

La Iglesia Luterana
La Santa Cruz:
A symbol of God's mercy

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Preface

I had the privilege of serving as vicar of la Iglesia Luterana la Santa Cruz (Holy Cross Lutheran Church) from June 1997 to August 1998. In a land dominated by Catholicism, Santa Cruz stands as a light on a hill, reflecting the glorious light of the gospel. The history of Santa Cruz, however, demonstrates how the devil will use whatever means possible to try to dull and even extinguish that light. The devil used money, personalities, culture, and even the government to try to hinder the gospel. Santa Cruz today is a testament to God's love and mercy. The gospel truly has power.

I encountered a few obstacles as I researched this paper. The members of Santa Cruz had taken minutes for all congregational meetings from the very founding of the congregation. Over the years many have been lost or destroyed. The ones that I did find were buried in a desk in the basement of the church, along with some scattered baptismal and marriage records. I organized these records and they are now safeguarded in the church library. Regrettably, no records exist from the 1960's nor 1970's.

In those drawers in the basement of the church, I also found stacks of letters dated at the time of the split with Pastor Dominguez. Thomas Zimdars in his essay, "The History of the Church 'La Santa Cruz': How this church became affiliated with the WELS," laments the fact that correspondence from this era was not available.¹ These letters shed more light on the controversy with Pastor Dominguez.

I would like to thank the Concordia Historical Institute of St. Louis, Missouri, for their help in researching this topic. Many reports and letters were found allowing me to

¹ Zimdars, Thomas, "History of the Church "La Santa Cruz":How this church became affiliated with the WELS," March 15, 1993: 2. Located in the essay file of the library of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

see Missouri's perspective of Santa Cruz. Again, regrettably nothing was found dating from the 1960's and 1970's.

I would also like to thank Victoria Segovia de Contreras and Elvia Flores de Aguilar, both life long members of Santa Cruz. They gave me interesting perspectives and helped me tie the information together. A special thank you also to the Pastors Larry Schlomer, Paul Hartman, and Eduardo Vazquez for their help and support in this project.

To help in understanding the *sitz im leben* of the congregation this essay will first briefly give background information concerning Monterrey, Pastor Felix Segovia, and the political climate in Mexico. It will then discuss the history of the church from its founding in 1941 until 1984 when Santa Cruz joined in fellowship with WELS. To God be the glory!

Andrew Schroer, March 1999.

La Iglesia Luterana La Santa Cruz: A symbol of God's mercy

The City of Monterrey

Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico is located just under 300 miles West of the tip of Texas.¹ Dr. F.C. Streufert, former Secretary of Missions for the Missouri

Synod, in an article dated March 1944, describes the Monterrey of his day:

Monterrey's population is about 250,000. It is called "the little Chicago" of Mexico. It has foundries, furniture, factories, woolen mills. It is the railroad center—travel and distributing center—citrus fruits, peaches, apples, grapefruit, grapes, pecans, wheat corn—irrigation—dry farming.²

Today Monterrey is still considered "the Chicago of Mexico," though it's not quite so little. As of 1997 Monterrey had a population of 1,255,456.³ Monterrey is very distinct from many other parts of Mexico. Due to its strategic position in the North and its thriving industry, Monterrey is influenced much more by American culture than other parts of Mexico. Unlike the majority of the country, which has a small middle-class in comparison with the United States, Monterrey has a rather sizable middle-class.

Pastor Segovia

Felix Segovia Fraga was born on November 19, 1900 in Villadama (just outside Monterrey), Nuevo León, Mexico.

Baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, he became a Methodist as a youth, attended the Lawrence Institute at Monterrey, continued his studies at the Lydia Patterson Institute at El Paso, Tex., and from there went to the Southern Methodist University at Dallas.⁴

¹ For map of Mexico see Appendix 7.

² Streufert, F.C., "The Story of Development of our Missions in Mexico," 1944. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

³ 1997 Information Please Almanac. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1997): 231
The metropolitan area is estimated at more than four million.

⁴ Bewie, W.H., "Felix Segovia—Spanish Lutheran," The Lutheran Witness, Vol. 58. No.4 (Feb.21, 1939): 58.

It was there in Dallas that he met Elizabeth Escobedo. They married in 1928.⁵

Pastor Segovia served *la Iglesia Metodista de Dallas*⁶ for four years. He later moved on to Austin, Texas. It was there in Austin that a good friend and former Methodist pastor, Cesar Lazos, first introduced Segovia to Lutheranism. Lazos, who at that time was associated with the LCMS, introduced Segovia to W.H. Bewie, a Missouri Synod pastor, who was serving as a professor at Concordia Lutheran College there in Austin. Professor Bewie wrote of their first meeting:

We discussed the chief differences between the Lutheran Church and the Methodist Church, the means of grace, the Church and the ministry, the person and the office of Christ. But especially did we discuss the question, vital to Methodism, whether man in his conversion can in any degree cooperate with God. On this point, my friend was a thoroughgoing Methodist. He believed very strongly not only that man can, but *must* cooperate with God if his conversion is to come about. Rev. Segovia was a synergist...⁷

Only a short while later, in November of 1935, Pastor Segovia was transferred to Fort Worth. There he got to know Pastor V. Behnken, again of the Missouri Synod, and began to study Walther's Law and Gospel. In 1936, Pastor Felix Segovia resigned from the Methodist Church, "because he saw that he was no longer a Methodist, but a Lutheran."⁸ Pastor Segovia studied at Concordia College in Austin and also founded a Mexican mission there. Then in June 1941, he was called to serve as missionary to the city of Monterrey.

Pastor Segovia is remembered fondly by his former members. To them, Pastor Segovia was a poet and a powerful preacher. Elvia Flores de Aguilar, who has been a

⁵ To this day, Lelita, as everyone calls her, claims her American heritage. Switching from her very proper Spanish, she will say with a smile and a strong Texas accent, "Born and raised in Dallas, Texas!"

⁶ That is, "The Methodist Church of Dallas."

⁷ Bewie, op. cit.

⁸ Ibid.

member for over forty years remembers Pastor Segovia in this way, "I would consider him a very gifted orator. He had a way of dramatizing his sermons. He had a very strong and emotional voice...He was very fatherly..."⁹ Pastor Segovia's daughter Victoria said of her father, "His life was dedicated to the church..."¹⁰ Pastor Segovia did however have his weaknesses. As will be demonstrated later in this essay, Pastor Segovia at times would show some evangelical tendencies. Legalism and ecumenism can be seen in both his preaching and actions.¹¹

The political climate in Mexico

Both Pastor Segovia and his friend Pastor Lazos were very important to the Missouri Synod given the political situation in Mexico at the time. Foreign missionaries were not allowed to serve in Mexico. Already back in 1928, the Missouri Synod, had seen such a need for native pastors, "Only a person born in Mexico can become a pastor or missionary there. We shall have to find native workers if after a few years of grace our mission is not to be shut down."¹²

The problem was that due to past abuses by the Roman Catholic Church, both the government and people of Mexico had developed a love/hate relationship with the Church.¹³ Over 95% of the country was decidedly Catholic,¹⁴ and yet anti-church and

⁹ Flores de Aguilar, Elvia. Personal Interview. 14 July 1998

¹⁰ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria. Personal Interview. 17 July 1998.

¹¹ See Appendix 1 for a translation of various devotions written by Pastor Segovia.

¹² Lazos, Cesar., "A Call from Mexico City," The Lutheran Witness, Vol. 59, No. 24 (Nov. 26, 1940): 411.

¹³ For more background on Church/State relations, Brian Dose gives a good summary in his essay, "Lutherans in Mexico," located in the essay file at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

¹⁴ This is the percentage cited by Pastor Eggert in 1978. The percentage of Catholics in Mexico is usually listed at well over 90%. Though the Catholic Church is now separated legally from the government, it demonstrates all the characteristics of a State Church. According to the World Christian Encyclopedia only one in four Catholics in Mexico makes the minimum requirement for church attendance (p.490).

anti-clerical sentiment abounded. Pastor Rupert Eggert describes the political situation in Mexico in the early years of this century:

At the end of the War of the Revolution, the Constitution of 1917 limited the activities of the church...with the result that clergy of the church was forbidden to found or direct primary school; the establishment of religious orders was prohibited; all public worship was to be under the supervision of the government; even the church buildings were to be government property; the clergy was required to register with the government. The clergy was disfranchised and forbidden to hold public office. Aliens were prohibited from ministering to Mexicans. Though these restrictions were directed primarily against the Roman Catholic Church they applied equally to other denominations.¹⁵

Already by 1936 it could be seen that the government was not going to enforce these laws too strictly:

Already the government is showing a more conciliatory attitude. Wide attention was given to a recent address of President Cardenas in Guadalajara, in which he declared that the religious question had been given overimportance; that the main aim of his administration is social and economic transformation; and that the government should not promote antireligious campaigns, thus sowing discord and impeding constructive accomplishment.¹⁶

It was not until 1993, however, that the government officially allowed foreign missionaries to serve in Mexico.

Governmental control did play an important role throughout the history of Santa Cruz. The government has always owned the church building and the former parsonage. As will be seen later, during the scare of communism in the late 1960's and early 70's there was a fear of the government shutting down the church.

¹⁵ Eggert, Ruppert E., "Christianity in Mexico," World Mission Seminary Conference, El Paso, Texas. 1978. Located in the essay files at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

¹⁶ "Modifications of the Mexican Government Attitude Allows Reopening of Churches," Concordia Theological Monthly, Vol. 7, No. 11 (Nov. 1936): 864-865.

The 1940's

The beginnings of a church

We left Austin Texas on the June 26. We slept that night in Cotulla, Texas. We spent two nights in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas, Mexico. We left Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas on the first Sunday of July 1941, and we arrived in Monterrey that same day.¹⁷

Pastor Felix Segovia arrived in Monterrey with his wife and seven children (two more would be born there) on a hot Sunday evening in the Summer of 1941. During his first few months in Monterrey, Pastor Segovia kept a log of his work. The title page of this log reads as follows: A book about the history and work of Pastor Felix Segovia F., missionary of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Monterrey, N.L., Mexico.¹⁸

In this log, Pastor Segovia describes his first catechism classes in Monterrey:

I had my first Catechism classes in the city of Monterrey with a husband and wife, Mr. José Medina and his wife Mrs. Sara Luján de Medina in our house at Zuazua #224 Nte., on August 24 and 25, 1941.¹⁹

For those first months, Segovia lived and worked out of his home on Zuazua Street, which at that time was on the edge of downtown Monterrey.

Due to the fact that he grew up in Monterrey, Pastor Segovia had many family and friends living in and around the city. One by one he visited them, sharing the precious news of the gospel. God began to bless the work of Pastor Segovia. Then however, during the month of November of that same year Segovia was struck with a terrible case of bronchitis. He was not able to work the whole month. His spirits nevertheless remained high. He wrote on November 29 regarding his classes and evangelism calls:

¹⁷ Segovia, Felix. Personal log. p.1.

¹⁸ Ibid. For a copy of this title page, see Appendix 2

There are moments that God gives us in life that are worth more than one hundred years that we could live. What we say and do in that instant is worth more than everything that we could say and do in the rest of our lives. Therefore we need to wait for such moments attentively, and then we should say what must be said and do what must be done, and whatever happens, happens.²⁰

On December 21, 1941 at 10:00 AM, a small group of 12 (which included Pastor Segovia's family²¹) celebrated their first worship service at J. Mendez #530. That afternoon at four o'clock another service was celebrated with basically the same group. La Iglesia Luterana la Santa Cruz would continue to conduct services every Sunday morning and evening (and also every Wednesday evening) throughout Pastor Segovia's ministry.

Pastor Segovia did not only work among family and friends. According to his daughter Victoria, he would literally talk to anyone about the gospel. He converted one of the oldest members of the congregation, Mrs. Angela Rueda, in a bus station. Victoria tells how her father once walked all day to visit a lady on the north side of town, and upon introducing himself, she chased him off, hitting him on the head with a broom. For some reason, Pastor Segovia went back. The woman eventually became a member.²²

After a year of work, twenty adults were taking adult instruction courses and thirty children were being instructed.²³ In that same year Pastor Segovia was named director of the monthly periodical Noticiero Luterano (The Lutheran News)²⁴ A position

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid. p.3

²¹ Mrs. Segovia was not at that first service. Pastor Segovia writes in his log that she was in Dallas due to health problems. During those first years in Monterrey, she would make frequent trips to Dallas. According to her daughter, Victoria, these trips were due to the fact that Mrs. Segovia had a hard time adapting to life in Monterrey.

²² Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, op. cit.

²³ Segovia, Felix, "Primicias de la Iglesia Luterana en Monterrey, México," Noticiero Luterano, Vol. 7, No. 13 (Oct. 1942): 3.

²⁴ Later called Noticiero de la Fe (Faith News).

that he held until 1957. Segovia had been a contributing writer for this periodical dating back to 1937.

Dr. F.C. Streufert in his previously mentioned article describes the situation in which this young mission found itself in 1944:

At present [Pastor Segovia] has a communicant membership of 15. A class of 25 adults and a class of 50 children are being instructed at present. Four families with 4 or 5 adult children each moved from Hidalgo to Monterrey for the express purpose of being instructed for membership. Among those received by confirmation is Rev. Segovia's aged father, Apolinar Segovia. The average attendance at the services held is 25; Sunday-school attendance is 10-15. A Saturday School is held at Colonia Victoria²⁵ with about 35 to 50 children. This place is about 1 ½ miles distant from the present place of worship. The pastor's home has six rooms. In the dining room (14x16) services are held.²⁶

The purpose of this article was to show the need for a new place to worship and to ask for funds to build a church building. The approximate cost would be \$12,000.²⁷

For these early Lutherans in Mexico, it was very important to have a *templo*²⁸. People flocked daily to Catholic cathedrals to pray. For the Mexican Catholic, a prayer in the church is more powerful than a prayer offered up almost anywhere else. Therefore, large *templos* were and are considered to be necessary by most Mexicans. These buildings also tended to be status symbols for the congregations and pastors.²⁹ The Mexican pastors claimed that large *templos* were necessary outreach tools.³⁰ In a report

²⁵ Cities in Mexico are divided up into smaller sections called "Colonias."

²⁶ Streufert, *op. cit.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ That is, "Temple" or "Church Building"

²⁹ The pride congregations feel for their church buildings can be seen for example in an article on the "Templo" of Santa Cruz, in the March 1951 *Noticiero de la Fe*. Pastor Paul Hartman, former friendly counselor to Mexico, states that there has been an over-emphasis on buildings in Mexico. Reports written by field coordinators for Missouri in the 1950's also show how the small missions in Mexico were consistently asking for newer and larger buildings.

³⁰ Mayer, H.A., "Additions to the Mexico Report," September 1952: 2. (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

on the 1956 Mexican Conference, a Mr. Garcia from the San Pablo congregation in Mexico City gave some insight to this issue:

[Mr.Garcia] insisted that he was not personally too greatly concerned whether San Pablo had a church or not. He could worship in the Capilla³¹ with complete satisfaction because his only concern was for the word of God. However, he explained in great detail that the Mexican looks with contempt upon a Capilla. He is accustomed to large churches and cathedrals and unless there is something there that draws his attention, it will be very difficult to interest him in the church.³²

Monterrey, however, would not have a *templo* until 1951. During the interim, however, the church continued to grow. On Palm Sunday, 1945, for example, there were twelve confirmations, one baptism, and one wedding. At that time average attendance on Sunday was 45.³³ In June of 1946, the congregation formed a Men's Group, a Ladies Aid, and later a Youth Group (1952).³⁴ The minutes of these groups reveal family names that still predominate in Santa Cruz: Flores, Segovia, Escobedo, and Gutierrez. These groups have met rather consistently at least one Sunday a month since 1946. The Men's Group made most of the congregational decisions. Major decisions, however, were brought before the entire congregation for a vote. Minutes taken from meetings in the early 1980's demonstrate that women also voted.³⁵

On January 4, 1947, Apolinar Segovia Sandoval, the father of Pastor Segovia passed away at the age of eighty. This is the first known funeral conducted by Pastor Segovia in Monterrey. That same month Germán Dionisio Antonio, the newly born son

³¹ That is, "A small chapel."

³² "Mexican Conference" Oct. 31—Nov.1, 1956: 9,10. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis Missouri).

³³ Segovia, Felix, "Brisas del Campo," *Noticiero de la Fe*, Vol. 10, No. 7 (April 1945): 3.

³⁴ Minutes from the meetings of these groups still exist in the basement of Santa Cruz.

³⁵ These were for the special Voter's Meetings held to deal with Pastor Dominguez, who will be discussed later in this paper.

of Pastor Segovia was baptized.³⁶ Germán would not only have a huge impact on his church, la Santa Cruz, but would also be a key figure in the political turmoil that shook Mexico in the late 1960's and early 1970's.

In the fall of 1945, la Santa Cruz had picked out and bought a plot of land for their *templo* in front of a park called the Alameda, located in downtown Monterrey. By 1947 they had also chosen an architect, Mr. Hermann Noeh of Mexico City. They still however lacked permission ^{from} by the government and also funds. Pastor Segovia therefore took it upon himself to make an impassioned plea to Missouri—using his position at Noticiero de la Fe. In the February 1947 issue he asked that God would show his mercy and kindness by allowing the Missouri Synod to see their great need.³⁷

The Concordia Institute: The First Lutheran Seminary in Mexico

Although they did not yet have a *templo*, God continued to bless the small mission in Monterrey. On September 15, 1947 the Concordia Institute of Mexico³⁸ was opened. The Institute would serve as seminary ^{for} to Mexico throughout the forties and fifties. Sadly, due to lack of candidates, it would close in 1959. Pastor Fred Growcock, who had been serving a Spanish speaking congregation in Corpus Christi, Texas, received and accepted the call to serve as professor of the Institute. The Institute began with two theological students, two in the preparatory school, and a larger number in the "catechitical" department which trained lay assistants.³⁹

³⁶ Segovia, Felix, "La Santa Cruz," Noticiero de la Fe, Vol. 12, Num. 5 (February 1947), p. 8.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ It could not be called a seminary, because the government forbid the creating of new seminaries. A Bible Institute under the auspices of a local congregation was however allowed.

³⁹ "Beckoning harvests: Below the Rio Grande," Oct. 1949. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

By 1949, there were three students under the direction of Professor Growcock. On June 17, 1949 Juan Ibarra graduated as the first Lutheran pastor trained in Mexico.⁴⁰ Pastor Ibarra and his family were sent to the town of Torreón, Coahuila. A member of Santa Cruz, Refugio Gutierrez, had been living in Torreón and had taken it upon himself to start a mission. He already had a small group of confirmed members by the time Pastor Ibarra arrived.⁴¹

According to Victoria Segovia, her father and the students of the Concordia Institute traveled to neighboring cities as far away as Saltillo,⁴² where they had prospects. In these places they set up mini-missions. They taught for a day and then went back.⁴³ In a report concerning the Concordia Institute dated November 25, 1947, Professor Growcock lists some of the work that the seminary students were to do: teach Sunday School classes, Bible Classes, Confirmation Classes, do canvassing, make church absenteeism calls, do some secretarial work connected with a parish, etc.⁴⁴

The Kindergarten in Colonia del Norte

It was also at this time that a kindergarten was founded in Colonia Del Norte, which as the name suggests, was on the North side of town. The property was donated by the Lutheran Women's League of Texas in 1945. The school was "officially" founded in 1950.⁴⁵ It contained three rooms. Classes were taught at the kindergarten and first

⁴⁰ Pastor Ibarra also holds another first. According to his wife and daughters, Pastor Ibarra (who by trade was a chemist) was the first man to sell soap in powder form in Mexico. According to Missionary Larry Schlomer, Pastor Ibarra's dying wish was that his church, El Redentor, change over to WELS. They joined with WELS the next year (1989-1990).

⁴¹ *Noticiero de la Fe*, Vol. 15, No. 12 (Sept. 1949): 8.

⁴² About an hour and a half West of Monterrey by bus.

⁴³ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴ Growcock, Fred, "Monterrey Bible School." LCMS Board for North and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri)

⁴⁵ As early as 1947, classes were being taught by a Miss Foss.

grade levels. In 1952, the school had an enrollment of 27 children.⁴⁶ In 1953 a Mrs. Marquez was given charge of the school. A Miss Rangel served as the other teacher. Although religious education was a part of the curriculum, there is some confusion whether both teachers were members of the congregation.⁴⁷ The correspondence from Missouri officials reveals that this school always seemed to be struggling. Santa Cruz never could make its budget, so the Missouri Synod had to keep increasing its subsidy.⁴⁸ According to one report, the school also struggled because Roman priests in the neighborhood sought to destroy it. Their efforts failed to close the school.⁴⁹ After 1956, however, there is no mention of the school. It ended up closing due to lack of financial support by the congregation.

The foundation has been laid...it's time to build

In 1947, the prayers of the members of la Santa Cruz concerning their *templo* were answered:

It was a red-letter day in the history of Mexican Lutheranism when, at their convention in Chicago in 1947, the members of The Lutheran Women's Missionary League resolved to collect \$30,000 for the erection of a church in Monterrey.⁵⁰

By the Fall of 1949, Santa Cruz was finally granted permission to build its *templo*. In April they received a check for \$30,000 from the Lutheran Women's Missionary League.

⁴⁶ Mayer *op. cit.* p. 2.

⁴⁷ Reports submitted to Missouri speak of religious education being done. There were doubts on the part of the Board of Missions whether this truly was being used as an outreach tool. Victoria Segovia mentioned to me that one of the teachers wasn't actually a member of the Church.

⁴⁸ Money issues with the Missouri Synod will be mentioned later.

⁴⁹ "Mexican Conference," Oct. 30—Nov. 1, 1956: 5. LCMS Board for North American and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

⁵⁰ "Beckoning harvests: Below the Rio Grande," Oct. 1949: 8,9. LCMS Board for North American and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).
For an artist's rendering of the new *templo*, see Appendix 4.

On August 26, 1949 they received authorization from the government to build.⁵¹ The Noticiero de la Fe announced in its September 1949 issue that the construction of the *templo* had begun in Monterrey:

Having obtained the proper permits from the federal government of the state, the congregation of the Holy Cross has now begun the construction of its new church. The site, in front of the Alameda Central on the corner of Washington Ave. and Amado Nervo, is undoubtedly the most desirable in the City of Monterrey...⁵²

By the end of the 1940's, la Santa Cruz had at least thirty-one communicant members,⁵³ countless children and prospects, a Seminary, a periodical, and a large *templo* under construction. God was truly blessing this small mission in Mexico.

The 1950's

God continued to bless la Santa Cruz in the 1950's as the congregation grew. Problems with the Missouri Synod, however, soon began to rise up over money issues. Up to this point, the Missouri Synod in its desire to get the work in Mexico going, paid for just about everything. The devil soon began to use money to try to undermine the preaching of the gospel.

The dedication of the new templo

The 1950's, nevertheless, started very well—with a new home for the congregation:

On November 12 [1950] Santa Cruz Lutheran Church at Monterrey, Mexico, was dedicated to the service of the Lord by a day of special services. The speakers at the dedication were the Reverend Cesar A. Lazos of Mexico City, the Reverend W. H. Bewie, field secretary for missions in the Texas District, and the Reverend Felix Segovia, the pastor in Monterrey. Special

⁵¹ As was mentioned earlier, once built, the building would then be handed over to the government and become legally the property of the government.

⁵² Segovia, Felix, "Nuevas," Noticiero de la Fe, Vol.15, No.12 (Sept. 1949): 1.

⁵³ According to the communion registry in Pastor Segovia's log.

greetings were brought by the Reverend Herman A. Mayer, assistant secretary of the Board for Missions in North and South America, The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Mr. Huges, the auditor for synod, and Mrs. Carl Blasig, president of the Texas District of the Lutheran Women's Missionary League, who brought a message on behalf of the National President of the L.W.M.L., Mrs. Sadie Fulk Roehrs.⁵⁴

The new *templo* was built in the style of the Fransiscan Missions of colonial California and had a capacity of about 250 people. It included a bell tower, an office for the Pastor, a "counseling room," a medical clinic, two small apartments, a large basement with classrooms for Sunday School and Seminary classes, a portable stage, and a library (which also was used for the Noticiero de la Fe). Though outside contractors were hired to build the church, all the carpentry, including the pews, altar, pulpit and desks were made by the Gutierrez brothers, Zerapie and Refugio, members of la Santa Cruz.⁵⁵

The public invitation to the dedication service read, "The Catholic Apostolic Lutheran Church of the Holy Cross of Monterrey."⁵⁶ This was the official name of la Santa Cruz. It appears to this author that Pastor Segovia (with the knowledge of the Missouri Synod) was not always very public with the fact that Santa Cruz was not Catholic. To this day the only sign on the front of the church that tells the church's name, is a small sign hidden behind a tree with barely visible letters. In the entrance to the sanctuary, Pastor Segovia left the baptismal font with water in it. This allowed for Catholics to believe that it was holy water. In the sanctuary proper, *via cruces* were hung. *Via cruces* are paintings of the "way of the cross." Catholics pray at each painting

⁵⁴ "Monterrey Church Dedication," District News of the Texas Lutheran Women's Missionary League, Vol. 8, No. 3 (January-February 1951): 1. (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri). For those who prefer to read in German, the January 30, 1951 edition of Der Lutheraner has a three page article on the new building and congregation in Monterrey.

⁵⁵ Segovia, Elizabeth, "Monterrey Reporting," Lutheran Woman's Quarterly, (January 1951): 7. (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

⁵⁶ For a copy of this invitation, see Appendix 3.

following Christ's journey to the cross as a good work and/or penance. The *Via cruce*s were removed when la Santa Cruz joined fellowship with WELS and the baptismal font was moved to the front of the Sanctuary. It no longer contains water except for baptisms.

So:

On that great day [November 12, 1950], at exactly 10 o'clock, a procession converged on the new chapel, and its doors were opened for the first time. Its walls reverberated with hymns of praise, and joyous sounds went forth as the choir intoned the Introit and the congregation broke out into a mighty, "Castillo Fuerte" (A Mighty Fortress). Pastor Lazos of Mexico City preached the sermon.⁵⁷

The Concordia Clinic

This new *templo* was open everyday for the public to enter and pray.⁵⁸ When it opened in 1950 the medical clinic was not yet functional. Mrs. Segovia writes:

The clinic will not be ready to function for a while. We have the promise of doctors who will assist. However, we have no equipment as yet, such as treatment table, X-ray machine, cabinets, supplies, etc. The treatment room and a small waiting room are absolutely bare as of this writing. When we do have the necessary items, we expect the clinic to be open two afternoons a week, which is the system of most clinics. Our son Felix, Jr., is studying medicine here in Monterrey, and we hope that in years to come he will be able to help in the clinic.⁵⁹

The clinic finally opened on October 1, 1954. It was called the *Clinica Concordia*.⁶⁰

Mrs. Marquez, the school teacher, served as the nurse and assistant of the doctor. The doctor serving the clinic was Dr. Passante Raoul Zarate, who was not a Lutheran. In fact, Dr. Zarate was a nominal Catholic and had no desire to become Lutheran. This caused concern for Missouri officials.⁶¹ By November of 1955, Felix Segovia, Jr., was still

⁵⁷ Segovia, Elizabeth *op. cit.* p. 7 (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

⁵⁸ As was seen above, it was therefore viewed as an outreach tool.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p. 8,9.

⁶⁰ That is "Concordia Clinic."

⁶¹ "Mexican Conference," *op. cit.*

This highly disappointed the author of this report who wrote, "This is not mission work."

finishing his studies. At that time he was serving an internship at Berwyn, Illinois. He was still maintaining that he wanted to be a medical missionary.⁶² By 1956, however, it became obvious that Felix Segovia, Jr., had no desire nor plans of serving as a medical missionary in Monterrey.⁶³

As of 1956 the clinic was open from Monday through Friday from 4:00-6:00 PM and then from 8:00-10:00. As far as can be concluded it stayed open for many years, though never officially recognized by Missouri as an outreach of the Church. Victoria Segovia, stated that her brother Germán later served as doctor at the mission (this would be in the late 1960's to early 1970's).⁶⁴

New challenges for the growing mission

On May 6, 1951, Reverend Alfonso de la Fuente, a recent graduate of the Concordia Institute was ordained and installed as associate pastor at Monterrey. Pastor De la Fuente served the Monterrey congregation until 1955, when he was called to begin a new mission in Mexico City.

By 1952, financial issues with Missouri began to come to a forefront. In a detailed report of a trip to Mexico in September of 1952, Dr. Herman Mayer reported:

Pastor De la Fuente regretted that because of lack of funds they are no longer able to give the Spanish Sunday School Leaflets to the children, because they can no longer afford them...Both pastors stressed that we must be ready to meet the competition of the Catholic Church which is constantly giving things away. They do not only give away candy and piñatas, but also shirts and pants and shoes. I fear that both of the men labor under the impression that poor people should not be expected to give anything.⁶⁵

⁶² "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board for Missions in North and South America," November 28, 29:18. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri). The minutes indicate that "internship and further study would leave him 'out of the picture' for about two more years."

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

⁶⁵ Mayer, *op. cit.* p.2.

In that same report, Dr. Mayer mentions a request made by Pastor Lazos of Mexico City:

Lazos raised the question whether a congregation could not spend its money for whatever it pleased. For example, his people want to use their contributions towards the purchase of an organ. They were told they could do this only if they no longer expected support from the Mission Board.⁶⁶

God however continued to bless the outreach effort. That same report of Dr. Mayer showed that in Monterrey, 151 children received religious instruction every Saturday under the supervision of Pastor De la Fuente. Communion registration for 1952 shows up to fifty communicant members.⁶⁷ In an article printed in the September 1954 edition of Noticiero de la Fe, Pastor De la Fuente announced the success of Vacation Bible School that had been conducted that summer. Forty-seven children attended VBS classes at the church and another ninety-eight attended at the school in Colonia Del Norte.

By 1954, Santa Cruz was requesting funds for a chapel to be built on the site of the school in the Colonia Del Norte. In response to this Dr. Mayer had some concerns:

Why cannot the present building be used as a chapel? What could the people do of their own accord? From what source could we take money towards a chapel? How could a possible loan be repaid?

Kindly inquire regarding the 1954 budget of the Santa Cruz congregation. Are they meeting their estimated budget? Last year they remained so far behind that they did not only lapse in their church extension payment but also in other expenses. Impress on the brethren that we appreciate and need regular monthly reports from them.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Taken from Pastor Segovia's log.

⁶⁸ Taken from a letter from Dr. H.A. Mayer to the Reverend Harry Krieger, dated May 24, 1954. LCMS Board for North American and South American Missions (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

By January 1955, the communion registration in Pastor Segovia's log shows at least sixty communicant members.⁶⁹ On November 13 of that year the members of Santa Cruz held a large celebration. They called it a triple commemoration: for the fifth anniversary of their *templo*, the birth of Martin Luther, and the "day of the Lutheran Pastor." A musical program was put on, attended by 125 spectators, not counting children.⁷⁰

On October 30 through November 1, 1956, the Mexican National Conference was held in Monterrey. A 24 page report was prepared by one of the representatives from the Missouri Synod. The name of this representative is not found on the report. The author of the report was very critical of the national pastors, their training, and the financial situation in Mexico.

He was especially critical of Pastor Segovia. He criticized the way in which Pastor Segovia reported on the progress of Noticiero de la Fe. "As usual Pastor Segovia had no written report. He rambled about to no end."⁷¹ Pastor Segovia also provided a "mission report" of Santa Cruz for the year 1956. Average attendance of Sunday services was 600 a month.⁷² During that year there were five baptisms, fifteen adult confirmations, two weddings and two funerals. At that time there were eighteen adults and ten children in confirmation classes being conducted twice a week. Up through November, Pastor Segovia had made 200 missionary visits and 120 pastoral visits.⁷³

⁶⁹ Taken from Pastor Segovia's log.

⁷⁰ Saavedra, Daniel and Flores, Juan, "Informe de los Caballeros de la 'Santa Cruz'," Noticiero de la Fe, Vol. 21, No. 3 (December 1955): 5.

⁷¹ "Mexican Conference," op. cit., p.3.

⁷² According to many members today, both of the Sunday Services were often attended by many members, so this number does not give an accurate count of actual people that attended church.

⁷³ Ibid. p.4.

The author of the conference report told Pastor Segovia that 200 missionary visits was "insufficient to justify the mission activity of the worker for an entire year."⁷⁴ Pastor Segovia and Pastor De la Fuente began to argue with the author of the report on that point. The author simply wrote, "It seems this is one of our problems—to get our men to make more conscious mission calls and to begin to enroll more people for their confirmation classes."⁷⁵

The report continues:

Thereupon Mr. Andres Gonzalez Alcala, the jeweler, read the financial report of the Santa Cruz congregation in Monterrey. This report is interesting for the fact that it records the theft of approximately 6,000 pesos by a young man who the congregation had befriended. It was reported that Mr. Gonzalez now has the money in a strong box at his place of business. Up till that time it was simply kept in the church where it was an open invitation for someone to take it.⁷⁶

On the second day of the conference, the lay delegates put the representative on the spot, pleading for both a new *templo* in Mexico City and a chapel in Colonia Del Norte. The representative responded:

I pointed out that the matter of getting money is not as easy anymore as it used to be. The Board of Directors now has placed certain restrictions, emphasized the tremendous and rapid increase of our budget demands, and that, therefore, congregations would have to give solid evidence that a temple is necessary.⁷⁷

Another financial concern was the traveling expenses to and from conferences:

A word here must be said about the traveling expenses. It seems that in the past Synod paid all the travel and conference expenses for these men, and thereby once again, we have developed a very bad habit in these men...Again I made a large number of enemies of these Mexicans, but I know of no other way to establish order and to train these people in the way things must

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p.16.

go unless at this very point we be absolutely firm and unyielding in our insistence that they abide by the rules of the game.⁷⁸

Pastor Segovia also complained in this meeting that ^{two} Missouri Synod was not educating his daughters to become Christian Day School Teachers:

He is looking for a beca, a scholarship, so that they can study in the United States. One always puts a question mark behind these requests. The Latins are always looking for help. They are not so alert and eager when one asks them to serve the Lord with these things.⁷⁹

There also was a very sad incident that occurred with Pastor Segovia:

In an effort to fault Synod, [Pastor Segovia] claimed that he had been compelled to take the subsidy sent for the salary of Srta. Rangel and to use it for his own household purposes.

At this point I made him repeat this very distinctly, and then I informed him that when any man uses salary or subsidy intended for another purpose, for his own purposes, he is violating the 7th commandment. Pastor Segovia tried to defend himself by claiming that he also had a duty as far as the 4th commandment was concerned, and that the 4th commandment stood first in the law and afterwards the 7th. Of course, he laid himself open there, because I pointed out that the commandments do not contradict one another...After much squirming Pastor Segovia had to confess in the presence of the entire committee that he had done wrong and the he begged apology and that he would repay the debt. By the way, the man will never be able to pay the debt.⁸⁰

In May of 1958, Pastor Segovia requested money again of the Missouri Synod claiming that his present house at Villa Gomez #322 was falling apart and that it was dangerous for the children.⁸¹ In June of that same year Dr. Ott of the LCMS Board for Missions went to Monterrey to meet with the congregation. He told them that they should be content with the help that Missouri was providing for them. According to Dr. Ott, they were receiving more help from the Board of Missions than any other mission.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p.16,17.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 22.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Taken from the minutes of a May 13, 1958 voter's meeting.

Dr. Ott also offered Pastor Segovia the house across the street from the church. This house had formerly been used for the Concordia Institute. Pastor Segovia then asked if he could rent out that house and use the money to pay the rent in the house he was at. Dr. Ott replied with a firm "no." Pastor Segovia then asked for 10,000 pesos to renovate the parsonage, to which Dr. Ott also responded "no." Natividad Segovia, brother to Pastor Segovia, then stood up and told Dr. Ott that Santa Cruz was still a very young church and could not be expected to pay its expenses.⁸² They needed more help. La Iglesia Luterana la Santa Cruz had been in existence for seventeen years at that time. Membership seems to have been well over one hundred if not two hundred.⁸³

At the end of the 1950's Santa Cruz was now no longer a baby mission. With its growth came growing pains. The devil used his tricks to hurt the relationship between Santa Cruz and the Missouri Synod. Santa Cruz would now face different challenges in the coming years, as their Pastor advanced in age and the political climate of Mexico changed.

1960-1984

A detailed study of Santa Cruz's history during the 1960's and 70's is difficult. The LCMS has no documents, correspondence, or the like dating from these decades. The Noticiero de la Fe had been discontinued. The Concordia Institute had been closed down due to lack of students. Worst of all, Santa Cruz has no minutes from any group or meeting during the 1960's and 70's.⁸⁴

⁸² Taken from the minutes of a June 11, 1958 voter's meeting.

⁸³ According to estimates by members today, the church at its height reached as many as four hundred members in the early seventies. Due to the apparent lack of outreach in the 1960's, this could place membership at the end of the 1950's as high as two hundred or more.

⁸⁴ Members say that Pastor Arnulfo Dominguez burned them.

Few new programs seem to have been started at this time. The church seems to have gone on auto pilot. Pastor Segovia was now advancing in years. He no longer had the help of young seminary students. He no longer was under the watchful eye of Professor Growcock and the Missouri Synod. According to Pastor Paul Hartman, the LCMS had decided to leave the Mexican field on its own. "The Pastors and congregations were to administer their own affairs, but the LCMS continued to provide subsidy."⁸⁵ As will be seen, Pastor Segovia also had to deal with some very personal problems concerning his son Germán.

Germán Segovia

To understand what happened with Germán Segovia, one must first know a little about the political climate of Mexico. As was mentioned above, the Constitution of 1917 was highly anticlerical. In 1926, militant Catholics revolted against the government in what is called the Cristero Revolt. By 1929, the government had brutally crushed this revolt. In that same year (1929), the political party that would dominate Mexican politics for the rest of the century was formed. It was originally call *Partido Nacional Revolucionario* and later *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI).⁸⁶ This party completely controlled the Mexican government until the 1980's. Professor Donald Mabry of Mississippi State University, in his essay on the 1968 Mexican Student Movement, describes the effect that this one party system had on Mexico:

In spite of a federalist, democratic constitution, the nation was ruled centrally from Mexico City and the government's political party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI in Spanish), "won" almost every election. Social services were dispensed

⁸⁵ Hartman, Paul. Written Interview. 25 February 1999.

⁸⁶ That is, "The National Revolutionary Party" and "The Institutional Revolutionary Party." "History of Mexico," www.virtualmex.com/history.htm. Downloaded March 2, 1999.

according to political imperatives, not need, and income disparities were increasing.⁸⁷

During the 1960's and 70's as student movements against social injustice were breaking out in the United States, the same also occurred in Mexico. Due to influences from Central America and Cuba, communism and revolution began to be preached on campuses throughout Mexico. In 1968, the government began to brutally oppress these student movements. "The misuse of force had precipitated the mass demonstrations and the continued reliance on repression only exacerbated problems."⁸⁸ On October 2 of that year, Mexican troops fired upon a large crowd of students and innocent spectators in the Tlatelolco Plaza killing dozens, if not hundreds (the number depends on the political views of the person with whom you speak). The truth of this massacre would not come out for some time, because the television and newspapers were owned by influential members of PRI. Germán Segovia was swept up in this student movement.

According to his sister Victoria, Germán had a very caring heart. He saw the poverty of his people and the corruption of the government. He felt it was his duty to raise up arms against these injustices.⁸⁹ It is interesting to note that at this same time Liberation Theology began to take hold in Latin America. Liberation Theology is a mixing of Christian and Marxist thought. It sets forth that the purpose of the Church is to liberate the politically, socially and economically oppressed from the bonds of their oppressors. It advocates rebellion and even armed revolt. Whether or not Germán Segovia was influenced by Liberation Theology is not known. It is however obvious that he was swept up by the spirit of his times.

⁸⁷ Mabry, Donald J., "The 1968 Mexican Student Movement," www.msstate.edu/Archives/Hi...Latin_America/Mexico/students.html. Downloaded March 2, 1999.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

Josefina Quiroz de Hernandez, a member of the congregation in Monterrey, served as secretary for Pastor Segovia during the 1960's. She remembers that Germán and his friends would have secret meetings in the basement of the church. Pastor Segovia asked her to help these young men if they needed anything typed. She remembers being given lists of names, which included names of government officials.⁹⁰ During these years there were even rumors of arms dealing out of Pastor Segovia's house.⁹¹ Victoria admits that for her brother to be involved with the revolutionary group that he was, he would have had to have killed.⁹² Her father, however, maintained that Germán had never killed.⁹³

It is hard to say how much Pastor Segovia actually knew of Germán's activities. In 1971, however, Pastor Segovia cut Germán off from the family because of his subversive government activities.⁹⁴ Then on December 8, 1972, Germán Segovia led a group of revolutionaries and hijacked Mexicana Airlines flight 727-200 out of Monterrey.⁹⁵ According to his sister, when giving his demands, he pleaded with his family to come with him.⁹⁶ Germán and his group of hijackers successfully took the plane to communist Cuba. From there Germán eventually moved to Italy. In 1979, the Mexican government declared amnesty for the hijackers. On December 9, 1979, Germán Segovia returned to Mexico accompanied by the Mexican ambassador to Italy. He once

⁹⁰ Quiroz de Hernandez, Josefina. Personal Conversation. 18 March, 1999.

⁹¹ Having discussed this issue with various members, I soon began to realize that there were many rumors about Germán's activities before and after his death. They cannot be substantiated, but when one looks at what we do know, these rumors seem very plausible.

⁹² Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

⁹³ "Vamos a matar a todos los que tú quieres..." *El Norte*, December 27, 1981: Section A, page 14

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ "Continuarán defendiendo los ideales del pueblo," *El Norte*, December 27, 1981: Section A, page 3

⁹⁶ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

again took an active role in a political organization call *Frente Nacional Contra la Represion*,⁹⁷ continuing his fight against the injustices that he saw around him.

During this time Germán Segovia received multiple death threats. According to his sister and other members of Santa Cruz, he was also being watched ^{scrutinously} by the government. Some members of Santa Cruz worried that the government would do the same to the church.⁹⁸ According to Victoria, Germán returned to Santa Cruz in 1981. Relations were once again restored with his family, though they remained shaky. On December 26, 1981, however, Germán Segovia was found dead in his apartment with a gunshot wound to the head. It was declared a suicide.

Pastor Arnulfo Dominguez

In 1972, Pastor Felix Segovia retired from the pastoral ministry and moved to Chicago to live with his son Carlos Martin, a Missouri Synod pastor.⁹⁹ Pastor Arnulfo Dominguez was called to replace him.

Arnulfo Dominguez was born on August 4, 1922 in Santa Ana, near Toluca, Mexico.¹⁰⁰ His parents were devout Presbyterians. In 1943, Pastor Dominguez graduated from *la Escuela Biblica del Presbiterio del Sur*.¹⁰¹ He then served various parishes in the states of Mexico and Michoacán. Two years into his ministry he married Micol Martinez, the daughter of an ^Eevangelical minister in Agostadero, Michoacán, Mexico. Pastor Dominguez eventually met Pastor Orea Luna, a Lutheran pastor, who would later be very influential in WELS mission work in Mexico. In August of 1952,

⁹⁷ That is "National Front Against Repression."

"Germán Segovia, ¡Presente!" *El Norte*, December 27, 1981, Section A, page 5 (Paid political advertisement).

⁹⁸ Various members commented that they remember seeing strange men watching the church or that visitors would come to the church and ask them strange questions.

⁹⁹ Flores de Cantú, Erinna, "Entrevista al Pbro. Felix Segovia," *El Evangélico*, (October 1994), p.6.

¹⁰⁰ Toluca is located just West of Mexico City.

Pastor Dominguez resigned from the Presbyterian Church.¹⁰² He was recommended to the Concordia Institute by Pastor Lazos of Mexico City along with three other Presbyterian ministers.¹⁰³

Pastor Dominguez attended the Concordia Institute from 1952-1957. He served as vicar at Santa Cruz starting in 1953. He graduated on June 29, 1957.¹⁰⁴ There is no mention ^{of} where he was originally assigned. In 1972, Pastor Dominguez returned to Monterrey. His wife Micol had passed away, and Pastor Dominguez had remarried a woman named Domitila. She would have a profound impact on Pastor Dominguez's ministry in Monterrey.

A house divided...

Mrs. Dominguez was involved in a new political party called *Partido Acción Nacional* (PAN),¹⁰⁵ which at the time was considered subversive. Today PAN has taken a foothold in Mexican politics. It stands in favor of the Catholic Church and against government corruption (though it has often been accused of being corrupt itself). Mrs. Dominguez would openly propagate her political views and according to Victoria Segovia, even had party meetings in the basement of the church.¹⁰⁶

Problems soon arose between Mrs. Dominguez and the members of the congregation. According to Victoria Segovia as well as many others in the congregation, she was a very strong-willed individual who often argued with the other woman of the

¹⁰¹ That is, "The Presbyterian Bible School of the South."

¹⁰² For a copy of his letter of resignation, see Appendix 3.

¹⁰³ Personal letter from Pastor Cesar A. Lazos to Professor Fred Growcock dated August 13, 1952. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions. (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

¹⁰⁴ Taken from a bulletin dated July 11, 1957. LCMS Board for North and South American Missions. (Concordia Historical Institute, St. Louis, Missouri).

¹⁰⁵ That is, the "National Action Party"

¹⁰⁶ Segovia de Contrera, Victoria, *op. cit.*

congregation.¹⁰⁷ According to members such as José Jimenez and Luis Ibarra, Pastor Dominguez's inability to control his wife was the main reason for his downfall.¹⁰⁸ The problem with his wife, however, wasn't the only problem. Although Pastor Dominguez is considered by most a genuinely nice person, many complaints were brought against his ministry. Pastor Paul Hartman described his encounter with Pastor Dominguez in this way, "We felt he was poorly trained and dishonest."¹⁰⁹ So in 1976, Santa Cruz once again called Pastor Segovia to serve as associate pastor to Pastor Dominguez.¹¹⁰

The problems with Pastor Dominguez finally came to a head in 1980. On January 20, 1980, a new Church Council was elected. Porfirio Segovia, who according to his cousin Victoria had been absent from the church for over ten years, was the newly elected president.¹¹¹ Porfirio made no qualms about the fact that he did not like Pastor Dominguez. In that January 20 meeting, Porfirio spoke to Pastor Dominguez on behalf of the congregation about the problems that they had seen in his ministry. Pastor Dominguez replied that if they weren't happy with him that he should resign and ask to be placed somewhere else. Porfirio responded that this wouldn't be necessary. They only wanted him to improve.¹¹² On February 3, 1980, Pastor Dominguez wrote a letter to the Church Council of Santa Cruz, asking for a raise to pay for car and gas expenses.¹¹³ This seems to ^{have been} be the straw that broke the camels back. On February 24, 1980 a specially called voter's assembly of Santa Cruz, with 69 members of the congregation present, sent

¹⁰⁷ According to general consensus of those with whom I spoke.

¹⁰⁸ José Jimenez. Personal Conversation. December 1998.

Luis Ibarra. Personal Conversation. July 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Hartman, op.cit.

¹¹⁰ Flores de Cantú, op. cit. p.6.

¹¹¹ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, op. cit.

¹¹² Taken from Minutes of the Voter's Assembly, 1980 (found in the basement of the church).

¹¹³ Letter from Pastor Dominguez to Church Council dated February 3, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

Pastor Dominguez a letter informing him that he was dismissed as Pastor of Santa Cruz. He was given fifteen days to vacate the parsonage. The reasons for his dismissal were listed:

Difficulty in understanding his sermons (maybe because of lack of study by the pastor), lack of visits to the members of the congregation, offenses to the members and their families, and negligence in the development of his ministerial activities.¹¹⁴

Copies of this letter were sent to the Missouri Synod. It is notable to mention that this group that had dismissed Pastor Dominguez was not the entire congregation. Certain members continued to support him.

On February 27, 1980, the *Sínodo Luterano de México*¹¹⁵ sent these voting members of Santa Cruz a letter.¹¹⁶ They asked for clarification of what Pastor Dominguez was guilty: whether it was heresy, immorality, or not fulfilling his duties as a pastor. They regretted that without clarification, they could not support the dismissal of Pastor Dominguez. The interesting thing about the letter is that it was co-signed by Pastor Dominguez as President of the Synod.

On March 9, 1980, this same voter's assembly of Santa Cruz sent a letter to the President of the Missouri Synod.¹¹⁷ They informed him that they had dismissed Pastor Dominguez for various reasons: incompetence in carrying out his ministerial duties; the behavior of Pastor Dominguez and his family did not comply with I Timothy 3:1-7; that through what the members had observed, his behavior incurred much of what is written

¹¹⁴ Letter to Pastor Arnulfo Dominguez from the Voter's Assemble of Santa Cruz, dated February 24, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹¹⁵ That is, the "Lutheran Synod of Mexico." This is the synod begun and supported by the LCMS in Mexico.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Lutheran Synod of Mexico to Santa Cruz dated February 27, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹¹⁷ Letter from Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz to President of LCMS dated March 9, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

in Galatians 5:19-21¹¹⁸; lack of piety, contentment, and humility. Having warned Pastor Dominguez in the past, these members felt that they had followed well Matthew 18:15-18.

On April 10, 1980, these same members sent another letter to the President of the Missouri Synod with more accusations.¹¹⁹ The letter claimed that Pastor Dominguez was denying the sacraments. It stated that he had denied baptism to the infants of certain members. Their children were baptized at the more liberal Lutheran church in the neighboring city of Guadalupe. What the letter doesn't mention is that at least one of these members was not attending Santa Cruz at this time, but rather that same church in Guadalupe. The letter also accuses him of not showing sympathy at the death of the grandmother of a member.

The letter then informs President Preuss that Pastor Dominguez was continuing to preach in Santa Cruz in defiance of the congregation. In one final plea the letter makes mention of the fact that they were in danger of being shut down by the government because of Mrs. Dominguez's opposition to the Mexican government.¹²⁰ The letter also accused Pastor Dominguez of making the church into a house of merchants, by renting out the apartments of the church.

Various pastors of the Lutheran Church of Mexico sent letters to Santa Cruz asking them to not act too hastily. They were instructed to wait for a meeting of the Synod which was to take place in August. President J.A.O Preuss also sent them a letter

¹¹⁸ This is a very strong accusation, which is never supported.

¹¹⁹ Letter from Voter's Assemble of Santa Cruz to President of LCMS dated April 10, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹²⁰ Though PAN was highly mistrusted by the PRI controlled government, this accusation seems to be rather exaggerated.

On July 2, 1980 an article appeared in El Norte, the leading newspaper of Monterrey. The article was called "*Existen en Monterrey 300 fieles Luteranos.*"¹²⁵ This article seems to be at the least an ill-advised idea of Pastor Dominguez, who allowed himself to be interviewed for it. It maintained that there were 300 faithful Lutherans in Monterrey, referring to the members of Santa Cruz. It explained briefly about the Reformation and spoke out against the Roman Catholic Church. It also was very ambiguous about Pastor Dominguez's view of transubstantiation. It is hard to say if this was his view or a mistake by the interviewer. This article led to even more accusations against Pastor Dominguez.

In response to this letter, Porfirio Segovia took it upon himself to write a letter of apology to the Archbishop of Monterrey:

The opinions of Reverend Arnulfo Dominguez are personal. The position adopted by the Lutheran Church has always and will always be to show profound respect for the Holy and Apostolic Roman Catholic Church, with whom we have received a show of brotherly love.¹²⁶

Porfirio signed the letter on behalf of the church. The conflict with Pastor Dominguez was a very emotional and personal struggle, with the result that many in the church fell to exaggeration of the truth and, as can be seen from Porfirio Segovia's letter, even false doctrine.

On August 3, 1980, the assembly of voters then sent a letter to the Lutheran Synod of Mexico accusing Pastor Dominguez of teaching transubstantiation.¹²⁷ The Synod finally met on August 5-7, 1980. A bulletin found in a file in Santa Cruz contains

¹²⁵ That is "There exist in Monterrey 300 Faithful Lutherans."
"Existen en Monterrey 300 fieles Luteranos," El Norte, July 2, 1980.

¹²⁶ Letter from Porfirio Segovia to the Archbishop of Monterrey, dated July 15, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

the schedule of this conference. No mention is made of dealing with the problem. Certain events on the schedule are however crossed out so that they are not legible.

On October 11, 1980, the voter's assembly received a letter from Rev. Jaime Martinez Torres of Ciudad Juarez informing them that a special Synod meeting would be held to discuss their problem.¹²⁸ It would take place on October 29-31 of that year. There is no record of what was decided in that meeting. In fact, there aren't any letters in the files of Santa Cruz until March of the next year (1981).

On March 16, 1981, the voter's assembly wrote a letter to President Preuss of Missouri asking his help to recover the parsonage from Pastor Dominguez.¹²⁹ Pastor Dominguez no longer was preaching in the church. He was holding services for the members that left with him on the church's property in Colonia Del Norte. He however continued to live in the parsonage. They also complained of the way the Lutheran Synod of Mexico had dealt with the situation. The Synod had appointed Pastor Dominguez to be the head of synodical evangelism. More importantly it had denied the request by Pastor Martinez to take charge of the ministry at Santa Cruz. The voter's assembly also informed President Preuss about a debt of approximately \$3500 that Pastor Dominguez owed the church.

On April 1, 1981, Pastor Martinez, as President of the Lutheran Synod of Mexico, wrote a letter to Santa Cruz.¹³⁰ He asked them to be patient. He reminded them that the problem should be dealt with by the Synod in Mexico and not by the LCMS. This seems

¹²⁷ Letter from Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz to the Lutheran Synod of Mexico dated August 3, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹²⁸ Letter from Pastor Jaime Martinez Torres to the Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz dated October 11, 1980. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹²⁹ Letter from Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz to President J.A.O. Preuss dated March 16, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

to be the philosophy adopted by the LCMS as well. The problem was never resolved. The parsonage of Santa Cruz to this day is occupied by the family^{D F} Pastor Dominguez. He is presently serving as a Missouri Synod pastor in Texas. Due to all these problems, the membership of the church that at one time had reached nearly four hundred members, now was under two hundred.¹³¹

On April 28, 1981, Dr. Andrés Melendez, a key figure in the Latin American Missions of the Missouri Synod, wrote a letter to Pastor Segovia assuring him that he was speaking on their behalf with Synod officials.¹³² Pastor Segovia at the age of 81 was serving alone as pastor of Santa Cruz. From descriptions not only by members, but also by Missionaries Larry Schlomer¹³³ and Paul Hartman,¹³⁴ it seems that Pastor Segovia's age began to effect his ability to serve. He began to say unfit things in the pulpit. He sprinkled holy water on members. Santa Cruz was in a difficult situation. They were refused other pastors. The Lutheran Synod of Mexico, in its support of Pastor Dominguez, refused to help them. It seems that the LCMS refused to help, because they wanted the synod in Mexico to be self-disciplining. Therefore, without Pastor Segovia, Santa Cruz would be without a pastor.

This led to a very heated debate between those who said that Pastor Segovia should step down and those who thought that his behavior should be tolerated. According to one member, José Jimenez, the argument would become so intense that

¹³⁰ Letter from Pastor Jaime Martinez Torres to the Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz dated April 1, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹³¹ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, op.cit. According to Victoria the membership dropped to less than half of what it was.

¹³² Personal letter from Dr. Andrés Melendez to Pastor Felix Segovia dated April 28, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹³³ Schlomer, Larry. Personal Conversation. December 1998.

¹³⁴ Hartman, Paul, op. cit.

members would nearly come to blows in the narthex of the church.¹³⁵ On June 29, 1981, the Church Council sent a letter to Pastor Segovia asking him to step down.¹³⁶ This however led to more arguments and the election of another council. The congregation was once again split. According to Victoria Segovia, one group actually sent letters to members of the other group, excommunicating them. Another letter was ~~once again~~ sent to President Preuss of Missouri, begging Missouri's help in the matter.¹³⁷ According to Victoria Segovia, the groups later reconciled and forgave one another in Christian love.¹³⁸ It is interesting to note that in an article of the July 1981 issue of The Lutheran Witness, the Missouri Synod did not seem to realize what was going on in Monterrey. The article considered the split of the congregation a plan for outreach: "Now the congregation is considering splitting in order to establish a new congregation at a different location in Monterrey."¹³⁹

On December 7, 1981, the members of Santa Cruz wrote a letter to the Registry of Public Property and Commerce, declaring independence from the LCMS and claiming the properties of the church. The letter was signed by 32 members.¹⁴⁰

In 1983, after two years of struggling, Pastor Segovia contacted Pastor David Chichía of Mexico City, who was associated with the WELS. This course of action was actually suggested by Dr. Andrés Melendez of the LCMS. In 1984, la Iglesia Luterana la

¹³⁵ Jimenez, José. Personal Conversation. December 1998.

¹³⁶ Letter from Church Council of Santa Cruz to Pastor Felix Segovia dated June 29, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹³⁷ Letter from Voter's Assembly of Santa Cruz to President J.A.O. Preuss dated July 5, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

¹³⁸ Segovia de Contreras, Victoria, *op. cit.*

¹³⁹ "A Small Mission with a Large Mission," The Lutheran Witness, July 1981: 14,15.

¹⁴⁰ Letter from members of Santa Cruz to Registry of Public Property and Commerce dated December 7, 1981. Found on file in basement of Santa Cruz.

Santa Cruz joined in fellowship with the Wisconsin Synod.¹⁴¹ According to Pastor Paul Hartman the church at the time had 110 souls.¹⁴²

Conclusion

God's power and mercy is never more evident than in the case of la Iglesia Luterana la Santa Cruz. The devil throughout its history sought to keep the pastors and members of Santa Cruz from proclaiming the precious gospel of salvation. Human pride, misunderstanding, money, government, and cultural differences all were used to try to keep God's Word from being preached. God however, in his infinite mercy, has allowed Santa Cruz to survive. After joining with WELS, the congregation still suffered setbacks. Between 1984 and 1996 two pastors, native Pastor Daniel Perez and Missionary Ernie Zimdars, served Santa Cruz. They both resigned for different reasons. Today however, Santa Cruz is being served by another native pastor, Eduardo Vazquez. The church now has over two hundred members and also helps support a mission in the neighboring city of Guadalupe. May God help the members of Santa Cruz learn from their past and keep pressing on toward the goal which Christ has won for them.

¹⁴¹ For an in depth study of how Santa Cruz came into contact and eventually joined WELS, see "The History of the Church 'La Santa Cruz': How this church became affiliated with the WELS," by Thomas Zimdars on file at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

¹⁴² Hartman, Paul, op. cit.

Appendix 1

The following are translations of devotions written by Pastor Segovia in Sunday Morning bulletins. They demonstrate his strong tendency toward synergism and legalism.

June 19, 1955

Christ and mothers

A good woman was praying her last prayers of the night before a crucifix. Suddenly Christ lifted his pained head and asked:

--Good woman, why is your daughter not with you?

--Lord, she is out having fun.

--Where is she right now?

--I don't know, Lord, maybe at the theater.

--What time will she return?

--I never really pay attention. She has a key to get in.

--Aren't you her mother? You are responsible for your daughter!

--Lord, the times are changing. Daughters don't need to be watched over so carefully anymore. How many mothers wouldn't do the same?

Christ said no more. Once again he bowed his pained head. Poor Jesus! When that good woman dies and is judged, Christ won't lower his head anymore. Poor woman!

January 1, 1956

The family every year gets together to celebrate the New Year. Is everyone here? There might be an empty seat, one less face, one more reason for sadness.

Family tables never are completely full here on this earth. Loved ones have passed away. Only faith can find them across the gate of death.

Each year that passes is one less year here on earth. The new year is a new opportunity that God gives us to do works worthy of our Christian life.

Each new year of my Christian life should be a reaffirmation of my Christian duties to Christ our Lord and to his work on earth: the Church. Christ our Lord and the Church, the two things that should be important to me—two thousand years ago they worked for the Salvation of all men.

Maybe this new year should be my mission year in which I learn to understand the value of my soul and the souls of others:

Next year it may be my chair at the family dinner table that is empty....The opportunity shouldn't be wasted.

March 4, 1956

Jesus expels the Devil from the heart of sinners

Do you know why we have so many problems doing the work of the Lord? Do you know why we are so indifferent and cold to the things of the Church? Do you know why we are so untrusting and malicious with our brothers in the faith? Do you know why our hearts, our wills, and our feelings do not demonstrate humility, patience, and Christian love?

All these questions can be answered in this way: It is because we do not give over our spirit, soul and body to our Lord Jesus Christ as we promised in our confirmation vow. Remember that "he" that is of Christ has crucified the flesh with all its affects and concupiscence. The man and woman that no longer do so live as sinful, fighting, gossiping, vengeful, malicious animals in their hearts and thoughts.

And yet all of these things am I, yes I, because I have not allowed, I have not placed my entire will sincerely in the Word of God which expels the Devil from my heart. Have mercy on me, Oh God! Have mercy on me! Amen.

Appendix 2

The opening page to Pastor Segovia's personal log of his first days in Monterrey.

Felix Segovia

Monterrey N.L.

Sept. - 1941

Libro sobre
la Historia y
el trabajo del pastor
Felix Segovia,
misionero de la Iglesia Evan-
gélica Luterana en Monterrey
N.L. Méx.

IGLESIA DE LA SANTA CRUZ

MONTERREY, N. L., MEXICO

Registro de la Santa Cena, pag. 50

IGLESIA DE LA SANTA CRUZ

MONTERREY, N. L., MEXICO

Appendix 3

The public invitation to the dedication of the *templo* (November 12, 1950).

NOV 6 1950

La Iglesia Católica Apostólica
Luterana
de
"La Santa Cruz"
de
Monterrey, N. L.

Se complace en invitar a Ud. y a su honorable familia
a la Inauguración y Consagración de su Templo,
por el Sr. Hbro. César A. Pazos que tendrá
lugar a las 10 hrs. del día 12 de noviem-
bre de 1950, en la Avenida
Washington Ste. No. 710,
de esta ciudad.

"Yo me alegré con los
que me decían: a la casa
de Dios iremos"

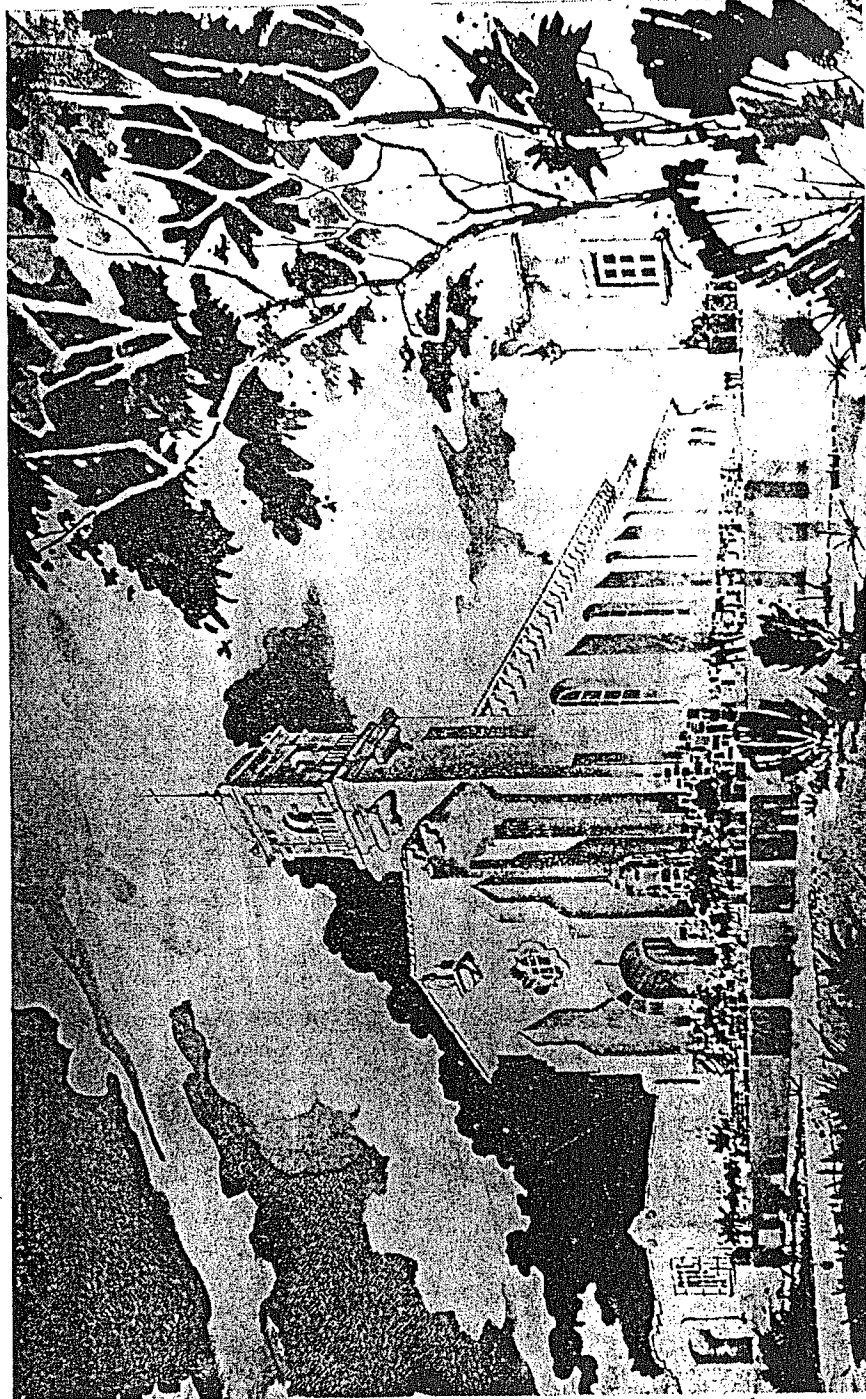
Salmo 122:1.

(Ejercicios Bíblicos a las 19.30, los días 12 al 17 de noviembre)

Appendix 4

Artist's rendering of Santa Cruz.

Lutheran Woman's Quarterly.
October, 1948.



Architect's Drawing of Monterey Chapel

Appendix 5

Pastor Dominguez's letter of resignation to the Presbyterian Church.

Sultepec, Méx., a 5 de agosto de 1952.

Al H. Presbiterio del Sur.

43316

Muy amados hermanos en el Señor Jesucristo:

Habiendo decidido separarme del seno de la Obra Presbiteriana, para poder ir a estudiar a una Institución Literaria, de la manera más atenta presente ante ustedes mi Formal Renuncia, como Obrero Presbiterial, por consiguiente espero que al presente me hagáis las gestiones necesarias para cubrir el campo que yo dejaré a partir del día último de agosto. Así mismo suplico a ustedes me concedáis una carta que acredite mis servicios dentro de vosotros en la Obra del Señor.

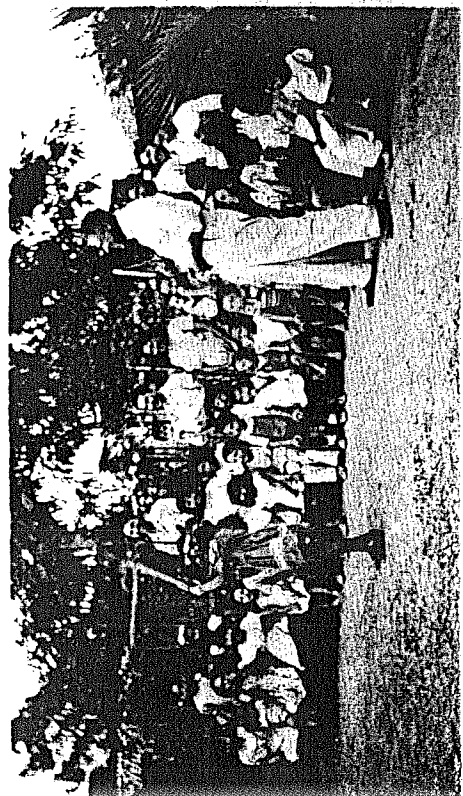
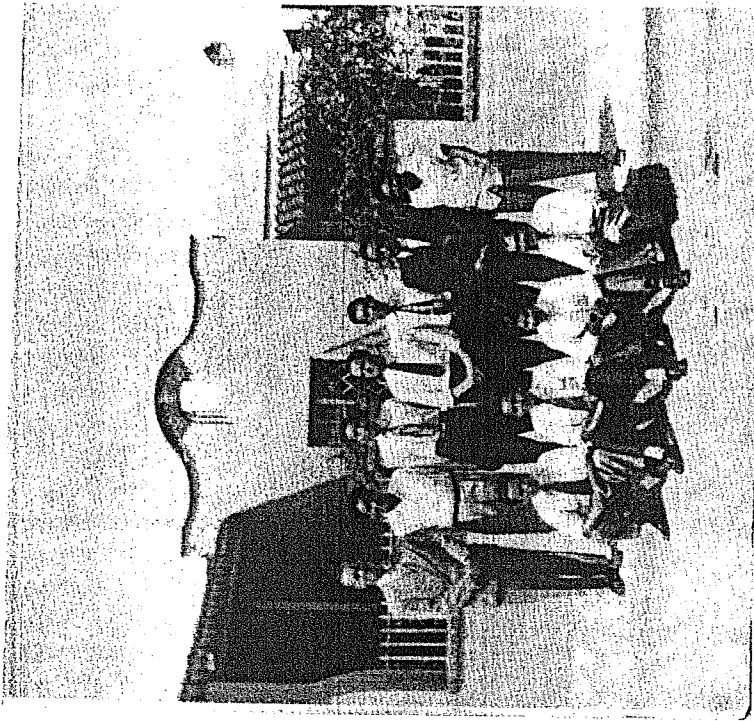
Expreso a ustedes mi profunda gratitud por la constante ayuda que me brindastéis y espero que el Señor es la recompensa con muy ricas bendiciones en vuestro Presbiterio.

Respetuosamente en Cristo,


Arnulfo Dominguez E.

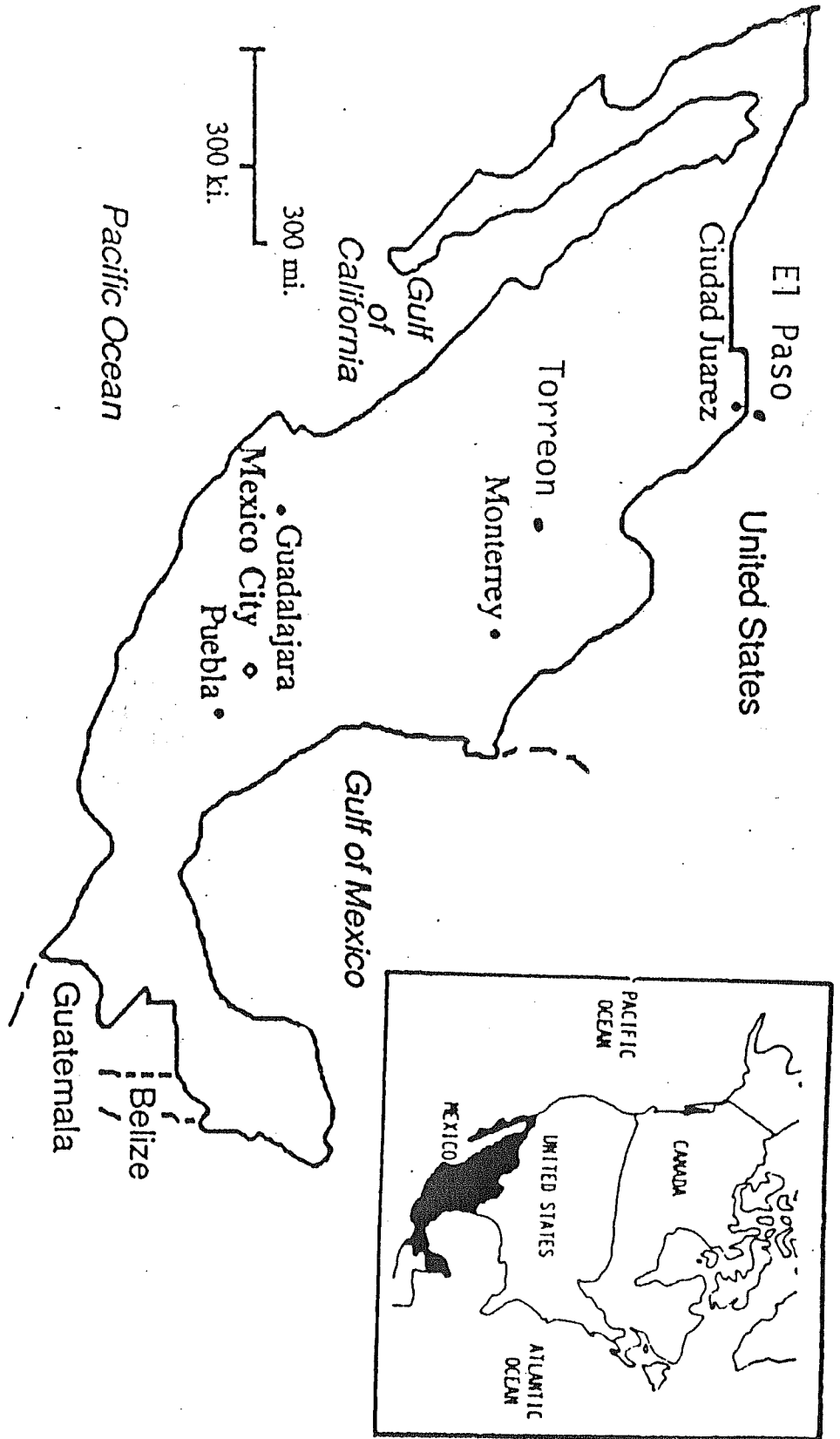
Appendix 6

Pictures of Pastor Segovia at work in the early years of Santa Cruz.



Appendix 7

Map of Mexico.



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