

Preface

At the Kaj Munk Research Center at Aalborg University it has become tradition to invite for an academic seminar held each year around September 29, the day the Danish cooperation with the German occupying forces broke down in 1943. The topics of the seminars are always related to the Danish priest, dramatist, poet and journalist Kaj Munk, who was killed by a German SS-group in January 1944.

The seminar “From Munk to Mohammed – Freedom of the Press, Censorship, Self-censorship, and Press Ethics” was such a seminar, where a number of known, international experts had been invited to participate and contribute. The reason for the topic of this seminar was two if not threefold. First, the Danish ‘Mohammed Cartoon Crisis’ did cast an immediate light on the question of freedom of the press, censorship, self-censorship and press ethics, but seemingly this discussion goes on now years after the concrete incident and indeed it is important to be aware of threats to press freedom and their consequences. Secondly Kaj Munk, as journalist and author was censored before and during the Second World War, and did show that censorship can be defied; although the price he paid was high. And thirdly, it was our impression, that the newer literature contains certain lacunae as it occurs to be atomized in character in the sense that it looks at press freedom in one single country, or relates to one specific period, or be of a very juridical nature. It is obvious that this book does not fill all lacunae, but it does attempt to give the discussion a historical dimension as well as to draw on the experience of practitioners concerning the situation of the press today, in countries where being a member of the press is not without personal danger.

I let Noam Chomsky remind us of one consequence of the freedom of speech:¹

If you believe in freedom of speech, you believe in freedom of speech for views you don't like. Goebbels was in favor of freedom of speech for views he liked. So was Stalin. If you're in favor of freedom of speech, that means you're in favor of freedom of speech precisely for views you despise.

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1 A similar stand you find in Chomsky: Free speech in a Democracy, Daily Camera, September, 1985.



Kaj Munk in his study in Vedersø