

## Chapter Five: Betrayal, Heroism and Everyday Life in the Norwegian Press during the German Occupation of Norway 1940-1945<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

The state of Norwegian journalism during World War II is not *one* unified history. There was no press front during the war. The newspapers and the individual colleagues were caught just as unaware by the German invasion as was the rest of the population. The stories and the individual fates that are brought out in this article therefore tell something in their own way about how the Norwegian journalistic world was turned upside down on April 9, 1940. These stories, whether they deal with deeds that are heroic or treasonous, provide a little of the mosaic that constitutes the history of the war. They are at one and the same time typical and atypical of their era. Because there is no “representative” fate to be found, the accounts can do little more than speak for themselves. Yet the choices taken by the individual staff members and newspapers can constitute some of the changes in press history.

Out of the 650 members of the Norwegian Press Association of 1940, only 298 were still working on February 1, 1943. By the end of the war, only 100 were working. Many of them went into exile, mostly in Stockholm, London or New York. According to an overview provided by the Norwegian Press Association there was a total of 133 journalists in exile. After the war the schism between those who returned from exile, and those who had remained in their jobs in Norway would give rise to a certain number of conflicts between former colleagues.

Viewed from hindsight, it would be interesting to have posed the question of what might have happened had the body of Norwegian journalists constituted of a purely journalistic union at the outbreak of the war. Might one consider that such a union could to a stronger degree have established a united line among journalists – indeed, even contributed to a press front? The Norwegian Press Association functioned more as an association of the whole branch, where the interests of the owners were at the forefront. The Journalist Group (*NPJ*) of the Norwegian Press Association, the nearest that one came to a trade union at that time, was a weak organization, where the division between the labor press and the bourgeois journalists was far from yielding a unified line when the war broke out. “After the annual general meeting of *NPJ* in March 1941, the Journalist Group [went] into hiding due to the fear of intervention”, as the journalist Egil Meidell Hopp expressed it in his role as provisional chairman in 1945. The sources

1 This article is based upon a short and updated version of a chapter in the book *Fra fjærpenn til Internet. Journalister i organisasjon og samfunn*, published by the author in 1996. It has been translated from Norwegian to English by Richard Dailey.

say nothing about the circumstances around these events and the background to Meidell Hopp taking over the chairmanship in *NPJ* from Erling Ruud (Ottosen 1996, 179).

The organization Norwegian Press Association (*NP*), which provided organization to editors and journalists and had the authority to issue press cards, continued its activities after the occupation. The need to keep the newspapers in operation and hold on to jobs stood out strongly in the consciousness of both journalists and employers. Therefore *NP*'s line was just as much determined by having to accept the economic interests of the owners as it was by ethical considerations linked to running newspapers under an occupying power. The economic considerations around access to advertising and market share were also of great significance to the debate within the press in the wake of the war. The newspaper economy is also of highest interest to the journalists as well. Yet it might be asked whether journalists in such a tense situation did not have a greater need for an organization that mainly focused on the moral choices and the ethical standpoints that the individual employee was confronted with in the media firms. Such as it was at that time, there was no one to guide the individual journalist about what he or she should stand for at work (Ottosen 1996, 135-136).

### *April Days in 1940*

Most of the morning newspapers had already been printed in the early hours of April 9 when rumors of the sinking of the cruiser "Blücher" reached the capital city. Although parts of the apparatus that was to implement the planned initiative regarding control over the Norwegian press had been lost with the sinking of the "Blücher", an offensive propaganda detachment was appointed and arrived in the capital on April 10<sup>th</sup> under the leadership of Corvette Captain Klaus-Friedrich Hahn (Hjeltnes 1990, 42-43). Hahn had himself survived the sinking of the Blücher, and due to the unexpected problems they experienced, the Germans showed a determined attitude that can be characterized as "an iron hand in a silk glove". They wanted to have an understanding with the press, but on German terms.

*Fritt Folk*, the Party paper of the Nasjonal Samling (*NS*, National Unification) went from being a weekly to a daily newspaper only a few days before April 9, and it was wholly financed by the Germans as a direct result of a personal meeting between Hitler and Quisling already in the middle of December 1939. The self-appointed "Quisling Government" right after the invasion was a textbook attempt at a *coup d'état*, once the government had fled to Hamar. The state coup was also under dispute among the Germans. The military leadership of the occupation and the German legation in Oslo would have preferred a "Danish" solution with an occupation administration based on an understanding with the royal family and the sitting government.

Through cunning intrigue in the wake of the chaos that followed the sinking of the Blücher", Quisling's supporter Hans Wilhelm Scheidt at the German legation in Oslo managed to get Hitler's personal support for Quisling's coup. The Quisling Government was to be of short duration, due among other reasons, to the massive opposition among

the population, an opposition that penetrated far into the *NS* Party and included several of so-called cabinet ministers who had been chosen against Quisling's will. For its part, *Fritt Folk* had functioned as an important means of ideological preparation for the state coup and it actively carried out propaganda for Quisling's plan to project himself as the nation's "savior". This was at a point in time when the Norwegian policy of neutrality had been thoroughly shipwrecked. But the basic subscription to *Fritt Folk* did not nearly cover the cost of spreading the *NS* message and marketing the Quisling Government in a satisfactory manner.

Economy chief Thronsen had had the brilliant idea to secure *Fritt Folk's* mass expansion by sending out a free supplement to all the Oslo newspapers. On the morning of April 11<sup>th</sup> he turned up at the office of General Manager Riddervold of *Aftenposten* with three armed Wehrmacht soldiers who had been put at his disposal by the occupying power. In the name of "the occupying power and the new government" he gave the order that *Fritt Folk* from now on would be printed at the *Aftenposten* premises, and that Riddervold, by virtue of his role as Secretary of the Oslo Newspaper Association, would make sure that *Fritt Folk* would be brought out simultaneously with the issues of Oslo's newspapers every morning. This was a gross invasion of the newspaper's operations and in violation of the German government's declared promise in the Morning Memorandum to the Danish and Norwegian authorities on April 9<sup>th</sup>, where it stated that the occupation power wanted media control such that the press did not take an anti-German stance, but otherwise that the newspapers came out as previously. While the media in Denmark quickly adapted to the new situation the picture in Norway was more complex.

After intense consultations the overall picture was that newspapers gave up their independence and adapted to the situation under German control. After the war critics would see this as an example of a lack of willpower in terms of resistance (Kildal 1945). But again this is not *one* story. The Communist paper *Arbeidet* had already been banned by Quisling, and the *Arbeiderbladet*, the party organ of the Labor party, had been temporarily stopped. This meant that subscribers to *Morgenbladet*, *Aftenposten*, *Tidens Tegn*, *Morgenposten* and *Sjøfartstidene* received every day *Fritt Folk* with its biographical articles about Quisling, material on the cabinet ministers of the new "government" and reassuring articles about the *NS* Party and its tasks at this fateful time for the nation. This led to *Fritt Folk* being printed in incredible runs of 200,000 copies per issue in the few days that the Quisling government survived. But on April 16<sup>th</sup> this fairytale adventure came to an end when the Germans decided to drop the Quisling government. In its stead, the occupying power set up the Administration Council, appointed by the Supreme Court under the leadership of Paal Berg. Quisling and his cabinet ministers had to retreat (Dahl 1992, 103-104).

As early as the afternoon of April 9 the Oslo press was called in to a press conference where Corvette Captain Klaus-Friedrich Hahn issued directives that the newspapers could not write anything that contradicted German military power. The Germans immediately took control of Norsk Rikskringkasting (*NRK*) – the national broadcasting company – and the national news agency, *Norsk Telegrambyrå (NTB)*. Otherwise the German tactic was to come to an understanding with the press that avoided censorship of political material, while the military censor would secure the Germans against leakage that could itself disturb their conduct of the war. This “soft line” that was so successfully adapted in Denmark was launched at a press conference in the newly established press center in Parliament on April 20. Captain Hahn led the press conference and explained that “Our aim is not to take over the affairs of the Norwegian press”. He assured them that the intention was not to introduce a German press here in the country. Military reports and foreign policy news items of military significance should however be submitted to the military censorship organs before they were published. He gave a further account of the special agreement with *NTB* which meant that the newspapers could use all *NTB* material without submitting it to the German authorities (reproduced in facsimile in Foss 1990, 97). Already by this point in time it was clear that the Germans were devoting special attention to the state of affairs at *NTB*. *NTB* thus became the channel for the daily directives to the newspapers through what was called *Tage-sanweisung* (Daily Instructions) that constituted detailed instructions explaining what the newspapers should and should not print.

The occupation power rapidly found out that the policy of allowing the press to govern its own house did not adequately secure and safeguard German interests. They had to beef up their control and on April 24 the Germans launched their “Military Principles for the Press”. If one makes an examination of the long-term lines used by the Germans to control the press, the obvious political aim was primarily to supervise and breakup the socialist labor press, while to the greatest possible degree, the large non-socialist newspapers should continue to publish and present the same appearance as previously (Hjeltnes 1986, 198).

The German military censor followed the Wehrmacht’s directives and got rid of anything that might be considered sensitive military information. After this the material was censored by the *Presseabteilung* (press section). The correspondent of *Tidningarans Telegrambyrå (TT)* (Swedish News Agency), who had to put up with this system on a daily basis, constantly experienced that his telegrams were cut by over half their length before he was allowed to send off material via *NTB*. Jerneck writes that Moser and Presseabteilung treated the Norwegian newspaper articles differently from his own telegram material that was to be sent abroad and which therefore could be construed to be security reports disguised as news items. The Germans were themselves known to use journalistic activity as a cover for his agents (Jerneck 1943, 212-214).

The precondition of the control apparatus of the Germans was that the most important executive control should be carried out with the help of Norwegians who were formally organized through the *NS* administration. The *Reichskommissariat für die besetzten norwegischen Gebiete* (Reich Commission for the Captured Norwegian Territory) was the Germans' organ of executive power, under the command of Josef Terboven. Terboven demanded two reports every day from the *Pressabteilung* with summaries of the day's Oslo newspapers drawn up by the Information Department. In addition he received constant reports from *Befehlshaber der Sicherheitspolizei* (Commander of the Security Police) about the local instances of censorship. Based on these reports Terboven personally implemented the passing of sanctions against the "disobedient". They ranged from warnings, prosecutions, fines, deprivation of freedom – to the prohibition of the newspaper from publishing (Foss 1990, 25).

*Presseabteilung*, which was a sub-department of *Abteilung für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda* (Department of Population Enlightenment and Propaganda), was placed under the direction of the *Reichskommissariat* with Hans Moser at the head. With the establishment of the Department of Culture and Popular Information on September 26, 1940, the Press Directorate became organized as a department in its own right with Press Director Anders Beggerud in charge. Thus it was that Norwegian newspapers were forced to operate in relation to two parallel control systems, and both of these systems issued instructions to Norwegian newspapers, the German-led *Presseabteilung* and the Norwegian Press Directorate.

### *The New Scheme*

From September 26, 1940, the Press Directorate took over the implementation of a series of decisions and decrees that affected the Norwegian press (Hjeltnes 1990, 56). The Department of Culture and Popular Information under the leadership of Guldbrand Lunde had both control over the press and responsibility for its own propaganda activity. A younger, highly energetic Party man Willy Klevenberg was hired as leader of the Propaganda Section at the end of September 1940. In addition, the *NS* had its own Department for Press and Broadcasting, which functioned as the Party's press office with its own "Norwegian Article of Service" that distributed to the newspapers of the country free material to be used for articles. With Quisling's law of February 26, 1942, regarding the publication of printed material, the Press Directorate gained the authority to stop the production of newspapers and weeklies. The *NS* was given the right to lay off newspaper personnel and full authority to replace them with *NS* members. As a rule these were people without qualifications for newspaper work.

Press Director Beggerud is described as having been a weak man who knew that the Directorate could or ought not to have ambitions other than to be an appendage of the *Presseabteilung*. According to the journalists who had to deal with him, Beggerud was insecure by nature, and with a handshake that hid his distaste for personally being touched, and who by his taciturnity in meetings and official relations covered a basic

insecurity. Benkt Jerneck, writes of Beggerud: “one would have to look long and hard to find a worse specialist” (Jerneck 1943, 210). Nonetheless he did exhibit a decisive determination in his efforts to gain control over the press.

So-called press leaders for the *NS* were employed in most of the counties around the country. Some press leaders had responsibility for several counties since the *NS* had been unable to find qualified personnel in every county. The press leader was to carry out press censorship of articles and make sure that the line of the newspapers was in accordance with the tasks of “the new era”. They made reports and showed the newspapers with commentaries about what had happened and imposed the acceptance of material from *NS* newspapers. Moreover, they were to conduct statistical investigations about all the publications in their respective counties (Blichfeldt 1992, 45).

Journalists were not distinguished from other vocations in their behavior toward the occupying power. Some actively joined resistance work and became engaged at various levels in illegal clandestine activities; others were passive and tried to get through everyday life to the best of their abilities. Some joined the *NS*, and among these there were several nuances when it came to motives and levels of activity. Some did so because they wanted to keep their jobs, some used it as a cover for illegal work and some did so out of conviction.

### *How Effective Was the Control?*

The occupying power and the *NS* regime tried as hard as they could to lead the press in detail through appointments and the daily directives that were distributed to the editorial boards. How effective was this control? With the assistance of content analysis of a sample of 321 directives from 1942 and 1943, Camilla Wernersen has investigated the degree that the directives were followed up by three newspapers, the two Oslo papers *Morgenbladet* and *Aftenposten* and the local, regional paper *Møre*.

The conclusion drawn by Wernersen is that the control system by and large functioned according to the intentions of the occupying power, although there were variations in the three newspapers. *Aftenposten* lived up to its reputation as a mouthpiece for the occupying power, with a fundamentally pro-German profile. To a greater degree than the other two investigated newspapers, *Aftenposten* accommodated itself to the demands of the occupying power and repeated the headlines and slants of the directives that took a pro-German direction. More frequently *Morgenbladet* had a more perfunctory rendering of the directives, made bland so that one could from time to time read between the lines and glimpse the newspaper’s opposition to the content of these directives.

Wernersen’s statistical analysis shows that in the period that covered the year 1943, *Morgenbladet* deviated from the directives twenty-five percent of the time. Comparable deviations in the same period by *Aftenposten* amounted to nine percent. The local paper *Møre* took advantage of being on the periphery of the control apparatus. The editorship of *Møre* consisted of one person, the editor, who was able to blame his lack

of compliance on the lack of resources and late printing. When the newspaper was forced to reduce publication to twice a week, this circumstance allowed the editor to argue credibly that part of the directives had lost their newsworthiness by the time the next printing of *Møre* rolled around. Wernersen considers that similar grounds could also have been used by other local newspapers which, viewed as a whole, were under less supervision than the capital city papers.

In summary, Wernersen writes that

*"Morgenbladet* showed a *subtle*, but oppositional attitude toward the occupying power. Conversely, *Aftenposten* can justifiably be accused of having shown a *servile* attitude in relation to the censorship authorities during the war. Finally, but of no less significance, the newspaper *Møre* at times showed a *stubborn* resistance under the iron heel" (Wernersen 2007, 107).

### *The Newspaper Economy*

The restriction of press freedom also had economic consequences of great significance for economic life. The restriction of the freedom of the press affected not only political and military conditions. The occupying power also deemed economic conditions to be sensitive. It was forbidden to interview business leaders and even to refer to economic dispositions that might be construed to have military significance. It was illegal to reproduce the contents of annual general reports of stock companies or information on exports or imports (Dahl 2002, 96). When one knows how important business news pages, stock market columns, etc. are to each economic enterprise one sees how these restrictions functioned as a hindrance to business life. The credibility of the press fell dramatically because it operated to such a great extent within the prevailing restrictions (Kildal 1945, 5-20). Paradoxically enough, they were still in great demand. Despite thinner publications and fewer editions than there had been during the 1930s, due to paper rationing among other factors, the newspapers were in great demand. People had to sign on to waiting lists for subscriptions due to low print runs caused in part by paper rationing (Dahl 2002, 97). The investigation of Guri Hjeltnes shows that twenty-five newspapers where it had been possible to assess and document the issues there was a circulation growth of eleven percent in the period between 1940 and 1945. Part of this increase can be explained by the fact that some profited by their competitors giving up or being forced to merge with other papers. This was a subject of heated discussion after the war. The labor press was particularly hard hit and after the war the representatives of these papers demanded compensation from their local bourgeois competitors for their loss of market share, something that they felt had had a lasting effect. Dealing with this in detail lies outside the framework of this article, but the great newspaper settlement ended with a compromise where some of the large newspapers like *Morgenbladet* and *Aftenposten* gave voluntary compensation (Hjeltnes 1990, 145).

Since it is not possible to generalize about the role of the journalists during the war, it could be interesting to examine more closely the positions taken by the press organizations. Since the Norwegian Press Association (*NP*) was led by persons who represented the proprietary and editorial stratum of the press, what came to distinguish *NP*'s evaluations were practical questions about securing the future operation of the newspaper, and not ethical questions that had to do with the individual journalist evaluating how far it was *right* to publish a paper under the existing conditions.

The practical problems were lined up and waiting to be dealt with – the lack of paper and the difficulties of obtaining everything from typesetting machines to printing ink made everyday life in the individual newspapers difficult, indeed, often chaotic. In March 1942 the new power brokers carried out a paper rationing that through four stages in the course of one year reduced the supply of paper by sixty percent. One directive in 1944 ordered that advertising could not take up more than one-third of the column space of the individual newspaper. The supply of advertising fell at the same time that the pricing authorities froze the advertising rates (Giverholt 1985, 31).

In other respects the press organizations were equally as unprepared as the press with regard to what would happen, and Torolv Kandahl, Chairman of the Norwegian Press Association, was immediately assigned new and unexpected tasks such as, for example, to get the stopped newspapers into production again and to obtain the releases of arrested press people – a rather hopeless task. The executive held its first meeting after the invasion on June 22, 1940, after several local branches had irresolutely applied themselves “to the opportunities provided by the conditions under which the press is working”. In relation to the State Council negotiations, the leadership of the *NP* made an enquiry to the governing body with a view to gaining clarification as to “what rights the press has or can additionally be obtained at this time”. In a confidential discussion between Torolv Kandahl and Georg-Wilhelm Müller, the leader of the *Hauptabteilung für Volksaufklärung und Propaganda*, Müller made it clear that all questions associated with the operation of the press were to be handled by the *Presseabteilung* (Erichsen 1960, 29).

When in 1946 Torolv Kandahl resigned as Chairman of the *NP* and took a look back at the war he still maintained that “the Association had managed its estate tolerably well” (Erichsen 1960, 51). The question is whether a more open-minded inquiry would view things differently. During the summer of 1940 the *NP* actually went a long way toward adapting to the Germans' control functions – indeed, even taking on some of the work itself. The *NP*'s working committee had given instructions to Supreme Court lawyer I. B. Hjort to work out a proposal for an agreement between the *NP*'s executive committee and the *Reichskommissariat* (*Pressabteilung*). In this proposal a common committee of five members would be launched “with its seat in Oslo as a central Norwegian organization for press control”. In this agreement the *NP* undertook “according to capacity to assist with control of the assembled Norwegian press” (the whole document is reproduced in Ottosen 1996, 152).

The complete text of this draft agreement was unknown until the present writer published it in *From Quill Pen to Internet: Norwegian Journalists in Organization and Society* (1996). During the fiftieth anniversary commemoration of the Norwegian Press Association Rolv Werner Erichsen published a book, but reproduced only Point Six from the draft which deals with appeal possibilities in the event that a newspaper is to be shut down. According to Rolf Werner Erichsen it was decided at meeting of NPs board on 18 July to postpone the decision on the proposal, but that board was asked to take up negotiation with the Germans for the release of arrested editors, banned newspapers and imprisoned journalists, based on section 6 of Hjort's proposal. The board also wanted to get warnings from the Germans before any action was directed towards the press. According to Rolf Werner Erichsen NP wanted to be represented in meetings together with representatives of the the occupying forces when decisions to take action against the press were taken, in order to minimize the damage. Whatever reason it must have been controversial that the NP considered to take part in a discussion with the occupying power about conditions for intervention against the press (Erichsen 1960, 31). However, in a confidential meeting with the Presseabteilung in the presence of Moser, Minister Müller rejected the idea of joint meeting but, "he had nothing against the NP immediately being notified by Presseabteilung about such matters. But he was not able to recommend any form of procedure" (Erichsen 1960, 31).

There are very few examples where the press organizations put their foot down and declared, "here and not a step further", in contrast to what happened in many other vocational or professional organizations. The leadership of the Oslo Journalists' Club decided, against the opposition of Erling Ruud to allow *Journalisten* to cease production after the November edition in 1940, in order to stop an article that the Culture and People's Enlightenment Department wanted to see in print. The closing down of *Journalisten* was perhaps the most conspicuous of the protest actions by the press organizations during the war. The reasoning behind this action was that if the NS article had been printed "the periodical would no longer have been an apolitical professional organ" (Meeting Book, Oslo Journalists' Association, January 31, 1938 to February 25, 1943).

### *The Norwegian Press Association under Commissariat Leadership*

On Saturday, September 13, 1941, *Fritt Folk's* editor Arnt Rishovd appeared at the premises of the Press Association with a document from the German authorities that he had been appointed Commissariat Leader of the Press Association. This meant that Ludvig Saxe, who had been Press Association Secretary since 1920, would continue under the leadership of the Commissariat. This decision was in keeping with the same balancing act that maintained the line of "keeping on at one's post in order to make the best of it". In Saxe's own account after the war he mentions examples of where he himself set limits on which types of duties he would agree to take on. In 1944, Bureau Chief Holmboe had asked Saxe to come to a conference and urged him to undertake

different types of journalistic work, but this was refused (Ottosen 1996:161-162). But Saxe continued to carry out his bureaucratic deeds and the leadership of the Commissariat, wrote his recommendations, answered correspondence and attended to the files just as he had done before the war, and which he continued to do until December 1946 when *Journalisten* announced that Saxe “after twenty-seven years finds it appropriate to transfer the work to younger forces”, and thereafter requested the acceptance of his resignation during the first quarter of 1947.

On January 30, 1942, the message came from the Wehrmacht that the Press Association's offices at Storting Street No. 22 had been requisitioned and that Rishovd had moved operations to the Culture Department's quarters in the Popular Theater Building on Youngstorget. Later in the year the Press Directorate itself needed these quarters and *NP* was sent into a side room.

After having taken control of the Press Association, the next step in the strategy of Quisling's *NS* regime was to control all press activity through new laws and to set up its own Press Union that would be the only authorized journalist association. There were two paragraphs to the law put forward by Minister-President Quisling on February 26, 1942:

§1. Press work can only be undertaken by members of the Norwegian Press Union.

§2. The head of the Department of Culture and Popular Enlightenment is issuing instructions on the implementation of this law, together with the organization and activity of the Norwegian Press Union and its members' rights and duties.

This proposed law met with such powerful opposition that the leading *NS* editors went to the Department and warned them against bringing it to life. There was a fear that the best people in the press would disappear from the newspapers and this would have catastrophic consequences for the whole newspaper business. The law was thus never followed up and was dismantled in total silence in April 1945 (Op. Cit).

The *NS* people tried locally to recruit members for their press organization, the Norwegian Press Union, but this association never had any real significance as an organization other than for the purposes of pure propaganda (Omberg 1945, 53). In many places *NS* journalists had to resort to forced recruitment in order to enlist members from outside their own ranks.

### *The 1942 Law Concerning Printed Texts*

On February 26, 1942, a law was enacted that was intended to contribute to increasing control over publication of printed materials and appointments to the newspapers. Without regard to the provisions of the Constitution, the Culture Department now obtained full power to stop the publication of written texts, and the Department could order the owner of the newspaper to terminate the employment of persons in the owner's company. Subsequent new appointments were to be made in consultation with the Department.

Norway's Cultural Court was also set up as part of the *NS* regime. This was formed in September 1942. Among those appointed permanent representatives were Press Director Beggerud, together with Director Paul de Glasenapp of *NTB* and the editors Johannes Knudsen, Torstein Lange, Dehli-Laurantzson and Arnt Rishovd. Johannes Knudsen had been editor of *Dagsposten* since 1917, Chairman of the Trøndelag Branch of the Norwegian Press Association since 1934, and during the period 1933-1935 he had also been Chairman of the Norwegian Editorial Association, the editorial grouping outside Oslo. Torstein Lange was editor of *Vestoppland*, a paper that will be more closely examined later in the article.

The Norwegian Press Association reached a low ebb during this period. Dues were not demanded and they almost never held meetings. The *NP* continued to administer stipends but it had not undertaken to award the Conrad Mohr Stipend either in 1942 or 1943. The Culture Department announced that applications would be accepted for 1944. There were only nine applicants and according to the recommendations Mandrup Rokne, Ole Schjerven and Einar Baltzersen (all from *Fritt Folk*) and Erling Nordahl from Bergen would get the scholarships. But in September a small notice was given that nevertheless the stipends would not be awarded in 1944. It would be too embarrassing to pretend that everything was normal in the press organizations.

### “No Norwegian For Sale”

Only one newspaper closed down as a direct result of the occupation. The paper *Gula Tidende* under the editorship of Agnar Skreidsvoll and editorial secretary Heming R. Skre warned the newspaper leadership about the interventions and demands for control from the occupying power. The editorial board and the newspaper leadership together decided to close down operations. Heming R. Skre was later condemned to death for his resistance work and was executed. Other papers were ordered stopped, as for example, *Arbeiderbladet*. Other papers were ordered to continue to operate because the occupying power needed a channel of information. Editor Trond Hegna published the article “No Norwegian For Sale” in the Stavanger newspaper *May 1* after Terboven made it known in his speech of September 25, 1940, that the Administration Council had been dismissed and replaced by so-called Commissariat cabinet ministers who were either members or sympathizers of the *NS*. At the same time Parliament was replaced and the King and government were relieved of all authority. Later this article came to be considered a symbol of the spirit of resistance of Norwegian journalists (Ottosen 1996, 140). The following day Hegna was called in to the police chief who announced that a certain person had been appointed as “supervisor” of the editorial board. This occurred on a Friday and the supervisor gave the message that he would take up his role on the following Monday. Hegna wrote his famous letter, but despite this he explained the dilemma which was of his own making by virtue of his having decided to continue with newspaper production in order to secure his employees' jobs, the limit had now been reached (Hegna 1983, 257-258). Such moral choices had to be

taken in most editorial rooms, and by individual journalists. Some left the ranks of the press and never returned. Some wanted to quit but were not allowed to do so by the *NS* and the Germans.

When the war was over, many of those who remained in their jobs had to explain their choice to continue as journalists, both to colleagues and to what was known as the court of honor. Some went further than merely continuing operations; they joined the *NS*; among others, this was the case with a number of *NTB* journalists (see Ottosen 1996, 142-150). Both at the time and later there were many who defended this morally, arguing that it was done in defense of jobs, and some felt it was better that some good Norwegians joined the *NS* to hinder editorial control by the “real” Nazis and agents of Hitler’s Germany. Even Trond Hegna himself, who more than any other was put forward as an example of a straight shooter by virtue of the above-mentioned leader he wrote, writes in his memoirs that he could have been stamped a traitor if things had turned out a little differently. To illustrate how different the choices could be, from within the same newspaper, I use as an example two journalists from the same paper who took routes that were completely different from one another. Erling Espeland and J. R. Ødegaard both started their careers at the newspaper *Vestoppland*. Through the whole decade of the 1930s Ødegaard had strong sympathy for German National Socialism, and from 1933 had been a member of the Norwegian National Socialist Labor Party (*NNSAP*), and was the leader of the Party in Gjøvik. By comparison, after the occupation, Espeland joined the resistance movement and became part of the top-secret organization *XU*. In connection to his clandestine work he joined the *NS* and accepted all the liabilities that that entailed. For his part, Ødegaard took a job in the German- and *NS*-controlled *NTB*. He was contacted by German intelligence and sent to Stockholm as a spy under the cover of being *NTB*’s new Stockholm correspondent. Espeland knew where Ødegaard’s sympathies lay and asked *XU*’s legation in Stockholm to keep an eye on him and warn the Swedish security police. A letter dated October 7, 1941, from Schive, at the Norwegian legation’s press office in Stockholm, written to the government’s Information Office in London, warned against Ødegaard who was “a special correspondent in Stockholm”. The Swedish *TT*, having no communication from the Norwegian legation, wanted a reply to the question of whether or not he was to be considered an accredited correspondent, but, as they put it “[they] maintained that he was not such in practice...”<sup>2</sup> Ødegaard continued his activities until after the assault on Stalingrad. When the fortunes of war turned, Swedish police arrested known spies. Ødegaard was arrested by the Swedish police on March 17, 1944, while he was on his way up the stairs to the German consulate in Birger Jarlsgatan 8. The Swedish press authorities complained to the Justice Ombudsman that the case took place behind closed doors and that Johan Røken Ødegaard’s name had been stricken from the court lists. In its statement, the press authority asked whether “it was consistent with Sweden’s principles of a just society that secret legal procedures took place and where the court even withholds the names of persons who have been judged.” Of course it was

2 Files on Ødegaard’s case in the Swedish State Archives.

not uncommon that those convicted of spying operated under the cover of being journalists. Janne Flyghed, who has gone through all of the spy cases related to World War II in Sweden shows in her findings that press people are over-represented among those indicted for espionage (Flyghed 1992, 166-168).

The judgment in the Ødegaard case came down on March 29, 1944. He was sentenced to five months' hard labor for spying on behalf of Germany, and after the war he was convicted of treason for his activities. Espeland continued in his dual role, formally an *NS* journalist and actually an illegal activist where, among other things, he took part in the distribution of illegal newspapers. The Home Front gave out its own newspaper in Gjøvik in connection to liberating the country, in which there was an article on Espeland with the headline "The only member of *NS* in Gjøvik with a Good Conscience". When after the war the membership list of the *NS* was posted by the local police detachments, his membership number was nineteen and his name was stricken. He received a written clarification from the state attorney that his case had been evaluated and it had been found that there was no basis for prosecution as a member of the *NS*. It later came out that Espeland himself had asked to be investigated due to the rumors about his *NS* membership. It was known at the highest level of state prosecution that Espeland had assumed the great liability of *NS* membership in the course of carrying out his illegal work (Ottosen 1996, 169).

### *Changes on the Newspaper Scene*

In the course of the war 110 newspapers were stopped by order of the German occupying power. In addition, a number of newspapers had to stop production due to events associated with the war. Most of these were put out of action due to bombings and other acts of war in April and May of 1940.

It was difficult to continue to produce issues in many places due to war damage and supply problems. *Nidaros* in Trondheim had to print on ordinary grey packing paper for many days (Ottosen 1996, 171). Many newspapers reduced their number of issues to two or three days a week and some towns began to produce joint papers.

A number of papers were also started during the war. The majority of them were *NS* organs, but there was at least one example of the establishment of a more ordinary one. When the *Telemark Arbeiderbladet* was stopped by the occupying power in 1940, one of the paper's typographers moved to Ulefoss and took a flat press with him on the moving van. In collaboration with Halvor Toreskaas, who became the editor, he published a test issue of the *Ulefoss Avis* at Christmas 1940. This paper had a badly hidden message about maintaining a national profile. In an introductory article it maintains among other things, "To those who nonetheless might have liked the newspaper to have "a color" we can state that we are with the national colors. As long as we are able we will try to nurture everything from the Norwegian world that is real and good among us. Do you not know us now, esteemed readers?" The occupying power and the *NS* kept the new publication under surveillance after seeing such a clear declaration

of intent. When the paper refused to accept *NS*-material from the local *NS* cadres a complaint was made to the *NS* leadership for the press. As punishment the paper was forced to print the *NS* program. The name of the editor was removed at New Years, 1941-1942 and the paper closed down a short time later (Toreskaas 190-194).

In groups and by different means, a number of papers gradually disappeared. In all, forty newspapers disappeared in 1940, among them a large part of the labor press. *Arbeiderbladet* was stopped for an indeterminate period from the end of August 1940 – and this would prove to be permanent. *Fritt Folk*, which was the major organ of the *NS*, moved into the editorial offices in the Popular Theater Building and put all of *Arbeiderbladet*'s belongings to use (Hjeltnes 1986, 200-201). But the really massive demolition of the Norwegian press occurred in 1942 when fifty newspapers were forced to close. Giving the paper rationing as the reason, and the law of February 22, 1943, on common labor efforts, the Germans defined the goal of having only one newspaper in each city or town. It was in connection with this that a proposal was raised to amalgamate *Dagbladet*, *Morgenbladet* and *Norges Handels- og Sjøfartstidende* and that they should be published under the name *Morgenbladet*. The proposal was dropped but it was the forerunner to the fact that *Dagbladet* and *Morgenbladet* decided to stop production in April 1943 – a decision that most members of their editorial staff accepted with relief. *Sjøfarten* continued as a weekly (Hjeltnes 1993, 149).

It was not only such that the Germans had many newspapers closed down; some of them also had to change their names. This was part and parcel of the German aversion to the word *arbeiderblad* (labor or workers' paper). The Germans scornfully referred to the social democratic press as *die marxistische Presse*. They tried to change all newspaper titles that included the word *arbeiderblad*, and thus, for example, the *Halden Arbeiderblad* became the *Fredriksten*, named for the local fortress (Hjeltnes 1986, 204-206).

### *Illegal Newspapers*

Most illegal newspapers obtained news from radio broadcasts of the Information Office of the Norwegian Government-in-Exile, handled by the BBC's overseas broadcasts using known Norwegian radio voices as announcers. *NRK*'s foreign affairs editor Torolv Øksenvad and historian Arne Ordning were the most highly profiled "voices from London". The occupying power and the *NS* found it abhorrent that the Norwegian people got to hear news about German losses. The *NS* organ *Fritt Folk* demanded counter-measures and the Germans devoted a lot of effort to smashing this channel of information. Thus precisely the illegal newspapers and radio-listening became highly important to the resistance work in occupied Norway.

Illegal newspapers came to play an invaluable role in the spreading of information and keeping up morale in everyday life under the occupation. A total of three hundred illegal newspapers were published during the war. The breadth of variation was great in terms of equipment, news formulation, editions, political content and readership.

The quality varied from hand-written publications with limited numbers of copies, to more professionally equipped newspapers with thousands of copies each issue and a well-developed apparatus for distribution. These papers were more than a replacement for a free press. The greatest and most significant was the *London-Nytt*, which came out in several regional editions, with a writing staff at all levels. Its total number of copies during the whole war has been estimated at 1.5 million, divided between 540 issues. This gives an average of 3,000 copies per edition (Dahl 2002, 98). Hans Luihn who has documented the illegal newspapers in several publications, has characterized them as having their own sector in the struggle of the resistance movement against the occupying power (Luihn 1981, 3). Most illegal newspapers carried news gathered from other news sources, the most important of which were the radio broadcasts from London. As such, these were not independent journalistic products, although many of them included some of their own journalism. The Swedish *TT* correspondent in Oslo, Benckt Jerneck, felt that for most Norwegians the illegal press, despite its limitations, was “the only acceptable press” because it “above all [was] free and stimulating, at the same time as it strove to be objective and trustworthy” (Jerneck 194, 229).

On the whole, as a channel of information the illegal newspapers fulfilled the function that otherwise would be the mandate of an uncensored press.

About 20,000 people were involved in the activity at different levels, many took great chances and many had to sacrifice their lives. Following a decree by Reich’s Commissar Terboven issued on October 12, 1942, it was made clear that the penalty for conducting illegal newspapers was death. In all, 4,000 people were arrested for shorter or longer periods for their participation in illegal newspaper work. Almost one hundred persons were executed due to illegal newspaper work. As a result of my questionnaire findings it also became evident that many press people had participated in this activity, and many got their first journalistic experience, and later became journalists, *on the basis of* this activity, while most of the thousands of activists who participated in this dangerous work went back to their civil jobs once peace returned (Ottosen 1996, 172-175).

### *Illegal Activity among Press People*

Journalists were represented from the top to the bottom of the resistance movement’s organizations. *Arbeiderbladet* journalist Ola Brandstorp for example was in the leadership of Milorg, a task he acquired more as a result of being a representative of the labor movement than as a member of the press (Kjeldstadli 1959, 232). Brandstorp had to flee to Sweden in 1943.

In the summer of 1944 the Home Front established its own committee to develop a program for founding a political collaboration for the reconstruction period following the war. For this purpose four press people were appointed as representatives of the parties. This reveals something about the position of the press in party politics, even though the parties had been dissolved since September 1941. The four were Gunnar

Ousland for the Labor Party, Hans Holten for the Farmers' Party, Herman Smitt Ingebretsen for the Conservative Party and Christian A. R. Christensen for the Liberal Party (Smitt Ingebretsen 1961, 75).

Arne Skouen was one of those who stretched the limits of what it was legal to write about, as well as taking part in organized illegal work. One day two men from Moser's office came marching into the editorial office and gave Skouen a thorough dressing down with the clear message that he had to quit the editorial board. This was during the winter of 1941, and other journalists too, for similar individual reasons, were removed by the occupying power. Among others, this applied to Hjalmar Johannesen, sports editor at *Morgenposten*, who was also thrown out around the same time.

When Skouen had to leave *Dagbladet*, his publisher Mads Nygaard offered him a job in the publishing house. He was aware that Skouen was involved in illegal work, and in a way the job in publishing was a cover. Skouen took books that were forbidden distribution, and distributed them in a kind of illegal market via the bookshops. Some booksellers, for example book dealer Quist, were willing to have forbidden books under the counter and these were sold in a discreet manner.

### *Journalists in Exile*

There developed important journalistic milieus in Stockholm, as well as in London and New York. The largest was in Stockholm where almost 43,000 Norwegian refugees found temporary asylum. Many press people were in this category and many found work for themselves at the Norwegian legation's press office in Banérgatan 37 under the leadership of Jens Schive, who had come from *NTB* but remained a foreign correspondent after the war. In all, 160 persons for a longer or a shorter period had ties to the Legation's press office. Out of this number, eighty-one were professional press people – journalists, photographers and representatives of the newspapers' technical and financial departments (Aas 1980, 5).

### *The Office of Information*

The journalist milieu in England was spread out, the press corps was large and took care of the many tasks, and in general there was too little to do.<sup>3</sup> Some journalists enrolled in the Armed Forces. Roald Jøraanstad was in the Navy and aboard the *Eiskdale* when it was torpedoed in the English Channel. Asbjørn Barlaup was in the Army and took part in the Måløy raid. Photographers like Bredo Lind, P. G. Johnson and other still- and film photographers took part in struggles as photographers, and according to Anders Buraas, had "the toughest jobs" (Op. Cit.).

3 Information from Anders Buraas in a letter to the author, July 7, 1995.

The majority of journalists were however linked to the Information Office of the Government-in-Exile in London. The English Section was led by Herman Lemkuhl with the English journalist William Warbey as his assistant. Here materials from the Norwegian Section were translated and processed and put at the disposition of the international press. *NTB* had its own little section headed by Birger Knudsen as liaison with Reuters. The Norwegian Section was filled by increasing numbers of new journalists who had gone into exile, and as focal coworkers, right from the beginning they had Carl Huitfeldt and Einar Diesen. Gradually other journalists arrived, like Per Monsen, Karl Slee and Jørgen Juve.

*NTB* Director Birger Knudsen's report to the *NTB* leadership in 1945 – written after he had returned home from London – reveals that a plan had been conceived to integrate the journalists into the intelligence service leading to an eventual invasion to free Norway. The plans were laid out in detail in a secret memo dated October 7<sup>th</sup>, with the title "On the Establishment of a Military Propaganda Corps Linked to Defense's E Office". Here a propaganda corps was proposed that was to be led by the E Office, together with the Government's Information Office and *NRK* representatives. The corps was to share in military exercises and the task was defined as follows:

- A. Information Service directed toward the Norwegian people during the invasion
  - Normal journalistic reports on the invasion
  - The operation of newspapers and radio broadcasts (partly with the help of equipment brought along)
  - The printing and dissemination of propaganda
  - Film and photo service for newspapers
  - The organization of, and participation in, censorship
  - Radio-listening service and other surveillance of the enemy's propaganda
- B. Information service during an invasion of Norwegian territory  
(Here, among other things, were the organization of news services and reporting to an international news central.)
- C. General information service on military issues that were to be taken up quickly.  
(Among other things, this covered recording reports to the press, broadcasting and film and this would later be incorporated into the State Archives. The journalists were also to participate in the military forces in order to report from exercises, report the attitude of personnel and so forth in a common understanding with the E Office.)
- D. The learning of "military journalism" with a view to full knowledge about what could and should, and what could not and should not be written about in terms of military matters.

The propaganda corps was to be composed of thirty men including orderlies and catering personnel.<sup>4</sup> In Sweden too there were preparations being developed with a view

4 Press History Archives, Box 300, Historical Documents, Box 4 NTB 1940-1945; Knudsen's Report on the NTB during the occupation, 72-73.

toward a possible invasion, and information officers at the Norwegian legation received military training in field maneuvers together with troops from the police at Dalarne (Aas 1980, 178).

This was simply a system for integrating the journalist corps into the Armed Forces through a planned invasion. Journalists who had been living in exile for several years and who dreamed of setting foot again on Norwegian soil certainly had no hesitation about taking on such tasks – indeed it would be more exact to say it was viewed as an honor and a national duty.

During the war there developed close ties between leading representatives of the press and the military. One central presence was Tor Gjesdal who, already in 1940 carried out joint service to the press and the Defense High Command, and in the period 1944-1945, he was appointed by the government to the Allied Committee (SHAEF) for “psychological warfare” (Norwegian Press Association 1950).

And after the war as well, part of military preparedness involved establishing a permanent collaboration between the military and the press organizations, organized through “Government’s press service during the war”. There is much to indicate that the roots of this apparatus, which also includes institutions like *NRK* and *Televerket*, were to be found in this milieu in London during the war. On the whole, there is reason to believe that the whole mentality about the journalists naturally putting themselves at the disposition of “the nation” persisted after the war and led to the way journalists positioned themselves during the Cold War. Both the strong memories of the war, the desire to avoid a new war and the belief that a definite direction existed that “defended the interests of the nation” were something inherited from the war (Ottosen 1996).

### *Imprisoned Journalists*

A number of journalists were imprisoned by the Germans. Olaf Gjerløw of *Morgenbladet* was condemned by court martial to fifteen years in jail in 1941 “for having been a good journalist”, as Per Bang put it (Bang 1994, 66). Many press people were imprisoned both in Germany and Norway. Haavard Haavardsholm was only eighteen years of age and worked on the illegal newspaper *Fri Fagbevegelse* when he was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Another co-worker at *Fri Fagbevegelse*, Kaare Haugen, was viciously beaten during interrogation at Møllergata before, after a spell at the Grini Camp for Political Prisoners, he ended up being transported to Germany. In Sachsenhausen he met other labor press journalists like Olav Larssen and Per Lie. They formed a little brotherhood of journalist colleagues who stood together at the assembly ground in the evening and exchanged the latest news (Larssen 1973, 20).

At Grini, on the other hand, the conditions for serving a sentence were such that it was possible to create a sort of press circle inside the camp. Regular meetings were held in the barracks and these had only little surveillance from the Germans.

When the war ended, a new everyday life could begin, and the plans concerning censorship under the direction of the military were implemented. This occurred without the scheme meeting any form of opposition. The censorship was dismantled after a short while. As a transitional arrangement, common newspapers were published in the largest cities. The provisional regime was very short-lived. In 1945 the journalist Per Johansen tried to pull together an overview of what had happened to the 135 Oslo journalists who had been working in 1940. He found that at the end of the war forty-one were still working, and of these he classified ten as “quislings”. Thirty-seven had left newspaper work, thirty-seven were in Sweden, seven or eight were in prison or concentration camps (of whom three were in Germany, six had died of natural causes and three had died in German concentration camps. Seven were linked to the Norwegian Information Service in London, and five were in the corresponding service in the USA). Six had been arrested but were released. By rough calculation only one-third of Oslo’s journalists were in press work at the end of the war, and every third one was living in exile. In the remainder of the country there were only twenty to twenty-five percent who continued in newspaper work. They had practiced “the art of over-wintering”, as Johansen expressed it (Johansen 1945, 298-301). The Norwegian press survived for five years of state of emergency where press freedom was terminated. The choices that were made by the individual journals and journalists created wounds and conflicts that would live on for a long time after the war. A comprehensive set of court settlements led to many press people being convicted of treason. Internal justice through what was called the court of honor in the press organizations left many press personnel out in the cold, and only a very few of those who lost their press cards and were shoved out into the cold made their way back into the ranks of the press. But no independent investigation was carried out with regard to the Norwegian Press Association which both continued its activities under the war, and after the war, managed to elevate itself, and from its lofty heights proceeded to make judgments with great equanimity as to what was right and wrong.

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## **Chapter Six: The Danish Press during the German Occupation: Between Indirect and Direct Control and from Dominant to Negotiated Reading**

*Palle Roslyng-Jensen*

Compared with all other occupied countries in Europe during the Second World War the conditions for the Danish daily press, including the dissemination of news and the public debate through the press, was in a category of its own. German control of the press and German direction of the press were carried out with “a velvet glove on the iron fist”. That is, seen in a European perspective, with considerable moderation, except for the last period of the occupation, although practically no Dane was in doubt of where ultimate control was vested.

The goal of this chapter is to discuss what the control and censorship system meant for the degree of adaptation of the press to the authorities exercising the control of the press, and what it meant for the reception of newspapers and the interpretation of news and comments in a democratic context. Radio broadcasting and clandestine press will be considered as they are functioning as competitors and alternatives to the daily “legal” press. The term “democratic” means in this respect the existence of a pluralistic newspaper (and other media) system and the possibility for the editors and journalists to use generally accepted media and journalistic standards of the time and for the public a free choice between different media. The empiric foundation of the chapter is to a significant degree dependant on my own research on attitudes and opinions in Denmark during the Occupation based on personal diaries, where opinions are placed in connection with media messages and media habits during the occupation (Roslyng-Jensen 2007).

The questions asked in the chapter are:

- 1) To what degree did Danish newspapers meet the goals and expectations of the occupation authorities to support the established occupation system in Denmark and to participate in establishing a friendly attitude to the Germans and a positive attitude to the German war effort?
- 2) To which degree did the control of Danish authorities, the professional standards and regulations of the press itself function in accordance with democratic ideals, even though, the press system, as such, was under heavy non-democratic influence and control?
- 3) How were the readers of the newspapers influenced by the media messages?

It is the general conclusion of this chapter, that, by controlling the press, the Germans safeguarded some support for the occupation system until August 1943, while their goals of establishing a friendly attitude among the Danish public to the Germans, their