

Enrique J. A. Candiotti,
Ambassador

AN ARGENTINE CONSUL IN UKRAINE

The material appears as written by the author

Introduction (by Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Argentine Republic to Ukraine, Mrs. Elena Leticia Mikusinski).

I would like to share a particularly compelling story about the Consulate of the Argentine Republic that operated in the city of Lviv starting in 1913. I had the privilege of learning about it thanks to an enriching conversation during the visit to Ukraine of Ambassador Gustavo Moreno — a career diplomat with 43 years of distinguished service, former president of the Association of Retired Members of the Argentine Foreign Service (ARSEN), and former Consul General and Director of the Trade Promotion Center in Milan, among other important postings.

On that occasion, Ambassador Moreno introduced me to an article written by Ambassador Enrique J.A. Candiotti, who served as Head of Mission in the United States, Australia, and Germany, and is the nephew of the first Argentine consul stationed in Lviv. I am pleased to share this piece, which I am certain will be especially appreciated in the current context. I would also like to thank Ambassador Candiotti for his generosity in allowing us to disseminate this story in Ukrainian — a narrative that not only reflects the deep-rooted ties between Argentina and Ukraine but also highlights how professional commitment and diplomatic vocation can leave a meaningful and lasting impact on society.

This account takes on a particularly emotional dimension, as in February 2025, thanks to the efforts of the Mayor of Lviv, Mr. Andriy Sadovyi, the commemorative plaque originally inaugurated in 2015 was reinstated on the iconic “Building with Sculptures of Knights,” which housed the Argentine Consular Office between 1915 and 1917, as mentioned by former Consul Alberto Candiotti on official documents.



Посол Альберто М. Кандіоті
Ambassador Alberto M. Candiotti

It is a little-known fact in the history of Argentine foreign relations that more than 110 years ago Argentina had a consulate in the city of Lviv, Ukraine, then known as 'Lemberg' in German, 'Lwów' in Polish and 'Leópolis' in Spanish.

In 1913 the Argentine government established in Lviv a third-class career consulate with the main purpose of promoting agricultural immigration and appointed to head it a 24-year-old native of the town of Rosario (province of Santa Fe). Not long before, he had begun his career in the diplomatic service as chancellor at the consulate in Punta Arenas, in southern Chile.

Lviv (Lemberg) was the capital of the Kingdom of Galicia within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It was an elegant, cosmopolitan city, renowned for its rich history, beautiful architecture and longstanding university tradition. With a population of approximately 180,000, consisting of Ukrainians, Poles, Jews, and Germans, the city was a vibrant commercial and cultural hub.

In August 1914 World War I began. Following the assassination in Sarajevo, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28 and on Russia on August 1. The city where our consul served found itself exposed on the Eastern Front, with Germany and Austria facing Russia from the Baltic Sea to the Carpathian Mountains.

Once hostilities began, the Russian army attacked Galicia engaging in fierce battles against the Austro-Hungarian forces which caused hundreds of thousands of casualties on both sides. On September 3, 1914, Russian troops entered Lviv. The occupation was particularly harsh due to the Russification policies targeting the local population, resulting in widespread destruction, human suffering, forced displacement and vast numbers of refugees. The occupation lasted until June 22, 1915, when Austrian-Hungarian forces, with substantial German assistance, reconquered the city.

The Argentine consul stayed in the occupied city as the only consular representative of a neutral country. From the outset he carried out humanitarian efforts and performed his duties with professional competence and commitment to service.

He maintained close communication with his immediate superior, Fernando Pérez, head of the Argentine Legation in Vienna, who authorized him to represent the interests of the Russian consulate (a month prior to the Russian occupation) and later the German consulate (during the entire occupation period).

Documents concerning Argentine Austro-Hungarian relations during the Great War that are preserved in the Historical Archive of the Argentine Foreign Ministry include reports on the occupation sent by our consul in Lviv.

With the severing of diplomatic ties between Austria-Hungary and Russia, Russian Consul Vladimir Nikolaev felt compelled to leave the city. On August 6, 1914, he entrusted the Argentine consul with the consulate, its archive and funds. The Argentine consulate also protected Russian nationals from deportation, demanding proper treatment from Austrian authorities.

On the night before August 31, anticipating the Russian army's imminent arrival, the German consul, Edward von Heinze, sent a written message to his Argentine colleague informing him of his need to leave immediately and requesting that he care for his residence, office, belongings and staff.

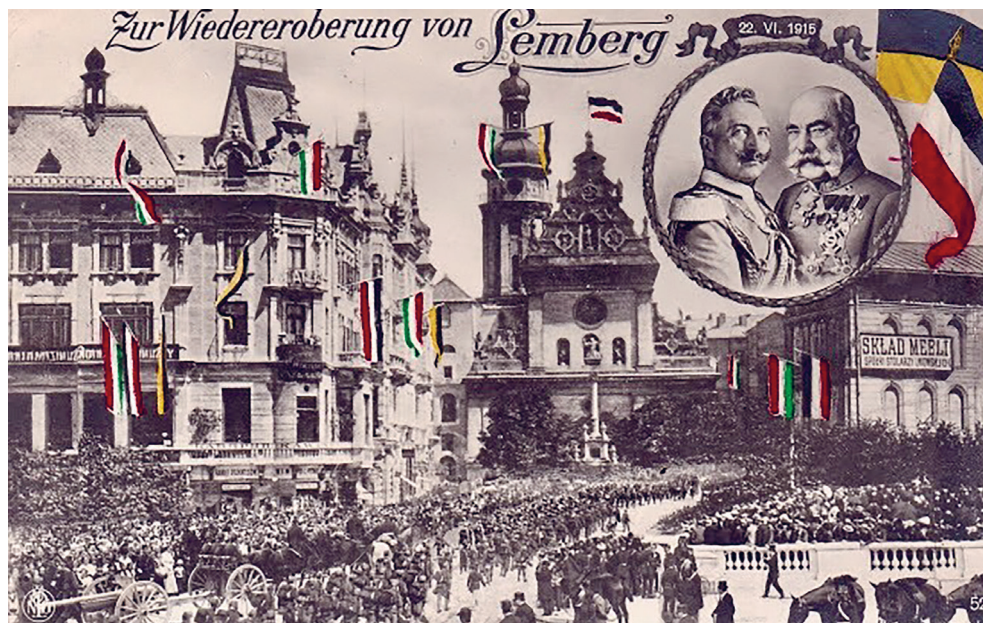
Russian Consul Nikolaev returned mid-October to Lviv, receiving back all deposited items from the Argentine consul in the presence of the tsarist new Governor, count Georgiy Bobrinsky.

Thus, for a certain time, the Argentine consulate housed valuables, furniture and archival material from both the Russian and the German consulates, and also personal effects of many families who had evacuated the city.

Throughout the nine-month occupation, the Argentine consul engaged in constant diplomatic demarches with Russian authorities. He sought prisoner releases, filed complaints about abuses against the Jewish population, mediated trade ban removals and endeavoured to mitigate the severe hardship endured by the locals. He notably managed to prevent the seizure of the Catholic archbishop's residence by the Russian Orthodox archbishop and arranged protection for the displaced Austrian governor of Galicia, Dr. Witold Korytowski, safeguarding his residence from plundering.

In one of his reports the consul described the city's financial collapse, escalating food shortage and starvation. Women frequently sought relief and moral support at the consulate and the consul offered solidarity and compassion. He reported that within a week of the occupation's start, violent persecution of Jews began, resulting in arrests and deaths. Many wounded individuals sought humanitarian assistance at the consulate. The harsh treatment eventually extended to the entire local population, with the Jewish community and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church suffering the most.

The consul pleaded Governor Bobrinsky to show mercy to the persecuted. The governor promised to take measures. The oppression briefly eased, likely due to the consul's intercession. However, when the frontline indicated the likely reconquest of the city by Austrian and German forces, persecution resumed with renewed intensity.



Лемберг (Львів) 22 червня 1915 року під час святкування повернення міста австрійськими та німецькими військами, на якому був присутній консул Кандіоті

Lemberg (Lviv) 22 June 1915, at the celebration of the recapture of the city by Austrian and German troops, at which Consul Candiotti was present

After Lviv's liberation in 1915, the Argentine consul received public recognition. Wearing his consular uniform, he formally greeted Archduke Friedrich of Habsburg, supreme commander of the Austro-Hungarian forces. In his report, the consul noted that Count Leon Piniński introduced him to the Archduke in the presence of the Catholic and the Armenian archbishops and other dignitaries. He wrote: "His Highness kindly expressed his great satisfaction that the Argentine consul was the only one to remain at his post throughout the occupation and was especially pleased that, as a representative of a neutral country, he could assist the population of Lemberg under Russian rule."

Tito Livio Foppa, war correspondent for Buenos Aires newspaper "La Razón", described his encounter with the consul. Foppa recounted entering the city with Austrian troops on June 22 and passing in front of the building of the consulate, where he saw flying the Argentine flag.

The following day he attended a lunch at the consulate, hosted by the consul, his wife and sister, with Spanish war correspondent Juan Pujol, Argentine lieutenant colonel Basilio Pertiné and Austrian first lieutenant Alexander Rippel also participating.

Pujol published two articles in Madrid's newspaper "ABC" detailing his visit to Lviv and highlighting the Argentine consul's work and the esteem he enjoyed among locals.

This consul was Alberto María Candiotti. After Lviv, he was transferred to the Argentine consulate in Berlin, serving there from 1916 to 1918 and again from 1920 to 1923. Subsequent postings included the general consulates in Sofia (1923), Athens (1925), Genoa (1926–27) and Beirut (1927–29). He was first appointed head of a diplomatic mission as Minister Plenipotentiary in Yugoslavia and Greece (1929–35). Later, Candiotti served as Minister (1935–39) and then Ambassador (1939–40) to Colombia and Ecuador (resident in Bogotá), as well as Ambassador to Japan (1941) and Mexico (1942–43). He entered domestic politics being elected a national deputy (1946–50). His diplomatic career culminated as Ambassador of Argentina to the United Kingdom (1955–58).