinna* 2015, no. 2; idem, 'Prof. Jan Mazurkiewicz – wolnomularz, twórca nowoczesnej polskiej psychiatrii i psychofizjologii', *Medycyna Rodzinna* 2016, no. 1.

<sup>23</sup> W. Gniadek, *Niemieckie loże...*, *op. cit.*, after: *Mitglieder – Verzeichnis der dem Bunde deutscher Freimaurer Logen in Polen angehörenden, Johannisfreimaurer – Logen für das Jahr 1931/32*.

<sup>24</sup> L. Chajm, *Wolnomularstwo...*, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

<sup>25</sup> L. Hass, *Ambicje, rachuby...*, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

A significant element which could lower the attractiveness of freemasonry ideas in the German community inhabiting Poland was the gradual penetration of the chauvinist and radically nationalistic ideology originating from Germany after 1924. What is also important is that this political trend was characterised with an overt aggression towards freemasonry.

Once this composition of the lodges is compared with the typically intellectual character of Polish freemasonry, with the domination of progressive and definitely social democratic trends (as the majority of Polish freemasons originated from Polish Socialist Party and in the 1930s they set up Alliance of Democrats and Democratic Clubs)<sup>26</sup>, it is clear to see that these two social groups of different nationality could not have anything in common. This was due to the fact that at the beginning of the twentieth century Polish freemasonry was restored by a progressive and socialist-oriented intelligentsia. In Germany, in turn, where the bourgeoisie had always been very strong, masonry, traditionally closely linked with this social group, not only was continually growing and getting more and more cultivated, but also was spreading more and more into petit bourgeoisie. In Polish freemasonry, in contrast, there were lodges consisting entirely of professors, which was both a reason for glory and a limitation for Polish freemasonry.

## The influences

The lack of mutual contacts and the far-reaching indifference for each other's existence were also the outcome of cultural differences, as Polish and German freemasonry stemmed from two completely different masonry traditions.

In the initial stage of its development, German freemasonry was the area of strong influences of both French and English freemasonries. The rite created following the spirit of medieval symbolism and knightly ethos was the Order of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (called *Strictae Observantiae* – Strict Observance with regards to its monocratic character), founded in 1751 by Karl Gotthelf von Hund und Altengrotkau, a Silesian baron.<sup>27</sup> In the eighteenth century, more than 70% of the German freemasonry lodges worked in the system of the Templar Strict Observance.

At the same time, in Sweden, the principles of a new rite were worked out by merging various European systems: the English St. John's rite, the French rite, the York rite, the SOT (Templar Strict Observance), and the elements borrowed from the rites of the Rosicrucian Order. In 1774, the Master Mason of Swedish freemasonry Prince Charles of Södermanland (later Charles XIII of Sweden) in 1801 introduced the final modifications to the rite, developing moral philosophy, and adding some characteristics of a knightly order. This is a rite of a Christian mystical nature, based on a gnostic and cabbalistic tradition, in which Jesus Christ is regarded to be the Highest Master and a True Knight. There are historical reasons

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<sup>26</sup> *Materiały do historii Klubów Demokratycznych i Stronnictwa Demokratycznego w latach 1937–1939*, parts 1 and 2, Introduction and Edition by L. Chajn, Warszawa 1964.

<sup>27</sup> W. Gniadek, *Niemieckie loże...*, *op. cit.*

for which German freemasonry lodges used a number of rites, but most frequently they reached back to the Swedish Rite.<sup>28</sup>

Generally speaking, in Germany in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, at least eight rites were cultivated, being either the reformed Swedish rite, or a mutation of the Templar Strict Observance, like for instance the Rectified Scottish Rite. As opposed to the countries in which only one Grand Lodge existed and used only one rite, in German countries there was a great and misleading diversity of the rites in St. John's Lodges. Currently, almost 80% of German lodges carry out their activity on the basis of the Swedish and Rectified rites, whilst other lodges use mainly the "Schröder" Rite, and eclectic rituals.

Polish freemasons, in turn, who came into being at the beginning of the century in the Paris lodges of the *Grand Orient de France*, were "brought up" in the French (in other words – secular) rite, which was significantly simplified and ideologically linked with republican and democratic traditions.<sup>29</sup> It was only when the Grand National Lodge of Poland was founded in 1920 with the assistance of the Grand National Lodge of Italy that the rules of English freemasonry were introduced, and they were supported by the Grand Lodge of England. These rules rest chiefly on deism and primarily, although not solely, on the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry.<sup>30</sup> In spite of this change, the majority of Polish fraters remained closely connected to the ideas of French freemasonry from which they had grown. The circles of the French and German freemasonry cultures had never overlapped before and were quite hostile towards each other.

## Brothers in the Army

The study of the similarities and differences between the Polish and German lodges should definitely include some references to military lodges. The tradition of the field or regimental lodges is as old and freemasonry itself. Taking into consideration that the majority of high officers in Western Europe came from the middle classes, freemasonry traditions easily penetrated to the army. German freemasons founded field lodges, already mentioned above, which operated until 1918. Military lodges also existed in Polish freemasonry in the inter-war period. These lodges had a slightly different nature, because they were not field lodges created on the front, but rather organisations formed out of military ones – informal bodies within the official army structure. The most known were the lodges by the name of "Machnicki", "Łukasiński", and "Sowiński", which gathered Piłsudski's followers and were supposed to provide the party's background among the army officers. Within the army, there were also secret organisations modelled on freemasonry; yet their true freemasonry character seems doubtful.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> W. Kirk MacNulty, *Wolnomularstwo*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 212–214.

<sup>29</sup> K. Wojciechowski, *Ryt Francuski od Alchemii do racjonalizmu*, Wrocław 2009, pp. 29–62.

<sup>30</sup> A. Millar, *Masoneria. Zarys dziejów*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 219–225; for more information, see: I. Mainguy, *La symbolique maconique du troisieme millenaire*, Paris 2019.

<sup>31</sup> L. Chajm, *Polskie wolnomularstwo 1920–1938*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 158–165.

A unique occurrence in the mutual contacts of Polish and German freemasons was an incidental meeting between Kurta Reichl and Andrzej Strug in 1932. Kurt Reichl, a German freemason of a higher rank had political connections with the Grand Lodge of Vienna, being its High Officer and an active member of the Supreme Council. He sought contact with Andrzej Strug, one of the founders of Polish freemasonry, a holder of the 33<sup>rd</sup> degree initiation and a member of the Supreme Council in Poland. Both gentlemen met in the Prague lodge called "*Adonhiram*", which belonged to "*Lessing zu drei Ringen*", the most socially active lodges within the section of the Grand Lodge of Germany.<sup>32</sup> Reichl's goal was to obtain information about Polish freemasonry. The aspect of this situation that strikes one the most is that this German mason could not meet his objective by contacting ... German lodges in Poland; he had to take a roundabout approach and use the agency of freemasons of other obediences to arrange a meeting with a representative of a Polish order ... in Prague! This very fact already offers a full picture of the mutual relations between Polish and German lodges, their knowledge of each other, and the degree of alienation of each of them.

## Grand Master's opinion

In the opinion of Andrzej Strug, the German Freemasonry Order had no cultural or political significance. "It was neither efficient in national or supranational terms. German fraters were either obscure world cosmopolitans, or accidental philistines," according to Strug. But, as he further noted "[i]n German freemasonry, the very few classics of humanity were a great thing."<sup>33</sup> He goes on to argue that

[y]ou probably know very little about German freemasonry in Poland. I could convince you that we are dealing with it only formally and we are satisfied with it. Thus you have a full reflection: neither national nor international, neither water nor wine, rather diluted fraters associated over some wine. The order which did not have enough spirit to live, but too many members and contributions to die. This is the example that confirms how right you are in talking about the lack of cultural or political mission of German workshops not only in Poland.<sup>34</sup>

## The twilight

Apart from masonry lodges, in both countries there were also numerous co-masonry organisations, and they should not be neglected. The largest co-masonry organisation, having many lodges both in Poland and in Germany, was a Jewish co-masonry that operated in line with the principles of a charity association by the

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<sup>32</sup> K. Reichl, *Memorandum w sprawie Polski*, Część Zbiorów Specjalnych, Zbiory Masońskie Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Poznaniu (BUP), Papiery dr Leona Chajna, teczka Artykuł o Strugu, Materiały i Korespondencja, brak paginacji.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

name of *B'nai B'rith*, and, to be precise, the *B'nai B'rith* Order (Hebrew: the Children of the Covenant). In both countries, *B'nai B'rith* founded its lodges as early as in the nineteenth century (in the case of Poland it was on Polish territories under the rule of partitions). In this case of co-masonry, the co-operation and mutual contacts of these two Jewish diasporas were very advanced. Both in Poland and in Germany, the *B'ani B'rith* was legally registered pursuant to the regulations on associations, The German *B'ani B'rith* Order survived the liquidation of the masonry lodges in the first months of 1933, but the Nazi law of 11 April, which banned the political activity of all non-Aryans, gave grounds for a battle against Jews and Jewish organisations. The repressions which affected all German *B'ani Brith* fraters resounded widely in Poland and in Europe, and the Polish *B'nai B'rith* lodges wanted to commence an extensive aid with the support of other lodges of the Order. This, however, was met with a firm opposition of the German *B'nai B'rith*, which feared an increase of the repressions. Thus the Polish Order requested its Viennese fraters (as there were also Jewish lodges) to go to Berlin in order to get the idea about the situation. The Viennese fraters did not take up this mission, but they delegated a trusted person to go from Prague to Berlin. This is how the command not to take any actions was sent from Berlin.<sup>35</sup> This situation clearly illustrates the profound relations within the *B'nai B'rith* in all the surrounding countries of the region. It was completely different than in the case of freemasonry, where internal political situation motivated to remain confidential, whilst mutual differences and frequent animosities of purely freemasonic character led to alienation. Once the disparity caused by the circumstances of the state foreign policy is taken into account, the picture of the above relationship is complete.

In Germany, the actions taken by the authorities towards freemasonry and *B'nai Brith* took diverse courses. Some lodges tried to oppose the Nazis, whereas the Old Prussian lodges tried to ingratiate themselves with the authorities by claiming that they were "free from Jews". Yet finally, in 1935, all the freemasonry associations were dissolved, and their assets were confiscated. The *B'nai B'rith* lodges, given their Jewish character, were not taken into consideration as a political entity.

In Poland, since 1937 a crude manhunt for masons was making itself conspicuous, and it was favoured by the authoritarian government. The Grand National Lodge of Poland, taking advantage of the friendly contacts in the governmental milieu, was informed in advance about the plans of the authorities and managed to be one step ahead of the decree dissolving the lodges. Before President Ignacy Mościcki issued the decree dissolving freemasonry associations in November 1938, the lodges managed to get dissolved themselves and hide their archives. The Polish government needed all the more some spectacular actions to prove its effectiveness which, in this situation, had clearly been undermined. Therefore, the decree affected the easiest target, i.e. the legally registered German lodges, and the legally active co-masonry lodges of *B'nai B'rith*. Contrary to popular belief, dissolving *B'nai B'rith* lodges in Poland was not an act of anti-Semitism.

In Germany, in 1935, *B'nai B'rith* was not regarded as belonging to masonry lodges, and thus it did not share their fate, nor was it dissolved. In Poland, *B'nai*

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<sup>35</sup> A. Kargol, 'Likwidacja łóz B'nei B'rith...', *op. cit.*, pp. 159–160.

*B'rith* lodges were dissolved as co-masonry organisations that depended on freemasonry in November 1938.<sup>36</sup>

## The Second World War

During the Second World War, the Gestapo carried out the searches and detentions amongst both German and Austrian freemasons. In the summer of 1940, the then political police appeared in the apartment of Stanisław Stempowski, one of the long-time Master Masons of the Polish freemasonry. Stempowski was not arrested but, instead, he was ordered to draft a report concerning Polish freemasonry. He intentionally marginalised the role of the lodges, and apart from his own name and the name of then-deceased politician, Walery Stawek, there were only the names of the freemasons generally known to the public from masonic publications. He described the lodges as branches of Piłsudski's party operating at his orders.

Without any knowledge about Polish lodges, the Nazi political police was unable to verify the information contained in the report. Perhaps this incidence of misleading the gestapo could be the key to understanding the strange discovery in the Szczecin archives. This was a collection of files with a significant value for the studies of the freemasonry in Germany and the states occupied by the Third Reich, contained in the personal files kept in the State Archives in Szczecin.

The files were created by the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) in 1939–1945.<sup>37</sup> Apart from RSHA, the data concerning the opponents of the national socialism (and freemasons were considered to be some of them) were also collected by the Secret State Police (Gestapo) and Security Service (SD). These files make up a new source of information about Polish citizens – members of freemasonry lodges carrying out activity on Polish territories in 1918–1938.<sup>38</sup> It is interesting to see that these files do not contain the names of the freemasons who were the members of any of Polish obediences.

It might seem surprising that the number 41,533 belongs to the file created for Józef Piłsudski /sic!/, although it is widely known that the Marshall never belonged

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 159–160.

<sup>37</sup> This set contains 46,528 uniform evidence charts containing information about individual members of freemasonry or co-masonry. Each chart contains twelve typed or handwritten windows with some space for a photograph, name and surname, birthdate, residence address, lodge affiliation, function, religion, nationality, profession, etc. Some people listed there have two or even three charts like that. This is the effect of some dispute concerning the competencies of the offices responsible to searching the milieus regarded as hostile for the Third Reich.

<sup>38</sup> This set contains an evidence chart that allows to identify the name and surname of a Warsaw merchant who received initiation in 1915 in a German field lodge by the name of "Under the Iron Cross", active in Warsaw, which clearly shows that German freemasons during the First World War admitted local Poles, which even recently was not obvious. Some other charts certify that Polish citizens of German origin belonged to lodges in Poznan, Katowice, Leszno, Gniezno, Stargard, Toruń, Bydgoszcz, and the lodges active in the then Free City of Danzig. Not all the names listed in the RSHA charts are present in the reports of the Association of German Freemasonry Lodges in Poland, which were regularly submitted to the Polish administration.

to freemasonry. In the opinion of Professor Eugeniusz Cezary Król, Director of the Institute of Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN), this fact could well confirm the allegations that at the turn of the 1920s and the 1930s, German intelligence was preparing a provocation addressed at Marshall Piłsudski.

## Conclusions

To sum up the report concerning the studies of the mutual relations between Polish and German freemasons, reference should also be made to the valuable materials documenting the activity of German freemasonry lodges in inter-war Poland, kept by the Special Section of the Russian State Military Archives in Moscow. These documents have never been used in the studies of Polish masonry scholars. These materials were seized and taken to the Soviet Union by special military units following the frontline moving westward, and taking over the archival materials looted by RSHA in Germany, and on the territories occupied by the German Army.

It was only in 1990 that the authorities of the Russian Federation decided to render the documents collected in these Archives available for academic research. The first scholar to study these documents was Professor Helmut Reinalter, an Austrian scholar carrying out research of the history of freemasonry. He made an objective catalogue of a few thousands of archival materials containing freemasonry documents, including a set of files concerning the German lodges active in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries on Polish territories, and then published this catalogue at Peter Lang, a Frankfurt-based publishing house.<sup>39</sup> The first Polish academic to use and study these materials was Waldemar Gniadek.

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<sup>39</sup> H. Reinalter, *Die deutschen und österreichischen Freimaurer Bestände im Deutschen Sonderarchiv in Moskau (heute Aufbewahrungszentrum der historisch-dokumentarischen Kollektionen)*, Frankfurt 2002.

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## *Królewska sztuka wolnomularstwa w Polsce i Niemczech w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Relacje, różnice i podobieństwa* **Streszczenie**

Artykuł dotyczy stanu badań nad wolnomularstwem niemieckim w Polsce oraz wzajemnymi relacjami pomiędzy lożami polskimi i niemieckimi w pierwszej połowie XX wieku. Łoże niemieckie na pozaborczych terenach polskich dalej wiodły swój żywot w okresie II Rzeczypospolitej. Równocześnie w Polsce żywo rozwijała się masoneria. Autorzy artykułu



starają się dać odpowiedź na pytania, jak układała się koegzystencja obydwu wolnomularskich kręgów kulturowych oraz jakie były przyczyny takiego stanu rzeczy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wolnomularstwo niemieckie w Polsce, wolnomularstwo w Polsce w pierwszej połowie XX w., wolnomularskie relacje polsko-niemieckie

*The Royal Art of Free Masonry in Poland and in Germany  
in the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century:  
Relations, Differences, and Similarities  
Abstract*

This paper looks at the research on German Freemasonry in Poland, and the relations between Polish and German Lodges in Poland in the first half of the twentieth century. The German Lodges which remained in the post-partition territories of Poland continued their existence during the Second Polish Republic. At the same time, the Polish Lodges started to grow vividly. The authors of the paper have made an attempt to answer the questions about the model of coexistence of both the Masonic circles of different culture and the type of reasons that played a major role in this process.

**Key words:** German Freemasonry in Poland, Freemasonry in Poland in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Masonic Polish-German relations

*Die königliche Kunst der Freimaurerei in Polen  
und in Deutschland in der ersten Hälfte des XX. Jahrhunderts:  
Beziehungen, Unterschiede und Ähnlichkeiten  
Zusammenfassung*

Der Artikel betrachtet die Forschungen über die deutsche Freimaurerei in Polen und die gegenseitigen Beziehungen zwischen den polnischen und deutschen Logen in der ersten Hälfte des XX. Jahrhunderts. Die deutschen Logen bestanden in der II. Republik Polen in denjenigen polnischen Gebieten weiter, die früher besetzt waren. Gleichzeitig entwickelte sich in Polen die Freimaurerei lebhaft. Die Autoren des Artikels versuchen die Fragen zu beantworten, wie beide Kulturkreise der Freimaurer nebeneinander existieren konnten und was die Gründe hierfür waren.

**Schlüsselwörter:** die deutsche Freimaurerei in Polen, die Freimaurerei in Polen in der ersten Hälfte des XX. Jahrhunderts, die polnisch-deutschen Beziehungen der Freimaurerei

*Королевское искусство свободного масонства  
в Польше и Германии в первой половине XX века.  
Взаимоотношения, различия, сходства  
Резюме*

Статья посвящена состоянию исследований проблематики немецкого масонства в Польше и взаимоотношений между польскими и немецкими ложами в первой половине XX века. Немецкие ложи действовали во Второй Речи Посполитой на польских территориях ранее находящихся в составе других государств. В то время в Польше масонство развивалось очень динамично. Авторы статьи предприняли

Anna Kargol, Waldemar Gniadek

попытку ответить на вопросы касающиеся того, как складывалось сосуществование обоих масонских культурных кругов и каковы были факторы сыгравшие главную роль в этом процессе.

**Ключевые слова:** немецкое масонство в Польше, масонство в Польше в первой половине XX века, польско-немецкие масонские отношения