

Trubetzkoy, N.S.: *L'Europe et l'humanité*. Traduction et notes par Patrick Sériot, précédé de "Trubetzkoy, linguiste ou historiosophe des totalités organiques?" par Patrick Sériot, Mardaga, 1996, 247 pp.

The fate of N.S. Trubetzkoy's works on history and politics is astounding. They were written in Russian between the world wars and aroused great interest among the emigré public, but the catastrophic events of 1939–1945 and the subsequent cold war deprived them of much of their actuality. Trubetzkoy founded the so-called Eurasian movement and remained active in it until the late 1920s, at which time P.P. Suvčinskij, D.P. Svjatopolk-Mirskij, and S.Ja. Ėfron, to mention the most prominent figures, turned the main Eurasian organizations into a club of the GPU (a predecessor of the NKVD–KGB), began to extol socialist industrialization and "the Lenin–Stalin national policy," and decided to return "home". Those who were allowed to return soon perished in prisons and concentration camps.

The Eurasians believed that Russia belonged to neither Europe nor Asia but was a world of its own, and offered a detailed program of governing Russia as they wanted to see it. Despite their insistence on Russia's unique character, they felt much closer to Asia (the steppe) than to Europe (the sea), and Trubetzkoy professed an almost pathological hatred of "Romano–Germanic civilization." Some of his articles predicting the fall of colonialism read like editorials in the most radical newspapers of the fifties. It was a paradoxical picture: an emigré aristocrat, a renowned professor at Vienna University, and a sworn enemy of the culture whose best product he himself was. The Eurasians were not Slavophiles, for Russian Orthodoxy meant more to them than the bond of ethnicity, and they looked upon Peter I's activities as detrimental to Russia. Their capital remained in Moscow forever, and their hero was (somewhat unexpectedly) Genghis Khan, whom they revered for uniting Russia. In their opinion, Russia carried on the cause of the great conqueror; hence the title of Trubetzkoy's book *Наследие Чингисхана*. Although the weakness of some of Trubetzkoy's arguments is as evident today as it was seventy years ago, something in his articles and books on Eurasianism seems to be indestructibly appealing, and almost everyone who reads them falls under their spell. Perhaps it is his uncompromising defense of a controversial cause, or his passion and originality, or the fact that much of what he says is true, but since the 1920s there have always been historians ready to popularize or refute his conception. It is a moot point whether his works on history and politics would have outlived their author if he had not been one of the founders of structuralism and a world famous linguist. It so happened that he was all that.

Trubetzkoy was born in 1890, and long before 1990 I began planning an edition of his selected writings in English on the model of Roman Jakobson's multivolume set. This project could not be realized in the form in which I envisaged it,

*Russian Linguistics* 23: 119–121, 1999.

but Minnesota published Trubetzkoy's *Writings on Literature* (1990), Michigan brought out his Eurasian works (*The Legacy of Genghis Khan and Other Essays on Russia's Identity*, 1991), and a volume of his articles on linguistics, along with a selection of his letters to Jakobson, is scheduled to appear in the nearest future (Duke University Press). When my work on the Michigan volume was drawing to an end, I was informed that a similar book would soon appear in Moscow. A feeble attempt was made to enlist my services as its editor, but in 1989 *perestroika* had not advanced far enough for the publishing house "Progress" to invite one emigré scholar to write on the achievements of another. A few years later, the Soviet Union collapsed, and state funding became a thing of the past. The Moscow book, a complete collection of Trubetzkoy's contributions to Eurasianism dated 1990, appeared finally in 1995 (Н.С. Трубецкой, *История. Культура. Язык*). It should be added that *Европа и человечество* was translated into German and Japanese in Trubetzkoy's lifetime (1922, 1926). In 1944, a Bulgarian translation of this book was published (I learned about its existence only from Sériot's bibliography), and in 1982 Einaudi brought out a translation of it in Italian and added a few articles as supplement. The Russian text of *Европа и человечество* was also reprinted by the emigré journal *Вече* in 1987–1988.

Now the main Eurasian works by Trubetzkoy are available in French. The present volume contains selected passages from *Европа и человечество*, the articles: "Об истинном и ложном национализме", "Верхи и низы русской культуры", "Вавилонская башня и смешение языков", "О туранском элементе в русской культуре", "К украинской проблеме", "Общевосточный национализм", "О расизме", "Об идее-правительнице идеократического государства", "Мысли об индоевропейской проблеме", and the introduction to *К проблеме русского самопознания. Наследие Чингисхана* has regrettably been left out. The book opens with Sériot's introduction and a translation into French of Jakobson's foreword to *L'Europa e l'umanità*. Trubetzkoy's bibliography and an excellent index are appended. Every item is followed by a few notes by the translator.

Sériot's introduction does not break new ground, but it is informative and useful. Like some of his predecessors, he asked himself whether one can detect a unifying set of principles in everything Trubetzkoy wrote. Trubetzkoy was apt to refer human behavior to Danilevskyan "types" and believed that he himself represented the Turanian type. But nowadays hardly anyone will search for the dominant (to use Jakobson's and the Formalists' favorite word) that would explain both people's ability to adjust to a hostile environment, their reception of phonology, and the preservation of palatalized consonants in their language. The extant corpus of Trubetzkoy's writings is heterogeneous with regard to message and style. His linguistic works were written for specialists, his lectures on Russian literature did not presuppose the listeners' previous exposure to this subject, and,

in writing books and articles on Eurasianism, he addressed his fellow emigrés in the capacity of a journalist. We note certain common features in his proposals. Thus, he disliked hybrid forms, and Sériot emphasizes Trubetzkoy's partiality for organic wholes, but phonology is too complex to be derived from such a general trait, and, while developing his early ideas on the prehistory of the Slavic languages, he did very well without phonology.

Today's Russia eagerly studies the literature the communists kept for decades in special storage (or closed stacks), but no one could predict that Trubetzkoy the historian and politician would become an ever-growing presence in the West. As Trubetzkoy once said, "It is impossible to deny that miracles sometimes occur, and they will again." And he was right.

*University of Minnesota*

ANATOLY LIBERMAN