

Jewish agricultural settlement in Brazil

NACHMAN FALBEL*

University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil
E-mail: NFALBEL@aol.com

Abstract. Jewish agricultural colonization in Brazil began in 1904 in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, supported by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA). The JCA created the first colonies – Philippson (1904) and Quatro Irmãos (1912) – with the intention of resettling Russian Jews during the decisive years of mass immigration from the Russian empire. In 1936, the JCA administration in Brazil proposed a new project to establish a colony for German Jews in Rezende, situated in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Similar to other initiatives undertaken by the São Paulo and Paraná state governments some years before, the Rezende colony did not last long. This essay analyzes the main factors behind the disintegration of the JCA colonies, noting that, in spite of their relative failure, the colonies aided Brazil and helped change the stereotypical image of the non-productive Jew, capable of working only in commerce and finance. The main benefit from these agricultural experiments was the removal of restrictions in Brazil on Jewish immigration from Europe during the twentieth century.

Introduction

Diverse Jewish farming colony experiments took place in Brazil, all in the shadow of the Jewish Colonization Society [Jewish Colonization Association (JCA)]. The fundamentally agrarian backdrop of the country's economy is most important in following the story. In the period immediately following the achievement of independence, Brazilian economic activity was limited to the exploitation of natural resources, and rapidly progressed to a sugarcane monoculture based on slave labor. In 1819, a sparsely populated Brazil effectively opened its doors to foreign immigrants prepared to work in agriculture. Brazil officially invited "other countries," specifically "the different German peoples," to found colonies, with the promise of free land and other benefits. German-speaking Swiss, Prussians, Pomeranians and other national groups responded, and in time their colonies became the nuclei for larger, more permanent towns and sometimes cities. This was an

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ongoing process involving successive waves of immigrants, concentrated particularly in the south-central region of this vast country.¹

Jewish colonization was linked indirectly to the slave trade. When, after prolonged pressure from England, Brazil finally abolished slavery in 1888, it became imperative to attract free workers through immigration. By the second half of the nineteenth century, Brazil had developed significant exports of agricultural products such as cotton, sugar, tobacco, cocoa, and especially coffee. This level of activity led to the demand for a policy to encourage immigration as a substitute for slave labor, but now without the incentives previously offered by the government, such as free land.²

The first Jews to immigrate to Brazil arrived in the early nineteenth century. These were North African Jews, who settled in the northern Amazon region. Rather than work in agriculture, these newcomers favored trading natural products extracted from the jungle. Similarly, the Jewish immigrants from Alsace-Lorraine settled in Brazil's large urban centers from the mid-nineteenth century. Jews arrived from Eastern Europe only from the final decade of the century, at which time the country's economy was essentially based on agricultural exports and manned by European labor brought in by the Brazilian government. Most immigrants remained predominantly in cities.

The dawn of Jewish agrarian colonization

It was during the 1890s that the JCA first began to support Jewish agrarian colonies, starting in South America. Its vast open lands, yet small and often unskilled population, seem to have encouraged governments to welcome the mass immigration of Jews from Eastern Europe. The JCA sent representatives to many Central and South American regions. Its largest success was in Argentina, where towns like Moisesville in the Province of Santa Fe are still alive not only in the Jewish, but also in the general Argentine memory. Photographs of Jewish gauchos, alongside pictures of the synagogue still standing in the town, periodically make their way into newspapers even today, and a small number of Jewish inhabitants still live there. Jewish agriculture itself is no longer a reality, although there is a Jewish school with 30-five pupils. Moisesville was founded in 1889 by a group of Yiddish-speaking immigrants from Eastern Europe. It once was the heart of a thriving Jewish gaucho culture that extended throughout the Argentine provinces of Santa Fe, Las Pampas, Entre Rios, and Corrientes.³

As will be discussed shortly, the JCA's work in Argentina coexisted with its efforts to settle Jews in Brazil. These were not isolated events. While the Argentine and Brazilian models may have indeed stood alone in Latin America for a number of years, international events made them extremely appealing to important forces in the Jewish world during the second half of the 1930s. With the rise of fascism in Germany and Poland at this time, Jewish philanthropic organizations and various luminaries sought – with varying degrees of intensity and success – regions of refuge throughout Latin America (in Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, Chile, British Guiana, and elsewhere) and in other spots around the globe (such as the Philippines, Madagascar, Birobidzhan, and Crimea). Overall, these efforts intended to create large communities where the endangered Jews of Germany and Poland could weather the coming storm and, through agricultural colonization, sustain themselves in these new locales. As in the experiments begun in the twilight of the nineteenth century in Brazil and Argentina, pre-conditions for the success of these interwar projects included the willingness of Jewish philanthropists in the West to invest major resources in the project; they also had to intervene in their domestic and foreign governments in order to make such bold undertakings work. No less important, as was to be the case in Argentina and Brazil, any attempt at large-scale Jewish resettlement had to have the sanction – if not the active support – of the host state.

On the eve of the Second World War, philanthropic organizations were able to create settlements in some of the regions mentioned above, whereas other projects never got beyond the planning stages. By this time, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee had eclipsed the JCA as the premier instrument of Jewish agricultural settlement outside the Land of Israel. We should also remember that during these decades the JCA and other philanthropic organizations in the West were initiating and strengthening large Jewish agricultural projects in North America and, of course, in Palestine. Hence, what transpired on the land in Brazil from the late 1880s until the Second World War must be seen as part of a larger phenomenon in the Jewish world.⁴

The Jewish agricultural settlement in Brazil was established following a proposal submitted by Professor William Lowenthal to Baron Hirsch in 1889, proposing the annual resettlement of 5,000 Russian Jews in Argentina. Moved by the disturbing situation of Jews in various countries, especially Eastern Europe, and acting essentially on his own initiative, Baron Hirsch donated the bulk of the JCA's initial capital stock of two million pounds sterling. The goal was to

settle Jews in farming colonies.⁵ As we may see in its Articles of Incorporation, the JCA's mission was "to establish farming colonies in different North and South American territories..." The JCA was not purely philanthropic, but encouraged settlers to achieve economic independence, and thus it promoted "institutions dedicated to education, training and development to improve the material and moral conditions of impoverished Jews in need."

Some 10 years after the start of its Argentinean initiative, the JCA initiated Jewish farming colonies in the south of Brazil, specifically in the State of Rio Grande do Sul. The project enjoyed the support of the local government, encouraged by the success of the German and Italian agricultural colonization in the region and impressed by JCA's recent achievements in Argentina. The governing elite in Rio Grande do Sul was strongly influenced by a Comtian faith in progress based on economic development, education for the whole of society, and religious freedom. All three tenets favored the initial phase of the JCA's colonization activities in Brazil between 1904 and 1930. At this time, the door to immigration remained open.⁶ By contrast to Argentina, however, Brazilian authorities did not advertise to attract European Jews to the farming colonies.⁷ Consequently, the JCA's Brazilian agricultural settlement project was not well known in Europe, and did not have the same appeal as its Argentine counterpart.⁸

The JCA's colonization project in Rio Grande do Sul developed independently of Brazil's existing Jewish community. When the first families arrived in 1904, Brazilian Jewry played no part in the project. Local administration granted limited benefits, whereas the state government of Sao Paulo covered all expenses and took full responsibility for Russian immigrant Jews, who, in 1905, settled in three planned farming colonies in Brazil's interior: Nova Odessa, Campos Salles and Jorge Tibiriçá.⁹

The first JCA colony in Rio Grande do Sul, named Philippon¹⁰, was located on a 5,767-ha tract of land in Pinhal, about 25 km from the city of Santa Maria. In 1903, Mr. Eusébio Lapine, an engineer and JCA agent arrived from Argentina to oversee the construction of the facilities needed to receive 38 families from Bessarabia, at that time a Russian possession.¹¹ The immigrants were scheduled to arrive in 1904, 1 year after the official establishment of the colony.

The JCA covered travel expenses and provided each settler with 25–30ha of land, a house, agricultural implements, two teams of oxen, two cows, one horse and an allowance that varied in accordance with the size of the family, payable once it had become self-sufficient.¹² The

colonizers were to repay the loan with interest over a period ranging from 10 to 20 years, with the provision that repayments halt should the crops be damaged by severe weather or pests. Furthermore, the JCA would defray all expenses incurred for colony management and public services, including education for the settlers' children.¹³

An initial difficulty was the quality of the lands earmarked for farming, which turned out to be far less fertile than expected. This forced the settlers to undertake the arduous task of clearing the dense forests in the region. Eventually, they began to cultivate wheat, corn, beans, peanuts, vegetables and fruits. One of the most successful crops was tobacco, grown with seeds brought from Bessarabia. It adapted so well to conditions in the area that buyers flocked in from Porto Alegre and São Paulo, keen for this high quality product. Indeed, the Philippon settlers were the first to grow wheat and Turkish tobacco on a large scale in the region. These two crops, and especially the wheat, were to become important components in the state's economy.

Encouraged by the initial success of this first settlement, in December 1909 the JCA acquired the 93,850⁶⁶ ha Quatro Irmãos farm in the Passo Fundo region. As with the Philippon colony, advance preparations were made to receive new immigrants. When they arrived in 1911, Quatro Irmãos had already been divided into lots and there were houses waiting for them. Some of the first settlers came from Argentina, where they had gained farming experience as paid laborers in the Argentinean settlements; others arrived by ship from Bessarabia. An additional 150 families came from Russia in 1913. In this second colony, each family received 150⁶⁶ ha of land, in addition to a house, a shed, 14 cows, four oxen, one bull, two horses, one cart, one plough, and other farming implements. The cost of the lots was to be repaid over a 20-year period at a low 4% annual interest; other capital investments were to be repaid over 13⁶⁶ years. The project was originally designed to complement farming with ranching, hence the heavier investment in livestock, particularly dairy cattle. The first years at Quatro Irmãos were promising and just prior to the outbreak of World War I, the settlement numbered 350 families. In addition to wheat, corn and other cereals, the settlers began to grow cassava, which they industrialized with help from the JCA.

At first, Quatro Irmãos was regarded as successful, confirming the viability of Jewish agrarian activity in Brazil. However, the outbreak of a revolution in Rio Grande do Sul in 1923 severely jeopardized the venture. Arbitrary forays by local bandits caused many colonists to abandon their lands in search of a haven in the cities around Porto

Alegre. In many cases, settlers who had worked for years lost their homes, cattle, money and farming implements, receiving no help from a powerless local government.¹⁴ This situation dragged on through the politically and militarily tumultuous year of 1924, driving the JCA to found the 19 de Abril colony in Uruguay for the refugees from Quatro Irmãos.¹⁵ According to a telegram received by the JCA agent in Brazil from his managers in Erebango and published in *Dos yidishe vochenblat* of December 1924, the colonists' situation at the end of that year was confusing. After the departure of the army, they were forced to flee, frequently in the direst conditions and with no help or protection. Over the next few years, the number of Jewish colonists in the settlement dwindled, and their lands were sold off to German and Italian immigrants.¹⁶

Despite these setbacks, the JCA made a concerted effort to maintain its colonization projects and attempted to replace the Jewish immigrants at Quatro Irmãos. The arrival in Rio de Janeiro in December 1923 of Isaiah Raffalovich, a renowned rabbi and JCA agent,¹⁷ helped ensure the continuity of the Rio Grande do Sul project. Raffalovich's influence with the Jewish community, government authorities and, most importantly, with the JCA principals in Europe led to more effective assistance for the colonists. One important initiative was the establishment of the charitable immigrant aid institution Relief, which began to monitor the immigrants' needs and oversee their settlement in the Rio Grande do Sul colonies. Raffalovich also used JCA funds to open schools and bring teachers from Europe to provide adequate education for the settlers' children. The JCA was to take on a vital role in the development of a Jewish school system in Brazil, eventually sponsoring schools in urban areas as well as in farming communities.¹⁸

Raffalovich also implemented measures to help the colonists affected by civil disturbances at Quatro Irmãos. These included a thorough renewal of the colonization project, the dismissal of certain administrators, and the appointment of a highly recommended new director, Jacob Moses. An article entitled "JCA bashlist oifleben Quatro Irmãos" in the newspaper *Dos Yidishe Vochenblat* lauded the work. This time the farm would be settled by rural workers and its 40,000 ha of forest land would also be exploited, taking advantage of the railway in place in the region.¹⁹ The Brazilian community's renewed feeling of confidence in the JCA was to a certain extent influenced by what was happening in Argentina. Colonists there had even held a conference in 1925 to plan further moves. Brazilian colonization was further strengthened by a prolonged visit to the colony by the JCA's general

inspector, Dr. David Zvi, whose goal was to lay the groundwork to receive new settlers.²⁰

In 1926, a new group of immigrants arrived at Quatro Irmãos. By that time, the colony was composed of four settlements: Quatro Irmãos, Baronesa Clara, Barão Hirsch and Rio Padre. The first 30 families went to Barão Hirsch.²¹ Once again, the JCA defrayed all of the settlers' expenses, but with one significant difference: this time, an annual rate of 5% was to be assessed for amortization over a 20-year period. Each family was to be given 50“ ha of land, 2.5“ ha of cleared forestland, two horses, two cows, a three-bedroom house with a stable, and farming implements. To get started, for 1“ year the colonists were to be able to fell trees on 1.5“ ha of forestland, sell the timber and keep the proceeds. Each one of the planned settlements in Quatro Irmãos would have a school, a synagogue and a library. These would be maintained by the JCA for the first 3“ years, after which the settlers themselves would run them.

Three Jewish philanthropies – the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society, with its head office in New York; the Paris and London-based JCA; and the Emigrations-Direktion in Berlin – from 1927, acting under the sole coordination of HICEM, played an important role in settling and aiding the new immigrants to South America. In 1927, a Jewish Immigrants Committee led by Leon Back was set up in Porto Alegre. Following HICEM directives, the institution was empowered to meet immigrants as they arrived by sea, house them, and find employment either in a city or on a farm. Similar committees were organized by the Jewish communities in other Brazilian cities to deal with the large influx of immigrants that continued throughout the 1920s and part of the 1930s.

HICEM's approach to immigration was outlined in a letter Raffalovich sent to the *Brazilianische Yidishe Presse* – the successor to *Dos Yidishe Vochenblat* – and may be summarized in five points: (a) the first immigrants to be brought to Brazil should be skilled workers and should be fit for farm work; (b) those with no professional qualifications should be trained in experimental stations to be set up by the three organizations in the countries of origin and immigration; (c) loan associations would be created to facilitate the absorption of immigrants, including lines of credit for them to purchase passages for their families; (d) evening courses would be offered to enable immigrants to learn the local language; and (e) an employment agency would be opened in every colony.²²

The initial results of the new colonization project were promising. In late 1927 and early 1928, optimistic reports stated that the farming cooperative created at Baronesa Clara was a success and that the

venture would be extended to other areas. Meanwhile, the 70 families established in Barão Hirsch and Baronesa Clara at the Erebangó station had brought in a good harvest, producing 1,500 bags of wheat and exporting eight wagonloads of corn worth 33,000 *réis*. Moreover, there was an abundance of alfalfa, Paraguay tea and fruit trees on their lands.²³ Unfortunately, a new catastrophe struck Quatro Irmãos with the outbreak of the 1930 Revolution. The colony was again overrun, causing settlers to lose heart and head for the urban centers, which had always exerted a strong attraction on them and whose appeal proved to be even stronger in times of hardship and turmoil.

The Rezende colony at the start of the Second World War

The 1930 revolution defined the second phase of JCA activity in Brazil, marked by the federal government's crackdown on immigration. It restricted Jewish immigration in particular.²⁴ This led, in turn, to a decline in the populations in the colonies followed by a gradual transfer of lots to non-Jewish settlers, even though the JCA strove to maintain its colonization program. The Society's last experiment in Brazil was an attempt to establish a new colony in Rezende in the state of Rio de Janeiro. In 1936, the JCA turned to the Brazilian government and proposed establishing a new farming settlement for Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany. Similar to other South American countries at this time, Brazil had no clearly defined foreign policy toward the Axis countries, and more specifically, toward Germany, which was seeking to extend its sphere of influence to this part of the world. Many Brazilians were sympathetic to Nazi Germany, which led to an immigration policy that discriminated against Jews, as a number of government documents from this period make clear. This did not, however, deter various government leaders, who accepted the JCA's Rezende project, although they chose not to participate actively. Another agricultural colonization project in the fertile lands in the north of the state of Parana preceded Rezende in the early 1930s. Supported by the local government and some private Anglo-German companies, the colony (Rolândia) was planned for German political refugees, many of whom were of Jewish origin. Rolândia later developed into an important urban center.²⁵

Affecting the fate of Jewish agrarian settlement was the often-changing immigration policy of the Brazilian government. Most importantly, a toughening of immigration law from the 1920s, particularly in the Epiitácio Pessoa Act, added to a quota system

imposed in the 1930s, severely limited the potential pool of Jewish settlers, even at a moment when agricultural colonization would have been most attractive to European Jewish refugees.²⁶ In 1934, the government did make it possible for some German Jews to enter Brazil as tourists and eventually to obtain a permanent visa, although more often than not this entailed a lengthy and arduous process. From 1937, discrimination against Jews became outright policy. The so-called Secret Memorandum no. 1249, addressed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all diplomatic missions, immigration and police authorities on September 29, 1938, preceded by a similar document, Secret Memorandum no. 1127, issued on June 7, 1937, determined that no visas should be granted to applicants of "Semitic descent," with the possible exception of prominent individuals in society or the business world.²⁷ Jews who did manage to get entry visas were said to have done so only by paying 10,000 *cruzeiros* per person to rather unscrupulous intermediaries. In 1940, the Brazilian Jewish press reported an agreement between Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Peru, San Salvador and Bolivia to support a Vatican initiative to facilitate the immigration of "converts."²⁸

We should not wonder that in this hostile climate, Rezende was the last of the JCA colonization projects on Brazilian soil. The land bought by the JCA consisted of several properties including the Fazenda Lambary, Castello, Santa Clara, Barra and São Sebastião, totaling 9,680,000 square meters. The area was acquired from Colonel Abílio Marcondes de Godoy. The engineers Israel Max Roussine and D. Rosenblum conducted the topographical survey on the property at the JCA's expense. We have two descriptions of the colony, both published in the *São Paulel Yidishe Zeitung*. The first resulted from a visit by the Rio de Janeiro state inspector, Commander Amaral Peixoto, in April 1938²⁹; and the second from the visit made by no less a person than the President of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas, in June of the same year. The Rio de Janeiro daily newspaper *A Tarde* also published an article about colonization and the JCA project in January 1938. The accounts of the two visits focused on the fact that a Jewish organization from Europe (i.e., the JCA) had paid for the initiative, thereby costing the Brazilian government nothing. The reports also noted the success of similar initiatives in other countries.

Other accounts of the President's visit to the Rezende colony were published in the same periodical on August 8 and October 26, with the title *Um exemplo de organização agrária, a colônia agrícola Fazenda da Barra, em Rezende* (An example of agrarian organization: the Fazenda

da Barra farming colony in Rezende). According to these articles, the colony had so far absorbed 16 families. There was one school and lots had already been surveyed and laid out to receive another 80 families.

The fate of the colony at Rezende was complex. The Jewish immigrants who were to come from Germany to complement the original 16 families simply did not arrive. Eventually the JCA lots passed into other hands. As mentioned above, the JCA's activities in Brazil encountered restrictive federal governmental policies on immigration from the 1920s onward. At the end of 1930, in the wake of the revolution, further restrictions were imposed based on allegations of the "unordered entry of foreigners to the country."³⁰ On the one hand, these restrictions stemmed from a fear of competition from foreign labor, provoked by the 1929 worldwide economic crash. On the other, they were fed by an upsurge in nationalist feelings among the ruling elite, associated with increased anti-Semitism, in great part imported from Europe. In addition, Brazil was aspiring to an industrial economy modeled on the most advanced western countries. Brazilian governmental elites increasingly turned towards industrialization. In this context, agrarian colonization projects, even when endorsed by state or central government, no longer had a major economic or social significance. At best, they reflected political or humanitarian considerations. Thus, the Rezende project was doomed to failure, faced by anti-Jewish immigration legislation and an economic policy increasingly oriented to industrialization in conjunction with the maintenance of the country's traditional extensive monoculture on large farms.

Conclusion

In Brazil, therefore, the JCA failed. The question is whether the causes of failure in Brazil are relevant to understanding other experiments, such as those in Argentina or even North America, for instance, those of the utopian agrarian movement *Am Olam*.³¹ At the same time, although the JCA was unable to continue and expand the venture initiated in Argentina and Brazil, we must recognize that its failure was relative. The efforts made in Rio Grande do Sul did foreshadow the development of urban communities which later evolved into regional centers.

The reasons for failure were many, perhaps the most important being the inexperience of the first Bessarabian settlers. They had to cope with farming conditions in Brazil that were extremely harsh compared to those in Europe, including the need to clear dense forests

and prepare the soil for cultivation. No less decisive was the relative physical and psychological isolation of the two settlements in Rio Grande do Sul, which was exacerbated by the low number of colonists, and the lack of good roads whose absence limited contact with other communities and the effective marketing of farm produce, difficulties which were compounded by the events of 1923 and 1924, which led the farmers to abandon their settlements. Finally, there was the appeal which cities held for younger immigrants matched by the absence of a continuous flow of immigrants willing to work on farms. The immigration policy adopted by the Brazilian government in the 1930s sealed the settlements' fate.

German, Italian, and Polish colonization projects, also in Grande do Sul, survived for precisely the same reasons that their Jewish neighbors failed. The non-Jewish colonists had previously lived in rural communities and were knowledgeable in the crafts, and well accustomed, therefore, to physical and agricultural labor. Their number was also much greater, and growing steadily by the hundreds or even thousands of families. Experience also meant internal supervision, with leaders and organizers drawn directly from the immigrant group. Non-Jewish colonies thus took root and soon became self-sufficient. No less important, the colonists were complemented by co-immigrants of similar origin who had settled in agro-industrial urban centers.

Nonetheless, one need not make polar comparisons between great success and resounding failure. By contrast to Argentina, for example, the initial scale of Brazilian agrarian settlements was minor. Success was bound to be limited from the start.³²

In this context, Rabbi Raffalovich's enormous efforts to increase immigration to the country must be emphasized. Despite adversity, he attempted to enlarge the institutions dedicated to providing support for immigrants, especially those that had frowned on immigration before his arrival. His efforts changed the mentality of the Jewish community and helped create the conditions necessary to absorb and integrate newcomers. This change was vital against the background of increased immigration to South America following the severe restrictions imposed on entry to North America after 1924.

In the long run, however, the hoped-for institutional support failed. The reasons were as internal as they were external; contrary to Argentina, the Brazilian colonies had no governmental support, nor did they benefit from the kind of aid that farming requires, especially during calamities. The central problem was the way the JCA managed the project. A study conducted by the JCA on Jewish immigration in

Argentina and Brazil showed that, in spite of its know-how and the funds it had available for investment, its management techniques were often neither as clever nor efficient as was called for. Many of the managers lacked inter-personal skills and were inept in their relations with settlers in need of technical advice and empathy. The conflicts between management and settlers in the history of Jewish colonization, particularly in Brazil and Argentina, too, cannot be discounted, which became a roadblock holding Jewish farming colonies and their development back.³³

Clashes between settlers and local JCA management were not uncommon in the Rio Grande do Sul. An eyewitness, Melech Reicher, described one protest organized by settlers in the early years of the Philippson colony. He told of the difficulties of adaptation from the very start, a situation that bad management aggravated; for instance, the order to enclose lots with picket fences made of wood that had to be cut from a forest located at a distance from the farms. Both men and oxen were forced to make enormous efforts, including cutting a path to the site. As Reicher recalled:

The settlers' leaders called a general assembly at the synagogue, where it was decided that everyone would head directly for the office building and confront the management. That same day, more than 60 colonists marched all the way from the settlement to the railway, shouting and jeering. Passing horsemen stopped and gaped in astonishment at this curious procession of ancient Jews with their long beards and black coats, marching along with sticks in their hands. The manager's office was located at the top of a hill, the highest point of the colony. When he saw this throng of protesters in the distance, he immediately shut the doors and windows and sent his two henchmen with their police dogs to meet the mob. The settlers, slightly the worse for wear with alcohol and furious because they had been kept waiting for a week, were not intimidated by the *caboclos* [Brazilians of mixed white and Indian ethnicity]. Shouting and swearing, they started banging on the closed door with their sticks for the manager to come out; they wished him no harm; after all, they were Jews, not thugs. Pallid and frightened, he was forced out together with his two henchmen and their dogs. With shaking hands, he took a letter from the Paris JCA office from the drawer of his huge desk and, with a nervous smile, announced that he

had received, “on that very day,” instructions to give them barbed wire to enclose their lots and zinc for the roofs of their houses and sheds, in addition to a more generous monthly allowance for each family. That day the settlers returned home in high spirits, boasting to their wives about their victory and great courage.³⁴

Events like this created a measure of confusion, and, along side the other weaknesses discussed above, led to a certain hostility among both settlers and other Jews toward the JCA, which was vented forcefully in the Jewish press, both in Brazil and elsewhere, although, admittedly, it was not always free from current ideologies. Among other considerations, many Jews were highly pessimistic about the prospects of colonization. Most Jews put their faith in urban settlement, some even foreseeing the creation of a Jewish industrial proletariat. All in all, the pessimism was not wholly misplaced.

During the crises of the 1920s and 1930s, the JCA’s operation in Brazil faltered, and the organization could not meet its goals. To be sure, the Brazilian government did not extend the necessary support. Nonetheless, as happened with Jewish agricultural experiments elsewhere, the JCA in Brazil ignored its own mistakes, limiting the help it was able to offer Jews fleeing Europe. It failed to draw proper conclusions from what had happened even in places as close as Argentina, not to mention in JCA settlements in North America, southern Russia, and Bessarabia. In these places, systematic efforts greatly overcame objective difficulties which were similar to those encountered in Brazil. These included the inexperience of new Jewish farmers, the geographic isolation of the colonies, and the sometimes tense relations between settlers and officials of the philanthropic organization. Yet, as in these other settlements, the Brazilian experiment highlighted two nearly insoluble problems, the flight of youth to the cities and restrictive governmental policies. It was perhaps these two dilemmas that impeded sustainable Jewish agricultural settlement most of all.

Notes

1. See *A História Alemã no Brasil/Die deutsche Geschichte Brasiliens* (São Paulo, 2001).
2. See Perdigão Malheiros, *A escravidão africana no Brasil* (São Paulo, 1964), 62–65.
3. For a description of colonization in Argentina, see Yehuda Levin’s article in this issue of *Jewish History*. See also Haim Avni, *Argentina ha-aretz ha-iehudah, mifal hitiashvut shel ha-Baron Hirsch be-Argentina*. (Jerusalem, 1973); idem, *Argentina y la historia de la inmigración judía (1810–1950)* (Jerusalem–Buenos Aires, 1983);

- Judith Elkin, "Goodnight, Sweet Gaucho: A Revisionist View of the Jewish Agricultural Experiment in Argentina," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 3 (1978): 208–23.
4. For overviews of these episodes, see Eliahu Benjamini, *Medinot le-yehudim: Uganda Birobidzhan ve-od 34 tokhniot* (Tel Aviv, 1990); Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the AJJDC, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia, 1974); Herman J. Levine and Benjamin Miller, *The American Jewish Farmer in Changing Times* (New York, 1966); and, Simon Schama, *Two Rothschilds and the Land of Israel* (London, 1978).
 5. On JCA and Baron Maurice de Hirsch, see for example, Theodore Norman, *An Outstretched Arm, A History of the Jewish Colonization Association* (London, 1985); and, Kurt Grunwald, *Israel Program for Scientific Translation* (Jerusalem, 1966).
 6. According to a decree dated June 28, 1890, there were certain restrictions on the immigration of "Asian or African natives." See Thomas Skidmore, *Preto no Branco-Raça e nacionalidade no pensamento brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro, 1976), 155.
 7. In 1891, before the involvement of JCA in the settlement of Jewish immigrants in farming colonies in Brazil, the German organization *Deutsches Central Komitee für Die Russischen Juden* sent Oswald Boxer, the European journalist and a friend of Theodor Herzl to the country with a proposal addressed to the Brazilian government for the acceptance of Jewish immigrants willing to engage in farming activities. See Haim Avni, "Amerika ha-latinit ve-baiatam shel yehudei Rusyah be-shnat 1891- shnat gerush Moskva" in *Divrei ha-Kongres ha-Olami ha-Hamishi le-Madaei ha-Yehadut* 2, (Jerusalem, 1972); Nachman Falbel "Oswald Boxer e o projeto de colonização de judeus no Brasil" in *Jornal do Imigrante* (1988) 118: 18; Frieda Wolff "Jewish Settlement Project in Brazil in 1891: the mission of Oswald Boxer" in *Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies*, III (Jerusalem, 1993).
 8. Although, and surprisingly, in the same year (1891), a group of 280 Jews from Tsarist Russia arrived in Brazil, disembarking in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. See Nachman Falbel "Uma imigração de judeus ao Brasil em 1891" in *Boletim Informativo do Arquivo Histórico Judaico Brasileiro* 21 (2000), 17–21.
 9. This first group of immigrants from Russia was composed entirely of Jews. See Nachman Falbel (2000) "Uma colonização judaica no interior de São Paulo" in *Boletim Informativo do Arquivo Histórico Judaico Brasileiro* 20 (2000), 17–25; Nachman Falbel "Uma colonização judaica no interior de São Paulo" in *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 409 (2000), 155–192.
 10. The colony was named for Franz Philippson, vice-president of the JCA. He was a banker and headed railway companies in Argentina and Rio Grande do Sul.
 11. According to Copier Book no.1 (1903–1905), a manuscript kept at the Jewish–Brazilian Historical Archive (AHJB), Eusébio Lapine stayed in Brazil until the end of 1903, preparing the installations for the new settlers, but not clearing forestlands. By January 1904, he was back in Buenos Aires, replaced by J. Bezchinsky and David Hassan, who nevertheless continued writing to him for advice and guidance. Regarding Eusébio Lapine and the fierce criticism to which he was subjected by the editor of *Di Folks Shtime* (1898–1914), Avraham Vermont, see Baruch Hochman "Materialen tsu der geschichte fun der yidisher kolonizatsie un agrar-kooperatsie in Argentine" in *Argentinier Iwo Shriftn* 9–10 (1964), 5–107. Regarding Vermont and his newspaper, see Pinie Katz "Yidische zhurnalistik in Argentine" in *Geklibene shriftn*, V (Buenos Aires, 1946).

12. Letter to Lapine, dated June 11, 1904, and signed by David Hassan. Copier Book no. 1, JCA archives, p. 86. AHJB-SP.
13. Mr. Leon Back was the first schoolmaster. He arrived in Philippson on June 5, 1908 and opened a mixed gender school. See Leon Back, "Imigração judaica no Rio Grande do Sul" in *Enciclopédia Rio Grandense V* (Canoas, 1958); Jeffrey Lesser, *Jewish Colonization in Rio Grande do Sul, 1904–1925*, (São Paulo, 1991); Isabel Gritti, *A imigração judaica para o Rio Grande do Sul. A JCA e a colonização de Quatro Irmãos* (Ph. D. dissertation, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, 1992). Another important reference is Eva Nicolaievsky *Israelitas no Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre, 1975). We have also accounts by former colonists like Frida Alexander, *Filipson* (São Paulo, 1967); Guilherme Soibelman, *Memórias de Philippson* (São Paulo, 1984); Adão Voloch *O colono judeu-áçu* (São Paulo, n.d.); Marcos Iolovich, *Numa clara manhã de abril* (Porto Alegre, 1987); Jacques Schweidson, *Judeus de bombacha e chimarrão* (Rio de Janeiro, 1985); Moisés Eizerik, *Aspectos da vida judaica no Rio Grande do Sul* (Porto Alegre, 1984); Etel de Souza, *Relembraças* (Porto Alegre, 1990); Martha Faermann, *A promessa cumprida* (Porto Alegre, 1990).
14. *Jewish Colonization Association Rapport* (Paris, 1926), 56–87. This report concerns the years 1923 and 1924. AHJB-SP.
15. *Dos Yidishe Vochenblat*, 82, 5/6/1925.
16. *Rapport sur les colonies de Quatro Irmãos y Philippson pour l'année 1925*. AHJB-SP. There are a number of important documents on the turbulent years between 1923 and 1925 in JCA files of the AHJB. The outstanding agronomist Akiva Etinger, agricultural consultant in the JCA settlements in Argentina and Brazil, visited JCA's colonies in Rio Grande do Sul twice, the first time in 1913 and the second in 1928. Etinger described the gradual dwindling of the Jewish colonies in Philippson and Quatro Irmãos. See his *Haklaim yehudim be-tefutsot* (Tel Aviv, 1942).
17. About Raffalovich and his role in the development of the Brazilian Jewish community between the years 1924–1934, see his biography *Tziunim ve-tamrurim* (Tel-Aviv, 1952).
18. In this regard see Nachman Falbel, "Subsídios à história da educação judaica no Brasil" in *Herança judaica* 47 (1981), 53–63; Nachman Falbel, "Isaias Raffalovich e a educação judaica no Brasil" in *Anais do IV Encontro Nacional do Arquivo Histórico Judaico Brasileiro* (São Paulo, 2005).
19. *Dos yidishe vochenblat*, 76, 24/4/1925.
20. *Dos yidishe vochenblat*, 95, 4/9/1925; 100, 9/10/1925; 105, 13/11/1925; 106, 20/11/1925.
21. *Dos yidishe vochenblat*, 133, 23/05/1926; 134, 04/06/1926.
22. *Brazilianische Yidishe Presse*, 203, 10/06/1927. JCA advertisements targeting prospective colonizers were published in this journal throughout the rest of 1927.
23. *Yidishe Folkzeitung*, 21, 28/02/1928.
24. Gustavo Barroso, an influential member of the pro-fascist *Integralista* Party, not only translated European anti-Semitic literature into Portuguese, but also provided copious contributions of anti-Semitic material to newspapers. In response, the most prominent Brazilian Christian and Jewish intellectuals joined forces to publish corrective literature. For example, see *Por que ser anti-semita?* edited in 1933. About this period and the antisemitic climate in Brazil, see Maria Luiza Tucci Carneiro, *O anti-semitismo na era Vargas (1930–1945)* (São Paulo, 1988); Jeffrey Lesser, *Welcoming the Undesirables: Brazil and the Jewish Question* (Berkeley,

- 1995); Avraham Milgram, *Os Judeus do Vaticano* (Rio de Janeiro, 1994); Milgram, "O Itamaraty e os Judeus," in Avraham Milgram, ed., *Entre la aceptación y el rechazo, América Latina y los refugiados judíos del nazismo* (Jerusalem, 2003); Fabio Koifman, *Quixote nas trevas - O embaixador Souza Dantas e os refugiados do nazismo* (Rio de Janeiro, 2002); Nachman Falbel, *David José Pérez, uma biografia* (Rio de Janeiro, 2005).
25. See Ethel Kosminsky, *Rolândia, a Terra Prometida*. (São Paulo, 1985). There is also some significant memorial literature about the Rolândia experiment, such as: Max Maier (1977) *Um advogado de Frankfurt se torna cafeicultor na selva brasileira-Relato de um imigrante (1938-1975)*, (Rolândia) translated from the German edition; Max Maier, *Os jardins de minha vida*. (São Paulo, 1981); Rudolf Isay, *Erinnerungen*, typewritten; Jaco Guinsburg and Plínio Filho, eds., *Sobre Anatol Rosenfeld*. (São Paulo, 1995); Bernd Breunig, *Die Deutsche Rolandwanderung (1932-1980)* (Munich, 1983); Oswald Nixdorf, *Pionier im Brasilianischen Urwald, Die Abenteurreiche Geschichte der Deutschen Siedlung Rolândia* (Berlin, 1979).
26. *Brazilianische Yidise Presse*, 4, 30/12/1927; 9, 17/01/1928.
27. See Alberto Dines, *Morte no Paraíso*, 3rd edition (Rio de Janeiro, 2004), 309. In November 1948, the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo* published a series of articles titled "A batalha contra a imigração" [The battle against immigration]. The sixth article in the series was titled "A circular secreta contra os judeus" [The secret memorandum against Jews].
28. *Sao Pauler yidische Zeitung*, April 8, 1940.
29. *Sao Pauler Yidische Zeitung*, April 10, 1938. On Rezende, see Avraham Milgram, "Haim ha-hitiyashvut yehudit-haklait be-Brazil be-tekufat ha-shoa haita efsharit?" in *Yehadut Amerika ha-latinit: kovets maamarim likhvod Prof. Haim Avni* (Jerusalem, 2001).
30. See José Carneiro, *Imigração e Colonização no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1950), 33; Julio de Revoredo, *Imigração*. (São Paulo, 1945).
31. Ellen Eisenberg, *Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882-1920* (Syracuse, NY, 1995); Eisenberg, "La influencia del lugar de origen de los integrantes de las colonias judias de Entre Rios, Argentina 1890-1910" in *Estudios Migratórios Latinoamericanos* (Buenos Aires, 1994), 27, 401-411. For more on *Am Olam*, see Israel Bartal's article in this issue of *Jewish History*.
32. The JCA enjoyed greater success in Argentina because of a higher immigrant flow. See *Algemeine Encyklopedie* 1 (Paris, 1939), 441-482; Pinie Katz, *Geklibene shriften*, 4 (Buenos Aires, 1946) 52; the articles in *Di Yidische Emigratsie* (1928), HIAS-Emigdirect, (Berlin, 1928) 2, February-March, 48-54; 2, April, 106-111; June 4, 205-211; 6-8, 337-341; Jacob Lestchinsky, "Yidische vanderungen in di letste hundert yohr" in *Yivo Bletter* XXIII, (New York, 1944), 141-54. For more on Jewish immigration to Argentina during the nineteenth century, see Arie Leib Schusheim, "Le-toledot ha-yishuv ha-yehudi b'Argentina," in *Sefer Argentina* (Buenos Aires, 1954), 27-65.
33. Melech Reicher, a former Philipson colonist described this conflict in *Velt Spiegel*, 6-7, November-December 1939; January 8, 1940; May 11, 1940; August 12, 1940; and December 14, 1940. See also Pinchas Bizberg, "Konfliktn svishn di yidische kolonisten" in *Argentine un der localer YCA - administratzie. Argentinier IWO Schriftn* 4 (1947), 88-107.
34. In *Velt Spiegel*, January 8, 1940, 6-7.