V. O. Kliuchevskii is the most distinguished representative of the bourgeois-landlord historical science of the second half of the XIX-beginning of the XX c. But in his creative work, especially in its final stage, there are also already clearly apparent the fundamental traits of its crisis.

L. V. Cherepnin

When you read Klyuchevsky and Solovyev, you see Russia’s real history, complete and un concealed. But when you read the periodically retouched pages of our modern history, you bitterly see that the pages are interspersed with white spots of silence and concealment, dark spots of obsequious truth-stretching and smudges of distortion.

Evgenii Evtushenko

Not a self-contained subject, the Soviet treatment of Kliuchevskii has constituted, of course, an integral part of Soviet cultural policies and the Soviet cultural scene. Nor can it be argued that it ever determined those policies or occupied the center of that scene. Still, one should not underestimate Kliuchevskii, even in relation to the Soviet Union. Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii, 1841-1911, who died shortly before the First World War after occupying the chair of Russian history at the University of Moscow for thirty-one years, was at the time of the October revolution almost certainly the most influential, the most famous, and the most popular historian of Russia. Kliuchevskii’s numerous students were continuing the investigation of Russian history in different, frequently fruitful directions, while his own finally


published lectures, *Kurs russkoi istorii*, stood out as its best-known and most admired comprehensive statement, with the lecturer's magnificent artistic images, whether of the Great Russian national character, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich or Peter the Great, vying in appeal among the educated Russians with the most celebrated pages of classical Russian literature. It was hard or impossible then and later to ignore Kliuchevskii entirely. The Soviet treatment of him is, therefore, of some moment to the student of the Soviet regime and culture as well as, needless to say, itself a historical record of the fortunes of a great historian in his native land during the period of time which now extends to some seventy years.

The earlier phases of the Soviet age are outside the scope of this essay, and it is sufficient for us to keep in mind the cataclysmic nature of those years. The purpose of the regime and the system, as yet poorly organized and coordinated and allowing many "vestiges of the past" to survive, was to destroy the old world *tout court*—rather than to deal at length individually with Vasilii Osipovich Kliuchevskii—and to replace it by a brave new world based on a schematic universal Marxist history, or, according to some especially optimistic versions, on no history at all. It is worth noting that the leader of the drive to replace bourgeois historiography with the Marxist historical science and indeed to achieve a similar transformation in the broader field of Russian, now Soviet, culture was Kliuchevskii's "renegade" student and a leading Russian Marxist intellectual of his generation Mikhail Nikolaevich Pokrovskii, 1868-1932.3 Pokrovskii was, to be sure, a well-trained and gifted scholar, full of hatred of "bourgeois" intellectualism but genuinely interested in historical problems and in the "correct" approach to history. Other people, events, and especially the dreadful physical circumstances of the time were frequently merely destructive. Russian culture in the large, not just the work and legacy of Kliuchevskii, suffered greatly.


The subject of Kliuchevskii's students certainly deserves further study, and on several levels. The late L. V. Cherepnin was working on the "Kliuchevskii school" when he died. In relation to the present essay I have barely room to mention that many of those students, including such prominent ones as P. N. Miliukov and A. A. Kizevetter, emigrated; others, exemplified by M. M. Bogoslovskii, ended their lives in the Soviet Union as rather isolated figures; relatively few played an active and significant part in Soviet higher education. Of those last ones perhaps the most important was Professor Iu. V. Gauthier, a teacher of P. A. Zaionchkovskii and other Soviet scholars. The Soviet specialists, including Academician Militsa Vasil'evna Nechkina herself, who have mounted the "Kliuchevskii revival" to which the rest of my essay will be devoted, seem in the main to have come to Kliuchevskii from the outside rather than to represent a continuation or a re-emergence of the original Kliuchevskii tradition.