

Anti-Masonic Postage Stamps

When I was approaching my ninth birthday...and my brother, Marshall, was a bit older, our parents led both of us toward the life-long hobbies of stamp and coin collecting. We still collect coins, but I would say that we are no longer just 'stamp collectors', but we have become Philatelists, or those who seriously study and research the origin, history and characteristics of postage stamps. By definition, philately is making the observation that in a pile of postage stamps that all appear to be the same type, closer examination may reveal different kinds of paper, different watermarks embedded in the paper, different cancellations, variations in color shades, or a different gauge of perforations around the edge of the stamps.

My brother's interests now include stamps and covers from Australia, China, Vietnam, and the US, and a little bit of anything else that strikes his fancy. I spend most of my time working on my collections of Great Britain (from 1840 to 1900), along with early US, Confederate stamps and postal history, and what are referred to in the hobby as topical, or thematic collections. Mine include stamps and covers and cancellations relating to radio broadcasting, and Masonry.

Topical collections can include envelopes, called 'covers', that have newly issued stamps postmarked on the first day of use, or older stamps with postmarks of interest, such as Masonic cancels showing a square & compasses, or a postmark from a significant city, such as Truth, Oregon, Wisdom, South Dakota, or Temperance, Alabama. Many of those cities have ceased to exist, and are referred to as DPO's (dead post offices) making those covers much harder to find in your search for topical material. On several occasions I have prepared covers for significant Masonic events, such as the anniversary of the founding of a Lodge, a cornerstone laying, or the installation of the Master of a Lodge. You're limited only by your creativity.

Now let's set the stage for a look at some rather unique 'Anti-Masonic' stamps. In this presentation you will see a series of stamps issued by Serbia in 1942. This commemorated a very well publicized "Anti-Masonic" conference in the capital of Belgrade late in 1941.

We will explain the meaning of the stamps, though some of which will be obvious to all Masons, and then offer some explanation, and hopefully an answer to the question "why an anti-Masonic Conference"?

In Adolph Hitler's manic ramblings written while in prison in 1924; "Mein Kampf" or "My Struggle", there is only one reference to Freemasonry. In describing what he refers to as the "development of Jewry", Adolph Hitler states:

"To strengthen his political position he tries to tear down the racial and civil barriers which for a time continue to restrain him at every step. To this end he fights with all the tenacity innate in him for religious tolerance – and in Freemasonry, which has succumbed to him completely, he has an excellent instrument with which to fight for his aims and put them across. The governing circles and the higher strata of the political and economic bourgeoisie are brought into his nets by the strings of Freemasonry, and never need to expect what is happening."

"The general pacifistic paralysis of the national instinct of self-preservation begun by Freemasonry in the circles of the so-called intelligentsia is transmitted to the broad masses and above all to the bourgeoisie by the activity of the big papers which today are always Jewish.

Added to these two weapons of disintegration comes a third, and by far the most terrible, the organization of brute force.

As a shock and storm troop, Marxism is intended to finish off what the preparatory softening up with the first two weapons has made ripe for collapse.”

These paragraphs are the essence – Jews, Freemasonry and Marxism – the enemies of the German peoples.

But Hitler did not invent the Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy – it existed from the beginnings of the 18th century in the form of a regular rumor and was propagated by many authors in the period up to and including WWI. It was then that the Grand Lodge of Italy and the Grand Orient of France were accused of anti-German “machinations”. The writings of many authors provided apparently plausible explanations for Germany’s defeat in WWI, and it was persistently cultivated from 1919 on, and the Nazi’s kept it alive.

The problem which bedeviled and split the Masonic Order in Germany for years on end was the so-called “Jewish question”. In its original form it referred to religious rather than racial prejudice. The three “Old Prussian” Grand Lodges had always refused to accept Jews for initiation because their Craft degrees were followed by higher ones of a Christian character. Thus, as far as the “Old Prussian’s” were concerned, one brief but important passage in the Ancient Charges was ignored. It read:

“Let a man’s religion or mode of worship be what it may, he is not excluded from the order provided he believes in the glorious architect of heaven and earth and practices the sacred duties of morality”.

The six “Humanitarian” Grand Lodges, on the other hand, nominally made no distinction between Christian and Jew. This did not mean that every Jewish candidate could be sure of joining a Lodge, because exclusion by blackball was not unknown. However, once a Jew became a Freemason he could attend “Old Prussian” Craft Lodges as a visitor.

Superficially, at least, the overall situation was that the “Old Prussian” Grand Lodges represented ultra-conservative attitudes, while the “Humanitarian” obediences were more liberally inclined.

The “Jewish question”, in the sense that it was always a source of controversy between the two groups, was probably always basically insoluble. Nevertheless, as long as it was solely based on religious prejudice, or some kind of “Modus Vivendi”, a never completely satisfactory solution was contrived.

As time passed, the “Old Prussian” Grand Lodges reduced their relationship with the “Humanitarian” Lodges to “unavoidable routine business”. Later, when the “Humanitarian” Lodges exchanged representatives with the Grand Lodge of England, the “Old Prussian” Lodges withdrew theirs with the comment, “we can offer no fraternal hand to our Fatherland’s enemy.... we know that our enemies sit in English Lodges”.





On January 1st of 1942 Serbia issued four postage stamps to commemorate the Grand Anti-Masonic Exhibition, which opened in Belgrade on October 22nd of 1941. These stamps depict a strong, victorious Serbia crushing the 'evil Masonic-Communist-Jewish plot for world domination'.

Notice the face value, or cost of the stamps. It shows the regular cost of the stamp, in the national currency of the time, followed by a plus sign and a second denomination. The second cost, or surtax on this stamp issue, was used to pay for the printing and distribution of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Communist, and Anti-Jewish propaganda. Each stamp bears the opening date 22x1941, 'x' in this case indicating the month of October, and was labeled as an "Anti-Masonic Exhibition" and "Serbia" in Cyrillic letters.

These stamps, with their juxtaposition of Masonic, Communist, Jewish and Serbian symbols (and notice that Nazi symbols do not appear anywhere in the designs) provide a remarkable window into the Serbian wartime worldview. Even after the Communist takeover of Yugoslavia in May 1945 Masons were regarded with great suspicion and contempt by the Serbian dominated Yugoslav authorities.

The first stamp shows Masonry, allegorically clad as a hooded figure wearing an apron and Star of David upon its chest. This hooded figure is shown cringing from a strong ray of light, which emanates from a circular design apparently representing the forces of Anti-Masonry.

Nowhere in Masonry does a hooded figure appear. Also any Mason can readily see the fallacy of "Cringing from Light" because Masons ask for light at least three times as they progress through the degrees of the Blue Lodge. Then too, the attempt to link the Jewish faith with Freemasonry is very evident by the Star of David emblazoned on the figure's chest.

The second stamp in the series shows a hand emanating from a silvery light and grasping the neck of a huge serpent whose head rests upon a square and compasses. Note that this reptile is covered with Stars of David rather than scales. Biblically, the snake represents the perceived forces of evil (here reported to be Jews and Masons) and is symbolically being stopped by the hand of Nazism.

The third stamp shows another Masonic symbol, a sheaf of wheat, superimposed upon a cross, which has a pointed lower leg together with the hammer and cycle, all resting upon and splitting a star in half, that star symbolizes Serbia. This attempts to show that the Jew, Mason, and Communist are alike in their ideals, if not one and the same.

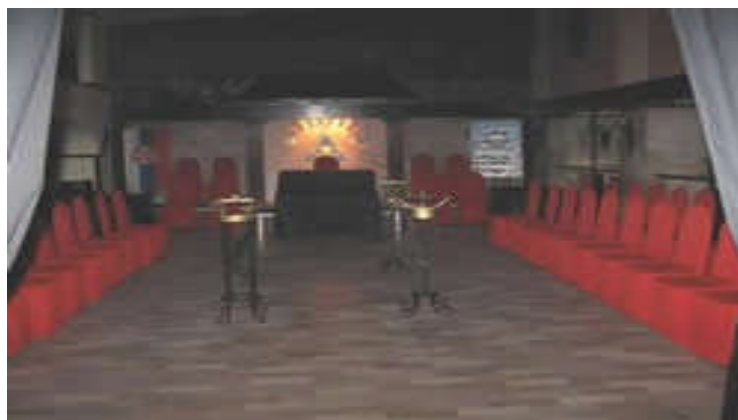
The last stamp in the series shows a Star of David upon the curved surface of the earth located between two pillars, which are being torn asunder by a very zealous 'Sampson', of obvious Serbian descent. Masons will recognize the pillars as the two brazen pillars placed within the outer porch of King Solomon's Temple; that on your right, Jachin, and that on your left, Boaz.

Unused sets of these four stamps were offered to stamp collectors in the 1950's and 60's by several US stamp companies as an incentive to order other 'interesting world wide topical stamps'. Used copies, and especially first day of issue covers, are very scarce and highly prized by Masonic stamp collectors today.

Like most European Grand Lodges, the Grand Lodge in Serbia ceased to exist within days of the start of World War II. Sadly, after the liberation in 1945, the new communist government was not favorable towards the Craft, and it took another 45 years for Masonic light to start shining again.

The rebirth of Freemasonry in Serbia happened on the 23rd of June 1990, when the United Grand Lodge of Germany gave light to the Grand Lodge of Yugoslavia. A year later, a formal Charter was issued, thus making that Grand Lodge regular, and recognized. In 1993, the name was changed to "Regular Grand Lodge Yugoslavia", with degree work being performed in 6 lodges under its jurisdiction. Today there are two other Grand Lodges claiming jurisdiction within the country; the *United* Grand Lodge of Serbia, and the *Grand National* Lodge of Serbia. Although both Grand Lodges claim ties to Serbian Masonry from the early 20th century, neither has been officially recognized by other European or US Grand Lodges.

In early 2008, based on political changes within the country the name changed again, this time to the Regular Grand Lodge of Serbia (A.F. & A.M.) and all international recognitions remained unchanged. They are recognized by nearly every Constitution in the world and after a recent historic visit with the Grand Master of United Grand Lodge of England, their ties with UGLE are stronger than ever.



In June of 2008 the Regular Grand Lodge of Serbia, with 12 Lodges working under its jurisdiction, held its Annual Conference in a hotel in downtown Belgrade. A large number of delegations from foreign Grand Lodges were present. This was the end of yet another very

successful year for our Brethren from Serbia, who in spite of the very unstable political and economic situations within the country, managed to grow their numbers, improve their Masonic education, and give back to society through particularly strong humanitarian and charity work programs.

As of July, 2009, membership stands at just over 750 in 22 Lodges (13 of which are in the city of Belgrade) and 4 more that are in the process of being formed. They are seeing the first results of their charitable work, their first English-speaking Lodge was consecrated in 2007, the construction of their Temple is nearly complete, ritual work is getting better than ever and, judging by the quality of some young masons initiated in last few years, even better times are ahead. I would say Freemasonry in Serbia is heading for its second “golden age”.



As the officially recognized successor to the pre-war *Grand Lodge of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes “Yugoslavia”*, later known as the as the *Grand Lodge “Yugoslavia”*, RGLS, in 2009, marked 90 years of continuity with Freemasonry in the region.

Excerpted from various sources, including:
The Encyclopedia Judaica, Keter Publishing
Excerpts quoted from Mein Kampf,
Grand Lodge of Serbia - <http://www.rglserbia.org/>
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