

# The Price of Freemasonry

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September 25, 1994

The streets were empty. Shops shut. All buildings had their doors closed.

The Grand Boulevard, as far as the eye could see, was deserted. The silence was unbelievable.

Adolph Hitler's armies moved into Paris and changed its history.

All freedom was lost. The Underground was the force against the German army, the German rule.

The French government was no more. The political parties and people began to look for excuses as to why this was happening. Paris – occupied!

The Germans began to feel opposition. Who could they blame? Who could they accuse? Traitors! But who were they? Where were they? Were they French, German or English? Perhaps communists? Or the work of a Fifth Column?

**Maybe it was the Jews!** Perhaps it was an occult power – **Freemasons!**

The Germans determined to make hard demands on both the Jew and Freemasons, linking the two together, or at least trying to.

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A law was passed on August 13, 1940, to outlaw secret societies, which in effect meant Freemasonry.

In an attempt to ward off the blow, Arthur Groussier, president of the Grand Orient (the leading Freemason), a few days earlier, had sent Henri Philippe Petain a letter of voluntary dissolution of Masonic organizations.

Later Groussier gave this account of what happened to him: "I returned home, a search had taken place. The day after I was back I reported to the commander at Enghien . . . Then they came to find me.

"One day I found seven German officers sitting around my table, and I had a long conversation with them. They found my house rather humble.

"The first thing I heard was, 'Is this your chateau?' I was supposed to be rich, like most Grand Masters in Europe. They saw how I organized a simple life by myself . . .

"My feeling was that I was responsible for the *fate of Masons*.

"Lists of Masons were in their possession, and no act of mine was to serve as a pretext for treating Masons as they treated Jews. One day a police commissioner, who was driving me to Paris to appear before a German inquiry, told me that he and his department were being criticized for not uncovering the ultra-secret cells of Freemasonry; and he added, 'I begin to think that the reason for this is that there are none.' I answered: 'Obviously, if there had been any you would have found them.' "

Freemasonry has been depicted in France as an occult power and anti-clerical [Editor's Note: And not only in France.] Some critics believe the Masons to be an old-boy network of industrialists and bankers.

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What the Germans actually found was a club-like organization that did charitable works, held luncheons and meetings, and commanded limited loyalty among members.

On the Avenue Foch was an office headed by a Dr. Pfannstiel of the S.S., Director for Service of Secret Societies. This was with the approval of Petain. Another office was set up at No. 16 rue Cadet, the confiscated headquarters of the Freemasons. A special police force was set up for use by the anti-Masonic service to liquidate Masonic Lodges.

Lists were established of Freemasons who by profession were bureaucrats or soldiers. [See addendum.]

At the beginning of October 1940, an anti-Masonic exhibition opened at the Petit Palais. There they tried to show that members had the best and most lucrative jobs, without having personal merit or skill. There, also, was on display the interiors of the lodges, initiation rites, triangles, skulls, Masonic ornaments and vestments, and assorted accessories. Also a diagram denouncing all the Freemasons in history, from which it appears that 96% of great men belonged to the Three-dot Brethren. Brochures were selling for forty sous (fifteen cents), and everyone was hopeful of finding the name of some friend or colleague.

Out of a 1919 membership of 50,000, 6,000 were harassed one way or the other by anti-Masonic measures. Nine hundred eighty-nine Freemasons were deported; 545 died in concentration camps or were executed.

Pierre Chevalier, who has written the official history of Freemasonry in France, leaves open the question whether or not responsibility for this total lies exclusively with the anti-Masonic service.

Petain set a much-publicized tone with this remark, "A Jew cannot help being what he is, but to a Freemason is a choice."

## Addendum

*Editor's Note: The following adds additional information about Freemasonry in France during the Nazis occupation. It will be found in Seekers of Truth, Allen E. Roberts; Anchor Communications, 1988.*

In an article appearing in *The Trowel* of the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts in 1986, Henri J. A. Laprime wrote about the atrocities of the 40s. "The Vichy government made a decree, Aug. 12, 1940, prohibiting all secret societies. This decree was specifically aimed at Freemasonry. Admiral Charles Platon, a fanatic Calvinist member of the French Parliament, thought all Masons should be burned at the stake."

Laprime said a search was made for all Masonic lodges and members. Masonic property was seized in all occupied countries. In France all Masons were arrested. "The archives were centralized and placed in the custody of Bernard Fay, an historian and fanatic enemy of Masons." The head of state was given the power to eliminate Freemasons, "and until the end of the Vichy government many anti-Masonic measures were applied by Vichy and Berlin. The Gestapo took up residence at Avenue Foch in Paris and centralized all their anti-Judaic and anti-Masonic activities. Varieties of torture were carried out and those who proudly wore our symbolic apron were executed. Thousands of French Brethren died for the cause of liberating their nation."

Laprime continued: "In the Buchenwald camp more than 100 Masons like Charles Riandey, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of France . . . were all executed. The Nazi court of justice ordered the punishment of 6,000, among whom 549 were killed by the firing squad and 900 others deported to death camps."

What finally happened to Bernard Fay, the arch-enemy of Freemasonry? David G. Boyd, MPS, a lieutenant colonel stationed in Heidelberg, Germany, and Master of Alt Heidelberg

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Lodge No. 821 in 1987, was asked to do some detective work. He did, and filled in several blanks.

Bernard Fay was born in Paris on April 3, 1893. He studied at the *Condorcet* and the *Sorbonne* from 1907 to 1914. He was a volunteer in the Army Red Cross during World War I. He resumed his studies in 1919. He received an LL.D and M.A. from Harvard, then served as a professor at the University of Clermont Ferrand from 1923-33, then at the College de France from 1933 to 1945. He made several trips to the United States between 1919 and 1939. He was appointed the administrator of the French National Library in 1940 and remained there until his arrest in 1945. He wrote numerous books and many articles for various magazines. It appears his specialty was in the history of Freemasonry.

Henri Coston, who along with Fay, ran the anti-Masonic operation in France under the Nazis, said Fay escaped from the French penitentiary at St. Martin de Re seven or eight years after he was sentenced to life at hard labor. How he managed to escape isn't clear. He returned to France and continued writing! Fay died in Tours on December 31, 1978. His funeral was held on January 4, 1979.

So well had Fay duped the Masonic world, well-known Freemasons often quote from his works even in this year 1988!

Were there German Freemasons in the Gestapo who re-membered their obligations? Could be. The Germans raided the Grand Lodge of Norway and many of its lodges immediately after their occupation. The loot that wasn't destroyed was loaded and sent on its way to Berlin. The shipment disappeared and didn't reach its destination. With the defeat of the Nazis the stolen items were quietly returned to the Grand Lodge.