

CENTRAL AND EASTERN

EUROPEAN REVIEW

Volume 3, 2009

KONSTANTIN NIKOLAEVICH GUL'KEVICH—F. NANSEN'S *POMOSHCHNIK*.

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

by

Claus Wittich,

Geneva.

Abstract

In spite of his prominence in the literature on “Russia Abroad after 1917”, the life-path of Konstantin Nikolaevich Gul’kevich is still largely unknown. The present “Biographical Note” attempts to fill in some of the lacunae in our knowledge, based on archival sources (personnel records of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs [MID], Geneva Cantonal records, the League of Nations [LoN] Archive files), the letters to Gul’kevich from his friend A.A. Chuprov (1919–22), and a confrontation with the recent Russian literature on “Russia Abroad”.

Main findings

K.N. Gul’kevich lived in Geneva from early 1922 until his death in 1935; although a “*pomoshchnik*” of Fridtjof Nansen in a very broad sense, he was never a staff member of the League of Nations, but rather the representative of the Paris-based “*Sovet [byvshikh rossiiskikh] poslov*” to the LoN High Commission for (Russian) Refugees and its successor organization (the LoN-attached “Nansen Office for Refugees”), and only from about 1930 a member of the policy-making Governing Board and other management committees of that organization. The Note also contains various observations, not always connected to Gul’kevich, on the recent Russian literature on “Russia Abroad” and Nansen’s League of Nations activities.

ISSN 1752-7503

© 2009 CEER

First publication

KONSTANTIN NIKOLAEVICH GUL'KEVICH—F. NANSEN'S *POMOSHCHNIK*.

A BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE ¹

by

Claus Wittich,

Geneva.

In the literature on exile Russia after the First World War, Konstantin Nikolaevich Gul'kevich, last envoy of the Provisional Government in Stockholm and later "aide" (*pomoshchnik*) of Fridtjof Nansen at the League of Nations in Geneva, is a figure of great presence, whose traces appear in books, articles, and (especially his letters) in many documentary collections. In face of this prominence, it is surprising how little reliable information on Gul'kevich can be found in the standard biographical sources and in the registers of the great archives holding deposits of his letters and other papers. Even his life span is rarely indicated, data on his career and its chronology are in most cases lacunary or outright wrong, and the definition of his rôle in his various activities is very vague (what does "*pomoshchnik*" signify?).

The present note attempts to throw a preliminary light on some aspects of the life and career of K.N. Gul'kevich. It is based on a brief survey of records found in the State Archive of the Canton of Geneva, in the League of Nations archive, also in Geneva, on information in the letters (1918–1925) of the statistician and economist Aleksandr Aleksandrovich Chuprov to his friend Gul'kevich that have recently become available, and on a general mining of the Russian literature accessible from Geneva, far away from Russian libraries.² This should help to fill some of the existing lacunae, although much remains to be clarified—the exploration has only just begun. It should be stressed that this study is of necessity preliminary, owing mainly to the author's quite random survey of the abundant recent Russian literature on the civil war period and "Russia Abroad", largely limited to texts available on the internet.³

¹ This is the original English version of a paper published in an abbreviated form (in particular, as concerns the documentation in the notes) under the title "Константин Николаевич Гулькевич—Биографические заметки" in: *Нансеновские чтения 2007*. СПб. Информ.-культур. центр «Русская эмиграция». Науч. ред. М.Н. Толстой. СПб.: Сударыня, 2008, с.107–136. The author thanks Dr. M. D. Chernysheva, the convener of the October 2007 conference in Sankt Petersburg on Fridtjof Nansen and his work, for her invitation to participate with this contribution.

² I ought to note that my own focus on K.N. Gul'kevich is of very recent date, mediated through my interest in A.A. Chuprov, in the editing of whose Russian correspondence with the Berlin-based economist-statistician Ladislaus von Bortkiewicz, his teacher and friend, I assisted Oskar B. Sheynin (Berlin) some years ago (Sheynin 2005). In late 2006 we discovered a deposit of Chuprov letters to K.N. Gul'kevich in the Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian & East European Culture at Columbia University (henceforth: BAR), which we edited and recently published electronically (Sheynin & Wittich 2007). In the course of this work, we came—with the help of Gottfried Kratz (Münster) and through his publications (e.g., Kratz 2005)—upon a further, larger and overlapping set of Chuprov letters to Gul'kevich, 1918–1925 (some 360 archival sheets in the Gul'kevich deposit of the State Archive of the Russian Federation in Moscow (henceforth: GARF), Fond 6094), which we—the three of us—intend to combine with the BAR letters for a joint publication (Kratz-Sheynin-Wittich, in preparation). The present note emerges from the preparatory work for this endeavour. The author thanks Gottfried Kratz and Oskar Sheynin for contributions to this note too numerous to be mentioned individually. His very special thanks also go to Mme. Bernardine Pejovic, curator of the Reading Room, League of Nations Archives at the UN Library in Geneva, for her exceedingly knowledgeable help and her assistance beyond the call of duty. Finally, the author invites comments on the present Note, addressed to claus.wittich.dc.58@aya.yale.edu.

³ Among probably relevant sources, I have been able to consult only the index of the voluminous Maklavov-Bakhmetev correspondence edited by Oleg Budnitskii (see Budnitskii 2001).

Konstantin Nikolaevich Gul'kevich was born on 18/30 March 1865 in St. Petersburg, as the son of Nicolas Goulkévitch and Olga, née Morgoli. Nothing further is known at present about his parents.⁴ He died on 25 June 1935 in Epalinges (Vaud), near Lausanne, where he was being treated in a sanatorium for a tubercular illness of long standing.⁵ Already these base data appear to be new.⁶

Image 1. Konstantin Nikolaevich Gul'kevich, 1865–1935.



Константин Николаевич Гулькевич, 1865–1935.

His career until 1917 can now be documented from the very summary personnel files of the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MID), which provide the chronological framework for our account below,⁷ as well as scattered other sources of information. While nothing is known about his schooling, it cannot have been long—from age 21 he worked in the State and MID archives (1886–87), and from 1887

⁴ A Nikolai Vasili'evich Gul'kevich (1814–1876) is mentioned as an administrator in the Caucasus—perhaps the father?

⁵ Extracts from KNG's *fichier* in Archives d'État, Canton de Genève (henceforth : AGVE), Série EE, Dossier 84376 (*Fond sur les étrangers, Régistre des permis de séjour 1898–1928*). The spelling « Goulkévitch » is the standard form in French-language records. The birth date is confirmed by his personnel file at the Imperial Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see below). The death date is reported slightly differently in Ross.Gos.Biblioteka, *Nezabytye mogily. Rossiiskoe zarubezhie: Nekrology 1917–1970*, Mo. 1999, t.2, p.269, where information on his career is also in various other ways deficient.

⁶ Many sources still report either no life span or give it as 18??–1935 (thus, the GARF and the BAR biographic entries for their Gul'kevich papers, the life sketch in *Encyclopedia of Russia Abroad*, see also the interesting website <http://www.mochola.org/russiaabroad/encyclopaedia/>). Most summary life sketches found in the literature are also clearly deficient regarding his diplomatic postings (random selection, often evidently wrong titles or rank, etc). As to his postings, KNG is variously designated as “*attachée*”, “*konsul*”, “*sovetnik*”, “*poslannik*” or “*posol*” for the Swedish post which he occupied from May 1917, where “*poslannik*” appears to be correct—but also for the Constantinople post in 1912–14, where clearly his rank was only “*sovetnik*”.

⁷ Based on data in *Ежегодник МИД* (Yearbook of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs) and in the Ministry's “*formuliarnye spiski*” stored at AVPRI (Archive of foreign policy of the Russian Empire), Fond DLS and KhD, op.464, delo 1054. (Данные по Ежегоднику МИД и АВПРИ [Архив внешней политики Российской империи], ф.ДЛС и ХД формулярные списки, оп. 464, дело 1054.) I thank G. Kratz for communicating these data, to be published in his “*Der russische Verlag ‘Slowo’*”, forthcoming.

in the administration of the Foreign Ministry (department for personnel and economic matters). In 1891 he (or, less likely, a namesake) purchased an estate in Vitebsk *guberniia* (in today's Latvia), which he actively rebuilt and sold again in 1910.⁸ By 1896 Gul'kevich was in the diplomatic service abroad (Second Secretary at the Russian legation in Munich, 1896–1901), but then left the service for five years.⁹ In 1906 he returned to the Ministry in senior positions, first (1906–08) as a member of the Foreign Minister's cabinet (Alexander Petrovich Izvolskii, 1906–10), and then as First Secretary of the Russian Embassy in Rome (1908–11), where he worked under Ambassadors Nikolai Valerianovich Muravev, then Prince Dolgoruki. There he seems to have distinguished himself with the arrangement of a meeting in October 1909 between Tsar Nicolas II and King Victor Emmanuel in Racconigi.¹⁰ Gul'kevich entered into the diplomatic limelight with his next posting, as Councillor (*sovetnik*) of the Russian Embassy in Constantinople (1912–14), under Ambassador Mikhail Nikolaevich Girs (1856–1932). During that period he—rather than the ambassador¹¹—negotiated an important treaty with the Turkish Foreign Minister, Prince Said Halim Pasha, in the wake of the “Adana affair” (1909) of extensive mistreatments of Turkey's Armenian population—a Russo-Turkish agreement to let foreign commissioners run the administration (“Kosovo-style”) of several eastern *vilayets* inhabited mainly by Armenians, signed on 8 February 1914 and promptly renounced by Turkey once the war had started.¹² After the evacuation of the Russian embassy from Turkey, Gul'kevich was posted to the Ministry in St. Petersburg, as Councillor in the 2d (Political) Department, then from February 1915 as envoy (*poslannik*) to Norway (Christiania/Oslo), and from May 1917 as envoy (*poslannik*), then perhaps ambassador (*posol*) of the Provisional Government to Sweden (Stockholm).¹³ On 26 December 1917, by decree of L.D. Trotskii, he—like all Russian foreign office officials who had not declared loyalty to the new régime—was officially dismissed from the service.¹⁴

⁸ A Konstantin Gul'kevich (no patronymic given), described as “a chamberlain at the Tsarist court” and “later envoy in Italy and Sweden”, in 1891 purchased an estate in Preili, Vitebsk guberniia, Dvinskii uyezd, today in eastern Latvia (near Daugavpils), from Baron Ungern-Sternberg, sold it again in 1910 to Karl Hippus, did quite a bit of construction on the old mansion house and the 42 ha park surrounding it during his ownership. (The mansion is today under reconstruction. See: http://www.preili.lv/en/evaluation_report_2002.pdf)

⁹ According to the MID register, he was “freed from his duties with maintenance in the administration and his rank” [уволен от занимаемой должности “с оставлением в ведомстве и звании”]. What he was doing during that period is still unclear, but perhaps it was some kind of court service – in one of the obituaries after his death he is referred to as “*maitre de cérémonie à la Cour de Russie*”, an appellation that would also accord with the description in the Preila notice above. See the obituary by Charles Bernard, “A la Mémoire de M. Constantin Goulkévitich”, in *Revue mensuelle* (Genève & Paris), July 1935, No. 405, transcription by V.M. Fel'kner, in League of Nations Archives (Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva), Nansen Collection (henceforth: LoN-NC), Sect.20A, Doss.80679, Doc.22873 (Box C-1538). The LoN-NC files are somewhat chaotically registered; in many cases even a Doc. number covers hundreds of archival sheets. The Box number is the most useful finding aid in most cases. For a general description of the deposit, see Blukacz-Louisfert 2003.

¹⁰ Obituary by V. M. Fel'kner in *Vozrozhdenie* (Paris), No.3676 (27.6.1935); Translation from Russian into French by V.M. Fel'kner, in LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.80679, Doc.22873 (Box C-1538).

¹¹ There are suggestions in the literature that Mikhail Nikolaevich Girs (de Giers in most western sources), who was well-connected—as son and long-time personal secretary of Nikolai Karlovich Girs [de Giers] (1820–95), the foreign minister (1882–94) of Alexander III—had made a rapid career on that basis, but was not highly rated by his colleagues on professional skills, initiative and diligence (see, e.g., Mironova 2004, p.17, my pagination). Nonetheless, after the outbreak of WW1 he was shifted from Constantinople to head the important embassy in Rome, and in 1918 was voted presiding officer of the Paris-based Conference, later “Council”, of [former Russian] Ambassadors, the diplomatic representation of Russia-in-Exile, mainly on the basis of his seniority in rank, a post he held to his death in 1932.

¹² Mentions of Gulkevich/Goulkévitich in Constantinople turn up in numerous digitalized memoirs of western diplomatic or missionary travelers in the region. For a text of the Russo-Turkish agreement of 1914, see <http://www.imprescriptible.fr/carzou/annexes1.htm#c>.

¹³ An unresolved question: was he ever “*posol*”? The literature uses both titles almost indifferently. Probably of little importance.

¹⁴ Mironova 2004, p.4, my pagination.

His MID record closes in December 1917, but Gul'kevich continued to hold the Stockholm post and maintained the Russian embassy at Strandvägen 7c in Stockholm (even, it seems, in considerable style)¹⁵ well beyond the Soviet seizure of power in Petrograd and the early establishment in Stockholm of a Soviet representation (in November 1917), in parallel with the Gul'kevich mission, only “semi-accredited” initially and later expelled.¹⁶ He served as representative of the various White Russian governments first in Siberia and then in the Russian south, and ultimately—after the exit of the last White Russian government (Baron Wrangel) from Russian soil in November 1920 at least for a while, as delegate of the Paris group of Russian ambassadors (Girs, Maklakov, Bakhmetev, *et al.*) who later (in 1921) formed the Совет Послов, the “Council of Ambassadors of Russia” which attempted to continue a representation of “legitimate” Russia (and its MID) well into the 1930s.

During the post-revolution and civil war years, 1917–21, Gul'kevich participated actively in the establishment of the diplomatic “Russia Abroad”. This period has already been broadly researched in the recent Russian literature, even if not with a focus on Gul'kevich, hence a broad summary will suffice here (the more so as I have done no own work on this aspect).¹⁷ The Stockholm envoy seems to have been closely involved (if perhaps only by letters and telegrams) in all policy discussions of the Russian exile ambassadors, starting with their disputes about how to react to their dismissal in December 1917, in their discussions about the defense of the tsarist frontiers (Gul'kevich seems to have taken a hard position, especially on Finland, but he was not alone in this), in the establishment of the “Russian political assembly ...” in Paris at the turn of 1918/19 in an effort that largely failed to influence the Versailles negotiations (he advised not pushing too hard), and perhaps also in the diplomats’ putsch in February 1921, when the “Conference of Russian Ambassadors” (soon styled the “Council of Ambassadors”, *Sovet poslov*) effectively “deposed” Baron Wrangel as “head of government” after his retreat from Russian soil (and refused his claim on Russian state financial resources held abroad)—although by that time Gul'kevich already was in semi-retirement in Norway (see below). His name appears on the membership roster of all these formations. In the Stockholm embassy, although “off-centre” in Europe, Gul'kevich sat at a neural point because of that capital’s propinquity to Petrograd as well as to the various Northern white armies, and was evidently also deeply involved in the transmission of finances to Kolchak, Denikin and Iudenich,¹⁸ and in advice (even military) to the diplomatic and army leaders.¹⁹ These roles also earned him close watch from the Soviet leadership.²⁰

¹⁵ In his posthumously published remembrances, the publisher Iosif V. Gessen (1865–1943) describes the setting, “*so shtabom chinovnikov, livreinyimi lakeiami*” (Gessen 1979, p.14). However, it should be noted that Gessen’s memory was not always reliable by the time he wrote down his notes—thus he claimed that A.A. Chuprov had moved to Geneva together with Gul'kevich “*kogda Nansen vzial KNG pomoshchnikom ...*” and that Gul'kevich had died two years after Chuprov, i.e. in 1928 (op.cit., p.15), both contrary to established facts.

¹⁶ Headed by V.V. Vorovskii, later expelled from Sweden and in 1923 assassinated in Geneva. Vorovskii described some of the events of his not very amical cohabitation with Gul'kevich in Stockholm – he had without success attempted to have the Imperial Russian embassy buildings and archives confiscated and transferred to his own mission (cf. Smolin 2005, p.1, my pagination)—in a pamphlet (Vorovskii 1919) of which I have seen only excerpts.

¹⁷ See especially Bocharova 2002, Kononova 2001 and her 2004 book (which I have not yet seen), Mironova 2004, Smolin 2005.

¹⁸ See Kononova 2001 and Smolin 2005.

¹⁹ Correspondence with Sazonov, Iudenich, Gessen and others, reprinted in *Beloe dvizhenie...* 2003.

²⁰ In an address to the All-Russia Central Executive Committee, 2 February 1920, Lenin reports as an important event the interception of telegrams from Sazonov to Gul'kevich: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/feb/02.htm>.

At least from summer 1920, still from Stockholm, Gul'kevich also took a very active interest in Russian publishing ventures abroad. These were aimed both at the Russian exile market and, in these early years, on the expectation that access could eventually be obtained to sell books also inside Russia—a hope that was soon to be deceived, foundering on the intransigence of the new leadership in Russia. In Stockholm, his ties in this respect were with E.A. Liatskii and his publishing firm “Severnye ogni”.²¹ More important perhaps was his connexion with I.V. Gessen in Berlin and with the Berlin exile circle’s search for a host-country partner that eventually led to their association with the Ullstein concern for the founding of the “Slovo” publishing house. Documents recently found in the Ullstein archives show that Gul'kevich was there seen as one of the Russian initiators of this project (Kratz 2006, pp.127, 136), perhaps even as a shareholder, and many of the letters he received from A.A. Chuprov until his departure from Stockholm in January 1921 are concerned with this topic, ranging from the inspection of printing facilities and possible financial arrangements to detailed publishing programmes and the then still burning question whether the new or the old orthography should be used (see Sheynin & Wittich 2007, *passim*).²² This liaison with two competing publishing houses would sometimes embarrass Gul'kevich when they got in each other’s way.²³

In September 1920, Gul'kevich moved out of the embassy building into a private apartment in the vicinity, and from this time on he appears to have been considering alternatives to his post in Stockholm.²⁴ Ultimately, however, as Mironova points out,²⁵ Gul'kevich was almost the only one of the ex-Tsarist and/or Provisional Government and then Russia-in-exile ambassadors who did “voluntarily and in good order” close down his embassy “that no longer represented anybody”. It seems that, under pressure from M.N. Girs to stay on, he offered to do it in a carefully guarded manner (at some personal cost, by taking an unpaid “leave of absence”, handing over the work to his deputy, rather than taking up a lucrative post in banking available to him which would have forced him to “resign” from his inscription to the Swedish diplomatic roster and presumably would have jeopardized the continued Swedish recognition of the legation). Mironova provides no date for this, but concludes that this procedure was ultimately not followed. However, we can now state—on evidence from the Chuprov letters to Gul'kevich, that this was precisely what happened—Gul'kevich did go on a “health-and-recuperation” leave towards the end of January 1921, moving to Christiania/Oslo, where he stayed through May, then moving on to Berlin and later Dresden in the summer and fall, and finally in December to Paris, from

²¹ On Liatskii and his publishing activities, see Shomrakova 2002. Gul'kevich’s negotiations for private employment after his withdrawal from the embassy seem to have had something to do with that liaison, an issue not yet clarified.

²² This topic also played a large role in their later correspondence (see Kratz 2004 and 2005). The details of KNG’s engagement in the publishing scene will be discussed in a forthcoming German publication on the history of “Slovo” (Kratz, forthcoming) and in the projected joint edition of the Chuprov letters from the BAR and the RZIA/GARF deposits (Kratz-Sheynin-Wittich, in preparation).

²³ When Chuprov solicited J.M. Keynes for the rights to a Russian translation of his *Economic Consequences of the Peace* on behalf of his Berlin friends, the author had to regret: “I have already assigned the Russian rights ... to a Swedish company” (Sheynin-Wittich 2007, letter 15); the Keynes volume was published by Liatskii in Stockholm. Chuprov considered this competition dangerous (op.cit., letter 22).

²⁴ As reflected in Chuprov’s letters (Sheynin-Wittich 2007, letters 22 (11.9.20), 27 (29.9.20), 28 (5.10.20), 38 (30.1.21). Some of the destinations explored—Reval, Riga, Warsaw—may have concerned possible transfers within the diplomatic service (correspondence with M.N. Girs is mentioned in each case), but the context is not entirely clear.

²⁵ Mironova 2004, p.22, my pagination.

where he resettled in Geneva in January 1922.²⁶ The Stockholm embassy/legation, however, appears to have been maintained at least into summer 1921, perhaps longer.²⁷

The *Swiss and League of Nations period* of Gul'kevich's life thus begins only in January 1922.²⁸ He traveled on a passport issued in Stockholm—by his own services—on 18 January 1921, and entered Switzerland in the first days of January 1922 on a visa issued by the Swiss Legation in Paris on 15 December 1921.²⁹ His situation in Switzerland clearly was quite precarious in the first years: Initially, he was a “tolerated” resident, on very short-term (monthly and quarterly “provisional”) permits, conditional on not performing any professional activities. In the Geneva address books he was listed throughout his stay as “*s.p.*”, *sans profession*. When in 1924 he applied for a residence permit with an annual duration, he was asked about his activities and assured the *Suret * agent sent to query him (a M. Chaffard) that “*il ne s'occupe pas de politique et passe son temps   lire et   se reposer*”, a statement certainly far from reflecting the reality of his ever-industrious life. He assured the agent that his income was adequate—some 600 Swiss francs per month—and the latter established that this sum indeed arrived regularly by cheque from London. Until October 1924 he resided in a *pension* at 11 route de Florissant (his landlord, M. Pittard, had to deposit a caution of 1,000 francs with the Cantonal treasury, and declared himself willing to renew “*la caution si cette formalit   tait jug e n cessaire*”, the client being “*un personnage des plus correct, s rieux et ne se faisant pas remarquer*”).³⁰ Once he had obtained his annual permit—in November 1925 replaced by a *Certificat Nansen* (No.1075), the famous Nansen passport³¹—Goul'kevitch moved to an apartment on the Champel heights of Geneva, at 4^{bis} [later 6] chemin Dumas (with a guest room for Chuprov), where he lived from October 1924 to July 1933; for the last years of his life he took a smaller apartment in the same street, at 1 chemin Dumas.³²

Over the 14 years from his arrival in Geneva in 1922 until his death in 1935, K.N. Gul'kevich was closely associated with the Russian refugee efforts of the League of Nations (LoN), specifically the League's High Commission on (Russian) Refugees³³ headed by Fridtjof Nansen and (from 1931) its successor organization, the “Nansen International Office for Refugees”. However, he was never a salaried

²⁶ Letters from Chuprov (Dresden) to Gul'kevich (at various locations), January 1921 to January 1922, in Sheynin-Wittich 2007, letters 37–38, for the period until January 1921, and in ГАРФ. Ф.6094. Оп.1. Ед.хр.117. ЛЛ.54, 57–58, 61, 65, 72, 78–79, 80–82, 89, 93 from February 1922 (to be published in Kratz-Sheynin-Wittich, in preparation).

²⁷ Letter from M.N. Girs (de Giers) to Sir Eric Drummond (LoN Secretary General) of 28 June 1921, transmitted by “Jean Efrehoff” (I.N. Efrehoff, Russian envoy in Berne) with an annex “List of Russian Diplomatic and Consular Institutions” operating at that date, among them a Legation and Consulate in Stockholm: LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.12319, Doc.13375, Annex 10 (Box R-1713). This letter was misidentified in Mironova 2004 (p.24, my pagination, perhaps due to an error in her source) as being addressed to Nansen, who in June 1921, however, was not yet even under consideration for the High Commissioner post. The year 1922 mentioned in the literature for the departure of Gul'kevich from Stockholm and the closing of the Stockholm embassy (Kononova 2004, p.33, cited in Smolin 2005, p.1, my pagination) thus stands to be corrected at least on the first point.

²⁸ As will be noted at several points later, on this issue our dating is in conflict with that generally provided in the recent Russian literature.

²⁹ AGVE, loc.cit.

³⁰ Ibid., « Enqu te de l'agent Chaffard, le 24 mars 1924 ».

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., and *Annuaire genevois—Gen ve ville et communes, 1920 to 1937*.

³³ The word “Russian” was dropped from the High Commission's name in 1923 (or 1924?), when its field of activity was expanded to cover also the Armenian, Greek and Turkish refugee problems that arose from the Anatolian wars.

staff member of the League or its High Commission—but then, neither was Fridtjof Nansen himself,³⁴ so this is perhaps of small importance. But before we consider his role in these organizations, it seems useful to throw a brief look at certain specifics of the institutional environment in which the Commission was established and evolved.

The League of Nations High Commission for Russian Refugees was created at the end of August 1921 (with effect from 1 September) after a seven-month process of deliberation in various bodies of the League, in the Council initially and then in a Study Committee (also called Conference) on the Question of Russian Refugees that worked through the summer. The tasks set for the High Commission can be grouped in three areas, (i) resettlement of refugees (from the camps of first refuge), (ii) employment for refugees, (iii) travel documents and legal status.

The League, of course, was a club of governments (a closed club of member governments), whose organs—the annual Assembly, the Council, and various Committees—provided the arena for inter-governmental negotiations (only amongst member governments) on the resolution of their often conflicting interests in League programs, policies or legislation. This sounds abstract, but the intention here is to accentuate that the only accepted *actors* in League bodies were governments, in fact, *member governments*, and that this new institution at least in its beginnings found it very difficult to make room for talks with—or even to listen to—*non-members* and *non-government entities*. Reaching agreement among member governments was difficult enough.

When the Russian refugee issue came on the agenda of the League in 1921, significant components of the problem to be solved were located in or concerned the territories of *non-member states* (Germany, Austria, the later Turkey, a part of the defunct Ottoman Empire, and the then RSFSR); further—as the League did not foresee financing itself the solution of the problem—reliance was needed on the co-operation of a number of non-governmental entities, mainly charitable organizations that were expected to get involved. Finally (and partly overlapping with the preceding group), there were the institutions of “Russia Abroad”, concentrated in Paris at the time, which also intended to have a voice in the policy-making.

This of course made for many parties to be accommodated in one way or another. The western charitable organizations usually managed to lobby quite effectively in the League bodies through their

³⁴ Nansen remained head of the Norwegian delegation to the League of Nations throughout his service as High Commissioner, 1921–30, and thus a member of the “government side” of the system, as against the remunerated LoN Secretariat staff (but with compensation of specific “expenses”).

national delegations,³⁵ whereas “Russia Abroad”—with pretensions to represent a “country”—was to remain largely disappointed,³⁶ and found some of its concerns never given an audience.³⁷

When Fridtjof Nansen accepted the post of LoN High Commissioner for Russian Refugees in September 1921, he already had behind him two stints of similar service (in which he was sometimes also described as “High Commissioner”³⁸)—for the repatriation of prisoners of war and for famine relief in the Volga area (work for which he was to obtain the Nobel Peace Prize 1922). These tasks he seems to have tackled without an institutionalized base in the LoN Secretariat, but rather through his own foundation, the “Dr. Fridtjof Nansen Action for Russian Relief”, through which he channeled the funds he raised personally. (In spite of this record, Nansen was not at all the primary candidate of the League members for High Commissioner—throughout the summer of 1921, his name was often lacking among those circulating in the deliberations; only in August did it come to the fore, perhaps because of the administrative apparatus he had to offer.³⁹) This time, however, the High Commission was to be established as an official part of the League Secretariat, under the supervision of its organs and thus also under the constraints mentioned above, which certainly would have sharply impeded its capacities to fulfill the tasks posed to it.

Nansen very effectively worked around this in two ways: (a) He maintained the “Dr. Nansen Action” organization, with its own secretariat, delegates in the field, and private budget, to serve not only as a vehicle for fundraising and the financing of activities not permitted under the budget rules of the LoN High Commission, but also in some cases to circumvent the problems of dealing with “non-member states” mentioned above.⁴⁰ Thus, for a certain time the Berlin office, and—more importantly, at least until 1924 also the Moscow office, were “Dr. Nansen Action” field delegations rather than “LoN High

³⁵ A number of (mainly UK-based) charitable organizations managed to get mentioned by name in the final resolution (24 August 1921) of the LoN “Study conference on the question of Russian refugees” that instructed the work of the High Commission about to commence (“Save the Children Fund”, “Jewish Colonization Association” and its president Lucien Wolf even personally). *LoN Official Journal*, 1921, pp.899–902.

³⁶ This became particularly evident when a delegation of the Paris *Conférence russe ... (the Sovet poslov, the Zemgor, and some other organizations)* attempted to present the Russian position to the “Study conference ...” on 25 August 1921 (and perhaps to negotiate the outcome). The Minutes of the previous day’s meeting (LoN Doc.: C.R.R. P.V.3-28.8.1921, “Conférence d’étude sur la question des réfugiés russes”, Procès-verbal, 3eme séance, p.7f) shows a long discussion on whether they should be heard at all, with a split decision “in favour” (a Georgian group that had applied for the same privilege was refused—“after all, they too are Russians”). The Russian delegation was indeed heard (LoN Doc.: C.R.R. P.V.4–25.8.1921)—with ambassador I.N. Efremov presiding and the Zemgor delegate N.I. Astrov presenting the text—but then was asked to leave the hall after its presentation. No “negotiation”!

³⁷ Among the many issues on the table, we might note the concern of the Russian diplomatic and legal community to preserve the special powers of their legations in the so-called “capitulary countries” (the Ottoman Empire, Persia, China) where in the past foreign residents had been subject to Consular rather than national courts, powers that were seen—for good reasons—to be threatened by the early proposals for the issuance of a League of Nations passport. This concern, rather anachronistic in the new “Wilsonian” world, takes up much space in the LoN-NC correspondence files. On this point, see also LoN Doc.1107, C.R.R./11 (1921), a submission to the LoN from a “Conférence russe réunie à Paris en août 1921”.

³⁸ I cannot determine whether this was ever an official title.

³⁹ Among names in circulation were a number of US citizens – Columbia University president Nicholas Murray Butler, ex-US president William Taft, a banker Morgenthau, but also nationals of other countries. Certain member governments distrusted Nansen precisely because of his involvement with the Soviet government during that work, as also did the “Russia Abroad” community, which in addition suspected him to be in favour of involuntary repatriation of refugees to Russia, an accusation Nansen strongly rejected. (See also Bocharova 2006, p.11, for a list of the candidates in play during summer 1921.)

⁴⁰ The LoN Archive files retain hundreds of mutual billing transactions (for often very small amounts) between the “Nansen Action” and the LoN High Commission bookkeeping departments. I have not been able to establish for how long these rather unusual arrangements continued, but they went through at least the end of 1924 (when the High Commission was transferred to the ILO).

Commission” delegations (in the latter case because the Soviet foreign minister G.V. Chicherin would not accept an LoN representation in Moscow, but had no objections to a “*Predstavitel'stvo D-ra Fridt'ofa Nansena v Rossii*”—thus one of its letterheads). (b) He pushed from almost the day of his arrival in Geneva in September 1921 for the creation, as an auxiliary to his Commission, of an “Advisory/consultative committee of private organizations on relief to Russian refugees”;⁴¹ this addressed the difficulty of finding a role for *non-government* entities noted earlier. In today’s UN, the NGO’s (non-governmental organizations) are an institutionalized category, with accreditation rules, defined access rights, etc.—none of which existed in 1921. Fridtjof Nansen may thus have been the inventor (without the term) of the NGOs. Some years later, that body was also the entry point for K.N. Gul’kevich as official delegate of “Russia Abroad” to the High Commission.

Finally, some notes on the chronological evolution of the High Commission (a subject already exceedingly well surveyed in Bocharova 2002 and 2006, but to which the present note may add a few informational points). As already stated, there were three phases: (i) the original High Commission attached to the LoN Secretariat, Sept. 1921 to Dec. 1924, (ii) the transfer of the High Commission to the International Labour Office (ILO), 1925-1928, with a brief return to attachment to the LoN Secretariat, 1929-1930, and (iii) its successor organization, autonomous but “under the authority of” the League of Nations, the “Nansen International Office for Refugees” from April 1931.

Through all these periods, the High Commission was an extremely small institution, in terms of its staff and of its budget, by any standard and not only by comparison to today’s UN High Commission for Refugees (HCR), with some 800 staff at headquarters, some 6,000 worldwide. When in late September 1921 Nansen modestly requested some staffing from LoN Secretary-General Sir Eric Drummond for his newly established High Commission, he asked for *one* professional in addition to his Deputy High Commissioner and for *one* bilingual steno-typist. Drummond responded that “I quite understand” and suggested Nansen hire the professional himself, he would provide the steno/typist from the pool; as for a budget allocation, “for this year [we] are able to take money from our item ‘Unforeseen Expenditure’ and make it available for your refugee work. For next year (1922) I am putting forward a supplementary estimate of 119,000 gold francs, which I hope will serve your office expenses, and which I trust the Assembly will vote”.⁴² In his first “General Report on the work accomplished up to March 15th 1922”,⁴³ Nansen stated that he had received £1,500 for the last third of 1921 and was assigned £4,000 for budgetary 1922 by the Assembly in Sept. 1921 (whether this was the equivalent of the 119,000 gold

⁴¹ See his proposal to an early meeting (17.9.1921), Minutes (*procès verbal*), LoN Records, vol.1108: C.R.R./2^{me} session, P.V. p.4: Nansen “*serait heureux de s’assurer la collaboration des sociétés de secours privées ... et serait disposé à les associer immédiatement à son oeuvre.*” Nansen followed up by meeting with the “private organizations” on 19.9.1921; LoN Records, vol.1108: C.R.R./P.V./O.P. extraordinaire. See also his letter on the same issue of 23.9.1921 in LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.16056x, Doc.16056 (Box R-1731).

⁴² LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.16056x, Doc.16056 (Box R-1731), Drummond to Nansen, 21.9.1921, Nansen to Drummond, 23.9.1921, and Drummond to Nansen, 27.9.1921.

⁴³ LoN Document C.124.M.74 (1922), “Communiqué au Conseil et aux membres de la Société”. Reprinted in: *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22/1 (2003), p.143ff.

francs promised remains to be established).⁴⁴ This concerns the size of the Geneva central office of the High Commission, which later rose to 2 professionals and 4 other staffers by April 1924, and never exceeded more than 10 members, secretaries included, as in November 1935.⁴⁵ The number of delegates in the field was substantially more important in the early years, but many of them were on loan from member governments, the International Red Cross and other organizations; in 1935, when these activities were already on a decline, this came to some 20 staffers.⁴⁶ Nansen himself for most of the year lived in Lysaker near Oslo or was on travel. The problem of office space also caused difficulties; still in April 1923, with 6 staffers, the High Commission was “scattered throughout the building” (the *Palais Wilson*, formerly a hotel) in 4 rooms on different floors; the Assistant High Commissioner T.F Johnson pleaded for a reallocation of rooms that would cede one room “recently converted from a bathroom” to his organization, even the SG joined in to back his plea, but to no avail—the issue was still not resolved a year later.⁴⁷

In the first period, two “advisory/consultative”⁴⁸ committees were attached to the High Commission: an “Inter-governmental advisory committee ...” (often called simply the “Advisory committee”, the adjective “intergovernmental” being omitted) and the “Advisory committee of private organizations ...” just mentioned. In spite of the same first adjective in their titles, there was an important distinction between the two committees: the first one was a supervisory agency, and its resolutions, coming from member-governments-in-committee (even if only from a subset of “interested” member governments, but the League Council would always support their decisions) were in reality instructions—rather than mere “advice”—to the High Commission (even if Nansen may have sometimes managed to avoid their implementation), whereas those of the second committee were just that, “advice” which the Secretariat might take or not. The first committee could be convoked by a majority vote of its members; the second committee was convoked by the High Commission (or the High Commissioner himself), and in fact in 1922–1925 (after several closely-spaced sessions in the late-1921 initial period of the High Commission) was convoked only once a year,⁴⁹ much to the dislike of its members. The *procès verbaux* of these sessions show that at almost every session an occasion arose for Nansen or his representatives to remind the members “you are here to give advice, not to make policy”; evidently they had different ideas.

⁴⁴ A very rough estimate of gold equivalents of the time: £ = 112 grains of gold, US\$ = 23 grains, gold franc [GF] = 4.46 grains (0.29 grams); hence GF/£ = 25.10. Thus GF 119,000 (submitted by Drummond) equals ca. £4,740, but Nansen ultimately got only £4,000. For the scale: LoN total expenditure 1921 was estimated at GF 21,000,000 (New York Times, 1921).

⁴⁵ LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.[not registered], Doc. [not registered] (Box C-1536).

⁴⁶ Ibid. At that late time (the Office was near closing down), there were another 21 staffers at 8 duty stations in the field (Berlin, Paris, Sofia, Athens, Belgrade, Beyrouth, Prague and Bucharest).

⁴⁷ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.16056x, Doc.16056 (Box R-1731); memo Drummond to «Establishment Officer» (25.4.1923), memo Johnson to Drummond (26.4.1923).

⁴⁸ The first term was used in English, the second in French.

⁴⁹ Session records : Comité Consultatif des Organisations privées de secours aux Réfugiés russes. *Organizing session*, 19.9.1921 (Doc. C.R.R./P.V.Extraordinary; First session, 27.10.1921 (Doc. C.C.R.R./P.V.1.); *Second session*, 24.11.1921 (Doc. C.C.R.R./P.V.2.); *1922 session*, 8.6.1922 (Doc. C.C.R.R./O.P./P.V.1.); *Third session*, 20.4.1923 (Doc. C.C.R.R./O.P./3^e.Session/P.V.1.)—first appearance of KNG, as rep. of Conférence des Ambassadeurs russes; *Fourth [?] session*, 3.9.1924 (Doc. C.C.R.R./O.P./2^e)—only the “*ordre du jour*” found: Was KNG there? The H.C. now without the adjective “russe”. In 1925, the H.C. was already attached to the ILO; perhaps from that year on, the “Intergovernmental advisory commission” and the “Advisory commission of private organizations” meet jointly, as documented for 1926?

In the second period, after the move of the High Commission to ILO supervision in 1925, a somewhat different structure seems to have prevailed: there was now a single “Advisory committee”, consisting of three groups, “member government delegates” (13), “technical experts” (8, including K.N.Gul’kevich, Baron B.E. Nol’de and Ia.L. Rubinshtein—who may in turn have been delegates from a still existing “Private organizations” committee), and a small number of *ex-officio* international officials (representatives of the League and the ILO). It is unknown whether the three groups had equal voting powers.⁵⁰

In the third period, from April 1931, that of the autonomous “Nansen International Office for Refugees (under the authority of the LoN)”, arrangements were quite different. The Office now had a Governing Body (*Conseil d’Administration* in French), a Managing Committee (*Comité de Direction* in French), and within the latter a Finance Commission (*Commission des Finances* in French) created on the authority of the Governing Body.⁵¹ In 1931, K.N. Gul’kevich was appointed regular (voting) member of all three bodies, nominated to the Governing Body by the “Advisory committee of private organizations”.⁵² At the Governing Body session of 13 December 1933 Gul’kevich was reelected to the Managing Committee and the Finance Commission for a second three-year term (to 3 February 1937).⁵³

Gul’kevich in the League of Nations High Commission, 1922–1935. We can now return to our original question: What is a *pomoshchnik*? Against the background of the changing organizational structure of the LoN engagement in the refugee question just outlined, we can see three very different types and periods of activity for K.N. Gul’kevich:

- an initial period (1922–23) of essentially background liaison work for the Commission’s Secretariat, followed by a more official status as delegate of the Paris *Sovet poslov* to the “Advisory/consultative committee of private organizations on the refugee question” attached to the High Commission (in 1923–24);
- a second period (1925–1930) in which he represented the “Advisory committee of private organization” as its elected delegate (styled “technical expert”) in another “Advisory committee” where governmental delegations sat together with those from the non-government entities;
- and finally a third period (1931–1935) in which Gul’kevich sat, still as delegate of the “private” organizations, with quasi-executive powers on all the boards of the last institutional incarnation of Nansen’s refugee work, the *post-Nansen* “Nansen International Office for Refugees”: its Governing Body, its Management Committee, and its Finance Commission.

⁵⁰ *Annuaire de l’SDN*, vol.1 (1927), pp. 244f and 1004f: presumably status of 1926, and vol.5 (1931), p.221: status of the last year of the High Commission, 1930.

⁵¹ LoN, *Official Journal*, April 1931, pp. 746–754.

⁵² Appointment letter, 18.3.1931, Pres. Huber to Excellence Goulkévitch, and hand-written reply, LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss. 27210, Doc. 27208 (Box C-1544).

⁵³ LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss. 80679, Doc. 22873 (Box C-1538).

These three periods are frequently “telescoped” in the recent Russian literature into a single role, but deserve to be distinguished.⁵⁴

What precisely brought Gul’kevich to Geneva is still not fully resolved. The obituaries after his death in 1935 generally attribute his move to an invitation from Fridtjof Nansen in 1921 to become his collaborator, councilor (*sovetnik*) or aide (*pomoshchnik*) in the work of the High Commission,⁵⁵ and this is often repeated in the more recent literature. However, no personal communication to that effect between the two—in fact, no personal communication at all—has been found so far.⁵⁶ That Nansen wanted to have Gul’kevich in Geneva is of course not unlikely—they must have known each other in Christiania/Oslo from 1915. But I wonder whether the needs of the Paris exile community to have a representative at the High Commission was not at least equally determinant for his move, and a formal assignment to Geneva from the Paris *Sovet poslov* not the actual lever that brought Gul’kevich out of his semi-retirement in Norway and Germany? While this line of reasoning cannot at the moment be supported by documents (which may still turn up, perhaps in the GARF deposit), it seems to be supported by some of the end-1921 letters from Chuprov to Gul’kevich (then still in Berlin), which refer to a summons from Ambassador Girs in Paris.⁵⁷

On his arrival in Geneva, the difficult formative period of the “Advisory committee of private organizations” had already passed (the first sessions from September to December 1921, with at times bitter disputes among the interested parties concerning who should be permitted to sit on that body and how admission should be regulated).⁵⁸ Gul’kevich is sometimes ascribed an important role in resolving these early disputes,⁵⁹ but given the chronology, this is unlikely or must refer to a later event. Even during

⁵⁴ To give only one example (similar statements can be found throughout the recent literature): Bocharova 2006, p.13, writes about the formation “совещательного комитета в сентябре 1921 ... Совещательный комитет имел своих представителей в Административном совете Лиги Наций”, with reference for the last sentence (fn.11) to a letter by V.A. Maklakov. This in fact telescopes two events 10 years apart into a single event: the establishment of the “Advisory committee ...” in September 1921 (actually, as noted in the text, there were two Advisory committees of very uneven weight, which are often confounded), and the appointment of Gul’kevich to the Governing Board of the “Nansen International Office ...” in April 1931, which is the subject of Maklakov’s letter. Gul’kevich, mentioned in the next paragraph of that article, of course was even not yet in Geneva in September 1921, as was shown above.

⁵⁵ E.g., V. Rudnev in *Sovremennye zapiski* (Paris), vyp.59, 1935, pp.466–70: “In 1921, after the evacuation of the Crimea, Fridtjof Nansen, on assuming the post of High Commissioner on Refugee Matters offered him by the LoN, convinced K.N to whom he was tied by a friendship of many years, to agree to be his counselor (byt’ emu sovetnikom).” Certainly wrong in the details is V. M. Felkner in *Vozrozhdenie* (Paris), No. 3676 (27.6.1935): “le Docteur Fridtjof Nansen ... avait envoyé à M. Goulkévitch, à Stockholm, un télégramme lui demandant, dans les termes les plus persuasifs, de lui assurer ses conseils.”—by the summer of 1921 KNG was no longer in Stockholm, but in Berlin and Dresden.

⁵⁶ i.e., not in the League of Nations archives; copies of such a message may of course still be found in the GARF deposit of Gul’kevich papers, or in the Nansen archives in Oslo.

⁵⁷ Chuprov to Gul’kevich (3.12.1921): “что Гирс просит Вас приехать ...” (ГАРФ. Ф. 6094. Оп. 1. Ед.хр. 117. Л. 83). Gul’kevich left Berlin for Paris three days later; on 7.12.1921 Chuprov sent him lengthy excerpts from information he had received “про Нансена и Нансенскую организацию” (ibid, Л. 83). The Girs connexion is also suggested in an obituary by A. Stupnitskii, in *Poslednye novosti* (Paris), No. 5210 (29.6.1935), where the move from Sweden in 1921 is ascribed to a direct request from M.N. de Giers “de transférer sa résidence de Stockholm à Genève.”

⁵⁸ The only Russian groups present in the earliest sessions (19–22 Sept. 1921) of the “Advisory committee of private organizations” were the Paris Zemgor (Comtesse Panina, N. Astrov) and the Russian Red Cross (Dr. Lodygenskii). Among the other groups (there were 12 in all) the London “Jewish Colonization Association” (Lucien Wolf) was the most active. Bitter conflict arose about the right to be seated, L. Wolf in particular wanting to admit only “donor” organizations, objecting to some that were present (on the basis of small financial weight) and desiring to exclude altogether non-donor “political” organizations not directly involved in the relief effort or its financing. (Perhaps this is why the Paris *Sovet poslov* was not present in the Committee until 1923. It was clearly “political”—but on the other hand, as shown in Budnitskii 2005, it was also a significant source of financing for the Zemgor and other Russian organizations.). The issue was indeed thrown into an accreditation process, but at least at that time this did not involve Gul’kevich. (LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.16065, Doc.16223–16224, 16971 (Box R-1732).)

⁵⁹ E.g., Bocharova 2002, p.10.

the first year of his presence in Geneva his name does not appear on the roster of participants in the Committee sessions. He is mentioned there for the first time in April 1923, as delegate of the Paris “Council of Russian ambassadors”, an organization not represented in the prior sessions. From that time on until his death, Gul’kevich was always on that Committee, not intervening frequently in the debates (according to the *procès verbaux*), but evidently trusted by his colleagues—he soon appears to have taken the chair at these meetings, and—from about 1926—was the delegate of the Committee (or rather its Russian group) to other bodies. Much of his work appears to have been done in the background (his obituarists remember the pre-session meetings of all Russian groups at the Gul’kevich apartment on chemin Dumas, during which he resolved divergences of opinion and established the “Russian line” for the formal session to come).⁶⁰

If during his first years in Geneva Gul’kevich was not much in the limelight, he was certainly not “only resting and reading his books” (as he had told *Suret  agent Chaffard* in 1924). From the beginning, he was evidently well introduced at the Secretariat of the High Commission, as attested by hundreds of small communications from and to him that have rested until today in the files of the Nansen Collection at the League of Nations Archives. His connexion with Fridtjof Nansen is likely to have opened these doors, but also another factor: until late in 1921, I.N. Efremov, the Russian envoy to Switzerland (in Berne) had been the channel for all communications from the Paris *Sovet poslov* to the League of Nations and the High Commission in its early days; his name disappears from the records, at least the High Commission records,⁶¹ in 1922, and this role is taken over by Gul’kevich.

But the “letter-carrying” mission was only one of his roles. Gul’kevich was of course a personality with both a superb “address book”—he knew everybody in Russian diplomacy and “Russia Abroad” in general, and everybody knew him—and also an intimate overview of all policy issues of the period. These were certainly assets most valuable to the upper ranks of the High Commission Secretariat—to the most part British, French, or Swiss civil servants on loan from their home administrations with (initially at least) small exposure to these matters. (Nansen himself by that time may not have been in need of much help.) The contacts between Gul’kevich and the senior staff of the High Commission Secretariat seem to have been continuous, and often also social, beyond office hours (many of the messages in the files contain statements of the type “As you said at dinner last night ...”). And their subject range was very wide, across matters small and large, concerning his formal functions (liaison with the Russian diplomatic institutions), requests for small services (from both sides), and requests for advice in policy contexts. The last perhaps is what defines a *pomoshchnik* and *sovetnik* of the High Commission, thus answering our question above.

The variety of K.N. Gul’kevich’s interactions with the High Commission Secretariat during his first years in Geneva is characterized by a selection of files listed in an Appendix below. Some, as noted,

⁶⁰ See Rudnev (op.cit.); also A. Stupnitskii in *Poslednye novosti* (Paris), No. 5210, 29.6.1935 (LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.80679, Doc.22873 (Box C-1538), translation into French by V. Fel’kner).

⁶¹ The Russian legation in Berne appears to have been closed only in 1925 (Mironova 2006, p.30).

concern small services. The High Commission was flooded by an enormous volume of requests for aid from individuals, from families inside or outside Russia seeking missing relatives or asking for help, for living support, for fares to move from one place to another, and so on—all of which were answered, in most cases in the negative (as individual relief was not among the Commission's functions nor in its budget), and some of which were transferred to Gul'kevich, especially if his Paris links were thought to be helpful. Other service requests called on his "address book" and broad acquaintance with the exile community, as in the case of preparation of voyages into the field of international officials. In other cases the Secretariat sought to draw on his knowledge of historical and political context—the query for advice on the question of "entailed estates" in Poland (1831 donations of Tsar Nicolas I to his generals after the Polish uprising of that year)—which seems to have baffled the Minorities Protection Section of the League, is a case in point. Another group of requests engages Gul'kevich as intermediary to the Paris Council of Ambassadors—this may have been involved also when he was shown advance drafts of High Commission or Nansen reports (but perhaps these were provided in expectation of inputs).

We do not at this stage know whether contacts between Gul'kevich and the High Commission Secretariat continued with the same intensity and variety beyond his first two years in Geneva (1922–1924), because most of the files of the ILO period of the High Commission (1925–1928) are located separately and have in general been reviewed more sporadically, but also seem to be less comprehensive than those of the first time span. Between these two periods, both the focus of work of the High Commission and that of the engagements of K.N. Gul'kevich changed substantially.

For the Commission, the first period was dominated by two concerns, (a) the emergency efforts to disperse the Russian exodus from its places of first refuge (especially Constantinople) to other countries, and (b) by preparations for what was to become the Nansen passport. In the second period (with extension to 1930), other concerns came to the fore—the employment problems of displaced refugees (and no longer mainly Russian refugees) on the one hand, and the preparation of a second round of agreements and conventions on the legal status, documents and mobility (again the Nansen passport) of refugees.

For Gul'kevich, the focus also changed: in the first period, he seems to have been mainly a helpmate of the High Commission working in the background, in the second period he was explicitly the delegate and representative of "Russia Abroad" on various League of Nations bodies, at times sitting together with League *member state* delegations (as "technical expert", we are not quite sure whether only with a right to be heard, or also with some voting power).

The third period (from 1931) is again less well documented. The conversion of the Commission into an autonomous agency, the "Nansen International Office for Refugees" with a collegial management style (the post of High Commissioner was abolished after Nansen's death) also internalized management transactions—the archives seem to hold few Minutes of meetings held by the various boards—perhaps none were prepared. For the agency itself, this was already a wind-down period (with closure set in

advance for end-1939), although it soon found itself faced with new refugee issues (the emergence of a German refugee problem with the rise of Hitler from 1933). The entry of the USSR into the League of Nations in 1934 also worsened the environment for the Office.

For Gul'kevich, the third period meant entry with a full vote into all managing bodies of the reformed agency. (One of his first interventions was a very critical memorandum on the plan for a 1939 closure of the Office.⁶²) However, only his seat on the Finance Commission is likely to have been a fairly continuous activity (under the Rules of Procedure, the Governing Body was to meet at least twice a year and the Management Committee four times a year, unless convoked more frequently).⁶³

Last illness and death. From 1933 on, health problems—tuberculosis—appear to have beset Gul'kevich, requiring various stays in sanatoria—even the Geneva police official whose annual customer Gul'kevich was (for the renewal of his *permis de séjour*, later his Nansen passport) became aware of this.⁶⁴ In fact, already his stay in Christiania/Oslo in 1921 may have been connected with this issue,⁶⁵ and there may have been earlier sanatoria stays in the 1920s.⁶⁶ During the winter and spring of 1935 his condition worsened, and in early June he had to be transported to a sanatorium in Epalinges near Lausanne, where he died on 25 June 1935. A funeral ceremony was held at the Greek Orthodox Church of Lausanne on 27 June, followed by incineration at the Lausanne *Crématoire*. A requiem (*panikhida*) was celebrated in Paris on 1 July at the Alexandre-Neviskii Cathedral with a large attendance from the Russian community.⁶⁷ In the wake of his death, the Nansen Office was flooded with condolence letters from organizations and individuals with whom Gul'kevich had been in contact; tributes to his services also dominated the ensuing sessions of the Office Governing Body and the advisory committee of private organizations (8.10.1935).⁶⁸ The files also retained a large volume of obituaries, mainly from the Russian-language press in western Europe,⁶⁹ which stressed—apart from praising his services at the League of Nations for “Russia Abroad”—his role in Geneva as moderator, arbiter and unifier in the face of multiple scissions and conflicts among the Russian groups present there. “K.N. was our ‘unofficial’ émigré envoy in Geneva. ... K.N. had no formal titles for this unifying role ... but did not need any” owing to his personality.⁷⁰

⁶² “Mémorandum au sujet de l'établissement d'un plan de liquidation de l'oeuvre des réfugiés avant le 31 décembre 1939” par S.E. M. C. Goulkévitich et M. J. Rubinstein. 18pp. Doc. C.A./18/1931 (18.5.1931). Copy in LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.18812, Doc.21623 (Box R-5631).

⁶³ LoN, *Official Journal*, April 1931, pp.746–54.

⁶⁴ AGVE, loc.cit. (Letter from “*Directeur du Bureau des permis de séjour*”, 6.1.1933, with best wishes for 1933 “*et tout particulièrement le retour à la santé*”; the Swiss police was exceedingly “caring” at least about certain clients in those long-ago days!)

⁶⁵ Indications in letters from Chuprov, 12. and 28.2.1921 (ГАРФ. Ф.6094. Он.1. Ед.хр.117. JJL.54, 57-58.)

⁶⁶ Some of his early communications to the High Commission Secretariat were sent from Lausanne.

⁶⁷ LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.80679, Doc.22873 (Box C-1538).

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ The obituaries in the files of the Nansen Office, on which we have drawn throughout this Note, were collated (and in part translated) for the Office by Vladimir M. Fel'kner, a Russian journalist then working in Geneva, who had also served as pall-bearer at the funeral in Lausanne. Fel'kner was also the representative in Switzerland of the “Russian Foreign Historical Archive” (RZIA) in Prague, and it was he who in 1935–36 deposited there the Gul'kevich papers today in the Moscow GARF collection (see: GARF, “Russkii zagranichnyi istoricheskii arkhiv v Prage”, p.286). Probably these are the papers Gul'kevich had stored in a Nansen Office bank safe at the time of his last move, in 1933, because he did not fully trust his new landlord.

⁷⁰ From V. Rudnev in *Sovremennye zapiski* (Paris), vyp.59, 1935, p.468. Other obituaries in LoN-NC, Sect.20A, Doss.80679, Doc.22873 (Box C-1538).

Appendix: Selected Gul'kevich Traces in the League of Nation Archives

- Philip Noel Baker sends KNG a draft report on High Commission's work to Feb.1922 (10.4.1922, response 11.4.22).⁷¹
- KNG to Cuno de Watteville (Adjoint High Commissioner, 1922–23), transmits telegram from de Giers who demands a demerit of the authenticity of some documents Chicherin had just presented in Genoa (19.5.1922); CdW responds "we have not seen anything" and promises to take up contact "au cas où ils nous parviendraient ... par votre aimable intermédiaire ... avec de Giers" (22.5.1922).⁷²
- Cuno de Watteville asks KNG to follow up with the YMCA on the request for aid of a Sea Captain Golovchenko stranded in Le Havre and wanting to move to Chile, with response. (12.10.1922 and 13.10.1922).⁷³
- KNG, various correspondence with the High Commission (9.11.1922).⁷⁴
- The case of Prof. Vladimir Tverdokhlebov (Polytechnical Institute Petrograd): KNG asks Major Johnson (Assistant High Commissioner) for help on a request that had reached him from Dresden (most likely from A.A. Chuprov, who then lived in Dresden, formerly professor 1901–17 at the SPg Polytechnic Institute) to obtain a UK visa to work at the British Museum for the professor, presently in Dresden, who wants to return to Soviet Russia and therefore hesitates to apply from Petrograd.(25.6.1923). Johnson on 9.7.23 forwards the request to Philip Noel Baker, then at Treasury ("Dear Baker"), who in turn forwards it on 28.7.23 to a "dear Strang" at the Foreign Office with his recommendation ("Goulkévitch is an exceedingly good man", would not make an undeserving request); Strang responds on 3.8.23 (to "Dear Baker") "I am directed by the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to ... inform that his Majesty's Representative in Petrograd has been authorized" to issue a 2-month visa for the professor. Noel Baker had to remind the FO that the visa should be issued in Dresden, not Petrograd, and with that on 15.8.1923 returned the whole correspondence to Johnson in Geneva, where it ended up in the LoN archives. Amazing, what the "old boy" network could achieve in 1923 for those it esteemed—a visa processed by the Foreign Secretary in person within barely a month. We do not know, however, whether Prof. Tverdokhlebov ever made it to the British Museum (perhaps further Chuprov-Gul'kevich letters will yield the answer).⁷⁵
- KNG submits to Maj. Johnson (*Goulkévitch pour la Conférence des ambassadeurs russes*) a resolution of the AdvCom on Russian refugees, endorsing a resolution from M. de Giers, to protest substantial reduction of HighCom's budget for 1924 under discussion (4.9.1923).⁷⁶ In April 1923, KNG had sat for the first time as member of the Adv Com, delegate of *Sovet poslov*.
- KNG is asked to obtain from his friends in Paris clarification about the fate of a certain Nikol'skii, whom Gorvin ("Nansen Action" delegate in Moscow) had been asked by his family to track down (9.4.1924).⁷⁷
- KNG asked to provide contact names for ILO head Albert Thomas trip to Balkans (14–17 Nov 1924).⁷⁸
- KNG asked for advice on the dossier "Entailed estates in Poland" (Russian nobles in Paris had petitioned LoN to act against Poland under the "minorities protection" provision, for confiscation in 1919 of their ancestral estates, donated in 1831ff by Nicolas I to various Russian generals); (20.6.1924 and 31.3.1925).⁷⁹

Archival references

(Abbreviations used after first mention)

- AGVE = Archives d'État, Canton de Genève
 AVPRI = Архив внешней политики Российской империи [Archive of foreign policy of the Russian Empire]
 GARF = Государственный архив Российской Федерации [State Archive of the Russian Federation]
 LoN-NC = League of Nations Archives (Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva), Nansen Collection.

References (Literature Cited)⁸⁰

- Beloe dvizhenie na severo-zapade Rossii*. Belaia gvardiia. Almanakh, 7. Moscow: Posev, 2003. 275 pp.
- Nansenovskie chteniia 2007. (Sbornik konferentsii, SPg 23–25 oktiabria 2007)*. Sankt-Peterburgskii Institut istorii RAN, Informatsionno-kulturnyi tsentr 'Russkaia emigratsiia', and Komitet po vneshnim sviaziam Sankt-Peterburga. Edited by M. N. Tolstoi. Sankt-Peterburg: Izd. 'Sudarynia', 2008. 492 pp.
- Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2003). 'Fridtjof Nansen and the International Protection of Refugees—Reports, Documents, Literature Survey.'
- Rossika v SShA: Sbornik statei. (50-letiiu Bakhmetevskogo arkhiva Kolumbiiskogo universiteta posviashchaetsia)*. Edited by Andrei Vladimirovich Popov. Materiali k istorii russkoi politicheskoi emigratsii, Vyp. VII. Moskva: Institut politicheskogo i voennogo analiza, 2001. 352 pp.
- Pravovoe polozenie Rossiiskoi emigratsii v 1920–1930e gody (Sbornik nauchnykh trudov)*. Edited by Zoia Sergeevna Bocharova. Sankt-Peterburg: Izdatel'stvo 'Sudarynia', for: Sankt-Peterburgskii informatsionno-kul'turnyi tsentr 'Russkaia emigratsiia', 2006. 353 pp.
- Blukacz-Louisfert, Blandine. 'The Nansen archival collection at the Library of the United Nations Office at Geneva.'

⁷¹ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.12319, Doc.19252 (Box R-1714). This is the first appearance so far of KNG in the LoN Nansen Collection.

⁷² LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.12319, Doc.12619 (Box R-1715).

⁷³ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.23917x, Doc.23917 (Box R-1747).

⁷⁴ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.23323x, Doc.23323 (Box R-1747), but alas a sheet there « the file is missing ».

⁷⁵ LoN-NC, Sect.39, Doss.29462, Doc.29462x (Box R-1561 [1656 ?]).

⁷⁶ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.12319, Doc.30643 (Box R-1715).

⁷⁷ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.22431, Doc.35326 (Box R-1747).

⁷⁸ LoN-NC, Sect.45, Doss.12319, Doc.40588 (Box R-1716).

⁷⁹ LoN-NC, Sect.41, Doss.10720, Doc.36730 and 42753 (Box R-1656).

⁸⁰ In the *Notes* and in the *References (Literature Cited)*, "my pagination" for texts obtained from the internet refers to the pagination of my downloaded texts converted to MS-Word format (as the digitalized texts found on the internet generally do not permit the determination of page breaks in the original document).

- Refugee Survey Quarterly* 22, no. 1 (2003): 52–62.
- Bocharova, Zoia Sergeevna. "Pravovoe polozhenie russkikh bezhentsev na Zapade v 1920–1930e gody." *Istoriia*, no. 2 (2002): 1–37 [pagination of reprint]. Web source: <http://his.1september.ru/article.php?ID=200200201>.
- _____. "Deiatel'nost' Ligii Natsii po uregulirovaniu statusa bezhentsev." Chapter in: *Pravovoe polozhenie rossiiskoi emigratsii v 1920–1930-e gody (Sbornik nauchnykh trudov)*, pp.10–25. Sankt-Peterburgskii informatsionno-kul'turnyi tsentr 'Russkaia emigratsiia'. Edited by Zoia Sergeevna Bocharova. SPg: Izdatel'stvo 'Sudarynia', 2006.
- Budnitskii, Oleg Vital'evich. "B.A. Bakhmetev—diplomats, politik, myslitel'." In: *Rossika v SShA. Sbornik statei (50-letiiu Bakhmetevskogo arkhiva Kolumbiiskogo universiteta posviashchaetsia)*, 8–64. Materialy k istorii russkoi politicheskoi emigratsii, VII. Moscow: Institut politicheskogo i voennogo analiza, 2001. Copy from website: <http://nature.web.ru/db/msg.html?mid=1187387>. An earlier version of the article (under different title) in *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia*, 2000/1, pp.134–166.
- _____. ed. *"Sovershenno lichno i doveritel'no!". B.A. Bakhmetev—V.A. Maklakov: Perepiska 1919–1951*. Foreword by Terence Emmons (3 volumes). Moscow-Stanford: ROSSPEN—Hoover Institution, 2001. 568+671+671 pp.
- _____. "Soveshchanie rossiiskikh poslov v Parizhe i Zemgor: Den'gi i politika (1921–1925)." *Cahiers du Monde russe* 46, no. 4 (2005): 457–508.
- Davies, Richard. 'The Zemgor Archive.' *Leeds University Library* (2006). Web source: www.leeds.ac.uk/library/spcoll/handlists/171LRAZemgor.pdf
- Gessen, Iosif Vladimirovich. *Gody izgnaniia. Zhiznennyi otchet*. Paris: YMCA Press, 1979. 268 pp.
- Holquist, Peter. "Dilemmas of a progressive administrator: Baron Boris Nolde." *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 7, no. 2 (2006): 241–73.
- Johnson, Thomas Frank. *International Tramps: From Chaos to Permanent World Peace*. London: Hutchinson, 1938. 399 pp.
- Kononova, Margarita Mikhailovna. "Deiatel'nost' diplomatov tsarskogo i Vremennogo pravitel'stv v emigratsii v 1917–1938 gg." *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn'*, no. 9–10 (2001): 71–83.
- _____. *Russkie diplomaticheskie predstavitel'stva v emigratsii (1917–1925 gg.)*. Moscow: Izd. 'Institut vseobshchei istorii RAN', 2004. 240 pp. (Only references seen.)
- Kratz, Gottfried. "Knigotorgovoe obshchestvo 'Logos' v Berlina (1922–1928) i stroitel'stvo sviashchennogo grada kul'tury." In: *Kniga i mirovaia tsivilizatsiia. Materialy 11-oi mezhdunarodnoi konferentsii po problemam knigovedeniia*, pp. 245–49. Vol. 2. Moscow: Nauka, 2004.
- _____. "Materialy k istorii Berlinskogo izdatel'stva 'Slovo' v zarubezhnykh kolleksiakh." In: *Dokumental'noe nasledie po istorii russkoi kul'tury v otechestvennykh arkhivakh i za rubezhom. Materialy mezhdunarodnoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii 29–30 oktiabria 2003 g.*, pp. 312–21. Moscow: Rosspen, 2005.
- _____. "Ross v Rossii. O poezdakh v Sovetskuiu Rossiiu v 1921 i 1923 gg. predstavitelia Ul'shteinov v knigoizdatel'stve 'Slovo' Fridrikha Rossa." In: *XX vek. Dve Rossii - odna kul'tura. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov po materialam 13-kh Smirdinskikh chtenii*, pp. 125–37. Sankt Peterburg: SPbGUKI, 2006.
- _____. "Der russische Verlag 'Slovo'." *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*. Forthcoming.
- Kratz, Gottfried, Oskar Borisovich Sheynin, and Claus Wittich, (Eds.). *A.A. Chuprov—Pis'ma K.N. Gul'kevichu, 1918–1925*. [Combined edition of the (Sheynin-Wittich 2007) Bakhmeteff Archive letters (1919–1921) and the GARF deposit letters (1918–1925).] In preparation.
- Kévonian, Dzovinar. 'L'organisation non-gouvernementale, nouvel acteur du champ humanitaire. Le Zemgor et la Société des Nations dans les années 1920.' *Cahiers du Monde russe* 46, no. 4 (2005): 739–56.
- Mironova, Elena Mikhailovna. "Diplomaticheskie predstavitel'stva Beloi Rossii v epokhu revoliutsii, grazhdanskoi voiny i emigratsii." *Diaspora VI* (2004): 89–134. Web: <http://www.bfrz.ru/news/mironova.htm>.
- _____. "Diplomaty russkogo zarubezh'ia v borbe za obespechenie pravovogo polozheniia bezhenstva." Chapter in: *Pravovoe polozhenie rossiiskoi emigratsii v 1920–1930-e gody (Sbornik nauchnykh trudov)*, pp. 25–43. Sankt-Peterburgskii informatsionno-kul'turnyi tsentr 'Russkaia emigratsiia'. Edited by Zoia Sergeevna Bocharova. SPg: Izdatel'stvo 'Sudaryna', 2006.
- Robinson, Paul. 'Zemgor and the Russian army in exile.' *Cahiers du Monde russe*, 46, no. 4 (2006): 719–37.
- Savický, Ivan. "Prazhskii zemgor: sozdanie chekhoslovatskogo pravitel'stva?" *Cahiers du Monde russe* 46, no. 4 (2006): 777–96.
- Sheynin, Oskar Borisovich, (Ed.). *V.I. Bortkevich—A.A. Chuprov: Perepiska (1895–1926)*. Berlin: NG Verlag (also at: http://www.sheynin.de/download/9_Perepiska.pdf), 2005. 335 pp.
- Sheynin, Oskar Borisovich, with Claus Wittich, (Eds.). *A.A. Chuprov—Pis'ma K.N. Gul'kevichu, 1919–1921*. Berlin: <http://www.sheynin.de/download/gulkletter.pdf>, 2007. 68 pp.
- Shnol', Simon El'evich. "A.L. i L.A. Shaniavskie i M.V. i S.V. Sabashnikovy." Chapter in his: *Geroi i zlodei rossiiskoi nauki*, 1–18 (offprint pagination). Moscow: Izd. Kron-Press, 1997. Copy from: www.znanie-sila.ru/projects/issue2print_94.html.
- Shomrakova, I. A. "Evgenii Aleksandrovich Liatskii—izdatel' russkogo zarubesh'ia (po arkhivnym materialam)." *Kniga. Issledovaniia i materialy. Sbornik* 80 (2002): 346–64. Mo: Izd. "Nauka".
- Smolin, A. V. "Russkoe diplomaticheskoe predstavitel'stvo v Shvetsii i belie pravitel'stva Rossii." In: *Sankt-Peterburg i strany Severnoi Evropy. (Materialy sedmoi ezhegodnoi nauchnoi konferentsii, 13–14 aprelia 2005)*, 1–6 (reprint pagination). (ed.) V. N. Baryshnikova. St. Petersburg, 2006. Web source: <http://www.history.pu.ru/biblioth/novhist/mono/spb2006/004.htm>.

Vorovskii, Vatslav Vatslavovich. *V mire merzosti zapusteniia. Russkaia belogvardeiskaia liga ubiits v Stokgol'me*, 32 pp. Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo, 1919. (Only pp. 12–13, 16–17, 22–23, 32 seen).

Wittich, Claus. "Konstantin Nikolaevich Gul'kevich—Biograficheskie zametki." in: *Nansenovskie chteniia 2007* (Sbornik Konferentsii, SPg 23–25 Oktiabria 2007), 107–36. Sankt-Peterburg: Izd. 'Sudarynia', 2008.

About the Author

Claus Wittich, retired Dpty. Dir. of Economic Analysis at the UN Economic Commission for Europe (Geneva), research on the centrally planned economies (eastern Europe and the Soviet Union). His recent work concerns academic relations between Germany and Russia in the early 20th century (M. Weber, G.F. Knapp, L. v. Bortkiewicz, their students and friends, E.E. Slutskii, A.A. Chuprov, W.W. Leontief). His email address is claus.wittich.dc.58@aya.yale.edu.