

A treasure chest for research

International archives material at ARAB

Right from the start the Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek ARAB [the Labour Movement Archives and Library] in Stockholm opened the windows unto the world beyond Sweden. The result is extensive holdings of (a) foreign archives and (b) internationally oriented collections, along with (c) international material in the Swedish archives and collections. The essays in this book, written by ARAB's archivists and librarians, are structured according to these categories. As will be shown ARAB offers most valuable and important material for research outside Sweden and in international fields.¹

The oldest foreign archives are, incidentally, Foreningen for socialismens fremme i Sverrig [Union for the advancement of socialism in Sweden] (Copenhagen), a support organisation for August Palm's agitation and for the establishment of trade unions in Skåne, presumably constituted in the autumn of 1883 (runs to one slim box). The latest material originates from the Independent Commission on Global Governance (chaired by Sweden's former Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson), up until the commission was wound up in June 2001.

Acquisition through contacts and exchanges

It was the librarians Fredrik Nilsson and Oscar Borge who proposed that Stockholm Workers' Library should establish a Labour Movement Archives and Library. Work started on 14 June 1902, the idea being that the archives should be directed principally toward the Swedish labour movement. However, an international perspective was established from the outset. Here one may cite, on the one hand, the purchase of foreign literature and, on the other, a regular exchange of organisations' printed matter from the Swedish labour movement for 'the more important printed works of equivalent foreign organisations'. The Labour Movement Archives - which became the name of the department and after 1906 of the independent institution - immediately set about collecting material aiming principally at printed matter, 'however trivial or insignificant it may be' (as the aforementioned proposal put it) and interesting, 'illuminating' documents.

The first foreign material arrived during 1905. As far as it can be determined from correspondence and annual reports, it came principally from the USA where contact had been made with the John Crerar Library in

Chicago and with the Department of Commerce and Labor, the Bureau of Labor, in Washington DC. However, almost as early, yet even more important are the contacts with Germany which had a significant influence on the Swedish labour movement during its first period. Wilhelm Jansson, a Swedish gardener, was chiefly responsible for arranging these contacts. He had emigrated to Germany in 1897 and came to play an important role in the German Trade Union Confederation as well as being an intermediary between the German and Swedish labour movements (see my contribution on Wilhelm Jansson's papers). Printed matter was also received from Norway and Denmark and, according to the annual report for 1905, from Hauptverein für Volkswohlfahrt [General Association for Public Welfare] in Hannover, the Musée Sociale in Paris and the Austrian Trade Union Confederation. In 1905, it was reported that 102 foreign organisations were represented in the archives section: from Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the USA. In *Redogörelse för Arbetarrörelsens arkiv* [Report on the Labour Movement Archives], 1905, Oscar Borge, the director of the Archives, describes 'the foreign collection' as 'still very insignificant since it consists almost exclusively of printed material that has accidentally come into the ownership of private individuals who then handed it over to the Archives'.

When one reads these compilations and lists of 'donors', particularly the foreign ones, in the annual reports for every year up to 1938, a very misleading impression can result. They actually seldom report deliveries of records from the stated organisations but rather material, sometimes almost exclusively printed matter, that has indeed been produced by those organisations but may have been handed over by anyone at all. For a relatively long time no clear distinction was made at ARAB between donors and creators of records, the principle of provenance was not fully respected and no clear distinction was drawn between archives and collections. Documents were collected together into 'archives' (really collections), removed from archives and compiled as new 'archives' including foreign ones such as the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (German Social Democratic Party) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or else printed documents were transferred to the library with other 'miscellaneous' material (for example posters and photographs) to special collections. However,

despite this interference, the collected material and printed matter, including the foreign items, and the collections that were formed naturally have great informative and research value. This is very much thanks to varied and extensive material having been taken care of and preserved so early on and so ambitiously.

Holdings profile

With the help of ARAB's holdings register it is possible to construct a comprehensive profile. This reveals that 150 of the 4,838 archives and collections registered up to now are classified as international in the sense of foreign archives and internationally oriented collections. Personal papers predominate (47). The German group is appreciably the largest (43), here too the majority are personal papers (36), all of them coming from either political refugees forced into exile after 1933 or exile organisations. Way behind come the Scandinavo-American archives (24), among them 4 fragmentary private archives, and then the Scandinavian archives (6).

The earliest foreign archival documents came from the USA, from Skandinaviska socialistiska arbetareförbundet [Scandinavian Socialist Workers' Federation], which contacted the Archives in September 1906 and offered records. The intermediary was August Palm who had visited the USA in the summer of 1906. The Swedes in the Scandinavo-American organisations felt a natural bond with the old country and naturally turned to The Labour Movement Archives in Sweden. They were aware that they were preserving their own history and offering the opportunity for the writing of a broader historiography than the 'official' one, and this, according to its initiators, Oscar Borge and Fredrik Nilsson, was the object and basis of a Labour Movement Archives. These supplies of archives from the USA were the first contributions to this valuable, although not very large, stock from Scandinavo-American organisations, and people active in them, held at ARAB. Ulf Jönson's contribution has more to say on this.

The post-1933 German refugees were also naturally drawn to ARAB. The Archives became a meeting place where newspapers and periodicals could be read, and a number of emigrants were employed as archives workers. Many of the emigrants remained in Sweden after 1945 and their papers consequently ended up at ARAB. From the Archives' point of view this meant a timely and energetic attempt to collect and save that special source material produced in exile. The extensive exile stock, chiefly personal papers, has been used very frequently over the years, especially by foreign researchers. There is substantial supplementary material in Swedish archives at ARAB, for example those of Arbetarrörelsens flyktinghjälp [Labour Movement Refugee Relief], Internationella Röda hjälpen - Svenska sektionen [International Red Aid - Swedish Section], the syndicalist movement's organisation Sveriges arbetares centralorganisation SAC [Central Organ-

isation of Swedish Workers] and in the archives of the organisations and people who had contact with and helped the emigrants (there is more detail on this in my contribution on the 'German speaking' archives).

Between Scandinavia and Vietnam

The group of Nordic archives consists chiefly of those of Nordic trade union organisations. When the secretariats of these organisations were based in Sweden, the records were likely to end up at ARAB. The largest is that of Nordens fackliga samorganisation [Council of Nordic Trade Unions], and there are also some from the textile, leather and garment workers trade union federations. Those of the Nordic trade union federations contain interesting material that hitherto has seldom been used for research. The same is true of Arbetarrörelsens nordiska samarbetskommitté SAMAK [Joint Committee of the Nordic Social Democratic Labour Movement] and its precursors (for a more detailed account, see my article on the Scandinavian archives in this book).

In this context I would also point out the compendious collections (27) relating to the international trade union federations, the so-called trade Internationals, which have been generally overlooked - as have the large collections on the socialist Internationals (from 1889 to the present day) and trade union Internationals. In the archives of Landsorganisationen LO [Swedish Trade Union Confederation], separate trade unions and Sveriges Socialdemokratiska arbetareparti SAP [Social Democratic Party of Sweden], both international and Scandinavian contacts are naturally well documented as are those of the SAC, the communist parties and the women's and youth organisations. There is additional material in the private archives of the people involved in the Internationals and Scandinavian co-operation (more about this in my article on international collections and archives).

As already stated, 'Internationalism at ARAB' also means international material in the Swedish archives. It is naturally impossible to give an overall account of the international content of these archives. The holdings register and other finding aids can guide us only in a limited way. On the one hand there are archives from internationally oriented organisations - solidarity and relief organisations and friendship societies, on the other, those from people who were involved in this type of activity. These archives contain a wealth of information about other countries and contacts with organisations and authorities and people in them. Lucy Viedma writes about relief aid for Spain during and after the Civil War and how solidarity work with Chile is reflected in our documents, Lars Gogman on that with Vietnam. Ulf Jönson writes about Africa and also the Africa Solidarity Groups in Sweden.

Regarding the USA I should also mention the Swedish Sacco and Vanzetti Defence Committee, Angela Davis Work

Group and the United Farm-workers Support Committee. Other examples of international solidarity include Demokratiska hjälpkommittén för Tyskland [Democratic Relief Committee for Germany] and Svenska kommittén för Greklands demokrati [Swedish Committee for Democracy in Greece] and it is self-evidently vital to mention Arbetarrörelsens internationella centrum [Labour Movement International Centre] now called Olof Palmes internationella centrum [Olof Palmes international centre]. Other important archives originate in friendship societies: Svensk-kubanska föreningen [Swedish-Cuban Association], Svensk-ungerska föreningen [Swedish-Hungarian Association], Förbundet Sverige - DDR [Swedish-DDR Federation] and Förbundet Sverige-Sovjetunionen [Swedish - Soviet Union Federation].

Conversely, there is material on international contacts in various guises in almost all the archives of political, trade union and other national organisations and in many personal papers. To take a thematic example, international peace and disarmament issues, the League of Nations and the United Nations are documented, in, inter alia, the papers of Hjalmar Branting, Rickard Sandler, Carl Johan Björklund, Alva and Gunnar Myrdal, Tage Erlander, Bertil Svahnström, Inga Thorsson, Maj-Britt Theorin, Olof Palme, Sten Andersson, Pierre Schori and Ingvar Carlsson. Here is also found for example, Arbetarrörelsens fredsforum [Labour Movement Peace Forum] and Svenska kvinnor för fred [Swedish Women for Peace]. See Stellan Andersson's article for a detailed discussion of this.

During the major upheaval in Eastern Europe during the 1990s focus turned once more on the archives of the Swedish communist organisations and the personal papers of for instance Ture Nerman, Zeth Höglund, Nils Lind, Carl Johan Björklund, Per Emil Brusewitz and Paul Olberg. There many hoped to find information about the Soviet Union, including Swedish-Russian contacts. The Russian photograph and poster collections can also be mentioned in this context. Lars Gogman has written more on the subject of Swedish-Russian contacts and the Soviet Union.

Stellan Andersson illustrates what an exceptional example Gunnar Myrdal's papers are as a source for contacts with the international scientific community (particularly in the USA). Mats Myrstener describes how foreign authors are well represented in the correspondence of the publisher Tiden förlag and in the smaller archives from Axel Holmström's publishing company.

'Globalisation' – in archives and library

On considering ARAB's total stock over the course of time, it is the contacts with Germany that have left behind the most extensive material. This applies in particular to the period up to the 1940s. Not only do we have source materi-

al that sheds light on the important relationship with the German labour movement, there are also essential sources on the history of that movement up to the end of the Second World War. This, from one point of view is some compensation for the many archives lost in Germany. After the Second World War the picture changes: contacts have partly broadened, partly become globalised; in the relevant archives from this time it is perhaps no longer labour movement contacts that predominate, whilst the new movements in the Third World, for example, are now also well represented.

In the library's stock in particular there is extremely rare material concerning international and foreign affairs. One example is that by or about the utopians, the Paris Commune of 1870 and the Spanish Civil War, but not least amongst these, as by way of conclusion Marie Hedström shows in her contribution, is that of the year of revolutions, 1848, again starting in Paris.

On ARAB's 50th anniversary in 1992 Ture Nerman wrote that the archives had 'from the outset a clear internationalist focus and its windows open to the world'.² The result is an extensive stock of international archives and internationally oriented collections along with a significant international contribution of printed matter, periodicals and literature in the library section. Most profitable, however, has been the international involvement of organisations and people resulting in the breadth and wealth of the international material that has thus gradually ended up in the Labour Movement Archives and Library in Stockholm.

NOTES

1. See also my articles in *Arbetarhistoria* 63-64 (1992/1993), pp 2-7: För 90 år sedan grundades Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek. Nedslag i korrespondensen 1902-1912. [The Labour Movement Archives and Library was founded 90 years ago. An immersion into the correspondence 1902-1912]; in *Arbetarhistoria* 75-76 (1995), pp 37-41: '...och fönstren öppna för utblickar'. Internationellt arkivmaterial på ARAB ['...and its windows open to the world'. International archives material at ARAB]; in *Arkiv hemma och ute. Årsbok för Riksarkivet och landsarkiven 1995*, [Archives at home and abroad. National and Provincial Archives Yearbook 1995], pp 90-196: Internationellt material i arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek [International material in the Labour Movement Archives and Library].
2. Ture Nerman: I internationalismens tjänst [In the Service of Internationalism], in *Hävd och handling. Arbetarrörelsens arkiv 50 år* [Tradition and Document. 50 years of The Labour Movement Archives], Stockholm 1992, pp 50-53.

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