

Historians v. Emily Spreckels (later Tremaine) & her associates, including Philip Johnson: Were they Nazi sympathizers, or anti-Nazi, and spies?

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PREAMBLE 1: The wobbling kickoff



Left: Sensational news clipping, page four and cover of Daily News (New York) on 7 September 1940. Santa Barbara-based socialite/magazine editor Emily Hall Spreckels sued her second husband Adolph for divorce, while Romania and Britain were facing chaos. Reported over six months by wire services flooding American newspapers, the case highlighted allegations of Nazi support in America's high-end social set, while the United States was still neutral until entering WWII after the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

Emily (1908-87) alleged after a year-long second marriage that Adolph was pro-Nazi and also violently beat her. He had a track record of alleged, extreme spousal violence by his wives and girlfriends.

Three months later in December 1940, Adolph fired back, "I'm not the Nazi, SHE is the Nazi", and unleashed a string of very suspicious counter-allegations. After the divorce attempt was curiously dropped months later, Emily and Adolph lived apart. It wasn't until her third divorce attempt, just after the Yalta Conference, that Emily was granted a divorce in Las Vegas, and very quickly.

Were Emily and her associates pro-Nazi, anti-Nazi, and spies? This study aims to get as close to the truth as possible, with Emily and her associates generating an unusually detailed paper trail, saturated in publicity, and interacting occasionally with Nazi government officials— including a now-known double agent, US and British intelligence figures, among minor royalty, celebrities, and socialites.

After WWII, Emily moved to New York & Connecticut and she became a noted art/design organizer and collector. Contemporary works she bought include top artworks today in the US, UK and the Netherlands. In the UK, that work is Andy Warhol's Marilyn Diptych (1962), which curiously shows what Emily experienced in 1934-41, rise and fall in the media. In Connecticut, I grew up down the street where Emily's work and her 400+ artwork collection were officially based. It was all a whispering, town... secret.

Historians v. Emily Spreckels et al.

An examination of five persons of interest utilizing extensive, related publicity and archival material— including from a Los Angeles based Jewish led spy ring— court records, an unearthed secret deposition, and available declassified German, British and US intelligence documents. How close can we get to the truth?

PREAMBLE 2: Persons of interest under investigation, Left to Right:



Adolph B. Spreckels, Jr. (c. 1911-1961), California-based, American sugar fortune heir, family's trust owned the Hotel del Coronado, next to important Pacific naval base of great interest to Nazi / Japanese intelligence, race horse owner near gangster "Bugsy" Siegel; second husband to Emily Spreckels in year-long marriage (1939-40+); in 1940, Emily announced to the world: he's a total Nazi and beat her viciously.

Philip Chancellor (c. 1908-?), American adventurer-socialite; "suspicious" extortion attempt victim by British Nazi Leopold McLaglen, alleged to plot the murder of 24 prominent Hollywood Jews in 1937; likely gave financial guarantees for 3 people fleeing Germany; friend of Emily and her first husband.

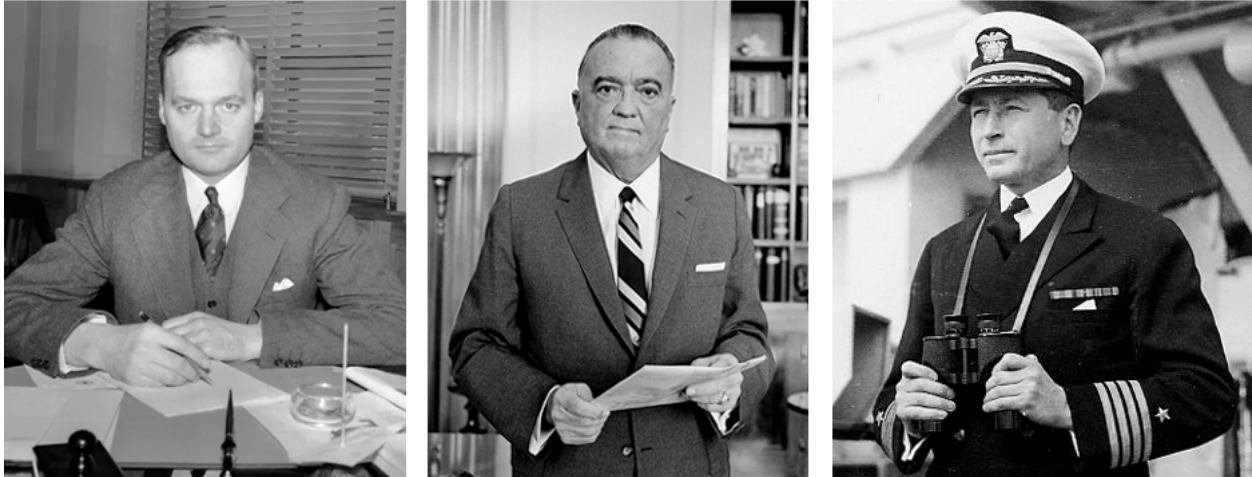
> **Key person of interest, Emily von Romberg - Spreckels - Tremaine** (1908-87), Santa Barbara-based, American, publicity-saturated "original It girl", socialite, editor of literary / society start-up magazine, self-declared anti-Nazi— with an "Indian" swastika on her house, and a dachshund named Swastika. Her brother-in-law worked directly under Ellis Zacharias, head of Pacific naval intelligence, Jewish; Zacharias and his wife publicly socialized with Emily and her family after an event for a close ally to Hitler at Emily's house, her divorce attempt, and the Pearl Harbor attack. Middle photo above was in Emily's scrapbook; noted Post-WWII art collector/creative. (See Appendix for impact in art/design fields in three countries.)

Elza Klecker - Chancellor - Splane (stage name: Temary) (c. 1905-1968), Hungarian-American, former Berlin silent film actress, fled Germany when Hitler took power in 1933; friend of Emily, cooked up event for Hitler ally (Queen Victoria's grandson) at Emily's house, about five blocks from Meghan and Harry today. Emily says she did this as a "favor" for Elza, who earlier got her mother and cousin out of Germany.

Baron Max von Romberg (c. 1911-38), Emily's first husband, German nationality, Converse (US) banking fortune heir, polo player; started construction of a house with secret rooms on Hitler's birthday in 1937, while quietly expatriating from Germany. In 1938, Max died in a suspicious plane crash, flying the plane.

Philip Johnson (1906-2005), American power-curator, 20th century architect; post-WWII associate of Emily. In 1933-34, Johnson wanted to become the American Hitler, while he was working at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, his secretary later told the FBI. Associated with Americans facing sedition charges in 1943, an alleged Nazi agent, plus too many other allegations to list here.

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L to R: US Prosecutor O. John Rogge (1903-81), Director of the FBI J. Edgar Hoover (1895-1972), Head of Pacific naval intelligence, Southern California, Ellis M. Zacharias (1890-1961). All three men were informed to varying degrees about Emily and her associates.

Research project

Since 2001, fourteen years after her death, Emily Hall - von Romberg - Spreckels - Tremaine (1908-87) has had a vague, pro-Nazi cloud over her head. At times, she seems she could be pro-Nazi, and then anti-Nazi, at generally the same time. This research project aims to get as close as possible to the truth regarding relevant allegations. Before World War II, Emily's life was filled with Nazi / anti-Nazi intrigue, as a social-celebrity and start-up literary / society magazine editor, centered in southern California. After the war, she moved east to New York and Connecticut, and over four decades became an influential contemporary art/design show organizer and collector. Among the artworks that she collected, three alone are considered top-level in museums, in the United States, the UK and the Netherlands.

This study aims to explore “the pro-Nazi cloud” around Emily much more deeply, through volumes of publicity, and into deep archival research, into declassified intelligence documents in the United States, the United Kingdom and Germany, and a Jewish-led spy archive in Los Angeles. This research builds upon and clarifies two short rounds of research on this topic in a secondary source biography (2001) and within a book survey of architecture projects (2019). [1,2] The study also gathers a significant amount of reporting in newspapers and a wide range of archival documentation, including items in Emily's scrapbook, court records and a found secret court deposition, totaling over 4000 sources to date. [3]