

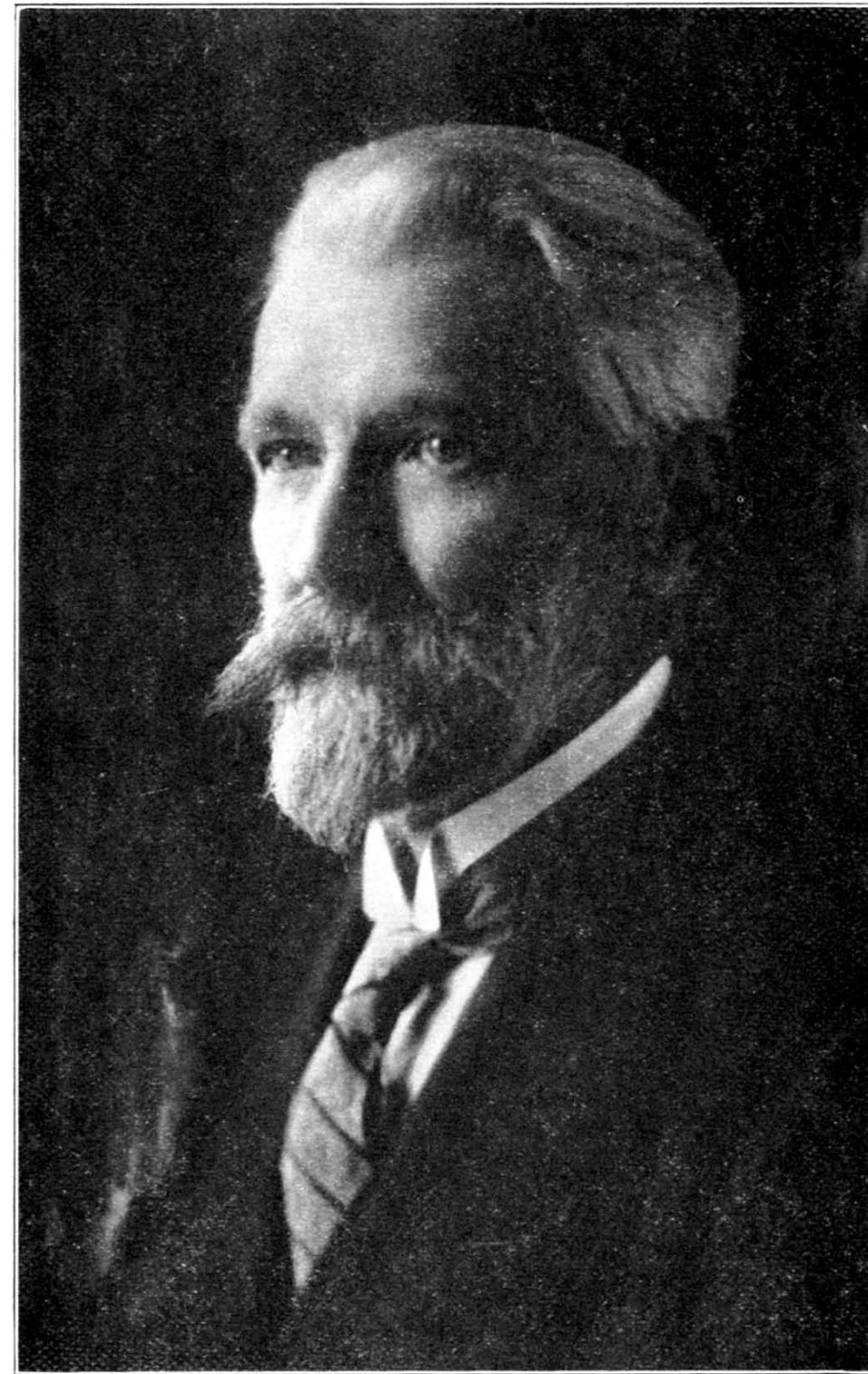
The Glinka Memorial Soil Monolith Collection: a Treasure of Soil Science

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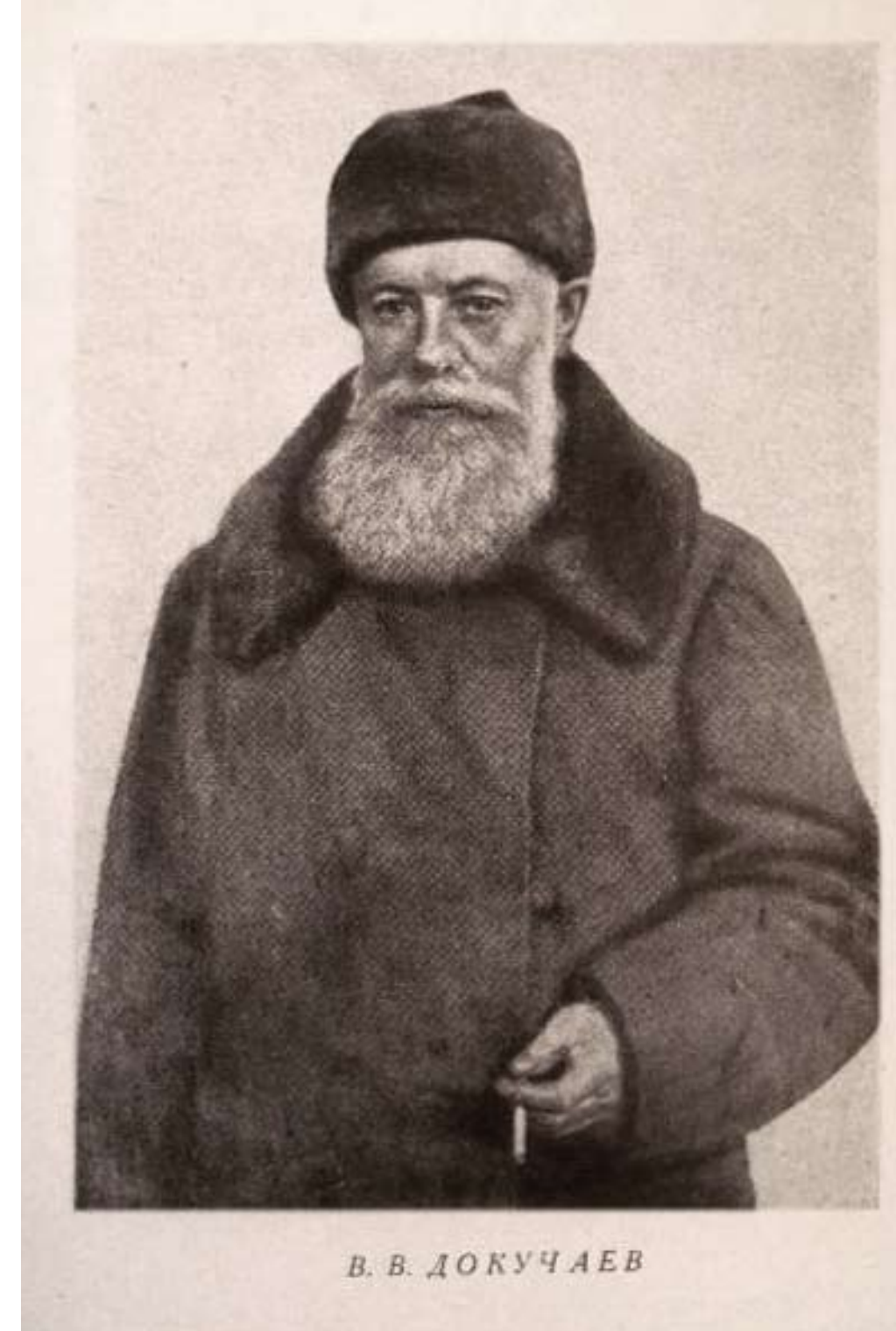
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Konstantin D. Glinka (1867-1927)



Vassily Dokuchaev (1846-1903)

The GLINKA MEMORIAL COLLECTION (GMC)

is a special collection of the World Soil Museum, a scientific and historical treasure that offers possibilities to dig into the history of soil science and the history of the soils themselves. The collection of soil profiles dates back to the beginning of the 1920's. They were collected in the former Soviet Union under the supervision of the soil scientist Konstantin D. Glinka to be sent to the 1st International Congress of Soil Science.

KONSTANTIN D. GLINKA,

born in 1867, started his career as a student and assistant of Vassily Dokuchaev, who is considered the founder of Soil Science. Glinka was the great diffuser of Dokuchaev's ideas since he could speak English and German, what made him very popular among the international soil scientific community. In 1922 he was appointed director of the Leningrad Agricultural Institute and head of the Soil Science Department.

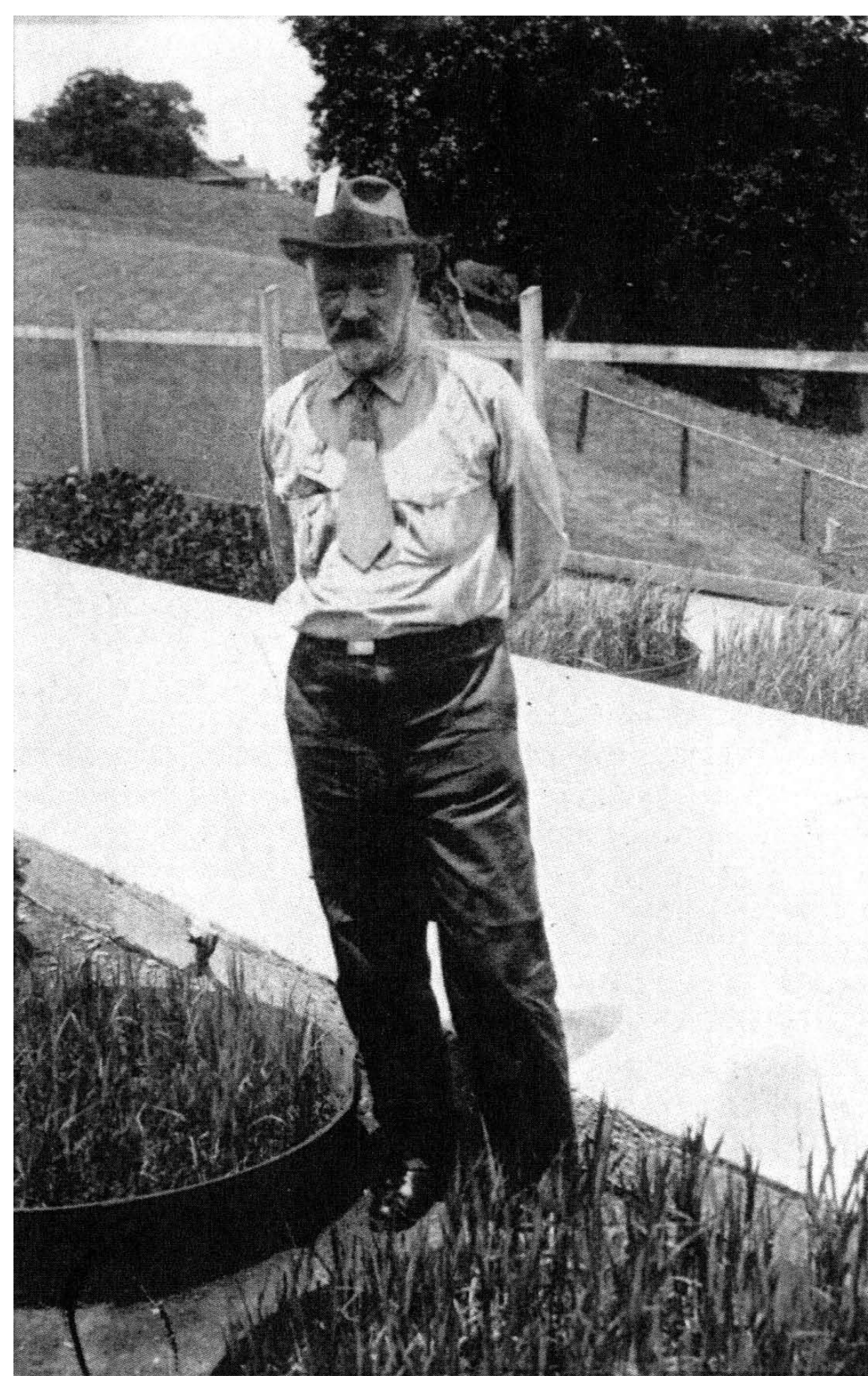
The 1st WORLD CONGRESS OF SOIL SCIENCE

of the new born International Soil Science Society took place in Washington DC, USA 1927. The ten days congress was followed by a transcontinental field trip of 30 days that counted more than 200 participants, a story to be told by itself!

Exhibits and presentations from all over the world were organized for this inauguration congress and the Soviet contribution expected to be impressive. Glinka was in charge to organize their participation and organized field trips to collect soils as well as other presentations and materials.

The RUSSIAN PARTICIPATION

was marked by the presence of 22 delegates that also joined the field trip after the congress. They had an active participation both with lectures and exhibits. Glinka gave a lecture on Dokuchaev's ideas and the Russian developments on soil science. At the congress Glinka was elected president of the International Soil Science Society and was in charge to organize the 1930 congress in Russia. However he passed away a few months after the congress.



Konstantin D. Glinka at the USA Soil Congress field trip 1927



Glinka soil profiles still in original boxes at the World Soil Museum



The RUSSIAN EXHIBITION OF SOILS

counted more than 50 soil monoliths. The collection of soil profiles included a geographical sequence from St Petersburg to the Caucasus and soils from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Amu Darya region and the Siberian Far East. They were treated with a sugar solution before shipment to the USA, and they are still well-preserved. The soils carry names from the old Soviet classification system and bear their approximate location. Due to shipping problems they did not arrive on time for the congress, and ended up in an USDA storage facility, where they remained untouched in their original wooden boxes until the late 70's.

In the 1970s, the collection was donated to the **INTERNATIONAL SOIL MUSEUM (ISM/ISRIC)** in the Netherlands, and the soil profiles became part of the collection of the Museum in 1980. In the early 1990s, a project for revisit the sites was set up by ISRIC researcher J. Boerma, and six sites around St Petersburg were sampled for a comparative study of the soils after 70 years. The project was discontinued at that time. Nevertheless the soil profiles and samples are to be researched and offer a great potential to unravel changes undergone by those soils in the time span of the largest environmental change the World has undergone after civilization started.



This story illustrates the value and importance of the collection of the World Soil Museum: it contains samples that are unique scientifically and historically, and have not yet had their importance assessed. As pointed out by Mol *et al.* (1998), the common notion among managers and policy makers, that once a sample has been analysed it can be discarded since the data are available, on paper or electronically, is equivocated. Obviously it is very useful to have a sample archive from which additional analyses may be possible, either to convey with a shift or improvements in analysis techniques or to correct mistakes.

Mol, G.; Vriend, S. P. & Gaans, P. F. M. Van, 1998. Future trends, detectable by soil monitoring networks? *Journal of Geochemical Exploration*, (62), 1-3:61-66.

Soil monoliths from the Glinka Memorial Collection, now in the World Soil Museum (ISRIC)