



## MEXICO

# A BREATH OF LIFE FOR CUPSA

Salvador Segura Cervantes, CUPSA's general manager in Mexico, is determined to bring new life and vitality to his organization's work.

In the offices of Casa Unida de Publicaciones S.A. (CUPSA) in Mexico, there is a beautiful book. It is not beautiful because of its appearance, but rather has become beautiful as time has passed. Government seals and stamps fill the pages of this book of minutes. The date on the first page is "August 26, 1921." Written 79 years ago, its pages speak of a "General Inventory" and a "Balance Sheet" of

like *La Pintura de Miguel Angel* [Michelangelo's Paintings] and *Cuentos de Walt Disney* [Stories from Walt Disney]. These titles, together with the names of such publishing houses as Aguilar and Espasa Calpe, show that CUPSA truly began with an evangelical purpose and with an openness to the general culture.

Through the years, CUPSA fulfilled its ministry through publishing, distribution, and retail sales. Though not a profitable business in a strictly commercial sense, it became a light for many. Its books featured the work of evangelicals in Mexico. Juan N. Pacoe, the first bishop of the Mexican Church, and J. Trinidad Ramírez, a respected leader, played an important part in directing CUPSA in the 1930s. CUPSA grew and gained prestige by publishing the work of Gonzalo Baez Camargo, author, intellectual, university professor, and renowned journalist who wrote under the pen name of Pedro Gringoire. It also published Federico J. Huegel's books, which are still selling well today.

Many people devoted their talents and time to provide a legacy for those who followed in their footsteps.

Though they are no longer present, their testimonies and works remain.

### *Inert and inactive*

Despite its solid origins and long tradition, CUPSA began a long decline. A series of bad management decisions placed the ministry in jeopardy. The structure of CUPSA has not been complex: a group of stockholders, a board of directors, a manager and a few employees. In the recent past, the stockholders did not hold the board of directors accountable. The board failed to pay sufficient attention to staff concerns and the manager took advantage of the situation. The details range from indolence and incompetence to the abuse of trust and outright corruption. CUPSA cut its staff to the bare minimum. Donations ceased. Such things left CUPSA inert and inactive.

The management was mishandled continuously for six to eight years. Perhaps this is not a long time, but it was enough for CUPSA to lose an

important place in the religious publishing market.

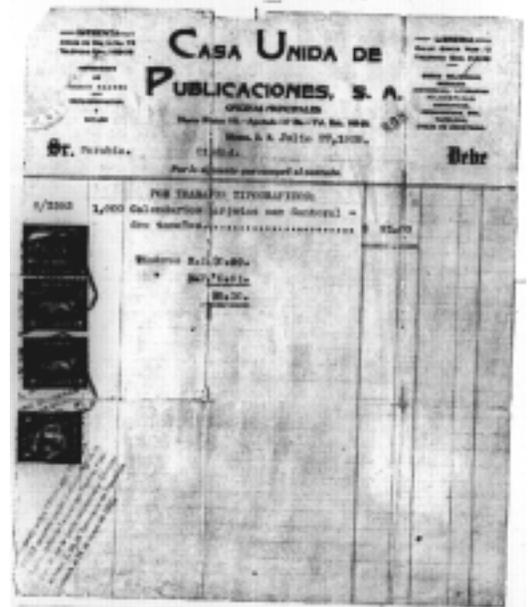
Other evangelical organizations gained prominence. These included Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, La Puerta de la Fe, Maranatha, Casa Nazarena de Publicaciones,

## *Reviving the dead was not easy.*

"Assets and Liabilities." They speak of inventory received and verified August 31, 1921. The pages are signed by an accountant, Gamaliel Hernández, and a manager, Andrés Osuna.

CUPSA began operations on September 1, 1921. Its board of directors included representatives from Presbyterian and Methodist denominations who shared a common purpose to make good Christian books available to Mexican evangelicals.

CUPSA began with an inventory of mostly Christian and evangelical books, such as *Vida de Jesucristo* [Life of Jesus] or *Sermones de Wesley* [Wesley's Sermons]. The inventory also lists titles



A 1928 invoice for typography done for CUPSA.

and others. None of them can replace CUPSA. Only CUPSA can fill its niche.

### *Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation*

The board determined it would work to see CUPSA rise and walk again. The Bible is filled with examples of people who were brought back from the brink of death. In 2 Kings 4:34, Elisha "got on the bed and lay

upon the [Shunammite woman's] boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out upon him, the boy's body grew warm." Reviving the dead was not an easy task.



A Canadian check with payment in Spanish coin.

Some fiscal statements had been completed with disorderly or even lost documentation, something which by law is severely punished in Mexico. The board of directors assigned Elisha's task to Cesáreo Martínez Morales, a management consultant. Internal and external inspections were conducted. Inventory records were brought up to date. An agent was hired. Fiscal statements that had not been done were completed. Though there are still some missing details, the danger is now past.

Martínez and CUPSA's board of directors cut costs. They changed the location of the bookstore to a more strategic venue. On March 13, 2000, they held an inspiring dedication service for their new bookstore. Presiding Bishop, Graciela Alvarez Delgado, and three superintendents of the district attended the ceremony. Also present were Abner Alaniz Rangel (board president), Horacio Aguilar M. (board secretary), Alejandro Romero Pedraza (agent and auditor), Ernesto Arrioja Juárez (stockholder), Samuel Martínez, Moisés Morales, and José Vázquez (members of the board). Cesáreo

Martínez Morales served as Master of Ceremonies.

For an entire year, Cesáreo Martínez dedicated himself to giving the moribund CUPSA mouth-to-mouth resuscitation so that it would not die. Once the immediate fiscal crisis was resolved, the board sought a new direction for the work. They hired

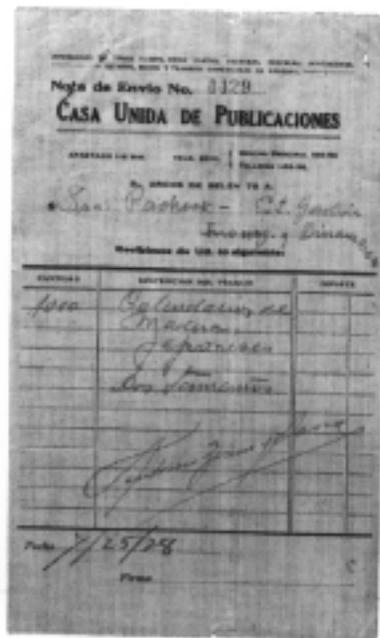
Salvador Segura Cervantes, a publicist, as the general manager for CUPSA.

The breath of life remaining in CUPSA was its role as Mexico's distributor for the well-known devotional booklet, *Aposento Alto* [The Upper Room]. Carmen M. Gaud, the international editor for this publication, was willing to work with CUPSA and expressed confidence in its new management. As a result, with Segura's leadership, CUPSA has begun a small promotion campaign with the slogan, *La oración está aquí* [Prayer is here], where the logo of "The Upper Room" and the subtitle *en el corazón de usted* [in your heart] serve as a play on words.

Segura seeks to strengthen the distribution side. He is gradually working to reorganize and supply product. He has even

dubbed this project "Operación Hormiga" [Operation Ant].

Segura has also drafted plans for a direct mail campaign to obtain donations. His appeal begins, *Donaría usted su corazón a quien lo necesitara* [You'd give your heart to someone who needed it]. He continues, *no nos dé todo su corazón, tan solo un latido* [don't give us your heart, just a heartbeat]. Segura sees his efforts as another way to continue infusing life into CUPSA. ♦



A note acknowledging receipt of 1,000 calendars.

## International PUBLISHING EVENTS

**October 3-7, 2000**

CCMI Publisher Retreat, Manila, Philippines  
www.ccmi.org

**October 9-10, 2000**

"Publishing at the Speed of Light: Christian Publishing in the Net Age," CCMI Publisher Consultation with the Association of Christian Publishers of Hong Kong  
www.ccmi.org; www.abec.com.br

**October 10-13, 2000**

Liber 2000, International Book Fair, Barcelona, Spain  
liber@firabcn.es

**October 18-23, 2000**

Frankfurt International Book Fair, Frankfurt, Germany  
www.frankfurt-book-fair.com

**October 23-27, 2000**

Litt-World, Media Associates International, Hoddesdon, England  
www.littworld.org

**October 29-November 4, 2000**

Nigeria Christian Booksellers Convention, Jos, Nigeria  
ichinv.j@jos.rcl.nig.com

**November 8-10, 2000**

"Developing Relevant Books for Brazil," CCMI Publisher Consultation with Associação Brasileira de Editores Cristãos, São Paulo, Brazil  
www.ccmi.org

**November 22-26, 2000**

Salon de l'Education, Paris, France  
www.salon-education.org

**January 28-February 3, 2001**

Christian Booksellers Association Expo, Louisville KY USA  
www.cbaonline.org

**March 11-22, 2001**

Marketing, Sales & Distribution, ICPI, Colorado Springs, CO USA  
www.ccmi.org

**March 18-23, 2001**

Jerusalem International Book Fair, Jerusalem, Israel  
www.jerusalembookfair.com