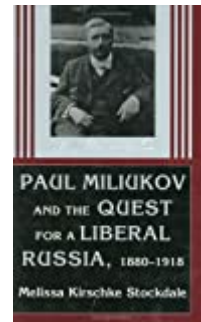


Melissa Kirschke Stockdale. *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880-1918.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996. xix + 379 pp. \$47.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8014-3248-4.



Reviewed by Bruce F. Adams (Department of History, University of Louisville)

Published on H-Russia (June, 1998)

Miliukov as Scholar, Political Thinker and Politician

In this perceptive study of Paul Miliukov, the historian and political activist, Professor Stockdale focuses on his most productive and visible middle years. Following a well-crafted introduction, which puts Miliukov's later career in clear perspective, Stockdale sketches a brief description of his childhood. Almost three hundred pages later, she ends with an equally succinct account of his twenty-five years in London and Paris following the Bolshevik Revolution. In between, she delves into Miliukov's professional education, his historical writing, and his political thought and activities. This is the heart of the book, which succeeds in its purpose as an intellectual biography. Along the way Stockdale provides glimpses of Miliukov as friend, colleague, husband, and father.

The book is carefully researched, nicely organized, and clearly written. As Miliukov was a giant in his time, prominent and deeply engaged in important intellectual and political struggles in turbulent times, non-specialist readers should find much to hold their attention throughout the book. Readers who are familiar with Miliukov's *Russia's Crisis* and have met him frequently in memoirs and histories of the Duma, the Kadets, and the revolu-

tions are less likely to find much that will be new to them in the second half of the book, but there are nuggets for us too. I hadn't known, for example, about Miliukov's participation in an investigation of atrocities in the Balkan Wars for the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and I was intrigued to see how that shaped his views on the coming World War. As histories of 1917 lose sight of him after April and those of the Kadets not long after that, it was also interesting to read of his role in the Volunteer Army and his brief, abortive effort to woo the Germans as allies against the Bolsheviks.

Stockdale makes her most original contribution in the first four chapters. These are superb. Chapter One investigates Miliukov's education and early years as a lecturer at the University of Moscow, his first forays into archival research and publication, and his increasingly cool relationship with Vasilii Kliuchevskii. Stockdale's explanation of the approach to social studies by the group she calls the "Moscow young professors" is clear and convincing. Following Comte's *Positive Philosophy*, this circle of influential professors were all "empiricists, imbued

with the 'scientific' spirit, and more or less hostile to 'metaphysics' " (p. 8).

Vasilii Kliuchevskii, who was a young professor when Miliukov was beginning his historical studies, strongly influenced Miliukov's decision to study Russian history, became Miliukov's graduate mentor, and by the example of his own published work inspired Miliukov to undertake exhaustive archival work to answer the historical questions he chose to ask. Miliukov's Master's thesis, "The State Economy of Russia in the first quarter of the eighteenth century and the reforms of Peter the Great," ran to seven hundred pages and took six years, twice the normal length of time, to complete. When Kliuchevskii did not recommend him for a doctoral degree on the strength of it and did not support him for more than a lectureship at the University of Moscow, where Miliukov had hoped to make a career, the breach between the two men became complete.

Chapter Two explores Miliukov's work in the 1890s as a professor at Moscow Pedagogical Institute and at Sofia University in Bulgaria and as a journalist for *Russkaia Mysl'* and the British journal *Athanaeum*. It also considers the political radicalization he underwent in these years. Miliukov had been politically aware and in touch with populist radicals while he was an undergraduate student. He had been less involved with political concerns while he immersed himself in his graduate studies. In the early 1890s, however, he became increasingly disturbed by the growth of individualism and indifference he saw in former activists and the next generation of students. Stockdale discusses briefly Miliukov's response to Vladimir Soloviev's writing, which was widely read in this decade, and his disapproval of the tactic and philosophy of small-deeds liberalism. In this discussion, I found Stockdale's explication of the patriotic impulse behind Miliukov's radicalism most illuminating. It was every Russian's duty, he believed, to work to improve their country.

By 1894-95, Miliukov had become more outspoken in his university lectures, in other public lectures, and in essays written for *Athanaeum*. He engaged in debates in public ways with neo-populists and Marxists and joined the revolutionary group, Narodnoe Pravo. When he finally went too far in his criticism of the autocracy in a series of public lectures over the Christmas holiday, 1894-95, which he had helped organize as part of an extension university, he was dismissed from his academic appointment and exiled from Moscow. Ironically, during the next two and a half years, which he spent in Riazan,

and 1897-99, while he held a chair in History at the University of Sofia, he wound up better off financially and made connections which made him a more committed and formidable foe of the autocracy.

In those same years and into the first years of the new century, Miliukov was also at his productive peak as a scholar. Between 1892 and 1903, he published eight books and established his reputation as one of the leading historians of the time. In Chapter Three, Stockdale examines Miliukov's historical thought. She finds that Miliukov slowly arrived at the conception of a three-fold process of historical development. From his positivist background, he retained the idea that there were historical laws which governed large parts of human history. He also acknowledged that there were local conditions, such as geography and climate, which inescapably shaped the development of people and nations—his break with Kliuchevskii was more personal than intellectual. In addition, Miliukov increasingly came to find room for historical accident.

Stockdale also makes it clear that Miliukov's historical and political thought were inextricably linked. In answering the question, "What is the use of history?," Miliukov would claim that it should clear out the underbrush that traps societies in obsolete institutions and structures. He believed in progress. History taught him that all things change. With historical understanding to illuminate the mistakes made in the past and the obsolescence of institutions, which might have been sensible responses to past conditions, people could make enlightened and progressive change in the contemporary world. Miliukov had no doubt that the Russian autocracy was obsolescent. Events in the next decade would persuade him that it was obsolete.

Between 1897 and 1905, Miliukov was more often out of Russia than in it. He spent the first two of those years in Bulgaria, most of a year in the United States, where he lectured at the University of Chicago, and considerable time in England as well. Six months of the time he did remain in Russia he spent in two three-month sentences in prison. Stockdale devotes Chapters Four and Five to these years, emphasizing the lessons Miliukov learned from Bulgarian constitutionalism and English liberalism. She gives considerable space to his role in the founding of *Osvobozhdenie* and the articles he contributed to the journal after he refused its editorship. Stockdale clearly develops in these chapters the sources of Miliukov's liberalism, which she finds much influenced by England's "new liberalism" of the same period, and his increasingly

prominent role as the leading voice of left-of-center liberalism. It was this activity which put him in position to be a leader of the Constitutional Democratic Party when it was founded in the wake of the 1905 Revolution and the October Manifesto.

Two stray facts which helped to illuminate Miliukov and his times caught my eye in these chapters. First, when Miliukov was invited to lecture at the University of Chicago, he decided to improve his English. Stockdale claims at this point that Miliukov mastered fourteen modern languages in addition to Latin and Greek. Second, Miliukov's first stay in England followed his second arrest in St. Petersburg. He was permitted by the government to go on a planned bicycle tour on the strength of his promise to return to serve his six-month sentence.

The following chapters examine Miliukov's role in the Union of Unions during the Revolution of 1905, as a leader of the Kadets, in the Third Duma, in the Fourth

Duma and the Progressive Bloc, and in the Provisional Government. They are nicely done and add to our understanding of Miliukov if not of the larger events in which he finds himself in these years—which have been explored minutely and repeatedly in other works. In sum, *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880-1918* is a fine book which intelligently examines the many different fields in which this enormously talented and hard-working man involved himself in the last four decades before the 1917 revolutions. The first five chapters held my attention as closely as did my favorite biography in Russian history, Martin Malia's *Alexander Herzen and the birth of Russian socialism*. The rest of the book could very well do as much for readers less familiar with the period.

Copyright (c) 1998 by H-Net, all rights reserved. This work may be copied for non-profit educational use if proper credit is given to the author and the list. For other permission, please contact H-Net@h-net.msu.edu.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-russia>

Citation: Bruce F. Adams. Review of Stockdale, Melissa Kirschke, *Paul Miliukov and the Quest for a Liberal Russia, 1880-1918*. H-Russia, H-Net Reviews. June, 1998.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=2101>

Copyright © 1998 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.org.