



*Publishers in Latin America provide lessons in faith.*

*by Isaac Phiri*

# *Hope for* Latin America

**B**ogotá, Colombia, is without a doubt one of the more beautiful places I have visited. After a nerve-racking drive through traffic, my hosts and I finally made it to the CLC bookstore. The small but well-organized premises were a striking contrast to the chaotic drive we had just survived. A CLC staffer pointed out the broad range of titles, mostly imports from the United States and other countries in Latin America. I was encouraged that Christians in this politically troubled nation could access books that speak to their souls. I was amazed by how calm and focused Colombian publishers and distributors were despite the tumultuous events in their country.

Quito, Ecuador, is smaller than most capital cities in Latin America. The vision and passion of the publishers who gathered there, however, were big. Christian publishers from Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Honduras, Paraguay, Uruguay, Peru, and Mexico spent days in deep and intense conversations. They discussed how to generate good books and other resources and how to increase distribution. These publishers were not oblivious to the conditions around them, but focused on having a positive impact in their nations through publishing.

Buenos Aires is the sprawling capital city of Argentina, a country with a proud history that, unfortunately, is marred by episodes of dire economics and poor governance.

Latin American publishers meeting there were neither distracted by the city's glamour, nor by the worsening economic and political conditions. Their focus was how to get their books to the public—to reach more people for Christ.

Here at Cook's international division, we pay very close attention to developments around the world that have an impact on the growth of publishing initiatives in different countries. Our hearts sink whenever something happens that is a threat to viable publishing. Some memories are still fresh.

A financial crash in South East Asia devastated publishing businesses in Hong Kong, Singapore and the Philippines. Torrential rains flooded bookstores and warehouses in Korea. Legal threats to Christian publishers in Russia and other former Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe. Extreme religious fundamentalism in South Asia. The collapse of the Rand in South Africa. Anarchy in Côte d'Ivoire and Zimbabwe. The list goes on.

We are also concerned by news from Latin America. Argentina's political and economic chaos. The uncertainty in Venezuela. Natural disasters in Honduras and Ecuador. The collapse of peace initiatives in Colombia. The harsh economic conditions in many other Latin American countries. We fear the impact of these developments on publishing in these countries.

Visiting that bookstore and warehouse in Bogotá, or listening to publishers in Buenos Aires, however, brings hope that all is not lost. They demonstrate resilience beyond our understanding. There is a sense of calling that is stronger than the impact of the political and economic circumstances. These publishers seem to know in a special way that there is Someone stronger on their side. "It is with this conviction that we live in these difficult times," says Beatriz Buono, of Certeza Argentina (p. 9).

Therefore, the struggles of publishers in Latin America, some of which are addressed in this issue of *InterLit*, serve as a lesson in faith. They teach publishers in similar circumstances—in Africa, Asia, and Central and Eastern Europe—to hope even when there appears to be no reason to hope.

Think of Brazil. There was a time when military despondence had left that country in a virtually hopeless state. Today, despite some ongoing challenges, Brazil has one of the most vibrant publishing industries outside North America and Western Europe. There is always hope. ❖