



In my capacity as Deputy Grand Master in charge of international relations of the Grand Orient of France (1991-1993), then as secretary of the European Masonic Conference (1993-1995), I worked with Madame Catherine Lalumière, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (1989-1994), towards the restoration of fundamental freedoms in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and therefore towards the restoration of Freemasonry, which was made possible by the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9<sup>th</sup> 1989. As a matter of fact, some laws concerning associations were still applicable and imposed a de facto ban on the return of Freemasonry which had been prohibited by totalitarianisms of all stripes since 1947.

I thought, at the time, that political or religious anti-masonry in Europe was coming to an end and that “*The Captive Mind*” subtitled “*An Essay on the People's Logocracies*”, a book by Czeslaw Milosz - the Nobel Prize winner in Literature for 1978 - definitely belonged to the history of political philosophy. I was mistaken.

In Hungary, Vice Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén declared on Radio Kossuth, on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 2017 that “Freemasonry (was) the original cause for the present migratory crisis”.

In Italy, in 2017, under the pretext of the fight against the Mafia, Freemasonry was subjected to police searches in its lodges in Sicily and Calabria, and its members are still at the mercy of a political plan of compelling those who are in the civil service to disclose their membership to the public.

In Switzerland, in 2015, a decision to compel the representatives of the canton of Valais to make their membership public was turned down by a few votes only.

In Britain, on February 4<sup>th</sup> 2018, the *Guardian* denounced the existence of Freemasons' lodges operating secretly at Westminster – the seat of the Houses of Parliament – and of collusion between journalists and politicians in the interests of a so-called masonic power.

In Africa, some twenty countries have banned Freemasonry, legally if not effectively, and in Senegal, a secular democracy, the organisers of the REHFRAM were forced to cancel their planned events under the pressure of Islamist organisations. In Dakar, masonic meetings are still forbidden by a decree of the local administration.

In the Americas, the witch hunt against Freemasonry only affects Venezuela, organised by the henchmen of the Chavist power under which two of our brothers were murdered, as I recently told you.

In France, we have become used to the ravings of left wing or right wing conspiracy theorists as well as to religious anti-masonry since the papal bull *In Eminenti* in 1738.

We may be less well informed of the positions adopted by Egyptian mufti Rashid Rida, taken up in Mecca on July 15<sup>th</sup> 1978 by an Islamic jurisprudence body which, as everyone knows, only concerns the Sunni Wahhabi stream in Islam. In Iran however, Shiite Hezbollah as well as Sunni Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood fully agree in their joint condemnation of Freemasonry, and in the propagation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* - a faked document forged by the tsarist Okhrana which refers to a pseudo Jewish-masonic conspiracy for conquering the world. Islamist organisations in Senegal are part of that theological-political Islamist anti-masonry.

Such simplistic discourse, a genuine religious logocracy in the service of a literal reading of the Koran, makes it possible to single out for public hatred, among a population deprived of critical judgement, a scapegoat for all its misfortunes: the Jew, the Freemason, the Other.

They have not read Camus for whom:

*To misname things is to add to the world's unhappiness.*

It behoves us, in accordance with our values, to undertake to *name things properly* in an attempt to *add to the world's happiness*. In order to do so, on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2018, on the occasion of a symposium on the religious phenomenon organised in partnership with the Institute of Political Studies of Aix-en-Provence, we will present the G.C.D.R.E. *Bruno Etienne Award* for a thesis on that theme.