

## Savitri Devi

Savitri Devi (1905–1982) is one of the most influential writers of post-war “esoteric neo-Nazism”. She propagated an “Aryan Paganism” opposed to Judeo-Christianity and claimed that Adolf Hitler was the Avatar of Vishnu who would herald the end of the Jewish-dominated Kali Yuga. In the 1950s, she was part of an international neo-Nazi network that included individuals such as Otto Skorzeny, Hans-Ulrich Rudel, Johannes von Leers, or Ernst Zündel. She also had close ties to the British National Party and French neo-Nazis such as Françoise Dior. In 1962, she was one of the founding members of the World Union of National Socialists.

Information about her life is highly unreliable. The only comprehensive scholarly work on her life, Nicholas Goodrick-Clarke’s *Hitler’s Priestess*, uncritically reproduces her autobiographic writings. She was born as Maximiani Portas on September 30, 1905 in Lyon to an English woman and her Italo-Greek husband. From an early age on, she felt attracted to “Hellenic” culture, adopting Greek citizenship in 1928. In 1929, a journey to Jerusalem allegedly made her aware of the dichotomy between heathen Europe and Judeo-Christianity. This resulted in a search for the roots of “Aryan” civilization in India, where she moved in 1932 and stayed until the end of the war. In 1936, she adopted her new name Savitri Devi.

In India, she maintained contacts to influential Hindu nationalists and reformers such as Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Subhas Chandra Bose, and the Hindutva thinker Veer D. Savarkar, whose brother Ganesh wrote an enthusiastic preface to her 1939 writing, *A Warning to the Hindus*. In this writing, she praises India as the leader of a future re-Aryanization of the West. In 1940, she married Asit Krishna Mukherji (1898–1977), a Bengali adhering to National Socialism, and in the following years gathered intelligence for the Axis forces.

After the war, she travelled and lived in Europe. In 1949, she was sentenced to prison for the promotion of Nazi ideas in Germany. She lived in Greece, France (where she spent most of the 1960s), and India before dying in 1982 in Sible Hedingham, Essex. More research is needed to understand the connections that she made during this period, and the emergence of her esoterically influenced neo-Nazism.

J. Strube, "Savitri Devi"  
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