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**Society for the Study of Labour History Research Bursary**  
**Research Trip Report: The Hoover Institution Archives, November 2016**

My research focuses on transnational networks established by Russian revolutionaries who promoted terrorism in emigration between 1881 and 1915, looking at how they represented themselves in relation to contemporary debates about socialism, anarchism and terrorism abroad in their publications aimed at both English- and Russian-speaking audiences. Émigré communities played an important role in the Russian revolutionary movement from the second half of the nineteenth century up to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, whereupon many émigrés who had returned to Russia emigrated once more to escape persecution under the new regime. In Britain, left-wing sympathisers played an important role in Russian revolutionaries' campaigns against the tsarist government, providing financial support for propaganda work, publicly declaring solidarity with Russians suffering persecution on political or religious grounds, and raising funds in response to famine in Russia. Two organisations, the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom and the Russian Free Press Fund, were established in London in 1890 by the émigré Russian terrorist and journalist Sergei Stepniak and his friend and colleague Felix Volkhovskii. The Fund's members were Russian revolutionary émigrés, whereas the Society's were foreign sympathisers. The Society had branches across Britain and internationally and there was also a partner American Society in the 1890s.

Funding from the Society for the Study of Labour History enabled me to spend two weeks at the Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford University, where I looked at letters and other documents in the Felix Volkhovskii, Egor Lazarev, and Boris Nicolaevsky collections. I focused on Volkhovskii's role in directing the Fund's activities, particularly in smuggling revolutionary literature into Russia, and what the Fund did after Stepniak's death in 1895. These aspects of the Fund's activities have been neglected but provide an insight into the Russian revolutionary émigrés' priorities and how material originally written for British and American audiences was translated and transmitted to Russia for propaganda purposes.



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Volkhovskii's personal archive revealed that smuggling revolutionary pamphlets and newspapers into Russia became one of the Fund's priorities over the course of the 1890s. The number of the Fund's publications in English reduced over the course of this decade. Sympathisers across Europe assisted the Fund to secretly send this material into Russia, often via Scandinavia. However, letters in the Hoover's collections show that British labour activists also assisted with these efforts, including the Newcastle trade unionist Joseph Bell (later a Labour Party MP) who in 1897 sent parcels of pamphlets to Russia under the auspices of his role as Corresponding Secretary of the National Amalgamated Union of Labour (J.N. Bell to F.V. Volkhovskii, 11 October 1897, Felix Vladimirovich Volkhovskii Papers, Box 10, Folder 5, Hoover Institution Archives). Other letters to Volkhovskii show that members of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, such as the Honorary Secretary Gertrude L. Mallet, also saw members of trade unions and the Independent Labour Party as potential subscribers to their newspaper *Free Russia* and donors to their various campaigns, and attended meetings in order to try to encourage new supporters.

Examples of some of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom's more ephemeral publications, such as annual reports, have only rarely survived, but among the Hoover's collections there are several examples. One pamphlet in the Boris Nicolaevsky collection reveals that some of the Society's efforts to find new sources of income were particularly unsuccessful. Sales of peasant handicrafts were advertised in *Free Russia*, but the pamphlet reveals that sales of such items before Christmas in December 1899 in Oxford and London brought in only £50 for the general funds of the Society, the majority of which were spent on *Free Russia* (The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom, 'The Cause of Russian Freedom in Russia and in England', Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection, Box 753, Folder 3, Hoover Institution Archives). The Society always struggled to fund the publication of *Free Russia*, which appeared less regularly as time passed, and documents such as this pamphlet revealed more about the financial difficulties that led to this.

In the Hoover's collections I also looked at how the Russian Free Press Fund's networks were used to print and distribute materials for the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party and Volkhovskii's support for revolutionary terrorism. Letters from various Socialist Revolutionaries revealed more about Volkhovskii's relationships with party leaders, however, of particular interest were several letters from the Socialist Revolutionary terrorist Boris Savinkov, in which Savinkov accused members of the Central Committee of 'hairsplitting' on the issue of whether the use of terrorism could be justified (B. Savinkov

to F.V. Volkhovskii, 27 April 1912, Felix Vladimirovich Volkhovskii Papers, Box 3, Folder 9, Hoover Institution Archives). In the draft of his response, Volkhovskii wrote that, in answer to Savinkov's request, he felt unable to protest about the Central Committee's opposition to terrorism, as they were likely to reject any individual's opinions on the matter (Draft letter by Felix Volkhovskii, No Date, Felix Vladimirovich Volkhovskii Papers, Box 3, Folder 9, Hoover Institution Archives). These letters suggest that Savinkov felt that Volkhovskii's opinions on terrorism would influence the Central Committee, showing that members of the Russian Free Press Fund continued to be seen as voices of authority on moral and ethical issues of Russian revolutionary terrorism.

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