

Danish Publishing House (Dansk Bogforlag)

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Dansk Bogforlag was established in Copenhagen in 1905 to produce and distribute Adventist literature to the church in Denmark and in the larger community. It provided books, periodicals, and Sabbath School materials to use in contact with the Danish population and to nurture the church members and their families. Literature evangelists made sales to homes and businesses over the whole country and the Faroe Islands. For a period of time the publishing house also ran a printing shop and was able to do most of the work in house. At present it is housed in the union office in Naerum and serves primarily the church members.

Founding

In the early years Seventh-day Adventist publications in Denmark were imported, first from the United States, later from Norway. When *Tidernes Tegn* ("Signs of the Times") began to be printed in Kristiania (Oslo), Norway, in 1879, a number of copies went to Denmark, and in July 1881 *Sundhedsbladet* (health journal) was issued also for both countries.¹

In harmony with a vote taken at the second annual meeting of the Danish Conference at Helligum, 1882, a depot for publications was opened at C. C. Hansen's home in Asaa, and in May 1886 a depot was opened in Copenhagen. In 1889 Denmark had four literature evangelists, who met with strong opposition. A colporteur institute was held in 1892 under the leadership of H. L. Henriksen, and the work began to develop.²

In 1893 C. C. Hansen and H. L. Henriksen organized a private firm, registered under the name C. C. Hansen and Company, which made a contract with the Norwegian Publishing House, Kristiania, to distribute its literature in Denmark. This firm operated in Copenhagen, in the Ebenezer building, Suomisvej 5, København V;³ continued until 1905, when the Danish Conference voted to establish a publishing house in Copenhagen, which they registered in the chamber of commerce under the name "Dansk Bogforlag, København" (Copenhagen Publishing House, also listed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* as Denmark Publishing House). The first publishing committee was composed of the following: P. A. Hansen, chair; J. C. Raft; Jens Olsen, manager; L. Muderspach;

H. L. Henriksen; N. P. Nielsen; and P. Hansen, publishing secretary. In 1906 arrangements were made with the firm of C. C. Hansen and Company to transfer all assets to Dansk Bogforlag, that continued to have its address on Suomisvej.⁴

History

While a publishing house had been established in Copenhagen, the printing continued to be done in Oslo (Kristiania), until high customs duties and World War II forced Dansk Bogforlag to have its books and periodicals printed in Denmark. In the Danish church paper *Missionsefterretninger* for January 1912 the union president, J. C. Raft, who also was the chair for the printing house committee in Norway, wrote: "At our constituency meetings in Norway and Denmark in the summer of 1910 it was . . . decided to set up a joint printing shop and a joint publishing house in Akersgaten 74, Kristiania. This arrangement was put in effect January 1, 1911. . . . The new company name was "Skandinavisk Bogforlag" (Scandinavian Publishing House)." In books and magazines "Sundhedsbladets Trykkeri" (Sundhedsbladets's Printing House) was still stated as the printer.⁵ Dansk Bogforlag was then operated as a branch office to Skandinavisk Bogforlag under the name "Copenhagen Branch," according to the yearbook, but with the corporate name "Dansk Bogforlag."⁶ From 1928 there was a change in status. Dansk Bogforlag was no longer listed as a branch office, but under the name "Copenhagen Publishing House."⁷

During the World Wars I and II and in the years between there was a great demand for spiritual books with emphasis on prophecies and the end time. To meet this interest and to share the Advent hope, a number of books were written by Adventist leaders and evangelists and published for sale for a group of full-time and part-time literature evangelists. This was the golden time of book sales from the publishing house. Many got their first contact with the church through this literature, before they later made the decision for baptism and church membership. Further down in this article follows a list of the more prominent books. Wartimes, however, also had its restrictions on free movement and trade. On November 27, 1940, a ban was issued by the German occupation forces against traveling around with wares in certain districts in Jutland, which meant that our literature evangelists were excluded from meeting 1 million people out of a population of 3.8 million. By direct contact to the Ministry of Justice, Dansk Bogforlag succeeded in getting exception for three married workers in the closed zone. For that same year the manager of the Danish publishing house reported sales of 25,101 bigger and smaller books, 41,899 tracts, and 256,270 periodicals.⁸

In 1966 Dansk Bogforlag moved from Copenhagen to Odense,⁹ where it was temporarily housed in the basement of the Adventist church at Hunderupvej 51, until it moved into a new building at Boerstenbindervej 4, which was dedicated on June 26, 1967.¹⁰ The new manager purchased an office Rotaprint offset printer, and the printing of Sabbath School lessons, leaflets, and some of the periodicals started in house. Soon after was added a Roland Favorit, that could print sheets of 46 x 64 centimeters and covers and labels in four colors. A

secondhand Heidelberg cylinder press was also acquired, which was eventually replaced by a new Roland Parva printing machine. A hand compositor was employed in 1968 and trained by printers from the Adventist publishing houses in Germany and Finland to run the machines. Other equipment, such as folding, cutting, stapling and plate casting machines, were purchased as well. And in addition, photo development equipment and other necessary devices were secured. Dansk Bogforlag was now able to do its own printing of books as well as periodicals, labels for the food factory, pamphlets, posters, etc. The bookbinding, however, had to be done outside, and mostly Bertelsen's or Bruun's bookbinding shops in Odense were used!¹¹ With manager, editors, translators, office workers, and added staff also in the printing section, Dansk Bogforlag had at that time 12 employees.¹²

For a period of about 25 years Adventist books and other publications were turned out in good quality and quantities. Literature evangelism, however, had become much more difficult, and except for the Faroe Islands, religious books and periodicals were no longer in demand in the Danish kingdom. The market for health literature, too, was getting strong competition from other sources. Subscriptions for Adventist periodicals were difficult to maintain. And the publishing house became more dependent on mission literature for distribution ordered by the church departments and books produced for the church members.

When the church in 1992 for financial reasons had to reorganize some of its institutions,¹³ Dansk Bogforlag had to close down in Odense and sell the building, machinery and other equipment, and moved in 1993 to the union headquarters in Naerum, north of Copenhagen, where accommodations already existed.¹⁴

New regulations on consumer contracts dramatically affected canvassing in Denmark, which was part of the European Union. On June 9, 2004, a directive from the European Parliament was implemented, when a new law was signed that prohibited unsolicited inquiry at a residence or workplace with sales in mind.¹⁵ This put an effective stop for canvassing in Denmark. At present Dansk Bogforlag primarily serves the church members.

Books

A wide variety of health, educational, family, and religious books have over the years been published in Danish, and a few in Faroese and Greenlandic. Among them a good number of books by Ellen G. White, of which *Steps to Christ*, the Conflict of the Ages series, *Education*, and others also have been sold to the public.

As mentioned earlier, in the first half of the twentieth century a number of spiritual books authored by Danish leaders and evangelists (with the authors mentioned first) were published: Erik Arnesen, *Et Blik på vor Tid* (A Look at Our Time, 1915);¹⁶ J. C. Raft, *Et Ord i rette Tid* (A Word in Due Time, 1916);¹⁷ Emil Åhrén, *De Store Verdensproblemer* (The Great Problems of the World, 1925);¹⁸ L. Muderspach, *Tidernes Vidnesbyrd* (The Testimonies of the Times, 1927); L. H. Christian, *Ved Vendepunktet* (At the Turning Point); Axel Varmer, *I Skyggen af Store Begivenheder* (In the Shadow of Great Events, 1942);¹⁹ Alf Lohne, *Det bedste i livet* (The Best in Life, 1955); Th. Kristensen, *Evigheden banker på* (Eternity Knocks, 1957); and Jens Madsen, *Den skjulte sandhed* (The Hidden

Truth, 1973).^{20, 21} Popular health and family books included Carl Ottosen, *Hold Dig Ung og Staerk på Sundhedens Kongevej* (Keep Young and Strong on the King's Highway of Health); L. Muderspach, *Et Hjem, Sundhedens Bedste Vaern* (A Home, Society's Best Defence); Anker Christensen, *Sunde Hjem* (Healthy Homes).

Among other bestsellers translated into Danish: Arthur S. Maxwell, *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories*;²² *The Children's Hour With Uncle Arthur* and *The Bible Story* (ten volumes); E. W. Emerson, *Footprints of Jesus* (four volumes); Etta B. Degering, *My Bible Friends* (five volumes).

Although the books in Danish were read by many in the Faroe Islands and in Greenland, Dansk Bogforlag also published Earle Albert Rowell, *Prophecy Speaks* (Tá Id á Stendur), *Uncle Arthur's Bedtime Stories* (*Skýmingarløtuni*)²³ and *My Bible Friends* (*Trúfastir vinið*)²⁴ in Faroese, as well as Ellen G. White's *Steps to Christ* (*Kristusimut Aqutissaq*) and *The Great Controversy* (*Akiunerssuaq*) in Greenlandic.

In 1977 the manager introduced the "Book Club," with club members receiving a new paperback every month. The series of books would cover important Bible teachings, mission stories, personal experiences, and church history.

Periodicals

Over the years the following periodicals have been published: *Evangeliets Sendebud* (Gospel Messenger, 1901–1927); *Tidens Tale* (Talk of the Time, 1928–1942); *Tidernes Tegn* (Signs of the Times, 1943–1990);²⁵ *Sundhedsbladet* (health journal, 1881–1993); *Missionsefterretninger/Adventnyt* (church paper, 1906–1952/1953–); *Advent Ungdom/Ung Adventist* (youth paper, 1934–1980/1982–2005); *Review and Herald World Edition* (Danish version, 1947–1953); Sabbath school lesson quarterlies for adults and children, mission quarterlies, and an annual Ingathering paper.

Managers/Administrators

J. G. Matteson (1977–1981), C. C. Hansen (1881–1893), C. C. Hansen and H. L. Henriksen (1893–1905), Jens Olsen (1905–1910), Chr. Hedeback (1910–1927), Johan Nielsen (1927–1935), R. F. Jensen (1935–1948), Viggo Thomsen (1948–1958), W. S. Jensen (1958–1966), Boerge Olsen (1966–1970), Aage Andersen (1970–1971), W. S. Jensen (1971–1977), Kaj Pedersen (1977–1984), Erling Berg (1984–1985), Jens Madsen (1985–1992), W. S. Jensen (1992–1993), Tue Westing (1993–1998), Walder Hartmann (1998–2004), Philip Philipsen (2004), Sven Hagen Jensen (2004–2007), Daniel Birch (2007–2010), Thomas Müller (2012–2014), Jan Nielsen (2016–2019), Thomas Müller (2019–)

SOURCES

Andersen, Aage. "Dansk Bogforlag indviet den 26. juni." *Adventnyt*, August 1967.

Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia. Second Revised Edition. Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996. S.v. "Danish Publishing House."

Pedersen, Kaj. *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* (The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Denmark). Naerum: Dansk Bogforlag, 2007.

Schantz, Hans Joergen. *I troens bakspejl* (In the Mirror of Faith). Naerum: Dansk Bogforlag, 1990s.

Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook. Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912, 1929.

NOTES

1. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, Second Revised Edition (1996), s.v. "Danish Publishing House."
2. Ibid.
3. Margrethevej 5 until 1927, when there was a change of street name; Dansk Kulturarv; Lokalthistorisk Billedsamling (via Det Kongelige Bibliotek); www.danskkulturarv.dk/indhold/margrethevej-blev-aendret-til-suomisvej-i-1927/.
4. Ibid.
5. Aage Andersen, *DB*, unpublished notes for a paper on Dansk Bogforlag received by email on September 24, 2019, 7.
6. "Scandinavian Publishing House," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1912), 182, 183.
7. "Copenhagen Publishing House," *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1929), 301.
8. Aage Andersen, *DB*, unpublished notes for a paper on Dansk Borforlag received by email on September 24, 2019, 12, 13.
9. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, second revised edition (1996), s.v. "Danish Publishing House."
10. Aage Andersen, "Dansk Bogforlag indviet den 26. juni," *Adventnyt*, August 1967, 1–3.
11. Knud Erik Winther-Jensen, hand composer, email message to author, October 11, 2019.
12. Aage Andersen, telephone message to author, October 3, 2019.
13. Kaj Pedersen, "Adventisternes livssyn praeger flere institutioner," *Syvende Dags Adventistkirken i Danmark* (Naerum: Dansk Bogforlag, 2007), 105.

14. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, second revised edition (1996), s.v. "Danish Publishing House."
15. Law No. 451 of June 9, 2004, about certain consumer contracts. The law does not apply to the Faroe Islands and Greenland.
16. Published in five editions and translated into Swedish and Finnish; more than two hundred thousand copies in sold the Nordic countries.
17. Published in six editions and fifty-five thousand copies sold in Denmark and Norway. The Danish and Norwegian written languages were so close that they were well understood in both countries.
18. The author was Swedish, and in tens of thousands of copies of the book was published in Swedish, Finnish, Norwegian, and Danish.
19. This book was an adapted shorthand version of Varmer's lectures in 1939–1940 in Copenhagen on Bible prophecy and the Adventist message in its fullness, and was sold by many eager literature evangelists during World War II and spread all over Denmark.
20. Sixty thousand copies sold (it was also translated into Greenlandic). For more information, Hans Joergen Schantz, *I Troens Bakspejl* (In the Mirror of Faith) (Naerum: Dansk Bogforlag), 48–100.
21. For more information about the authors and their books and the times in which they were written: Hans Joergen Schantz, *I Troens Bakspejl* (In the Mirror of Faith) (Naerum: Dansk Bogforlag), 48–100, and Aage Andersen, *DB*, unpublished notes for a paper on Dansk Bogforlag received by e-mail on September 24, 2019, 7–12.
22. The first volume was published in 1926, and 11 more volumes followed.
23. Forty-five thousand copies sold by missionary literature evangelist Ib Jensen (45 years of service) in a population of only 49,270 (2017).
24. Sixteen thousand copies sold by Ib Jensen.
25. When *Tidernes Tegn* stopped after 1990, *Fokus* (Focus) was published for two years as a periodical to be shared with contacts and interests of the church. Later from 1914 to 1917 *Nyt Fokus* (New Focus) was published as a 16-page monthly in three thousand copies, which were shared by door-to-door visitation.

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