Frank Golder in

REVOLUTIONARY RUSSIA

As Ralph Lutz became the pioneer in collecting twentieth-century documentation in Europe, Frank Golder did the same in Russia, solidifying Hoover's holdings on the period, which are unmatched outside their homeland.

Frank Golder received his PhD in history from Harvard in 1909. He taught at Boston University, the University of Chicago, and Washington State College, where he remained until 1920, interrupting his teaching with long research trips to Russia in 1914 and 1917. In the summer of 1920, Golder was teaching at Stanford when, thanks to Ralph Lutz, he was offered (and accepted) a curatorship at the Hoover War Collection. In 1921 he was appointed as an associate professor; in 1924 he was promoted to professor of Russian history and became a director of the Hoover Library, along with Lutz and E. D. Adams.

During his decade-long association with Stanford and the Hoover Library, Golder made three trips to Russia, substantially increasing the library's holdings. Through his diaries and correspondence, Golder gives us a vivid account of the turmoil and change that brought down the Romanov dynasty and heralded the emergence of the Soviet Union. Golder was thus in the right place at the right time to witness some momentous events in modern history: he was in St. Petersburg in 1914 when Russia entered World War I, in Petrograd in 1917 during the February Revolution that toppled the monarchy, in Russia from 1921 to 1923 as a representative of the ARA aiding in famine relief, and again, in 1925 and 1927, during Stalin's rise to power.

In August 1920, in advance of his lengthiest stay in Russia (1921–23), Golder traveled to Eastern Europe to acquire materials relating to Russia as well as its former provinces. Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Finland, Ukraine, and Poland. Golder also went to the Caucasus, visiting several countries there before they were conquered by the Soviet Union. His greatest collecting successes, however, were achieved when he was a representative of the ARA between late 1921 and mid-1923, at which time agreements between the ARA and the Russian government allowed the relief organization managed by Herbert Hoover access to the country to aid millions of starving Russians. At its height in 1922, the ARA was feeding eleven million people daily with a staff of 250 foreigners and 120,000 domestic volunteers. When not investigating famine conditions for the ARA, Golder worked to acquire roughly 25,000 books and more than 60,000 pamphlets, government documents, periodicals, and newspapers. That volume of acquisitions was partly a result of their low prices; printed matter, largely from a bygone era, held little value in a ravaged land. Of great help in this endeavor was Golder's friend Anatolii Lunacharskii, an acquaintance from his student days in Russia who was then the Soviet people's commissar for education. Another invaluable contact was the historian Mikhail Pokrovskii, the deputy people's commissar of enlightenment, who helped Golder collect many government publications and complete runs of a number of periodicals and newspapers.

Golder's humble and reserved demeanor helped him establish friendships, both before and after the revolution, across a broad range of Russian society, giving him unprecedented access to materials documenting contemporary events in Russia. His untimely death from cancer in 1928 was a huge blow to the Hoover Library, in particular to his close friend Ralph Lutz. Despite his early demise, Golder's legacy lives on in the richness of the Russian collections of the Hoover Institution.