

È apparso sulla rivista SQUARE, il più importante magazine inglese e voce della Massoneria Emulation, un lungo articolo sulla Confederazione Massonica Francese CMF, composta dalle quattro maggiori Obbedienze francesi, che professano la pura tradizione scozzese, con leader indiscusso la Gran Loggia di Francia.

La CMF, i cui appartenenti superano i 65.000 fratelli, è nata sulla spinta del progetto della Confederazione delle Grandi Logge Unite d'Europa che aveva recepito appieno l'iniziativa della Serenissima Gran Loggia d'Italia, la quale era stata la promotrice della Confederazione delle Grandi Logge Unite d'Italia.

Infatti, dopo la dura Dichiarazione di Basilea del giugno 2013 e la altrettanto dura contro-dichiarazione del settembre del 2013 a Roma, le cinque sorelle (Germania, Svizzera Alpina, Benelux) vicine alla Gran Loggia Unita d'Inghilterra, hanno mostrato grande attenzione alla CMF con la Dichiarazione di Berlino del 2014, aprendo ad un possibile riconoscimento reciproco tra la Confederazione e la rinata Gran Loggia Nazionale di Francia. Sta forse cadendo il tabù di una sola Obbedienza per territorio. Ormai è un fatto acclarato che in ogni nazione siano presenti alcune Obbedienze pienamente regolari e che la divisione aiuta solo al nascere e proliferare di realtà associative di dubbia regolarità. Il futuro, intuito ormai da qualche anno, è questo: riconoscere l'esistenza di più obbedienze regolari per territorio, auspicando che le realtà scozzesi possano trovare cammino comune in una sola Piramide sopra il Cubo. In Italia sarà arduo il cammino del dialogo, perché si vanno a toccare piccoli feudi di pseudo potere, tanto cari ai campanilismi italiani. È giunto il momento di un pieno ritorno ad una nuova Massoneria Federiciana.

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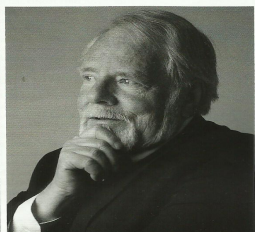
Tutti vorrebbero cambiare l'Umanità, ma a nessuno viene l'idea di trasformare se stesso.”

Leone Tolstoj

'There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men'

'There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men'

Matters of Recognition: A Test of Masonic Values



John Belton

William Shakespeare in *Julius Caesar*, and perhaps that is true. In May Master was I told that the Symposium in London was the topic of the address by the Grand Master was titled "The Future of Freemasonry." The other speakers at the symposium were the Grand Master of the United Grand Lodges of Germany, the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of England, Secretary of the World Conference of Grand Lodges.

Just as I was about to leave the room, a message flashed onto my screen announcing that the Supreme Council (Southern Jurisdiction) of the United States had issued a statement (PHFA Southern Jurisdiction continuation). This was after a letter from the Grand Master of the PHFA. Certainly the Scottish Rite is and remains separate from the Southern Jurisdiction of the United Grand Masters [Jurisdiction] had already recognized its southern counterpart. So perhaps the question is - what does it mean for the Scottish Rite to be part of the Craft, of course) and state-by-state and year-by-year the number of recognitions has grown until now only fifty of the fifty-two jurisdictions have accepted those steps of recognition. The progress seems to be slow, but it is there. It is also true that there are rumblings from brothers who feel that there the ethical standards of the Scottish Rite are being lowered. There is really no logical reason, given that PHFA Grand Lodges in principle are considered as being "regular," which would justify the criticism or those who

states are excluded from being part of the 'greater regular Masonic world community'. That recognition has remained unforthcoming because of a practice, till now considered normal, that both the mainstream and PHA Grand Lodges had to recognise each other before anyone else would.

anyone else. I am OK and fair enough, except that many of these open ulcers upon the face of Freemasonry involve similar sorts of issues. But the world, even the Masonic world, does change and increasingly it has proved possible to read of brothers expressing dissatisfaction with such issues not being addressed and resolved, and expressing concern that such problems need to be dealt with. But moves such as that by the Supreme Council will also stir up old issues, because the non-PHAR-recognising Grand Lodges (and vice versa of course) will feel another Masonic body has in a sense undermined their position. I am glad I am gladdened by the position taken by the Supreme Council and I will watch developments.

Masonic recognitions, or recently non-recognitions, have proved an issue in France (see previous issues of *The Square*). An initiative from five Grand Lodges in the United Grand Lodges of Germany sought to encourage a wider inclusion of regular French brothers in what remained in the aftermath of the GLNF debate. The German brothers were obliged to form an umbrella organisation as the only way to avoid exclusion of the vast majority of brothers from European Freemasonry. That experience led them to provide encouragement to the French to consider doing likewise.

After extensive discussion both between Grand Lodges and Brethren, four of them got together and on 10 June signed a treaty which formed the **Confédération Maçonnique de France (CMAF)**. The participating Grand Lodges are the Grande Loge de France (GLdF), Grande Loge Traditionnelle et Symbolique Opéra (GLTSO), Grande Loge de l'Alliance Maçonnique Française (GLAMF), and Grande Loge Indépendante de France (GLIF). The treaty includes various principles that we will all recognize.

- Invocation of the Great Architect of the Universe
- Exclusive sovereignty over the symbolic Degrees *(for us the three Craft degrees)*
- Independence from any Masonic structure of the Higher Degrees
- No female presence during ritual workings
- Prohibition of political or religious discussions
- The progressive and spiritual character of the Masonic approach

Once the necessary formalities and so on have been completed it is surely the intent of the original five Grand Lodges who met first in Basel (and were later joined by the Grand East of the Netherlands) and the CMdF to exchange mutual recognition. When that

occurs many observers will be delighted to have, for the first time in over a century, a majority of French brothers within the fold of recognised Freemasonry. It is worth exploring some of the background behind the situation in Germany after World War II, to gain some appreciation of the German perspective on the role of Freemasonry and recognition. In 1948 they formed a United Grand Lodge of Germany, comprising over 150 lodges. There was one Berlin Grand Lodge that did not join, whose lodges worked the Swedish Rite. Talks continued and in 1951 an agreement was reached for recognition. In 1952 the United Grand Lodge of Germany was recognised. It is important to note the plural in Grand Lodges because each Grand Lodge would continue to govern its own internal affairs while the United Grand Lodges of Germany would look after external matters and general policy. At this time they created the *Loggia Classica* defining the role of the new body.

In 1970 they had an amended Magna Carta, and were joined by the Grand Lodge of British Freemasons in Germany and the American Grand Lodge of the Pacific. These Lodges were specifically formed for the benefit of the NATO member states, and were based in Germany, then West Germany. And with this step they were permitted to be recognised by the United Grand Lodge of England. The 1970s also saw the formation of the European Masonic community. One might say that the 1970s were the decade of the European and American-Canadian Grand Lodges was the final piece in the jigsaw puzzle. The process was not without its problems, and it was not without its pains and struggles. That was evident when I first visited the Grand Lodge of the Pacific in 1974. Temple, like a heartless address on this subject that I have seen, said: "The Grand Lodge of the Pacific has similarities between their situation in Germany half a century ago and that in France today. They were not recognised as a Grand Lodge until they had from having an umbrella organisation to facilitate their recognition. Understood, but it was not so crucial to an understanding of the route suggested for these five European Grand Lodges that issued their

At the recent conference of European Grand Masters and Grand Secretaries there was also, I have been told, an opinion expressed by the two Grand Masters of UGLE, Peter Lowndes, that 'although he was speaking hypothetically, UGLE could recognize two Grand Lodges in the same territory, even if these two Grand Lodges were not in amity with each other' (these are the words noted down by one of those present and hence may not be word-perfect but certainly carry the gist of it). It is greatly

encouraging to discover that such lateral thinking (when compared with the old style of the winner takes all and the loser gets excommunicated and consigned to purgatory) is taking place, because a more detailed exploration of such possibilities may open the door to a resolution of many of the outstanding and intractable recognition problems in Europe. These are surely steps to be applauded by all of us.

It is interesting to reflect that among those Grand Lodges attending, and having enough others considering them as being regular, were two from Italy, two from Greece and five (yes, five) from France. The five from France were the four of the Confederation and the GLNFA decade ago such a presence would have been almost inconceivable but the acknowledgement that Freemasonry in Europe can no longer be considered as the old monolithic structure it used to be.

Whether one is a brother watching these goings-on from inside or an outsider looking in, there are questions that come to mind about the values of Freemasonry and the principles of fairness and equity being applied. I am aware that just as in national politics so Masonic politics also has its petty jealousies. The decision by the Supreme Council of the US Southern Jurisdiction feel such a good example. Clearly they must have felt there was a good reason for excluding the Grand Lodge of the South PHA (Prince Hall) Supreme Council ought to be recognised by them and should not be excluded from being part of the community. The fact that the community has a strong interest in such matters, across the world, would seem not only to be good for Freemasonry in general, but if it were to be brought to the attention of the Grand Lodge brothers into the broader mainstream Masonic community, we will have demonstrated our true Masonic values in practice, support the next year's Grand Lodge and its members in their efforts.

Brutus:
There is a tide in the affairs of men.
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea are we now afloat,
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures.

Iulius Caesar, Act 4, Scene 3

Left and below: The seals and signatures on the Treaty which formed the Confédération Macaronique de France

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