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**COLONIA MAURICIO
TWO COMPLEMENTARY VISIONS**

Edgardo Zablotzky

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COLONIA MAURICIO

TWO COMPLEMENTARY VISIONS

*EDGARDO ZABLITSKY**

APRIL 2012

ABSTRACT

In 1891 Baron Maurice de Hirsch founded the Jewish Colonization Association (J.C.A.), which was to become one of the largest philanthropic firms of their time, conducting a gigantic experiment in social welfare consisting in the organized immigration of thousands of people from the Russian Empire to Argentina and setting up agricultural colonies. Colonia Mauricio, close to Carlos Casares, in the Provincia of Buenos Aires, was established in 1891 on the first land acquired by the J.C.A. in Argentina and by far the most fertile. In the early 20th century, the prosperity of the colony reflected the ideal of Hirsch, who in 1892 had stated in an interview with the New York World: *“These exiles are so poor that if they are given the means to work and they are taught to work the land, so that the harvest would be sufficient to feed their families and earn some profit as well, I have no doubt that they will make good use of the opportunity.”* However, Colonia Mauricio rapidly disintegrated. For 1930 the colony was only a memory. What happened? In this paper we will reconstruct the history of Colonia Mauricio from two complementary primary sources: the memories of Boris Garfunkel, one of the first and more important settlers, and the historical review written by Demetrio Aranovich, the first Russian Jew who earned a Doctorate degree in Medicine in Argentina, who attended the health needs of the colony in the early 20th. We will evaluate the hypothesis proposed by Aranovich as responsible for the dissolution of the Colony, and we will collate it with the vision of Garfunkel on this event.

JEL classification codes: D64 (Welfare economics, philanthropy)

Key words: Maurice de Hirsch, philanthropy, Jewish Colonization Association, Colonia Mauricio, Boris Garfunkel, Demetrio Aranovich

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EDGARDO ZABLITSKY

APRIL 2012

“Mauricio, the most prosperous of our colonies”
Jewish Colonization Association, 1904¹

*“These are the latest official data (1930) on Colonia Mauricio,
which, by all accounts, no longer exists as a Jewish colony.”*
D. Aranovich, 1931²

I. INTRODUCTION

In 1891 Baron Maurice de Hirsch founded the Jewish Colonization Association (J.C.A.), which was to become one of the largest philanthropic firms of their time, conducting a gigantic experiment in social welfare consisting in the organized immigration of thousands of people from the Russian Empire to Argentina and setting up agricultural colonies.

Colonia Mauricio, close to Carlos Casares, in the Provincia of Buenos Aires, was established in 1891 on the first land acquired by the J.C.A. in Argentina and by far the most fertile. As pointed out by Haim Avni (January 1983), when the Baron de Hirsch chose Argentina as a repository of his project he dreamed of a vast extension of fertile land, this vision is adjusted to the humid pampas, while the quality of the periphery land progressively deteriorates. The colonies, with the exception of Mauricio, were located very close to the margins of this region, in lands of very poor quality.

In the early 20th century, the prosperity of the colony reflected the ideal of Hirsch, who in 1892 had stated in an interview with the New York World: *“These exiles are so poor that if they are given the means to work and they are taught to work the land, so that the harvest would be sufficient to feed their families and earn some profit as well, I have no doubt that they will make good use of the opportunity.”*

¹ D. Aranovich, p. 14.

However, Colonia Mauricio rapidly disintegrated. For 1930 the colony was only a memory. What happened?

In this paper we reconstruct the history of Colonia Mauricio from two complementary primary sources: the memories of Boris Garfunkel, one of the first and more important settlers, and the historical review written by Demetrio Aranovich, the first Russian Jew who earned a Doctorate degree in Medicine in Argentina, who attended the health needs of the colony in the early 20th.

Boris Garfunkel was born in Russia in 1866, he emigrated to Argentina in 1891 with one of the first contingents of the J.C.A., he was settled in Mauricio and resided in the colony during the first 15 years of its live. He moved to Buenos Aires in 1906, opening a furniture store and, over the years, he became an icon of the Argentine business society.

Unlike the vast majority of immigrants colonized by the project of Baron de Hirsch, Boris Garfunkel did not emigrate from Russia to escape from poverty and he would have not move to any country in the world, whatever the proposal of the philanthropic sponsor.³ Garfunkel, a rich man, cultured and deeply observant, emigrated by his own choice, following an ideal conceived in his teens. He wanted to become a farmer in the Holy Land and the project of Baron Hirsch, in tune with their aspirations, altered his destiny. This led him to remain with his family in Colonia Mauricio for 15 years, suffering the greatest privations, when he could have moved to Buenos Aires when he would liked it, given the capital he had.

Thus his Memoires are not those of an immigrant who came to Colonia Mauricio by chance, but of someone who gave up a comfortable lifestyle to realize his aspirations, being the testimony of a settler, but also of a critical observer of the project, given his genuine interest in it.

Demetrio Aranovich was born in Taganrog, Russia, on October 20, 1871 and died in Buenos Aires on June 21, 1945.

Aranovich was a man of remarkable formation. He completed his secondary education at the Gymnasium of the city of Nikolayev, which is evidence of outstanding academic

² D. Aranovich, p. 29.

³ A clear example is provided by the case of the Pampistas, who isolated in Constantinople, after having tried unsuccessfully to enter Palestine, survive in abject poverty and gratefully accepted the opportunity to emigrate to Argentina and be colonized by the J.C.A., in the same way they would have accepted any other alternative. E. Zablotsky, December 2011.

conditions, given the limited quota for Jewish students existing under the constraints imposed by the government of the Czar.

In 1896 he was hired by the J.C.A., traveling to Argentina and settled in Villaguay, Entre Rios, taking charge of the secretary of the administration of Colonia Clara. Before long he moved to Buenos Aires, enrolling in the Faculty of Medicine.

In 1903 he obtains the degree of Doctor in Medicine, becoming the first Jewish doctor in Argentina.

In 1904 the J.C.A. hired him again, this time to cover for one year the health needs of Colonia Mauricio, settling at the end of his contract in Carlos Casares where he would practice his profession until November 1916, when he moved to Buenos Aires. Over the next 30 years he practiced in the Hospital Israelita Ezra, becoming its President.

The personal characteristics of Aranovich, the first Jewish doctor graduated from the University of Buenos Aires in 1903 and a member of the Socialist Party; the fact that he was hired by the J.C.A. to meet the health needs of Colonia Mauricio in 1904, he practiced in Carlos Casares between 1905 and 1916 and he was a prominent leader of the local Jewish community; the methodology of his work, a detailed statistical report which helps us to understand the economy of the colony; the contemporaneity of his study to the facts, since it was published in 1932; and the fact that it covered the period of disintegration of the colony, not included in the memories of Garfunkel, given his settling in Buenos Aires in 1906, makes the analysis of his review the perfect complement to the study of the memories of Boris Garfunkel.

The organization of the paper is as follows. In the next section we will study the position of Baron de Hirsch on philanthropy, essential to understand many of the events of everyday life in Colonia Mauricio. Section III will report the background of the project. Why Russian Jews arrived in the late nineteenth century to settle in Mauricio, in the distant and unknown Pampa Argentina? The following section presents our analysis of the memories of Boris Garfunkel, we will begin to reconstruct the history of the colony and identify a potential trigger of its disintegration. In Section V we will study the historical review of Demetrio Aranovich, we will continue our reconstruction of the history of the Colony, we will cross check many of the statements expressed by Garfunkel and we will identify the main reason, in the author's point of view, of the disintegration of Mauricio.

Close the paper a brief section in which we will evaluate the four hypothesis proposed by Aranovich as responsible for the dissolution of the Colony, which we will collate with the vision of Garfunkel on this event.

II. THE POSITION OF THE BARON DE HIRSCH ON PHILANTHROPY

Baron Maurice de Hirsch was born into a wealthy, aristocratic family in Munich on December 19, 1831.⁴ He was a dynamic personality. Concessions granted by the governments of Austria, Russia and Turkey for the building of railroads provided him with the opportunity to display his financial and organizational skills, and he dedicated 25 years to the gigantic undertaking that was to enable him to build up an immense fortune. Its exact size is unknown. S. Adler-Rudel (1963) estimates his fortune at between 14 and 30 million pounds sterling.⁵ It is clear that the magnitude of his wealth provided him with a privileged position among the most powerful and influential millionaires of his age.

Having built up such a fortune, increasing it for the mere pleasure of doing so lost its attraction to him, and he needed to channel his energy in a different direction, a possibility that was provided to him by large-scale philanthropy, not through the dispensing of charity but by generating a genuine philanthropic undertaking. In this enterprise he was as tough and stubborn as he had been in his business dealings.

In 1887, shortly after the death of his only son, Lucien, Hirsch decided to retire from business altogether, dedicating the rest of his life to his philanthropic activities; this devotion is evident from his reply to a letter of condolence on the death of Lucien, when he wrote “*My son I have lost, but not my heir; humanity is my heir.*”⁶

Hirsch’s vision of philanthropy is on record from a wide range of sources. For example, the day after he died, the *Neues Wiener Tageblatt*, a morning paper in Vienna, published the following obituary:

*“His philanthropy was not important so much because of its amounts, but because of the practical approach: economic rehabilitation.”*⁷

⁴ S. Adler-Rudel, 1963, secs. 2-4, presents a very accurate biography.

⁵ Exchange rates used were: 5 Swiss francs, 1890 = 1 dollar, 1890; 1 pound sterling, 1890 = 1 dollar, 1890; 1,25 rublos, 1890 = 1 dollar, 1890. One dollar, 1890, adjusted according to the US Consumer Price Index, would at 2011 be equivalent to 29.77 dollars. E. Zablotsky, 2005 and E. Zablotsky, February 2012.

⁶ S. Adler-Rudel, 1963, p. 39.

⁷ *Neues Wiener Tageblatt*, April 22, 1896 (in K. Grunwald, p. 63).

The economic rehabilitation aim of the undertaking was stressed by S. Adler-Rudel (1963):

*“One of the few outstanding Jewish philanthropists in Western Europe who were determined to meet the needs of Eastern Jews not with alms but with constructive plans and substantial financial resources was a scion of German Jewry: Baron Moritz von Hirsch.”*⁸

It was also given express recognition by one of the beneficiaries, A. D. Goldhaft, a student at the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School at Woodbine, N.J., USA:

*“Baron de Hirsch was a person ahead of his time as a philanthropist. In the history books they say that most of his attempts of solving the Jewish problem turned out to be failures, and that hundreds of millions of dollars was wasted. But I wonder if such things can ever be measured. Perhaps some of the settlements that he set up failed to have a spectacular success, and most of them failed in time, but my life was helped by his work, as I suppose were many others.”*⁹

This is mentioned even today on the web page of the Jewish Colonization Association:

*“Hirsch was contemptuous of traditional charity with its emphasis on the distribution of alms as a means of bringing relief. He was convinced that he could secure the future of the Russian Jews by providing them with the opportunity to become self-reliant through productive work.”*¹⁰

Hirsch himself publicly stated this vision on several occasions. For example, in 1873 he addressed the following note to the Board of the Alliance Israélite Universelle (A.I.U.):

*“During my repeated and extended visits to Turkey I have been painfully impressed by the misery and ignorance in which the Jewish masses live in that Empire... progress had bypassed them, their poverty stems from lack of education, and only the education and training of the young generation can remedy this dismal situation.”*¹¹

To complete this picture, the brief paper that Hirsch published in The North American Review, in July 1891 is highly illustrative. The following paragraph speaks for itself:

“I contend most decidedly against the old system of alms-giving, which only makes so many more beggars; and I consider it the greatest problem in philanthropy to make human

⁸ S. Adler-Rudel, p. 30.

⁹ A. D. Goldhaft, former student of the Baron de Hirsch Agricultural School at Woodbine, N. J., USA. (in K. Grunwald, p. 65).

¹⁰ ICA in Israel, J.C.A. Charitable Foundation.

¹¹ N. Leven, Cinquante Ans, Vol. II. pags. 23-24 (in K. Grunwald, p. 66).

*beings who are capable of work out of individuals who otherwise must become paupers, and in this way to create useful members of society.”*¹²

and it was in this vein that he undertook his philanthropic work.

III. THE ANTECEDENTS OF THE PROJECT

We will devote the first part of this section to describe the deteriorating situation of Jews in the Russian Empire during the 19th century, whose extremely poor living conditions would lead to the intervention of Baron de Hirsch.

In March 1881 Alexander II was assassinated and Alexander III, his successor, sought to direct the anger of the population, caused by the death of the Czar, towards the Jews, encouraging, or at least tolerating, a series of pogroms shaking the south of the Empire in 1881/82; these pogroms were the first of a series of physical attacks on Jews and their property. The so-called May or Temporary Laws, promulgated in May 1882, re-established the Pale of Settlement. Even inside the Pale, the Jews were prohibited from settling in the outskirts of cities and towns, from acquiring land in rural areas, and from doing businesses on Sundays or any other Christian feast days. Jews residing in urban regions had no alternative but to remain there, and rural residents were forced to move to the former. The territory where they could legally reside was reduced by 90%.

The Jewish population was frightened by violence and by the new restrictions and started seeking the way to come out of the Russian Empire. Thousands of people started on their way towards the borders; emigration, which had mildly begun in the second half of the 70's gathered strength again. Upon crossing the western border they were in Brody, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, where their living conditions were not much better; thus, they began a steady process of spontaneous emigration towards the USA, where the Jewish population would double within 10 years.

When in 1888 the Czar intensified restrictions, provincial authorities reduced even more the territory open to settlements, since small villages and towns were redefined as rural areas and consequently, prohibited for Jews; those who had moved to these regions after the decrees of 1882 were again forced to emigrate.

¹² M. de Hirsch, July 1891.

On the other hand, there were other strong restrictions such as the numerus clausus established in 1887, setting an admission quota for high schools and superior schools (for example, in the Pale of Settlement schools accepted 10% of Jews, while outside this area, the ratio decreased to 5%, and in Moscow and Saint Petersburg it was 3%), and special limitations imposed in 1889 for admission of Jewish lawyers to the bar.

In 1891, those Jews who still resided in Moscow and Saint Petersburg were suddenly forced to sell the properties where they had lived for generations, and to abandon the cities. Those who were not able to sell their properties fast (in most cases at prices below cost) were taken to jail. In this way, 20,000 Jews living in Moscow were obliged to move to the Pale of Settlement.

Confinement in the overpopulated Pale of Settlement, the absence of possibilities to acquire lands and to carry out farming work, to have access to education and to practise certain professions, plus the strong demographic growth, made living conditions deteriorate considerably, since the aforementioned factors increased competence among small retailers and reduced even more their already very low income due to urbanization of the Russian Empire during the second half of 19th century. The urbanization had created a huge demand for consumer goods, replacing the individual artisan's work for industrial production, and developing railway networks. Large-scale trade, encouraged by industrialization, passed by the small local traders, usually Jews due to the restrictions imposed on their exercising any other activity. Towards the end of the 80's, the severe deterioration of living conditions again encouraged spontaneous emigration.

In this context, Baron de Hirsch first attempted to improve living conditions within the Pale of Settlement, as he had done in the Near East and in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He proposed to the Czar the creation of a Fund with an endowment of US\$ 10,000,000 for the purpose of founding and operating technical and agricultural schools in the Pale of Settlement; negotiations with the government were carried out during one year, but his initiative was rejected unless the Fund were to be administered by the government itself, a condition that was quite unacceptable to Hirsch. As revealed in the following quote from his article published in *The Forum* in August 1891, from that moment onward, he considered that the only viable alternative consisted in organized emigration and resettlement in other countries:

*“The measures now being enforced against the Jews which are equivalent to their wholesale expulsion do not appear to me to be altogether a misfortune to the Russian Jew. I think that the worst thing that could happen to these unfortunate people would be to continue for an indefinite period the wretched existence which they have led up to the present time, crowded altogether in narrow streets, merely vegetating without hope and without future, reduced to a condition incompatible with the dignity of human beings. The only means to raise their condition is to remove them from the soil to which they are rooted and to transport them to other countries, where they will enjoy the same rights as the people among whom they live where they will cease to be pariahs, and become citizens. What is going on in Russia today may be the prelude to their beneficent transformation.”*¹³

Although USA was the preferred destination for spontaneous emigration, it was not the adequate destination for a project of such a magnitude as imagined by Hirsch, and having to seek other destinations Baron de Hirsch would be inclined in favor of Argentina.

But why Argentina? To find the answer to this question it is necessary to go back to October 19, 1876, when President Nicolás Avellaneda enacted the Immigration and Colonization Act (Law No. 817) which was to define the image of Argentina as a country. Although it placed no restriction on spontaneous immigration, it provided a strong stimulus to organized immigration; that is to say, to immigration promoted by the Argentine government.

The Act was not to have an immediate effect. The four years following its enactment were of great importance for Argentina. The Conquest of the Desert, which took place between 1878 and 1879, placed vast areas under the effective control of the Republic, and the federalization of Buenos Aires set the seal on the process of national organization. On October 12, 1880, when Julio Argentino Roca became President, Argentina was unified and Roca had at his disposal enormous extensions of virgin territory, ideally suited to the start of the active policy for population and colonization that had been outlined during the presidency of Avellaneda.

The timing could not have been better, as news of the pogroms of May 1881 spread across Europe, reaching to the representative of the Argentine Department of Immigration in Paris, Carlos Calvo, who immediately got in touch with his important connections in St.

¹³ M. de Hirsch, August 1891, in S. Joseph, p. 10.

Petersburg to ensure that some of the Jews anxious to emigrate could be guided towards Argentina. This initiative was backed by the Roca government, which issued a decree on August 6, 1881 naming José María Bustos honorary agent in Europe, with special responsibility for directing towards Argentina the Israelite emigration originating in Imperial Russia.

Bustos was to last only one year in his job. The first attempt to take large numbers of Jewish immigrants to Argentina failed, but it was to have a long-term impact through occasional articles published in the Jewish press in Europe, by means of which Argentina began to become known in communities in Russia as a country with potential for the settlement of Jews. This process was to culminate eight years later, on August 14, 1889, with the arrival in Buenos Aires of the S.S. Weser, which carried among its 1,200 passengers 820 Russian Jews, equivalent to half the Jewish population in Argentina.

The history of this group had begun in 1887 at a meeting held in Katowice (Silesia, Poland) by delegates of the Jewish communities in Podolia and Bessarabia, where the conditions of life were extremely severe; at that meeting it was decided that emigration was the only solution, and a delegate was sent to Paris to seek the support of Baron de Rothschild for emigration to Palestine. These negotiations failed, but whilst he was in Paris, the delegate, Eliezer Kauffman, learnt by chance of the existence in the city of an office promoting immigration to Argentina, a country about which he knew very little, and which had not even been considered at the Katowice conference. At that office, Kauffman was informed by J. B. Frank, the government agent in charge, that a gentleman by the name of Rafael Hernández was interested in selling land to European immigrants; the land was in Nueva Plata, Province of Buenos Aires, close to the city of La Plata. The transaction was completed, and thus the 120 families that Kauffman represented began their trip to Argentina.

They had barely disembarked when they learnt that the land they had purchased was no longer available. During the lengthy trip, land prices had more than doubled, so it did not suit Hernández to hand over the land on which a deposit had been paid, and he simply failed to fulfill his side of the contract. The rabbi of the incipient Jewish community in Buenos Aires, Henry Joseph, put them in touch with Pedro Palacios, the owner of extensive

tracts of land in the Province of Santa Fe. The proposal was accepted, contracts were exchanged, and a few days later they traveled to that area.

Their first impressions were bleak indeed. The families were lodged in freight trucks in a railway shed by the side of the railway line. They waited fruitlessly to be transferred to their fields, and to be provided with farm animals and implements, as had been agreed in the contract. It is reported that the workers on the railroad distributed food among the hungry children; sadly, a typhoid epidemic, spread because of the lack of hygiene, ended the lives of 60 of them.

News of this misery reached the national authorities, who ordered the General Commissioner for Immigration to discover the reasons for the difficult situation the immigrants were in. At this stage Wilhelm Loewenthal, a Romanian doctor who had graduated from the University of Berlin, specializing in bacteriology, appeared on the scene. He had been hired in Paris by the Argentine government for a scientific mission. Before he left Paris, the A.I.U. requested him to intervene on behalf of the immigrants from the Weser.

Loewenthal visited Palacios Station, confirmed the misery in which the colonists were living, and their desire to become farmers, despite their numerous adversities, and in a report to the Foreign Minister, Estanislao Zeballos, he dedicated a chapter to the so-called affaire of the Russian immigrants, repeating that they had been at Palacios Station for six weeks, often with no more to eat than a portion of biscuit each for 48 hours at a time. Loewenthal also met with Palacios to demand that he comply with his obligations.

Back in Paris, Loewenthal detailed in writing to Chief Rabbi Zadoc Kahn a project for agricultural colonization by Jewish families in Argentina, which was to benefit in the first place the Palacios colonists,

*“The project furthermore proposes that assistance to persecuted Jews should not be in the nature of a charitable gift, and that it would be most constructive if they were to be provided with the possibility of dedicating themselves to farming, founding agricultural colonies to that end.”*¹⁴

Loewenthal considered that ideally 50,000,000 francs should be made available to be able to settle 5,000 families in the short term. He was aware that two years earlier, Baron de

¹⁴ L. Schallman, 1971 (i), p. 26.

Hirsch had attempted to invest precisely that amount in the setting up of technical and agricultural schools in the Pale of Settlement, and therefore thought of Hirsch as a candidate to finance the project. Hirsch learnt of the plans through the A.I.U. and gave the project his approval in January 1890,

*“The constructive nature of the project for assistance to the Russian Jews coincided precisely with Hirsch’s own point of view on the spirit of philanthropy in general, which is contrary to the old system of charity, which only succeeded in forming more beggars.”*¹⁵

Hirsch decided on a vast undertaking to establish large colonies in Argentina, and as a first step in that direction, sent out a commission made up by Loewenthal and two experts in emigration and colonization problems, C. N. Cullen, a British engineer, and Colonel Vanvinckeroy, a Belgian, to make studies of the soil and other aspects essential to the success of the project. In March 1891 the Commission sent Hirsch a favorable evaluation, having in addition obtained the approval of the Argentine government. Argentina was considered as a country suitable for the colonization project because of its size, small population, ease of cultivation even for the most inexperienced of colonists, its liberal political regime, and the advantages offered by the country’s laws to immigrants seeking agricultural work.

Mass emigration such as that proposed required the selection of the immigrants, their transportation to Argentina, and the opening of administrative offices at destination to receive them and settle them in their new homes. To carry out these tasks the Jewish Colonization Association (J.C.A.) was set up. The purposes of the Association, as stated by Hirsch himself, were:

*“To assist and promote the emigration of Jews from any part of Europe or Asia -and principally from countries in which they may for the time being be subjected to any special taxes or political or other disabilities- to any parts of the world, and to form and establish colonies in various parts of North and South America and other countries, for agricultural, commercial and other purposes.”*¹⁶

¹⁵ L. Schallman, 1971 (i), p. 27.

IV. THE MEMORIES OF BORIS GARFUNKEL

In this section we will allow Boris Garfunkel to tell us by himself different events related to his life in Colonia Mauricio. We will begin to reconstruct the history of the colony and we will identify a potential trigger of its disintegration. To this end we will use the following timeline:

- The birth of Colonia Mauricio (1891-1893)
- The maturity of Colonia Mauricio (1894-1905)
- The beginning of the disintegration of Colonia Mauricio (1906)

The Birth of Colonia Mauricio (1891-1893)

Boris Garfunkel left Kamenetz, Podolia, on July 1, 1891, traveling in a carriage to Czernovitz, just crossing the Russian-Austrian border; thence he traveled by train to Berlin and then to Hamburg, where he would embark to Argentina. In Berlin and later in Hamburg, he came into contact with those who would be his traveling companions for the next 15 years: young adults, for 25 to 35 years old and extremely poor, in their the vast majority.

On August 2, Garfunkel embarked on the Petropolis with other 236 immigrants. The single class ship was built especially to drive immigrants to South American countries. On September 4 the ship landed in Buenos Aires. The passengers were driven by employees of the J.C.A. to the Hotel de Inmigrantes. A week later they were transported by train to Carlos Casares, where they were greeted by a native who guided them to a warehouse of zinc, located 200 meters from the station, where he would spend the night on two rows of straw and hay covered with tarps and bags. On the morning of September 11, after a journey of two hours in several two-wheeled carts pulled by six horses, the contingent arrived at a place called Algarrobos where, in one of the highest places of the area, it had been installed the Administration of the future Colonia Mauricio.

They were 5 km away of their final destination. Garfunkel mentions the unfounded expectation that flourished in the minds of the settlers, that they were on their way to their own fields, since they had no opposite information about it. Finally, upon their arrival they found no homes as such, but three rows of independent tents linked by common walls of canvas. Ten meters away there were another series of three rows of rectangular marked

¹⁶ Jewish Encyclopedia, 1901-1906.

lands, of four meters by eight, where the newcomers have to build their tents by themselves.

The immigrants were greeted by several people of the first group settled in Mauricio, who had arrived one month earlier on the steam Tyoko. At dinner time the Garfunkel family was invited by the Polak family, neighbors of the camp. The talk described in the memories is a clear picture of the frustration of the immigrants who arrived that morning to Colonia Mauricio and the resignation of those who lived in the colony for a month. Polak describes the harsh initial conditions faced by the immigrants who arrived a month before, the open field that they found, the need to build their own tents, the food, consisting of meat in abundance but lacking of milk for the children, and the use of dry cow dung given the lack of fuel wood. The birth of Colonia Mauricio, at the light of the memories of Boris Garfunkel, could not have been more precarious and improvised.

For the rest of 1891 it is possible to rescue three episodes of interest, all of them associated with the discomfort that had developed between the settlers to continue living in the tent camp waiting for the allocation of the lands. Such episodes highlight the strict non-welfarism of the immigration project, the chronic disagreements between the immigrants and the Administrators of the colony, often motivated by their ineptitude or even their corruption, the precariousness of the life in the colony during its early stages, and how complicated was the start of the colonization project, given the untimely arrival of the beneficiaries when there were not even given the conditions for their reception, and the J.C.A. was not properly organized in Argentina. In the first episode, Garfunkel explicitly mention the discomfort:

*“Time went on his way. The days were going and our uncertainty grew. The progressive discontent was aggravated by the idleness and shame to eat unearned bread. Well, that’s what we thought. Eventually we had to know that everything given to us was bore in mind, every cent. The J.C.A. considers all these as part of the loan provided for our support during our first year in the colony.”*¹⁷

The second episode describes probably the first of many revolts that were to succeed in the colony, with the participation of immigrants who had traveled alone to Argentina, leaving their families in Europe to move them later, since their forced inactivity made them

¹⁷ B. Garfunkel, 1960, p. 198.

impossible to send money for their livelihood, so they asked the Administrator for any type of work.

The Administrator with the help of a police officer convinced the revolutionaries (a term used by Garfunkel)¹⁸ that he should seek instructions from the Director of the J.C.A. in Buenos Aires. A few days later arrived to Algarrobos a cart full of shovels. The immigrants, whose families remained in Russia, would dig and smooth a road leading from the Administration to the main road leading to Carlos Casares. It would be charged two dollars a day. For this, the Administrator appointed, among the J.C.A. employees, supervisors, who allocated the tasks and would verify their compliance. Of course, it would be inequities in the distribution of the jobs, not without settlers bribing foremen to receive wages without working or supervisors that seek such bribes, hurting other settlers in whose notebooks were not written down all their working days.

On the evening of December 26 it happened the third of the episodes that seems interesting to note. A strong storm hit the area, completely destroying the camp, claiming the life of a settler's wife and of the young son of another, and causing mass casualties, which would generate the second revolt against the Administration.

Thus came the month of January, although there was some improvement in the quality of life of the immigrants with respect to the first three months in the colony, there was a growing discontent because of the continued inactivity and the lack of signs of an early distribution of the land.

By then Loewenthal try to replace the Administrator, Guerbel, but given his resistance he would not have the necessary determination to carry it out. After confirmation, Guerbel became more accessible and provided an explanation of why the colonists had not yet been allocated to their land. The fields were occupied; when Loewenthal completed the acquisition of the land (August, 1891, contemporaneously with the arrival to Buenos Aires of the first contingent of prospective colonists), some of the previous owners had their lands leased, so the J.C.A. had to wait until the leasers raise their latest vintages (probably during the summer of 1892), to measure and fraction the lands.

¹⁸ All remarks between parentheses have been written by us. They are intended to provide the reader with relevant information for a better understanding of the text.

Guerbel would be removed from office by Colonel Albert Godschmid, the new Director of the J.C.A. in Argentina a few months later. His visit to the colony would become the main event of 1892.

On the morning of May 12, Colonel Goldschmid arrived to Algarrobos with the mandate of Baron de Hirsch to bring order to the colony. This decision was clear from his first speech, forceful plea for the non-welfarism concept imbued in the philanthropy of Hirsch. In the speech he promised his support for the settlers but he also warned them that he was willing to disarm the colony should not shown an iron will to work:

*“I know all about your desires and your sorrows. When I left the Baron, he asked me to tell you that he puts at your disposal all the necessary money, but added that if I shall find in the colony people who do not show willingness to work, I will have to undo all without mercy.”*¹⁹

Loud applause approved the speech, but after a few minutes some groups of colonists began to gather outside the gates of the Administration building expressing their demands loudly. The vigorous reaction of Goldschmid did not take long:

“I demand of you composure and respect. It is essential that you be disciplined. The rush, which do not conform to the expected logic of each start, the impatient and the rebels have to leave. I am but the faithful servant of the Baron, who sent me here to clean the house and put some order in it. I will fulfill my mission in all loyalty, but those who disagree with the order and discipline that must prevail in every good organization are undesirable elements and should be radiated. The disgruntled may ask tickets for anywhere in the world other than Russia and they will receive them for free. Let them go and the sooner the better! People who demonstrate excessive impatience and fear have to leave, but to the others, who have sufficient moral energy to take those troubles with faith of fate, I say: In a very short time the tents will be dismantled and the settlers will be established in suitable housing on their own farms. It will be abolished the notebook that records the products that each family gets from the store and this in turn will be liquidated. Instead of the notebooks we will give you cash loans and you can freely buy whatever you like. The money to be

¹⁹ B. Garfunkel, p. 241-242.

*distributed monthly to each household will vary according to the number of dependents. Of yourself, my dear fellows, your ultimate fate depend.”*²⁰

The speech implied the virtual reorganization of the colony: the possibility that leave the colony those who wished, the beginning of the distribution of the lands and the consequent end of the inactivity, and the elimination, as often requested by the settlers, of the annotations in their notebooks of the goods bought at the store of the J.C.A.

Those immigrants eager to leave the colony would be able to do so, opening one hour after the speech ended, a record for that purpose. About 300 immigrants, of the 2,500 settlers of Mauricio were recorded in it, getting free tickets to Buenos Aires by train and from there to the country they wanted by boat, except Russia (which was forbidden, as Hirsch had negotiated with the Tsar's government the permission for the emigration of the Jews on the condition that they would never return).

Moreover, some undesirable elements had to be subsequently expelled, as the offices of the Agency for Jewish Emigrants had been no prior selection among the candidates who applied to emigrate. This would be in effect mid 1893. The decision of the Colonel Goldschmid to expel from their farms the settlers who prove negligence or inability to agriculture could be inferred from his speech, it was clear he was willing to act with all the energy that was necessary to order the colony.

The episode was not for free and would have sequels. Regional inspectors, qualified by Garfunkel as real spies, had the mission to inform the Administration about the conduct of the colonists. Obviously, these reports were subjective and sensitive to the will of the inspectors, for which, besides being driven out undesirable elements were committed injustices. Beyond all the excesses, the colony was cleaned.

Let us return to May 1892, two weeks after the departure of Colonel Goldschmid. Mr. Wulf, the new Administrator, began to draw the lands, each 80 to 100 hectares. Mr. Wulf gave each family a hand plow, a harrow, a shovel, four oxen, a cow with a calf, four horses, and wheat seeds for the sowing of 1892.

The colony has been consolidated. It has spent just under a year since her traumatic birth. The introduction of cash grants, the abolishing of the settlers notebooks, and the closing of the J.C.A. store, would give the immigrants a sense of freedom that they never

²⁰ B. Garfunkel, p. 244.

have enjoyed before, but they also imply a responsibility that the colonists do not know. Of themselves would depend from now on the use they give to their money.

The Maturity of Colonia Mauricio (1894-1905)

In December of 1893 representative members of the colony began to interact to organize the communitarian life; it is clear that the degree of development of the colony allowed them to do so.

During the first years of the colony, when the immigrants lived in the campings of carps, a slaughterer concurred three times per week to sacrifice cows property of the J.C.A.; the meat, extremely cheap, was distributed between the colonists and its cost loaded in their notebooks. In the middle of 1892 the J.C.A. suspended the distribution of meat, given the new policy of subsidies in cash. The Administration began to sell the meat to a butcher in Algarrobos and to another one in Alice, who exerting monopoly power increased its price in a 150%. For worse, the colonists had to go to the butcher's shops, which sometimes implied long-hauls from their farms. It took the colonists a pair of years to decide the hiring of two wagons so that they acquired the meat and they directly sold it to the colonists in their respective farms.

A second episode of the year 1893 that seems interesting to highlight happened in the first days of December, when Garfunkel and five neighbors acquired to the J.C.A. a harvester, which would be used communitarianly. This fact demonstrates a remarkable growth of the colonists, it is the first investment in a capital asset to the aims of being more efficient in their work.

During 1895 it would take place the event of the greatest relevance of this period: the signature of the contracts by the possession of the lands. Before studying it in detail we will focus our attention on an episode of the same year that will allow us to construct a better image of the geography of Colonia Mauricio and in a digression of Garfunkel on the education in the colony, which, although it is not dated, it is clear that he talks about the first years of life of the colony.

Garfunkel tells us that the harvest of wheat which he made by the end of 1893 had a poor yield; he mentions two elements on his defense, the fact that his lands in Algarrobos (where there is the lagoon of the same name) were low and subject to flooding and the unfavorable climatic conditions. Since the situation did not improve with the harvests of

corn nor of wheat of 1894, in January of 1895 he decided to change the ranch in search of higher lands in Alice, where there were a good number of vacated farms. This operation was allowed, adjusting, of course, the price of the land in the debt of the colonist with the J.C.A.:

*“This extension of land was indeed the one that with the running of the time would be the more populated part of the colony. It was the group of the so called 15 farms; their sizes were 210 hectares each one. I had to sign a written promise to pay by the new land a price that double the previous one.”*²¹

Now let us see the beginnings of the education in the colony, central element of any philanthropic project carried out by Baron de Hirsch. The opinion of Garfunkel is forceful:

*“To the Administration of the J.C.A. few things can not be censured, but at the same time they do not lack some reasons for praise. Between these last ones it is without a doubt the way in which the education of the children of the colonists was managed.”*²²

The colony had two schools, located a pair of kilometers of Algarrobos and Alice, respectively; they were far away of most of the groups of farms (even 15 km), thus the children had to make long walks or they have to go by horse. It was offered Judaica and general education according to the official program of the schools of the Province of Buenos Aires. Maths, language, Argentine history and geography, were dictated by sefardi teachers who had finished their studies in normal schools of Turkey and the Middle East, operated by the A.I.U.. These teachers, beyond having the necessary pedagogical knowledge, talks spanish fluently but also they could communicate in idish, indispensable requirement to educate the children of the colonist that did not speak spanish.

At the beginning of 1895, after three years and a half of the birth of the colony, the J.C.A. presented to the colonists the contracts for their lands. The original terms were the following ones:

“It was specified, in effect, that the maturity of the contract would be of 12 years, and the value of the land would have jointly to be paid in the course of that term with an annual interest of 5%, like thus also any loan in money, machinery or species that the J.C.A. had granted to the colonists. The harvest that he would obtain every year would have completely to be deposited in the sheds of the J.C.A. in Carlos Casares or in any other

²¹ B. Garfunkel, p. 268.

*place that the local Administration indicated; such deposit already had taken place from the beginning. Of the value of the sale of the cereal, a part would be assigned to the Administration that corresponded to the amortizable annuity of the debt of the colonist plus the interest of 5%, but if the product of such sale was inferior to the annuity, the Administration could postpone for the following year the payment of this last one. In any way, the total amount of the price of the land plus the interests had to be satisfied at the end of the contract, during whose course, on the other hand, the colonist could not leave his farm nor make it work by others. At any time some could be evicted without indemnification if, in opinion of the Administration, they miss to pay some annuity by carelessness and laziness in the agricultural tasks.”*²³

The colonos refused to sign the contracts, like those of the rest of the colonies. The Direction of the J.C.A. required that each colony sent two delegates to Buenos Aires, with the purpose of meeting the Directors.

The delegates exposed their points of view on the conflicting clauses: the impossibility to leave the fields or to make them work by others, that were not members of their families, and the lack of indemnification for the cases of eviction. The answer of Cazes was reasonable:

*“He said that the J.C.A. had to make sure at all costs that the postulates of the company initiated by Baron Hirsch were fully fulfilled. It was necessary to dissuade the colonists, from the beginning, of all intention to take commercially advantage, in the short term, of the doubtless progressive valuation of the lands.”*²⁴

The delegates were in agreement with this argument, but they distrusted the power that the contracts granted to the Administrators, who actually could throw the colonists of their lands to their single will, since history demonstrated the dishonesty of many of them. In addition, they raised that:

*“The distrust of the J.C.A. by the possible disposition of the lands by the colonists could be, at the end, more detrimental than beneficial, since nobody works with happiness when he has been crushed by obligatory exigencies that limit his freedom to think and to act.”*²⁵

²² B. Garfunkel, p. 275.

²³ B. Garfunkel, p. 281.

²⁴ B. Garfunkel, p. 283.

²⁵ B. Garfunkel, p. 283.

This quotation has great significance; immigrants, who three years and a half ago everything that they wished was to leave Russia, where they lived in the greatest of the miseries, argued with the Directors of the J.C.A. by their freedom to think and to act. The colonization advances, is clear that the immigrants continue growing.

Three days after their leave the delegates returned to Mauricio; it was decided to send a letter to Baron Hirsch, being solicited the reform of the contracts. Although they did not receive an answer, the contracts were modified, extending the term of the quotas to 20 years. The new contracts did not satisfy the demands of the colonists but they improved the original conditions; this stimulated them to sign them, regularizing, after a long way, their legal situation.

Meanwhile the colony continued evolving; some colonists of several groups jointly rented threshing machines, alternating themselves in its use; a colonist chosen between the involved ones fulfilled the overseer roll and ordered the work.

Lets go to year 1896, dominated by the episode of the death of Baron de Hirsch. The sensation of gratitude of the colonos towards Hirsch, beyond the mix-ups with the Administrators and still with the Directors of the J.C.A., was attested by Garfunkel:

*“We were like orphans abandoned in the solitude. But even when this graphically testifiee what we felt at those moments, there was an underestimation of the magnitude of the work that had carried out the man whose loss we cried. And it would be demonstrated obviously in the subsequent years. It is that a project or system of organization is good and feasible when, disappeared of the scene his creator, it is continued without difficulties by his successors. In our case, after the death of Baron de Hirsch the direction of his work of root of Jewish blood in the feracious Argentine plains could be transmitted without shocks and interruptions to his successors, who were chosen in the way that he himself had indicated.”*²⁶

From 1897 to the birth of the new century we found two ilustrative episodes of the evolution of the colony: the acquisition of milk cows, extending the activities of the colonists, and the beginning of cattle operations, diversifying, still more, their activities.

The dairy arrived at the colony in 1898, when some immigrants acquired milk cows to the Administration. The cows produced up to ten liters of milk daily, which the colonists

²⁶ B. Garfunkel, p. 313.

sold to one cremería that a private company had installed in Mauricio, being sent the cream to an establishment in Carlos Casares where the butter was made.

On the other hand, the cattle ranch arrived at the colony around 1900. By the way, the contracts did not mention this type of activity, but since they did not prohibit it either, the J.C.A. was not against it. The colonists acquired cows and bulls, in the suitable proportion and also young cows for their fattening. It could be won a worthy sum in each animal, at a time at which the casualties inflicted by the bad harvests required some type of compensation. The cattle ranch brought the necessity to pay attention to the alfalfa, since it constituted an essential input.

It is clear that at the beginning of the 20th century the situation in Colonia Mauricio had improved considerably, nothing had in common with that open terrain at which the immigrants had arrived near 10 years before. The colonists had become accustomed to the tasks of the farming, they had diversified their activities and there did not exist greater problems in their future.

Two episodes which happened in the first years of the new century will endorse this conclusion: the extension of the colony and one frustrated purchase of lands in the Province of La Pampa.

In 1902 the J.C.A. acquired a land of 9,914 hectares denominated Santo Tomás, with the purpose of being used like a reserve for the future installation of the sons of the colonists. The division was made at the rate of 150 hectares the farm, planning their sales by means of mortgages to the habitual term of 20 years. They were alfalfados, ideal for the cattle ranch and more expensive than the located in Algarrobos or in Alice, but the investment was attractive for families who wished that the new generation followed the steps of their parents. This purchase was carried by the requests of colonists from several years ago, worried about the future of their sons since it was not profitable that several of them jointly operated the family land.

Around 1905 we found the second of the episodes. A colonizing company was arranged to sell, in quotas to 20 years, an important extension in La Pampa, near General Acha. It required a 10% for sign, which was advanced by 28 colonists that decided to participate in the operation. The operation would finish of the worst way, since the sale were fraudulent and they lost the sign.

The magnitude of the frustrated operation provides new evidence about the economic well-being of the colonists. Their motivation was, once again, to assure the future of the following generations. The colonists had reached their redemption. Only a memory was left of the misery and oppression in which they vegetated in their native Russia, before being rescued by the project of Baron de Hirsch; for that reason, they could already dedicate to think about the future of their children.

The Beginning of the Disintegration of Colonia Mauricio (1906)

We have chosen 1906 to locate in the line of the time the beginning of the disintegration of Mauricio not because in this year have taken place particular conditions, but because in 1906 Boris Garfunkel begins the process of his moving to Buenos Aires, which would culminate in 1908 with the transfer of all his family. The result of his dispute with the J.C.A. in order to be allowed to leave the colony, since the contracts tied the immigrants to their lands during 20 years, would be a trigger for other colonists to do the same. It is clear that this fact is not the cause of the disintegration of the colony but demonstrates that there were given the conditions so that it happened:

“When my family came to Buenos Aires, the J.C.A. demanded me the fulfillment of the contract, that is to say, that they did not allow me to make abandonment of the colony. The J.C.A. based their pretension in the abandonment of the field on the part of settler, although I had solved not to sell the land, but to rent it... According to the interpretation that the J.C.A. gave the contracts that there were suscripted in its opportunity, the colonist and their children were virtually enslaved to the land and could not leave it of any way. To my repeated protests it was answered that doing an exception with me would be equivalent to seat a dangerous precedent, for the possibility that an exodus in mass of the colonists would take place towards the city. It was alleged that the contract established that the colonists had to personally work the land and, therefore, as much the sale as the renting meant a violation of the stipulated.”²⁷

Garfunkel decided to take the case to justice, but it was not finally necessary because the J.C.A. retired their demands allowing him to take root in Buenos Aires. Two relevant remarks; Garfunkel relates that when he decided to litigate to the J.C.A.:

²⁷ B. Garfunkel, p. 381.

*“A student of law, near his graduation, Isaac Nissensohn (son of colonists of Mauricio), aware the details of the subject, gently offered his services to me for the case that other colonists, in the same conditions than me, were decided to leave the colony.”*²⁸

Garfunkel also adds, with real sadness, that:

*“But the sad thing of the case, I fulfill an obligation of conscience in saying it, is that many colonists took advantage of the antecedent to make as well abandonment of the colony, although the reasons that determined them to make that decision, in the great majority of the cases were not the same than mine.”*²⁹ *It hurt to me deeply that it happened and gave the reason to the J.C.A., as far as the fear that my attitude seated a bad precedent.”*³⁰

For that reason, it seems to us adequate to propose this episode as the trigger of the disintegration of Colonia Mauricio.

V. THE HISTORICAL REVIEW OF DEMETRIO ARANOVICH

Colonia Mauricio settled down in 1891 on the first lands acquired by the J.C.A. in our country and, by far, the most fertile. Something more than one decade later the Official Memory of the J.C.A. described it as the most prosperous of the colonies. Nevertheless, for 1930 Mauricio was nothing more than a memory. What happened during those 40 years? How those immigrants who arrived at Argentina in 1891 managed to obtain the property of their lands? Why the colony was disintegrated?

In order to answer these questions, Aranovich makes an historical review of the colony from its creation, in 1891, to its virtual disintegration, in 1930. The review is based, mainly, in official publications of the J.C.A. (Yearbooks and Informs); with the exception of the first years of the colonization for which his source of information was Zoilo Kohan, one of the first employees of the J.C.A.

The fact that Aranovich, unlike Garfunkel, has not been a colonist eliminates certain necessary subjectivity in the analysis of the facts. In his work he displays numerous statistics and very few opinions on events of the daily life. On the other hand, given his

²⁸ B. Garfunkel, p. 383.

²⁹ He had three motivations: the future of their children, fatigue against the injustices of the J.C.A. administrators and the feeling of having accomplished his ideal. Moreover, Garfunkel never sold his land: “I felt deep gratitude for the country, to the point that I promised myself not to sell it during my life, whatever the circumstances or the pressures. So much so that recently (around 1959) I have rejected a succulent proposal, even when it gives me a negligible income.” (B. Garfunkel, p. 385)

residence in the colony during 1904, and in Carlos Casares between 1905 and 1916, it is clear that he had the opportunity to interrelate with old colonists.

His work complements the memories of Garfunkel, not only by his approach to the subject, much more analytical and objective, but also because he centers his attention, fundamentally, in the period of the disintegration of the colony. On the other hand, its entailment with the Socialist Party eliminates the risk that, because of having arrived to Argentina hired by the J.C.A. and having exerting his profession in Mauricio contracted again by the J.C.A., their analysis was slanted in favor of this organization.

We will divide the chapter in two sections:

- The birth, establishment and maturation of Colonia Mauricio (1891-1898).
- The apogee and the disintegration of the colony (1899-1930).

We will describe the facts from the optics of Aranovich, and we will evaluate the exactitude of such corroborating them with the memories of Boris Garfunkel.

The Birth, Establishment and Maturation of Colonia Mauricio (1891-1899)

Demetrio Aranovich relates that the news on the project of Baron de Hirsch had quickly scattered in the Jewish villages of the west and the south of Russia. The local committees of the ports of embarkation to Argentina, like Hamburg and others, were themselves finessed by an extraordinary flow of immigrants.

Nothing had been still organized to receive the prospective colonists (not even the land where they would be colonized had still been bought); nevertheless, the committees had to embark the immigrants to Buenos Aires because the German authorities threatened their repatriation if they did not follow their way. The first contingent arrived to Buenos Aires in August of 1891; they would be colonized in Colonia Mauricio.

On August 25, Dr. Loewenthal, the representative of Baron de Hirsch, concluded the acquisition of the first property in the Argentine Republic of the J.C.A.: *“24,889 hectares in the plain pampa of the province of Buenos Aires, seven hours from the city of Buenos Aires by the line of the Railroad of the West, to the distance of three leguas of station Carlos Casares, in that solitary time, surrounded by virgin fields covered with strong*

³⁰ B. Garfunkel, p. 384.

*grass. The property, located in a place known as Algarrobos, was acquired to Rómulo Franco, including the cows and horses that live in the property.”*³¹

On September 4 around 300 families of immigrants took the railroad in Buenos Aires in direction to Carlos Casares, arriving in the afternoon. Algarrobos (where the Administration of the colony was settled) was 15 km from the station. Given the little amount of carts, the men had to make the trip on foot, arriving late at the night, after supporting a storm.

The women, the children, as well as some few men of extreme weakness, were lodged in a shed of about 20 meters in length by 10 of wide, the rest of the men slept in an open area. Aranovich states that: *“The preparations that had been made to receive as much people were very deficient: when arriving they were without ceiling and food.”*³²

The life of the colonists during the first weeks was very precarious, until the direction of the J.C.A. in Buenos Aires sent carps for their lodging and installed in the shed of Algarrobos a deposit of provisions to distribute between the immigrants; writing down the consumptions of each family in their respective notebooks.

The picture that provides Aranovich of this period totally agrees with the description that Boris Garfunkel makes his the optics of a colonist. The hard cakes as the only food when arriving to the station of Carlos Casares, the lodging in the shed and the construction of the camping of carps, are described in detail in his memories.³³ Garfunkel also relates, in numerous opportunities, the unscrupulous behavior of Guerber, the first Administrator of the colony, and the frequent misconduct of the employees of the J.C.A.³⁴

Aranovich continues describing the first times of the colony on the basis of the report on Mauricio presented by David Cazes, ex-director of the J.C.A. in Argentina, to the Council of Administration in Paris in 1907, report that he will use frequently throughout his review. He tells us that the future colonists lived in the camping of carps during months, in some cases until a year, in the greatest inactivity, without making any productive activity. This fact is authenticated by Garfunkel.

³¹ D. Aranovich, p. 1.

³² D. Aranovich, p. 3.

³³ B. Garfunkel, p. 184-192.

³⁴ Examples of it can be found in B. Garfunkel, p. 198-200.

Why the colonists were not settling down in their lands? Aranovich explains that the lands of the colony were not totally free of renters yet. This fact would force the J.C.A. to litigate by years and would end with their obligation to pay important indemnifications to several renters whose leases had not expired when the sale took place. Again, from his optics of a colonist, Garfunkel corroborates this fact.

At the beginning of 1892 Colonel Goldsmid, who obtained a license of the British Ministry military to come to organize the colonies, arrived to Argentina.

The new Director of the J.C.A visited and reorganized Colonia Mauricio (May of 1892) with military hand. He agreeded with those immigrants who did not serve like colonists, or who did not wish to be them, the amount of the indemnification with the aim that they left the colony. He also suppressed the deposit of provisions and the notebooks were eliminated. From now on, until the colonists obtained utilities from their harvests, they would receive a monthly stipend in cash, in a loan character, and they would have to buy everything that they needed for their feeding and its daily life from the retailers of the zone. Finally, he gave the instructions of the case to disarm the camping of carps and gradually to install the colonists in their farms. All these facts are also meticulously described by Garfunkel.

We found here the first divergence in the optics of Garfunkel, as a colonist, and Aranovich, as an objective observer of the facts. For Garfunkel, the abolition of the notebooks of the colonists, and the consequent closing of the warehouse of the J.C.A., was something long wished by the colonists. However Aranovich mentions that:

*“It is easily understood to what degree of demoralization has been able to take the colonists, taking into account the moral quality of this people in that time, the monthly deliveries of money to support its expenses of life. The only useful consequence of this experiment went that it contributed to that the good elements and the bad ones were polarizen; those immigrants who offered some promise for the future from the others that absolutely did not serve as colonists. The first stage for the purging of the colony began. It was agreed with the unsuitable one, the amount of the indemnification that was paid to them, provided they left the colony.”*³⁵

³⁵ D. Aranovich, p. 4.

To our understanding the vision of Aranovich adjusts more to the reality. All the colonists were not prepared to make decisions on the use from their money. Let us remember the misery of which they came in Russia and the fact that they have found their necessities satisfied during almost a year in the warehouse of the J.C.A. It is clear that their expenses were written down in their respective notebooks, but they did not internalized this fact.

The project of Hirsch had the goal to provide to the beneficiaries the opportunity not only to become useful members for the society, recovering economically, but also as human beings:

*“Hirsch disapproved the traditional charity with its emphasis in the distribution of alms. He was convinced that he could assure the future of the Jews of Russia providing them the opportunity to become self-sufficient through productive work.”*³⁶

All the beneficiaries would not be able to take advantage of it; some would have to defect, it is the logical thing. For that reason we considered that the episode of the stipends would have to be interpreted within this context.

(In 1893) colonel Goldsmid left the Direction of the J.C.A. and he returned to Europe. He was replaced temporarily by Maximo Kogan, a Russian engineer, who continued with the task of purging colonies. Kogan had two collaborators: Emilio Korkus and Dr. Berkenheim, who would be in charge of Colonia Mauricio.

Berkenheim would purify the colony from paupers, thieves and also of those who, in his opinion, by their character or because of the composition of their family, were not sufficient apt for the agricultural work. In words of Aranovich: *“A period of cleaning, sprinkled of pathetic scenes and scandals began.”*³⁷ These facts are consistent once again with the memories of Boris Garfunkel.

Throught the passing of the years, the review of Aranovich begins to include a greater amount of statistical references and the description of a smaller number of events; for that reason we will try to segment this period annually or so, emphasizing the information provided by the author and extending it by our analysis when we consider it opportune.

³⁶ ICA in Israel, J.C.A. Charitable Foundation.

1894 -1895

- In 1894 the J.C.A. presents to the colonists the contracts of the lands, which include the consolidation of the total debts of the colonists with the company.

These debts reached a magnitude of around 50% of the value of the land. The original contract stipulated that this amount would have to be paid in 12 annuities, with an annual interest of 5%. The colonists refused to sign it. Aranovich relates that “*only in the following year, induced by Mr. Eusebio Lapine (the new Administrator), in charge of organizing on more solid bases the colony, almost all the colonists would sign the contracts to assure their rights over the lands.*”³⁸

This episode is described in detail in the memories of Boris Garfunkel, who locates it at the beginning of 1895. The commentary of Aranovich on the event speaks by itself:

*“The colonists, that were believed they have the right to enjoy the generosity of the philanthropy of Baron de Hirsch, were surprised by the knowledge that all the expenses were loaded in their accounts, that there were not given away anything, the fare, or the subsidies they have received for many months, and what annoyed them most was that 5% interest.”*³⁹

As it is expected the non welfarism concept of philanthropy, which characterized the project, was not understood and, by the way, was resisted, by the own beneficiaries of the project.

- Lapine finished the purging of the colony, expelling some undesirable elements that still were there, soon improving the conditions of installation of the colonists. Anyone who wished it may change his lot (of 80 to 100 hectares) by better located land, increasing until the maximum the extension of such (210 hectares).

Like in other occasions, the analysis of the memories of Garfunkel gives faith to this fact.

In Aranovich words, this “*last decision was based on a mistaken concept of the value and the capacity of yield of the land of Colonia Mauricio.*”⁴⁰ This fact is of fundamental

³⁷ D. Aranovich, p. 6.

³⁸ D. Aranovich, p. 7.

³⁹ D. Aranovich, p. 7.

⁴⁰ D. Aranovich, p. 7.

importance, because in these mistakes Aranovich will find the genesis of the future disintegration of the colony.

The author supports his position in the report presented by David Cazes in 1907 to the Council of Administration of Paris:

“Agronomists and others that had occasion to pronounce themselves on the value of the land of the colony declared that a third of her was formed of absolutely unusable low marshes, and the other two thirds were made up of very poor land, of which the analyses, they have been mentioned in support, superabundantly demonstrated their poverty, and that after four or five years of work would be exhausted and without any value for agriculture.

*In vain we mentioned the example of surrounding lands, in vain we insisted that tests became of alfalfa plantations; we have sent with this aim seeds and material for farming, but our agronomists declared that it would be a effort to pure loss, and after the years of unfruitful fight we had to retire of Mauricio the alfalfa seed that we had sent there, and to resend it to Moisés Ville where they will be used.”*⁴¹

Let us remember this last paragraph, because we will return to it years later.

1896

- Of the 213 families installed as colonists in Mauricio before 1894 they were in December of 1896, after successive purgings, 187 colonists; the total population was reduced to 947 people.

- The event of the year, obviously, was the death, on April 21, of Baron de Hirsch.

Aranovich emphasizes the neglect in which the colonists fell. His statement proves that the author shares the vision of Hirsch on the goal of the philanthropy:

“The mentality of the uneducated mass of the first colonists as far as their relation with Baron de Hirsch and the J.C.A. is peculiar. The Baron was the good father of the colonists, he always arranged to give all the imaginable favors to them and to overwhelm them with benefits, that never arrived at their destiny because the employees of the company interposed, people of bad heart, enemies of the colonists, to whom they looked to harm. That sentimentality instead of being a clear and defined concept of justice, of business with the J.C.A. that provides to the colonists the means for a healthy work by means of a loan,

⁴¹ D. Aranovich, p. 7.

*whose reimbursement will serve to help other coreligionists in equality of conditions, was the cause of most of the conflicts between the colonists and the J.C.A.”*⁴²

The neglect and the sensation of gratitude of the colonists towards Hirsch, beyond the mix-ups with the administrators and still with the Directors of the J.C.A., were also attested by Garfunkel.

1897-1898

- Economically, they are very bad years. In 1894, 5,328 hectares of wheat were planted, which was burned by a frost fallen in the month of November; this induced a reduction of the seed in 1895 to only 2,291 hectares, increasing to 4,090 in 1896. The harvests of wheat and corn in 1887 and 1898 also gave very bad results. There were planted between 8,500 and 9,000 hectares, but the benefit was very thin. The wheat rendered between 3 and 4 fanegas (each fanega is equivalent to 43.247 kilograms) by hectare, the corn was not far better.

These numbers mark the first economic statistics that we found in the review; from them until 1930, Aranovich will provide us with numbers of great interest to the aims to understand the economic unfolding of the colony.

As a synthesis: *“The colonists were discouraged; twenty families left the colony and it was afraid that the exodus became general.”*⁴³

It ended here the period that we have denominated “Birth, Establishment and Maturation of Colonia Mauricio.” It is clear that if there is a determining event to divide the history of Mauricio in two periods it is the introduction of the cattle activity; for that reason the separation in these two sections.

During the years that we finished reporting, the sayings of Demetrio Aranovich and Boris Garfunkel show, in general, great coincidence; beyond differences in the years in which they report the events, probably caused by the fact that Garfunkel writes his memories more than 50 years after happened the facts and surpassing the 90 years of age, whereas the review of Aranovich is contemporary to the facts.

⁴² D. Aranovich, p. 8.

⁴³ D. Aranovich, p. 9.

The Apogee and the Disintegration of Colonia Mauricio

1899

The year 1899 marks a point of inflexion in the economic situation of the colony: the harvests improves, it begins to be developed the milk industry and, fundamentally, the cattle ranch is introduced and the colonists begin to expand the fields of alfalfa. The conditions are given for the takeoff of the colony.

- The 1899 harvest is not so bad. The wheat renders in average between 7 and 8 fanegas by hectare; the corn around 15 fanegas. The difference of productivity with the previous years is remarkable.

- On August 15 a company installs the first cream maker in the colony. Most of the colonists sell 50 liters of milk daily, which contributes to improve their economic situation.

As it is expected, this activity generates an increase in the stock of milk cows. Garfunkel reports this event a year before, in 1898, when some immigrants acquired milk cows to the Administration of the J.C.A.

- The cattle activity makes its appearance in the colony. The colonists buy cattle, duplicating the stock in the colony, which reaches 6,452 animals.

The economic rationality of the colonists is remarkable. In words of Garfunkel: *“When the century dawned, some colonists decided to extend our scope of action to the cattle activities, so expensive to the man of the Argentine field. Encouraged by what I saw in the neighboring ranches, I began to raise and sell cattle.”*⁴⁴

- The greater amount of milk cows and cattle for the sale stimulates the growth of the surface dedicated to the seeding of alfalfa, which is increased from 597 hectares in 1898 to 1,097 in 1899.

In words of Aranovich: *“The confidence in the future reborns.”* Nevertheless, still very few colonists can pay their annuity by virtue of the debts contracted in the previous years with the retailers of Carlos Casares, who charged a very high interest.

⁴⁴ B. Garfunkel, p. 328.

1900

- Some discontented abandon the colony, so the number of settlers is reduced to 131 and the population to 926 people.

If we remember that in December 1896, after successive purges, there had been in Mauricio 187 settlers, who with their families represented a population of 947 people, it is clear that the hard times were felt, reducing the number of settlers by 29%.

- The land of the colony extends by further acquisitions, increasing its area by more than 20,000 hectares in relation to its original extension.

Surely, Aranovich refers to the acquisition of Santo Tomás and La Esperanza, which Garfunkel locates in 1902 and some years later, respectively, acquired to be used as a reserve for the future installation of sons of the colonists. The parcelling was performed at 150 hectares the ranch; they were alfalfa fields, ideal for livestock and more expensive than those in Algarrobos and Alice, but the investment was attractive to families who wished that the new generation follows the steps of their parents.

- The amount of cultivated land expands, reaching 12,886 hectares. The wheat crop was just medium and the prices were not high; however, since most of the settlers made the work by themselves, they obtained some profits.

Two events will be reported consistently over the coming years:

- It extends the area planted with alfalfa, adding 2,172 hectares. The colonists sale alfalfa for forage but also their seeds. The good quality of the grass allows its selling at a very good price; since they made four cuts per year, each hectare leaves a remarkable annual profit. The seed yields even more, since on average they are obtained 2.5 fanegas per hectare, which are also sold at excellent values.

Let us remember that last paragraph of the Report presented by David Cazes in 1907 to the Council of Administration of Paris, mentioned by Aranovich when relating the 1895 events:

“In vain we mentioned the example of surrounding lands, in vain we insisted that tests became of alfalfa plantations; we have sent with this aim seeds and material for farming, but our agronomists declared that it would be a effort to pure loss, and after the years of

*unfruitful fight we have had to retire of Mauricio the alfalfa seed that we had sent there, and to send it to Moisés Ville, to the aim to be used there.”*⁴⁵

The error of judgment on the potentiality of the lands of Mauricio is evident; Aranovich will provide us numerous statistics in its support.

- The cattle activity is increased, the cattle stock amounted to about 6,300 animals.

Boris Garfunkel also tells us this fact. It is clear that the colonists responded to the incentives created by changes in the relative prices.

- (Probably, for the first time) Almost all the colonists could pay their annuity to the J.C.A.

It is not a minor detail; Aranovich draws it from an objective analysis of the information provided by the Yearbooks of the J.C.A. Boris Garfunkel highlights it from his optics as a colonist.

1901

- The cultivated land is reduced to 5,663 hectares (remember that in 1900 it reached almost 13,000).

It is interesting the remark of Aranovich, who explains that this is founded in an attempt not to “weaken too much” (quotation marks placed by the author in his review) the land that still was considered very poor. Do not forget that the author proposes that misperception as the seed of the future collapse of the colony.

- The cattle activity, as expected, expands. The number of animals reaches more than 11,000 heads, between the ones acquired to work in the farms and those acquired for fattening.

Given the increase in the number of cattle, the alfalfa fields, which extend to about 3,000 hectares, are used for grazing, leaving only the last of the four yearly cuts for seed.

- The dairy cattle became much less profitable than the selling of livestock. The cream maker industry continues to decline, a phenomenon that began in 1900 with the launch of the cattle activity.

- The colonists pay their debts to the merchants of Carlos Casares and their annuities to the J.C.A.

⁴⁵ D. Aranovich, p. 8.

The image of prosperity set in; the ability of the colonists to pay their old debts and their annuities provides evidence of this.

1902

- 30 new colonists settle. They are the sons of old colonists and some new immigrants.

As we mentioned when commenting the events of year 1900, Garfunkel himself corroborates this fact.

- The total sown, taking into account the 3,000 acres of alfalfa that were grown previously, amounts to 14,530 hectares (recovering the surface of 1900, 12,886 acres, regardless of the fields of alfalfa).

- The success of the harvest allowed the colonists to pay back their annuities to the J.C.A.

- This year, two inspectors of the Central Council of Paris visit the colony, which impresses them as “a fully active center and in the process of a growing prosperity” (quotation marks placed by the author in the review).

The picture is excellent, good years follow one to another. The prosperity of the colony is undeniable.

1903

- The number of colonists reaches to 164.

The increase in the number of colonists is another evidence of the increasing well-being of the colony. Recall that from the Report of 1900 Aranovich tells us that the amount of colonists had decreased to 131, compared to the 187 existing in December of 1896, because of the bad years. From 1899 the incipient prosperity attracted new immigrants willing to be colonized; if we added to it, in words of Garfunkel, the interest of the old colonists in acquiring fields in Santo Tomás for their sons, because they are full of alfalfa and, therefore, they are ideals for the cattle activity, we obtain this increase of 25% in the number of colonists with respect to the year 1900.

- The year is excellent for agriculture. The 5,520 hectares of wheat produce 10.5 fanegas by hectare, the 4.561 hectares of corn render around 11 fanegas by hectare. On the other hand, 382 hectares of new fields of alfalfa are added.

- Meanwhile, livestock continues to expand. The number of cattle amounted to 11,741, of whom only 2,368 were given to the colonists by the Administration, the remaining 9,373 were purchased by the colonists to third parties. Some of the colonists are engaged in fattening livestock for export.

- The colonists pay to the J.C.A. around 95% of the annualities scheduled for the year.

The best summary of the status of the colony at this time is provided by Aranovich himself: “*The growing prosperity is on the rise*” (quotation marks placed by the author).⁴⁶

1904

- The size of the plantings are the same of the previous year. They are devoted to wheat 6,186 acres, which yield 3.9 fanegas per hectare, but the corn fails because of the drought.

- Livestock production continues to expand. The amount of cattle acquired for fattening and trade already ascend to 19,657 heads.

It is clear that at this moment this one is the central activity of the colony, given its high yield. This performance threatens the very existence of the dairy industry, for which the cream makers factories continue to decline.

- The colonists pay to the J.C.A 88% of the amount of their annuities.

The wellness is evident. Aranovich points that the Official Memory of the J.C.A. corresponding to 1904 be refers the colony with these words: “*Mauricio, the most prosperous of our colonies.*”

1905

- In 1905 the number of colonists reaches 186 (22 new colonists with respect to 1903) and the population 2,118 people. 110 new families of immigrants have arrived (probably spontaneously), composed by 804 people.

The population doubled from the values of the year 1900 (926 inhabitants), turning point in the economic situation of Mauricio. The colony attracts new immigrants because the facility of its access, given its proximity to Buenos Aires, and, of course, because its prosperity.

⁴⁶ D. Aranovich, p. 12.

- 14.679 hectares are harvested. Of these, 10,300 hectares of wheat, which have a yield of 10.73 fanegas the hectare. Corn yield is still mediocre (it is worth noting the significant increase in the wheat area harvested: slightly less than the double of the previous two years).

- The cattle fattening continues prospering. With such aim the colonists travel far away from the colony, buy and bring skinny animals; then, in three or four months fatten and sell them, either to butchers in Buenos Aires or to the fridge industry. The money has a great rotation, since the cattle is renewed three or four times a year.

Coincidentally, Garfunkel says that the main difficulty for this type of operation lays in the great distance between ranches, or rather, the large size of these. Sometimes you had to make up to 100 kilometers on horseback, which meant a great loss of time and a great physical, but the results outweigh the sacrifices.

- As it was expected the cream maker factory finally is closed (the milk industry simply could not compete with the yield of the cattle activity).

- This performance encourages the sewing of alfalfa, dedicating 743 new hectares (totalizing an area of about 4,000 hectares) and reduced the selling of bundles of grass (given the logical necessity of using them as food for the livestock).

- The colonists renewed their capital assets, replacing old plows for new and more efficient models (their economic reality allow them to do that).

Prosperity remains the norm. The synthesis of the year is simple; in words of Aranovich: *"The colonists have money."*

1906-1907

- The number of colonized immigrants continues growing; they are already 200 (14 more than in 1905). They continue arriving spontaneously, the population reaches 2,318 people (10% more than in 1905, another evidence of the prosperity of the colony).

- The wheat gives excellent results. The colonists also begins to experience with oats, which has an optimal yield, 13 to 17 fanegas by hectare.

- Nevertheless, the greater benefit is produced by the alfalfa seed, from which they were obtained more than four fanegas by hectare; a total of 4,143 fanegas, which were commercialized to very good prices. The fields of alfalfa already occupies 15,847 hectares.

It is interesting to mention that the last information that Aranovich had provided about the plantings of alfalfa data from 1905, with an area of about 4,000 hectares. The numbers show, in a couple of years, an increase of almost 12,000 hectares devoted to the activity (probably, included in this total are the land planted with alfalfa that the J.C.A. had bought in Santo Tomás). It is also to mention the increase in the productivity, since in 1900 they were obtained around 2.5 fanegas by hectare.

It is clear, as Aranovich mentions, as much in his description of year 1900 like in the one of the present period, that the quality of the alfalfa is very good, the soil and the climate of Mauricio are adequate and, given the prices, the crop is highly convenient.

- The colonists continue paying their annuities to the J.C.A. without greater problems and acquiring capital goods (plow seat and sowing machines). The working oxens of the principle of the colonization are just a memory, they have been replaced by horses and mares.

The picture is forceful again: “*Years 1906 and 1907 mark an accentuated well-being and prosperity.*”⁴⁷

Aranovich digression on the origin of the disintegration of Mauricio

After providing to us statistics on the situation of the colony in 1906 and 1907, Aranovich raises for the first time his hypothesis on the causal of the disappearance of Mauricio as a Jewish agricultural colony.

Aranovich based his remarks on the report of 1907 of David Cazes to the Board of Directors of Paris, therefore we will transcribe the relevant paragraphs of the report:

“Luckily, some colonists are let persuade and sow some hectares of alfalfa that give satisfactory results, the very compelling example of the neighbors also produces effect; in short, all the colonists seek to extend their fields of alfalfa at first in high and, to say thus, tired lands, later in those classified like low, that improved as they were worked.

Meanwhile, we have acquired the domain of Santo Tomás, which a part constituted fields of alfalfa. The colonists settled in these prairies have obtained benefits from the first year. Thus, the impulse was given and now several colonists have transformed all their lots into fields of alfalfa, others destine for alfalfa 80, 100 and 120 hectares. The net benefits have been very important.

⁴⁷ D. Aranovich, p. 14.

The alfalfa is not the only resource of the colonists of Mauricio. After some years this land that, according to the experts, had to be exhausted quickly, has produced good harvests of wheat; the yields of 12 to 14 fanegas by hectare were not rare; in 1905 and 1906 the average yield of the wheat was near 12 fanegas. To such point that this year, when the mean efficiency was of 7.72 by hectare it is considered very low.

Also some old colonists, that have great surfaces of alfalfa, when do not have enough number of animals to use among them the fields, they rent them and they obtain a rent. Several colonists of Santo Tomás, that have received lots entirely seeded of alfalfa, were thus able for paying elevated annuities from the first year of their installation..

Mauricio is a colony of fattening of animals rather than of raising. Few colonists are dedicated to their reproduction. All of them buy, sell and almost renew their cattle, in everything or partly, two or three times a year.

As a result of all these circumstances the smaller piece of land in Mauricio is disputed with fierceness. The lands that formerly were considered without any value, are nowadays working, used and contribute almost as much as the others.

Everything what precedes explains and justifies the valuation at which has arrived the land from the region of Mauricio and the sales become more and more rare.”⁴⁸

Aranovich states that the report of Cazes is a strong evidence of the magnitude of the error of the agronomists of the J.C.A. when classifying the lands of Mauricio as poor and inadequate for agriculture. This error would induce an unfortunate policy of land allocation, granting the colonists extensive fields, under the assumption that with little fields they would have no means of live.

What would be the consequence of this? In the words of the author:

“The decay and the disintegration of Colonia Mauricio like an Jewish agricultural colony, since the enormous value of the land in Mauricio was a temptation too great for the immigrant who had paid a low price to make a brilliant business by selling his farm. So he becomes owner of several tens of thousands pesos for use in any commercial enterprise. That was the origin of the decay and decline of Mauricio as an agricultural Jewish colony.”⁴⁹

⁴⁸ D. Aranovich, p. 15.

⁴⁹ D. Aranovich, p. 19.

The hypothesis of Aranovich is clear; we will evaluate it, in the last section of our paper.

Now let us continue the study of the statistics presented by the author in his review; in that direction we close the year 1907 with his economic assessment on the situation of the colony:

- In 1907 the prosperity of the colonists and the development of Mauricio go on increasing.

1908

- The number of colonized immigrants continues increasing, it reaches to 243.
- Even by this time, the J.C.A. continues with the practice of waste land (in the words of the author), by assigning large fields to the colonists.

Aranovich provides us the following paragraph of the Annual Report of the Administrator of the colony: “*According to the adopted system to give new lands of more than 150 hectares to the colonists that have originally received bad lands, the total surface of 44 lots was distributed. If we do not make new acquisitions, which would be very difficult, given the high prices of the lands in our region, the colony will not develop further.*”⁵⁰ The text emphasizes the two points that the author tries to highlight again and again in his review: the high value reached by the land in the region and the practice to give to the colonists fields of more than 150 hectares.

- The surface dedicated to alfalfa continues growing, ascending to 18,953 hectares (it increased in 3,056 hectares).

Since it exceeds the necessities of the colonists, by virtue of the quantity of cattle in the colony, it is received cattle from neighboring farms for grazing, by a monthly payment by head.

The prosperity of the colonists is undeniable. The magnitude of the payments made to the J.C.A. during the year, for annuities, debts and contributions, is not the only evidence of it, but also the fact that the colonists seed vegetables only for their domestic consumption, not looking to obtain any benefit of its orchards as complement of the agricultural operations. In words of the author: “*such smallness does not interest to them.*”⁵¹

⁵⁰ D. Aranovich, p. 20.

1909

- They continue arriving spontaneous immigrants, who work in different offices.
- There are four schools in the colony, with a total of 18 teachers and 407 students.

This number is consistent with the growth of the population, doubling the number of establishments and of teachers with respect to 1904, when there was a school in Algarrobos and another one in Alice, and increasing the number of pupils 38%.

- The Israelite Agricultural Center, created by the J.C.A. in 1906 as a cooperative similar to the existing ones in the colonies of Entre Rios does not prosper.

A hypothesis that we like to propose in order to explain the failure of the cooperative is the economic success of the colonists, which decreases the incentives for joining an institution of this class. The colonists feel financially secure and probably do not see the need for an intermediary in their commercial transactions.

- It returns the dairy to the colony, no longer through cream makers firms like in the older times, but now the same colonists have cream separators machines in their farms and they directly send the cream to Buenos Aires and Chivilcoy.

This fact not only demonstrates the reduction of the opportunity cost of the dairy respect to the cattle activity, which gradually made disappear the cream makers firms of the colony in the first years of the 20th century, but it also reflects the economic capacity of the colonists, which allows them to acquire capital assets like the cream separators, unthinkable in the times not so distant when the milk was sent to the cream maker firms. Aranovich tells us that there are 113 colonists who have their own cream separators; it is not a small number.

1910

- The population of Mauricio in 1910 reaches its maximum: 3.077 inhabitants (750 people more than a pair of years ago).

- The surface of alfalfa increases in 3.979 hectares, reaching an extension of 25,557 hectares.

- The industry of milk continuous in expansion. Three new cream separators are added to the already existing stock and opens a factory of casein.

- The colonists continue regularly making their payments to the J.C.A.

⁵¹ D. Aranovich, p. 20.

- Two colonists initiate a lawsuit against the J.C.A. in order to obtain the titles of property of their land. The Court of appeal rejects the demand. Between the arguments the Court states the following one: *“The contract is not a simple ticket of sale, but a commitment that the colonist accept voluntarily to respect the social aims and traditions that persecutes the Association that forms centers of Jewish population exclusively, formed by Jewish agriculturists and it is against all class of commercial speculation.”*⁵²

This episode is of such relevance that it is described in the Annual Report of the J.C.A. corresponding to 1910:

“Despite the prosperity of numerous colonists, the unhappy ones do not lack... Several colonists of Mauricio have requested to our Association some time ago the delivery of the titles of property of their lands by means of the advance payment of the annuities still not overcome. According to our contracts with the colonists, there are twenty years to settle the debt with the society and the advance payment cannot take place, except with our consent.

This clause is included in the contract to prevent that the colonists may speculate with their lands. We have fulfilled our duty to ensure the children of those colonists the benefits of farm life on the property that have been bought by their parents to the J.C.A. at very low prices. We have not been mistaken in our forecasts and it test that that increase of the value of the land is indeed the main cause of the movement to which we have talked about.

In Mauricio, for example, the price of the land almost has been decupled. Speculators of all species wanted to buy these lands; they incentive the colonists to demand their titles of property, offering to advance the necessary money to them for the payment of the annuities that still remains.

*We do not know the conditions that they offer to the colonists, but it is allowed to think that they are not advantageous for them. Once their lands were sold, it would be seen that many of the Jewish agriculturists move to the cities and take care of businesses: their efforts of twenty years would be lost at the same time that ours.”*⁵³

We have mentioned a similar fact as the trigger of the process of disintegration of the colony. The description of the event by Garfunkel differs from that of Aranovich, since the former does not mention that the dispute have reached the courts. Surely the event described by Aranovich had its genesis in the one narrated by Garfunkel. Obviously, the

⁵² D. Aranovich, p. 22.

departure of Boris Garfunkel was not the cause of the disintegration of the colony but only evidence that the conditions were given for this to happen.

Which were these conditions? Aranovich proposes to us systematically, being based on the Information of the J.C.A., that the possibility of obtaining a great gain of capital by virtue of the valuation of the land has been the determining factor in the disappearance of Mauricio as a Jewish agricultural colony, with which implicitly agrees Garfunkel.

1911-1913

- In 1911 the wheat area extends considerably, but the result is not good. Of 14,788 hectares are harvested only 8,690, with a yield of 7.40 fanegas per hectare. The following year the number grows. Planting was reduced to 5,306 hectares (not far from the values of 1910), but the harvest reaches only 1,845, with a yield of 5.25 fanegas per hectare.

- In 1913 the overproduction of alfalfa in the zone generates a drop in its prices. This fact induces a reduction of the seeded surface; still more, a third of the alfalfa is left without cutting. The jointly reduction of seedtime, the harvest, and from the yields, generates important losses to the colonists.

- If we compared the physical capital of the colonists between 1912 and 1913 we noticed a diminution of the agricultural implements: instead of 397 plows they are left 286, instead of 175 machines gleaners, 128. In turn, the number of windmills with reservoirs for drinking water of cattle has increased, and reached 84.

The role of the cattle activity in the economy of the colony is increased; during all these years it allows the colonists to pay its annuities to the J.C.A.

- In 1911 there are five schools with 20 teachers and 369 students.

It is interesting to compare these numbers with those reported two years earlier, in 1909, when the four schools of the colony took care of 407 students. The review of Aranovich continues providing small signs of the beginning of the disintegration process of the colony.

- Between 1912 and 1913 the J.C.A. grants the title of property of their lands to 14 colonists that have paid the totality of their debts with the institution.

This information constitutes the first mention of Aranovich on the subject; mentions that from now on will be a constant.

⁵³ D. Aranovich, p. 21.

1914-1918

Since the J.C.A. has not published annual reports during the years of World War I, Aranovich does not make any commentary on such period, beyond to point out that during this time did not take place any event worth mentioning. This fact provides certainty on the sources of information of his review: the Yearbooks and Annual Reports of the J.C.A.

1919

- Although the seeded surface is relatively small, the yield is very good: the wheat rendered 10 fanegas; oats 14.5 and corn 16,5. It is to be mentioned the increase of the land dedicated to the sunflower (this is the first mention of Aranovich to that crop, introduced in the country in Colonia Mauricio), in 1918 it was planted 673 hectares, being increased to 1,359 in 1919, with an optimal yield.

- The milk industry is fundamental to the economy of the colony; the colonists dedicate all their cattle to it (it begins to be perceived a change in relative prices to the detriment of cattle trading).

- It is to notice the reduction of the fields of alfalfa, which occupy 19,443 hectares, in relation to the surface seeded in 1910, 25,557 hectares. The exhaustion of the fields after 15 years of operations is made feel, no longer is forage for sale; it is used in its totality for the pasturing of the cattle.

Although that reseeding is necessary, Aranovich tells us that the colonists do not want to make the investment; new piece of evidence of their vision of short term as far as its future in the countryside.

- During 1914-1919, 70 colonists have obtained their titles of property, reaching a total of 84 the number of emancipated colonists: of them 27 have sold their lots to strange elements to the colony.

It is the first time that the author provides direct evidence on the process of dissolution of the colony.

1920

- The picture of agriculture is similar to the previous year. Although the acreage is small, 8,630 hectares, the performance is optimal. The wheat rendered 10.7 fanegas by hectare, oats 11.5. The corn rendered 16 fanegas, but only 810 hectares are seeded, because the rest of the 2,863 hectares was used for grazing in the absence of an adequate amount of

alfalfa, 1,320 hectares of sunflower are harvested, with a yield of 11.5 fanegas by hectare, being obtained good prices.

As in 1919 the majority of grassland is used for grazing, either cattle raising or dairy cows, or are leased to third parties, since the fattening of cattle does not give a good result because of the low prices. The cattle crisis is beginning, it will explode in 1921 and it will strongly affect the colony, which had become, throughout the years, in a cattle operation, given the incentives generated by the structure of relative prices.

- The disintegration continues. 23 new colonists have obtained their titles of property, reaching a total of 117 the number of emancipated colonists; of them continue living in the colony only 86.

Aranovich, once again, sustains its position on the cause of the dissolution of the colony “which urges the colonists to sell their land to strangers, is the great valuation that has acquired the land in the region. Their renting are equally expensive, as much of hectares with alfalfa or for cultivation

1921

- The harvest of 1921 had a good yield, continuing a string of good years: wheat yielded 12.2 fanegas per hectare. Of the 2,500 hectares of oats were harvested 500 with a yield of 14.3 fanegas, the rest was left to forage (another piece of evidence of the lack of alfalfa); the corn yielded 17.6 fanegas and the 500 hectares of sunflower only 6.1 fanegas per hectare. It was planted a total of 8,500 hectares.

It is to note the drop in the sown of sunflower as the result of the sharp drop in its price. Once again, the colonists act rationally, following the incentives provided by the price system.

- The cattle crisis that explodes in 1921 and extends to 1922 has an important effect on the economy of the colonists, given that the cattle activity was their main occupation and, on the other hand, they were strongly indebted with the banks, because of expanding their cattle activities. It can not be worst, they have cattle of little value and large liabilities. On the other hand, the climate did not help. The 1921 drought diminished the yield of the dairy; to make matters even worse, when the weather improves the price of the butter sharply fell.

The necessity to sell animals to pay their debts causes the ruin of a great number of colonists. As an example, the best milk cows are sold back to a 10% of the value of some years ago. As it is to be expected, the collapse of the price of the cattle considerably affects the value of the land, which falls until in a 50%.

- The contracts of the old colonists, still not emancipated, arrive at their end on April 1, 1921, the old colonists will pay the remaining of their debts and will obtain the titles of property of the land. In this way 27 colonists receive their titles of property, ascending to 144 the total number of emancipated colonists.

There is no colonist from the original groups of Algarrobo and Alice who has not received yet the title of property of his land. They only remain around 100 colonists in the groups of Santo Tomás and Esperanza, who were colonized at the beginning of the 20th century, many of them sons or sons in law of the first colonists.

- The population of the colony has been reduced to 2.073 people.

The data provided by the author is significant; it represents a 33% less than the maximum population of the colony (3,077 inhabitants), reached in 1910.

- The five schools of the colony stay, but the number of students is reduced to 284 and the number of teachers to 8.

If we remembered that in 1909 the schools had 407 students and in 1911, 369, the evidence cannot be more forceful. In spite of the generational growth the number of students go on declining, unequivocal picture of the emigration of the colonists towards the cities.

Mauricio is firmly directed to its disappearance as a Jewish agricultural colony. It is to be mentioned two completely different scenarios between those colonists that sold their lands before the crises and those that have to do it in the years of the cattle crisis. The first ones sold their lands by convenience, capitalizing themselves. The seconds, more likely by necessity, to pay their debts, ending in a very bad economic situation.

1922

- In 1922 the cattle crisis stimulates the reconversion of the activities, it increases plantings, given the losses to livestock The settlers doubled the area allocated to wheat and corn, and sunflower reaches the 2,000 hectares, four times the area of 1921. The high

opportunity cost causes the alfalfa fields reduce its size by 50%, occupying only 10,000 hectares.

The reduction of the fields of alfalfa is probably the strongest evidence of the cattle crisis. If we remembered that in 1910 the seeded surface reached the 25,557 hectares, the numbers speak by itself.

- For 1922 the total surface of the colony has been assigned. The number of emancipated colonists grows in 19, reaching 163; other 12 will finish paying their debts during the year and will receive the property titles.

In view of the emancipation of the great majority of the colonists, the J.C.A. eliminates the function of Administrator; it is replaced by sporadic inspections of the Direction of Buenos Aires. It is clear that Colonia Mauricio already walks by itself, but not as it was imagined in its origins. The indications of their disintegration are accentuated. As Aranovich mentions: *“Already for years it has not existed in the colony any cooperative nor another society of general interest.”*⁵⁴

1923

- During 1923 the economy of the colony improves, the restructuring of activities pays off, despite the weather threatens the outcome of the harvest. Wheat yields are half than expected, 7 to 8 fanegas per hectare, the corn is significantly affected by drought and yields only 5 fanegas, like sunflower.

- The most important aspect is the replanting of 15,000 hectares of alfalfa, which add to the 10,000 hectares of old alfalfa fields that were left.

On the matter, Aranovich highlights, once again, the quality of the land, which in his vision, constituted the genesis of the disintegration of the colony: *“It is clear that the alfalfa returns to occupy the first position and its rational cultivation, given the excellent quality of the land, allows to obtain a strong yield.”*⁵⁵

- The number of colonists that have received the property of the land elevates to 180.

1924-1925

- The 1924 harvest was quite good; principally the one of corn. The wheat renders 11 fanegas, the oat 15, and the corn 25 fanegas by hectare. The sunflower occupies more than

⁵⁴ D. Aranovich, p. 26.

⁵⁵ D. Aranovich, p. 27.

1,000 hectares; a considerable surface, but 50% less than in 1922. In 1925 the seeded area was much greater, but its yield was similar.

- It returns the cattle activity to the colony. The colonists send 2.624.000 liters of milk; in addition, the sale of livestock reappears, by virtue of the improve in the prices of the cattle.

It is interesting to mention the commentary of Aranovich on the matter, since it illustrates the diversification of activities as a form to attenuate the risk: *“The colonists are not dedicated exclusively to this trade (the sale of livestock) and now do not despise crops, which become more varied.”*⁵⁶

- For 1925, the number of colonists that have obtained the titles of property of their lands reaches 200.

1926-1929

- In 1926 the harvest of corn gave the best result in the history of the colony; in average, 30 fanegas by hectare, but the prices were low. However, the harvest of wheat, failed, as much by the quality of the grain as by the yield. The scenario improves in 1927, rendering the wheat 14 fanegas by hectare and improving even more the yield of the corn: 30 to 35 fanegas by hectare, reaching 39 fanegas in 1928.

- In 1927, 16,150 hectares were seeded, which increases to 17,400 hectares in 1928. The surface of the fields of alfalfa reaches 16,000 hectares.

The commentary of Aranovich is conclusive: “We have insisted all along our review in the numeric data of the harvests to demonstrate how far away from their exhaustion, still in our days (1931), are the excellent lands of Mauricio.”⁵⁷ His position cannot be clearer; the error in the original valuation of the land shines evident.

- In 1927 the number of colonists that have obtained the titles of property of their lands ascends to 210, over a total of 270 colonists, and in 1928 to 215. The colony is practically independent.

The end of Mauricio, as a Jewish agricultural colony, is coming, as it reported in the Report of 1928 of Louis Oungre, Director of the J.C.A. in Argentina, after an inspection tour to the colonies:

⁵⁶ D. Aranovich, p. 27.

⁵⁷ D. Aranovich, p. 29.

“Only the small Colonia Dora, very little populated, and our old Colonia Mauricio, who gradually loses all the characteristics of our colonization, lacks agricultural cooperatives.”

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1930

- In 1930 the population of the colony is made up of 268 colonists, of which 232 have obtained the titles of property of their lands. Of them 130 have sold everything or part of the land, and 60 have it rented. They are left in the colony 42 emancipated colonists and 36 that have not yet obtained the property of their lands.

In words of Aranovich: *“Such are the last official data on this colony, which, according to the general opinion, no longer exists as a Jewish colony,”*⁵⁹ since many new owners and renters of lands are not Jewish.

1931

Aranovich provides us the following final picture of Colonia Mauricio, 40 years after its foundation:

- For the second semester of 1931 the 270 colonists have obtained the titles of property of their lands. Of them 60 have sold their lands and other 70 have sold a part of their lots and operate the rest.

- Of the 210 colonists that stay as proprietors, 100 rent their fields and they do not live in the colony; other 55 live with their families in the urban centers, the majority in Carlos Casares, and come to their farms to work; finally, the remaining 65 live on their lands and work like farmers.

That is to say that from the 270 colonists that have obtained the titles of property of their lands only 65 live in the farms and continue working them. Of course, the vast majority are not the original colonists, as many were dead and others left the country side, being replaced by some of their children.

Aranovich also mentions that it took place a great subdivision of the land, since the sales have taken place in parcels of 50 and still less hectares: *“The Jewish lots are in general much greater than the Christians.”*⁶⁰

⁵⁸ D. Aranovich, p. 28.

⁵⁹ D. Aranovich, p. 29.

⁶⁰ D. Aranovich, p. 31.

This fact is further evidence of the original error when allocating large tracts of land to the colonists, on the base that the operation would not be feasible on a smaller scale, given the low quality of the ground.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Let us summarize, in words of Aranovich, the four determinants of the disintegration of the colony:

(1) “The quality of the colonists, in its great majority without antecedents or experience in rural tasks, who considered their work in the fields as a slavery and looked for their economic emancipation as a way of leaving that rustic way of living in their eagerness to return to the city. The capital that they obtained from the sale of their farms, and that seemed to them enormous, was not use with benefit by most of them, except for very rare exceptions, and they finished without the property and without the money, gaining in the oldness miserably their life, in the same way they did it before their installation in the colony. Some returned with their families to work in the fields or in the towns of the campaign.”⁶¹

Without any doubt most of the immigrants were not farmers, but this fact in itself does not explain, to our understanding, the disappearance of the colony because the same situation occurred in other contemporary colonies to Mauricio. Without going farther, Moisesville, which would not have to disintegrate, but all the opposite. The desire of another type of life can solely be understood like a trigger if there exist adequate conditions for the emigration and these are not others that the economic possibilities of the colonists.

(2) “*The children of many colonists have dedicated themselves to the study of liberal arts and exert their professions in the city of Buenos Aires and in other major cities.*”⁶²

The education and the well-being of their children, *my son the doctor*, were the goal of many immigrants. But again, this fact cannot be considered as an explanatory variable since there is no reason to assume that in the rest of the colonies the incentives were not the same. Many colonists did the impossible thing so that their children studied. *We seeded wheat and we harvested doctors* was a usual quotation between the old colonists. But for the whole family to emigrate from the country to the city, and not only some of their

⁶¹ D. Aranovich, p. 29.

children, this transfer had to be economically feasible. The economic conditions are central again.

(3) *“It has also contributed much to force several colonists to sale part of their lands the great debts that they have contracted with the J.C.A., and that was another of the great errors of the company. We have read in the Official Report of 1910: In order to defend the colonists of Mauricio against the speculators whom love to buy their lands, the Council has made them important advances, when they have needed money to buy cattle. At the request of David Cazes, the J.C.A. has been distributed loans to the colonists in relation to their alfalfares... The advances have been made based on the following reason: the colonists request the titles of their lands in order to use them as collaterals of credits in the banks with the object to invest the money in the purchase of cattle. We will facilitate the advances to them in more advantageous conditions. It was, then, a competition to the banks. And as the banks had come in this case, it also demanded the Jewish the payment of the quotas, having often resorted to embargoes of the product of the harvest of the defaulters. The colonists were entangled in debts and to leave afloat they were forced to sell part of their lands.”*⁶³

Although the description of the situation by Aranovich is correct, it is not his interpretation of the facts. The indebtedness of the colonists forced many of them to sell part or the totality of their lands in disadvantageous conditions after the 1921/22 crises; but it would had happened in any case, even if the J.C.A. had not made the loans, since, by virtue of the great businesses that could be carried out at the beginning of century, many colonists expanded their operations without taking into account the risk of a contingent fall in the prices.

(4) *“The erroneous appreciation by the J.C.A. of the productivity of the land and, therefore, the amplitude of the lots for farming given to the colonists, which could be reduced to their fifth or sixth part, because with 25 or 30 hectares it had been enough for a family of farmers to being able to gain their life. The enormous valuation of the land was the greatest incentive for the selling of the properties.”*⁶⁴

⁶² D. Aranovich, p. 29.

⁶³ D. Aranovich, p. 30.

⁶⁴ D. Aranovich, p. 29.

Even more, as we have indicated it in the previous section (p. 48), Boris Garfunkel implicitly supports this hypothesis:

*“But the sad thing of the case, I fulfill an obligation of conscience in saying it, is that many colonists took advantage of the antecedent to make as well abandonment of the colony, although the reasons that determined them to make that decision, in the great majority of the cases were not the same than mine. It hurt to me deeply that it happened and gave the reason to the J.C.A., as far as the fear that my attitude seated a bad precedent.”*⁶⁵

We cannot but agree with Demetrio Aranovich and Boris Garfunkel. The objective defense of Aranovich of this hypothesis, through the information provided in his review, is conclusive. The colonists had a major incentive to make a strong capital gain; it was rational to do so and they behaved, exactly, as the economic theory predicts it, given the opportunity cost of not doing so.

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⁶⁵ B. Garfunkel, p. 384.

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