

Chapter Three:

Kaj Munk in and between the World Wars. Official and Political Censorship.

Svend Aage Nielsen

I. Censorship related to written and unwritten rules.

Democracy emerged gradually in Denmark

It is often said and written that Denmark's constitution launched democracy and civic rights. However the transition to democracy as we understand it today was gradual. The Constitution of 1849 permitted men over 30 years of age to vote, provided they had their own household and never had accepted social security benefits from the government. Parliamentary, as form of democracy, was introduced in 1901.

It was not until 1915 that women were allowed to vote.

The Constitution's §77 explicitly secured freedom of speech:

Any person shall be entitled to publish his thoughts in print, in writing, and in speech, provided that he may be held accountable in a court of justice. Censorship and other preventative measures shall never again be introduced.

Kaj Munk came close to the truth about this when he said: "In Denmark, everything is taken into account – except the reality."¹

Examples of limits of freedom of speech

When Kaj Munk attended high school the general rule was employed that students did not speak at general assemblies. The original paragraph of the Constitution upheld that anyone on financial aid or not head of a household was not permitted to vote.

In Toreby Parish an incident occurred while Kaj Munk was a high school student at Nykøbing F. Katedralskole between 1914-17. Kaj Munk attended an election meeting in Øster Toreby School. It was here he opposed the then social democratic representative to the Parliament, Valdemar Olsen, in such a way that the then mayor of Nykøbing Falster, H. P. Jensen, because of the impact of this impertinence, asked Kaj Munk's school principal to have a word with his students to advise them that they were not welcome as active participants at election meetings (Nielsen 1984).

1 According to Arne Munk, son of Kaj Munk, quoted during 'provstikonvent' (convention of pastors) at Toreby Vicarage 24 November 1987.

Another example occurred during Kaj Munk's time at high school. When the Government decided to sell the Danish Virgin Islands to the USA, a public meeting was held in Toreby Community House on December 12, 1916. This meeting was called only two days prior to the referendum date.

However, it was not similar to the Sydslesvig vote in 1920, in which locals voted on their nationality; whether or not to belong to Germany or to be Danish citizens. On the contrary, the Danish government in 1916 overruled the votes of the inhabitants of the Virgin Islands, and sold *en bloc* the population as slaves, ignoring the individuals' rights by selling their nationality as a commodity.

In his biography *Foraaret saa sagte kommer* (Spring arrives so slowly) Kaj Munk (1942) tells about his experience. He states:

A meeting was advertised to take place in Toreby concerning the sale. The two speakers were the social democrats from Nykøbing F.: Member of the Parliament Valdemar Olsen and editor J. P. Jensen.

They both were keen on the sale. "So I requested to speak; because after all it was my municipality." (Munk 1942, 211-212).

Kaj Munk was polite, as his mother had taught him, when posing his question which opposed the sale. This unexpected opposition created a stir and both speakers denounced him. He in return responded accordingly.

However, Kaj Munk does not recount how he got the better of the old teacher of the parish, Mikkelsen, to such an extent that it caused a scandal at the start of the meeting. Here, angry outbursts from the crowd expressed "that he certainly was a bit too green and cheeky to take part in public meetings." (Nielsen 1984, 23).

The outrage committed by Kaj Munk soon spread like ripples on water, and in his biography he remembers:

A few days later the principal of Nykøbing F. Katedralskole showed up in my class. He just did not show up, no he trembled with rage. He charged towards me like a dancing dervish, while he ranted and raved in the presence of the entire class:

"I know about you people from Maribo. And whom do you think you are to stand up this way? Such a poor chap who comes here, and that we squander scholarships on, has the audacity to think he can disgrace our entire school." (Munk 1942, 212).

Kaj Munk does not comment on the 'censorship' of this infringement of freedom of speech, as it may be referred to in retrospect. However, it is evident that it is very typical of the constrained way of thinking prevalent in the past.

More than any other episode in his high school years, it had an impact on things to come. The episode fortified his dismissive attitude towards Nykøbing F. Katedralskole for the rest of his life. This was not surprising as he had been humiliated by the principal's slander and peculiar behavior that denounced him in the presence of all his classmates.

Presumably this was the first significant denunciation of his opinions and freedom of speech even though the mayor in Nykøbing F. and the principal of Nykøbing F. Katedralskole might have thought that they merely handled the situation appropriately for the time.

Kaj Munk finishes chapter 20 in his biography: “With an overwhelming majority, Denmark decided to sell its colonies. Was this an omen that it was also ready to sell itself?” (Munk 1942, 212).

II. *Censorship by the Danish Authorities*

Censorship of Kaj Munk’s play *Sejren* (The Victory) 1936

Kaj Munk’s play *Sejren* (The Victory) (1936) had its first performance in 1936. For good reasons he also subtitled it *Et skuespil om verden i dag* (A play about the world today). It opens with a thought-provoking prologue on the stage before curtain call:

The playwright stands outside life’s periphery and looks into its substance. It is not real events and people he will interpret as he is not a historian. Consequently, Italy in the play is not the one on the map, its chancellor not the fascist dictator... Only the faces are similar... Does he succeed in finding not the individual’s human heart but time’she will seize it with trembling hands... and if he is able to move hearts to smile with and have mercy with the one rightfully condemned, then the playwright gives thanks for his vocation that allowed him the position outside life’s periphery – the post of a watcher. (Munk 1936, 5).

This indicates that plays are in a category by themselves. A writer cannot completely be outside life if his message is to move the audience to “smile with” and “have mercy” with “the one rightfully condemned.” This refers to Mussolini after a bombing raid in his conquest in Africa, indicating that he is more involved with life than an outside onlooker. Another example of his involvement with life is the play’s subtitle “A play about the world today.” (Munk 1936, 5), as observed by a poet – not by a historian or a judge.

Parallel with his plays and poetry there were many other signs from his own life in the period. However, in the play he cannot be held accountable for the dialogs that differ from one’s own opinion if one fails to consider the anti-dialogs in an evaluation. The playwright is responsible for all the lines but the main point is that when the words alternate between agreement and disagreement in every play, the writer has now authoritatively declared that challenging words and opinions is a good thing on stage as well as in conversation – in concurrence and divergence – so it is in real life?

Which of Kaj Munk’s contemporaries insisted that democracy is also conversation? Hal Koch reasoned the same way and therefore Kaj Munk was invited to speak at Askov Højskole during the war.

Thus it is absurd that Knud Hansen, first at a lecture at Tidehvervs summer meeting June 3, 1942, and later in a publication, now a book in The Royal Library, scrutinizes nine of Kaj Munk’s plays and, in the light of them, makes judgment on what he also entitles his book: *Forkyndelsen i Kaj Munks Forfatterskab* (The Preaching in Kaj Munk’s Authorship) (Hansen 1942).

His conclusion is and he reasons as follows: “In every one of his hero plays there is a kneeling admiration for the one who is the hero even if he – in the majority of plays

in the last act – lets go of his hero and surrenders him to suffer defeat.” (Hansen 1942, 88).

This sounds clever and is plausible but it is based on shallow thinking or a flawed logic attack launched at Kaj Munk, and Knud Hansen ought to have been inspired by the dialectical theology. It simply aborts the category of a play because it lacks the attacks and counterattacks that are so essential to a play.

Hans Brix, who was Kaj Munk’s long-standing sparring partner in regard to his drama, expresses a more nuanced picture about *Sejren*: “While Christianity is the absolute authority for Munk, his Christians are not sacred in their religious beliefs. They are infested with many flaws, especially the Jesuits...” (Brix 1946, 162) He continues:

Behind the plot of the play is the tragedy of the states. States can only be run by manipulation, lies and fraud...It is the tragedy of all politicians, all rulers, all legislators. (Brix 1946, 164).

Hans Brix also notes:

The Royal Theater could not play it. For this purpose, we have diplomats to prevent the art from offending dictators. (Brix 1946, 164).

It is surprising that Hans Brix refers to The National Stage which first and foremost by obligation to the Constitution of freedom of speech ought to maintain the artistic freedom, but in reality this was different.

This is underscored with the information that Kaj Munk and his family planned to immigrate to Norway because “Det Norske Teatret” in Oslo intended to play *Sejren*.

In February 1936, J. C. Normann, censor at The Royal Theater wrote to Kaj Munk. It caused a fury. Hans Brix recounts:

“In a letter to pastor Munk in the vicarage, Normann, this clown of the town, had forbidden the performance of the play.” And with a postscript: “He himself had written to Steincke. No attorney general in Denmark has ever had a more attentive ear than his.” (Brix 1946, 165). *Sejren* was played a year later at Folketeatret in Copenhagen.

On the other hand, the management of The Royal Theater not only continued to cooperate with the Government. It also cooperated with Nazi Germany with guest appearances before and during the occupation by Nazi Germany.

Bjarne Nielsen Brovst quotes in his *Kaj Munk og den stærke mand* (Kaj Munk and the Strong Man) from Kaj Munk’s article in *Jyllands-Posten*, February 9, 1936:

Where will we see “Sejren”? It will not be seen...the Department of Education and the State Department and the Italian Legation and censor and quæstor, or what is his name, the Pope’s censor.... When finally there is a play that is genuine... so many eiderdowns will be heaped on top of it that it will suffocate in the first round... (Nielsen Brovst 1992, 271).

This was precisely what happened with The Royal Theater.

Even so, Minister of Justice, K. K. Steincke, uttered in an interview in *BT* on March 14, 1936: “A democratic parliamentary government acknowledges the freedom of religion, speech, press, association and the right to assembly...” (Nielsen Brovst 1992, 273).

This statement of his was short lived. Two years later he directly disregarded these constitutional rights.

Afterwards, it was established that Kaj Munk had verbally sided with Mussolini during his rise, but in reality turned against his abuse of power. Steincke had verbally sided with democracy and the constitution, but in reality turned against its ideas and its promise of freedom.

Such opposing norms of behavior relates to Jesus' parable about the two sons in the gospel according to Matthew chapter 21:

A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not; but afterwards he repented and went. And he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir, and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say until him: "The first."

The ban on freedom of speech against the performance of *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* (He Sits at the Melting Pot) in Sønderjylland, the southern part of Jutland

On January 29, 1939 Kaj Munk published an article in *Jyllands-Posten* entitled *Ved Fejghed opnaas intet* (By Cowardice Nothing is Attained) (Munk 1949, 92-94).

He begins with the reasons: "Only 10 days ago the author of *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* was notified through his *Jyllands-Posten* that a public performance in Sønderborg was cancelled by theater director Gerda Christophersen after a pressing request from the office of the Minister of Justice.

Several days passed while Kaj Munk regained his composure about this notice that he found "simply incredible." (Munk 1949, 92).

The year before Crystal Night, 1938, the play repudiated the Nazi regime's discriminatory persecution of Jews. Kaj Munk believed that the ministerial demand ought to be defied and wrote, that the banning of the play *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* in Sønderjylland "is unthinkable. It would be a foolish, undignified and preposterous act." (Munk 1949, 92).

"Foolish because, firstly, it gives a few irresponsible and excitable young people the impression that they are the ones in control, and, secondly, it would agree with a perception of the play that is completely incorrect.." (Munk 1949, 92 f.)).

To the contrary, Kaj Munk insists that in recent Danish literature there are hardly any works like his play "that, to such a degree, have shown insight for Der Führer and his masterwork and contributed to realizing his accomplishments in Scandinavia." (Munk 1949, 93).

Undoubtedly, Kaj Munk recognizes Hitler's measures in dealing with depression and mass unemployment that were a consequence of the crushing defeat experienced by the German people after World War I.

He did consider the Versailles treaty as the victors' orders. The way he prophetically had looked at the treaty in his play *Fugl Fønix* (The Phoenix) from 1926 (Munk 1939).

This rationalization was not appropriate after Hitler's cleansing, abuse of power, Chrystal Night and continuous infringement on civil liberties for Jews and other groups made into objects of hate among the people.

Of this he readily admits that *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* is a protest "against a sin in the national socialistic regime." (Munk 1949, 93). It is the persecution of the Jews.

He could have very well made use of the main line in the play, Bishop von Beugel's words: "But to deny people their civil rights makes oneself a criminal." (Munk 1938, 51).

He goes into further details explaining the crucial idea:

Through my vocation as clergy the play's imperative words are Bishop von Beugel's remark to Dorn about Der Führer: "So close to being a God as it is possible to be when in fact he is only human; he needs a church to tell him when he is wrong (Munk 1938, 51-52).

Kaj Munk also points out that throughout the entire play, only positive words are used about the Germans, and he mentions that those referring to it as "a dishonorable attack on Germany" and starting street riots against its performance should be fined. It ought to suffice "as long as we have another parliament than that of the street." (Munk 1949, 94).

"It is a blemish on Denmark's name if the Danish government by threats of unrest gives in to fear and gives truth a muzzle." Finally he sharpens the tone: "The Marxist Steincke as a knight's attendant to Mr. Goebbels – aye, the things one is exposed to." (Munk 1949, 94).

The analysis is very precise. There is a straight line; yes a leitmotif of what Kaj Munk was subjected to in his high school years, and endured during the latter part of the 1930s both nationally and internationally.

The Government did not even defend our constitutional rights.

It was mute about injustice, and it reduced Denmark to a submissive position.

Disguised as a democracy, it submissively relinquished to dictatorship by depriving the people of their right to assemble and see a play. Those of the Jewish faith were deprived of their freedom to have their situation exposed in a play. As a matter of fact Danish theater was deprived of its fundamental right: Freedom of speech.

There is a direct line of continuity from this play from 1938 and Kaj Munk's article on it in 1939 to his clash with just verbal "democracy" in his speech in Ollerup in 1940.

Despite this, Kaj Munk had made his breakthrough with several earlier plays. *En Idealist (Herod the King)* which was first performed in 1928, and was performed again in 1938. *Ordet (The Word)* from 1925 was played in 1932. *Kærlighed (Love)*, written in 1926, was put on the stage in September 1935. It was indeed submitted to self-censorship whether it ought to be publicized because of its strong autobiographical and biographical elements (Munk 1948).

Hans Bay-Petersen writes in his book *En selskabelig invitation* about The Royal Theater's guest performances in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. About *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* he writes:

The Minister of Justice's appointed censor, J.C. Normann, had enough to attend to. The theater's censorship was not only controlling moral issues but became increasingly political... e.g. about *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* at Folketeatret August 1938, where a Jew after a bloody Nazi assault tumbles into the sitting room of the main character with blood running down his face. At the dress rehearsal, both Normann and the head of the theater found that this stream of blood was too provocative, and it was removed on opening night (Bay-Petersen 2003, 10).

This extremely detailed degree is symptomatic of how widespread the censorship was.

.... Normann knew that it was not the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' business to interfere in censorship, but on the other hand the film censorship had asked the Ministry several times, so why not? (Bay-Petersen 2003, 10-11).

This information sheds light upon the fact that not only did the Ministry of Foreign Affairs increasingly leave the right to freedom of speech high and dry, but it took place within several departments. This close collaboration that later became known when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that pastors belonging to the Danish State Church were not permitted to exercise freedom of speech when preaching in relation to the Norwegian church's confrontation with Nazism.

Hans Bay-Petersen also touches upon Kaj Munk's version of *Hamlet* in his book: "... it flirted with Nazism and belittled and abhorred democracy." (Bay-Petersen 2003, 11).

Perhaps this play should also be valued for its artistic autonomy to present opposite views and attitudes to free discourse. Is it fair to take some of the lines out of context to browbeat the author with when the intention of the author was an invitation to reflection and possible contradiction?

Was it not primarily the theater censor and the government that failed when they willingly cooperated with violation of the constitution, and thus Denmark as a community founded on the rule of law?

III. Censorship during the occupation of Denmark 1940-1945.

Nazi Germany occupied Denmark April 9, 1940. The consequences of this were that the Danish people faced new rules of censorship from the Danish as well as the German authorities or perhaps, in most cases, by collaboration of both.

This lasted until the Danish government stepped down on August 29, 1943.

Three proclamations on April 9, 1940 establish some guidelines for the coming years during the occupation (Christoffersen 1945).

The first proclamation is that of German commander-in-chief Kaupisch.

He begins his defense for the occupation by stating that it is really against the sincere wishes of the German people, but to protect Denmark against Great Britain, Nazi Germany will shield Denmark and Norway.

At the end of his proclamation he mentions that there will be continuous negotiations between the German government and the Royal Danish government that will secure:

“the Kingdom’s continuation, preservation of army and navy, respect for the Danish people’s liberty and that the country’s independence will persevere.”

There is therefore anticipated by the occupying power an “understanding”, and any omission by anybody to be “passive or active resistance” and:

“The Citizens are asked to proceed with their daily lives and maintain peace and order.” (Christoffersen 1945, 11).

The second proclamation explains that because German troops have crossed the Danish border it is acknowledged: “The Danish Government in protest decided to carry out the country’s dealings in consideration to the occupation that has taken place.”

It is further emphasized that “It is the duty of the people to refrain from any resistance towards these troops...law and order must prevail and a loyal attitude by all for any authority that can be implemented.” (Christoffersen 1945, 13).

The words “in protest” are thought to provide circumstances for the government’s standpoint. Should those two words not shake the population to more thoughtful consideration?

However it is submission that is expressed in the wording. It is copied from some of the German commandant’s proclamations. It is not so much about liberty and independence than about omitting “any active and passive resistance”, and about “law and order.”

It was signed by the King and the Prime Minister: Christian Rex and T. Stauning.

The third proclamation on April 9, 1940 was short and concise and signed by the King alone:

Due to this situation, so grave for our country, I call upon all in metropolitan and rural areas to show correct and dignified behavior, because any rash acts or remarks may have the most sinister consequences. – God save all, God save Denmark.

Christian Rex, Amalienborg, April 9, 1940 (Christoffersen 1945, 13).

The three proclamations were of momentous importance to the administration collaborating with the occupying power. This included also administering terminologies either with direct or indirect censorship or self-censorship that were or were not communicated to the public by the media.

Ollerup-talen (The Ollerup Speech) 1940

An article in *Svendborg Avis* in July 1940 is a striking example of how clearly the occupying power had expressed itself and the actual effects it had on the public. It gives an idea of the instruction the editor gave reporter H. C. Nielsen before Kaj Munk was to make a speech at Ollerup Gymnastikhøjskole on July 28, 1940.

The reporter was coached: “In regard to Kaj Munk, of course we want what he says but be careful. Unfortunately after the Germans’ arrival here we cannot write anything we may desire.” (Munkiana 1998, Møller 2000).

A few days after the coaching of the reporter in *Svendborg Avis*, July 30, 1940, editor Regner Stenbæk wrote an editorial. He accused Kaj Munk of expressing sentiments as “derogatory democracy.” He also charged Kaj Munk with “irresponsible verbiage.” (Munkiana 1998, Møller 2000).

This signifies that Stenbæk was well informed about the German commander-in-chief’s proclamation of April 9, 1940; he is also submissive to it and refers to it in his editorial. There are several passages to that effect besides this one about the occupying power: “What they demand and what they, within reason, can expect is a correct and comprehensible way of behaving.” (Munkiana 1998, Møller 2000).

This unconditional consent to the occupying power’s orders – at the expense of the Danish Constitution’s law on free speech – is an obvious confirmation where the editor has placed himself with the coaching and the editorial (Munkiana 1998, Møller 2000).

One of the first speeches by Kaj Munk after the invasion was the Ollerup Speech that became a pivotal point for the degradation of Kaj Munk. Although considering the existing censorship it was received with mixed feelings.

The unfavorable critics have ignored the fact that Kaj Munk pronounced markedly against the extract in *Svendborg Avis* in Odense on November 4, 1940:

The last time I spoke here in Funen I spoke about Denmark and Germany. A newspaper reported exactly one half of what I said and published it as the whole truth; it was a Svendborg paper, I do not recall its name, but I denounce this issue as mendacious and cowardly (Munk 1949, 208).

Posterity has dwelled on the fact that Kaj Munk spoke of Hitler “as one of the greatest figures in the history of the world” and “a religious figure.” (Munk 1949, 208).

Presumably none of his critics have noted that it occurred in the same month and shortly after Prime Minister Stauning on July 8, 1940 endorsed “foremost a good and friendly relationship to Germany with whom cooperation will be a very natural thing.” (Brøndsted and Gedde 1946, 136).

And in the very same month, the newly-appointed Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Erik Scavenius, said:

With the great German victories that have elicited worldwide astonishment and admiration, a new era in Europe has begun, which will bring political and economical reform under the leadership of Germany. It will be Denmark’s duty to find its place in a necessary and mutual collaboration with Greater Germany (Brøndsted and Gedde 1946, 136).

The critics did not assess with enough emphasis on the fact that Kaj Munk was a passionate observer of life, and through his plays portrayed the entire spectrum of governmental management and administration. He did this by scrutinizing the leaders in real life and putting them on stage, exposing them to opposing viewpoints. Kaj Munk’s reason for doing this was an exercise in revealing the truth about the different kinds of governments – what they were good or bad at doing – no matter whether they were called democracies, dictatorships or something else.

The critics also dwelled on the fact that Kaj Munk admitted that it had been hard to experience the response to his play *Sejren* (The Victory) 1936, that included the line: “Victory justifies all.” (Munkiana 1998, Møller 2000).

Niels Nøjgaard goes into detail about the consequences of the Ollerup Speech:

In news reports and letters from the readers the conclusion was that Kaj Munk had spoken against democracy...Due to the latent censorship it was out of the question to retaliate...The most abhorrent rumors about what Kaj Munk said thrived exuberantly...The illegal flyers and publishing to remedy the lost freedom of the press had not yet emerged; people had to be content with pretty much what fitted in with the German's version of events. (Nøjgaard 1946, 355).

Rejection of the government's policy and approval of the King's proclamation

It also was overlooked that in the Ollerup Speech he turned sharply against the government's proclamations from April 9 and henceforward, but stuck to His Majesty's short proclamation to the people of April 9. It emerges clearly by the use of the word "correct" in the King's proclamation and his reasonable interpretation of this word in light of the occupation of Denmark. His intentions were that the occupying power should then be exposed to "correctness and coolness". The rejection of the government's policy and approval of the King's proposal can be spun as a leitmotif through his feelings towards the occupying power right from the very beginning. This opinion was not mentioned in *Svendborg Avis* though it reported Kaj Munk's accolade to King Christian as a soldier Danish to the bone, and held in the highest esteem by his subjects.

The speeches in Ollerup, Gerlev and in Odense in 1940 clearly display this leitmotif. In the Odense speech it shows with the words:

All the great parties have closed ranks behind Stauning who is now travelling around and showing himself in public so that everyone can see how comfortable he is with the chain. [...] Where is the Danish dignity? He, who with a gun pointed at his chest, calls himself a friend whilst being threatened, we know that the gutter shall be the place for his urn.

(Munk 1949, 208f).

It looks as if almost the entire population had endorsed a convincing 'yes' to the monarchical leadership during the occupation.

Munk's interpretation of the King's message threw him into relief as he himself was pressed by the realities of the time and affected by them.

He began a letter to Valdemar Rørdam on February 20, 1941 where, in a later addendum, he broke with Valdemar Rørdam. It was first sent on July 13, 1941 and he wrote:

I am obliged to stick to England and Stauning where the latter is the harder. But when my King demands it and the Germans the contrary there is no choice. (Munk 1958, 223).

“How come a man like Helweg-Larsen disappeared?”

The editor in chief at *Kristeligt Dagblad*, Helweg-Larsen, was dismissed on May 14, 1941 for speaking against the occupation. Kaj Munk related to this at The Student Organization “Hejmdahl”’s welcome to the new students in September 1941:

How come a man like Helweg-Larsen disappeared? Maybe we shall not discuss that. It is said that it can have the most severe consequences. It would not do to say “woof” to a ferocious dog. One says: “Good dog, and then we say: “good dog.” But one man had the courage not to say “good dog”. He can teach us much. I do not serve my country by being a dog and turning its people into a tail-wagging team of dogs (Munk 1941).

When Kaj Munk talks about “severe consequences” it is in the midst of war, not expressed by anyone at any time. It is from the King’s proclamation of April 9. This is how he spins his leitmotif in a time of war; that “honorable behavior” will prove respect for the Constitution in the kingdom of Christ – and also in the realm of the King, honoring “The constitution of Denmark.”

When Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Erik Scavenius, committed Denmark to the “Antikomintern-treaty” led by Nazi Germany in November 1941, Kaj Munk snapped “Down with Scavenius! There can be no coalition in this coalition government as long Scavenius is its dictator!.” (Munk 1949, 252).

How incorrect, how unworthy! What an outrage on the King’s message

This remarkable interpretation of the King’s proclamation reached its peak at a convention of pastors in Tommerup on September 2, 1942 when Kaj Munk castigated the men with ideas, the governments, the judiciary and the representatives of the press:

But where are they, all the Pacifists and the Quakers and the Men of Ideas? Have they fallen out with Mr. Hitler? Have they been imprisoned because of their ideas? Are they not enjoying themselves at their adult education schools and vicarages and letting injustice erupt in the streets? Does the Danish government not even emerge from oblivion with its proclamations about friendship with the nation that praises all of the ideas that we reject and despise, and which with treachery and violence has beaten us to the ground? Friendship, the Danish government proclaims. How wrong, how pathetic! How insulting to the King’s bidding! Our courts, whose independence and unquestionable righteousness were our pride, do not they, led by the Supreme Court, get up as soon as the Germans pull a string? How wrong, how pathetic! How insulting to the King’s bidding! Do not the papers print the lies they are dictated and dismiss their best men on orders from outside parties, are not the men of the press, like the unfortunate women in our streets, now in the pay of the foreigners? How wrong, how pathetic! How insulting to the King’s bidding! Alas, I could continue. [...] But Christ says: By their fruit you will recognize them. (Munk 1949, 280-89).

This became the reality in Denmark more and more, as Hal Koch’s article in *Lederbladet* (Leader’s Journal), May 1943 underscores:

The job of an incumbent government is to take care of things...Here, it must act according to its best ability and belief. Often, it has to resort to measures, which are an affront to freedom, often it must make statements that do not correspond with the truth (quoted in Nielsen Brovst 1993, 247f.).

Kaj Munk contradicted this in *Dansk Samlings Julinummer*, July 2, 1943:

A leader of young people gives his government a free hand to act illegally, criminally, yes, committing perjury, if only he can preserve his right to protest. Here Machiavelli certainly lags behind. [...] About this crude and cynical point of view there is just one thing left to take into account: for such a way to govern we need not a Danish government, then we are better off without one (quoted in Nielsen Brovst 1993, 248).

Advanced censorship of freedom of expression/preaching in relation to the Norwegian Church's opposition

Here it is pertinent to refer to Erik Thostrup Jacobsen's book *Som om intet var hændt* (As if nothing had happened) (1991).

He states with clarity that in spite of the fact that the Church had its own "Master" it was not only submissive to the government's ways, but also extremely obedient when the government infringed upon the guaranteed liberties among those preaching.

De kirkelige dokumenter fra besættelsestiden (The ecclesiastical documents from the time of occupation)

Published by Jørgen Glenthøj in 1985, these documents shed light upon what happened to the leaders within the Church when their cooperation with the Danish authorities ran into difficulties (Glenthøj 1985).

On January 15, 1943 the Danish bishops wrote to the Minister of Justice:

[...] firstly because of severe unrest in relation to the law of the land [...] Secondly with regard to the propaganda for the incitement of racial hatred while, at the same time, the priests are rightly ordered to refrain from commenting on the political side of the Jewish question. (Glenthøj 1985, 13).

This document clearly tells that the bishops think of themselves more as government paid public servants than as bishops, when they admit that they have grasped the infringements of the pastors' freedom of speech and proclamation in such an urgent issue as the political side of the Jewish question.

This stand is in deep contrast to their pastoral letter of the same year dated September 29, 1943: "*The Danish Church's position on the Jewish question.*" (Glenthøj 1985, 10) in which they state that:

Wherever persecution of Jews due to racial or religious reasons is taking place, it is the duty of the Christian church to protest against it. (Glenthøj 1985, 10)

Between these two dates Kaj Munk sent his courageous letter to the Department for Church Affairs, as well as the Prime Minister and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Erik Scavenius, on March 23, 1943:

Today, I have received a circular letter concerning the Danish priests' position on the Norwegian conditions.

I hereby allow myself to most respectfully inform the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that I do not intend to obey it, but act completely against it.

Rather than requesting that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs handles its own affairs and letting the Church handle its affairs (for which Mr. Scavenius is hardly the right person), the Department for Church Affairs has turned in the opposite direction.

Danish priests are swearing an oath on the symbolic books and other good things, however, not yet to the Honorable Foreign Minister.

If I, out of fear, became a passive bystander, I would feel like an offender against my Christian faith, my Danish (i.e. Nordic) disposition and my oath as a priest.

It is better to damage Denmark in its relationship to Germany than in its relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps one actually ought to take the Department to court. Rightfully speaking, we have here an instance where a superior civil servant will lead his subordinates to misconduct.

For we, the priests, are here to speak the word and not to silence it.

To compromise with injustice – that alone will result in serious consequences for our country and people. Christ has taught us this. [...] This is where I stand; I cannot do it differently [...]

(Munk quoted in Nielsen Brovst 1995, 239 f.)

These statements were refreshing and in plain language concerning the relationship between State and Church and between power and righteousness.

It is not surprising that this has since led to Kaj Munk becoming a great source of inspiration for much liberation theology and stance which derives from the greatest fountain of inspiration that the Church has in the words and example of Jesus Christ.

This too was a moment for reaching the stars in Kaj Munk's life, the last words show where he uses the same words as Martin Luther used to the Emperor at the summons in Worms, when he will give God what God is and the Emperor what the Emperor is.

On September 28, 1941 Kaj Munk gave a sermon just as strong and precise:

The pulpit has become a place of responsibility so we shudder in our black garb when we ascend the stairs. Because here in God's house the word is free – not free in the way that we determine it, but it determines us. In here the only ruler is the censorship of The Holy Ghost and it is this censorship that forces us not to silence but to speak up. [...]

Sure enough the church is not the place for planning economy, the new Europe and ideology of the State, but it is the place where injustice shall be excommunicated, where lies shall be exposed, [...] (Nielsen Brovst 1993, 153).

It is so because the Holy Ghost according to Gospel – John 15, 26 (The little Creed) – is the spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father. About eleven years ago, a person under strict censorship spoke in similar terms. To the Secretary General for the relief programs of Danish Church Aid, Aung San Suu Kyi said about true Christian awe: "A true Christian only fears God's wrath and nobody else's." (Kennedy Society 1997).

References

- Bay-Petersen, Hans. 2003. *En selskabelig invitation*. Copenhagen: Multivers.
- Brix, Hans. 1946. *Hurtigt svandt den lyse sommer*. Copenhagen: Westermann.
- Brøndsted, Johannes and Knud Gedde. 1946. *De fem lange år. Danmark under besættelsen*. Bind I. Copenhagen.
- Christoffersen (Press reporter). 1945. *Fyn under fem års krig*. Odense.
- Dosenrode, Søren. 2009. *Hvad sagde Kaj Munk egentlig i Ollerup?* In Munkiana vol 40, 34-47. Aalborg: Kaj Munk Society.
- Glenthøj, Jørgen. 1985. *Kirkelige dokumenter fra besættelsestiden: officielle og uofficielle hyrdebrev, bekendelser og erklæringer fra den danske kirke*. Sabro: Self-published.
- Hansen, Knud. 1942. *Forkyndelsen i Kaj Munks forfatterskab*. Copenhagen: Povl Branners Forlag.
- Kennedy Society. 1997. Awards and Laudatio. www.kennedysociety.dk (accessed December 1, 2009).
- Munk, Kaj. 1936. *Sejren. Et Skuespil om verden i dag*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1938. *Han sidder ved smeltediglen*. 10.edition. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1939. *Fugl Fønix*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1941. "Rustale i Studenterforeningen Heimdal". September 17, 1941. Newspaper articles in several Danish newspapers. H.H. Siegmundfeldt's clipping archive, volume 12. The Kaj Munk Research Center. Aalborg University.
- Munk, Kaj. 1942. *Foraaret saa sagte kommer*. Copenhagen: Westermann.
- Munk, Kaj. 1948. *Mindeudgave. Kærlighed og andre Skuespil*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1949. *Mindeudgave. Dagen er inde og andre Artikler*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1958. *Aldrig spørge, om det nytter: Digterens liv fortalt af ham selv i breve og artikler m.m.* Ed. Niels Nøjgaard. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munk, Kaj. 1962. *Mindeudgave. Kærlighed og andre skuespil*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- Munkiana. 1998. "Ollerup-talen". 2. årgang nr. 5. Aalborg: The Kaj Munk Society.
- Møller, Per Stig. 2000. *Munk*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.
- Nielsen, Svend Aage. 1984. *Livet gad jeg ønske jer. Erindringer om, taler af og breve fra Kaj Munk*. Herning: Poul Kristensens Forlag.
- Nielsen Brovst, Bjarne. 1984. *Kaj Munk. Liv og død*. Aarhus: Centrum.
- Nielsen Brovst, Bjarne. 1992. *Kaj Munk og den stærke mand*. Aarhus: Centrum.
- Nielsen Brovst, Bjarne. 1993. *Kaj Munk – Krigen og mordet*. Aarhus: Centrum.
- Nøjgaard, Niels. 1946. *Ordets dyst og dåd*. Copenhagen: Nyt Nordisk Forlag Arnold Busck.
- The Constitutional Act of Denmark of June 5, 1953. Official English translation 1999. Fact Sheet/ Denmark (010279/7) of the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Copenhagen: the Folketing.
- Thostrup Jacobsen, Erik. 1991. *Som om intet var hændt: den danske folkekirke under besættelsen*. About the Danish Church during the Occupation 1940-45. Odense: Odense Universitetsforlag.

