Once the ‘baptism’ of the Jung Codex on 15 November 1953 had made its acquisition by the Jung Institute public knowledge, the follow-up had of necessity to consist in securing photographs and publication rights for the so-called ‘missing 40 pages’ of Codex I that had remained in Egypt, as part of the sequestering of the collection of Maria Dattari and Phocion J. Tano on 12 May 1952 (see below).

But this objective of the Jung Institute concerning ‘the missing 40 pages’ had expanded into the hope of being entrusted with the publication of all the Nag Hammadi Codices. This could either be in France at the Imprimerie Nationale, as Puech had always advocated ever since the publication of Codex III was first planned, or in the Netherlands, where Quispel favored Brill as the publisher, or in Switzerland through the Jung Institute, following upon the publication of the Jung Codex, as Meier would prefer. Though Puech, Quispel and Meier all attempted through their national representatives in Egypt to gain publication rights, sometimes to the detriment of each other and of the shared objective, it was the Swiss Ambassador to Egypt, Beat von Fischer-Reichenbach, a personal friend of C.A. Meier and Patron of the Jung Institute, who pressed forward most relentlessly.

Planning was rendered much more complicated by two political factors: Beat von Fischer was transferred from Cairo to Lisbon, to become Ambassador to Portugal. This was scheduled to take place the end of April 1954, which put pressure on him to find a solution for the Nag Hammadi Codices before he left; he actually left on 14 June 1954, with the task still incomplete.

The other difficulty was the ongoing upheavals of the Egyptian government. The deposition of King Farouk was begun by Muhammad Naguib on 23 July 1952, leading to the proclamation of the Republic of Egypt on 18 June 1953, with Naguib as President. On 25 February 1954 Naguib was forced to resign, but street protests brought him back to power the next day, though with Gamal Abd el-Nasser as Prime Minister and Naguib only a figurehead. Naguib resigned from this position on 14 November 1954, leaving Nasser as the head of the government. These radical shifts in Egyptian politics meant
almost a complete administrative paralysis throughout this period, resulting in an inability to get decisions finalized, precisely at the time von Fischer was trying to get them finalized before he left Egypt.

1. Von Fischer’s Final Diplomatic Efforts

Proposing Committees, Memberships, and Chairpersons

Already in producing a translation of the Jung Codex, the woodenness, even unintelligibility, of the draft translations by Malinine made it necessary to find other translators more familiar with the subject matter. Puech made proposals to Quispel in this regard:

If you think well of it, we will add Kahle to the edition, or, rather, Till. But we could also appeal to the excellent French coptologist, Lacau. I know him quite well, as does Malinine. He is interested in the new texts, and would certainly not demand that his name be joined to ours on the cover. Do you want me to talk about him to Malinine? In any case, do not give up too quickly on the elucidation of the text. We will come to the goal in fine shape bit by bit.

Yet the situation was actually much more acute, since Meier had written Puech about the idea of publishing not only the Jung Codex, but also all of the Nag Hammadi Codices:

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1 11 iv 53: Letter from Puech to Quispel (see Chapter 3, Part 4 above).
2 18 i 52: Letter from Meier to Puech:

Comme vous le savez déjà, cher Monsieur, j’ai un programme ambitieux concernant toute cette bibliothèque gnostique. Je pense qu’il nous sera relativement facile d’obtenir l’autorisation du Gouvernement Égyptien pour l’édition de tous les douze Codices. On rendra notre Codex, après publication, seulement sous cette condition.

Il me semble que pour faire cette demande ou cet offre aux Égyptiens il vous faut avoir un plan complet pour l’édition de tous les Codices. Je me permets donc, cher Monsieur, de vous prier de tâcher à trouver un cadre de collaborateurs. Il me semble que le choix de ces collaborateurs soit indispensable pour l’édition de tous les volumes sans trop de délai. Vue toutes les difficultés et les confusions de ces derniers temps je me permets de vous demander de bien vouloir diriger toutes les correspondances et questions importantes concernants l’achat de notre codex et le programme de l’édition des autres volumes à mon adresse. Je vous demande spécialement de laisser les négociations avec le Gouvernement Égyptien entièrement à mon initiative. Mon ami, l’ambassadeur de Suisse au Caire, a été pendant toute cette affaire d’une efficacité et ténacité remarquables.