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## RUSSIAN HISTORY AND EUROPEAN IDEAS: THE HISTORICAL VISION OF VASILII KLIUCHEVSKII\*

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To the general public, Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii (1841-1911) is above all known for his *Course in Russian History* (*Kurs russkoi istorii*), which he began reading at the University of Moscow in the 1880s and which was published for the first time two decades later.<sup>1</sup> Since then, his history of Russia has been republished several times; in the late 1980s, a new nine-volume edition of his works even became a best-seller. Kliuchevskii has had tremendous impact on Russian historical self-awareness. His skills as a historian, his appealing schemes and his eloquent style are all factors that have contributed to his canonical position. As the Russian émigré historian Georgii Fedotov (1886-1951) wrote in 1932, Kliuchevskii's history "is not just one among many – it is *the* Russian History on which two generations of Russians have been brought up. Specialists may have voiced their objections, but whenever any of us think of historical Russia, what comes to mind is the Russia Kliuchevskii visualized" (Fedotov 1986: 204).

Kliuchevskii's idea of Russia also involves an idea of Europe. According to Charles Halperin, "even when Kliuchevskii emphasized the distinctiveness of Russian historical evolution compared to West-European, West-European history remained the standard by which the past of Russia – or anywhere else – would be judged" (Halperin 2000: 404). It is not difficult to find quotations from his history that testify to this tendency; a typical formulation of Kliuchevskii is "let us now have a look at Moscow's location in relationship to the *other* European states [at the end of the sixteenth century, KJM]" (2: 397, italics added).<sup>2</sup> His numerous comparisons, by implication, do not primarily aim to maintain an antithetic relationship; rather, they implicitly inform the readers that Russia forms a part of Europe.

There is not one people in Europe that is capable of such intensive work for a short period as the Great Russian is, but nowhere in Europe, apparently, would you also find a person that is so unaccustomed to regular, moderate and measured, continual work as in Great Russia (1: 314).

It has been argued that this way of comparing Russia to Europe has been highly characteristic of Russian identity discourses, to which historians too have contributed in their works on Russian history. In modern Russia, more specifically, the "idea of Europe" or the "West" has been "the 'other' in relation to which the idea of Russia is defined" (Neumann 1996: 1) or even "the main constituent other, against which [educated Russians] tried to construct a new Russian identity" (Tolz 2001: 1). From the 1840s onwards, both Slavophiles and Westernisers, to mention the most famous example, evaluated Russia in relation to or against an idea of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

However widespread it may seem to have been in Russian intellectual history, the comparison of Russia with the West is still not inevitable. According to Vera Tolz, "these constant attempts to compare and contrast Russia and the West provided a powerful creative stimulus for Russian cultural figures, but proved dysfunctional as a tool of political analysis of Russia's development" (Tolz 2001: 1). And while a notion of Europe is clearly present in Kliuchevskii's history of Russia, his main project is not to measure Russia against Europe but rather to represent Russian history as unique and possessing its own logic. In contrast to the two principal positions among Russian intellectuals of the mid-nineteenth century, Kliuchevskii's Russia is neither the Slavophile antithesis to Western Europe nor a belated version of Europe, as most Westernisers would have it. Kliuchevskii conceptualises Russia differently, as I intend to show. But precisely because he shied away from the traditional positions, he was able to reformulate the problem of Russia and Europe in a new and compelling way. It seems to be Kliuchevskii's view that Russia becomes European not through an adaptation but through a rejection of Eurocentric and hegemonic models of historical development.

*Progress and Retardation*

While situated on the fringes of Europe geographically, Russia is, Kliuchevskii maintains early in his course, connected with Europe culturally.

Historically, Russia is of course not Asia, but geographically it is not entirely Europe either. It is an intermediary land (*perekhodnaia strana*), the mediator (*posrednitsa*) between two worlds. Culture has inseparably linked it to Europe, but nature has contributed with features and influences that always attracted Russia to Asia, or Asia to Russia (1: 47).

Kliuchevskii does not make explicit exactly which cultural aspects have tied Russia to Western Europe. One would expect religion to be a factor worth mentioning here; but as Fedotov (1986) has observed, there is a conspicuous omission of Orthodoxy in Kliuchevskii's history, which in turn might suggest that there are other European connections in Russian history which were at least equally important to him but which are not elaborated. What the European character of Russian history consists of must therefore be sought in the way in which his narrative unfolds.

In claiming that Russia is part of Europe, Kliuchevskii remains in agreement with many previous professional Russian historians of the nineteenth century, most of whom were Westernisers. The term refers to a heterogeneous group of thinkers (not only historians) who in one way or another claimed that Russia was part of Europe, or at least that it would or should become part of Europe. Politically, the Westernisers comprised Hegelians, liberals and utopian socialists, and to most of them Western Europe represented a model for Russian development (Offord 1985: 1-43). Variations of this view were formulated in response to the Slavophiles, who claimed that Russia formed a civilisation different from that of Western Europe above all because of its deep roots in Orthodox Christianity. Between Eastern and Western Christianity, the Slavophiles believed, there was not only an abyss; Western Christianity even represented an apostasy. Hence they saw Russian culture as fundamentally different from – as well as superior to – European culture. Differences mattered more to them than similarities.

In contrast, Russian thinkers oriented towards the West held that Russia would develop along the same lines as the West-European countries, i.e. that it would go through the same historical phases. A well-known Westerniser of the 1840s was the literary critic Vissarion Belinskii (1811-1848), who in a seminal article of 1842, "Russia before Peter the Great" (Belinskii 1954: 91-152), celebrated the opening up of Russia to Western impact through the reforms of Peter the Great in the early eighteenth century. According to Belinskii, this event represented the transition from the level of "people" (*narod*) to "nation" (*natsiia*). To Belinskii, "nation" represented a more complex formation than "people," and as to what separated the two he paid particular attention to the introduction of a modern nobility (*dvorianstvo*).<sup>4</sup> Equally important, however, was the "historical process" that this shift itself had inaugurated, whereby Russia came to abandon its "Asianness" and become European.

Similarly, the professional Russian historians of this age too operated in their writings with a universal unilinear scheme for historical development, a notion of world history common to all "historical nations," which they subsequently tried to adapt to Russian history. The most obvious example is Sergei Solov'ev (1820-1879), who was Kliuchevskii's teacher and the most influential Russian historian of the mid-nineteenth century, thanks not least to his twenty-nine volume *History of Russia from the Earliest Times*, which he began publishing in 1851. Defining the historical discipline as the study of national self-awareness, Solov'ev described Russian history as a variation of a threefold universal pattern, which he deliberately adapted from Hegel and the French historian of civilisations François Guizot. According to Solov'ev, the primary stage is made up of the clan (*rod*) and clan life (*rodovoi byt*), and is in turn succeeded by the emergence of a militia (*druzhina*), which challenges the dominance of the clan. The third phase is the creation of a state or "a state principle" (*pravitel'stvennoe nachalo*) (Siljak 1999: 224ff). According to Solov'ev, Russian history begins with the passing from the first stage to the next. On the first page of his history we read that "Russian history begins with the situation that some tribes, unable to find the way out of the isolated clan life, invite the princes of foreign clan, invite a unified common rule that unites the clans in a whole, provides them with order [...]" (Solov'ev 1959-1966, 1: 55).

Solov'ev was a prominent representative of what is often labelled the "state school" of Russian historiography, whose interest was centred on the gradual emergence of the Russian state (Hamburg 1999). And he held that the "invitation" of a foreign clan referred to above initiated this process. His history is founded on a firm belief in progress, which was coupled with the fundamental conviction that Russia was

an integral part of Europe, of Christian Western civilisation (Siljak 1999; Bassin 1993: 482f).

In historiography, the nineteenth century was the age of historicism. In contrast to the didactic interpretation characteristic of Enlightenment historiography, a historicist representation of the past, according to Friedrich Meinecke's classic definition, implied an emphasis on individuality and development, i.e. on faculties projected from human beings onto collectives (states, nations, cultures).<sup>5</sup> Edward Thaden has suggested that the state school of Solov'ev and others represents the Russian equivalent of West-European historicism (Thaden 1999). In Russia, however, where most historians believed in the existence of a common universal history of progress, development became a more fundamental category than individuality. In Terence Emmons's precise observation:

In Russia, the classic Enlightenment belief that the story of mankind has a single plot, and that men are everywhere basically the same, survived the challenge of Romanticism in the second quarter of the nineteenth century intact and was still something like an article of faith among professional historians of the late nineteenth century. For the Westernizing intelligentsia as a whole, liberal and radical, reformist and revolutionary, the belief in progress and Russia's European destiny, their rejection of the idea of Russian "exceptionalism," depended on an idea of universal history (Emmons 2003: 98).

Another Westerniser, Konstantin Kavelin (1818-1885), characteristically insisted that the presence of development in its history was the main factor that distinguished Russia from the cultures of the East (Asia) and brought it closer to Europe. Just as Belinskii saw development itself as a token of Europeanness, defined by its *dynamic* nature (Belinskii 1954: 105), so did Kavelin. As he wrote in his 1847 study on the "Juridical Life of Ancient Russia," "we are a European people, capable of perfection, of development; we do not like to repeat ourselves or to stand on the same spot for an endless number of centuries" (Kavelin 1989: 13).

At the same time, most Westernisers shared a belief that Russia had developed at a slower pace than the remaining civilised world. The shift from "people" to "nation," Belinskii insinuated, had taken place relatively late in Russia. The same held true for the emergence of a Russian state, according to Solov'ev's history. So the differences that clearly existed between Russia and Europe were a result of a *retardation* of the universal historical process on Russian soil. Russia had been held back at a preliminary stage. And the main task for historians became to explain this alleged backwardness.

I would like to suggest, however, that Kliuchevskii's approach to Russian history represents an alternative to this view. He reformulated the relationship of Russia to Europe by suggesting that Russia was European because of their common cultural origin, not their common historical goal. To Kliuchevskii, the universal historical process, of which Russia is part, is one of a gradual diversification.<sup>6</sup> Hence the primary purpose of Russia has not been to imitate the West. In his narrative of Russian history, Kliuchevskii abandons, by implication, the model of unilinear progress and retardation developed by his teacher Solov'ev. Instead, his historiography emerges as more in keeping with both historicist principles – development and individuality – as foreshadowed in the second lecture of his course:

And if you are able to acquire from my presentation, however full of deficiencies, if only the most general features of the image of the Russian people (*obraz russkogo naroda*) as a historical personality (*istoricheskaia lichnost'*), I will consider the purpose of my course achieved (1: 41).

A people's "personality," Kliuchevskii continues, is the main theme (*osnovnoi predmet*) when studying its history. And in keeping with the human metaphor, he goes on to claim that a people with a personality, such as the Russian, has a calling (*prizvanie*) of accomplishing a set of tasks emerging from its capabilities. Kliuchevskii's historical thinking is permeated by the romantic idea going back at least to Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803) of peoples and nations being individuals, and that peoples possess properties belonging to human beings.

By conceiving of the history of the Russian people in terms of a human personality, Kliuchevskii opens up for individualising the historical development to a greater extent than his predecessors. Despite the tendency in much late nineteenth-century historiography to appeal to models of biological processes in nature in particular in order to assert its scientific character, the past as it appears here, as argued by Narve Fulsås, is above all a scene of *dramatic reversals*: the rise and decline, strength and weakness, perfection

and failure of nations, states, or cultures – i.e. a development typical of dramas and narratives about human fate (Fulsås 1999: 135ff). By the same token, Kliuchevskii's history is ultimately the dramatic history of the Russian people (*russkii narod*), of its growth, withering, and possible future recovery.

### *The Russian People and the Russian Land*

One of Kliuchevskii's most famous statements about Russian history is given early in the second lecture of his *Course*: "The history of Russia is the history of a land that colonises itself (*kolonizuetsia*)" (1: 31).<sup>7</sup> The formulation was not invented by Kliuchevskii; it was his teacher Solov'ev who first argued that "ancient Russian history is the history of a land that colonises itself" (Solov'ev 1959-1966, 2: 648). But what may this notion of "self-colonisation" have meant?

As it appears in Solov'ev's history, the phrase corresponds to his environmentalism. As Mark Bassin has shown, there is a striking parallel between Solov'ev's vision of Russian history and Frederick Jackson Turner's "frontier hypothesis" about American colonisation. In a famous lecture read in 1893, Turner declared that "the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the resulting advance of American settlement, westward, explain American development" (cited in Bassin 1993: 481). In the writings of Turner and Solov'ev,

The United States and Russia both represented the product of European expansion into geographical realms that either were not European, in the case of the former, or were only dubiously so, in the case of Russia. [...] The two characterized and evaluated their own native society and culture precisely in terms of divergences from what they saw as the "model" of the European Old World (Bassin 1993: 485).

In the case of Solov'ev, and in contrast to Turner, however, the "Russian frontier" assumed a highly ambiguous role. Solov'ev described Russia's natural milieu as an "evil stepmother" (*machekha*) that was assumed to have had a negative impact on its historical progress. The open and sparsely populated spaces of the East-European plain, the "existence of free land" (Turner), represented to Solov'ev first and foremost unfavourable conditions. By implication, the colonisation process turned out to have *retarded* the development and temporarily separated Russia from the West, since it had forced the population of early Russia to continually migrate and thus remain on a quasi-sedentary, half-nomadic level for longer periods than the West-European peoples (Bassin 1993: 502f).

Since Kliuchevskii in general avoids universal schemes as interpretative tools in his historiography,<sup>8</sup> colonisation also assumes a function different from that which it had in Solov'ev. Colonisation to him was not the process in which Russia both adapted to and deviated from universal schemes. Rather than relating it to the development of the Russian state, he sees colonisation as the fundamental vehicle of early Russian history that has testified to the unique character or "personality" of the Russian people.

Kliuchevskii's history of Russian colonisation is not what we today would think of as Russia's colonial, i.e. imperial, history, which began with the eastward expansion into non-Slavic territories in the 1550s, and which was rapidly followed by the conquest of Siberia in the early seventeenth century. These events do not belong to Kliuchevskii's history of Russian colonisation, and are mainly referred to instead as "conquest" (*zavoevanie*). Few periods in Kliuchevskii's course are described in such detail as the reign of Ivan the Terrible, when this eastward expansion began. However, the Muscovite conquest of the East is only mentioned in passing, and plays in general a marginal role in Kliuchevskii's history; his main interest lies instead in the continual East Slavic resettlement on the East-European plain, in "European Russia," which had been the enterprise of the Russian people in previous epochs. In contrast, Azov and the Baltic areas under Peter the Great, Crimea under Catherine the Great and the Caucasus and Central Asia in the nineteenth century were all *conquered* by the state.<sup>9</sup>

Kliuchevskii's history of Russia, by implication, is not imperial history but national history. He clearly downplays its imperial character by exploring the Russian national core as distinguished from the non-Russian peripheries, thereby drawing implicitly the line between national and imperial spaces. Kliuchevskii might be accused of having ignored the multi-ethnic character of the Russian empire; but the essential point here, in my view, is that he is not interested in Russia as an empire with colonies, such as Siberia. His main project is instead to imagine a "Russian land" and its history, i.e. to appropriate a certain part of the empire as Russian national territory.

Notions of an "interior Russia", "native Russia" or "central Russia" became widespread in the Russian public of the nineteenth century, in particular among liberal nationalists (Miller 2005; Gorizontov

2008). We should note, however, that Kliuchevskii achieves his national history by means of the imperial distinction between centre and periphery, i.e. the distinction put forward in the early eighteenth century in the aftermath of the proclamation of the Russian empire, when the Urals was symbolically defined as the border between Europe and Asia, between European and Asian Russia, and thus between metropolis and colony of the empire. Kliuchevskii's history of the Russian *nation* takes place in this European centre. In other words, he creates a national history of Russia on the basis of the imperial imaginary geography of Russia as European.

Hence Kliuchevskii's concept of colonisation is confined to the "Russian land" (*rusaskaia zemlia*), i.e. the land that is assumed to have been "colonised" by the Russian people, in contrast to the land conquered by the Russian state later. Kliuchevskii's concept of colonisation is far more positive than that of Solov'ev; it comes, in fact, closer to Turner's concept of the frontier as an area of continual expansion – also because it is seen as part of European expansion. As an example, we may quote Kliuchevskii's summary of Early Russian relationship to the Asiatic, nomadic neighbours in the southeast:

Russia's (*Rus'*) nearly two-hundred years of struggle with the Polovtsians is significant to European history. At the same time as West-European crusaders undertook an offensive struggle in the Asian East, and a similar campaign against the Moors began on the Pyrenean peninsula, Russia covered the left flank of the European offensive through its struggle on the steppes (1: 281f).

The scene of Russian colonisation is the East-European plain (*ravnina*), frequently also referred to as the "Russian plain" and even "our plain" (*nasha ravnina*). Tolz (2001: 159) has suggested that Kliuchevskii sees Russia as having possessed a "manifest destiny" in colonising these areas. The "ancient issue (*staroe delo*) of territorial and national unification of the Russian land," Kliuchevskii writes in the opening of his 82nd lecture, is finally accomplished in the early nineteenth century: "The Russian state territory in Europe reaches its natural geographical borders – comprises the entire East-European plain and at some places even crosses its boundaries; the Russian people, correspondingly, is politically unified, with one single exception" (5: 186f).<sup>10</sup> Although geography is systematically and technically discussed in the initial lectures, it gradually assumes a symbolic character through this "Russification."

The concept of the "Russian land" might appear to be a translation of the East Slavic term *rusaskaia zemlia*, the "Land of the Rus," which occurs frequently in East Slavic medieval texts and refers primarily to areas ruled over by princes of the Rurik dynasty, which in the earliest texts was also named "Rus." However, Kliuchevskii's concept is not so much a translation as a modern reinterpretation, in which a medieval dynastic concept is reified as a nineteenth-century nationalist conception of Russia (Halperin 2000: 390, n. 24). To Kliuchevskii the Russian land is first and foremost the land of the Russian people. His concept is ethnic and geographical, not dynastic.

Ukraine ("Little Russia") is also part of Kliuchevskii's "Russian land," a claim that has contributed to the opinion that he represents the empire as a nation-state (Plochy 2008: 19). Indeed, Kliuchevskii did share the widespread view of his age that Ukraine (Kiev and Left-bank Ukraine) became "reunited" with the remaining part of Russia in the mid-seventeenth century. While his opinion of Ukraine may be called "imperial," however, this does not mean that he treats the entire empire in the same way. In contrast to the panslavist Nikolai Danilevskii, who in his famous book *Russia and Europe* of 1869 conceived of the entire empire as one "natural region" (*estestvennaia oblast'*, Danilevskii 1995: 19), the distinction between the Russian and non-Russian lands is if not explicitly pronounced then clearly felt through the way in which Kliuchevskii's narrative proceeds.<sup>11</sup>

### ***The Rise and Decline of Russian Nationhood***

Kliuchevskii's narrative of Russian history begins in the Carpathian Mountains (the seventh lecture), in the "common nest of the Slavs" (*obshcheshlavianskoe gnezdo*). After a "five-century long Slavic sojourn (*stoiianka*) in the Carpathians," some tribes departed to the south and the west, while Kliuchevskii follows the tribe which headed eastwards.

Our history begins with the entering of the Eastern branch of Slavdom, which later developed into the Russian people, onto the Russian plain from one of its corners, from the southwest, from the slopes of the Carpathian Mountains. [...] Conditioned by its historical life and the geographical factor the Slavic population spread out on the plain not gradually by means of a growing population, not by settling apart but

by resettling (*ne rasseliaias' a pereseliaias'*) – it was carried away like migrating birds (*perenosilos' ptich'imi pereletami*) from one district to another, leaving fertilised places behind and settling on new ones (1: 30f).

It is this event, and not the first state-like formation as in Solov'ev's history, which also took place far later, that marks the beginning of Russian history according to Kliuchevskii. This history begins with resettlement, with "colonisation." In his dynamic narrative, Kliuchevskii visualises this process by means of an imagery in which a halt (*stoianka, perestanovka*) is always followed by further resettlement (*rasselenie, pereselenie*). This resettlement is repeatedly described in terms of a "stream from" (*otliv*) or "stream into" (*priliv*). In the seventh and eighth centuries, he writes, the Eastern branch of the Slavs "gradually poured out towards (*malo-pomalu otlivala na*) the east and northeast" (1: 114) As we see in the above quotations, East Slavic resettlement is also conceptualised with help from similes of nests and birds.

This first settlement on the East-European plain also marks the opening of what Kliuchevskii distinguishes as the "first period" of Russian history, the "Dnepr period" of urban commerce. Of the towns that appeared on the banks of the Dnepr for commercial reasons, Kiev became the most important – in time it became the central principality of the Eastern Slavs, which in turn meant the "first Russian state" (1: 147). While the creation of this state-like formation may have been enforced by an immediate need for defending commercial centres such as Kiev, the fundamental, underlying cause for its emergence was still the resettlement of the Eastern Slavs. Thus we may see how Kliuchevskii's concept of Russian history differs from that of the state school representatives. While Solov'ev saw an overall continuity in the gradual evolution of state formations, Kliuchevskii focuses on the Russian people and their colonisation of the Russian land. For Kliuchevskii, colonisation *is* Russian history, not a factor obstructing it.

Furthermore, the Kievan principality did *not* evolve into a more complex state. In the mid-eleventh century, it disintegrated instead into several minor principalities. In addition, this process was paralleled with further Slavic migration to the northeast. These shifts mark the second period of Kliuchevskii's scheme. Here, agriculture replaces commerce as the most important economic factor. The disintegration of the Kievan principality was due to a complex hereditary system, according to which the land was subdivided by a ruler and bequeathed equally among his sons. According to Kliuchevskii, this system had two consequences:

It 1) ruined the political wholeness, the state unity of the Russian land (*gosudarstvennoe edinstvo Russkoi zemli*), with which, apparently, the first Russian princes were so successfully concerned, and it 2) contributed to the awakening in Russian society (*russkoe obshchestvo*) of a feeling for the unity of the land (*chuvstvo zemskogo edinstva*), to the birth of Russian nationhood (*russkaia narodnost'*). [...] The awakening in the entire society of the idea of the Russian land (*mysl' o Russkoi zemle*) as something complete, of the common land-related cause (*ob obshchem zemskom dele*) as an unavoidable, obligatory cause for each and everyone, all this made up the most fundamental, deepest fact of this period. [...] The historical epoch, in whose issues the entire people took part and through participation in which it experienced itself as one people by contributing to a common cause, has always expressed itself particularly deeply in the memory of the people. [...] The Russian land, which was mechanically coupled by the first Kievan princes from a manifold of ethnographic elements into one political whole, now began, while losing this political wholeness, for the first time to experience itself as a complete national or land-related configuration (*narodnyi ili zemskii sostav*) (1: 202ff).

In this idealised description, the main idea is that the *decline* of a centralised state formation makes possible the emergence of Russian nationhood (*russkaia narodnost'*), founded on a shared "feeling for a common land" (*obshchezemskoe chuvstvo*). Loss of political unity brings about an imaginary community and even a "civil society" (*grazhdanskoe obshchestvo*), as he terms it. "Of course, this fact cannot be proved by means of quotations from the historical sources, but it glimmers everywhere, in each expression of spirit or mood of the period" (1: 204).

While Kliuchevskii on the one hand breaks down Russian history into four different periods, i.e. emphasises diachronicity to an extent that results in synchronicity as to the individual periods (Ankersmit 1995, 153), he recreates on the other an overall coherence by means of a "narrative substance" (Ankersmit), in which the "principal mass of the Russian population (*glavnaia massa russkogo naseleniia*)" be-

comes the main agent of his narrative.<sup>12</sup> It is his idea of the Russian people and its continual resettlement on the Russian land that provides his history, while divided into separate periods that are isolated and treated as unique phases, with coherence.<sup>13</sup> Kliuchevskii creates a continuity in Russian history on the basis of an “imaginary migration of Russians from the area around Kiev to the northeast” (Ostrowski 2009: 73), i.e. by claiming that it was the *same* people that first lived in the Dnepr region – which was subsequently “emptied,” a commonplace among Russian nineteenth-century historians – and later settled in the Upper Volga region.

The Suzdal region, which in the early twelfth century was still a remote corner in the north-eastern part of the Russian land, is in the early thirteenth century a principality that resolutely rules over the remaining Rus. The political pivot has clearly moved from the banks of Middle Dnepr to the banks of Kliazma. This movement (*peredvizhenie*) was the result of the Russian forces streaming from (*otliv russkikh sil iz*) the banks of the Middle Dnepr to the Upper Volga region (1: 331f).

This quotation shows how Kliuchevskii conceives of colonisation as the major, shaping force of early Russian history, testifying to the free initiative of the people itself. The establishment of the new political centre is a consequence of migration; political formations are set up afterwards. “The appanage order itself [...] was one of the political results of the Russian colonisation of Upper Volga with help from the nature of the region (*pri uchastii prirody kraia*)” (1: 353).

In the third period, however, this relationship is gradually reversed. Having described Russian nationhood as the result of a dissolving political unity, Kliuchevskii proceeds to the rise and expansion of Moscow, i.e. the re-emergence of a new state.

In Moscow one felt that a great, long-standing project was accomplished, which mattered deeply to the inner structure of the life of the land (*zemskaia zhizn'*). [...] The Chronicles describe the great prince Vasili III as the last gatherer (*sobiratel'*) of Rus. [...] If you imagine the new borders of the Muscovite principality, the result of numerous territorial acquisitions, you will see that it incorporated an entire nation (*narodnost'*) (2: 113).

Kliuchevskii, by implication, would have disagreed with Ernest Gellner's well-known thesis that it is “nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round” (Gellner 1983, 55). To Kliuchevskii, the splitting up of “Russian land,” the nation, fosters Russian nationhood, a nationalist sentiment, which in turn makes possible a “striving for political unity on a popular basis (*na narodnom osnove*)” (2: 115). Only in the third period, then, does Russian nationhood become embodied in a Great Russian State.

The rise of Moscow was both inevitable and desirable; in Kliuchevskii's history, this “unification of Russia” is the expression, as suggested by Lawrence Langer, of the “historical *primum mobile*” (Langer 1986: 257). However, what initially appears to be a very positive as well as necessary process – a solid state ensuring a vulnerable nationhood – turns out to have an ambiguous character, not least for Russian nationhood itself. Kliuchevskii's description of the Muscovite period of Russian history is concentrated on the gradual disappearance of independent spheres of freedom as a process complementary to the centralisation of the state. The boyars lose power and influence; the peasants are “fastened to the land” (*prikreplenie krestian k zemle*) and the small, independent monasteries that once contributed in expanding the Russian land to the north are replaced by mighty monasteries loyal to the tsar. The colonisation by the Russian people yields to the consolidation of the Russian state, which subsequently begins to conquer non-Slavic areas.

The splitting up of the Russian land, a seemingly negative event, carries within itself a positive consequence: the emergence of nationhood. The subsequent “gathering of the Russian land,” in turn, led to the disappearance of both a pre-modern civil society and of free and unlimited migration by the Russian people – all factors that made Russian nationhood possible. The Russian people, which has so far been the dominant force in Russian history, is replaced by the state as its main agent and disappears from the scene. Colonisation is replaced by serfdom. This is the tragic logic of Kliuchevskii's history of Russia.

#### ***Restoring the Balance***

This process comes to a climax in the fourth period, the “All-Russian period” from the early seventeenth century onwards, in which huge territorial expansion and increasing productivity were “reversely proportional” to the evolution of the people's freedom and creativity.

The popular forces (*narodnye sily*) in their development fell behind the tasks that were raised before the state as the result of its rapid external growth; the spiritual work of the people could not keep up with the material activity of the state. The state grew fat (*pukhlo*) and the people grew lean (*khirel*) (3: 12).

The final stroke in this respect becomes the abolition of obligatory service for the nobility in 1762, an event that completely isolated it from its people, whom it was supposed to serve. The year of 1762 may be said to mark the end of Kliuchevskii's populist history.<sup>1</sup> In the 81st lecture, the Westerner Kliuchevskii describes the introduction of West-European norms, institutions, habits etc. with great suspicion and irony, and he sees the aristocratic culture of this new nobility as superficial and even pathological. This Europeanisation represented, according to Kliuchevskii, an anomaly in the course of Russian history in that it imposed Enlightenment thoughts and ideals that were alien to, as he consistently terms it in this context, "Eastern Europe," i.e. to nations that had not taken part in the feudal and Catholic traditions that formed the background for these imported ideas.

On this basis, Wolfgang Kissel has suggested that Kliuchevskii's history terminates in a satirical mode, a feature that makes it comparable to Jakob Burckhardt's works as Hayden White has interpreted them. I agree that there is much satire and irony towards the end of his history, but if I were to adopt White's framework, i.e. the fourfold genre typology of Northrop Frye, I would rather claim that the overall plot structure of his history is that of a tragedy, since it describes the development "from happiness to misery" (Aristotle) – seen from a populist point of view. In addition, Kliuchevskii's history encourages its addressees to *learn* from history, an invitation that is difficult to combine with a consistent satirical approach. Tragedy has a therapeutic purpose; it aims to "prepare men to assume responsibility for their own destinies by the construction of institutions and laws adequate to the cultivation of their noblest capacities" (White 1973: 204).

Such a practical purpose is fully compatible with the scientific programme for the study of history, Kliuchevskii maintains in his opening lectures. And it is in agreement with the general tendency in European nineteenth-century historicism. Although Leopold Ranke's oft-quoted "as it really was" (which was part of his critique of the didactic historiography of the Enlightenment) might indicate otherwise when read in isolation, the study of the past should indeed be related to the political and social tasks at present. The aim of history as understood at that time was to understand not only the past but also the present and even the future in order to serve a society's interests and need for orientation, as well as contributing to its identity formation (Jaeger & Rüsen 1992: 42). And the kind of historical identity that historicism above all maintained was national identity. "The compelling literary expression Kliuchevskii gave his insights helped to shape the "Russianness" of his compatriots; by bringing to life Russia's past he contributed to his readers' sense of historical identity" (Raeff 1986: 202).

In keeping with the imagery of the people as a "historical personality" with a particular calling, Kliuchevskii conceptualises the past as the educational process, the "historical education" (*istoricheskoe vospitanie*) of this people.

Only through a historical study is the course of this education supervised. The history of the people, rendered on the basis of research, becomes an account book, in which the deficiencies and excesses (*nedochety i perederzhki*) of its past are added up. The sincere task for the nearest future is to reduce the inflations and replenish the arrears, to restore the balance of national tasks and means (1: 42).

In the Russian past, the "lack of balance" consists above all in the emergent discrepancy between a mighty, successful state and its downtrodden people who have not been able to make use of its potential for the benefit of the Russian nation. As a result, the Russian people "still does not stand in the front line among the other European peoples" (1: 43).

What Russia lacks more specifically, Kliuchevskii suggests, is a well-developed *civil society*, a concept that for liberals in late Imperial Russia "exercised a strong symbolic influence independent of its practical realization" (Engelstein 2000: 25). This "dream of a civil society" is also shared by Kliuchevskii; his

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<sup>1</sup> The remaining five lectures on the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have, when compared to the preceding ones, a rather summarising character. The populist tendency in Kliuchevskii, i.e. that he was "deeply interested in and sympathetic to the life of the lower classes (the peasantry)", is discussed by Fedotov (1986: 207).

work is founded on the belief in history as being capable of fostering civic participation and social solidarity (Bohn 1997: 365; Wendland 2008: 417), all issues that had become urgent to the Russian intelligentsia after the abolition of serfdom in 1861. “Each of us ought to be at least a little historian, in order to become a consciously and honestly active citizen (*grazhdanin*)” (1: 44). This potential Russian historian-citizen is the main addressee of Kliuchevskii’s course, which draws the listeners’ and readers’ attention to the lost paths of history: the pre-modern civil society and its common feeling for a common land. By visualising an indigenous, alternative way Kliuchevskii aims to restore the continuity of Russian history from the Medieval period up to the present.

### ***Russia, Europe and Kliuchevskii***

Kliuchevskii’s historical vision is enabled by contemporary European ideas, above all historicism and nationalism. It represents a continuation of Herder’s critique of Eurocentrism and defence of cultural pluralism, i.e. the “equal validity of incommensurable cultures” (Berlin 1976: 209). Kliuchevskii’s adaptation of European ideas, in other words, has made it possible for him to reject hegemonic notions of Europe. His historicism, furthermore, resumes the ideas of Herder and the early Wilhelm von Humboldt, who denied that the state was the ultimate goal of history, as Ranke and Humboldt himself later would say, and focused instead on humanity and civil society respectively (Iggers 1968: 41).

Kliuchevskii’s critique of modern, Europeanised Russia might suggest a Slavophile tendency in his work; but as I hopefully have shown, he is in general very far from such a position. First and foremost, he wanted Russia to be on equal terms with the remaining parts of Europe – on its own terms. Eastward Slavic migration starting from a common cultural origin appears to the Kliuchevskii’s basis for claiming that Russia is Europe. Although he may be said to idealise the past, above all early Russian colonisation, his past is founded not on the antithesis of Russia and Europe, but rather on an open and inclusive notion of the latter. To Kliuchevskii, Europe was not a neutral concept, as we saw above; Russia should aim to be ranked among the other European nations. However, Western Europe does not represent the benchmark for the Eastern “peripheries.” Kliuchevskii rejects the idea of a unilinear advance in history common to all nations.

By implication, Kliuchevskii’s Russia also presents us with an alternative to the dichotomisation so characteristic of the debates on national identity in nineteenth-century Russia. His historiography, I would claim, was an attempt to conceptualise Russia outside the Hegelian framework, according to which the essential question was whether Russia was a “historical nation” or not. While both Slavophiles and Westernisers had viewed Russia as “poised on the border between two worlds, fated to choose one and leave the other entirely behind” (Siljak 2001: 357), Kliuchevskii refrained from seeing this as an either/or question. Russia was already European and should not attempt to adapt further to West-European cultural models.

### **Notes**

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<sup>1</sup> For Kliuchevskii’s biography, see Byrnes (1995).

<sup>2</sup> I have taken the opportunity to simplify the references to my primary source (Kliuchevskii’s *Course*), i.e. omitted “Kliuchevskii 1956-1959” here and below. Hence the numbers preceding and succeeding the colon refer to volumes of this edition and pages respectively. All translations from Russian are my own.

<sup>3</sup> In my view, however, there is a marked difference between the Russia of the Slavophiles, which was formulated by way of a rejection of West-European culture, and the Westernisers’ view of Russia as basically European (or eventually European) and, by implication, non-Asian. In the writings of Belinskii or Kavelin, to whom I shall return below, the “main constituent other” is not Europe, as far as I can see, but Asia. Tolz’s formulation in particular (“against which”) – when applied to the Westernisers – appears therefore to be slightly exaggerated.

<sup>4</sup> Belinskii is thus an interesting counterexample of what Tolz (2001: 15) claims to have been a predominant tendency in Russian nineteenth-century thought: the exclusion of the upper classes from the concept of the Russian “nation” or “people” (*narod*). Indeed, many Russian thinkers have operated with an exclusive concept of nationality, but not Belinskii.

<sup>5</sup> “Der Kern des Historismus besteht in der Ersetzung einer generalisierenden Betrachtung geschichtlich-menschlicher Kräfte durch eine individualisierende Betrachtung. [...] Im Wesen der Individualität, der des Einzelmenschen wie der ideellen und realen Kollektivgebilde, liegt es, daß sie sich nur durch Entwicklung offenbart” (Meinecke 1959: 3, 5).

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, this way of perceiving the universal historical process may be found in other parts of the European “periphery” at this time as well: The Norwegian historian Ernst Sars (1835-1917, i.e. contemporary to Kliuchevskii) shared a similar “myth of origin” in that he conceived of national differentiation and national independence as the most important *result* of the universal historical process (Fulsås 1999: 139).

<sup>7</sup> Technically, “is being colonised” is more accurate, since the subject of this sentence is an inanimate one, but this translation has gained foothold in English, as seen most recently in a study by Alexander Etkind (2011: 61-71). In keeping with Etkind, “colonises itself” may be said to be an appropriate solution *hermeneutically* since Kliuchevskii (and Solov’ev) conceived of Russian colonisation as “self-colonisation,” i.e. colonisation of one’s “own” land. This land not only becomes Russia through (Russian) colonisation; it comes into being. Hence “Russia has constituted itself through the process of colonization” (Etkind 2011: 67f). See also below.

<sup>8</sup> This is not to say that they are entirely absent; in the first lecture he introduces a “scheme of the social-historical process,” which operates with the succeeding stages of family, clan, tribe, people, state. In Kliuchevskii’s history, however, this scheme cannot be said to represent a major structuring principle comparable to the threefold one of Solov’ev.

<sup>9</sup> Subsequently, imperial conquest may have led to “colonisation,” for instance in parts of Siberia (3: 125; 5: 137). The same goes for “New Russia,” i.e. the north coast of the Black Sea conquered in the late eighteenth century. Although this area seems to be included in his concept of the “Russian land,” colonisation here, which was preceded by state conquest, also plays a marginal role in Kliuchevskii’s narrative as compared to colonisation before the sixteenth century. Etkind is thus correct in observing that the historian extended the concept of (self-)colonisation “well into the modern age” (2011: 67), but he does not distinguish between colonisation and conquest (or colonisation proper and colonisation upon conquest), as Kliuchevskii, in my view, did.

<sup>10</sup> The “exception” to which Kliuchevskii refers here is probably the areas that today make up Western Ukraine, which was part of the Habsburg Empire until the First World War.

<sup>11</sup> I thus share Tolz’s view that Kliuchevskii and other Russian liberals “downplayed the imperial nature of the Russian state,” but not because he “upheld the view that the Russian empire was a Russian nation state” (Tolz 2001: 172). Kliuchevskii, in my view, was simply not concerned with the entire empire when composing his history. More generally, Tolz argues that the “vision of the Russian empire as a Russian nation-state” (2001: 155) was *the* commonly held perspective in Imperial Russia. This has later been questioned by Aleksei Miller (2005), who claims that Ernest Gellner’s theory of nationalism as a quest for congruence between the national and political unit (1983: 1) does not apply very well to late Imperial Russia, where it was possible to be nationalist and imperialist at the same time, i.e. to defend the existence of the empire while at the same time imagining a truly “Russian land” within it. Russian nationalism in this sense may have been expansionist, in the case of Ukraine or the Volga district, but refrained more often than not from encompassing the entire empire. See also Bassin (2006), who operates with a three-fold scheme of Russian imperial visions: “Russia as a European empire,” “Russia as an anti-European empire” and “Russia as a national empire.”

<sup>12</sup> Solov’ev, in contrast, claimed that one should “not divide, not split Russian history up into singular parts, periods, but look mainly for the connection of phenomena, for the immediate succession of forms” (Solov’ev 1959-1966, 1: 55). By the same token, I do not find Robert Byrnes’s analysis of Kliuchevskii’s “flow of Russian History” (Byrnes 1995: 163-166), while insightful in its parts, to be sufficiently to the point. His one-sided emphasis on Kliuchevskii’s history as one of a “constant, slow change” fails to identify the historian’s idea of a hidden continuity in an otherwise discontinuous past, subdivided into discrete periods. According to Ankersmit and his narrativist approach to historicism (1995), this combination of synchronicity and diachronicity is a defining feature of historicist thinking and writing.

<sup>13</sup> This analysis goes in a direction different from that which sees Kliuchevskii as a founder of “historical sociology” in Russia (Bohn 1997). Without denying these innovative aspects in his work, it is my view that Kliuchevskii’s emphasis on economic factors and social forms (*obshchezhitie*) in favour of the state did not imply a replacement of narrative representation by positivist “explanation,” as Bohn seems to suggest (Bohn 1997: 368). Bohn’s approach tends to ignore the importance of his grand narrative.

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## **РУССКАЯ ИСТОРИЯ И ЕВРОПЕЙСКАЯ МЫСЛЬ: ИСТОРИЧЕСКАЯ КОНЦЕПЦИЯ ВАСИЛИЯ КЛЮЧЕВСКОГО**

Историческая концепция Василия Ключевского включала в себя «идею Европы». В литературе принято полагать, что Европа воспринималась российскими интеллектуалами как некая фигура «Другого», по отношению к которой формировалась идентичность России. Анализ трудов Ключевского, однако, показывает, что эта картина должна быть более нюансированной и что «Европа» или «Запад» не обязательно выступали неперенным мерилем России: образцом для подражания у западников или негативным примером для славянофилов. В статье показано, что сопротивляясь традиционным способам концептуализации «европейскости» в русском контексте, Ключевский выработал новые историографические подходы, основанные на отрицании не «Европы», а гегемонического европоцентризма в осмыслении истории.

Важнейшей точкой отталкивания в построениях Ключевского было славянофильство, для которого отличие России от Запада коренилось в различном культурном и религиозном базисе, более того, западноевропейское христианство воспринималось славянофилами как отступничество от истинной веры. Наоборот, для западников сходство России и Запада превалировало над различиями, в частности, имелось в виду сходство модели исторического развития, а не только культурного багажа. Большинство профессиональных историков той эпохи, включая и Сергея Соловьева – учителя Ключевского, придерживались аналогичной западной, схемы универсального движения человечества вперед.

Для европейской историософии XIX в. – века «историзма» и романтизма – характерен перенос качеств личности на общества, прежде всего качеств индивидуальности и развития. По мнению исследователей, в российском контексте понятие «развитие» стало более фундаментальной категорией объяснения истории, чем понятие «индивидуальность». С этой точки зрения, для западной историографии ключевой стратегией интерпретации явилось представление об «отсталости» России, которая в своем историческом движении повторяет те же европейские стадии, но с известной задержкой.

В статье доказывается, что, не принадлежа к славянофилам, Ключевский предложил альтернативу западному пониманию истории России. По его мнению, Россия уже является частью Запада по происхождению и общим культурным корням, но это не означает, что подражание Западу должно определять историческое развитие России. Напротив, акцентируя «индивидуальность» в истории, Ключевский утверждал, что, развиваясь, нации диверсифицируются, все полнее раскрывают свою уникальность. Ключевский в этом смысле возвращался к более сбалансированной, «европейской» историософии, в которой «развитие» и «индивидуальность» равномерно представлены, что позволяет нарисовать историю России как историю развития личности, проходящей этапы роста, деградации и возможного возрождения в будущем.

Убеждения Ключевского, философски далекие от славянофильства, сближались с ним в плане критики гегемонистического понимания Европы как выбравшей единственно правильную модель исторического развития. Признавая Россию неотъемлемой и полноправной частью Европы, историк настаивал на том, что на ранних этапах развития «русская земля» испытала то же влияние колонизации и ранних форм гражданского общества, что и Запад.

Ключевский, как известно, интерпретировал историю России как историю страны, «которая колонизируется», создав тем самым историографическую традицию, воспринятую современными исследованиями «внутренней колонизации». Важно подчеркнуть, что для Ключевского «колонизация» означала прежде всего стихийное освоение народом пространств центральной России, а не государственную политику покорения окраин. В этом смысле теория колонизации Ключевского отражала осмысление истории русского народа, а не истории Российской империи. Его исследовательский проект заключался в осмыслении истории «русской земли», т.е. в выделении из имперского пространства определенной части, понимаемой как русская национальная территория. Аналогичные проекты воображения «центральной/национальной России» были широко распространены среди либеральных националистов позднеимперского периода. Для Ключевского же важной была взаимосвязь «русской нации» и европейской территории России.

Таким образом, переосмысливая средневековый династический термин «Русь» или «русская земля» с национальной и территориальной точки зрения, Ключевский создавал концепцию нацио-

нализма, которая не противоречила концепции империи, но и не совпадала с ней. Как резонно отмечает А. Миллер, российский интеллектуал мог быть сторонником империи и при этом мечтать о воображаемой «русской земле» в ее составе.

На стыке концепций «русской земли» и «страны, которая колонизируется» появляется возможность идеализация периода феодальной раздробленности, когда, по мнению Ключевского, ослабление государства вызвало импульсы формирования политического тела России «на народной основе» и в процессе активного освоения территорий верхней Волги. Наоборот, последующая централизация государства влекла за собой ослабление домодерного «гражданского общества» и остановку миграционных потоков: на сцену истории вышел государственный деспотизм и крепостное право.

В контексте формулы «государство пухло, народ хирел» интерпретировалась Ключевским и вестернизация страны в XVIII в., которую он иронически описывал как патологический отрыв аристократической культуры от народа. Если попытаться применить таксономию Х. Уайта к трудам Ключевского, то основным модусом его историософии будет трагедия – история народа/личности в движении от довольства и счастья к ничтожеству. Эта «трагедия» создавалась Ключевским с педагогической целью – изобразить гибельность дисбаланса между могуществом государства и слабостью народа. В контексте политических и историософских воззрений Ключевского преодоление этого дисбаланса связывалось с развитием гражданского общества в России и с восстановлением преемственности со средневековым периодом посредством преодоления государственнической «патологии».