

First Steps

Ivan Stavrev, 33°

DEAR BRETHREN,

In January 2000, after I submitted a detailed report to the Grand Lodge, I was given a mandate to undertake the necessary steps for introducing the A.A.S.R. to Bulgaria. There were many Brethren in Bulgaria at that time who had desire and were ready to begin working for their perfection in the Degrees from 4° to 33°. I had conducted numerous talks with leaders of our Movement from various countries in Europe and America, as follows:

- I had initial talks with the Grand Master of Germany, Bro. Alfred Kostka and his then Deputy Grand Master Friedrich-Wilhelm Schmidt (currently Sovereign Grand Commander of the Ritual in Germany) during the signature of the famous Protocol of Sinaya at Sinaya, Romaina.

- with the Grand Master of Italy Bro. Virgilio Gaito, as well as with the then Grand Commander of Italy Bro. Fabio Ganiatelli.

- in September 1999, during the regular annual Conference of Italy in Rome, I had talks in this direction with the new elected Grand Master of Italy Bro. Gustavo Raffi, as well as with Bro. Masur Hatafi, Grand Master of Washington, D.C.,

- over those years similar talks were also held with the Grand Lodge of France, with the Grand Commander Marcel Shapira, while attending various meetings in Romania and France.

- talks in this direction were held in different countries by Brethren, authorised by me, as the most important and essential one was the talk Bro. Ognyan Anachkov, an authorised Representative of the Grand Lodge near Japan. He talked to Bro. Joe Dale, Deputy of the Supreme Council for Japan and South Korea. He informed us that in order to install the Scottish Rite, the Grand Master should write a communication to the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction, USA.

There were several options for us and more specifically - possibilities for installation performed by Italy

or Germany. The Grand Lodge was acquainted with these options in detail. Then on January 7, 2000, at a regular session of the Grand Lodge, a mandate was unanimously voted

for the Grand Master to undertake the necessary steps, procedures and communications for installation of Supreme Council in Orient Bulgaria. I delivered a communication to the Sovereign Grand Commander of the Southern Jurisdiction, USA, the M.P. & Ill. Bro. Fred Kleinknecht, in Washington, expressing our desire to work the A.A.S.R., as well as request for a procedure concerning the actions we were to take for this purpose. This communication was dated April 26, 2000. With a communication, dated May 2, 2000, we received answer with the necessary procedure of the Supreme Council of Bulgaria. The initial proposal was that the first group of 34 Brethren should undergo a separate procedure in Frankfurt, Orient NATO, as well as to establish direct contacts with the Deputy of the Supreme Council, Southern Jurisdiction of USA, for Orient NATO in Europe, Bro. Robert Woodward, 33°.

With my communication of May 2, 2000 a direct contact was established with Bro. Robert Woodward and we started the necessary specific actions for installation of the Supreme Council. Due to the fact that there was a lot of work ahead of us, related to the future organising of the events concerning the Installation, at the end of May I made a big trip around Europe. Our working visits began with the Grand Lodge of France in Paris with talks with the Grand Master of France, Bro. Claude Charboneux, the Grand Secretary Bro. Ives Torstencel, as well as the Grand Commander, M.P. & Ill. Bro. Marcel Shapira, 33°.

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I visited Brussels and had two-day talks with Bro. Robert Woodward at Chateau Santa Anna near Brussels. At the end of these talks it was decided that the 34 wishing Brethren shall be initiated in the A.A.S.R. on July 1 in Sofia. We received the necessary materials and instructions for our concrete organisation of this forthcoming event. The next three days of our working trip took us to Karlsruhe, Germany, to the regular annual Conference of the Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. of Germany. There I had long talks concerning Installation of the Rite in Bulgaria with the M.W. Grand Master Klaus Hornerfer, as well as with the District Master of Bavaria Bro. Willi Drach. I expressed the thesis that Bulgaria, being a small country, needs to have Installation of the Rite as soon as possible, which coincides with the desire of the larger part of the Brethren. At the end of the meeting we agreed that the Rite will be installed in Bulgaria.

After my return to Bulgaria a preparation of the July 1 event in Sofia began. The Ceremony took place at the Temple of the Lodge at Gorna Banya, which was followed by an extensive press conference. at Hotel Kempinski-Zografski. After this event there began preparation of carrying out the raising in Degree of a second group of Brethren, which had been arranged in advance and which was to take place, according to the preliminary plans, on October 7 at Vicenza, Italy. I approved and submitted to Bro. Robert Woodward a list of 12 Brethren to be raised to 33° in Vicenza. Such were the requirements according to the procedure. On July 10, 2000 was also received the Certificate, approving Bro. Petar Kalpakchiev, 33°, as Personal Representative of A.M.R.S. of NATO in Bulgaria. A lot of organizational work was done during that period in respect of the second group of our Brethren in Vicenza, Italy. We prepared our second visit to Brussels for further and more precisely defining the programme for Vicenza, election of Supreme Council, as well as specifying the date of Installation of the Rite in Bulgaria. The Grand Master of England, M.W. Bro. Jim Daniel was also informed.

Our second visit to Brussels took place on August 26 and 27. There were concretised and defined all details concerning the future event in Vicenza, as well as initial draft of the programme for development of the Rite in 2001.

About 35 Brethren went to Vicenza via different routes. Some took a charter, other - e regular flight, but the main group travelled by cars along the Sofia - Nish - Belgrade - Trieste Highway. This was an unforgettable and memorable trip for the Brethren Ivan Stavrev, 33°, Venelin Jechev, 33°, Ivan Ivanov, 33°, Plamen Kozarski, 33°, Williams Ivanov, 33° etc. On October 5 the whole of Yugoslavia was out on the Nish-Belgrade Highway and half a Million people were on their way to Belgrade in order to participate to the meeting, which actually toppled the Miloshevic regime. At Vicenza 23 Brethren were raised to 32° and 11 Brethren were ordained to the highest 33°. Here was also elected the first Council of the Elected to the Supreme Council of Bulgaria. Bro. Peter Kalpakchiev, 33°, was elected as the first Sovereign Grand Commander. Also approved was the date for Installation of the Supreme Council, i.e. January 7, 2001. A conference was given for the Brethren attending the event in Vicenza.

After our return to Bulgaria we continued our work aimed at the Installation to be conducted on January 7, 2001. The Installation took place at Hotel Sheraton, Sofia, in the presence of a large number of foreign delegations from USA, Greece, Turkey, Hungary, Russia, Portugal, which legitimised the Supreme Council before the Masonic world.

I am happy and satisfied with the fact that for only one year, i.e. from January 7, 2001 till January 7, 2002 we did succeed, with the efforts of numerous Brethren, to have the Installation of the Supreme Council, A.A.S.R., installed in Orient Bulgaria exactly of St. John the Baptist Day, which is one of the most important Masonic festivals.

Respectfully yours and with Brotherly love,
Past Grand Master of the Grand Lodge
A.F. & A.M of Bulgaria (1994-2001)
Past Grand Prior (2001-2004)



International Activities

Grand Lodge of A.F. & A.M. in Bulgaria

Ivan Stavrev, 33°, Grand Master (1995 - 2001)



Bro. Werth, Grand Secretary of the United Grand Lodges of Germany, presents the First Grand Master of the Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. in Bulgaria at official ceremony in Rome.

Sitting: Bro. Howard Graff (Illinois), Bro. Robert Calp (Illinois), Bro. George Stallone and Bro. Ross Ness Bower (Jersey)



November 1997 at a World Conference of the Grand Masters in Rome with Grand Masters of Austria and Cuba Bro. Alexander Gize and Bro. Martines.



Congratulations for Grand Master of Italy Bro. Gustavo Raffi at his assumption of office on behalf of the Bulgarian Freemasons.



With Grand Secretary of the Grand Lodge of Netherlands Bro. Fred Adriolli in Hague searching for the Archive of the Grand Lodge till 1940.

THE BEGINNING



With Grand Masters of Spain, Portugal, Columbia and Cuba at International Masonic Conference in Italy



With Grand Master of Italy Bro. Virgilio Gaito



With Grand Master of New York Bro. Earl Enno in Berlin



At the first conference in Sinaya with Grand Masters Koska, Comanescu, Jean-Jaques Sounier, Dergachov, Pavel Shebek and Deputy Grand Master Massimo Bianki (Italy).



20 September 1997, hotel Rodina, Sofia, at a press conference with Grand Master of the United Grand Lodges of Germany Bro. Reiner Schike.



1 July 2000, hotel Kempinski Zografski, Sofia. First presentation of the American Freemasonry. Left right: Brothers George Helmer, 33°, Mario Guia, 33°, Woody, 33°, Don Saint, 33°, Ivan Stavrev, 33°, Wil Jetchev, 33° and Peter Kalpakchiev, 33°.