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Robert F. Byrnes. *V.O. Kliuchevskii: Historian of Russia.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995. xxi + 301 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-32940-0.

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The late Robert F. Byrnes was the foremost authority on Russian conservative intellectual history of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. His study of Vasilii O. Kliuchevskii, who set the pattern for the study of Russian history, is in part a traditional biography and in part a monograph on the state of Russian history at the turn of the last century.

Kliuchevskii was born the son of a village priest near the provincial town of Penza. In tsarist Russia, the priesthood was a lowly regarded and largely hereditary profession. Kliuchevskii was able to escape that fate in spite of his education in a seminary because Russia had too many priests. His intellectual ability allowed him to enroll in Moscow University, where he became a student of Sergei M. Soloviev.

While at the University, Kliuchevskii was beset by the money worries that often plagued students from poor families then and now. He arrived in Moscow as a country bumpkin in the heady years of the great reforms of Alexander II. He was not a student rebel. When a demonstration took place over a rise in tuition, Kliuchevskii considered joining, but came to the conclusion that he was a conservative. He remained basically a conservative for the rest of his life.

As Kliuchevskii's student career advanced, he found a number of opportunities to teach in the Russian system–for example the Third Aleksandrovskoe Military School, the Moscow Ecclesiastical Academy, and the Women's Higher Courses. During those years, he was well published but was quite slow in completing his education. Soloviev arranged for him to get a job at Dorpat University, but Kliuchevskii turned it down, a fact which led to some estrangement between mentor and student.

Kliuchevskii seemed to have little hope of a University position in Moscow. The only professor of Russian history in the city was Soloviev, and he was still a comparatively young man. When the mentor died suddenly of cancer, Kliuchevskii was the surprise choice to replace him. He was to teach for the rest of his career at Moscow University while retaining his positions at several other schools.

Much of Kliuchevskii's influence came from his teaching. He was a brilliant lecturer who could inspire his students and drew a huge audience to the largest lecture hall at the school. Many students from other faculties audited his courses, and Russian statesmen often sat in on his lectures when they were in Moscow. He knew the type of student he would be facing at each of the institutions where he was employed and tailored his lectures to meet their interests and their needs. Feeling that part of his job was to inform the people about their past, he made use of frequent opportunities to give public addresses. The students who worked closely with him constituted the bulk of Russian historians, both Soviet and emigree, in the years before the Second World War.

Byrnes' Kliuchevskii is in many ways a remarkably provincial man. He came from Penza to Moscow and stayed there. He went to St. Petersburg on only a few occasions; he never went to Kiev although he emphasized that that city was the original base of the Russian state. He never traveled in Europe, although he taught courses in European history. Byrnes says that his European course was filled with errors, but Kliuchevskii showed no interest in learning more about European history or trying to correct his misconceptions. His only regular journeys out of Moscow came in the summers, which he often spent at the *dachas* of friends. He never bought a *dacha* for himself although he became a rich man by the Russian standards of the early twentieth century.

Kliuchevskii's provincialism was not confined to a lack of travel. He had little interest in the minorities of the Russian Empire. He considered the White Russians and the Ukrainians (whom he called Little Russians) to be Russians. He had friends and students from among both groups, but he never considered their nationalism as valid. They were simply a part of the Russian people who made up the core of the Empire. He had little con-

cern for the numerous non-Russian minorities that Russia absorbed as she expanded from her Muscovite base. It was their fate to be Russian-ized and absorbed into the Russian people.

Byrnes describes Kliuchevskii as a "nation builder." He wanted to absorb the people already within the state rather than to expand it. A major theme of *The Course of Russian History* is the gathering of the Russian people into one nation. This idea of the regathering led him to ignore those peoples who can not be readily absorbed. Kliuchevskii saw all Slavs, except for the Poles, as components of that Russian nation. Yet he was not swept up in the Pan-Slav madness that infected much of Russian society in the 1870's. His life's work, to build a Russian nation, was basically a failure. The Empire could be held together when there was a forceful power at its center. If that power were to falter, the Empire would divide into its various groupings, as the events after 1917 and 1989 have proved.

Nor was Kliuchevskii any less narrow in his interests in contemporary Moscow. His friends were fellow professors, students, and a relatively small contingent of people outside the academic profession. He took little part in faculty governance and refused most offers to serve in the political arena. He knew few factory owners and was hardly aware of the massive changes taking place in the Russian economy. His tenure at Moscow University coincided with the industrial revolution, and he lived near the factory district, but he took little notice of the immense changes occurring there. Likewise, his acquaintances included none of the newly emerging proletariat which was to have such a great effect on Russia's future.

The element that makes Byrnes' Kliuchevskii a figure worthy of study is his interest in the people. Kliuchevskii was not the first to see the people as a force in history, but he was the first to write a history applying Michelet's ideas to Russia. His overwhelmingly popular lectures, his training of young historians, and his writings have combined to make Russian history a largely social history. In this area, his influence lingers on more than in any other, on both sides of the Atlantic. While Kliuchevskii was quite conservative in his point of view, he allowed his students freedom of thought. A number became revolutionaries. Among Kliuchevskii's more famous students were such diverse figures as Mikhail Pokrovskii, Pavel Miliukov, and Michael Karpovich. Byrnes argues that Kliuchevskii's emphasis on social history predisposed some of his students to take service under the Soviets and to follow the dictates of the Marxist analysis.

Kliuchevskii's master's thesis on Ancient Russian Saints' Lives as an Historical Source was published in 1871 and received great praise. He also wrote extensively on the views of Western visitors to Russia through the eighteenth century. He regarded Russia as a part of Europe, not Asia. In spite of his emphasis on nation building, Byrnes concludes that Kliuchevskii was a Westernizer. Russia needed to borrow from the West in order to advance.

Byrnes devotes much attention to Kliuchevskii's book, *The Boyar Council*, which was published in the 1880's. This work defends the autocracy in Russia and sees its subject not as a parliament but as an advisory body to the tsar. Like much of Kliuchevskii's work, this is a study that covers a long period of history, tracing an institution from the rise of Muscovy to the early modern period.

The Course of Russian History is Kliuchevskii's best known work in the West. Its five volumes follow closely the lectures that Kliuchevskii gave at the various institutions with which he was associated. In fact, the last volume was compiled from lithographs of his lecture notes after his death. Byrnes has assiduously studied not only these works but the lithographs of various lectures that Kliuchevskii delivered. While the style of the books is much more polished, the consistency between the lectures and the written work is striking.

In spite of Kliuchevskii's religious background and his continual attendance at Orthodox services, the church plays a very small role in the development of Russia. Some attention is paid to the schism which Kliuchevskii felt left the church weakened both spiritually and morally. Kliuchevskii felt that the autocracy was a necessity for Russia. A state developed the institutions necessary for its climate and its people. Russia's harsh climate demanded a strong government, which the autocracy provided. Individual autocrats may have made serious mistakes. Kliuchevskii pointed them out in a manner and with a style that did not irritate the sensitive tsarist censors. Some thought that he defended the autocracy only as a state employee concerned about keeping his position, but Byrnes concludes that this was not the case. Kliuchevskii was convinced that the climate of Russia dictated such institutions.

Kliuchevskii usually shied away from politics, both national and University. In 1905, he was brought to St. Petersburg to help draft Nicholas II's *August Manifesto* which would have created a consultive duma. When this attempt at reform failed, he withdrew from politics and watched the events of the rest of the year, for the most

part with dismay. A dispute with the rector of Moscow University offended him and caused him to begin to retire from his academic positions, a process which took five years. He died in 1911, well before the collapse of his beloved Russian Empire.

Byrnes' book is thoroughly researched and extremely readable. While perhaps not of much interest for undergraduates, it belongs in the library of every university that has a graduate program in history or in the Russian language.

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