

THE OCCULT WAR

Secret Agents, Magicians and Hitler

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It is surprising the number of practitioners of the magical arts and witchcraft who were involved in military and intelligence work during the Second World War. Perhaps the best known 'occult spy' operating in the Second World War, and in fact long before, and whose intelligence career as been well documented, is Aleister Crowley. Author Dr Richard B. Spence believes that Crowley began his journey to being a secret agent when he took an oath of allegiance to the British Crown. This was at the Malvern College boarding school in 1891 when he joined the cadet corps of the local Worcestershire Royal Artillery Volunteers. Later in life Crowley was to say that despite his problems and issues with the British establishment he had always felt that he was bound to that oath. In fact it had strengthened his link with England (Spence 2008:17). It is possible he meant on a magical and psychic level as well as the physical and patriotic one.

As a young man, through an introduction by his aunt who was a member, Crowley joined the Primrose League. This was a semi-secret, quasi-Masonic, right-wing group within the Conservative Party whose aim was to protect it from its political enemies. Dr Spence suggests that Crowley's Jacobite sympathies in support of the return of the Stuart dynasty to the British throne to replace the Hanoverian usurpers, could have been used by the League to persuade Crowley to spy on potential enemies of the Crown. This however would suggest that his Jacobite inclinations were not genuine or a passing teenage phase.

Crowley was lucky enough to come under the patronage of the Marquess of Salisbury, the Grand Master of the League. It has been suggested that Salisbury helped Crowley to enter Cambridge University and was grooming his young protégé for a lifelong career in the Diplomatic Service, which might well have involved spying for his country. However Crowley had other ideas, although it was at Cambridge that he met the future artist Gerald Kelly and later to married his sister Rose. Forty years or so later both men were to serve in the wartime British Secret Service (Ibid: 18-19).

In the First World War Crowley was living in New York and he was accosted by a stranger on an omnibus. During their conversation about the war in Europe the man handed Crowley a business card. Printed on it were the addresses of two pro-German magazines and subsequently Crowley wrote anti-British propaganda for these publications. Naturally the British government took a dim view of this anti-patriotic, traitorous act. They labelled him a traitor and the police raided his magical temple in London and closed it down. Crowley always protested his innocence. In fact he said he had been working for British Intelligence and written the satirical articles at their request. The aim was to ridicule the pro-German movement in America and discredit the magazines. This has never confirmed by the British government, but it has also not been denied.

While Crowley was in the States he also posed as an Irishman supporting home rule or self-government for Ireland, which was still part of the British Empire. He managed to make contact with several Irish-American republicans who shared his alleged views. They seemed to have supplied him with the funds to stay in the country, although they eventually got fed up with his financial demands. It is quite possible that Crowley was spying on the Irish republican and was sending the information he gleaned back to his handler or case officer in London.

In the early 1920s Crowley and his little band of followers were expelled from Italy on the direct orders of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. The official version was that were kicked out because of their 'obscene and perverted' sexual activities at the so-called 'Abbey of Thelema at Cefalu on Sicily. The real reason was that the Italian police had a secret dossier on Crowley and believed he was British spy (Spence 2008:188).

Rumours circulating in government circles and the media in both Germany and France claimed that Crowley had contacts with 'the intelligence services of foreign countries'. In 1929 he was thrown out of Paris by the French government because they were convinced he was a spy. Dr Spence believes that at the time Crowley's British Intelligence case officer and contact was Gerald Yorke, who had met in 1927. Yorke was a freelance journalist and also worked for the international Reuters press agency. (Ibid: 208-209). That could have been a good cover for intelligence activities and many journalists are still recruited for that purpose today.

In the 1930s there is the first solid evidence that Crowley was recruited by MI6 or the SIS (Secret Intelligence Service). This was to spy on German occultists with political links to the emerging National Socialist ('Nazi') Party and Marxists revolutionaries. One of Crowley's possible targets was Albert Karl Theodor Reuss, the founder of the magical group the *Ordo Templi Orientis* or Order of the Eastern Templars (OTO), into which Crowley had been initiated in 1912 and made head of the British branch. Reuss was reputed to have worked before the First World War as an undercover agent for the Prussian secret police. While he was living in London in 1885, Reuss joined the Revolutionary Socialist League run by the founder of the arts and crafts movement William Morris and Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor. When they eventually discovered he was spying on them Reuss was expelled.

Another prominent member of the OTO in Germany, and controversially was later to become its Grand Master based in the USA, was Karl Johannes Germer. He had been awarded the much coveted Iron Cross medal in the First World War for his intelligence work, although unfortunately he was imprisoned in a concentration camp by the Nazis. It has been claimed that this was because of his association with Crowley and his attempts to recruit German members for the OTO.

When he was living in Berlin in the 1930s Crowley spied on secret societies and members of the Nazi Party known to be interested in occultism and reviving the old Germanic pagan religions. He shared a flat with Gerald Hamilton, a pro-communist English journalist, who was known to British Intelligence as a spy working for the Germans. Crowley reported back to London on Hamilton's activities and no doubt he was doing the same to his German masters. It may have been Crowley's involvement with the SIS that led Heinrich Himmler, head of the Nazi's SS Order, to publicly claim that the British Secret Service was run by Rosicrucians who used their occult powers to spy on their enemies.

In 1933, the year that the Nazis took power in Germany, Crowley met an eccentric Welsh aristocrat Viscount Tregedar (Evan Morgan 1893-1949). His haunted country house was near Newport in South Wales and was the site of famous wild parties to which he invited a wide mix of social types including Aldous Huxley and H.G. Wells. The estate included a private zoo featuring a kangaroo, honey bear, baboon and a macaw parrot. Queen Mary, the present queen's grandmother, called Lord Tregedar "My favourite bohemian". One of his more unusual and notorious house guests was, perhaps significantly in the light of later dramatic events, the Nazi deputy-fuehrer Rudolf Hess. In fact Hess had a family connection with the Tregedar estate as his first wife was buried nearby. In 2012 the house will be taken over by the National Trust and opened to the public.

Lord Tregedar had also visited the German home of Ernst Rohm, the head of the SA, and they shared a male lover. Rohm, who consulted astrologers about his homosexuality, was assassinated on the orders of Adolf Hitler during the purge of the Nazi Party known as 'the night of the long knives' in June 1943 when the SA was disbanded. This was partly because Hitler feared the organisation and Rohm's growing power, but also because many of its members shared their leader's sexual preferences and the other top Nazis were homophobes.

Crowley's friendship with Lord Tregedar was largely based on the fact that the two men shared an interest in the occult and possibly because they were both bisexuals. The Great Beast gave his lordship the ultimate accolade of calling him 'the [magical] Adept of Adepts'. Although Tregedar had converted as a young man to Catholicism, and even served as a chamberlain to two popes and was a Knights of Malta, he had still continued his occult activities. While living in Rome it is said that he did a necromantic rite in the English

Protestant cemetery in the city to conjure up the spirit of the eighteenth-century romantic poet Shelly. He also had contact with a cunning man in North Wales.

Tregedar seems to have been fond of graveyards for rituals as he allegedly used the one at the parish church of Ovingdean in Sussex. This was conveniently near his mother's house. In one of these churchyard rituals he was joined by a group of occultists who included a male cousin of Sir Winston Churchill. Lord Tregedar belonged to an occult secret society in London called The Black Circle, which had the traditional thirteen members of a witch coven. In it the aristocrat was known as the 'Black Monk' and was even painted in the hooded black robe all the members wore for their ceremonies. He owned several saints relics, reflecting his Catholic background, had the skeleton of a local Welsh witch set up in his hallway to greet his guests and confided in Crowley that his family was descended from King Arthur. The legendary city of Camelot was supposed to have been at the nearby Roman site of Caerleon. Crowley even described his lordship as "the rightful heir to Excalibur".

When Britain declared war on Germany in September 1939, despite his occult beliefs or possibly because of his unusual connection with Churchill, Lord Tregedar was recruited by MI5 (the internal British Security Service). It is even possible he belonged to it before the war and was passing information on his Nazi contacts to Five. He was appointed as the head of the MI6 section known as the Radio Security Service (RSS). Among his other duties in that position he was in charge of the carrier pigeons used to communicate with secret agents in Nazi occupied Europe.

Unfortunately his secret career ended abruptly. One day Tregedar gave an unauthorised office tour to a pretty young woman who did not have security clearance. He was arrested and charged with treason, which was very serious offence in wartime. It could mean a lengthy time in the Tower of London or even execution by hanging or a firing squad. However to the surprise of his colleagues the aristocrat was released and it was whispered that MI5 had intervened in the case. Perhaps he knew where too many of the bodies were buried! Immediately Tregedar contacted his old friend Crowley and tried to persuade him to put a curse on the arresting officer (Spence 2008: 225 and personal communications from Paul Busby 13.10. 2009),

Another link between Crowley and the intelligence services was his friendship with the homosexual M.P. Tom Driberg. He had been a society gossip columnist on the *Daily Express* and paradoxically had joined the British Communist party in 1920. With contacts in the different worlds of politics, high society and the gay scene he was an ideal informant for MI5, although it was also rumoured he was also a KGB agent. Driberg was recruited in 1937 by the assistant-director of Five responsible for counter-espionage, Maxwell Knight. He was in charge of planting 'moles' in fascist and communist organisations and other groups regarded by the government as a threat to national security. After 1933 Knight turned his attention to pro-German organisations operating in Britain.

After Tom Driberg was brought in he introduced Crowley to the writer of adventure, historical and 'black magic' thrillers Dennis Wheatley, whose wife worked as the transport administration officer for MI5. Wheatley was also personally recruited by Churchill to be part of a top-secret unit in the Cabinet Office planning for total warfare (including the use of poison gas and biological weapons), the local defence of Britain if the Germans invaded and organising a resistance movement if they succeeded. Crowley is supposed to have helped Wheatley with research for his occult novels and arranged introductions to other magicians. There is even a story that, while Wheatley denied ever attending any magical ceremony, he and Maxwell Knight might have become Crowley's students.

Coincidentally Dennis Wheatley was also a close friend of the occult writer Joan Grant who wrote bestselling novels about reincarnation, such as *The Winged Pharoah* based on her own life in Ancient Egyptian. Grant practised Rosicrucian-type sex magic rites with her psychiatrist husband. She was also a member of the International Order of Co-Freemasonry and when this writer joined a Co-Masonic Egyptian themed lodge in the 1970s he was told it was the one Joan Grant had been in many years before. Several of the members remembered her with fondness. As a child in 1914 she had sailed with her parents on the ill-fated SS

Lusitania. Crowley was on the same voyage and when in New York had visited Grant's family home because he knew her father (Spence 2008: 226).

The incestuous connection between Maxwell Knight, Dennis Wheatley, Tom Driberg and Crowley is that all four men were interested in the occult. Knight was also obsessed with animals and kept grass snakes in the bath of his ground floor Chelsea flat, an Amazonian parrot in the kitchen and a Himalayan monkey in the garden. After the war, when he had retired from MI5, Knight started a successful second career. He recorded natural history programmes for BBC radio's Children's Hour under the nickname of 'Uncle Mac'. Maxwell Knight was also bisexual and a friend of Lord Tregedar who was mentioned earlier and also had a private menagerie.

When Knight's wife died in 1936, from a suspected accidental overdose of painkillers prescribed for her bad back, rumours circulated that she had committed suicide after participating in a magical ritual with Crowley. It was even suggested that she was murdered by her husband for her money and the Great Beast had advised Knight how to do it using his knowledge of drugs (Spence 2008:226-227). Needless to say there is not a shred of evidence to support either of these stories.

When war broke out Crowley was eager to do his bit for king and country and continue his pre-war relationship with MI6. Both MI5 and the SIS approached and recruited occultists at the time because of their specialist knowledge and skills. On September 10th 1939, seven days after the war started, and after filling in an application form, Crowley was invited to an interview at the Admiralty in Whitehall. This was with Commander C.J. Lang of the Naval Intelligence Department (NID). Only the two men know what happened at this secret meeting, but it has been claimed that when Crowley died in 1946 among his papers was found a note from the NID acknowledging his 'war efforts'.

Another possible clue to Crowley's wartime involvement with intelligence agencies surfaced in a report sent by the MI6 officer, British traitor and Soviet mole Kim Philby to Moscow Control in 1942. Philby informed his Russian masters that MI6 were investigating a blackmailing racket linking Royal Air Force officers and members of British high society to drug smuggling, orgies (heterosexual and homosexual) and 'black magic rites'. It was believed this racket was being run by operatives of the German secret service based in their embassy in neutral Dublin. Coincidentally Crowley's Berlin contact Gerald Hamilton was interned by the British in 1939 as a potential security risk. It was said that the government was worried about his 'suspicious communications' with the Germany embassy in Dublin (Spence 2008:246).

According to Kim Philby, who supplied documentary evidence to the KGB that is strangely missing from SIS files, the 'notorious occultist Aleister Crowley' was involved in these nefarious activities (Tsarev and West 1999: 316-318). Dr Richard Spence believes that what the SIS stumbled upon was in fact a clandestine MI5 operation run by Maxwell Knight, possibly aided by Crowley. MI5 and MI6 have always been rivals and often did not tell each other about ongoing operations. It may have been part of the sophisticated counter-espionage 'double cross' system created by Five to 'turn' the Nazi spy network in Britain (Ibid: 241). As both Crowley and oddly the Soviet ambassador are supposed to have been involved in organising the alleged sex orgies and Black Masses described by Philby, it is more likely that MI5 were behind it than the Germans. Intelligence services from all countries have always carried out 'false flag' operations and used the dark arts of blackmail and subversion to expose traitors and recruit foreign agents, politicians and dignitaries.

The assistant-director of British Naval Intelligence during the Second World War was the eccentric, colourful and flamboyant Lt. Commander Ian Fleming R.N.. He was of course to become world famous in the 1950s as the creator of the fictional British spy James Bond 007, who had a licence to kill. In fact it is believed that Fleming based his character 'M', the head of the Secret Service in the books, on his friend and colleague Maxwell Knight of MI5. It was also no mystery why Bond held the rank of a naval commander. Fleming also shared Knight's interest in the occult, especially astrology, divination and numerology, and he also

knew Crowley. Hence we have a clandestine social and work related network of intelligence officers interested in occult and actual practitioners of the magical arts.

Commander Fleming was well known for his innovative schemes, although some preferred to call them “Ian’s crazy ideas”. These included planning to snatch a German ‘Enigma’ code machine by staging a fake plane crash in the English Channel, scuttling barges made of cement in the Danube to block the river to Nazi shipping, forging millions of Reichmarks to bankrupt the German economy and offering the French Navy the Isle of Wight as their sovereign territory for the duration of the war. He was a bit of a *Boy’s Own* hero and created his own private commando unit called 30 Assault, known in the NID as ‘the Red Indians’, who were involved in daring raids on the coast of Occupied Europe.

It may have been Fleming’s interest in astrology that led to his boss Admiral John Godfrey to recruit astrologers to cast the horoscopes of Hitler to see what he might be planning (or what the astrologers who worked for the Nazi were predicting and advising) and even those of our own Royal Navy admirals (recorded in a diary entry by MI5 chief Guy Liddell dated April 10th 1941 and quoted in Spence 2008). One of the astrologers who it is known was recruited by SOE and the NID was a Hungarian-Jewish novelist, journalist and film-maker called Louis de Wohl. He claimed that he had been given the honorary rank of a captain in the British Army by SOE complete with a uniform. Although the Ministry of Defence denied this after the war it was a known practice. The thriller writer Dennis Wheatley was given a temporary rank as a Wing-Commander in the RAF Reserve to cover his secret wartime work (Howe 1967 204-205 and 215).

It was believed by the British government that Hitler and some high ranking Nazis had an interest in such esoteric subjects as astrology, psychism, magic and the occult arts. In 1942 a secret psychiatric assessment was commissioned by British Intelligence that concluded that Hitler was suffering from what it called ‘religious delusions’ and believed he was divine. The fuhrer was also paranoid about the Jews and believed he was following a spiritual mission that in his twisted mind justified the policy of the Final Solution resulting in the Holocaust. The report compared his ranting and near hysterical speeches at the infamous nocturnal torch lit Nuremburg rallies as the work of a ‘shaman’ and he believed he was transmitting messages from ‘the spirits’ to his fanatical followers.

In 1943 the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the wartime forerunner of the CIA, asked a well-known Harvard University psychologist to do a similar study. His report identified Hitler as someone suffering from a wide range of serious mental disorders. The doctor concluded quite correctly that if or when Germany faced defeat its leader’s messianic complex would mean he would take the ancient role of the ‘dying god’. This meant he would sacrifice himself for his people and land by committing suicide (*The Times* May 4th 2012).

Ian Fleming hatched an idea to exploit the known interest in the occult, divination and astrology by the German deputy-fuhrer Rudolf Hess and his pre-war connections with Britain. He conceived a daring plan to lure the top Nazi to England by pretending to resurrect a pre-war Anglo-German friendship organisation called The Link. Coincidentally this had been formed by a retired director the NID, Admiral Sir Barry Domville, and included among its leading members an occultist called General J.F. C. Fuller, an open admirer of Hitler and a disciple of Crowley. Domville was arrested and interned when the war began. This was because the government believed he was plotting a fascist coup supported by appeasers in the British social and political establishment who wanted peace with Germany.

Ian Fleming’s cunning plan was to plant disinformation that would be picked up by the German High Command. The false intelligence would persuade them that despite its leading members being in prison The Link was still operating underground. In fact it still had secret supporters and friends in high place including aristocrats and royalty. They were plotting to overthrow the ‘warmonger’ Churchill and his wartime coalition government and negotiate a truce and peace treaty with Nazi Germany. The British and Germans could then unite their

armies to turn east and jointly fight the 'real enemy', the communist Russians.

To achieve his aim Fleming hired astrologers to produce fake charts and predictions to convince Hess to travel to Britain and meet up with representatives of The Link. The deputy-fuehrer was fed data based on genuine astrological calculations that suggested that May 10th 1941 was an auspicious day for his trip. Coincidentally, Hess also had a confirmatory dream in which he was having an audience at Buckingham Palace with King George, who he already falsely believed hated Churchill and wanted peace with his German cousins. It has been suggested that Crowley was employed by the NID to use magical or psychic techniques to plant the dream in Hess' mind while he slept (Spence 2008:247-248).

When Hess carried out his disastrous 'peace mission' and landed by plane in Scotland he was immediately arrested by the Home Guard and handed over to the Army. He had chosen a Scottish landing site near the ancestral home of the Duke of Hamilton and he demanded to see the aristocrat. This was because he had been told that the duke was one of the secret members of the imaginary Link organisation and also a member of the Order of the Golden Dawn. Hess also said he wanted to be taken to London to see the king.

Hess told his amazed interrogators that occultists had influenced or hypnotised Churchill to take a negative attitude towards Germany. He also said that the German High Command believed that key British political figures had been 'mesmerised by 'evil forces'. Allegedly these same forces were trying to kill Hess because he was one of the few people who knew about their 'secret psychic powers'. (*The Daily Telegraph* 7th April 2012). Naturally the British authorities concluded that the deputy-fuehrer was raving mad. In fact one exasperated Army officer involved in his interrogation said that Hess should be taken out and shot like a rabid dog.

Commander Ian Fleming was keen that Crowley should be allowed to interview Hess in captivity. This seems to have been suggested to Fleming in a letter from Crowley dated four days after the Nazi was captured. In it the Great Beast says: 'If it is true that Herr Hess is much influenced by astrology an magick, my services might be useful to the [Naval Intelligence] department in case he should not be willing to do as you wish' (Pearson 1966). Although SIS asserted that Crowley never met Hess, it has been claimed that MI5 did arrange an interview between the two men at one of their interrogation centres. This was allegedly at Latchmore House on Ham Common in London used by Five for questioning German prisoners-of-war and secret agents they wanted to turn. (Spence 2008:249).

The Nazi Party's reaction to Hess' 'peace mission' was to disown the deputy-fuehrer and his actions. It was claimed he was mentally deranged and had been falsely and disastrously influenced by astrologers and occultists. A report in *The Times* newspaper on May 14th 1941 however claimed that Hess had secretly been offering astrological advice to Hitler. A few months before his ill-fated trip to Scotland the deputy-fuehrer had allegedly convinced himself from astrological calculations that, despite recent German victories, Hitler was doomed. Therefore Hess saw it as his patriotic duty to try and make peace with the British government before Germany was defeated. Despite its unofficial interest, the Third Reich had always had an ambiguous official approach to occultism and secret societies. A few weeks after the failed mission an operation called 'Aktion Hess' was launched by the Gestapo. This included banning performances or lectures on the occult, astrology, telepathy, clairvoyance and Spiritualism and many of their publicly known practitioners were arrested and ended up in concentration camps (Howe 1967: 192-193).

Another occultist who was supposed to have been involved in or connected to the Hess affair was the late Cecil Hugh Williamson, the founder of the Museum of Witchcraft and Magic at Castletown on the Isle of the Man that is now located in Boscastle in North Cornwall. Williamson had been recruited into MI6 in 1938 by a family friend Major Edward Maltby, who coincidentally was the brother-in-law of the famous occultist Dion Fortune. He was described by a Six officer who met him at Warsaw railway station in 1939 as a typical English gentleman wearing his Old Etonian tie. As a supposed secret agent his 'distinct

haberdashery' made him stand out like a sore thumb among the Polish peasants coming off the train. (Smith 2010:376).

The major was in charge of a section of SIS set up to deal with the unusual threat posed by esoteric and magical groups in Germany and occultists in the Nazi Party. Williamson agreed to work for Six as an undercover agent and before the war made several trips to Germany posing as a folklorist to collect information. Cecil told this writer that he believed the intelligence he collected on at least two thousands Nazi Party members interested or involved in the occult and astrology helped Ian Fleming's NID operation to trap Rudolf Hess.

When the war started Cecil Williamson was seconded to a specialist unit of the Special Executive Operation (SOE) based at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire. Churchill had ordered the formation of the SOE to work with resistance groups in Nazi-occupied Europe and organise and take part in subversion, sabotage and assassinations. Williamson worked initially with Edward Maltby, who was then a Lieutenant Colonel and assistant-director of the communications section of MI6, the Radio Security Service that Lord Tregedar worked for in London. Williamson's immediate boss was an ex-*Daily Express* journalist Sefton Delmer who ran the Psychological Warfare Executive (PWE) involved in 'black' propaganda. Delmer had also been involved with Ian Fleming in the Hess operation. Dr Spence refers to a long destroyed intelligence file on 'The Use of Astrology in Propaganda' and he suggests that Delmer was in charge of the astrological aspects of the affair (2008:251). Another possibility is that it was Sir Charles Hambro, the deputy-director of SOE who had commissioned Louis de Wohl to furnish it with material that could be used for 'black' propaganda. He also sent the Hungarian astrologer to America on a lecture tour predicting the downfall of Nazi Germany based on astrological predictions (Howe 1967: 210-213).

One of the tasks of the PWE was to run 'black' propaganda radio stations feeding false information to the German High Command and morale-sapping news to German U-boats patrolling the Atlantic. Williamson was given the job of controlling several static and mobile radio stations located across southern England, including the New Forest area. These had been secretly supplied by the American government and Williamson supervised the mobile ones operated from the back of army trucks. These were camouflaged and kept moving around so they were not a tempting target for the Luftwaffe. These radio units broadcast an entertaining mixture of American and British jazz and dance band music interspersed with 'news' describing the kinky sex activities and financial corruption of the Nazi hierarchy back home and fake astrological predictions and prophecies by the medieval French seer Nostradamus about a German defeat in the war (possibly supplied to SOE by Louis de Wohl).

One of Cecil Williamson's most controversial claims relating to his wartime work was his involvement in an anti-Hitler propaganda exercise organised jointly by the SIS and MI5 called Operation Mistletoe, which may or may not included Crowley's participation. This was supposed to have taken place in Ashdown Forest in Sussex and featured a fake magical ritual. Its aim was to convince those in the German High Command who believed in the occult that ceremonial magicians and witches in England were working against them. Allegedly Canadian troops were recruited to take part in the 'ritual' acting as 'wizards' and wearing improvised 'robes' made from sackcloth and decorated with symbols from the *Key of Solomon*. Doubt has been cast on the truth of Williamson's account and partly because Canadian and not British troops were involved. However a radio transmitter with a tall tower codenamed 'Aspidistra' was provided by the US military and set up in Ashdown Forest. This was as part of the work Williamson was responsible for and a Canadian engineer battalion based locally was brought in to erect it.

According to an obituary of Cecil Williamson published in *The Daily Telegraph* newspaper when he died in 1999, he also carried out undercover operation with the SOE in occupied France. This may still have been part of his work with the Radio Security Service as one of its tasks was to make and supply small radio transmitters to SOE agents working with the French Resistance. Towards the end of the war Williamson and the RSS were part of Operation Fortitude. This was a complex and sophisticated plan to mislead the Germans that the

expected Allied invasion of Europe would take place on the French coast at Pas de Calais rather than the real site of the D-Day landings in Normandy. Williamson's job was to broadcast false messages about army manoeuvres in Essex preparing for the invasion, rather than the real ones on the south coast of England (Heselton 2012. Vol 2:412-413).

As well as those occultists working in military intelligence others were also doing magic against the Nazis, especially in the early days of the war when a German invasion was expected any day and Britain was unprepared. One famous example is the ritual at Lammas 1940 (or possible a series of rituals on the full moons from May Eve to Lammas) carried out by the New Forest Coven and vividly described by Gerald Gardner. He also claimed that the local hereditary witches in the coven had told him their ancestors did similar magical rituals to stop the Spanish Armada and Napoleon's proposed invasion of England. (heselton 2012. Vol 1: 240-252) Incidentally Cecil Williamson had family connections to the New Forest and one of the RSS transmitters was based there in the war. He told this writer that at that period he had come across Gardner's initiator 'Dafo' (Edith Woodford-Grimes) and also met other witches in the area who had nothing to do with the New Forest Coven.

The anti-Nazi activities of Dion Fortune and her Fraternity of the Inner Light during the war have been given the title 'The Magical Battle of Britain' (see Knight 1993). According to a letter from Geraldine Beskin, owner of the Atlantis occult bookshop in Museum Street, London, published in the paranormal magazine *Fortean Times* # 288 (May 2012) in her opinion Dion Fortune's rituals to protect Britain from the Nazis were ironic. This was because her family, the Firth's based in Sheffield, were the 'world's largest producers of arms and armaments'. Beskin said that in the nineteenth-century steel from the Firth foundry was used to manufacture all the guns supplied to the British government. It may well be ironic, but perhaps Dion Fortune's magical rituals were just an extension on another level of the valuable services her family had provided for the British Empire in the past?

As mentioned earlier Dion Fortune had a link by marriage with Cecil Williamson's MI6 recruiter Major Edward Maltby. Both he and another MI6 officer, Anthony Daws, belonged to a magical lodge led by Christine Hartley, one of Fortune's students and at one time her heir apparent until they fell out, and Hartley's magical partner Charles Richard Foster 'Kim' Seymour. Interestingly and perhaps highly coincidental, Colonel Seymour, an Irishman who had served in the Indian Army, taken part in 'covert actions' in Iraq during the First World War and worked as a Russian translator, was employed by the War Office to intercept and study enemy messages. Using his specialist knowledge his job description included investigating links between British and German occult groups. Later Seymour joined the SIS and during the war he became the head of the Dutch section of the SOE (Jeffrey 2010:544).

There were also attempts to curse Hitler and again Crowley was involved. In 1941 he wrote *Thumbs-Up: A Pentagram – a Particle to Win the War*, which was privately published from his then home at 10 Hanover Square in a posh district of London's West End and by the American branch of the OTO at the 'Abbey of Thelema' in California. It includes patriotic poems by Crowley, *England, Stand Fast!* and *Hymn for the American People* and a curse against Adolf Shicklegruber – Hitler's real Austrian name.

Also in 1941, the American writer, globetrotting adventurer and occultist William B. Seabrook was contacted by a 'coven' of amateur witches in Washington asking for instruction on how to do 'doll magic' against Hitler. Their representative Richard W. Tupper told Seabrook that 'it would help pass the evenings' and also perhaps encourage thousands of people to hex Herr Hitler. Seabrook was delighted with the idea as he had plenty of experience with witch poppets and wax images in pre-war France, London and New York. He also said interestingly: "After all it was Hitler who invented psychic warfare."

Seabrook even provided Mr Tupper and his Washington witches with a suitable hexing charm that they could use when sticking pins in an effigy of the German leader:

Islan, come and help us,
We are driving pins and needles
Into Adolf Hitler's heart,

We are driving pins and needles,
Driving pins and needles,
Cat will claw his heart,
Dog will bite it in the night.

Islan, Seabrook helpful explained for those who have never heard of him before, was a pagan god worshipped in Central Europe in the Middle Ages.

The story appeared in the March 1941 issue of the popular magazine *Readers Digest*, which is still published and can often be found in doctors' surgeries and dentist waiting rooms. On May 13th, coinciding with the announcement on American radio of the capture of Rudolf Hess by the British three days earlier, a *Digest* reader called Fred W. Shultz wrote to the magazine suggesting that 'hexing Hitler' should be on a mass production scale. He referred to a 'negress' called Katherine Durham who was an anthropologist and had studied voodoo in Haiti and noted the American movie industry was making educational and propaganda films for the US military.

Schultz says in his letter that William Seabrook and Katherine Durham could combine their knowledge of 'jungle magic' (sic) to write more incantations and suggest suitable material for making a Hitler doll. He added that the Walt Disney Corporation or the International Ladies Garment Workers Union could design, produce and sell such a doll accompanied by hexing instructions. Disney could also release a short film or cartoon of a 'hexing Hitler' session so people could copy it. Schultz copied his letter to Durham and the Walt Disney studios in Hollywood. Their reaction is unknown but no Hitler doll ever came on the market.

However during the Second World War small figurines of Hitler depicting him bending over with his trousers down were marketed and proved successful. His bare backside was a pin cushion and no doubt could be used like a wax image for cursing. The pin cushions were copied from a similar popular image of 'Kaiser Bill' (the German emperor Wilhelm) sold in the First World War. Examples of both figures are on display in the witchcraft museum at Boscastle.

It is also possible that behind the scenes British Intelligence was also involved in hands-on occult operations that were more real and serious than Operation Mistletoe. Again, as in the Ashdown Forest event, unsubstantial rumours linked Aleister Crowley with one incident. In April 1943 four boys searching for birds nests in Hagley Wood in Warwickshire found the skeletal remains in an old hollowed out elm tree. The police were called and it was established that the bones were the remains of a woman aged about thirty. Scraps of rotted clothing, a pair of shoes and a cheap wedding ring were also found. At first it seemed as if the skeleton was complete, but on further investigation the right hand was missing. It was later found some yards away from the tree. From forensic evidence and a witness who came forward saying he had screams in the wood at the time, it was believed that the remains had been placed in the tree about two years before.

Various theories were put forward about the incident. Naturally Dr Margaret Alice Murray came forward to claim it was a sign of the revival of ancient tree worship and a human sacrifice to some arboreal god or spirit. Obviously the media picked up on this sensational theory and suddenly the skeleton in the tree was a witch or the victim of witchcraft. As is to be expected, the detectives investigating the case were less than convinced by the theory. The concept of tree sacrifice incidentally features in Robin Hardy's new movie *The Wicker Tree*, which is a follow-up to the classic 1970's horror film *The Wicker Man*. About eight months after the grisly find graffiti began appearing on walls and monuments in Birmingham saying: 'Who put Bella down in the wych-elm?' and 'Hagley Wood Bella'. Sometimes her name was spelt 'Luebella'. Normally no notice would have been taken of such public scribblings except that Bella was an unusual and foreign sounding name.

Writer Donald McCormick came across the 'Bella-in-a-tree' case when investigating the gory ritualistic murder in 1945 of an elderly farm labourer called Charles Walton in the village of Lower Quinton, also in Warwickshire. Allegedly he was another victim of human

sacrifice according to Dr Murray, despite his age! There were also rumours that Crowley and some of his disciples from Cornwall and the Midlands were involved in the killing. In fact Walton was known locally as a 'cunning man' and may have been killed because somebody feared his powers. More prosaically it was suggested he was the victim of a dispute with a local farmer over money he was owed. McCormack however suggested that both murders were connected with a revival of witchcraft before the war in the West Midlands and Cotswolds. Allegedly an 'Hungarian astrologer' working for British Intelligence was involved in setting up several new covens in the area. As McCormick had worked for the SIS and later wrote a history of the British Secret Service under the nom-de-plume 'Richard Deacon' he may have had some inside knowledge to support this claim.

McCormick says the pre-war traditional witch covens established in the Cotswolds were authentic (which suggest genuine people were involved) but were part of an intelligence operation to catch Nazi spies. He claimed that agents of the Third Reich had been parachuted into the Midlands from occupied Holland in 1941 and MI5 had uncovered the plot. McCormick had met an ex-Nazi who had spent some time in the Midlands during the war and knew a German agent with a Dutch girlfriend called Clarabella Dronkers. Coincidentally in 1942 a Dutchman called Johannes Marinus Dronkers was executed by the British for spying.

Allegedly, McCormick then discovered from an informant in Holland who knew Clarabella that she had been a member of the Dutch Resistance, and therefore would have probably had SOE contacts. However her Resistance colleagues suspected Clarabella was a double agent working for the Germans. She was also interested in astrology and the occult and owned a so-called 'witch's garter' made of green snakeskin. It is true that two German parachutists were supposed to have landed and then vanished in the Hagley Wood area in 1941.

In 1953 a local newspaper reporter in Wolverhampton was contacted by somebody called 'Anna'. She claimed that the woman nicknamed 'Bella' had been murdered because she knew too much about a pro-Nazi spy ring, whose members included a RAF officer who was a traitor. According to the informant, who claimed to have known 'Bella', she had entered England illegally from Holland and got mixed up in espionage. Like the Walton murder, the case was never solved and mysteriously, and very suspiciously, both the 'Bella' skeleton and her clothing subsequently went 'missing' (Newman 2009: 85 and McCormick 1968).

So it would seem that there is a lot of evidence of occult activities in the Second World War involving secret agents, magicians and the Nazis. The links between occultists and the intelligence community were not confined to wartime. Behind the Profumo Affair in 1963, which nearly led to the fall of the Tory government, there was a strong occult element that was covered up. The scandal featured politicians, high society orgies, call girls, MI5 and Russian spies. At least two of the leading figures in the affair were practitioners of what the sensationalist press would call 'black magic'. In recent times the CIA and the KGB have both employed clairvoyants, conducted scientific research into the use of psychic powers for espionage and warfare, and also carried out mind-control experiments. If the rumours and leaks are true, as Cecil Williamson said about old-style witchcraft, it still goes on today.

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