

ATTITUDES OF YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES TO FREEMASONRY IN YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1945*

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ABSTRACT: *The paper analyses the reasons why Freemasonry could not be re-activated in 1945-47 in communist Yugoslavia, unlike in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. It gives insights into the freemasonic circles that operated in Belgrade in the 1950s and 1960s, and the activities of the Supreme Council of Yugoslavia in Exile. It also explains how the secret services of communist Yugoslavia and publicists in the 1980s used very similar explanations on Freemasonry as anti-Masonic propaganda by clerical and pro-Nazi authors in 1926–1944.*

KEYWORDS: Yugoslav Freemasonry, Anti-Masonic propaganda, Yugoslav secret services

After the Great War, three lodges in Serbia¹ and the lodges in Croatia that had operated under the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary till 1918 decided to establish a supreme masonic body. In June 1919, the Grand Lodge of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes "Yugoslavia" (GLY) was formed in Zagreb. In the 1920s and 1930s, Yugoslav Freemasonry gathered members of the cultural, economic, and social élites.² It was a very pro-Yugoslav organisation that enjoyed discreet support from King Alexander. However, when the Grand Lodge "Yugoslavia" collided with the government over the Concordat Crisis in 1937, Prince Regent Paul instead chose to support the 77th District of Rotary International and, in May 1938, became its Honorary Governor *ad vitam*.³

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¹ In June 2023, the nucleus of this paper was presented at the symposium entitled "Bringing Light Back to Yugoslavia, Central, and Eastern Europe". Edited transcripts from the symposium were published for internal use: S. G. Markovich (ed.), *Bringing Light Back to Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe* (Belgrade: RGLS, 2024).

² Slobodan G. Marković. *Jedan vek Velike lože Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca „Jugoslavija“*, (Belgrade: RGLS and Dosije Studio, 2019), 135-138. Cf. Ranka Gašić, "Srpski masoni između dva svetska rata kao društvena grupa", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju*, vol. V, no. 1-3 (1998), 85-100.

³ Slobodan G. Markovich, "Cultural Transfer Europe-Kingdom of Yugoslavia seen through the Activities of the Grand Lodge 'Yugoslavia' and the 77th District of Rotary International", in Aleksan-

Russian émigrés in Yugoslavia were involved in the first well-organised anti-Masonic campaign. In addition, after the Anschluss, in 1939–40, the German special police service *Sicherheitsdienst* for the area of Upper Danube made concentrated efforts to collect data on freemasons and Rotary clubs in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia.⁴ As Yugoslav freemasons were open opponents of Fascism and Nazism, Italy and particularly the Third Reich increasingly pressured the Yugoslav government to ban Freemasonry.⁵ Vladimir Ćorović, Deputy Grand Master of GLY, made an agreement with the Yugoslav government and Prince Regent Paul that GLY would self-suspend its activities to avoid an official ban. This happened on August 1, 1940.⁶

Contrary to some previous exaggerated claims, at its climax, around 1934, GLY had up to 1,000 members.⁷ Additionally, there was also the Grand Lodge “Libertas”, which had split from GLY in 1927 and operated only in Croatia. Opponents of Freemasonry in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Fascist Italy overestimated the influence of the Grand Lodge “Yugoslavia”, and various urban legends were spread about the wide influence of the association, especially after the Masonic Peace Congress in Belgrade in September 1926.⁸ In reality, not a single interwar Yugoslav prime minister was a freemason, and not a single leader of the most prominent political parties joined the Craft, although several ministers were indeed freemasons.⁹

In his history of interwar Europe, Andrej Mitrović identified three notions of three key interwar ideologies. The constitution was the cornerstone for the advocates of liberal democracy, the class for communists, and the nation for (authoritarian) nationalists and fascists. All three ideologies defined their opponents as enemies of their key notion.¹⁰ In this sense, in the interwar period, freemasons came to be seen all around Europe and globally as “class enemies” by the communists and as “anti-national” elements by authoritarian nationalists and fascists. Open opposition of many freemasons in continental Europe to totalitarian ideologies and their sup-

dra Djurić Milovanović and Ivana Pantelić (eds.). *Echoes of Europe: Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia*, (Belgrade: Institute of European Studies and Zepter Book World, 2025), 199–227.

⁴ Arhiv Jugoslavije, fond 100, Masonske lože u Jugoslaviji, fascikla 29.

⁵ For more details on the activities of the Grand Lodge of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes “Yugoslavia” see Slobodan G. Marković. *Jedan vek Velike lože*, 61–138. Cf. Idem. “Overview of the History of Freemasonry in Yugoslavia (1919–2000)”, in Matevž Košir (ed.). *The Secret of the Lodge*, (Ljubljana: National Museum of Slovenia and Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, 2018), 205–219.

⁶ Slobodan G. Marković, “Vladimir Ćorović kao slobodni zidar, mirovni aktivista i pristalica prozapadne politike” [“Vladimir Ćorović as a Freemason, Peace Activist and Advocate of Pro-Western Foreign Policy”], *Ars Regia* [Belgrade], vol. VII (2020), 272–297.

⁷ Slobodan G. Marković. *Jedan vek Velike lože*, 65–69.

⁸ Zoran D. Nenezić published in 1984 exaggerated lists of freemasons without supplying any sort of commentary. He was particularly careless in compiling his own list entitled “Freemasons in the Kingdom of SCS Yugoslavia (1918–1941)”, which implied a very inflated presence of Yugoslav freemasons in the inter-war governments. Zoran D. Nenezić. *Masoni u Jugoslaviji (1764–1980)*, (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1984), 553–556. The same arbitrary and unfounded identification of certain Yugoslav politicians as members of masonic lodges was implemented by another author, Mihailo Popovski. See: Idem. *Tajanstveni svet masona*, (Belgrade: Nova knjiga, 1984), 129–135.

⁹ An incomplete list of the inter-war ministers who were freemasons was published in Slobodan G. Marković, *Jedan vek Velike lože*, 138.

¹⁰ Andrej Mitrović, *Vreme netrpeljivih* (Belgrade: Zavod za udžbenike, 2012), 95–96.

port for parliamentary democracies made them perfect targets for fascist, Nazi and communist regimes.

For Yugoslav freemasons, the first and foremost model country was France, with Britain and Czechoslovakia close behind.¹¹ Since Yugoslav and other European freemasons promoted parliamentary democracies as model countries, opponents of this system viewed them as enemies.

In 1941–44, Yugoslav freemasons faced persecution throughout Yugoslavia, occupied by the Third Reich and its satellites. Anglophiles and those who maintained international masonic contacts were particularly targeted by Nazi secret police units. In occupied Serbia, many freemasons were detained and arrested and were not allowed to perform any public duties. A special directive of the Quisling Council of Commissioners, dated August 6, 1941, declared the freemasons and communists to be “nationally non-reliable elements”. Persons who had been members of the craft till 1940 were interrogated by various secret services of the Third Reich, also facing persecution in the so-called Independent State of Croatia. Some freemasons were killed.

The same happened in occupied Serbia. Tanasije Tasa Dinić, Commissioner for Personal Affairs in the Serbian Quisling government, conducted special interrogations from October 1941 onward. In the spring of 1942, new questionnaires were prepared for all ex-freemasons within reach in occupied Serbia. They all had to fill in a questionnaire with 33 questions. The files of these ex-freemasons, 161 of them, have been preserved.¹²

In October 1941, an anti-masonic exhibition opened in Belgrade with much pomp. The exhibition was anti-masonic, anti-Semitic, anti-communist and anti-British. It accused freemasons and Jews of having organised the coup of March 27, 1941, and was accompanied by 19 publications printed in 207,000 copies. It was claimed that 90,000 persons visited the exhibition.¹³ During the exhibition, 193 Belgraders were arrested on November 4–5, 1941. Of these persons, 130 were on the Quisling authorities’ various “lists of freemasons”, and around 60 were indeed pre-war members of GLY. Half of them were released at the end of November, one-third in December, and the rest in early January 1942.¹⁴

In 1944/45, after the victory of the communist-led People’s Liberation Army over the Third Reich and its satellites, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia rose to power in the country. Although the pre-war political parties were reactivated, by the end of 1945, they were marginalised, exposed to various kinds of pressure and forced to stop working.

¹¹ Slobodan G. Markovich, “Cultural Transfer Europe-Kingdom of Yugoslavia seen through the Activities of the Grand Lodge ‘Yugoslavia’ and the 77th District of Rotary International”, 223–224.

¹² Nadežda Jovanović. “Odnos okupatora i kvislinga prema masoneriji u Srbiji 1941–1942” [“Treatment of Freemasonry in Serbia 1941–42 by Occupiers and Quislings”], *Godišnjak grada Beograda*, vol. 18 (1971), 77–107. Files are kept in the Archives of Yugoslavia. AJ, 100-16; AJ, 100-17; AJ 100-18.

¹³ Nadežda Jovanović. *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Vladislav D. Pavlović, “I. Neka obaveštenja o životu i radu taoca”; Idem, “II. Prilog. Azbučni spisak taoca prosvetnih radnika”, *Arhiv SANU (ASANU)*, no. 15584.

The USSR, as the leader of world communism, and its Red Army assumed central places in the propaganda of the new regime. Yugoslavia was affected by Sovietisation more than any other country in Eastern and Central Europe.¹⁵ Under such conditions, the Soviet policy to Freemasonry became crucial for the positions taken by Yugoslav communists in a period when the overall Sovietisation of Yugoslav society and its culture reached its peak (1945–48).

The USSR was among the first countries in Europe to ban Freemasonry. At the Fourth Congress of the Communist International, held in Moscow in November–December 1922, Leon Trotsky, People's Commissar for Military and Naval Affairs of the Soviet Union, demanded at the same Congress that Freemasonry should be removed by an "iron broom" in Russia and France.¹⁶ This effectively meant that wherever the Communist International run from Moscow had an influence on local communist parties, they had to expel members who were freemasons.

Policy regarding Freemasonry in other Countries under Soviet Influence and in Yugoslavia in 1945–50

When Nazi occupation ended in Eastern Europe, the issue of the reactivation of Freemasonry was raised in many of those countries. There was a Soviet military presence in each of them. In many, bourgeois political parties continued to exist for some time, and associations typical of bourgeois societies made efforts to renew their activities. Hungarian Freemasonry had made a huge impact on its Serbian counterpart before 1908, and Yugoslav Freemasonry was very closely linked with the Czechoslovak interwar Freemasonry. Therefore, the cases of these two Freemasonries at the end of World War Two will be discussed here.

In 1918, the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary had around 10,000 members across more than 100 lodges.¹⁷ Following the Great War, Freemasonry was first suspended in May 1919 by the Hungarian Republic of Councils, and, in May 1920, the counterrevolutionary regime's Ministry of the Interior dissolved the grand lodge. Budapest was liberated by the Red Army between mid-January and mid-February 1945. On March 16, 1945, the first regular lodge meeting was held, and 18 lodges with 1,300 members resumed operations by 1950. However, in June 1950, the Symbolic Grand Lodge of Hungary was dissolved.¹⁸

¹⁵ In their seminal book on totalitarian dictatorship, Carl Friedrich and Zbigniew Brzezinski claimed: "Yugoslavia was probably the most communised satellite in Eastern Europe by the time of the break in 1948." Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 363.

¹⁶ Nina Berberova, *Ljudi i lože. Ruski slobodni zidari u dvadesetom veku* [People and Lodges. Russian Freemasons in the Twentieth Century], (Belgrade: Paideia, 2002), 62–63.

¹⁷ By comparison, in 1914, the number of freemasons in the Kingdom of Serbia was below 100, and they operated in four lodges. In 1911, Jovan Aleksijević, a very prominent Serbian freemason, claimed that there were altogether 60 freemasons in Serbia. AJ, 100–11–363.

¹⁸ Attila Pók, "The Dilemmas of Modern Hungarian Freemasonry", in Slobodan G. Markovich (ed.), *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe*, 86–87, 89, 94. S. v. "Ungarn", in Eugen Lennhoff, Oskar Posner, Dieter A. Binder (eds.), *Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon* (Munich: Herbig, 2006, 5th new ed.), 861.

The most influential Freemasonry in interwar Eastern Europe was probably the Czechoslovakian, which included two grand lodges. Before their self-suspension in 1938, they had 1,500 and 1,400 members respectively. The National Grand Lodge of Czechoslovakia was installed through a delegation sent by the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia in 1923. Since GLY was its mother lodge, relations with Yugoslav freemasons were particularly fraternal.¹⁹ Following the 1945 liberation, efforts were made to reactivate Freemasonry. The Holocaust had decimated the Grand Lodge "Lessing", and many ethnic German members had to leave Czechoslovakia after the war. Therefore, only the National Grand Lodge could undertake reactivation. Its efforts materialised in October 1947. Fifteen lodges resumed their work, reaching 580 members. Political pressure forced this grand lodge to self-suspend its activities in April 1951.²⁰

However, in Yugoslavia, which had a home-grown communist movement and the impressively sized People's Liberation Army, nothing of the sort was to happen. Freemasonry symbolised the old bourgeois society, and the bourgeoisie was seen as the main opponent of the new order. Consequently, Freemasonry was not allowed to resume its activities. It seems that Yugoslav freemasons understood the spirit of the times well, choosing not to launch a serious action to re-activate their grand lodge.

In Yugoslavia, the belief that non-communist political parties could freely exist proved to be an illusion as early as the autumn of 1945.²¹ Contrary to this, an illusion of party pluralism was maintained in Czechoslovakia till 1948 and in Hungary till 1947.²² This political background explains the different experiences of the Freemasonries in those three countries.

Available data show that the interrogations related to Freemasonry began immediately after the communist takeover in 1945. Some freemasons were even executed, including Stanoje Mihajlović, who was killed in May 1946 primarily because he was an Anglophile.²³

However, some Yugoslav freemasons had contacts with the new authorities. Vladimir Velebit, head of the Military Mission of Yugoslav Partisans in London (1944) and later Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs, did not object to the Yugoslav freemasons maintaining contacts with the United Grand Loge of England through Yugoslav diplomacy. He held the following opinion: "We could pass these things because the freemasons may [otherwise] come into contact with Lon-

¹⁹ Cf. Slobodan G. Marković, *Jedan vek Velike lože*, 77-78.

²⁰ Jacob Sadilek and Tomaš Rybaček, *A Century of Czech and Slovak Freemasons*, (Grand Lodge of the Czech Republic, 2023), 55-57. S. v. "Tschechien", in E. Lennhoff, O. Posner, D. A. Binder (eds.), *Internationales Freimaurer Lexikon*, 851.

²¹ Cf. Vojislav Košunica and Kosta Čavoški, *Party Pluralism or Monism. Social Movements and the Political System in Yugoslavia 1944-1949*, (Boulder: Columbia University Press, 1985), 173-190.

²² Miklós Molnár, *A Concise History of Hungary*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 11th ed.), 300-301.

²³ Slobodan G. Markovich, "The Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia between France and Britain (1919-1940)", *Balkanica*, no. 50 (2019), 293. Matevž Košir, "About the Freemasons in Slovenia in the Wheel of History", 193. Matevž Košir, "Buran diplomatski i masonske život dr Stanoja Mihajlovića i njegov tragičan kraj 1946. godine na Kozjaku", *Ars Regia*, no. 2 (2015), 230-234.

don freemasons without us". Suggestively, a young Yugoslav diplomat called Leo Mates (1911–1991), a counsellor at the Yugoslav Embassy in London, had involved the secret police in this matter. He eventually received instructions to return the materials to Belgrade and even had to write a personal statement about the affair.²⁴

This episode suggests that there were different opinions on Freemasonry among the Yugoslav communist authorities. One faction was more diplomatic and another more dogmatic. It also indicates that the Yugoslav Communist Secret Police, OZNA, heavily influenced by the Soviet model, took a very rigid and negative attitude to Freemasonry from the outset.

When the Yugoslav communists clashed with the USSR in 1948 and were expelled from the Soviet bloc, they had to find new allies in the West. Robert Lee Wolff summarised the new American policy toward communist Yugoslavia: "The wider the rift between Stalin and Tito, and the more sympathizers 'Titoism' might gain (in a sense of nationalist anti-Stalinist communism), the better for the west."²⁵ In February 1953, the shift of the Yugoslav foreign policy orientation reached its climax when communist Yugoslavia signed a five-year "Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation" with two NATO countries: Greece and Turkey. This was the beginning of a "unique 'anomaly' throughout the Cold War."²⁶

Re-assessment of Freemasonry in Communist Yugoslavia

The Yugoslav secret police was inclined to believe rumours that the links of Yugoslav freemasons with the West were very significant. This service was known by its acronym – UDBA (Administration of State Security).²⁷ In 1951, or slightly earlier, UDBA decided to use an institution dubbed "the Institute" as its cover. Officers of the Administration of State Security received special training in order to be able to act as researchers of the "Institute". The interviewees were led to believe that their interviews would be archived as historical testimonies to be used by historians and cultural institutions in future research.

UDBA operatives received written instructions on how to approach the issue of Freemasonry. The instructions defined in advance what operatives were supposed to find out, making it clear that Freemasonry was a highly suspicious association tied with espionage.

The principal task of the UDBA was to "investigate all political work of Freemasonry, especially connections with the Grand Orient", seen as "a wide channel for conscious and intentional and also sporadic and unintentional intelligence

²⁴ Leo Mates, "Izjava" [Declaration], London, December 9, 1945. AJ, 100-15-256/257.

²⁵ Robert Lee Wolff, *The Balkans in Our Time*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974, 1st ed. 1956), 410.

²⁶ Milan Ristović, "The Troublesome Yugoslav-Greek-British Triangle: 1945-1949", in Slobodan G. Markovich (ed.), *British-Serbian Relations from the 18th to the 21st Centuries*, (Belgrade: Faculty of Political Science and Zepter Book World, 2018), 334.

²⁷ The Yugoslav Secret Police existed under the name OZNA (Department for the Protection of People) from 1944. It was renamed UDBA in early 1946 and SDB (State Security Service) in 1967.

activity.”²⁸ Operatives were specifically told to analyse how Freemasonry “implemented foreign instructions and its own policies for keeping control over public life.” “The central problem” noted in the Instructions was that Yugoslav freemasons of lower degrees had no idea what the freemasons of upper degrees were doing. It was falsely claimed that freemasons of higher degrees “were mostly members of foreign lodges”, with allegations that “the intelligence work of a higher style was conducted through them, while brethren of lower degrees were mostly unaware of their real political role and the intelligence work that they were doing.”²⁹

Finally, the Instructions warned that information on masonic activities should be harvested “very carefully” because their membership was “a feature for life.”³⁰ In reality, in the second half of the 1930s, when Yugoslav Freemasonry found itself under increased political pressure, many freemasons had left the lodges under GLY. Also, a significant number of freemasons had been expelled from their lodges for improper conduct, including such prominent names as the writer and diplomat Ivo Andrić. By the spring of 1940, shortly before the self-suspension of GLY, the number of those former Yugoslav freemasons who had either left the Craft or had been expelled had reached hundreds.

Impact of Danilo Gregorić on UDBA narratives about Freemasonry

It is easy enough to understand how UDBA operatives compiled their instructions and where they found grounds for their conspiracy theories about Freemasonry. There is a remarkable similarity between the questions formulated in the instructions and a book published in German-occupied Belgrade in 1942. The author of the book was Dr Danilo Gregorić (1911–1957),³¹ a Slovene author who became an ardent supporter of national socialism in the late 1930s and launched an anti-masonic and anti-Semitic campaign in the summer of 1940 in the Belgrade daily *Vreme* after he had become its director in late March 1940. Gregorić spent the last years of World War Two in Berlin and was still in Germany when the war ended. He was extradited to communist Yugoslavia in 1947, tried in 1949, and sentenced to 18 years in prison.

In the prison at Sremska Mitrovica, Gregorić became a collaborator of UDBA, which needed anti-Soviet specialists after the break-up with Stalin. In prison, Gregorić ran a kind of a special group of convicts who got some privileges and in return supplied UDBA with various reports and analyses. These “working groups” were at their most active in 1951–53, and, in 1954, Gregorić was transferred to the central prison in Belgrade, where he continued to compile studies for UDBA.³² This means that, at the time when the Instructions were made (1951), Gregorić already

²⁸ “Masonsko pitanje, 1919–1941” [The Masonic Question, 1919–1941], *AJ*, 100–15–467.

²⁹ *AJ*, 100–15–468.

³⁰ *AJ*, 100–15–469.

³¹ In Serbia, he used the Serbo-Croat version of his surname with *ć* and signed his name as Gregorić. In his native Slovene, he was Gregorič.

³² Kosta Nikolić and Bojan Dimitrijević, “Predgovor” in K. Nikolić and B. Dimitrijević (eds.). *Danilo Gregorić i 25. mart 1941*, (Belgrade: ISI, 2007), 15–19. OZNA changed its name to UDBA early in 1946.

had a reputation as a good source for UDBA. Therefore, a book he published in 1942, entitled *The Suicide of Yugoslavia*, was given proper notice. It had editions in Serbian, German, Slovene, and Czech.³³ As already noted, the book served as a relevant source on Freemasonry for UDBA analysts.³⁴

This book was written to justify Yugoslavia's accession to the Tripartite Pact on March 25, 1941, and to condemn all opponents of the Pact, which was overthrown by a coup and mass demonstrations organised two days later. The book designates Yugoslav freemasons as the main culprits. Gregorić claimed that international Freemasonry "was an important element" behind the assassination of King Alexander in Marseilles in 1934.³⁵ He stated that Mihailo Konstantinović was a high-ranking freemason and that Ivan Šubašić was also a freemason. Gregorić called Slobodan Jovanović "the head of Serbian Freemasonry".³⁶

Gregorić also claimed that freemasons in Yugoslavia were people who were "tied to the West with fanatical love and fanatical conviction."³⁷ It was Gregorić who claimed that "masons of lower degrees" were puppets in the hands of "the most consecrated" masons.³⁸ The Serbian-Croatian Agreement of 1939 was, for Gregorić, a deal made by freemasons who had received a directive from the Grand Orient to make it happen. Overall, the book is replete with conspiracy theories of various kinds. Some of the claims made by Gregorić were quoted verbatim in the Instructions.

Supplied with the Instructions and Gregorić's narratives, UDBA operatives were prepared to run interviews in 1951. There are twelve interviews that have been preserved as typed reports. All were conducted between June 1951 and May 1952, most in February and March 1952. Although the former Marshal of the Yugoslav Court Milan Antić expressly told "the Institute" that in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, freemasons "had not had greater importance or strong influence on the state administration",³⁹ this was not taken as credible by the analysts of the secret service.

³³ Danilo Gregorić, *Samoubistvo Jugoslavije. Poslednji čin jugoslovenske tragedije*, (Belgrade: Jugostok, 1942). Danilo Gregorić, *So endete Jugoslawien*, (Leipzig: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1943); Danilo Gregorić, *Tak skončila Jugoslavie*, (Prague: Orbis, 1944); Danilo Gregorić, *Samomor Jugoslavije*, (Ljubljana: Luč, 1945).

³⁴ Matevž Košir, "Decline of the Grand Lodge of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia", 269. Matevž Košir, *Zgovodina prostozidarstva na Slovenskem*, (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2015), 368.

³⁵ Gregorić, *Samoubistvo Jugoslavije*, 45.

³⁶ Ibid, 95, 182. Gregorić's claims were blatantly false. Prof. Viktor Novak was Grand Secretary of GLY in 1934–40. He was, therefore, perfectly well-informed on who the members of the lodges under GLY were. In the same year when Gregorić published his book (1942), Novak answered the questions of the Serbian Quisling authorities (dated 18 April 1942). He stated: "I am using this opportunity under oath, invoking God as my witness, to ascertain that these men were never freemasons (i.e. till 1940 when the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia existed...)...: Svetozar Pribičević, Minister Mihailo Konstantinović, Ban Šubašić, Assistant Minister of For. Aff. Miloje Smiljanić, General D[ušan]. Simović, Minister Dr Branko Čubrilović, Prof. Slobodan Jovanović, Director of the City of Belgrade Drinčić, Prof. Boža Marković. It is all the result of incorrect hypotheses with even worse preconceptions stemming from false information, leading to conclusions that have nothing to do with reality and veracity." AJ, 100-17-742.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Interview with Milan Antić conducted on April 18, 1952. AJ, 100-15-478.

A 1953 Study by a Former NKVD Agent

Further proof that the Yugoslav secret service took a keen interest in Freemasonry was that UDBA commissioned another special study on Freemasonry to be drafted, again by a political prisoner. This time, it was Miloš N. Brašić (1904–1985), a journalist of the *Vreme* daily from 1927. He had had ties with the Yugoslav communists before World War Two and even closer contacts with NKVD. In 1948, he was arrested because he continued to support the USSR after Stalin had expelled the Yugoslav communists from the Communist International. He was sent to the Goli Otok gulag in 1950.⁴⁰ In 1953, Brašić was asked to write a study entitled “Who are Masons?” His 70-page study was finished in July 1953; in August, it was filed in the archives of the Yugoslav secret service with a stamp containing the following words: “permanently restricted.” It was not available to researchers in the 20th century.⁴¹

Brašić admits in his report that he was a former NKVD informant under the pseudonym “Džin” (“giant”). Referring to the Soviet legation in Belgrade in 1940/41, he says the Russians were “interested in the conditions of our [Yugoslav] masonic organisation...” In 1946 or 1947, Brašić was given a special NKVD report on freemasons to read by the secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Belgrade, Grigoriev. The report depicted the freemasons as bitter enemies of the USSR. Grigoriev asked Brašić to check what Yugoslav freemasons were doing. Still, Brašić admitted: “At that time, masons [in Yugoslavia] had not resumed their work and, except for personal international contacts, no activities in their ranks could be detected. The only gathering of freemasons was at the funeral of Dr Voja Kujundžić.” One claim by Brašić is exceptionally important: that the Russians, even more than the Vatican, “see the freemasons as a threat to their hegemony.”⁴²

At the end of his study, Brašić offered a reply to the question of who were freemasons. This reply could only have amplified the concerns of the Yugoslav communists and the Yugoslav secret service: “They are members of the World Union of Freemasons fanatically fighting to establish leadership over mankind...”⁴³ He claimed that the ultimate aim of masons was “to govern mankind”,⁴⁴ obviously agreeing with his former bosses from NKVD.

He also wrote about his own experience with the interwar Yugoslav Freemasonry. Brašić claimed that “there was not a single relevant issue in which masons did not have vested interests, gather data and take a clear, rectified and uniform stance”.⁴⁵ It is obvious that as an outsider, Brašić attributed to the freemasons fea-

⁴⁰ Simo C. Ćirković. *Ko je ko u Nedićevoj Srbiji* (Belgrade: Prosveta and IPS, 2009), 77.

⁴¹ Miloš Brašić. “Ko su masoni?”, Državni Arhiv Srbije (DAS), fond BIA, no. 93 – “Masoni”

⁴² Ibid, 6-8.

⁴³ Ibid, 69.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ “Ko su masoni?”, 51. Brašić had served as press secretary to the Serbian patriarch Varnava/Barnabas (1930–37), and this may have been the reason behind his views on the freemasons. The patriarch became the central figure of a very broad opposition movement against the signing of the Concordat between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and the Holy See. Yugoslav Freemasonry took a very prominent role in this movement as an open opponent of the Concordat, and it was one of the very few political cases on which the vast majority of Yugoslav Freemasonry had a common view. Since Brašić must

tures characteristic of a centralised political party. He viewed both Yugoslav and world Freemasonry in the same way.

Although European Freemasonry was deeply split in the interwar period along the lines of nation-states and their particular and conflicting interests, Brašić suggested that there was a freemasonic global plan to govern the world. The two most influential continental European Freemasonries, the French and German, did not communicate at all between 1871 and the early 20th century and had very limited communication from 1914 to the 1930s.⁴⁶ Furthermore, no meetings between the German and French freemasons took place between 1914 and 1926, and the first such meeting in Belgrade, attended by a single German freemason, in September 1926, was something of a sensation.⁴⁷ How could, then, an association that had been deeply divided along the lines of nation-states in the period that saw the climax of nationalism aspire to do anything beyond the national borders of individual grand lodges? Nonetheless, compared to Gregorić's offering, Brašić's analysis was far more serious and included some relevant insights and observations.

All of this could only have strengthened the analysts of the Yugoslav secret service in their belief that the freemasons could be a very dangerous enemy of the new communist order. Gregorić also grossly overestimated the masonic influence in the university circles of interwar Yugoslavia: "Education was fully in their [masonic] hands. Almost all university professors were freemasons."⁴⁸ Since fascist and Soviet commentators on Freemasonry had rather similar ideas on the organisation, it was easy for UDBA analysts to combine the two narratives they had received via Gregorić and Brašić.

Remnants of Yugoslav Freemasonry in Exile

Remnants of various Eastern European Freemasonries endeavoured to regroup in exile. Two Czech lodges in exile were established in West Germany: "T. G. Masaryk" in Mannheim and later in Bonn, and "Zu den drei Sternen" in Munich. They operated under the German grand lodge AFAM.⁴⁹ This was much easier to do than to establish a new grand lodge, as two grand lodges could exist in the same territory only in exceptional circumstances. One such exception was interwar Czechoslovakia.

In October 1947, a new Yugoslav masonic body appeared in emigration. "The Supreme Council of the 33rd and the Last Degree for Yugoslavia and her Dependencies" was established in Rome. It claimed to be the lawful successor of the

have discussed this topic with the freemasons he knew, he could have easily been misled to believe that Yugoslav freemasons held the same political views on all major questions.

⁴⁶ Joachim Berger. "European Freemasonries, 1850–1935: Networks and Transnational Movements", in: European History Online (EGO), published by the Institute of European History (IEG), Mainz 2010-12-03. URL: <https://www.ieg-ego.eu/bergerj-2010-en> [2024-07-26].

⁴⁷ Slobodan G. Markovich, "The Belgrade Congress of 1926. A 'Masonic Locarno'?", *Quatuor Coronati Berichte. Wiener Jahrbuch für historische Freimaurerforschung*, vol. 42 (2022), 323–366.

⁴⁸ Gregorić, *op. cit.*, 84.

⁴⁹ J. Sadilek, T. Rybaček, *op. cit.*, 100.

Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia.⁵⁰ Dr Vladimir Belajčić, who lived in Paris and later in Sweden, was its Grand Commander. Its Grand Secretary was Colonel Miloye S. Dinitch (Miloje Dinić), who lived in London. In February 1948, Dinitch submitted to UGLE a list of Yugoslav freemasons who lived in London and Paris. The list includes their name, occupation and the degree they had in the red Freemasonry. The following members were listed in London: Bogoljub Jeftić (33^o), former Prime Minister, Radoje Knežević (30^o), Lt. Colonel Miloje Dinić (33^o), Major Vladeta Bogdanović (18^o), Colonel Dragutin Savić, Lt. Colonel Bogoljub Vuković (3^o), Pavle Životić (3^o), Toka Nikolić (3^o), Kamilo Haggia (3^o), Pavle Jeftić (3^o). The following members were listed as living in Paris: Dr Vladimir Belajčić (33^o), Aleksandar Vukčević (33^o), Prof. Svetislav Petrović (30^o), Jura Popović (30^o), Bora Radenković (18^o), Lazar Kostić (30^o), Andra Savić (4^o), Milorad Radovanović (18^o), Dr Vojko Soler (18^o), Dr Nikola Rakić (18^o), Veselin Petrović (18^o), Dr Dragan Mihalović (30^o), Milan Dojčinović (33^o), Jovan Djonović (30^o), Dr Sima Adanya (33^o), Ilija Šumenković (30^o), Momčilo Jurišić (30^o), Svetožar Rašić (33^o).⁵¹ Many of these names do not appear in the available lists of Serbian freemasons up to 1940.

Grand Secretary of the Supreme Council in Exile, former general Miloye S. Dinitch was tasked with securing the support of regular grand lodges. In February 1948, he explained to the Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE) that the pre-war Freemasonries in the Danubian countries had had links with the Grand Orient of France, insisting that the Supreme Council for Yugoslavia in Exile intended to pursue a different orientation.⁵²

Dinitch also tried to secure the support of foreign grand masonic bodies for the new Supreme Council and repeatedly wrote to UGLE. In December 1948, he informed Sidney White, Grand Secretary of UGLE: "Yugoslav freemasons in exile, while experiencing days of bitter material hardship, still continue to struggle for freedom and democracy".⁵³ One cannot find any replies in the archives of UGLE, but Dinitch himself acknowledged in 1955: "Distinguished brethren here [in the United Kingdom], Bros. of the Grand English Lodge and the Grand Lodge of Scotland have supported us in our efforts to somehow keep our material resources".⁵⁴

The Supreme Commander of the Supreme Council for Yugoslavia in Exile, Dr Vladimir Belajčić (1887–1962), was the governor of the 77th District of Rotary In-

⁵⁰ Circular letter, Rome, 01.10.1947, Library and Museum of Freemasonry, United Grand Lodge of England (LMF UGLE), File 2, "Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia".

⁵¹ M. Dinitch to Sidney White, London, February 13, 1948. LMF UGLE, File 2, "Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia". The list of members in Great Britain and Paris is on pages 4 and 5 of the letter. The list of the members of the Supreme Council in exile is on page 5. The following persons are listed as members of the Supreme Council: Vladimir Belajčić, Svetožar Rašić, Sima Adanja, M. S. Dinić, Vladimir Polić, Branko Denić, Dragomir Nikolić, Nan Kovač, and Milan Dojčinović. In the original letter, the names of Yugoslav freemasons are sometimes spelled phonetically and sometimes in standard Serbo-Croat.

⁵² Miloye S. Dinitch to V. W. Bro. Sidney White, London, Feb. 13, 1948, p. 2. LMF UGLE, File 2 "Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia".

⁵³ Miloye S. Dinitch to Bernard Summers, London, 09.12.1948. LMF UGLE, File 2 "Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Yugoslavia".

⁵⁴ Miloye S. Dinitch to Prince Paul, June 27, 1955, AJ, Fond 797, Zbirka kneza Pavla, roll 9, 290–296.

ternational (for Yugoslavia) in 1936/37.⁵⁵ As one of the most prominent interwar Rotarians in Novi Sad and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, Balajčić must have tried to use these connections as well, but only further research will show what he was able to accomplish.

Douchan Tomitch (Dušan Tomić) was a pre-war French and Yugoslav freemason who offered his services to the new authorities and even pledged allegiance to the new communist regime in Belgrade.⁵⁶ He did his best to convince grand lodges around the world not to support the Supreme Council of Yugoslavia in Exile. Tomitch accused the leadership of the Supreme Council in Exile of being supporters of Prince Paul in March 1941 without any evidence.⁵⁷ He also accused the Supreme Council for Yugoslavia that it was established with the help of irregular freemasons in Italy. This accusation limited the possibilities of the Supreme Council for Yugoslavia of garnering any support from regular grand masonic bodies.

Delusions about Freemasonic Circles in Communist Yugoslavia and about Freemasons as powerful “internal enemies”

The highest position among American freemasons is the office of the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction. John H. Cowles (1863–1954) preformed this position from 1921 till 1952. He was very interested in supporting freemasons in distress in communist Europe. From his letters to Douchan Tomitch, one learns that Cowles considered Ljubomir Tomašić the Sovereign Grand Commander in Yugoslavia.⁵⁸ Dr Ljubomir Tomašić (1879–1959) served as minister of agriculture in one cabinet in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1933 and twice as president of the Senate of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1933–34, 1935–36).⁵⁹

From 1946, Tomašić made efforts to organise the surviving Yugoslav freemasons. He headed the so-called “Yugoslav Lodge”, which was actually a continuation of the Supreme Council of Yugoslavia. In reality, it was little more than a debate club of former freemasons, most of whom had already reached retirement age. This may be the reason why the re-activation of the Supreme Council did not progress well.

D. Tomitch was involved in promoting the communist regime’s official (and extremely negative) views about the defeated royalist resistance movement and tried to dissuade some prominent American freemasons from having a very high opinion

⁵⁵ In that capacity he also edited *Jugoslovenski Rotar*, the official organ of Yugoslav Rotarians from July 1936 till June 1937.

⁵⁶ In 1946, Tomitch offered to promote the new communist regime in the West. In the inter-war period, he had quite different preferences and was a staunch propagator of King Alexander, even endorsing his personal rule, which he tried to justify in his lectures in French lodges. Stanislav Sretenović. “The French Freemasonry and the relations between Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovene in the 1920s”, in S. G. Markovich (ed.). *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe*, 247–248.

⁵⁷ *Proceedings of the Grand Lodge of Kentucky for 1948*, 145–146.

⁵⁸ *AJ*, 100–15–330/331.

⁵⁹ S. Matković, s. v. “Tomašić dr Ljubomir” in M. Pavlović et al. (eds.), *Senatori Kraljevine Jugoslavije. Biografski leksikon* [Senators of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. A biographical lexicon], (Belgrade and Zagreb: Institut za savremenu istoriju and Hrvatski institut za povijest, 2016), 306–307.

of this movement.⁶⁰ He sent copies of those letters to Yugoslavia, hoping to get Moša Pijade to endorse his position. Pijade was his old friend, from their “bohemian days in Paris”,⁶¹ and he hoped to get official support through him for the reactivation of Yugoslav Freemasonry. The problem was that the Yugoslav regime viewed Tomitch merely as a useful informant. It is obvious that they never genuinely contemplated allowing a reactivation of Freemasonry. Therefore, Tomitch’s only achievement was that he contributed to preventing the Supreme Council for Yugoslavia in Exile from acquiring some international recognition.

Masonic efforts to reactivate Freemasonry may be linked with Yugoslavia’s foreign policy shift, which became apparent in 1951–52. During the period of the Sovietisation of Yugoslav culture in 1944–48, no such action would have been realistic. An analyst of the Yugoslav secret police claimed that Tomašić had not taken on substantial activities until 1953. Later, this lodge was headed by Vojislav Paljić (around 1956) and Božidar Pavlović, a barrister.⁶² One should be reminded of the lines from the Instructions that attributed special intelligence and other work to freemasons of higher degrees. For this reason, “the Yugoslav Lodge”, as the continuation of the Yugoslav red freemasonry, was particularly suspicious in UDBA’s eyes. The links that members of this circle had with American Freemasonry must have seemed particularly sinister.

Operatives of the Yugoslav secret service claimed that the Yugoslav lodge was active till 1967. UDBA’s information on the activities of this lodge contained names of persons who were never freemasons and other false data. Only when the documents preserved in the United States and Switzerland and private documents become accessible will one be able to cross-examine the entire body of evidence, hopefully resulting in a more accurate and coherent picture.

Another circle of freemasons gathered around Dam(n)jan Branković (1866–September 9, 1954), the long-serving master of the leading Belgrade lodge “Pobratim” and a pre-war industrialist.⁶³ An informant of the secret service wrote down an observation that the Belgrade barrister Dragoljub Joksimović had made at Branković’s funeral: “This week, we buried the Grand Master Damjan Branković. It was a display of opposition against both Marshal Tito and communism”.⁶⁴

From the available scattered data, it appears that Branković had been considered the successor of Andra Dinić as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge “Yugoslavia”

⁶⁰ Tomitch also got involved in a campaign against the Vatican during the trial of Cardinal Stepinac. Matevž Košir. “Decline of the Grand Lodge of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia”, in Slobodan G. Markovich (ed.). *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe from the 19th to the 21st Century*, (Belgrade: IES and Zepter Book World, 2020), 268–269.

⁶¹ See AJ, 100–15. In the last preserved letter from Tomitch to Pijade, the former requested from the Yugoslav communist authorities monthly material assistance “in the form of a pension or allowance”, reminding Pijade “how useful for national propaganda my connections in world Freemasonry were” [AJ, 100–15–466, Tomitch to Pijade, Paris, June 22, 1949].

⁶² See the secret service report entitled “Aktivnosti masonerije u Beogradu” [“Activities of Freemasonry in Belgrade”], June 12, 1957, DAS, BIA, no. 93.

⁶³ Vladimir M. Nikolić. S.v. “Branković, Damjan J.”, in *Srpski biografski rečnik*, (Novi Sad: Matica srpska, 2004), vol. 1, 781–782.

⁶⁴ A report of the secret police (OZNA) for Belgrade dated September 18, 1954. DAS, BIA, personal file of Dragić Joksimović, 263.

even before Andra Dinić died in 1951. “The Belgrade Lodge”, around Branković, was, in reality, a circle of former members of the blue Freemasonry in Belgrade. It continued to be active for several years after Branković’s death.

The Yugoslav State Security monitored the activities of both groups. OZ-NA/UDBA supervised even the deliveries of packages of purely humanitarian assistance that American freemasons sent to their Yugoslav brethren in distress and the widows of Yugoslav freemasons.⁶⁵ It possessed information that the red and blue Freemasonry in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia had occasional disputes. Therefore, UDBA endeavoured to plant intrigues between them. It is clear that the “lodges” did not organise any ritual meetings and that their activities were restricted to personal gatherings. They happened to be in a similar position as the Turkish Freemasonry from 1935 onward. The state did not allow the re-activation of Freemasonry, but it also never took any decisive action against their existence in the form of private gatherings. In Hungary, freemasons also continued holding informal gatherings in cafés after their ban in 1950, and this had also been the case with Yugoslav Freemasonry in the period between its self-suspension on August 1, 1940, and the attack of Nazi Germany in April 1941.

A report from the 1950s suggests that UDBA had minutes from the Yugoslav lodge’s meetings.⁶⁶ The second report from the same period goes as far as to claim: “Perhaps it would not be an exaggeration if we said, based on the currently available data, that it [Freemasonry] is one of the most active enemy groups in Belgrade”.⁶⁷ This is indeed a very surprising conclusion. Without the narratives shaped primarily by Gregorić, as well as Brašić, one could hardly understand how UDBA could have made such an assessment.

Anti-masonic authors were obsessed with masonic “infiltrations” into the Serbian Academy of Sciences and the University of Belgrade. UDBA shared this obsession. The report from 1956 identifies “masons” as the “key obstacle” at the University for the implementation of the policies of the Communist Party. The report claims that such a conclusion was drawn from conversations with prominent university professors, including several party members.⁶⁸ Again, this was in line with what Gregorić and Brašić claimed in their texts about freemasonic influence.

The two authors also insisted on the special influence of Freemasonry on the inter-war University of Belgrade. In line with that, during the 1950s, UDBA also monitored the Rector of the University of Belgrade, Ilija Djuričić (Rector in 1950–52 and 1954/55). He was followed as a former freemason. The secret police had under surveillance the classical scholar Miloš N. Djurić and historian Viktor Novak, professors of the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade. By his own testimony, which cannot be fully verified, Djurić was a freemason for no more than several months.

⁶⁵ DAS, BIA, no. 93, a report entitled “Oživljavanje aktivnosti masona u Jugoslaviji” [“Revival of Masonic Activities in Yugoslavia”], dated June 8, 1957, for the Second Department of UDB.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ The unsigned report “Masonerija na Beogradskom univerzitetu” [“Freemasonry at the University of Belgrade”] dated July 17, 1956. DAS, BIA, no. 93.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Djurić claimed that he left his lodge in 1937/38.⁶⁹ Of the three of them, only Viktor Novak, former Grand Secretary of GLY (1930-40) remained loyal to the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia till its self-suspension in 1940. Preserved letters indicate that even after the regime change, some of his masonic brethren addressed him as “Brother” in their correspondence.⁷⁰

Once UDBA had fabricated the existence of a freemasonic menace at the Faculty of Philosophy, it had to act. Its agent claimed that UDBA used one of its informants among the professors of the Faculty of Philosophy to mobilise members of the Communist Party to prevent Prof. Viktor Novak from becoming the dean of that faculty in 1956.⁷¹ The report suggests that Prof. Miloš Djurić informed Prof. Bogdan Šešić, “our collaborator – on whom this group for some reason counts”, of the idea that Viktor Novak should be the next dean. Šešić, who had just defended his PhD dissertation, was a lecturer in philosophy, and later an associate and full professor.⁷² He forwarded this information to the local branch of the Communist Party at the Faculty of Philosophy. Members of this branch then prevented Novak’s election.⁷³

This incident was the second episode directed against Viktor Novak by the communist authorities. In 1947, Novak became the director of the Historical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences. Seven years later, his poorly formulated remark insulted his much younger colleague Branko Pavićević, an ardent communist who needed to prove his loyalty to the Communist Party. At a meeting of the fellows of the Institute, Pavićević attacked Prof. Novak as a prewar monarchist and claimed that he had no right to interpret anyone’s political attitudes. Novak was heavily affected by this attack on a personal level and submitted his resignations several days later.⁷⁴

The key analyst for Freemasonry in UDBA/SDB, B. Matić, later quoted the opinion of those who had stayed loyal to masonic circles in Belgrade. Reportedly, they believed that Viktor Novak joined the group of freemasons who “went to the other side of the barricades” or, in other words, the group that co-operated with the communist authorities.⁷⁵ Serbian-American historian Dimitrije Djordjević lavished praise on Novak in his memoirs, but noticed that his professor had mentioned Karl Marx quite often, even in his lectures on Latin palaeography.⁷⁶ This raises the question about the motivation of UDBA to follow Prof. Novak, who was sentimental about his former fraternity but also loyal to the new authorities. Why did UDBA mobilise communist members of the Faculty of Philosophy to prevent him from becoming the dean or even from becoming a candidate for that position? Obviously, the word “mason” became a convenient label for UDBA. The label was sufficient to raise suspicion and stop undesired individuals who were not members of the Com-

⁶⁹ AJ 100-16-633, 665–666, Personal masonic files of Prof. Miloš N. Djurić and Prof. Ilija Djurić.

⁷⁰ For instance, Dam(n)jan Branković addressed him as “dear borthter” in his letters sent in 1951-52. ASANU, f. “Viktor Novak. Masonica”.

⁷¹ The unsigned report “Masoni na Beogradskom univerzitetu”, dated July 17, 1956. DAS, BIA, no. 93.

⁷² S. v. “Šešić, Bogdan”, in *Ko je ko u Jugoslaviji*, (Belgrade: Hronometar, 1970), 1026.

⁷³ Ibid, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Dejan Medaković, *Efemeris III. Hronika jedne porodice* (Belgrade: BIGZ, 1992), 288-290.

⁷⁵ Boško Matić, “Masoni” [“Masons”], *Bezbednost*, No. 1 (1983), 70–92.

⁷⁶ Dimitrije Djordjević, *Ožiljci i opomene III* (Belgrade: SKZ, 2000), 20.

munist Party from reaching certain positions. In some cases, the victims of such labels were even persons who had never been members of the craft.

A pre-war French and Yugoslav freemason, Dr Djura Djurović, wrote around 1967 a report to the Luther Smiht, the Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of American freemasons. Djurović had been initiated in 1925 in the “Général Paigné” lodge in Paris before joining the Belgrade “Dositej Obradović” lodge four years later.⁷⁷ At the time when he wrote the report, he was a former convict who spent 17 years in prison (1945–1962) for his involvement in the royalist resistance movement. In the foreword to the report, he mentions that the late barrister “Bro. Boža Pavlović” showed him a letter from Luther Smith in which Smith asked him to put down in writing his experiences during his prison years. He warned that his experiences could not be published under his real name because that would entail another long prison sentence.⁷⁸

Djurović was indeed arrested again at the end of 1973. His trial took place in September and October 1974, and he was sentenced to five more years. The early 1970s were a period of increased authoritarianism due to discussions about constitutional changes, but the Yugoslav communist regime also wanted to maintain good relations with the West. The public prosecutor carefully phrased his charges so to avoid western protests, but the trial clearly implied that Djurović’s “Report to Luther Smith” was the document that had particularly upset the Yugoslav authorities.⁷⁹

The second trial of Djurović was very strange in many ways. Tellingly, the official records of the trial and the notes of the Amnesty International observer, Prof. Christiaan Frederik Rüter from Amsterdam, are so different that an uninformed reader might be led to believe that they covered two unconnected trials.⁸⁰ The President of Yugoslavia received numerous foreign appeals for Djurović’s release, and he was pardoned in November 1977. Among others, US President Jimmy Carter requested the release of political prisoners in Yugoslavia.⁸¹ Djurović died six years later and was buried in April 1983.

⁷⁷ AJ, 100-4-594, Circular letter no. 231 of the Grand Lodge of SCS “Yugoslavia” to its craft lodges, dated November, 8, 1929. Dr Djura Djurović is listed under no. 695 for affiliation to the lodge “Dositej Obradović”. AJ, 100-16, “Djura Djurović”.

⁷⁸ Djura Djurović, “Izveštaj Luteru Smitu” [Report to Luther Smith], in the author’s collection. Previously given by Djura Djurović and kept by book antiquarian Života Lazić. A slightly different version of the report has been preserved in the OZNA/UDBA personal file of Djura Djurović in the Archives of Serbia, no. 720-01-16556, pp. 132–185.

⁷⁹ Djurović was accused of writing several “reports” seen as “anti-state”. His secret police file has been preserved, and it does not include any of those “reports”. Only his “Report to Luther Smith” is in the folder. File of Djura Djurović, DAS, BIA, no. 720-01-16556, 323. On the trial of Djurović in 1974 see: Slobodan G. Marković, “Sudjenje Djuri Djuroviću 1974. godine i stanje jugoslovenskog pravosuđa sedamdestih godina 20. veka”, *Istorija 20. veka*, no. 2 (2013), 9–40.

⁸⁰ C. F. Rüter, “Izveštaj o sudjenju Djuri Djuroviću i drugima pred Okružnim sudom u Beogradu” [“Report on the trial of Djura Djurović and others before the District Court in Belgrade”], 15 Nov. 1974. DAS, BIA, pers. file of Dj. Djurović, 403–423. Only a Serbian translation is available in the file. From my correspondence with Prof. Rüter, I learned that this was a summarised report and that a longer report also existed but was not available to researchers due to data protection.

⁸¹ S. G. Markovich, “Dr. Djura Djurović. A lifelong opponent of Yugoslav communist totalitarianism”, *Balkanica*, no. (2012), 318–319.

Some reports on “freemasons” are addressed to Svetislav Stefanović, the federal Minister of Internal Affairs (1953-1963).⁸² These reports were subpar in quality, abundant in improvisations, and full of general characterisations with no factual evidence to support them. Nonetheless, they were sufficient to categorise real and alleged pre-war freemasons as “internal enemies”. They were viewed as such from 1945 till the end of the activities of their informal circles in the late 1960s and, in some cases, even later, into the 1980s.

Restrictions regarding the Freemasonic Archives in Yugoslavia in the 1980s and in the USSR

The archives of Yugoslav freemasonic lodges have had an unfortunate history. They were partly destroyed by officials of GLY in 1940. Later, the remaining documents were dispersed all around Europe. First the Gestapo and Quisling authorities in occupied Serbia came into possession of many masonic documents. Then, at the end of the war, the authorities of USSR confiscated all masonic documents that their soldiers and agents could find. They took the documents to Moscow.

The Yugoslav Secret Police came into possession of the remaining masonic records in Yugoslavia and kept them till March 1968, when the Federal Secretariat of Internal Affairs handed over its collection on freemasons to the Archives of Yugoslavia. In 1969–70, the Archives of Yugoslavia processed and catalogued the whole collection. The official name of the collection is “Fonds 100”, and it includes materials related to masonic lodges and B’nai B’rith lodges.⁸³ One year later, a researcher, Nadežda Jovanović, was allowed access to the Fonds 100 and published her study in 1971.⁸⁴

The Russian State Military Archives in Moscow (RGVA) still hold many documents of the Serbian and Yugoslav masonic lodges, with very complicated procedures required for their perusal. It is interesting to note that the documents of the 77th District of Rotary International (for Yugoslavia) also ended up in the USSR. Unlike the Masonic documents, they were given back to Yugoslavia in August 1956, after the Yugoslav-Soviet rapprochement.⁸⁵ On the same occasion, the USSR gave back to Yugoslavia the documents on the B’nai B’rith lodges. The Secretariat for Internal Affairs sent both collections to the Archives of Yugoslavia in 1961. This is another important fact because the freemasonic records were handed over to the Archives of Yugoslavia only after the fall of Aleksandar Ranković, the main person in charge of secret services in communist Yugoslavia from 1944 till 1966.

Interested researchers from Yugoslavia had no access to the fonds, either in Yugoslavia or in the USSR. A preserved reply of the director of the Archives of Yugoslavia,

⁸² For instance, the report entitled “The Revival of Activities of Freemasons in Yugoslavia” was typed on June 8, 1957, and sent to three addresses, of which the first was “State Secretary comrade Stefanović”. “Oživljavanje aktivnosti masona u Jugoslaviji”, DAS, BIA, no. 93.

⁸³ Vasilije Kosić, “Typed catalogue of Fonds 100”. The catalogue includes 25 pages of introductory remarks, contents, and 86 pages of catalogued items. The catalogue was compiled in the period 1968–1971.

⁸⁴ See the references at the end of the paper of Nadežda Jovanović. “Odnos okupatora i kvislinga prema masoneriji u Srbiji 1941–1942”, 103–106.

⁸⁵ Vasilije Kosić, f. 99, “Rotary International – 77 disktrikt”, (Belgrade, no date), vii.

Dr Sida Marjanović, to the Croatian publicist Ivan Mužić, confirms that his request from 1980 was rejected because “the fonds was still being processed”. In reality, the fonds had been catalogued ten years earlier. That is evident from the references to Fonds 100 in the 1971 paper by Nadežda Jovanović. Therefore, the reply was just an excuse.⁸⁶

Restriction of access to Fonds 100 meant that professional historians could not consult primary sources, seriously affecting and limiting the research of Yugoslav Freemasonry. This, however, did not prevent various authors from dealing with this very specific topic. The early 1980s saw the publication of three books on Yugoslav Freemasonry, but unfortunately, all three were written in a less than scholarly manner. The first was *Freemasonry among the Croats* by Croatian lawyer and publicist Ivan Mužić (1934–2021). The book begins with a sentence from *A Freemasonic Reader*, published in 1940 by Vojislav Kujundžić,⁸⁷ which reads: “... You are now in the circle of people who are felt everywhere, but who show up nowhere... In that lies that great power of ours to rule the world...”⁸⁸ With an introductory quotation like this, the book assumes conspiratorial overtones from the very first page. A year later, Mužić’s book *The Meaning of Freemasonry* claimed that Freemasonry aspired to rule the world and that “it endeavours to permeate all classes, all states, all parties, and all churches”.⁸⁹ This Manichean view of Freemasonry crudely disregarded huge internal divisions between various Freemasonries.

The ban that ordinary researchers faced did not apply to everyone. A Belgrade publicist Zoran D. Nenezić (1952–2021) was granted access to Fonds 100 and published his book, *Masons in Yugoslavia (1764–1980)*, in 1984. In 1983, Boško Matić, an SDB operative, integrated assessments of various secret services in his article on freemasons, published in the journal *Bezbednost* [Security], the official organ of the Secretariat of Internal Affairs of Serbia, and Zoran D. Nenezić took all the main points from Matić in the last (tenth) chapter of his book entitled “Freemasons in Socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1980)”.⁹⁰ In the early 1980s, there were no trac-

⁸⁶ AJ, Dr Sida Marjanović to comrade Mužić, February 13, 1981, 22/35/2. I would like to thank Mr Miladin Milošević for giving me the copy of this reply.

⁸⁷ Kujundžić was never even initiated into the red Freemasonry. Conspiracy theorists typically claim that only the higher degrees know “the real secrets” of Freemasonry. In this case, however, even someone who was neither a mason of a higher degree nor in the first echelons of Yugoslav Freemasonry proved to be a useful tool. AJ, Fond 100-17-284. The typed replies to the Quisling authorities in Serbia of May 7, 1942. Kujundžić was a pioneer of many clubs and discreet societies in Serbia and Yugoslavia, including Rotary International and the Theosophists. He definitely belonged to the “warm” or esoteric current of Yugoslav Freemasonry, which was not very popular in Serbia, where Freemasonry followed the English and Scandinavian models of not breaking with traditional religion. N. Radulović, “Esotericism among the Serbian and Yugoslav Freemasonry in the inter-war Period”, in S. G. Markovich. *Freemasonry in Southeast Europe*, (Belgrade: IES and Zepter Book World, 2020), 208.

⁸⁸ Dr. Voj. Kujundžić. *Slobodnozidarska čitanka*, (Belgrade, 1940), 61. Needless to say, Mužić chose not to quote the following sentence, which would have given a different meaning to the whole quoted section: “...feeling compassion in our heart and love for our neighbour, we develop this stronger and more sincere brotherhood among humans, and by that we suppress the interests of individuals, serving though our work and life to the grandeur of the community only.”

⁸⁹ Ivan Mužić. *Smisao masonstva*, (Split: Crkva u svijetu, 1984), 43.

⁹⁰ Zoran D. Nenezić. *Masoni u Jugoslaviji (1764–1980)*, (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga, 1984), 503–515.

es of any kind of Freemasonry in Yugoslavia, and pre-war freemasons were almost all dead by that time. Matić was still able to conclude that after the two “lodges” that existed in Belgrade in the 1950s and 1960s, one should not discard the view that, in addition to them and after them, “many other masons achieved and still achieve influence as individuals, or within other forces and structures”.⁹¹

Another book on Freemasonry entitled *Tajanstveni svet masona* [*Secretive World of Masons*] by Mihailo Popovski was published in the same year as Nenezić’s with a circulation of 10,000. It draws on various conspiracy theories, some with clear antisemitic undertones, and even includes “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion”. Suffice it to mention that the author claimed that many were proving the Protocols to be forgery, “but Zionism refuted them”.⁹² The book was banned in Yugoslavia because it had published *The Protocols* and on account of “falsifying historical facts”.⁹³

Concluding Remarks

One can give one general observation of how Yugoslav secret services dealt with “freemasons” in Yugoslavia after World War Two. The fewer pre-war freemasons were alive, the more illusionary reports of UDBA/SDB analysts tended to be. In the end, as Matić’s case demonstrates, SDB reports became outright delusional, with two early “experts” on Freemasonry in Yugoslavia extensively using Matić’s article.

Once established, false narratives are difficult to refute. Thus, the names of persons once labelled freemasons by a secret service were repeated in later lists made by subsequent secret services. Even the services that served totally opposite ideological agendas used the same lists. The first works on Freemasonry in Yugoslavia in the early 1980s were written by authors who were unfamiliar with the historical critical method to the sources that good historiography implements.

Similarly, once established, labels tend to stick for the long term. Unsurprisingly, Nenezić mimicked preexisting UDBA narratives, some almost verbatim. When the book by Z. Nenezić appeared in 1984, it had a huge circulation of 10,000 copies and was a real sensation. It paved the way for a more general image of Freemasonry, and his labels included accusations against the freemasons of being anti-communist, anti-socialist, elitist and anti-labour – an overall highly suspicious organisation. Since the drafting of the Instructions in 1951, it was claimed that the Yugoslav freemasons were involved in intelligence work for Western interests, and Nenezić again had no qualms about repeating this claim.

This brings us to the disheartening conclusion that false narratives, once they gain traction, may survive even very different political regimes. Paradoxically, the false narratives that emerged in 1926–1942 were spread by various anti-communist organisations before being espoused, quite surprisingly, by the secret services of communist Yugoslavia. They continued to influence Yugoslav publications on Freemasonry in the 1980s. The most bizarre aspect of these narratives is that they

⁹¹ Boško Matić, “Masoni” [“Masons”], *Bezbednost*, no. 1 (1983), 92.

⁹² Mihailo Popovski, *Tajanstveni svet masona*, (Belgrade: Nova knjiga, 1984), 118.

⁹³ Marko Lopušina, *Crna knjiga. Cenzura u Jugoslaviji 1945–91*, (Belgrade: Fokus, 1991), 88.

freely combine Catholic, Russian Imperial, Fascist, Nazi, and Soviet propaganda on Freemasonry.

The suspension of political parties in Yugoslavia in 1945/46 meant that Freemasonry could not be re-activated. Obviously, this association was unable to exist in Yugoslavia without the background of parliamentary democracy and a multi-party system. Therefore, it was to be expected that the discussions on political pluralism that began in Yugoslavia in the first half of the 1980s would include an interest in Freemasonry. This indeed happened, but the first books were written by lay authors rather than professional historians. In line with the prevailing socialist values of that age, the two books on Freemasonry published in Belgrade by Popovski and Nenezić correctly assessed that the association of freemasons was pro-western, viewing their activities with the utmost suspicion. In their research, these authors could rely on just one scholarly article on Yugoslav Freemasonry but had access to many official and unofficial reports written or inspired by the secret services from 1941 to 1983. The policy of the Yugoslav authorities not to allow the public use of the Fonds 100 till the 1990s only hampered scholarly research on this topic.

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ATTITUDES OF YUGOSLAV AUTHORITIES TO FREEMASONRY IN YUGOSLAVIA SINCE 1945

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Summary

The paper discusses why Freemasonry could not be re-activated in 1945 in Yugoslavia, unlike in some other Eastern European countries, attributing this to the rapid Sovietisation of the country in 1944–48. It analyses how the new communist authorities and UDBA formed their opinion on Freemasonry and concludes that it was essentially based on Nazi and Quisling propaganda against Freemasonry and conspiracy theories, even making use of some participants of those propaganda campaigns. The paper describes the activities of freemasonic circles in Belgrade in the 1950s and 1960s and the grossly overrated significance assigned to them by UDBA. It also retraces the efforts of Yugoslav emigrants to form their own masonic supreme body in exile. It concludes that freemasons were seen and treated from 1945 till their dormancy in the late 1960s as a “powerful internal enemy”. This view was transplanted into non-historiographical works, penned by amateur authors rather than trained scholars, in the 1980s, which even included conspiracy theories. The policy of keeping masonic archives in Belgrade under an embargo provided fertile ground for developing such theories.

KEYWORDS: Yugoslav Freemasonry, Anti-Masonic propaganda, Yugoslav Secret Services

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