

SUPREMO CONSEJO DEL GRADO 33º Y ÚLTIMO DEL R.:E.:A.:A.: PARA ESPAÑA



4 de Julio de 1811

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL

At the beginning of 1811, the Marquis de Clermont-Tonnerre, as a member of the Supreme Council of France, formed philosophical bodies in Spain that worked until the XXXII degree of the Scottish Rite. On July 4th, 1811, with patents issued to that effect by the Supreme Council of Charleston, of which he was a founder, Count de Grasse-Tilly, regularly constituted the Supreme Council of the 33rd Degree for Spain and its Dependencies, appointing Ill.º Miguel José de Azanza as the 1st Sovereign Grand Commander.

The members of the Supreme Council during the first absolutist reaction of Fernando VII did not interrupt Masonic labor in Spain, meeting clandestinely and making efforts to recover their lost liberties.

The military rebellion that began in Cabezas de San Juan forced Fernando VII to restore the Constitution of 1812.^

For this reason Freemasonry came into an era of tranquility that favored its free development. Sovereign Grand Commander Agustín Argüelles, who was also the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Spain, abdicated his position and was replaced by Ill.º Antonio Pérez de Tudela.

After the invasion of Spain by the French armies under the agreements of the Holy Alliance, a new absolutist reaction came in 1823, and the Sovereign Grand Commander and some other members of the Supreme Council had to seek exile in England, where they found the generous hospitality of English Freemasonry. The Suppression of Fernando VII reached terrible heights as the Royal Decree of Sacedón in 1824, declaring that being a Mason was an “*offense against his Majesty*”. The Royal Order of October 9th, 1824 ordered that anyone who was a Mason, a member of any secret society, or a co-participant to be put to death. Among the thousands of victims that perished due to this cruel repression were Generals Juan Martin, el Empecinado, Torrijos, and Lacy.

At the end of 1829 the persecutions stopped somewhat and the Sovereign Grand Commander, Prince Don Francisco de Paula de Borbón, regrouped the Lodges of Perfection and Chapters. In 1833, after the death of Fernando VII, Queen María Christina began to act as governing Queen, allowing many of the members of the Supreme Council to return.

Finally in 1843, after so many persecutions Spanish Freemasonry was able to reorganize itself with more than 300 lodges coming into existence. In 1846 Prince Don Francisco had to leave Spain to escape from the persecutions being perpetrated by General Narváez and the clergy. From 1856 Spanish masons again were persecuted and forced to act in secret. Neither the Supreme Council, nor the Grand Orient could develop their labor and the Philippines were full of Masons banished by Narváez.

The revolution of 1868 that deposed Queen Isabella II, allowed Spanish Masons and the Supreme Council, chaired by Ill. Bro.: Carlos Celestino Mañan y Clark, to resume their activities. The Philosophical Bodies contained Brethren as prominent as Generals Serrano, Duke de la Torre, Prim, Count of Reus; and politicians Manuel Becerra, Práxedes Mateo Sagasta, Nicolás María Rivero, and Juan Moreno who were Deputies on several occasions and even Ministers.

In the month of October 1868, the Supreme Council presented the interim Government a “Masonically inspired Program”, consisting of fourteen propositions, which, among other reforms, included the following: freedom of worship, suppression of the religious orders, secularization of cemeteries, the end of exempting the clergy from military service, civil marriage, etc. The program deserved the government’s attention.

Shortly before the Savoyard monarchy and taking advantage of the temporary absence of the Sovereign Grand Commander Mañan, several members of the Supreme Council elected Ill.: Bro. Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla as Sovereign Grand Commander. The split caused within the Supreme Council as a consequence of these acts, originated a lot of confusion in Spanish Freemasonry. To remedy this, Mañan and Zorrilla’s sense of Masonic spirit was appealed to; the Brethren responding in fraternal terms to the request Ill.: Bro. Ruiz Zorrilla renounced to all his Masonic offices in September 1873.

He was succeeded by Ill.: Bro. Carvajal, who immediately delivered his chair to Ill.: Bro.: Mañan, who had resigned at the same time as Ruiz Zorrilla in order to achieve a Masonic conciliation. Elections were held on September 18th, 1873 resulting elected as Sovereign Grand Commander, Ill.: Bro.: José de Carvajal, a distinguished lawyer and Minister of State of the Spanish Republic. They then proceeded to completely reorganize the Philosophical and Symbolic Bodies, carrying out, in 1869, the first public appearance of the Spanish Masonic family on the occasion of Bro.: Brigadier Escalante’s funeral and later at the one of Prince Enrique’s and General Prim’s.

With the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy in the person of Alfonso XII, disunity in the Spanish Masonic family popped its ugly head up again, existing, in addition to the regular Supreme Council, two irregular Supreme Councils. Such a confusing situation gave rise to the fact that none of the Spanish Supreme Councils could attend the international meeting of Supreme Councils celebrated in Lausanne in 1876.

In 1881, Antonio Romero Ortiz remained as the only legitimate and regular Sovereign Grand Commander, being recognized as such in 1882 by the

Ill.: Bro.: Albert Pike, Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction of the United States followed by the Supreme Councils of Scotland, Ireland, Greece, etc.

On January 20th, 1884 Ill.: Bro. Antonio Romero Ortiz passed away. Then, for the first and only time in the history of the Supreme Council, to provide the charge of Sovereign Grand Commander, which, at that time, was also the Grand Master of the Symbolic Grand Orient, a direct Masonic election was convened to decide who would be the next Sovereign Grand Commander. The election took place on August 15th, 1884 and its outcome, which is curious to record, was as follows: Manuel Becerra, 2.237 votes; Emilio Castelar, 605; Manuel Ruiz Zorilla, 478; Manuel de Llano Persi, 296; José María Beranger, 118; Juan Téllez Vicent, 23; Praxedes Mateo Sagasta, 12; Victor Balaguer, 5; Sergio Martín del Bosch, 4; José Carvajal, 2; Juan Utor Fernández, Sebastian Salvador, Francisco Pí y Margall, Buenaventura Roignet and José María Panzano one vote each.

When the Sovereign Grand Commander Manuel Becerra resigned in favor of the Lieutenant Grand Commander Ignacio Rosas in 1889, a new era of confusion came with certain factions wanting to snatch Symbolic Masonry's autonomy. On February 8th, 1889 it was agreed to refund the two Symbolic Obedience's, The Grand Orient of Spain and The National Grand Orient. Thus the Spanish Grand Orient was born under the direction of Bro.: Miguel Morayta Sagarrio, who was also as Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, replacing the Ill.: Bro. Manuel Becerra.

At the advent of the dictatorship of general Primo de Rivera (September 13th, 1923), Spanish Freemasonry again found itself in a difficult situation. Their lodges had to accentuate the clandestine nature of their work. On April 1st, 1924 it was agreed, through a written, and solemn Covenant, stipulated between the Grand Symbolic Federal Council of the Grand Orient of Spain and the Supreme Council of Spain, to reform the Statutes of the Supreme Council to recognize Symbolic Masonry's independence. The agreements of 1922 were declared to be permanent. These related to the autonomy of the regional

Grand Lodges and the mutual recognition of their authority, The Grand Orient of Spain's control over the first three symbolic degrees and of the Supreme Council of Spain's over the Philosophical Degrees, i.e. from the IVth to the XXXIIIrd.

On April 14th, 1931 the monarchy was overthrown and the Second Republic was established. The establishment of a liberal and tolerant regime allowed Spanish Freemasonry to work with greater security and efficiency. Were Active members of the Supreme Council, at that time, the Ill.: Br.:s Augusto Barcia, Diego Martínez Barrio, Angel Rizo, Demófilo de Buen, Fermín Zayas, José Boch, Evelio Torent, José Estruch, Manuel Nieto, Antonio Montaner, Manuel Portela Valladares, Francisco Soto Mas, Juan Manuel Iniesta, Isidro Sánchez Martínez, Miguel de Benavides, Pedro Las Heras and Julio Hernández.

On July 18th, 1936, an uprising led by several generals against the democratic system of the second Republic started. In the area of Spain dominated by the rebels a systematic killing was practiced not only against Masons but also many unfortunate, moderate Liberals who were suspected to belong to Freemasonry.

Spanish Freemasonry, which had never intervened in the hazards of political life, could not remain neutral in a military uprising that threatened their own liberal and democratic ideals and that made them so unfairly persecuted. In the struggle for freedom that took place in Spain from 1936 to 1939; Spanish Freemasonry played an important role in the defense of the homeland and of justice.

The military rebels persecuted Masons during the course of the Spanish Civil War. This persecution took a legislative form after the war, with the Communism and Masonry Suppression Act, which was issued on March 1st, 1940. This Act arbitrarily grouped two ideologies which have nothing in common together.

The Spanish Civil War and the fierce persecution of Spanish Brethren of General Franco's regime forced many of them to leave Spain, which broke their hearts and lives

The Supreme Council of Mexico, granting Fraternal Exile to Spain, established, together with England's in the 19th century, a precedent of Masonic jurisprudence inspired by the highest sense of fraternity.

The granting of exile to the Supreme Council of Spain was approved in the Extraordinary General Session of the Supreme Council of Mexico, held on February 3rd, the year of 1943, dictating the corresponding Decree.

In April of the year 1961, a *History of the Supreme Council of the 33rd degree for Spain and its dependencies and Spanish Freemasonry* was published in Mexico City. This work, done by the Supreme Council of Spain in exile, is an excellent guide to learn about our history and the names of the Brethren who forged it. Greatest merit should be granted to the authors of this effort, considering that the Supreme Council files were lost or destroyed voluntarily, fearing their capture by General Franco's regime and the corresponding consequences. Part of the files were transferred to Paris and then again destroyed, to prevent that the troops of another dictatorship would seize them. (Dictators do not like Freemasonry because it preaches the Liberty of the nations and of the individuals).

Reading the history of the Supreme Council of Spain, poorly edited, you can see how the line of succession of the Sovereign Grand Commanders, proceeds legally, regularly and without any interruption since the first one: Don Miguel de Azanza, until our days.