

# Recreating journalism after censorship. Generational shifts and professional ambiguities among journalists after changes in the political systems



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**ABSTRACT:** The system and practices of both German censorship in Norway in 1940–1945 and of Soviet censorship in Estonia in 1944–1990 were, because of their totalitarian nature, very similar. Some aspects of the reorganisation of the press in Norway and Estonia after the shift to freedom of expression are compared. In both countries freedom of the press released a high level of activity in publishing, attracting a lot of new and untrained journalists to the field. This created a generational shift, if not a cleavage, between old hands and neophytes. Since the younger generation was more numerous, the transition also implied tensions and ambiguities between different ideas of professional practices and values. When media began to consolidate in both countries, the job market became more competitive and journalists found themselves under commercial pressures and, somewhat paradoxically, in the same process became more professionalized. In Norway the old multi-party press re-emerged after a short while together with old routines from the mid-war period. In Estonia, the old Soviet press system was replaced with completely different one, based on private ownership and ruled by the free market.

**KEYWORDS:** press history, comparative approach, press freedom, censorship, Norway, Estonia, Soviet press system, transition



## INTRODUCTION

Among the central propositions in Hallin and Mancini's *Comparing Media Systems* (2004) is the suggestion that the social structure and the political system of a country condition the possibilities for reporting public affairs. This proposition is most easily confirmed when you compare where most journalists find their sources for prospective news stories. As a rule, the more institutionalised interest organisations are in a pluralistic society, the more organised these interests will become with headquarters, a telephone, an e-mail address and may be with a home page for orien-

tation. Here journalists can access sources of information and interviewees with an overview and with authority to give relevant answers. The most frequently used sources of information in various countries are the Civil Service for information about society and politicians for opinions about current affairs. News hunting by journalists is regularly met by news making efforts. If possible, the Government and the Public Administration may synchronise the decision-making process to conform to the routines of the media (Cook, 2006). Social stratification and culture may or may not facilitate these encounters when journalists offer publicity in exchange for information from sources. Thus media systems are likely both to be similar in some respect and different in others, from one nation to another.

Also, as a rule, the written code of ethics for journalists in most democratic societies is supplemented with unwritten text norms for journalism and tacit rules of how journalists shall relate to information sources (interviews, press conferences, press releases, etc.) as well as towards their own public. Such habits and traditions Hallin and Mancini call 'journalistic culture.'

At the opposite end of the political *continuum* we find totalitarian political systems where the information that can be published is rarely negotiable. Instead rules of censorship define which kinds of information are allowed, how shall the information be written up, what kind of stories and propaganda do the authorities prefer (Lauk, 2005).

In-between closed and open media systems you find authoritarian political structures from which it is possible, with some artistic effort, to bypass censorship. The maintenance of patriotism and a national identity under Communism may be the best proof of this. Metaphors were the main tools for a 'double speech,' which on the surface conformed to the rules, but at the same time referred to another reality by way of an alternative frame of reference. The question remains, however, to what extent such riddles could also express instrumental and pro-active information directed at oppositional activities. As it turned out, *glasnost* and *perestroika* from 1985 caused just this, opening up for more freedom of expression and eventually for a series of actions, which in the end destroyed communism itself.

In this paper we intend to compare different events and transitory periods where censorship expires and leaves a situation of uncertainty and ambiguity. When censorship is lifted, several problems have to be solved in a short time: what kind of newspapers and news channels shall best serve the new public discourse and who are the new and legitimate politicians who can play their new role of adversaries for the press and so forth. During the transition from Communism to Capitalism not only should a new political system be organised, and new roles be found for media in politics. In the wake of system change at the macro-level the media was completely reorganised at the meso-level with new capital, with advertising, new technology and new editorial procedures (see: Saks, 2002).

When much of the basic rules are changed over a short period, many things are concurrently set in motion and things easily get out of control. Whether such tran-

sitions shall end in a period of turmoil or not, seems to depend on some planning ahead of events like a sudden press freedom. But how and for how long can freedom and independence be foreseen under strict censorship and political control? These are some of the problems from the near past to which we are dedicated.

Media history offers many, albeit irregular, situations of transition, when political censorship suddenly disappears and leaves a normative vacuum. In this paper we will focus on some of these events and their aftermath, taken from the Norwegian and Estonian history of the press. Our approach is a bit different from the usual comparative framework, as defined for instance by Renate Köcher (1986, 44): 'Comparative studies address themselves to the different conditions that prevail rather than to those who practice their profession under these conditions.' By contrast we focus on transient historical periods that did not prevail but even so, to a certain extent, fall into similar patterns when they are compared. We begin with a story from the 18<sup>th</sup> century Danish-Norwegian history, and continue with the Russian revolution in 1905 as it occurred in Estonia. Thereafter we move to censorship in Norway during the German occupation 1940–1945, and to Soviet censorship in Estonia. As it turned out the German and Soviet censorships were very similar. So we do not treat the short German occupation of Estonia in 1941–1944 especially, since it was preceded and followed by Soviet censorship in 1940 and 1944, respectively.

## **A DANISH EXPERIMENT WITH FREE EXPRESSION 1770–73<sup>1</sup>**

Formal censorship started 1537 in Denmark-Norway<sup>2</sup> and lasted 233 years when suddenly freedom of expression was introduced in 1770, an intermission that lasted only 3 years. The man behind this incident was Johann Friedrich Struensee, a doctor from Halle in Germany who was called to the Danish court in Copenhagen as the personal physician for the insane King Christian VII. Struensee, a man of the Enlightenment, became a lover of the Queen and soon won enough political influence to edict, in the name of the King, a long list of reforms from 1770.

More than a 1000 printed works were published during the period of unlimited press freedom. Altogether 393 publications were printed in 1770 alone as compared to an average of 1.8 printed works per year during the previous 50 years. The most

<sup>1</sup> Most of the data and findings in this section are taken from: (Berge, 1998a and b).

<sup>2</sup> In 1380 Denmark and Norway were united under the same absolute king. The union was formalised in a treaty in 1450 and ended in 1814 when Denmark lost Norway to Sweden after the Napoleonic wars. Under Danish rule Norway was always the weaker part, with few independent public institutions and a small population compared to Denmark. During the short intermission between Danish and Swedish rule, however, Norway gave itself a constitution as an independent country. This constitution was kept almost intact during the union with Sweden with an independent Norwegian Parliament. In 1905, Norway broke the union unilaterally, but after some negotiations, no war ensued.

typical literary genre of the time was the political pamphlet; 77% of publications in 1770 were pamphlets compared to 26% of the 89 publications that were issued between 1720 and 1770. The form of publishing of these relatively short pamphlets<sup>3</sup> implied little if any editorial control.

Some limited press freedom existed already from 1740. Certain groups among the nobility, higher civil servants and select professors were allowed to discuss political affairs. Their essays, always addressed to the King, regularly contained a submissive and wide-ranging discussion of practical matters, economy and the possibility of certain reforms. Neutrality was a hallmark; authors appeared more as spectators than agitators of their ideas which they had no power to enforce. The King's, or Struensee's, intention for letting printing and expressions free in 1770 was to receive more varied opinions from the lay public of possible mistakes in state affairs that could be amended.

The short period of full press freedom, however, completely changed the direction and character of public discourse. Many simply did not know how to use their freedom effectively; formal freedom was apparently greater than their ability to use proper forms of public discourse. A majority of writers were newcomers outside the establishment. Since 91% of the publications were anonymous, the social origins of authors had to be identified from their style of writing, which was generally more vernacular in vocabulary and more mundane and spread out in topics, compared to earlier publications. The great variety of styles and topics gave witness to a lack of textual and discursive norms as well as a lack of consensus about important issues to be promoted. Complaints by anonymous authors were addressed to named persons and not so much to social conditions and political causes in general.

Criticism of authorities was common, but paradoxically much of the condemnation was directed towards Struensee himself as the *de facto* power-holder. Freedom of expression soon released much latent social frustration; it took only about 3 months from when freedom of the press was declared on September 14<sup>th</sup> to Christmas Eve 1770 for revolution-like incidents to occur among Norwegian soldiers in the Kings Guard. They rebelled against the manner in which the kingdom was ruled.

## 1905 IN ESTONIA

The period of the Russian Revolution in 1905–1907 was a time of increasing spiritual and political activism in Estonia,<sup>4</sup> where at the time the first national political parties emerged. Some parties grew out directly from the newspaper circles. For example, one of the leading newspapers of that time, the conservative daily *Postimees* (*The Postman*) assembled young national-minded Estonian educated people

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<sup>3</sup> Pamphlets should not exceed 48 pages or three sheets of paper.

<sup>4</sup> Estonia was a province of Russian Empire from 1710 to 1918.

who sympathized with its petty-bourgeois ideology, and formed the first Estonian political party, the Estonian Progressive People's Party. During these 2 years, the whole political spectrum became reflected in the press.

There was a short while in the autumn of 1905 when the Estonian press enjoyed an absolutely censorship-free period. The Manifesto of the Russian Emperor of October 17, 1905, pledged freedom of speech, but in fact, pre-publication censorship was not abolished. The editorial boards of the major newspapers in Tallinn then arranged a 3-day strike when no papers appeared, and after that, taking the law into their own hands, started to appear without censorship. This was the first time ever in history that Estonian newspapers were not censored. The short freedom of the press was achieved as a result of purposeful and pre-planned action, in which the experienced editors-in-chief played a decisive role. Thus, appearing without censorship, the newspapers published a number of critical political editorials and feuilletons that could never be published otherwise. However, the Martial Law proclaimed in December 1905 gave the local administrative authorities the right to close any publication that appeared dubious or dangerous to the ruling powers. The result was the closure of all newspapers that participated in the strike.

A completely new phenomenon appeared in the press discourse in those years – that of the satirical political pamphlets, which were published as supplements of the regular newspapers. They could not, however, spread widely because of the persecution by the censorship authorities (Høyer et al. (eds.), 1993).

## **NAZI CENSORSHIP IN NORWAY 1940–1945**

Like many European countries Norway was attacked by the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich in 1940 and then occupied until the German debacle in the spring of 1945. Within hours of their arrival on April 9, the Germans seized both the Norwegian Broadcasting and the Norwegian Telegram Bureau in Oslo. The same afternoon the Wehrmacht gave orders to the Norwegian press within the occupied territories not to publish anything that could militate against their operations. Late in the evening a news wire informed editors that their papers on the following day should publish only the declaration of the new Nazi government and politically irrelevant articles (Luihn, 1960; Wernersen, 2006).

**Rules of censorship.** In the more detailed regulations, which came into effect on April 22, restrictions were specified in 9 points, for instance: all messages, which contained military information or concerned foreign affairs, had to be controlled ahead of publication; announcements from the German military authorities had to be translated *verbatim* and placed as directed by censors; no criticism of German authorities was allowed, the expression 'world war' should never be used and layout should be balanced so as not to alarm the public, etc. Furthermore, orders from censors should be treated as secrets; it was strictly forbidden to reveal their content or origin to outsiders. Violation of the rules meant diverse sanctions from cutting

down on newsprint supply to stopping publication and arresting the editor-in-chief. Altogether 3 bodies of censorship were installed: by the German civil authorities, by the Wehrmacht and by the Norwegian Nazi authorities.

The German Pressabteilung issued an edict each weekday<sup>5</sup> or a *Tagesanweisung* for stories to be published the next day telling also how stories should be located in the newspaper, as an editorial or as a front-page story, including the number of columns for the headline, etc. Some of these instructions have been kept and studied anew, to see to what extent some important newspapers obeyed the censors. Few obvious deviations from German directions were found in a content analysis (Wernersen, 2006). Most of the regular press was apparently abiding to the censors, some even loyally.

In spite of censorship the Norwegian public continued to read their newspapers. Most of the 114 newspapers, publishing at the end of 1944, either kept their pre-war circulation or increased it, some by more than 50% (Hjeltnes, 1990, pp. 46–49, 331–333).

**Underground press.** Already in April 1940 the first underground paper appeared. In every city there were one or more illegal news-sheets printed, which contained information and comments not found in the regular newspapers. In September 1941 all radio receivers were confiscated. Accordingly the underground press concentrated on printing BBC war news. In 1943 the Germans declared death sentences for those who produced or distributed underground papers. Accordingly, between three and four thousand people were arrested during the occupation of which 62 were executed and 146 died in concentration camps (Luihn, 1960).

## **AFTERMATHS OF NAZI CENSORSHIP: THE POST-WAR PERIOD UNTIL 1950**

According to plans from the Resistance Movement, the remaining newspapers after the end of the German occupation in May 1945 stopped publishing until May 14, and were replaced by interim newspapers, one for each city. The interim papers were edited and written by returning journalists who had either lost their jobs during the occupation, had worked with the Resistance Movement or in the underground press, or had been refugees in Sweden and England.

All members of the Nazi party were expelled from their jobs. Some of the editors returning from diasporas or from concentration camps, summarily dismissed those who had worked in the Nazi controlled press. Later in the summer a court of honour was installed by the press organizations to give a verdict to non-party members who had cooperated with the Nazis. The court worked for 2 years and 33 journalists were given the epithet of having shown ‘unpatriotic behaviour’ (Hjeltnes, 1990).

The number of newspapers increased from 114 in 1944 to 186 in 1946 and 200 in 1951 (Høyer, 1995, p. 244). Between 1945 and 1949 34 new newspapers were

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<sup>5</sup> Sunday editions of newspapers did not exist.

started (Høst, 2007). In spite of the increasing number of titles, all newspapers benefited from a circulation boom during 1945 and 1946. Many increased circulation from their pre-war level by more than 50% (Hjeltnes, 1990, pp. 46–47). This also implied a shortage of journalists, especially trained journalist, which at that time meant experienced journalists.

**Characteristics of the early post-war generation.** To learn more of how some key characteristics of the journalist corps have changed over the years we have coded the collections of professional biographies until 1990 of members of the Norwegian Press Association, later also members of the Norwegian Federation of Journalists, and the Editors Society.<sup>6</sup> From this database we can learn something of how the newly recruited journalists in the early post-war period differed from those inhabiting the editorial offices in the Oslo-press before and after this period (Høyer, 2003a).

Between 1944 and 1949 there was a sudden influx of new editorial personnel. In 5 Oslo-papers the number of personnel increased 6 times (Høyer, 2003a). Most of the recruits were journalists of course, but also some few editors. Sub-editors were few at this time but their number increased markedly in the booming 1960s. Compared to the present open spaced editorial departments, newspapers in the late 1940s and 1950s were quite primitive, both in specialisation into beats, in job functions and in the organisational complexity.<sup>7</sup> A multilayered editing process was not a typical phenomenon either for 1945 or for the ensuing years until the early 1960s. The journalistic products were, accordingly, rather modest as measured against present standards.

The lack of professional experience among journalists recruited to the Oslo press in 1945–1949 was also quite exceptional compared to both the pre-war generation and the generation of journalists recruited from the late 1950s and forth. Not only was earlier professional experience from journalism outside Oslo quite modest, in addition the experience from other occupations and the number of years with formal schooling was at the lowest for all periods (Høyer, Ihlen, 1998). But in one respect those belonging to the early post-war generation excelled, they wrote more books, relatively speaking, than the journalist generations following them.

Practicing writing as a compensation for formal education is well known in the press. Until the 1890s the majority of literary authors wrote for newspapers. Like many other nations, Norwegian newspapers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were dependent on outside content providers, after which the profession of journalism slowly devel-

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<sup>6</sup> These collections of biographies have been published irregularly since 1930. Before 1940 the Norwegian Press Association was the only national organisation for journalists and editors. Journalists formed their own professional and national organisation in 1946 and editors followed suit in 1950.

<sup>7</sup> In the period 1945–1949 six sub-editors were recruited to the Oslo papers, or 4% of the total number of recruits, compared to 39 for the period 1985–1989, or 15% of the recruited personnel in this period.



oped (Høyer, 2003b). The first post-war generation deviated from this trend. Not only were there many authors/journalists, many of them also became well known in Norwegian literature.

A formal education for journalists had been discussed since 1910 within various forums for editors and journalists, without any results (Ottosen, 1996). A half-year course in journalism was hastily organised in 1946; a one-year course in journalism came 1951, and only in 1965 the first Norwegian College of Journalism started. Before this time professional training could only be obtained as trainees in the provincial press or by studying abroad. During the 1970s university studies became common among journalists (Høyer, Ihlen, 1998).

As schooling increased among new recruits from the 1960s their literary productivity fell compared to the generation from the 1940s. The generational shift was also marked by much animosity against formal schooling from the self-taught generation of 1945–1949, especially directed against the study of journalism. Much of this criticism was given informally (Ottosen, 2004). Allegations varied, but most of it turned around the idea of journalism being an artistic gift. Journalism could not be learned, it had had to be practiced.

**Summary.** Between 1940 and 1944 the number of journalists in the Oslo press was at its lowest of which about a third was not allowed to continue as journalists, or had disappeared into other activities. So in May 1945 there were many openings to be filled. The majority of those who were recruited had no professional CV's in modern parlance, but most of them excelled in the basic skill of writing. They may have been less efficient in writing news, however. We lack systematic data on how journalism has developed in Norway, except for short and irregular periods. But many impressionistic observations suggest that full-fledged modern news journalism only began in the 1960s.

This does not mean that the transition to a free Norwegian press started from scratch in 1945. In contrast to the Danish experiment 1770–1773, the transition in 1945 was to a large extent planned ahead in Oslo, Stockholm, and London (Ottosen, 1996, p. 203). Among the 15 newspapers in the 3 largest cities,<sup>8</sup> which were published both in 1940 and 1945, 11 of them had reinstalled their old editors-in-chief in 1945; only 2 had changed editors completely, while one newspaper reinstalled their editor from 1941; he replaced his colleague from 1940, who was shot by the Germans.<sup>9</sup> In other words, those who took command in the media after liberation could clearly remember how the press operated before 1940. Some of the machinery was intact by 1945, but many new printing presses had to be bought from abroad. During the war the leader of the Labour press – as a refugee in London – planned

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<sup>8</sup> Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim.

<sup>9</sup> The source for the coding of my data is the bibliography of Norwegian newspapers: *Norske aviser 1763–1969*. [Norwegian Newspapers 1763–1969], published by the University Library in Oslo, 1973.



the restoration of his party papers which were closed down by the Germans. With loans and aid from American and Swedish trade unions he soon succeeded after May 1945. The Conservatives in turn soon answered the challenge with money from Industry and Shipping (Høyer, 1995, pp. 342–343).

The return of press freedom could have created a critical juncture where old routines in journalism and the media system as a whole were broken. There were some few signs in this direction. The communist wing of the resistance movement turned their newsheet – *Friheten* – into a regular newspaper from May 14, 1945 with great success. The circulation of *Friheten* was probably close to the highest in 1945 and well into 1946. The Resistance Movement planned a politically uncommitted newspaper – *Verdens Gang* – to save the national concord during restoration after the war. This paper started in June 1945 (Eide, 1995, 37). The Christian movement founded a national daily which originally was not meant as a party paper but later became the main organ for the Christian Democrats. So by 1947 the multi-party press was fully restored, albeit with some fewer newspapers compared to the highly polarised mid-war period. Most of the journalists were new and inexperienced, yet editors were able, it seems, to restore old routines.

### **COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM 1989–1991**

Liberation from censorship and state control in Central and Eastern Europe was immediately followed by an enormous expansion and diversification of the press market, with a rising demand for journalists. The story was repeated all over Central and Eastern Europe as these countries returned to diversity from more centralized media systems. From 1989 to 1996, nearly 800 new periodical publications were launched in Estonia. Similarly, 928 newspapers were issued in 1993 in Bulgaria, compared to 381 newspapers in 1988 (Raycheva, Petev, 2003, p. 83). At the end of 1991 there were an estimated 2000 press titles in Poland, 1300 of which had first appeared between 1989 and 1991 (Jakubowicz, 2003, p. 223).

In all of these cases a certain degree of confusion and a common sense of ambiguity were central traits, partly because public discourse was poorly prepared for what followed, and partly because there were not any journalistic conventions or guidelines to keep to when seemingly unlimited freedom of expression was achieved. Journalists found themselves in a completely different social and professional environment that required them to re-conceptualize their role perceptions, professional identities, and ethical norms and values. They had to adapt to the new work routines and organisational structures of newsrooms. At the same time there was also a rapid spread of technological innovations in editorial offices, studios and printing plants. It took only a couple of years in the early 1990s for the personal computer to replace the typewriter.

The change from the totally controlled media, supervised by the Communist Party, to the total freedom of expression was one of the most dramatic turning

points for journalists in Estonia. Soviet censorship had been overwhelming and penetrated all spheres of life, not only the media. Journalists experienced the watchful eye of the authorities not just in the editorial offices. They knew that their correspondence might be checked and their telephone calls eavesdropped. Self-censorship was a common strategy of professional survival. Journalists knew well which topics, names or facts were sensitive or forbidden, which issues were not recommended to touch upon, and how to report in the 'correct' way. In many cases, however, journalists and editors challenged the constraints by transmitting their messages between the lines or even quite explicitly in the lines – sometimes more, sometimes less successfully.

Soviet censorship was simultaneously preventive and repressive (in the forms of preliminary and post-publishing censorship respectively). It was also prescriptive, or 'creative,' playing the role of the Orwellian 'Ministry of Truth.' Secretiveness is typical to all censorship systems and thus, the instructions and orders of its officials were treated as secrets, and the words 'censorship' and 'censor' were never mentioned in public texts.

The Soviet censorship mechanism included, in general, two large sectors: the Communist Party authorities and the KGB as the 'brain' of the system, and the state censorship administration (GLAVLIT) operating as an 'executive hand.' Two groups of secret documents guided the work of censors: 1) the lists of banned data and lists of prohibited literature and authors, and 2) regulations and instructions of how to publish and present information that people were allowed to know. Before a manuscript became a publication ready for distribution, it had to pass 4 stages of control and receive 4 permissions: for type-setting, for printing, for appearance and for distribution (Lauk, 1999, pp. 30–32).

Manuscripts of the newspaper texts were first censored by the editors-in-chief (in local newspapers) and by the heads of the 'party-life' section in the national daily newspapers. Censors controlled the proofs and the first printed copies of the newspapers and then gave permission for distribution. Newspapers were also censored after publication. The printing plants in Estonia had to send copies of newspapers and magazines to over 20 controlling institutions in Moscow (Lauk, 1999, p. 32).

Soviet censorship in Estonia lasted for nearly 50 years. It functioned as a block to the access of alternative information for the public in order to create a 'right' model of thinking in the populace. The spirit of opposition was expressed in latent ways, using an alternative apolitical discourse alongside an ideological one. In the 1960s, a generation of young journalists and authors developed a sophisticated metaphorical language that used allegories and allusions for talking to the public from behind the lines. Cultural magazines and newspapers were mainly the place where opposition discourse surfaced. Therefore, they became extremely popular. Circulation of the cultural weekly *Sirp ja Vasar* (*Sickle and Hammer*) in 1985 was 71 000 copies and increased to 88 000 by 1990 (which equates to approx-

imately 6 copies per 100 inhabitants), and the circulation of the cultural monthly magazine *Vikerkaar* (*Rainbow*) in the same year was 53 000 copies (Vihalemm (ed.), 2004).

Along with the rapid expansion of the press market in the late 1980s and early 1990s, an open public forum developed where free exchange of information and opinion became possible. The cultural press lost its function as the only channel of expressing resistance because the mainstream media gradually took over the role of a critical observer and reviewer. Popularity of the cultural publications dropped drastically in the following years: by 1993, the circulation of *Sirp ja Vasar* had dropped to 8800 and that of *Vikerkaar* to just 3000 copies. Today, the cultural press is subsidised by the State.

During the independence movement in 1988–1991, a reasonably active public debate took place on the subject of freedom of the press and media legislation. Four different media law drafts were worked out, but none of them was ever passed. The absence of a particular media or press law does not mean that no rules with the objective to regulate the media existed. The Constitution of 1992 guarantees every citizen the unlimited right to receive public information and, under any circumstances, the right to express freely one's ideas, opinions, convictions, or any other information. The Broadcasting Act was passed in 1994. Several other laws influence the operation of the media in many different ways.

Until the Estonian Constitution was passed, there was practically no legal regulation of the media. The old laws did not work; the notion of good journalism and ethical conventions was very limited among journalists. Thus, for a while, the freedom of speech and press was interpreted as freedom from any kind of limits. In the early 1990s, this absolutely unlimited freedom of expression created a kind of euphoric atmosphere where journalists often did not follow the elementary conventions of their profession. They seemed to have lost their sense of decency and temperance or to have underestimated the sensitivity of certain issues in society.

It was evident that there was a need for some kind of regulation of media practices. It was not easy, however, to establish conventional rules regulating publishing or broadcasting after 50 years of Soviet censorship and strict regulation. Journalists had a controversial attitude towards the ideas of any kind of regulation. Although they principally agreed with the necessity for an ethical code (according to a survey carried out by the Department of Journalism of Tartu University in 1995, 64% of those interviewed considered it necessary), proposals to establish rules were very often met as attempts to re-instate censorship. Therefore, a case-by-case method was chosen for setting rules and developing the understanding of 'good journalistic practice.' An initiative of the Estonian Newspaper Association in 1991 led to the creation of the Estonian Press Council (EPC), taking the Finnish experience as an example. Protection of freedom of the press, examination of complaints about the media based on ethical considerations and adherence to the good tradition of journalism were declared the main objectives of the EPC. A set of case-based guidelines

dealing with the manner in which certain topics (e.g. death, crimes, court cases, etc.), should be reported, how to use and defend information sources etc. emerged. The community of journalists gradually accepted the guidelines, and in 1997, the formal code of ethics was adopted by a congress of Estonian journalists.

**Generation shift.** Each change of regime brought along a change among the journalistic corps. By the end of the independent Estonian Republic and beginning of the Soviet occupation in 1940, there were nearly 700 journalists in Estonia, working in 281 newspapers and magazines. In a 6 month period in late 1940, the existing press system was completely destroyed and the first Soviet publications established. Most of the staff members of the old editorial boards were fired and new people employed from amongst those who demonstrated loyalty to the new regime. Those who did not want to cooperate or had been involved in political life during the independence, were arrested, deported or shot. There is still no data about the destiny of 211 journalists who disappeared in 1940.

During the German occupation from the summer 1941 to September 1944 few journalists returned to their jobs, as the occupation authorities allowed only a few of the newspapers which the Soviets had closed down, to restart. It is fair to say that during the first year of the Soviet rule in Estonia and during the WW II, the whole corps of journalists was destroyed and the profession of journalism ceased to exist.

After the War, the Soviet media system was gradually established in Estonia. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, journalists were mostly recruited among the members of the Young Communist League and demobilized military men, and trained in the so-called Party Universities (institutions for teaching Marxism-Leninism). Many of those 'journalists' were not even able to write correct Estonian; but this was not an obstacle for serving as a 'Party soldier on the ideological front.'

In 1954, journalism education was established in the University of Tartu on the basis of Estonian philology. Journalism graduates, from the late 1950s onwards, occupied key positions in the media and brought with them much of the opposition spirit of the University. They found themselves in an ambiguous situation, where they often sincerely tried to fulfil the role of people's advocate and informer on the one hand, but had to deserve the trust of the authorities on the other. They developed their strategies of professional survival that proved, when censorship and control eased in the late 1980s, to be too cautious. By that time, a new, more critically minded generation of journalists stepped into the arena.

The demand for the journalistic personnel increased dramatically with the market fluctuation and diversification. Private people, institutions, organisations, local communities, political movements, etc. launched different types of new publications, empty niches were filled. In a few years, the number of individuals involved in journalistic work, including publishing, had increased by about 40%. The sizeable invasion of newcomers between 1989 and 1995 completely changed the character

of the workforce. In many post-Communist countries, tensions arose between the remaining old hands from the former regime and the more numerous and inexperienced younger outsiders who had entered the field (see, e.g., Pasti, 2005). In Estonia young journalists replaced the old generation in the early 1990s and were supported by the middle-aged generation of those who started their careers in the 1980s. It was a natural result of age and retirement among journalists that coincided with the transition period in society. The withdrawal of the old generation was also a response to the changes in the character of the journalistic job (see more: Lauk, 1996).

The young generation gradually, just like the previous generation in the 1950s, began to take the major roles in the media. According to the 1995 survey, the majority of contemporary journalists of that year had entered the field during the late 1980s and early 1990s. About half of journalists had a job career shorter than 5 years and another 14% had started their journalistic work during Gorbachev's reforms and the independence movement. The most inexperienced journalists worked in weeklies (73% had less than 5 years experience), the longest were the careers in television (52% had worked there for more than 10 years).

Most of the journalists were young (68% were less than 40 years old in 1995). The breakthrough of a younger generation of journalists in the early 1990s reflected a typical phenomenon in Estonian society: a remarkable proportion of the new political and economic elite were then under 35 years of age. Thus, the transition from one generation to another took place without any dramatic confrontations and struggles on a political basis between old and young generations of journalists.

The average educational level of journalists decreased during the first 6 to 7 years of transition. According to a 1988 survey, 78% of the journalists had a university degree, whereas in 1995 only 70% had completed their studies and there were less people with a journalism degree among them.

**Changes in the editorial offices.** Transition to the free market and liberal employment policies also dismantled the old rigid editorial structures of the newspapers and magazines. In the Soviet media system, the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Moscow determined the number of employees and the payment norms for all types of newspapers. In Estonia the main Communist Party paper *Rahva Hääli* (*The People's Voice*) could employ 65–70 people, including 40 journalists. In local newspapers, the number of staff was 12–15 (Saks, 2002, p. 188). Journalists used to work in the same news organisation for decades, some for life. Within the new market conditions under the growing pressure of competition the sizes of editorial staffs grew and the mobility of journalists among different outlets and broadcasting stations became frequent. In 1995, 46% of those surveyed had worked in two to three news organisations, and 13% had changed their employer four or more times.

Modernisation of news organisations brought about alterations in work routines and organisational structures and also created a number of new functions in journalistic work. The rapid computerisation of work processes added confusion. Journalists had to obtain new skills rapidly, and indeed, young people were quicker in learning. Since the mid-1990s, the technological advancement has been very rapid. In 1995, 18% of Estonian journalists had not used computers, whereas the proportion of non-users was the lowest among newspaper journalists (10%) and the highest among television journalists (30%). A survey in 2002 showed that all journalists were 'computer-literate': 99% felt comfortable in using a computer in text-processing, 98% used e-mail and 95% surfed the web daily. 65% were frequent users of search engines. The Internet enlarged enormously the scope of sources and also increased the importance of the knowledge of foreign languages for journalists.

During the transition period from old to modern newspaper, written guidelines on how to compile a newspaper did not yet exist. This was a period of creative experimentation both for reporters, editors and designers. The first style-books appeared in the editorial offices in 1993. According to Saks (2002, 193), there is a specifically Estonian feature in them, compared to the Scandinavian or Anglo-American tradition, in that there were instructions for writing in different journalistic formats – news, features, editorials. One of the most remarkable changes that occurred in the Estonian journalistic text-conventions was a shift of the news paradigm.

**News paradigm.** Promotion of the news during the Soviet time was clearly ideological. The news that the media reported were selected and presented according to ideological dogmas and strictly censored. All foreign news that the Soviet media distributed were centrally censored by the main information agency called TASS. Only the news authorised by TASS could become published or aired. Consequently, objective reporting or transmission of unbiased information was entirely impossible. Even the timing of the launching of news items was in the hands of the authorities. They decided the appropriate time to make something public.

The core of the news concept was the idea that 'bad news was not news.' The Soviet media reported almost without exception about the achievements of socialist labour, science and culture. The inverted pyramid structure was not conventionalised into the practice of Estonian journalism since the news was mainly presented in chronological narrative. Since the news genre was an ideological tool, the news value and focus were pre-given or the news story did not include any news value at all. The news was not really designed to convey new information, but to confirm positive sides of the Soviet reality. As the news value was missing, most news items were not focused on topical details but presented a homogeneous list of actions (Harro, 2001, p. 109).



The structure of the news did not, furthermore, have any relevance because there was no competition for the readers' attention. Thus, there was no need for the segmentation of stories by leads, subheadings or photo captions. When important materials like Communist Party congresses, speeches of public leaders, etc. had to be published, all the pages might have been filled with plain text without any subheadings or pictures (Saks, 2002, 189).

A shift to the 'western' news paradigm occurred very rapidly in the early 1990s. Where ideology once constituted the criterion for publishing, the news value of events now replaced it. Journalists quickly learned to use the American invention of the inverted pyramid. This model became especially popular after a university teacher who had spent half a year in the editorial office of *Newsweek* started to teach it at basic levels and mid-career training courses at the University of Tartu. Soon he also published a textbook on news writing. Together with another teacher, who was a linguist, an efficient method of teaching news writing was introduced. The effect of this work was seen in the newspapers quite quickly.

## A COMPARISON OF THE TWO CASES

Although censorship was similar in Estonia and Norway, the break-up and transition periods turned out very different, mainly because of the long endurance of Soviet rule in Estonia for nearly 50 years. In Norway the liberation was long foreseen and transition planned ahead by the Resistance Movement and in the refugee milieus in Stockholm and London. The end of Soviet rule could hardly be foreseen in Estonia. A respite from censorship, but without full press freedom, was granted by *glasnost* and *perestroika* from 1987 onwards. Although *glasnost* as a new communication policy was announced by Moscow in 1985, it was only established communicators who were given an active role in the communication process. As earlier political leaders and public figures presented information to public at their own discretion. Only gradually did the public begin participating in discussions of common problems of the day and in 1987, a relatively free political dialogue was taking place on Estonian Radio and Estonian Television. This was led by the creative intelligentsia, industrial, scientific, financial experts and journalists, and can be seen as a purposeful activity.

In general, the old tradition of a multi-party press survived in Norway, with some exceptions. Today we will find only traces of the party press in Scandinavia, but that is another story (Høyer, 2005). In Estonia the old communist tradition in journalism was completely transformed. The press quickly distanced from politics, and all newspapers declared political independence. Although a multi-party structure was soon formed in the Estonian society, no party press as such emerged. The parties mostly publish small monthly information sheets for their members (with the exception of the Central Party, which has a weekly newspaper).



In Estonia the political system had to be re-created with new parties without any history and a new constitution. In legislative and institutional re-construction, in many cases pre-1940 practices were taken as model examples. During 1988–1991, the newspapers took back their old historical names that were changed into Soviet ones in the late 1940s.

In Norway the editors who returned to their old newspapers in 1945 clearly remembered how their journalism and newspapers were organised. The break with a censorship regime in Estonia was much more dramatic. The pre-war journalistic community had been destroyed long ago; the new journalists in 1944 had been mostly recruited among people who had no journalistic training whatsoever, but were loyal to the Soviet authorities. Professionally educated journalists started to appear in the editorial offices only from the late 1950s onwards, after journalism education was established in Tartu University. They formed the ‘old guard’ at the end of the Communist regime and were replaced by a new generation during the early 1990s. The newcomers became responsible for developing a new professional ideology. The Anglo-American or ‘liberal’ model was the best known ideal to follow. The conventions and values of the ‘liberal’ press of a stable society, however, were not easy to introduce into a society in transition.

## CONCLUSIONS

We departed from the assumption that totalitarian and authoritarian censorships, similar by their nature and executive mechanisms, may have similar effects on the press and journalists in various periods. We also assumed that after a sudden end of censorship and achieving the freedom of expression in society, a certain chaos or confusion will occur where the old norms do not work and the new ones are not yet adopted. After comparing two cases from earlier histories and two from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we would argue that there are more differences than similarities in the ways that journalists and media systems react to censorship and to the liberation from it. We saw a resolutely pre-planned post-WWII restoration of the Norwegian press along the same lines of the pre-War press. In Estonia, after the liberation from the Soviet regime and censorship, the media system and journalistic profession were built up anew, looking to follow the examples in the Western democracies, and following the rules of the free market. The old canons were completely denied in Estonia, adaptation to the new canons is the task of the new generation of journalists, who do not carry the burden of the old regime.

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