

# HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Submitted: June, 06, 2021

Reviewed: December, 15, 2021

Accepted: December, 16, 2021

Original article

UDC: 060

DOI: 10.48612/HSIR/IRDC.2021.9.3

## RUSSIAN – ARGENTINIAN DIPLOMATIC INTERACTIONS FROM 1885 TO 1917

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**Abstract.** *The article is devoted to main analysis of the main trends of Russian-Argentinian diplomatic interactions' development from 1885 to 1917. Russian Empire's government had not considered Latin American states as potential partners for a long time because these states were formed in a revolutionary way. That is why Russian Empire rejected all attempts of such states to establish official diplomatic interactions until the middle of the XIX century. As a result, Russia's diplomatic interactions with Argentina were established only on October 22, 1885, but were interrupted after the October Revolution (1917). Argentina had the largest Russian diaspora in Latin America. It involved about 300 thousand people. As a matter of fact, emigration of Russians to Argentina consisted of several waves that coincided with key events in Russian history. The descendants of Russian emigrants made significant contribution to industrial, scientific and cultural development of Argentina as well as they preserved Russian customs, traditions and culture. It means that Russia had many supporters, many participants of Russian-Argentinean economic and cultural cooperation. It is necessary to note that at the initial stages of Russian-Argentinian*

*bilateral interactions' formation there were mutual exchanges in scientific sphere. The Russian Orthodox Church played "diaspora-forming role" due to lack of a permanent imperial mission in Argentina. The importance of spiritual presence in Argentina was realized by the Russian elite. It is well-known fact that the Russian Empire's Government supported the Russian Orthodox Church in Argentina, therefore it is sufficient to say that the first Russian Orthodox Church there was built with funds raised not only in South America, but also in Russia, including the donations by the Imperator Nicholay the II. Having analyzed main trends of Russian-Argentinian diplomatic interactions' development from 1885 to 1917, it must be concluded that Russian-Argentinean interactions of this period were developed rather slowly.*

**Keywords:** *Russia's foreign policy; Argentina's foreign policy; Latin America; International interactions; State interests*

**For citation:** Bestolkova G.V. Russian – Argentinian Diplomatic Interactions from 1885 to 1917. *International Relations and Dialogue of Cultures*. 2021; 9: 26–35. DOI: 10.48612/HSIR/IRDC.2021.9.3

## **Introduction**

It is noteworthy that the tsarist government has not considered Latin American states as potential partners for a long time because these states were formed in a revolutionary way. That is why Russian Empire rejected all attempts of these states to establish official diplomatic interactions until the middle of the XIX century. (Kazakov V.P., 2008: 111-112)

The Argentine Republic's Government was very interested in establishing diplomatic relations with the Russian Empire shortly after having gained independence. The thing is the authorized Valdez was sent to the Imperial Courtyard of Alexander the I in order to conduct negotiations in 1817 as well as the letter of the Argentinian Diplomatic Mission's Head B. Rivadavia was sent to the State Secretary of the Russian Foreign Affair Ministry K.V. Nesselrode in 1818, but everything was in vain. (Filimonova E.V., 1991: 82-83)

As a matter of fact, Russian Empire's interests were modestly represented on the South American continent for most of the XIX century. So, the only envoy with a full-time consul worked in Brazil by the beginning of the 80s, though there were also three more consuls working in Peru, Chile and Argentina.

Russian Empire's policy towards Latin American states was changed only in the end of the XIX century due to Latin America's growing economic and political importance within international interactions' system. Thus, Russian Empire started to establish diplomatic interactions with a number of Latin American countries, including Argentina, in the 1880s. The thing is Russia had its strategic interests in this region (Dik Dovgiallo E., 2002: 117) whereas by that time Argentina headed by President Julio Argentino Roca, was

also interested in Russia as in powerful partner. (Belov D.V., Bredikhin A.V., Dobrolyubov S.A., Komissarov B.N., Naumov A.S., Sizonenko A.I., Sokolova D.V., Tanasiychuk V.N., Kholina V.N., 2014: 226)

Outstanding Russian diplomat Alexander Semenovich Ionin (1836-1900) managed to change the situation. He served as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary in Brazil (1883-1892) and wrote regularly in his reports about necessity to establish diplomatic interactions among Russian Empire and Latin American states, primarily with Argentina and Chile. (Kazakov V.P., 2008: 112-114) According to A.S. Ionin, Argentina's geographical position was of strategic importance, since it allowed it to control sea routes from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Magellan. This factor became very important in the context of growing tension between the Russian Empire and England in the second half of the XIXth century. Among other things, A. S. Ionin drew attention to the possibility of using Argentinian and Chilean ports as transshipment points for Russian ships, where, if necessary, they could replenish coal and provisions. (Dik Dovgiallo E., 2002: 118)

Fulfilling the order to establish "direct diplomatic interactions with the most important of the South American republics" (Dremin V.P., Sizonenko A.I., 1985: 36), he directed all efforts to formalize contacts of the Russian Empire with Argentina. Referring to conversations with Argentinean Government circles' representatives, A.S. Ionin emphasized economic benefits that led to St. Petersburg's rapprochement with Buenos Aires. The main purpose was to coordinate policies connected with international labor division, since both countries occupied the same niche, i.e. they were producers and exporters of wheat, leather and wool. In his report (the report by the Russian Envoy in Brazil (A.S. Ionin) to the Russian Foreign Affair Minister (N.K. Girsu) on diplomatic interactions' establishment between the Russian Empire and the Argentinean Republic (August 1 (13), 1885) to the Foreign Affair Minister N.K. Girsu), A.S. Ionin wrote that Russia and Argentina "*can shake hands with each other in order to become allies and compete with North America and Australia.*" (Shevarnadze E., Dante K., eds., 1990: 7) It must be mentioned that, according to the diplomat, this South American state was also interested in creating a trade union with Russia.

Credentials' presentation in May 1885 marked the beginning of cooperation between the Russian Empire and the Argentinian Republic in various fields. It was based on Ionin's conviction mentioned in his report (the report by the Russian Envoy (A.S. Ionin) in the Argentine Republic to the Russian Foreign Affair Minister (N.K. Girsu) about Russian-Argentinean

Interactions – November 18 (30), 1888): “*if the Southern end of America keeps developing so fast as it does now, it will be of great political interest to international interactions in the nearest future.*” (Shevarnadze E., Dante K., eds., 1990: 22)

It should be stressed that Russian-Argentinian diplomatic interactions’ history had been developed without summits for more than 100 years. Since diplomatic contacts’ establishment in 1885, no one of Russian or Argentinian heads of state did not find any sufficient reasons and opportunities to overcome considerable distance dividing these two countries.

### **The Russian Diaspora in Argentina**

One of Russian most powerful resources in the Argentinean Republic is the Russian diaspora. It involves about 300,000 people. (Astakhov E.M., 2014: 19) The Russian diaspora was mainly formed due to immigrants having arrived in Argentina. According to some reports, their number exceeded 20,000 during the period from 1886 to 1900 (Dick E.N., 1991: 82), that led this South American country to become the second center for immigrants from the Russian Empire after the United States.

There were 6 waves of Russian emigration to Argentina:

➤ The first immigration wave involved Russified Germans’ descendants who settled in Russia in the XIXth century and rushed to the New World after overall military service’s introduction by Alexander the II in 1874. It should be mentioned here that the opportunity to settle in Argentina for hundreds of Europeans appeared in 1876 by means of “immigration and colonization” law by the Government of N. Avellaneda. So, it was the “Russian Germans” who were the first to cultivate cereal crops on Argentinian soil. At the same time, German immigrants did not interrupt close ties with Russia: they sent money there as well as they continued to help relatives. It should be noted that even after decades of staying in Argentina, they did not cease to consider themselves as Russians and everything that happened in their former homeland aroused their keen interest. Thus, they made donations to the Red Cross during the Russian-Japanese War. (Putyatova E.G., 2005: 77-79).

➤ The second emigration wave was formed by Jews who arrived from Russian Empire’s western provinces. By the beginning of the First World War, about 150 thousand immigrants from Russia already lived in Argentina and among them approximately 100 thousand people were Jews (Sheinbaum L.S., 1993: 114), since many Jews consider themselves as Russians.

➤ The third emigration wave involved seasonal workers, mainly peasants, who went overseas in the hope of obtaining land. Many of them decided to stay in Argentina after the First World War and the October Revolution (1917). Their number reached 200 thousand people in Buenos Aires and in the agricultural provinces of Argentina. (Astakhov E.M., 2014: 21).

➤ The fourth wave was formed by White Russian emigrants, who were forced by Bolsheviks' victory to seek salvation and better life abroad. According to some reports, only in Buenos Aires in the 1930s there were about 500 White Russian emigrants, mainly descendants of imperial family's members, aristocratic families, famous generals, scientists and statesmen. (Sheinbaum L.S., 1993: 117).

➤ The fifth emigration wave consisted of political emigrants who arrived in Argentina due to the decree by J.D. Peron on reception of Russians, regardless of their age and marital status. It should be noted that not only White emigrants who lived in Western Europe before the war, but also former Soviet war prisoners and clergy of the Russian Orthodox Church were allowed to arrive in the Argentinean Republic. (Road to Home, 2019).

➤ The sixth emigration wave involved post-Soviet emigrants from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, since most of them identified themselves not by ethnicity, but by state-territorial basis. (Road to Home, 2019).

Such a large Russian diaspora abroad is a significant resource for Russia, but the Russian Ambassador to Argentina E.M. Astakhov says that the compatriots were not supported during many years (Astakhov E.M., 2014: 18), since the Argentine's Government refused to recognize the USSR after the October Revolution (1917) and diplomatic interactions between these two countries were established only after the Second World War. Therefore, the Orthodox Church initially played consolidating role in Russian diaspora's formation in Argentina, then it acquired decisive influence on the Russian diaspora in this Latin American country.

### **The Russian Orthodox Church in Argentina**

Beyond any doubts, the Russian Orthodox Church played "diaspora-forming role" due to a number of reasons. The main reason was the lack of a permanent imperial mission in Argentina. While other state citizens' interests were represented and defended by numerous consulates in Buenos Aires and countrywide, the Russians did not have such a protection. That is why the Russian Orthodox Church built in Buenos Aires in 1901 began to carry out embassy's functions.

The importance of spiritual presence in Argentina was realized by the Russian elite. Thus, it was discussed in the letter (April 15, 1890) of N.K. Girska (the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1882-1895) to P.M. Bogdanov (the Chargé d'Affaires of Russia in Brazil) about Russian Empire's interests in Latin America, especially, in the Argentinean Republic: *"The Argentinean Republic becomes a significant factor in the political life of America that is why it is very important for us to receive constant and reliable information especially about country's economic development that can promote emergence of a rival in the world raw product trade field ... but the main goal of your trip is to settle our spiritual mission's affairs ... in terms of parishioners' number, the Orthodox community in the Argentinean Republic is the most significant of all those abroad."* (Shevarnadze E., Dante K., eds., 1990: 28-31)

It is well-known fact that the Russian Empire's Government supported the Russian Orthodox Church in Argentina, therefore it is sufficient to say that the first Russian Orthodox Church there was built with funds raised not only in South America, but also in Russia, including the donations by the Emperor Nicholay the II.

It should be mentioned that the Russian Diplomatic Mission in Argentina involved the Orthodox Church, that is why the priest Konstantin Izraztsov (1865–1953) was Diplomatic Department's Secretary, i.e. he did not only carry out spiritual and cultural mission, but he acted as Official Authorities' Representative as well.

Moreover, except the Russian Orthodox Church in the federal capital, there were several Russian Orthodox Parishes in the suburbs:

- the Russian Orthodox Church in the Northern part of the city (its iconostasis was created with donations by S. S. Mamontov's grandfather),
- the Russian Orthodox Church in the Kilmes district, i.e. in the district, where Russian Cossacks, Ukrainians, Poles, Lithuanians lived,
- the All Russian Saints' Church in Kaselare,
- the Russian Orthodox Church named after St. Sergius of Radonezh in Villa Ballester.

The main Orthodox Church and Parishes soon became centers of attraction for Russian emigrants, since schools, libraries, publishing houses, nursing homes, the orphanage for the needy, the cultural and educational club for Russian workers, the amateur choir, the drama troupe were founded there. The priest K. Izraztsov also collected money for needy people and helped those who wished to return to the Russian Empire.

The February Revolution (1905) and the October Revolution (1917) changed the bilateral interactions between Russian and Argentina as well as interactions of the Russian Orthodox Church in Buenos Aires with the new Russian authorities.

Thus, the Russian Provisional Government fired Konstantin Izraztsov from the Diplomatic Department's Secretary post of the Russian Mission in April 1917, that led to he became White Immigration's Leader. From that moment, the Russian Orthodox Church in Argentina could hardly be considered as Russia's supporter, since K. Izraztsov welcomed Fascist Germany's aggression and called it the beginning of "*Russia's liberation from Bolshevism*". (Pravoslavie, 2019) As a result, many parishioners left his community and turned to the Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenkov) of Aleut and North America with the request to organize Moscow Patriarchate's Parishes in Argentina. In response to this petition, the Argentinean Vicariate was established, but before bishop's arrival, the community prayed in the Church named after Great Martyr George the Victorious in Buenos Aires (the Antioch Orthodox Church), where the Archimandrite Ignatius (Aburrus) received the Russian parishioners with love and performed services for them in Church Slavonic Language.

Moreover, the Argentinean Government even issued the decree for banning the Moscow Patriarchate's Russian Orthodox Church due to hostile actions of Konstantin's community, but parishioners succeeded in lifting this prohibition and the church resumed its work. (Pravoslavie, 2019; The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, 2021)

### **Russian-Argentinian Diplomatic Interactions in Scientific and Cultural Spheres**

It is necessary to note that at the initial stages of Russian-Argentinian bilateral interactions' formation there were mutual exchanges in scientific sphere.

The Russian Science Academy (then the St. Petersburg's Imperial Science Academy) played an important role in establishing scientific ties between these two countries. So, K. Burmeister, the Director of the Public Museum in Buenos Aires and one of the founders of the National Science Academy in Cordoba, was elected the Corresponding Member of the St. Petersburg's Imperial Science Academy in December 1855.

Two decades later, B. Guld, the astrophysicist and the Cordoba Observatory's founder, was elected the Corresponding Member of the Physics

and Mathematics Department of the St. Petersburg's Imperial Science Academy that allowed to establish constant exchange of information on natural science researches' results between Argentina and Russia.

In the 1890s Argentina was firstly visited by the Russian scientists: geographers, botanists and ethnographers, whose researches made a significant contribution to Argentina's science. Their scientific works and travel essays were published in the journal "Geography" published at the Moscow University. One of the most significant results of this scientific exchange is the monograph "*Argentina. Agriculture in Argentina in connection with country's overall development*" by the agronomist N.A. Kryukov, who visited this country in 1902-1904. It should be mentioned also the scientific trip of the famous Soviet botanist, the Academician N.I. Vavilov to Argentina in 1932. (Dremin V.P., Sizonenko A.I., 1985: 57-58)

Russian scientific institutions' cooperation with Argentinian scientific institutes and museums had been expanded at the beginning of the XXth century.

Thus, the St. Petersburg's Science Academy established contacts with Argentinian specialists due to the trip by the geologist O.O. Backlund in Argentina (November, 1911). Subsequently, the scientists from Buenos Aires repeatedly replenished the St. Petersburg Geological Mineralogical Museum's collections with minerals.

Pavlov I.P., whose name was already well-known in the scientific world, had extensive scientific contacts with Latin American physiologists and the famous Argentinean psychiatrist O. Piniero who visited his clinic in 1906 where he conducted a number of studies.

Thanks to well-known Argentinean scholars – the anthropologist R. Lehmann Nietzsche and the ethnographer H.-B. Ambrosetti, who visited Russia in 1908 and 1912, it was possible to establish exhibits' exchange between St. Petersburg ethnographers and their colleagues in Buenos Aires and La Plata. As a result of such contacts, South American material objects' collections began to arrive at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in St. Petersburg whereas the Argentinian scientists were interested in materials on ethnography and anthropology of Siberian and the Far East inhabitants. (Feinstein M. Sh., 1985: 20-25).

As for the Russian Empire's cultural diplomacy in Argentina, it was reduced mainly to cultural exchanges: exhibitions, theatrical and musical groups' tours. (Astakhov E.M., 2014 :22) For example, the tour of the famous Russian singer Fyodor Chaliapin (1873–1938) in 1908. Chaliapin's tour was



associated with Colon Opera House's opening in Buenos Aires. He had a tremendous success and performed for a month and a half in this theater. (Sizonenko A.I., 1979: 203-209) Another example is the personal exhibitions of the prominent Russian sculptor, the "Russian Rodin", S.D. Erzya-Nefedov (1876–1959), who arrived in South America in 1927. (Astakhov E.M., 2014: 23)

### **Conclusion**

In general, Russian-Argentinean interactions of this period were developed rather slowly, but despite this fact, several events can be distinguished because they featured Russian-Argentinean interactions as positive ones:

✓ 1902 – the Argentinean frigate "Sarmiento" moored in St. Petersburg, was enthusiastically greeted by the Russian society. The ship was even visited by the Russian Emperor Nicholas the II.

✓ 1903 – Russia participated in the International Agricultural Exhibition took place in Argentina. The Russian delegation's participation was intended to remove Belgian, German and American manufacturers of agricultural machinery from the Argentinean market.

✓ 1911 – the Russian Empire's First Diplomatic Mission was opened in Buenos Aires.

✓ 1913 – the Russian-Argentinean agreement on trade and navigation was signed in St. Petersburg. According to this agreement, both countries granted each other the most favored trade treatment. This agreement reflected the successes achieved by Russia and Argentina in strengthening bilateral cooperation as well as it confirmed Argentina's status as Russian Empire's main partner in Latin America.

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