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**THE FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN ARGENTINA\***

by

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Argentina is situated in the southern part of South America. It has about 3.000.000 square kilometers, including the Antarctic sector. Its population is about 25.000.000 inhabitants, of which more than the third lives in Buenos Aires, its capital, and in a zone of 300 kilometers around it.

People speak Spanish and emigrated from Europe mainly Spain and Italy.

The country's length from North to South, is about 3.500 kilometers, and from East to West about 1.200 kilometers in its widest part. For this reason the country has all kinds of climates. In the North, it is tropical, it has a moderate climate in Buenos Aires and is cold in the South (Patagonia). Buenos Aires' latitude is the same in the southern hemisphere as Malaga (Spain) is in the northern one.

The temperature is between 25°C in summer and 8°C in winter months. Its wet weather is really peculiar specially in the central coastal area around the principal cities.

#### Raw materials

A great part of Argentina is wooded, although only 50 per cent of wood used in furniture is grown locally. The other 50 per cent is imported from neighbouring countries, such as Paraguay, Bolivia and Brazil. The woods most frequently used are:

- Quatambu (ivory wood)
- Cedar
- Mahogany
- Lengua

Quatambu and cedar are imported from Paraguay in great sizes and re-sawn in the country. From Bolivia we get Mahogany (not produced in Argentina) and from Brazil, the Brazilian pine. This kind of wood (Brazilian pine) had been used for a long time, but recently it became expensive, so it is not used frequently.

Manufacturing centers are not placed near the forests and for this reason, only a few furniture manufacturers have sawmills.

Bolivian Mahogany is used for the best kind of furniture and for products of a lower quality, cedar, gustambu and lenga are used. Many of the manufacturers buy the wood in small stock sizes, small diameter timber (2" x 2", 1" x 3", etc.), obtained from small diameter trees. This allows the use of this kind of wood.

Few manufacturers dry the wood in kiln driers. Generally they air dry the wood. Factories of plywood, particle board, veneers, hardboard, glue, textiles and finishing products exist, so these materials are not imported. Reforestation is subsidized by the government, but practically everything that is planted is intended for the paper mills.

#### Furniture factories

Argentinian furniture factories are not big. The average is less than twenty workers.

Generally, they began with small workshops, as a result of local requests, and with time they improved both industrially and commercially. Because of this, management is not professional and frequently factories are managed by the owners. Big corporations are few.

During many years, the imports of machinery were forbidden, but about ten years ago, importation was open and many manufacturers re-equipped their factories with new and modern machines, generally bought in Germany and Italy.

There are only few schools which teach carpentry, and they train cabinet makers; but pupils are not trained to use modern machines. There are no schools for supervisors for the furniture industries. These employ mechanical engineers or technicians learning the speciality on the factory floor, but as the wood industry does not have the same prestige or status as the metallurgical or automotive industries, for example they employ less qualified personnel.

#### Marketing

Furniture is marketed through exclusive furniture shops. It is not common to sell furniture in supermarkets.

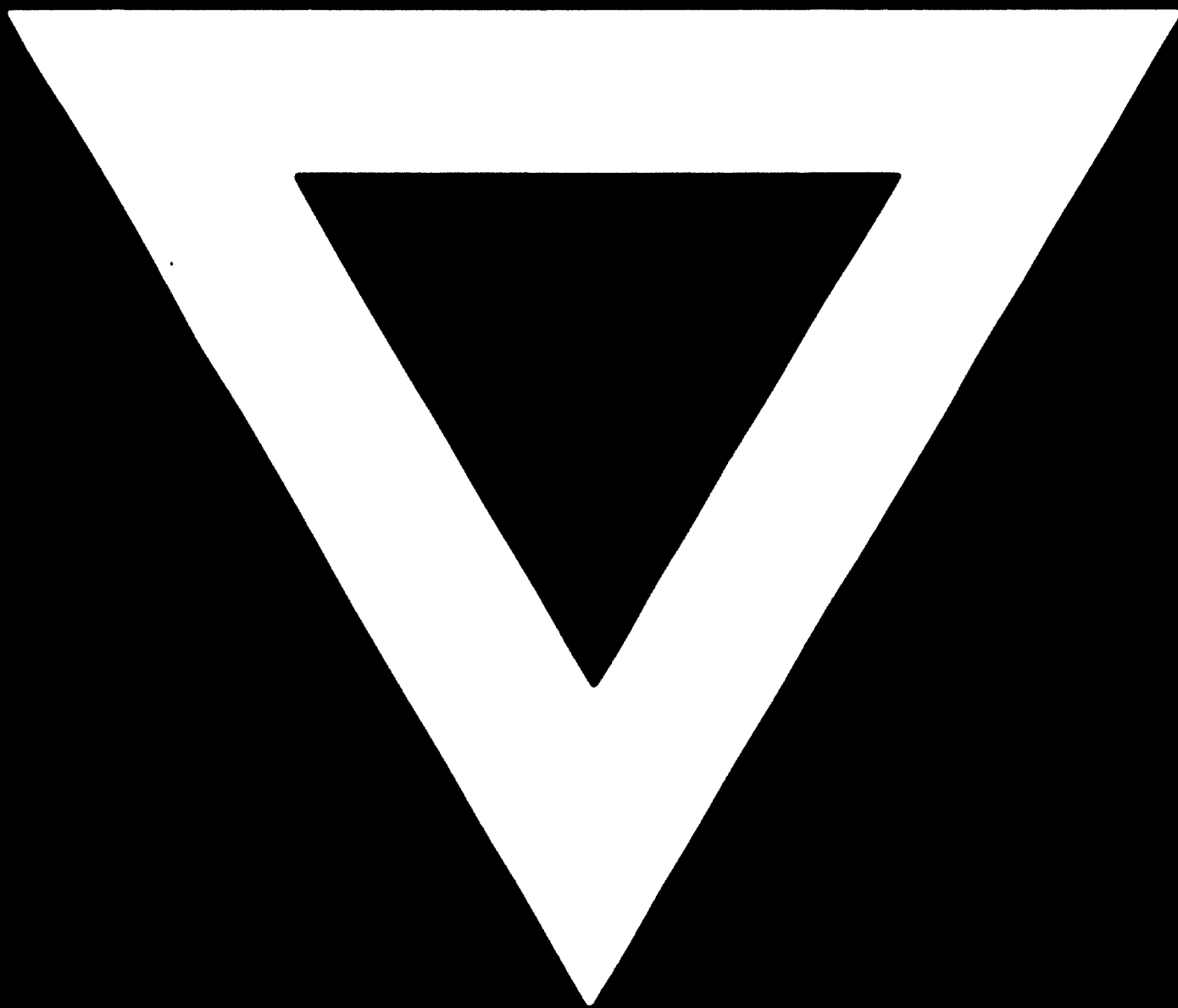
Practically all furniture production is sold in Argentina. I belong to one of the few factories that exports part of their production (40 per cent), but generally, production looks to local market, that has a great demand.

**Design**

Each plant produces its own designs, free-lance designers working in the furniture industry do not exist, although we have a few good designers. These good designers are working in other sectors, such as housewares. Designs are based on European styles, specially Italian, which are known through magazines and other specialized publications.



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