

Regularity and Recognition –

New Approaches

The Meeting of the Grand Masters of the Regular Grand Lodges of Europe held in Geneva, Switzerland, on 27-30 June probably “took an even longer step” in a course that began in November 2007 when the first Meeting in London addressed the issue of Regularity and Recognition.

During that Meeting, alongside the Grand Lodges recognized by UGLE were invited two other Grand Lodges, the Grand Orient of Italy and the National Grand Lodge of Greece, both regular and recognized by other Grand Lodges of Europe. Then, the power of decision of 1929 on the Basic Principles for the Recognition of Grand Lodges were particularly noted and it was explained that jurisdiction, as described in Article 5 of that decision, is not necessarily linked to the territorial sovereignty of the Grand Lodges. There have been reports of the opinion of the Pro Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of England in the recent Meeting, made a case, noting, of course, that is not an issue of today, for the possibility of the United Grand Lodge of England to proceed with a recognition of two Grand Lodges in the same territory, even if these two Grand Lodges are not in a relationship of amity and mutual recognition.

Pierre Mollier Director of Library, Archives and Museum of the Grand Orient of France, believes that such a development would allow UGLE to solve two problems. Recognition of Prince Hall Grand Lodges in the South, which the UGLE wishes to recognize, as has been done for those in the North, despite the fact that the Mainstream Grand Lodges in the South have repeatedly stated they will not recognize Prince Hall Grand Lodges. The second problem this will address is that of France, where the National Grand Lodge of France and the newly formed Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance, i.e. the Masonic Confederation of France, of which the new Grand Lodge is also a member, have regularity according to the Anglo -Saxon concept. Mollier considers that the Joint Declaration of the 5 Grand Lodges of Central Europe on the positive developments regarding the Masonic Confederation of France a few days after the meeting at Geneva is no coincidence.

It is likely that such a development would have an effect in other areas of the world such as Italy, Greece, and Mexico.

No matter how tempting it might be, however, to terminate the study at this point the events taking place in France in the past few years and the recent developments in particular, should not be overlooked as they are probably indications of what is to come.

The Declaration of Basel

After the withdrawal of the recognition of the National Grand Lodge of France by the three Home Grand Lodges, other Grand Lodges followed suit. The Grand Lodges of neighboring countries of France (Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium, Grand Lodge of Luxembourg, Grand Lodge Alpina of Switzerland and United Grand Lodges of Germany) and the Grand Lodge of Austria, i.e. the Central European forces, faced the issue collectively. In their joint statement from London on **December 17, 2011**, the five Grand Masters announced that they will take appropriate steps to withdraw the

recognition of the National Grand Lodge of France. Hence the Basel Declaration of **10th June 2012**, in which it was, albeit regrettably, announced that from that day onwards their respective Grand Lodges would not officially recognize the National Grand Lodge of France. The stated reason was that the French administration had moved away from masonic principles and landmarks while the electoral procedures applied lacked legitimacy thus having destroyed 100 years of history and having caused a crisis to the Freemasonry of France. The five Grand Lodges asserted their belief that because of its large masonic tradition France should regain its proper position in the global chain through a bold reconstruction of the masonic landscape avoiding all further acts that could potentially increase its fragmentation. The signatories to the Declaration consider the Grand Lodge of France an important factor in the suggested reconstruction process as it was, for quite some time, held in high esteem by the five Grand Lodges, not only because of the quality of the brethren and ritual, but also for their intense and known desire to become part of the worldwide chain of recognized masonic jurisdictions. Therefore, the five Grand Lodges believe that hereby lies an historic opportunity for the Grand Lodge of France to realize its ambition utilizing all the necessary options so those that it can:

- continue to work in accordance with the fundamental principles of Regular Freemasonry.
- summarily sever all relationships with irregular Jurisdictions.
- maintain the international customs and traditions that govern the relationship between a Lodge and the Supreme Council.

The five Grand Lodges seriously wish to support and advise the Grand Lodge of France in this matter and declare their willingness to enter into negotiations with a view to possible recognition. They declare their support to the French Masons and their firm intention to not abandon them.

The National Grand Lodge of France

The National Grand Lodge of France has already been on the receiving end of numerous attacks, as on **28 April 2012**, Lodges withdrew and established the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance. It is notable that one of the founding Lodges is the Lodge L'Anglaise 204 with history dating back to 1732 when it was established under the auspices of the United Grand Lodge of England and through the centuries has been placed under the auspices of many French masonic jurisdictions, albeit always regular ones. Later, on **January 12, 2013**, the Independent Grand Lodge of France was established followed on 19 January 2013 by the Traditional Grand Lodge of France in Avignon. The National Grand Lodge of France has already lost 40% of its power. Meanwhile Jean-Pierre Serval was elected Grand Master, in September 2012, when the period of guardianship by the French state ended. His first act was a Decree expelling Immediate Past Grand Master François Stifani, who, of course, had already resigned some time ago.

The difficult situation that arose in the National Grand Lodge of France was examined in great detail through the evidence submitted to the Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons of North America, according to the annual report of 2012. It is reported that about 28 regular Grand Lodges, including six in the United States and one in Canada, have suspended fraternal relations with GLNF. Although still considered regular, there is a question as to whether it meets the standards for recognition. After much deliberation, the Commission was of the opinion that a reasonable course of action that should be considered would be to suspend

fraternal relations with the National Grand Lodge of France until a solution to the crisis was reached. As new elections are scheduled in the near future, there is hope for an imminent solution.

The Grand Lodge of France

The Grand Lodge of France, blocked over the years by the Regular Grand Lodges, is recognized and cooperates with the so-called 'liberal' jurisdictions and also has amicable relations with the Grand Orient of France and French Women and Mixed Jurisdictions as well as with other Grand Lodges supporting the Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite (including amity with the Grand Lodge of Greece of A.A.S.T. which was found on 26 February 1988, after a schism of the Grand Lodge of Greece) around the world. It also has its own network of Lodges in several countries such as Belgium, Spain, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Russia, Israel, Togo, Congo, Mauritius, Senegal, Madagascar, Canada, Thailand, Cambodia and England.

It should also be noted that since 2002 a League named "The French Masonry" has created in which nine jurisdictions (the Grand Lodge of France, the French National Lodge, the Traditional and Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera, the Grand Orient of France, the French Federation for Human Right, the Grand Feminine Lodge of France, the Grand Feminine Lodge of Memphis-Misraim, the Grand Mixed Lodge of France, Grand Mixed Universal Lodge participate. These Obediences have created the Masonic Institute of France. The Grand Lodge of France withdrew from the League in 2006.

Minnesota Affair

In April 2001, however, the Grand Lodge of Minnesota voted to recognize the Grand Lodge of France alongside the National Grand Lodge of France. The decision follows a proposal from the Foreign Relations Committee, on the basis that they are in essence of a confirmation of recognition since they recognized it officially in 1919, and - because of the Second World War - had lost all contact with it and, despite the 1954 advice of Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons of North America , they proceeded with the recognition of the National Grand Lodge of France whilst never withdrawing the recognition of the Grand Lodge of France. Apparently some expected the Grand Master to decide to withdraw the recognition of the Grand Lodge of France by his Grand Lodge but this never materialized, nor were any steps taken on this issue at the next Grand Assembly in April 2002.

From May to July 2002, eight Grand Lodges of the United States (Michigan, Maine, Rhode Island, Kentucky, New York, Maryland, Florida, Vermont) withdrew their recognition of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, because they had recognized the Grand Lodge of France and six Grand Lodges of the United States (Indiana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Massachusetts, Wisconsin, New Hampshire) addressed the issue, but did not suspend their relations, unlike the Grand Lodge of Arizona which in June 2002 were also ready to recognize the Grand Lodge of France, but after deliberations, postponed the issue for the day after the Grand Assembly.

On July 13, 2002, the Grand Lodge of Minnesota suspended recognition of the Grand Lodge of France, stating that they do so because the suspension of the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Minnesota, by some Grand Lodges U.S. raises difficulties for its members and because they wanted to be able to discuss the issue of practical masonic recognition with other American Grand Lodges and could only do so if it was in recognition by them.

Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons of North America

The 2003 Annual Report of Commission on Information for Recognition of the Conference of Grand Masters of Masons of North America indicated that questions about the Grand Lodge of France had been raised with respect to their having invaded regions, such as the Czech Republic and Spain, where there are regular Grand Lodges; that hold fraternal relations with the irregular Grand Orient of France and the French Federation for Human Right. During the Conference, the Grand Chancellor, Michel Singer, answered various questions and stated his position that the Lodge in the Czech Republic was established in consultation with the Grand Master of the Czech Republic; that there is no formal fraternal relationship with the Grand Orient of France and the mixed French Federation for Human Right; that the information regarding a treaty signed by him in Iceland last year was incorrect, as it was a mistake to have signed there, but despite that the treaty had been signed, since then had not been presented to the Grand Lodge for approval and thus it was of no consequence ; that there had been some visits between the Grand Lodge of France and the Grand Orient of France and the French Federation for Human Rights (male members only), but these were very few and not prohibited; that dual membership between the Grand Lodge of France and the Grand Orient of France is not allowed; that the Bible is on the altar in all the Lodges of the Grand Lodge of France and the Grand Lodge of France had withdrawn the Charter of a Lodge that violated this policy, and that the participation of the Grand Lodge of France to the United Grand Lodges of Europe was a mistake and in any case it was simply some discussions which took place and that this organization is unlikely to continue.

Nat Granstein, one of the Assistant Grand Masters of the National Grand Lodge of France refuted these arguments. He, and some members of the committee, said that, what the Commission and the visitors had just heard was in many respects inaccurate. The Grand Master of the Czech Republic had expressed in writing strong objections, to the creation of another Grand Lodge in that country, and stated that there were relationships and visits between the Grand Lodge of France and the Grand Orient of France as evidenced by documents and photographs and these comments are accepted by the Grand Lodge of France.

Creating a Confederation

With the announcement of the Declaration of Basel, however, a process was set in motion and the result of which was that five French Masonic Jurisdictions are now discussing the creation of a Confederation. These are the Grand Lodge of France, Traditional and Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera (established in 1958 by splitting the National Grand Lodge of France and currently having 4500 members), the two new Grand Lodges (the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance and the Independent Grand Lodge of France) and the French National Lodge (established in 1968, and currently having 600 members).

French National Lodge - The Withdrawal

The French National Lodge on **February 21, 2013** withdrew from the negotiations. The reason was a conflict between the Federal Council of the Grand Lodge of France and the Freemasonry historian Roger Dachez, President of the Masonic Institute of France and National Chancellor of the French National Lodge and one of the negotiators. In the words of Robert Guinot, president of the National

Council of the French National Lodge "The decision to ban the speeches of our brother Roger Dachez in the Lodges of the Grand Lodge of France created a deep sense of pain".

What is the origin of the drama? Roger Dachez has signed a series of articles in the latest issue of the Historia journal and one of them has angered the members of the Federal Council of the Grand Lodge of France. Its title was "The Grand Lodge of France has existed continuously without interruption since 1738 FALSE." According to Roger Dachez, the Federal Council decided on February 16 to take revenge by vetoing the invitation to talk about Masonic history issued to him by two Lodges.

"There was never any question of prohibiting access to temples to Roger Dachez, reacts the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of France. The Federal Council reacted emotionally to the Historia journal article, which was really wrong, and I have suggested to our two Lodges that since they have invited Dachez they should arrange for one of our historians to also attend. "

The reaction of Roger Dachez: «is beyond anyone's imagination that I'll give a talk in a Lodge under the control of a political commissar. Also, I wrote to Mark Henry that I am not an employee of the Soviet Encyclopedia. It is an insult to my international reputation as a historian of Freemasonry."

Undoubtedly it was the water that overflowed the glass since in the French National Lodge they clearly did not believe in the work of the Confederation, mainly due to the requirement of the Basel Declaration to sever relations with the irregular jurisdictions and, clearly, the French National Lodge was not as optimistic as Mark Henry who said: "The Confederation can survive, leaving each of the member Grand Lodges free to allow visits to whomever they wish based on their own internal rules. Each jurisdiction may have different internal rules. There is no need to impose a state of prohibition on each other. "

The Supreme Councils

In the meantime the Supreme Council for France (the one supported by the National Grand Lodge of France) is concerned in what is happening in the Craft. The Sovereign Grand Commander in his letter dated **September 5, 2011** announced that

"The current crisis of the National Grand Lodge of France caused the suspension of relations with the majority of European Grand Lodges. This can create confusion and uncertainty in international relations. To protect our jurisdiction, I resigned from the National Grand Lodge of France on 31 August 2011. By belonging to the United Grand Lodge of England, according to the constitution and our regulations, we avoid any suspicion as to the regularity of the governance of our Supreme Council. "

The Supreme Council of France in Paris, was founded in October 1804 and is the second oldest of the Supreme Councils of the world and the first of the Old Continent. Guard and Keeper of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, it is the ultimate and supreme authority throughout the territory of the French Republic. Almost all the members are members of the Grand Lodge of France and on 1st December 2012 it numbered 8,263 members.

In 1894, the Supreme Council relinquished jurisdiction over the first three degrees to the Grand Lodge of France but, in 1965, when they refused to break relations with the Grand Orient of France

on the subject of the Great Architect of the Universe, 1,000 members left and joined the National Grand Lodge of France. They introduced the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. The Supreme Council of France was declared irregular by the Supreme Council of the USA, Canada and the Netherlands. Past Sovereign Grand Commander Riandey Charles, resigned and organized the Supreme Council for France which comprises brethren belonging to the National Grand Lodge of France, was recognized by the Supreme Council of the United States after having been designated as the sole authority of the Scottish Rite for France after the Synod of Barranquilla in 1970. Of course the Grand Orient of France has its own Supreme Council.

The Supreme Council for France, in a letter to its members on **April 4, 2012**, stated that having monitored very closely recent events in the National Grand Lodge of France and as the candidacy of François Stifani for the position of Grand Master was accepted by the Commission considers that this decision - regardless of its being ratified or rejected by the Grand Assembly of June 23rd 2012 - the National Grand Lodge of France will not find the peace needed to start work. Its future is uncertain as the necessary reforms cannot be implemented unless the French Justice and the brethren of the Commission have decided to take action.

Under these conditions, the process of suspension of the recognition from foreign grand lodges is likely to be accelerated and the National Grand Lodge of France will most likely be excluded from the regular recognized Freemasonry.

This largely unexpected condition was predicted by many brothers who have organized themselves to build a new regular Grand Lodge in France, with respect to the «landmarks» and demonstrating the desire to restore conditions for the revival of traditional initiatory masonry in the French territory. This initiative has the support of a large number of brethren from all rites. The project was completed recently thus giving birth to the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance which will be established by the founding Lodges on April 28, 2013. The Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance will be a fully sovereign jurisdiction allowing all members of the three symbolic degrees regular practice using all recognized rituals of universal masonry. As it was regularly created and it respects the criteria for establishing regular masonry, the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance is a regular Masonic body. Therefore, it is legally entitled to apply for recognition by foreign regular Grand Lodges.

The community of Scottish Rite Freemasons of the National Grand Lodge of France today is divided between the brethren who are members and those who have joined this new regular jurisdiction. The Supreme Council for France respects the freedom of conscience of its members, is not allowed to comment on the choice of the brethren and intends to fulfill its mission of the initiatory transmission without any discrimination. They are also committed to accepting all current, future and prospective members in their workings regardless of their affiliation to one or the other of the two Grand Lodges.

This exceptional provision will be maintained as long as the international community of regular Grand Lodges will not have made their final position on the recognition of a Grand Lodge in France formally known.

The next move was that the Supreme Council for France met with the Supreme Councils of Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Romania, Portugal and Greece (signed by S. Kamalakis) in

Lausanne on **April 20th, 2013** and decided to establish the Confederation of European Supreme Councils and chose the French Sovereign Grand Commander as the inaugural President. This act was notified to all the Supreme Councils and all regular Grand Lodges of the world on the **15 of May 2013**. Two points in this document deserve to be highlighted. The first is about one of the objectives which are to promote a common position of all members of the Confederation regarding all matters of masonic "geo-politics", including specific criteria of amity between European Supreme Councils. The second is the statement that a Supreme Council made up according to the requirements of the Grand Constitutions of the Order of the Grand Inspectors General of the 33rd and last degree has the indivisible sovereign governance of its territorial jurisdiction as it is the only body that can confer the grades of the hierarchy.

Foundation of the Confederation

During the Grand Assembly of the Grand Lodge of France on June 14, 2013 the agreement was ratified by a landslide majority of 89% in favor of the creation of a Confederation of the four jurisdictions which will consist of over 1,600 Lodges and over 50,000 members and 91% in favor of the procedures for visiting.

Moreover, as noted by the Past Grand Master Alain-Noël Dubart the procedures for visiting consist of two parts. The first concerns freedom of exchanging visits between members of the Confederation, always in accordance with the provisions of each one whilst the second set concerns visits to jurisdictions outside the Confederation. According to the same source, there will be no announcement by the Council of Grand Lodge. This statement of course is somehow contradicting the February statement by the Grand Master Mark Henry, at the time of the withdrawal of the French National Lodge (see p.5).

The Masonic Confederation of France was inaugurated on **15 June 2013** when the four Grand Masters of the Grand Lodge of France, Traditional and Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera, Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance and Independent Grand Lodge of France signed the Treaty of Establishment, the protocol of visits and masonic exchanges and the special provisions for each jurisdiction.

When these special provisions are analyzed, however, there arises a slight difficulty. As expected, the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance and the Independent Grand Lodge of France (two secessions of the National Grand Lodge of France) have no difficulty in signing the prohibition of visits by members of «irregular» jurisdictions (Grand Orient of France, the French Federation of Human Rights, Grand Mixed Lodge of France, Grand Mixed Universal Lodge) as well as forbidding their members to visit these 'irregular' jurisdictions. For the Grand Lodge of France and the Traditional and Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera this, however, is not easy. It will take time for both of them to change their practices. There will soon be a new wording according to which it will be compulsory for 'irregular' visitors to have, prior to entry, signed a document recognizing the seven principles of the regular Freemasonic Confederation which are:

- Invocation of the Great Architect of the Universe
- The presence in the Lodge of the three Great Lights: An open Volume of the Sacred Law with the Square and the Compasses
- The exclusive sovereignty over the symbolic degrees
- Independence from any masonic structure of the high grades

- No intermingling of genders during masonic work
- The ban of political or religious discussions
- The progressive and spiritual character of the Masonic approach.

It will take a few months before these new regulations are implemented. "They will be ready before the end of the year", says Jean Dubar, Grand Master of the Opera, adding that "the agreements between jurisdictions should be changed."

The Declaration of the five Grand Lodges

The Confederation in response to the Basel Declaration on **July 3rd, 2013** adopted the Paris Declaration, noting the issues on which there has already been some progress towards their cooperation as well as reinstating their willingness to complete the effort of their integration into Regular Freemasonry.

This event was welcomed by a joint statement by the five Grand Lodges of Central Europe, a few days after the meeting at Geneva, and at this point Mollier is standing.

It is to be remembered that in the meantime the Meeting of the Grand Masters of Regular Grand Lodges of Europe had taken place in Geneva, Switzerland between the **27th and 30th June 30, 2013** and was attended by the Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of France.

In their **10 July 2013** joint statement addressed to all the Grand Lodges with which they are in amity, they expressed their satisfaction on the birth of Masonic Confederation of France highlighting the historic opportunity, noting the need to work towards the development of institutional structures and the resolution of many issues, albeit without specifying which ones but certainly including the issues of visitations with 'irregular' jurisdictions and the connection of the Grand Lodge of France with the Supreme Council of France. Furthermore, the National Grand Lodge of France is unequivocally criticized after having first noted that the Basel Declaration was also addressed to the Brethren of the National Grand Lodge of France, for their participation in this joint effort for a Regular traditional Freemasonry on French territory, it is suggested that the real and deeply rooted causes of the crisis which cannot be resolved simply by expelling one person need to be made known and that a return to tranquility and peace will not be automatically achieved but will be precipitated by specific actions addressing the real causes of the unrest. So it seems that to expel one, namely François Stifani, is not seen as sufficient, that is Jean-Pierre Serval has not been successful in his attempts to convince them at the Meeting of the Grand Masters.

The reaction of the National Grand Lodge of France

The reaction of the Grand Master of the National Grand Lodge of France Jean-Pierre Serval was a little hesitant, but eventually, the aggressive management of the five Grand Lodges of Europe was so violent against his jurisdiction that he decided to respond through a public blog, the same one in which the statement of the five Grand Lodges was released on July 10. He did so two days later, on **July 12, 2013**. Since his installation as the Grand Master on December 1, 2012, Serval had refused all requests to be interviewed by a reporter. Jean-Pierre Serval responded to the attack on three points:

1. He challenged the criticisms by the five Grand Lodges of Europe as follows "The Geneva meeting was attended by 40 Grand Masters, some of them representing more important

jurisdictions than these five. They applauded me. The writings of the five are not representative of what is generally believed by European Grand Lodges." He adds that "The National Grand Lodge of France should not be judged by these five Grand Lodges. It's unpleasant. Can I interfere in their internal affairs? "

2. On the establishment of the Masonic Confederation of France he stated that "the five Grand Lodges express their solidarity with the Confederation whilst failing to recognize that not all its participants are regular. During their Meeting, the Grand Lodge of France has not legislated on the subject of inter-visitation with the Grand Orient of France. The five Grand Lodges may well rejoice over the creation of the Confederation, but this no good reason to marginalize us on the basis that we have not proven ourselves! "
3. On the criticisms of the National Grand Lodge of France he says that "It took me a few hours [after my installation as Grand Master] to decide to expel François Stifani. And I have since dedicated my days and nights to the future of the National Grand Lodge of France dealing, for example, with rule reform. Order has returned to the house. The National Grand Lodge of France regained its shining and grandeur. We are recognized by 120 Grand Lodges around the world. And I understand that the United Grand Lodge of England is affording us time after we lost their recognition during the three years of our crisis. "

The reaction of the Grand Orient of France

About a month after the creation of the Masonic Confederation of France, the reaction of the Grand Orient of France, the Grand Mixed Lodge of France and the Grand Mixed Universal Lodge with the support of the French Federation of Human Rights and the Grand Feminine Lodge of France was swift and decisive. "The Grand Lodge of France and the Traditional and the Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera must choose their camp: either that of English regularity or adogmatic and liberal Freemasonry; such a big variance is no longer tolerated." So said Jose Gulino, Grand Master of the Grand Orient of France in a press conference.

For the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance and the Independent Grand Lodge of France, the situation is straightforward as the two jurisdictions (derived from the National Grand Lodge of France) made it clear that there will be no inter-visitation with the brethren who are not in the Confederation.

"We Are going to write to the Grand Lodge of the French Masonic Alliance and the Independent Grand Lodge of France asking them to leave our temples, from September 1," said Jose Gulino. From this it can be surmised that these two jurisdictions had requested to house their meetings in the temples of the Grand Orient. For the Grand Lodge of France and the Traditional and the Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera the issue is more complicated as they do not stop the exchange of visits but intend to impose seven signed commitments. "This is completely inconsistent with our vows of initiation, such as the obligation to invoke the GAOTU or work with the Bible open," says Jose Gulino.

"If they go for the regularity of the United Grand Lodge of England, we can no longer work together" says Gulino. «I told to Mark Henry (GM of the Grand Lodge of France), When you make a strategic choice, consider what connects us." Gulino stresses that "3,000 - 4,000 brethren of the Grand Lodge of France are housed in temples of the Grand Orient of France". These words do not yet constitute a threat, but we feel that they could be used as such. Gulino also says that these new rules that

discriminate are not understood by the base of brethren belonging either to the Grand Orient of France or the Grand Lodge of France, especially in the provinces.

"Mark Henry believes he can get the English regularity while staying with us which is not possible," says José Gulino giving the example of the new European Masonic Alliance, where no Regular Grand Lodge is participating, but which the Grand Lodge of France would like to join.

Jose Gulino, expressed his wish that from September 2013 his jurisdiction, led by his successor, will be engaged with the Grand Lodge of France and the Traditional and Symbolic Grand Lodge Opera in substantive discussions on the historical agreements governing their relationship. These discussions are therefore most likely to have a bitter taste.

The Afterword

It is certain that the outcome will be of interest to multiple recipients:

England wants to overcome the trap of territoriality as more and more voices are calling for a move in this direction. They would, of course, also like to regain the lead through a redefinition of at least the recognition process of probably on the occasion of 300 years since its foundation. Dual recognition will solve problems in Greece, Italy and the Prince Halls in the USA. Thus they will not be abandoning the National Grand Lodge of France whilst regularizing the second largest jurisdiction in France, the Grand Lodge, thus acquiring a large philosophical counterweight against adogmatic Masonry.

Germany would like the model of the United Grand Lodges to take a breather through the success of a similar model in France. They are also afraid of the dual recognition, because in their case it would be fivefold (the Confederation consists of five Grand Lodges) and they also promote the dissolution of the Confederation, pushing the National Grand Lodge of France to join. Besides, they are proud of their model and it could be said that they see it as a plausible, if not desirable solution to problems such as Italy and Greece.

Switzerland has a past which has cost them dearly, since for 32 years (1958-1990) - as officially reported by Jean Bénédic, founder and president of the Research Group of Alpina - despite having severed all relations with France at the Masonic level UGLE nonetheless interrupted for a few months in 1971 their relationship with the Grand Lodge Alpina of Switzerland, as well as indicate the then Grand Secretary of UGLE Sir James Stubbs contacts between Swiss Lodges with irregular Lodges of the Grand Orient of France and the Grand Lodge of France in Geneva and Basel continuing. In essence it was a pressure to recognize National Grand Lodge of France, which was finally done by the Swiss in 1990. Jean Bénédic also notes the withdrawal of the recognition of the Grand Lodge of Belgium in 1983 in favor the then small newborn Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium took place under such a climate of fear, was, as it was thought that another wrong step would mean final exclusion. This concern had, for a long time, exacerbated the relationship with UGLE.

If the effort of the five is successful, Austria, will see their views going on, as well as attempts of the past to implement a European Committee for Recognition following American standards justified.

Even though the Regular Grand Lodge of Belgium has very little influence on the masonic events in the country, as the Grand Orient and the Grand Lodge, and the Women's and the Mixed Obediences

are strongest by far in membership, they clearly have a reason to care as the history of France always has influenced the masonic history in Belgium. Some would even argue that Belgium replicates France to the point of justifying Sir James Stubbs' calling it Belgian masonic history 'a micrograph' of the French one.

France is seeking a path to restoring some balance in a history of, one could argue, seemingly centennial cycles of disturbances. A lot of issues are put forward: first and foremost the conflict of two different Freemasonic ideologies which are most explicitly expressed in the texts and opinions of the official bodies of the two factions and their allies.

There are other issues on the practical implications.

How will relationships which had developed between the Grand Lodge of France and other Grand Lodges in Europe - those that are not only considered as regular, but also with those that follow practice similar to the Regular ones (i.e. faith in God, their members are only men, etc.) - develop?

Can the obstacles to entering the Lodges be overcome by the declaration of acceptance thus resulting in Lodge members belonging to jurisdictions that are not in amity and mutual recognition and do not belong to the same ideological side attend the same Lodge meetings? Something rather similar has been the case for fifteen years now in Italy and Greece (save, albeit, the declarations as the relationships there have developed between Regular Grand Lodges). If this happens it will be another step towards a return to traditional pre-1717 values, under which Lodges and Brethren had the right of a free visit and there were no commitments, definitions and aphorisms imposed from "above". Is this probably a solution to the problem of the reduction of Freemasonry through reduced membership all over the world?

Why should the National Grand Lodge of France join the Confederation when they have 120 recognitions and relationships throughout the world? Just a few days ago they were re-established relations with the Grand Lodge of Washington DC and the Grand Orient of Brazil!

How would the two Supreme Councils in France react? And what is the difference between them as both are of a universal character?

What will happen if under the existing rules of regularity, many Grand Lodges start to be established in one geographical area? Doesn't this also happen in many cases already? Where are these Grand Lodges led, if they are not accepted in the regular camp? And how far can this phenomenon reach? Was a line finally drawn in 2007 with Italy and Greece or is France to be another live example with two Regular Grand Lodges but only one of them being recognized by one camp and the other one being recognized by the other, thus, once again dividing Regular Freemasonry?

Could it be that Stewart Miner, from the Grand Lodge of the District of Columbia is vindicated when in his 1992 article he wrote: "In conclusion, I would like to note that an examination of the American doctrine of exclusive territorial sovereignty revealed (a) that the doctrine, as originally conceived, no longer exists, (b) that the historical application of the doctrine, especially during the 19th century, was selective, (c) that contradictory applications of the doctrine have increased the need of clarification and (d) that, where it seemed prudent, American Grand Lodges have changed their interpretations of the doctrine so that clarifications are made on a case-by-case as appropriate.

This process, I believe, is irreversible; and the efforts of a few Grand Lodges to curtail the tide through punitive measures will fail in the long run and change will undoubtedly prevail.

Is Regularity that different from Recognition? Would it be that simply recognizing Regularity will solve the problems?

And finally who would simply rely on the authority of a Grand Lodge, when even the then Pro Grand Master Spencer "Spenny" Douglas David Compton, 7th Marquess of Northampton of the senior Grand Lodge of the Grand Lodge of England, in the 2007 first Meeting of the Grand Masters of Regular Grand Lodges of Europe, expressed the following position: " We are always available for advice, information and sharing our long experience but we cannot, nor would we seek to, interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign Grand Lodge. We can offer a lead, provide comfort and support in times of trouble, and give practical assistance to new Grand Lodges, but England cannot be a sort of international Masonic policeman arbitrating disagreements within and between sovereign Grand Lodges. We can and will make our position clear on the subjects of regularity and recognition but it is then up to you to decide what your views are. We cannot, and would not seek to, impose our views on others and we do not believe that any other body should do so either. However, we do reserve our right to decide who we regard as being regular and capable of recognition. Brethren, we have a wonderful diversity of Masonic practice in Europe. We are bound by the same basic principles, tenets and landmarks but have each developed in our own way. We should celebrate that diversity, so long as it remains within the bounds of regularity."

The last paragraph covers everything, the richness of diversity is the strongest weapon for Regular Freemasonry, which is accused of dogmatism and restricting the freedom of its members by the irregular Grand Lodges that claim to have freedom and democracy as their dominant characteristic of their expression and function. Although the leader of this camp, the Grand Orient of France, according its regulations does not elect the Grand Master directly from the representatives of its Lodges but by a 35member electoral Board!

Developments lie ahead and on these there are many opinions. The battle is fought at the ideological level using many material weapons.