
NEWS OF THE PROFESSION

HAROLD HENRY FISHER, 1890–1975

Reflecting briefly upon the life of a scholar who clearly advanced the cause of Slavic Studies, one can recall only some of his achievements and contributions. Harold Fisher's pioneering efforts to promote interest in Eastern Europe and to provide scholars with useful materials for research were indefatigable and involved so many different activities that placing him in any one professional category is difficult. Teacher, journalist, government official, archivist, editor, and historian were among the roles he filled at different stages of a long career.

Harold Fisher was a native of Vermont and a graduate of the University of Vermont. He briefly attended Dartmouth College and Columbia University and in 1935 received an honorary doctorate from Vermont. His teaching career began in New England before World War I and ended on the Pacific Coast in 1960. Most of his teaching was performed at Stanford University as a professor of history.

It was Fisher's long association with the Hoover Institution at Stanford and his publications that brought him international stature. As an army officer in Europe during World War I and as postwar chief of the historical department of the American Relief Administration, he early recognized the extraordinary opportunities afforded by the war to gather data of outstanding historical interest. With the encouragement of Herbert Hoover, he initiated a large scale plan to amass documentary materials on tsarist and Bolshevik Russia which became the nucleus of the future Hoover collection on war, revolution and peace. While Russian history was his main interest, other fields proved attractive and in later years he expanded the Hoover collection to include rich holdings on Asian countries. His association with the Hoover Institution involved a succession of offices ending in his chairmanship of the Advisory Board. While engaged in administrative duties he also authored, edited, and compiled an impressive list of books dealing with developments and personalities of the early years of Soviet Russia. Among his last works was a book of critical essays, *American Research on Russia* (1959) which reviewed American scholarship on Russia since World War II.

Harold Fisher's influence extended beyond the academic community. During World War II he conducted a training school for naval officers and in 1945 served as a U.S. advisor at the United Nations Organizing Conference in San Francisco. During the "McCarthy years" of the early 1950s he espoused the right of scholars to pursue historical truth without harassment and took public issue with the "Red Scare" sweeping the nation. In short, Harold Fisher's concern for scholarship and helpful service was varied and unwavering. Because of his foresight and skills in developing the Hoover Institution, his numerous publications, and his humane qualities—patience, generosity, and integrity, he remains "a shining light."

BICKFORD O'BRIEN
University of California, Davis