

Cultural transfer in Swedish exile

The Bonnier family's stake in the Bermann-Fischer publishing house

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ABSTRACT • After the death in 1934 of his father-in-law Samuel Fischer, founder of the well-known publishing house S. Fischer in Berlin, Gottfried Bermann Fischer moved to Vienna with the aim of publishing the works of prominent German-speaking Jewish and non-Jewish authors who could no longer publish in National Socialist Germany. After the ‘Anschluss’ to Nazi Germany in March 1938 he fled to Sweden with help from Karl Otto and Tor Bonnier, heads of Albert Bonniers Förlag. Eagerly observed by the Nazi authorities, Gottfried Bermann Fischer published books of well-known German, Austrian, and Swedish writers. What did this German-language publishing work look like in a foreign-language environment? Who were the employees? Where were the sales markets? Why did this cooperation between Bermann Fischer and Bonnier fail in the end? The main focus of this article is on Bermann Fischer’s efforts on behalf of German-speaking authors outside Nazi Germany, and on the resentments against a (foreign) Jewish entrepreneur and Bonniers’ engagement in this last remaining large German publishing house in exile after May 1940, even after Gottfried Bermann Fischer’s expulsion from Sweden.

In 1967 the German publisher Gottfried Bermann Fischer published his autobiography, *Bedroht – Bewahrt. Der Weg eines Verlegers* (Threatened – Preserved. The Path of a Publisher). There he tells of his first meeting with the Swedish publisher Tor Bonnier, which took place in Geneva, Switzerland, in April 1938 – almost exactly one month after the ‘Anschluss’ of Austria to the Third Reich and the flight of the German publishing family from Vienna. The two publishers immediately agreed to cooperate and to relocate the German publishing house to Sweden.

I was deeply impressed by the sense of responsibility for a higher cause that the preservation of the displaced publishing

house clearly represented for them. (Bermann Fischer 1971: 128)¹

The two publishing houses, S. Fischer Verlag in Berlin and Albert Bonniers Förlag in Stockholm, had similar historical beginnings. The founder of the publishing house Albert Bonnier, Gerard Bonnier, was born in 1778 as Gutkind Hirschel in Dresden in northern Germany. He changed his name under the influence of the French Revolution. Around the turn of the century, he came to Copenhagen, where he bought a lending library in 1804. Later he added an assortment bookshop and his own book-publishing

1 The translations from Swedish and German are by the author.

house. Owing to the poor economic situation in Denmark in the 1820s, Gerard Bonnier decided to take the publishing house to Sweden, but he was refused a settlement permit. His son Adolf, however, was able to settle in Gothenburg in 1827, where he opened a lending library and ran a bookshop.

In 1832, Adolf Bonnier moved to Stockholm and ran a lending library. He had his two brothers Albert and David Felix join him in Sweden. All three brothers worked as book printers. David Felix opened his own printing shop and published the daily newspaper *Göteborgs-Posten*. Albert received his training in Leipzig with K. F. Koehler, the eminent commission agent, and founded the publishing house of the same name in 1837. Albert's son Karl Otto followed the family tradition and worked in Vienna 1876–7 in the retail book trade Gerold & Co. Albert and his son Karl Otto became the great Swedish publishers. Their authors included, for example, Gustav Fröding, Verner von Heidenstam, Ellen Key, Selma Lagerlöf, Oscar Levertin, Vilhelm Moberg, Viktor Rydberg, August Strindberg, Hjalmar Söderberg (Svedjedal 1993: 610–29; Bonnier 1974: 9–37, 96–8), and their German-speaking authors, which they published in Swedish translation, included Hermann Hesse and Thomas Mann.

S. Fischer Verlag's story is that of Samuel Fischer, who was born in 1859 in a small town called Liptó Szen Miklós in Austria-Hungary to a Jewish merchant family. At the age of 14, he decided to become a bookseller and went to Vienna to learn the bookselling trade. Later he worked as a bookseller's assistant in Berlin and became a partner in the commission publishing house Hugo Steinitz & Co., from 1884 Steinitz & Fischer. In 1886, at the age of 27, Samuel Fischer founded the S. Fischer publishing house in Berlin.

From 1887 to 1890, the small publishing house published Henrik Ibsen's plays from *Rosmersholm*, the first book of the new publishing house, to *Nora oder ein Puppenheim* (Et dukkehjem; A Doll's Home), *Hedda Gabler* and *Baumeister Solness* (Bygmester Solness; The Master Builder). In 1889 Fischer opened his first book series, Nordische Bibliothek (Nordic Library).

Subsequently, the works of Scandinavian authors such as Edvard Brandes, Jan Peter Jacobsen, Arne Garborg, Aage Madelung, Johannes V. Jensen, Herman Bang, Gustaf af Geijerstam, Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, Ellen Key and Peter Nansen appeared. Oscar II of Sweden in 1889 awarded Fischer the title of 'Königlich Schwedischer Hofbuchhändler' (Royal Swedish Court Bookseller) in recognition of his services to Scandinavian literature (Mendelssohn 1970: 82). It was to remain Fischer's only official distinction.

It was also a Scandinavian who received the first complete edition from S. Fischer: Henrik Ibsen. This made it a principle at Fischer not to publish only isolated works by an author, but to present the work collectively. Subsequently, authors such as Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Richard Dehmel, Arthur Schnitzler, and George Bernard Shaw received complete editions. Gerhart Hauptmann became the most important author of the S. Fischer publishing house during the lifetime of Samuel Fischer. S. Fischer won over authors of 'Viennese Modernism' such as Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Felix Salten and Richard Beer-Hofmann, whose life's work Fischer began to dedicate himself to.

At the beginning of the 1930s the renewed economic crisis was also felt in the publishing house. Nevertheless, a decline in new publications only became apparent under the political circumstances. During this

period, the publishing house also lost three of its great authors: Hugo von Hofmannsthal died in 1929, Arthur Schnitzler in 1931, and Jakob Wassermann at the beginning of 1934. Alexander Lernet-Holenia, Klaus Mann, René Schickele and Manfred Hausmann joined the publishing house as new authors.

Samuel Fischer died in October 1934. His son-in-law Gottfried Bermann Fischer took over the publishing business and continued the publishing work in exile from 1935/6. At first, Vienna was the publishing headquarters of Bermann-Fischer Verlag; after the political events in Austria, the publishing house found a way to continue its work through the financial participation of the Swedish publishing house Bonnier in Stockholm.

Publishers in exile

The largest publishers of German-language literature, in terms of the quantity of production, that began operations outside Germany after the political events of 1933 were the Querido and the Allert de Lange publishing houses in Amsterdam, and from 1936 Bermann-Fischer in Vienna.

In his 'Biographical Handbook' *Verleger, Buchhändler & Antiquare aus Deutschland und Österreich in der Emigration nach 1933* Ernst Fischer lists more than 800 people from the book trade who could no longer practise their profession in National Socialist Germany and were expelled. About thirty fled to Scandinavia, a large number of them to Sweden, including the publishers Max Tau as well as Brigitte and Gottfried Bermann Fischer, Adolf Neumann, Max Seydewitz and Ernst Rudolf Sulzbach, to name just a few. They contributed to a cultural exchange.

The Viennese Adolf Neumann (1878–1953) was a partner in the publishing house Rütten & Loening in Frankfurt, which was



© Karen Balder

Brigitte (1905–91) and Gottfried Bermann Fischer (1897–1995) on the balcony of their Stockholm flat, June 1940.

'aryanised' in 1936. He fled to Oslo in 1939 with the support of the writer Sigrid Undset. After the German invasion of Norway, he lived underground, escaped to Sweden in 1942 and, after his internment in southern Sweden, worked at Norstedts Förlag and at the Importbokhandeln company (Fischer 2011: 226). He prepared a book programme for the German-speaking market after the end of the war. But he was unable to implement this plan, as were Gottfried Bermann Fischer and the Bonnier publishing family, because the occupying powers did not issue any permits for importing books into Germany for a long time.

Max Seydewitz (1892–1987) fled to Sweden after the German invasion of Norway and was arrested there several times because of his communist activities. He became prime minister of Saxony in 1947 (Fischer 2011: 302–3). Ernst Rudolf Sulzbach (1887–1954) ran the theatre and music publishing house Arcadia, which was part of the

Ullstein publishing house in Berlin, and was dismissed in 1933 because of his 'non-Aryan' origins. After emigrating to Sweden in 1938, he became an announcer for German news programmes on Swedish radio and eventually an editor at Bonnier. His wife Renée (1892–1978) succeeded him as reviewer of German literature in *Bonniers Litterära Magasin* (Bonnier's Literary Magazine), and edited anthologies of German literature in the textbook publishing house Svenska Bokförlaget and thus contributed to the introduction of German post-war literature to Swedish schools and universities (p. 321).

Max Tau (1897–1976) worked as chief editor at Bruno Cassirer Verlag in Berlin and promoted Scandinavian authors such as Sigrid Undset and Knut Hamsun. As a 'non-Aryan' employee, he was expelled from the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) in 1933. In Oslo he found a job as an editor at the Johan Grundt Tanum publishing house in 1938, joined the Norwegian resistance movement and fled to Sweden in 1942. Until 1945 he worked as an editor for the Esselte publishing group and in 1944 established the Neue Verlag there as the German-language department of the Ljus Förlag, which belonged to the group. Apart from Heinemann & Zsolnay in London, this remained the only founding of a German-language exile publishing house during the war; it published mainly German-language exile literature as well as translations from Russian and Swedish. Its authors included Johannes R. Becher, Heinrich Mann and Lion Feuchtwanger.

Thus, shortly before the end of the war, the Neue Verlag represented serious competition for the Bermann-Fischer Verlag in Stockholm. In 1946, Tau returned to Norway and again became an editor at Johan Grundt Tanum (Fischer 2011: 325–6; Nawrocka 2004: 75–9).

The production of the publishing house Bermann-Fischer in Vienna was distributed and manufactured in Germany (Hall 1985, vol. 2: 94–6; Nawrocka 2000: 110–32). In exile in Stockholm, the company distributed its books without selling them in Germany. The diminishing sales territories for literature in German outside the Third Reich as a result of the annexation policy of National Socialist Germany made it necessary for the publishing houses Querido, Allert de Lange and Bermann-Fischer to decide to work together (Nawrocka 2004: 66–74). The work of the two Amsterdam publishers was brought to an end in May 1940 by the German invasion of the Netherlands.

Bermann Fischer was expelled from Sweden shortly afterwards. The publishing house remained in Stockholm, while the publisher emigrated to the USA and continued the publishing work from there. Together with Fritz H. Landshoff of Querido Verlag, Bermann Fischer attempted to establish himself on the American market with English-language books. At the end of the war, via detours and stops in Amsterdam and Vienna, the publishing house of Bermann-Fischer returned to Germany. But the planned collaboration with Peter Suhrkamp, who had managed the part of S. Fischer Verlag that remained in Germany during the war, failed.

How did a publishing house operate when its headquarters were in Stockholm, its publisher was in New York, its authors lived in centres of exile in France, England or later mainly in the USA, and its books bore notations such as 'printed in Hungary', 'bound in Holland', and were sold mainly in Switzerland?

The National Socialists kept an eye on these German-language publishers who worked outside the German Reich. They represented serious competition to the Reich

German book, and the National Socialists tried to injure the publishers by price dumping Reich German books to the point of selling the confiscated stock of the exiled publishers abroad.

Cultural policy in National Socialist Germany

As a result of the National Socialists' seizure of power in Germany on 30 January 1933, fundamental changes took place in cultural policy. Art was placed in the service of the state and became an (indirect) channel of politics (Dahm 1986: 75). As early as the time of the Great Depression, the NSDAP (National Socialist German Workers' Party) was busy drafting laws to protect 'German culture property from foreign racial influences' (Walter 1972: 45). After 1929, there was increased state interference in freedom of speech, assembly and the press. Numerous, mainly communist, editors and writers were subsequently arrested for 'literary treason' (p. 56).

The exercise of a cultural profession was only possible with personal membership in the Reichskulturkammer (Reich Chamber of Culture) or its specialised chambers. With the exception of the Reichspressekammer (Press Chamber), which prohibited Jewish journalists and editors from working professionally, there was initially no 'Aryan paragraph' in the Reich Chamber of Culture. Later, the admission of Jews was to be limited to 5 per cent of the total membership (Dahm 1983: 50).

As early as August 1932, the *Völkischer Beobachter*, the organ of the NSDAP, had presented a list of names of writers who were to be banned. Among them were authors such as Klaus Mann, Franz Werfel, Stefan Zweig, Carl Zuckmayer, Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and

Frank Wedekind. After the book burning of 10 May 1933, at which Joseph Goebbels held the 'fire speech', German literature was 'systematically purged'. The Börsenverein der Deutschen Buchhändler (German Publishers' and Booksellers' Association) published a list of twelve authors whose works were to be regarded as 'damaging to the German reputation' (*Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* 1933: 1). They were Lion Feuchtwanger, Ernst Glaeser, Arthur Holitscher, Alfred Kerr, Egon Erwin Kisch, Emil Ludwig, Heinrich Mann, Ernst Ottwalt, Theodor Plivier, Erich Maria Remarque, Kurt Tucholsky and Arnold Zweig. This was followed by an appeal to the book trade not to distribute their works.

In December 1935, Jewish booksellers were excluded from the Reichsschrifttumskammer (Reich Writing Chamber). In autumn 1935, a liquidation order had been issued to Jewish booksellers to dissolve their business or hand it over to 'Aryan ownership'. The activities of Jewish booksellers had to be limited to Jewish culture and Jewish buyers and led to the emergence of a ghetto book trade. Not only the authors, but also their publishers thought about emigration.

The S. Fischer Verlag remained in Germany after the National Socialist takeover, although many of its authors had already gone into exile. Samuel Fischer refused to agree to an emigration of the publishing house. The fact that the Jewish S. Fischer Verlag remained in Germany after the National Socialist takeover and only emigrated at the end of 1935 with part of the authors' rights triggered heated discussions in émigré circles. Doubts were expressed as to whether a Jewish publisher could pursue his activities in National Socialist Germany without compromising with the regime. By this time, Gottfried Bermann Fischer had already largely taken over the publishing business.

Despite continuing to operate undisturbed, S. Fischer expected to close at any time. But the publishing house was of great economic importance to the National Socialists.

Samuel Fischer died on 15 October 1934. The death of the important publisher of German naturalism, who had also made many Scandinavians known to the German-speaking world, received little attention in National Socialist Germany. In March 1935 Gottfried Bermann Fischer began negotiations with the Reichsministerium für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda (Reich Ministry for Popular Enlightenment and Propaganda) (Nawrocka 2000: 31–6). As a result, the publishing house was divided into two parts, one of which was allowed to emigrate to Austria. The takeover of the other part by Peter Suhrkamp was in line with Goebbels's idea of maintaining economic operations and transferring them into 'Aryan' hands while continuing to be able to present S. Fischer Verlag as a flagship for German literature to foreign countries.

The emigration and the years in Vienna

In April 1936 Gottfried Bermann Fischer officially left S. Fischer Verlag. In an advertisement in the *Börsenblatt für den deutschen Buchhandel* on 13 July 1936 the S. Fischer Verlag announced that the publishing rights of the following authors had been transferred to Bermann-Fischer Verlag in Vienna: Peter Altenberg, Richard Beer-Hofmann, Alice Berend, Martin Gumpert, Moritz Heimann, Friedrich Heydenau, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Marta Karlweis, Annette Kolb, Mechthilde Lichnowsky, Thomas Mann, André Maurois, Carl Rössler, George Bernard Shaw and Carl Zuckmayer.

The names of the authors whose works Bermann Fischer was not allowed to import to Germany were missing. The fact that

Bermann Fischer continued to sell most of his books in the Third Reich led to criticism within the emigration (Nawrocka 2000: 41–3). What was the difference between the exiled publishers and the 'secession publishing house' (Hall 1985, vol. 2: 89) Bermann-Fischer? Querido, Allert de Lange and the other exiled publishing houses had taken a clear position from the beginning. Their production was literature that could not be published in Germany, whereas Bermann Fischer was politically restrained in his programme. The restraint was partly due to the fact that Samuel Fischer's widow Hedwig was still in Germany and was not intent on emigrating. On the other hand, Germany continued to be the main market for the publishing house of Bermann-Fischer and a considerable part of the production was undertaken in Germany until 1938.

A book warehouse of more than 780,000 volumes of 217 titles from the publisher's production in Berlin was transported to Vienna (Pfäfflin and Kussmaul 1985: 479). The first publishing title was a lecture by Thomas Mann on Sigmund Freud, *Freud und die Zukunft* (Freud and the Future), which the Nobel Prize winner had given in Vienna in May 1936. The first programme with which the new publishing house presented itself included titles by well-known authors such as Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse and Hugo von Hofmannsthal and at the same time introduced authors new to the publishing house such as the Austrian Minister of Justice Hans von Hammerstein, Ralph Roeder and Jean Giraudoux. A prospectus of new publications from the autumn of 1936, intended for the Reich German book trade, did not show two new publications: Thomas Mann's *Freud und die Zukunft* and Carl Zuckmayer's *Salwäre*. The reason was that they were on the blacklist and could not be sold in Germany.

After the 'Anschluss' of Austria

In his second biography, *Wanderer durch ein Jahrhundert* (Wanderer through a Century), Gottfried Bermann Fischer described the two years in Vienna in business terms as 'beautiful and successful' (Bermann Fischer 1994: 131). And yet it was only an 'Austrian idyll' with an end that soon followed. On 11 March 1938, the publisher was warned the German army would march into Austria. The Bermann Fischer family left Austria with three children on 13 March 1938. They had to leave furniture and valuables behind. With their German passports still valid, they fled by train to Rapallo in Italy (Bermann Fischer 1971: 122–3).

On 15 March, 36 hours later, their Viennese house was visited by the SS and Bermann Fischer's private property was confiscated. They were also immediately interested in the publishing activities of the Bermann-Fischer Verlag. As a result, the publishing house had a provisional management and was liquidated in April 1939. The book warehouse was lost to the publisher, as he was to learn much later.

New start in Stockholm

After fleeing Austria, the family did not stay long in Rapallo, but continued on to Zürich, one of the centres of German-language emigration at that time. Bermann Fischer had to hurry in order not to lose his authors' rights. On the one hand, many authors had become publisherless after the events in Austria. On the other hand, some large publishing houses, especially in England and the USA, showed interest in including German-language books in their original language in their programmes. Quick action was in order, as the market had become too small for several competing companies after the loss of the Austrian readership.

Finally, Bermann Fischer came up with the idea of approaching the long-time Swedish business partner, the publishing house Albert Bonnier. Karl Otto Bonnier replied to his letter that he had retired, and that his son Tor had taken over the management of the company. Tor Bonnier – at this time in Geneva – showed understanding for Bermann Fischer's situation, but he was also aware of how difficult the work of a German-language publishing house would be, for which the German sales market remained closed. He wrote to Bermann Fischer: 'It will probably not be possible to extinguish the interest in good German literature' (Bermann Fischer 1971: 127). Although he did not know how he could help the exiled publisher from Sweden, he was not opposed to a meeting. After a successful conversation in Geneva the German publisher received a letter with the following content:

We are interested in founding a German-language publishing house together with you, whose headquarters – at least for the time being – should be transferred to Sweden. We are not entirely convinced that Stockholm is the right place. We believe it would be wiser to move a possible enterprise of this kind to Gothenburg or Malmö, cities which – especially Gothenburg – have better connections with both European and overseas countries. (Bermann Fischer 1990: 727–8)

Bonnier suggested the first year be considered a 'trial year'.

Bermann Fischer telegraphed to Stockholm immediately after receiving the letter: 'letter received see suitable basis in it look forward to future cooperation' (Nawrocka 2000: 87). He arrived in Stockholm on 4 May 1938. The contract between him and the Bonnier family was signed two days later.

In order to finance the publishing during this year, a joint-stock company was to be founded with a small share capital, whereby Bermann Fischer's contribution consisted of his author rights, while the contribution on Bonnier's part was made in cash (Nawrocka 2000: 87–8). The Bonnier brothers were to own 51 per cent of the share capital, as it was not possible for Bermann Fischer, as a foreign citizen, to have the majority of shares under Swedish law. To carry out the publishing work with a German-language production in a different linguistic environment would not be an easy task.

The new headquarters of the publishing house were only a short distance from the Bonnier publishing house, which was then as now located at Sveavägen 56. The company moved into several offices at the centrally located Stureplan 19. Despite the good location, Bermann Fischer was not entirely satisfied with the new publishing address: 'I cannot claim that the office was particularly imposing, but it satisfied our modest demands for the next ten years, and we developed a highly unusual publishing activity and production there' (Bermann Fischer 1994: 137).

The publishing house employees were also found quickly. They were mostly emigrants from Germany and Austria. Walter Singer, a former employee of the *Berliner Tageblatt* who had lived in Sweden since 1917, became managing director. Annie Stern, a Viennese Jew who had come to Stockholm in March 1938, began working as a secretary and foreign correspondent at the publishing house. She had been to Sweden in 1920 as a war child and spoke the language fluently. The couple Viktor and Mimi Zuckerkandl, also from Vienna, and Kurt Bernheim from Salzburg became editors, translators and agents for Bermann-Fischer and Bonnier before emigrating to the United States in 1940 (Nawrocka 2000: 89).



Tor Bonnier (1883–1976).

Justinian Frisch, the employee of the Viennese Bermann-Fischer publishing house, was also among the small circle of employees. He had come to Stockholm under dramatic circumstances. Frisch was 'half-Jewish' according to the Nazis. He was married to a Jewish woman, Auguste, the sister of the nuclear physicist Lise Meitner. After the 'Anschluss' of Austria, Frisch continued to work for the Bermann-Fischer publishing house, which was temporarily in charge, until he was dismissed because of his ancestry.

In August 1938, Justinian Frisch had contacted Gottfried Bermann Fischer through his son Otto Robert Frisch, who was working as an atomic physicist with Niels Bohr in Copenhagen. Although he had already found the staff for his newly founded publishing house, Bermann Fischer agreed to employ him. However, some time passed before Frisch arrived in Stockholm with his wife Auguste, as the couple did not receive permission to leave the country. The situation

in Vienna became increasingly unbearable for the Frisches. Justinian Frisch was already 59 years old at this time and was about to retire. He and his wife possessed unexpired Austrian passports, which were, however, declared invalid without a general order. Only in the event of emigration were they to receive new Reich German passports. Frisch and his wife were preparing to emigrate when, on the day of the November pogrom, Justinian Frisch was arrested early in the course of a general action along with many others and taken to the Dachau concentration camp. His wife Auguste remained without news of her husband's whereabouts for several days. At this point, the Frisches received an entry permit to Sweden. On the basis of this, Justinian Frisch was released from the concentration camp and could finally leave Austria. The Bonnier family had succeeded in bringing him to Sweden by guaranteeing him employment at the Bermann-Fischer publishing house in Stockholm.

In mid-February 1939, he and his wife arrived in Stockholm, where Frisch resumed his work at the Bermann-Fischer publishing house. He worked as an editor, translator and production manager, and subsequently also took over the layout of some books. He was to make uninterrupted publishing activity possible even during the war in Bermann Fischer's absence (Nawrocka 2000: 89–90).

The National Socialist rulers and the exiled publishers after March 1938

In Germany, the work of exiled publishers was observed who, despite difficulties, produced books that enjoyed greater popularity outside Germany than Reich German literature. Even in Sweden, the Bermann-Fischer publishing house was still a thorn in the side of the National Socialists. In the German Reich, people followed the

founding of the new publishing house in Stockholm. As early as June 1938, when the publishing house in Stockholm was still being set up, they reacted to the news from Stockholm. Karl Heinrich Bischoff of the Reichsschrifttumskammer (Reich Writing Chamber) informed the Geheime Staatspolizei (Secret State Police):

I have just heard that the Jewish publisher Bermann-Fischer now wants to open a German publishing house in Stockholm, after his activity in Austria has fortunately come to an end. From what I hear, he also wants to take German books, that is, books by non-Jewish authors, with him to Stockholm. It does not seem desirable to me at all that a Jewish publisher should now open a German publishing house in Sweden and possibly strongly emphasise the work of Hugo von Hofmannsthal [Hofmannsthal was a quarter-Jew], for example, in order to launch a Jewish-oriented publishing house in Sweden for German-language literature on the basis of this name and others. (Nawrocka 2000: 103)

Bischoff had justified fears: while German literature was still the most widely translated foreign literature in Sweden at the turn of the century, this interest had declined sharply and had been pushed back by translations from English and French. Bischoff feared that the remaining interest in literature from Germany might decline even further as a result of the presence of the Bermann-Fischer publishing house in Stockholm in favour of German-language exile literature.

In February 1939 all titles published by the Bermann-Fischer publishing house in Stockholm were placed on the 'Liste des schädlichen und unerwünschten Schrifttum'

(List of harmful und undesirable literature) by Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels. Nevertheless, they were included in the holdings and placed on the list of 'printed materials kept under lock and key' in the German Library in Leipzig (Nawrocka 2000: 105).

'Letters from the German displaced persons'

In autumn 1938, Gottfried Bermann Fischer had the idea of publishing a collection of emigrant letters and published an Open Letter to all German emigrants in international newspapers asking them to send their letters or ones they had received themselves to the publisher. Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel, Carl Zuckmayer and Alfred Döblin were to be involved in selecting the letters. Part of the proceeds were to go to Stockholms central-kommitte för flyktingshjälp (Stockholm's Central Committee for Refugee Aid) to support German refugees.

The Swedish press, however, was not un-animously positive about the idea of this collection of letters. *Stockholms-Tidningen* devoted on 5 January 1939 a long article to the German publisher's plan under the title 'Gästfrihetens belöning' (The Reward for Hospitality), which reflected the fear of jeopardising Sweden's relations with the Third Reich. The journalist suspected that this collection of letters might contain hateful examples directed against Nazi Germany. He saw the publication of the planned collection as a violation of the principle of the right to asylum.

Just one day later, an article appeared in the Nazi organ *Der Angriff* with the headline 'Entrüstung in Schweden. Jüdischer Emigranten-Verlag sucht Hetzmaterial' (Outrage in Sweden. Jewish émigré publisher seeks inflammatory material). Stockholm was already seen as a nascent headquarters

for international Jewish agitators against Germany. The title of the planned collection was effectively changed to 'Anklagebriefe gegen das Dritte Reich' (Letters of accusation against the Third Reich). Reference was made to the *Stockholms-Tidningen* journalist: 'We welcome this Swedish voice as a gratifying sign that in the public opinion of the Scandinavian countries the necessity of neutrality is understood, extending not only to the correct forms of international diplomacy, but also to the relationship of people to people' (*Der Angriff* 6.1.1939).

These articles did not remain without effect. In his biography, Gottfried Bermann Fischer describes the reactions to his appeal:

Almost every day I received anonymous telephone calls in German, with savage insults and threats, the first signs that the evil forces of Nazism were already at work here too, beneath the seemingly calm and balanced surface. The Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* demanded my residence permit be revoked. *Der Angriff* and the *Völkischer Beobachter* raged. (Bermann Fischer 1971: 156-7)

Although Bermann Fischer's aims had clearly been misjudged, the collection of letters subsequently did not materialise (Nawrocka 2000: 104-7).

As Åke Bonnier reports in his autobiography, there was also a campaign of smear and lies against the Bonnier family in German newspapers such as the *Völkischer Beobachter* and *Der Angriff*. 'It was claimed, among many other things, that Bonniers were "a danger to normal relations between Sweden and Germany", that "Bonniers controlled 90 per cent of the entire Swedish press", and it was rumored that "Karl Otto Bonnier was a danger to peace in Europe"' (Bonnier 1974: 217).

At Tor Bonnier's request, Thomas Mann also had to omit his essay *Der Bruder* (The Brother), which was, without naming him, aimed at Hitler, from the Swedish and the German editions of his volume of essays *Achtung Europa!* (Attention Europe!). The text included, among other things, the remark 'this fellow is catastrophic' (Nawrocka 2000: 107–9).

Bermann Fischer and his family had been allowed entry to Sweden thanks to Bonniers. Hedwig Fischer, Bermann Fischer's mother and his nephew subsequently joined them. Bermann Fischer received a work permit, but had to exercise political restraint, including with regard to publishing work.

Gottfried Bermann Fischer's expulsion

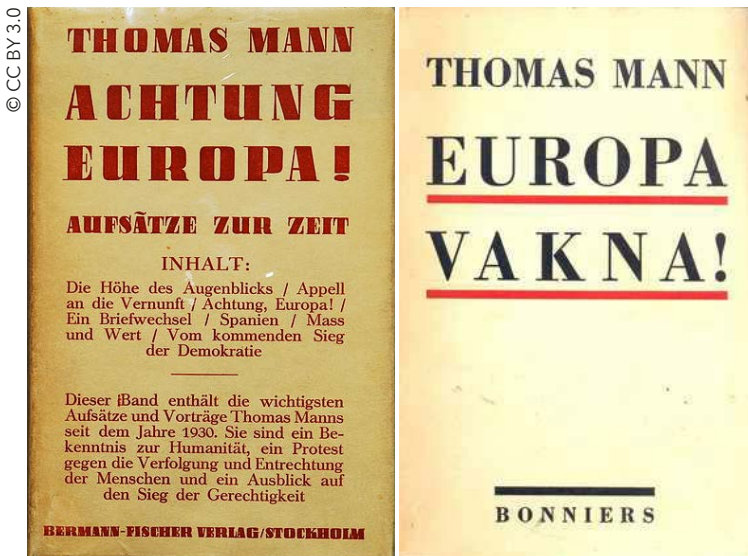
The first year of the Bermann-Fischer publishing house in Stockholm was crowned with success. By the end of 1938, Bermann Fischer had already been able to establish that the turnover of the Stockholm publishing house was almost as high as that of the Viennese publishing house, although Germany and Austria had been eliminated

as customer countries. Through the participation of Bonnier and the far-reaching cooperation with Allert de Lange and Querido in Amsterdam the continued work of the exiled publishing house seemed to be assured. But the tensions in Europe and finally the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939 once again raised doubts about the possibilities of publishing in German in Sweden. When the Finnish–Russian war broke out in December 1939, it seemed to Gottfried Bermann Fischer that Stockholm was no longer a safe place.

In order to obtain English visas Bermann Fischer turned to the writer Karl Otten, who maintained relations with the English government. In his biography, Bermann Fischer recounted the events that followed: 'Instead of a reply letter, he sent me an English friend who introduced himself as Mr. Alfred Rickman' (Bermann Fischer 1971: 168). Rickman was an agent of the British Secret Service and was interested in the publisher's extensive address card index, which Bermann Fischer also made available to him. From Sweden, anti-Nazi reconnaissance material was to be sent to Germany. During a house

search of Rickman's Stockholm flat, in addition to documents on a planned blowing-up of the Swedish port of Oxelösund, which was to cut off Swedish ore shipments to Germany, invoices for 20,000 envelopes were found. These were made out to the Bermann-Fischer publishing house.

(Left) Thomas Mann, *Achtung Europa!* 1938. (Right) The Swedish edition of Thomas Mann's *Attention Europe!* 1939.



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Meanwhile the Bermann Fischer family were preparing to leave for England, which might happen at any time owing to political developments. They planned to travel to England via the USA and had American transit visas stamped into their still-valid German passports in addition to the English visa. The trip was finally scheduled for 22 April 1940. But it did not happen. On the evening of 19 April Bermann Fischer was arrested and taken to Stockholm remand prison.

According to the police report Bermann Fischer's role was that he had not actively helped transport anti-Nazi reconnaissance material to Germany, but had read the leaflets for correct German and had his office provide the envelopes for sending them to Germany. The publisher had furthermore made his office available to Rickman's group for meetings without attending himself and had allowed an agent to meet with a contact person in his car.

Bermann Fischer remained imprisoned for two months. Initially he was shielded and not allowed to receive visitors. He received no news from outside, so he remained uninformed about political events in Europe such as the occupation of the Netherlands in May 1940. On 20 June 1940 Bermann Fischer was released and expelled from Sweden (Nawrocka 2000: 133–6).

Gottfried Bermann Fischer in New York

Bermann Fischer continued to receive his salary as managing director of the publishing house in Stockholm from Bonniers, who themselves had a branch in New York, so that the family soon decided to stay in the USA and settle there permanently. In the USA, together with Fritz H. Landshoff of *Querido*, Gottfried Bermann Fischer founded an American publishing house, the L. B. Fischer Publishing Corporation, in



Anti-National Socialist imagery produced by the Rickman Group. Riksarkivet, Stockholm.

which the Bonnier family also participated in 1941 (Nawrocka 2000: 152–9). The Bonniers now saw an opportunity to publish the works of Swedish authors whose English-language rights they owned within this publishing house. It was hoped that this would provide greater opportunities for the distribution of Swedish literature.

This hope that the L. B. Fischer Publishing Corporation could become an 'international publishing house' was not fulfilled. The war in Europe had prevented Bermann Fischer from coming into contact with other European publishers. This would have been the prerequisite for an American publishing house according to Bonnier's ideas. In 1946, after the end of the war, the possibilities were open again. In Åke Bonnier's opinion, cooperation between the publishing house of Bermann-Fischer and France, Poland, Russia and the Scandinavian countries was promising. In addition, Landshoff's connections in Europe could be of use to the American publishing house. With these prospects in mind, Åke Bonnier told his brothers that there might still be opportunities for the American publishing house, especially since

the programme for 1946 was promising. But this was no longer carried out in full. Surprisingly, the publishing house was sold in February 1946.

The L. B. Fischer Publishing Corporation had run into such serious financial difficulties that swift action was necessary. The Bonnier family refused to provide any further financial support, especially since they were already spending large sums on building up the Stockholm-based Bermann-Fischer publishing house at that time. Gottfried Bermann Fischer was not in New York at the time of the sale. He had embarked on his first trip to Europe after the war. The negotiations with the publisher A. A. Wyn, who was interested in buying the company, were conducted by Åke Bonnier, among others. The sale to Wyn ended a publishing activity that brought out more than sixty English-language titles by mainly American and exiled authors between 1942 and 1946.²

In Stockholm the publishing house was financially on shaky ground and had not been able to get out of its initial financial difficulties, despite sales successes. Two thirds of the share capital had been lost, so that the Bonniers briefly considered liquidating it. However, it was then decided to reorganise the company. Even before Bermann Fischer left the country in April 1940, an agreement was reached with Bonniers, according to

which Bermann Fischer was to 'safeguard the interests of the joint-stock company in every way'³ outside Sweden (Nawrocka 2000: 139).

In the summer of 1940, the work in Stockholm was initially limited to 'correspondence with intermediaries, the collection of outstanding payments, and efforts to possibly get parts of the book warehouse out of Holland via Switzerland'. This was because there was justified hope that books from the publishing house were still available in Holland, 'since part of the warehouse is kept in printers and bookbinders and therefore possibly escapes the attention of the Gestapo'.⁴ This assumption was to prove correct. But the publishing house did not learn of this until after the end of the war. For the time being, the warehouse at the central distribution in Amsterdam had to be considered lost. A warehouse list from June 1940 shows that a stock of approximately 110,000 books was kept in Holland, to which Bermann-Fischer Verlag no longer had access given the political events. This stock represented about 80 per cent of the total stock of Bermann-Fischer Verlag (Nawrocka 2000: 140).

It seemed possible for Bermann Fischer to 'remotely manage' the publishing house in Stockholm from the USA. From New York he was able to maintain contact with the authors living in the USA – above all Thomas Mann, Franz Werfel and Carl Zuckmayer – and sell authors' rights to newspapers, film and radio, and the rights for translations from German into other languages. As a result, Bermann Fischer arranged for the authors' manuscripts to be published by the Stockholm publishing house. Even though this was often

2 These included Klaus Mann, *The Turning Point, Thirty-five Years in This Century*, 1942; Henry A. Wallace, *The Price of Free World Victory*, 1942; Herta E. Pauli, *Alfred Nobel, Dynamite King, Architect of Peace*, 1942; Franz Werfel and Paul Stefan, *Verdi, The Man in His Letters*, 1942; Erika Mann, *A Gang of Ten*, 1942; *Heart of Europe, An Anthology of Creative Writing in Europe 1920 – 1940*, ed. Klaus Mann and Hermann Kesten, 1943; Pär Lagerkvist, *The Dwarf*, 1945; *Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, 1945.

3 Letter from Bonnier to Bermann Fischer, 18.6.1940, Bonniers Förlag archive.

4 Pro memorandum to the Bermann-Fischer publishing house, 10.6.1940, Bonniers Förlag archive.

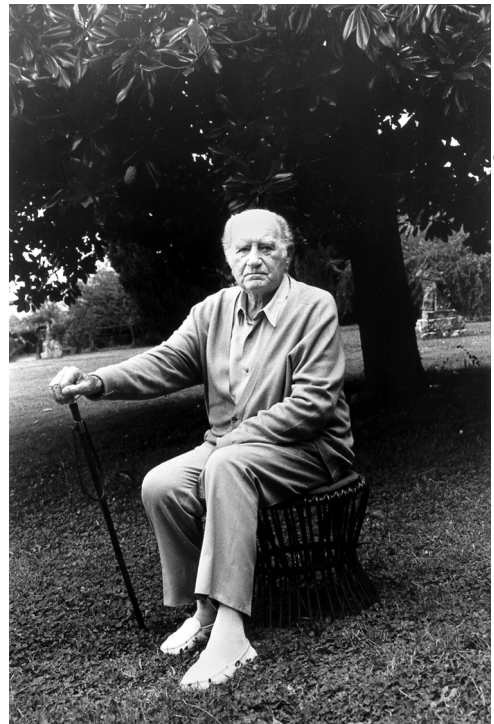
difficult as postal connections were frequently interrupted because of the war situation or else many letters or consignments were lost. Parallel to his work for the American publishing house, the L. B. Fischer Publishing Corporation, Gottfried Bermann Fischer continued his work for the Stockholm publishing house. He sent the completed manuscripts of the publisher's authors from New York on to Stockholm, where Walter Singer and Justinian Frisch carried out the production of the books. Contact between the publisher and the publishing house was maintained mainly by telegrams. It was still possible to continue working in Stockholm.

In the USA Gottfried Bermann Fischer also worked on book projects for post-war Germany (Nawrocka 2000: 161–6). Concrete preparations for the opening of the German book market after the war began as early as the end of 1943. But neither the political situation in Germany nor the end of the war and the opening of the German book market could be foreseen. Since 1933, Germany had been largely cut off from outside literature and from access to foreign authors. This resulted in a task for the publishing house in Stockholm to reprint these works. They began producing the early works of Thomas Mann and the titles of Stefan Zweig and Franz Werfel. The books by Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bruno Frank, Erich Maria Remarque, Carl Zuckmayer, Vicki Baum and Joseph Roth were to follow. The implementation of such a plan required enormous capital, which was provided by Bonnier.

Another focus of the Stockholm publishing house's work was the publication of important foreign-language literature in German translation. It could be assumed that there would be a great demand in Germany for books about world events outside Germany during the past few years, so that the

Stockholm Bermann-Fischer publishing house turned to non-fiction books again for the first time and placed an emphasis on them.

Together with a group of émigré German educators the idea for a series of German-language textbooks was born. This project took up a problem that was being intensively discussed in America – the question of re-educating the population in Germany after the end of National Socialist rule. However, this large-scale project failed because of the political situation in Germany and the bureaucracy of the occupying powers. Bermann Fischer's expectations of being involved to a greater extent in the American government's re-education programmes were not fulfilled. The Americans showed interest in Bermann Fischer's textbooks, but did not want to influence the selection of the textbooks used, leaving that to the German school authorities.



Gottfried Bermann Fischer, 1993. Photo: Stefano Baroni.

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Return to Europe

At the beginning of 1946 Gottfried Bermann Fischer embarked on his first trip to Europe after spending almost six years in the USA. The most important stop was Stockholm. Bonniers had invested a great deal of money in the German-language publishing house. It was in view of this that Bermann Fischer was surprised by Bonniers' attitude, which was one of restraint. The Swedish business partners had been pressuring Bermann Fischer for some time to move to Europe, which he refused to do, having his family life in the USA. Tensions with Bonniers increased. Despite negotiations with the American authorities and initial contacts with Suhrkamp, the opening of the German book market had been delayed. Bonniers were reluctant to make further financial investments.

After long negotiations the Bonnier family finally sold their shares in the Bermann-Fischer publishing house to the Dutch publishers Querido, and the headquarters of the German-language publishing house were moved from Stockholm to Amsterdam in April 1948.

The presence of the German-language publishing house in Stockholm also contributed to Swedish-German cultural exchange: a number of Swedish names appeared in the publishing programme of the German company who were among Bonniers' authors. The first was the anthology *Zwölf schwedische Erzähler* (Twelve Swedish Narrators), with contributions by Selma Lagerlöf, Hans Larsson, Per Hallström, Albert Engström, Moa Martinson, Pär Lagerkvist, Eyvind Johnson, Irja Browallius and Harry Martinson. The volume was scheduled for delivery in May 1940, but as a result of the German occupation of the Netherlands the title did not reach bookstores. However, one copy reached Stockholm, where a new

edition was produced in the spring of 1942. In 1943 appeared the volume *Attentat in Paris* (Paris Attack) by Marika Stiernstedt, in 1944 *Kontakt mit Amerika* (Contact with America) by Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, in 1945 Gustaf Hellström's novel *Stürmisches Paradies* (Stormy Paradise), *Die Excellenz* (The Excellency) by Bertil Malmberg, *Winston Churchill* by Knut Hagberg, in 1946 *Der Henker / Der Zwerg* (The Executioner / The Dwarf) by Pär Lagerkvist, *Reit heut nacht* (Ride Tonight) by Vilhelm Moberg, in 1948 *Die Heimkehr des Odysseus* (The Homecoming of Ulysses) by Eyvind Johnson. When the publishing journal *Neue Rundschau* reappeared in 1945, Scandinavian authors like Martin Andersen Nexø, Vilhelm Moberg, Anders Österling, Eyvind Johnson, Olle Holmberg, Sigrid Undset, Gustaf Lundgren, Harry Martinson, and Stig Dagerman contributed to it (Nawrocka 1994: 88).

Having started this article with a quotation from Gottfried Bermann Fischer about the Bonnier family I would have liked to end with one from the autobiographies of Tor and Åke Bonnier (Bonnier 1973; Bonnier 1974) – but neither of them mention Gottfried Bermann Fischer or the collaboration from 1938 to 1948 with a single word. Nevertheless, their financial and personal commitment to German exile literature cannot be overestimated. ■



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