

JOHN PANCHUK

SHEVCHENKO'S  
TESTAMENT



SVOBODA PRESS

JERSEY CITY 1965 NEW YORK

*SHEVCHENKO'S  
TESTAMENT*

DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE LATE  
LUKE MYSHUHA, LL. D.,  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF THE UKRAINIAN DAILY "SVOBODA,"  
A SCHOLAR AND PATRIOT WHOSE GENEROSITY MADE  
POSSIBLE THE PUBLICATION OF THIS BOOK.

# **SHEVCHENKO'S TESTAMENT**

**ANNOTATED COMMENTARIES**

**BY**

**JOHN PANCHUK**



**SVOBODA PRESS**

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**JERSEY CITY**

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As I look back, the inspiration for this work was kindled at a literary reception given by Professor J. B. Rudnycky and his wife at their home in Winnipeg, in July of 1961. Following a formal evening session of the Ukrainian Free Academy of Sciences (UVAN) in the Parliament Building of the Province of Manitoba, held in connection with the dedicatory events of the Shevchenko statue, Mrs. Olha Wojcenko invited me to join the reception. As it turned out, the main theme of the literary soiree was a critical discussion of the English translations of Shevchenko's *Testament (Zapovit)*.

I soon found myself fending some subtle queries leveled at the refreshingly original rendition of the poem, especially made for the dedicatory occasion by the talented Canadian poetess Myra L. Haas, who was one of the guests. I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to J. B. Rudnycky and Olha Wojcenko for then and there encouraging me to delve further into the *Testament*.

I wish to express my appreciation to Joseph Lesawyer, President of the Ukrainian National Association for inviting the submission of the manuscript to the MYSHUHA FUND for publication possibility; to Roman Slobodian, administrator and trustee of the MYSHUHA FUND, for the financial sponsorship of this work, which I wish to believe reflects the testamentary intentions of my close friend and severest critic, the late Dr. Luke Myshuha, in establishing the FUND; to Clarence A. Manning for expert review of the manuscript; to Zenon Snylyk, Editor of *The Ukrainian Weekly* section of *Svoboda* for valuable comments, preparation of English transliteration of references, and technical advice; to Anthony Dragan, Editor-in-Chief of *Svoboda* for sympathetic consideration in making this publication possible; to Vera Rich of London, England, for permission to use her

translation of the *Testament* from the volume *Song Out of Darkness*, a collection of selected poems of Shevchenko, and to The Mitre Press for the publisher's permission.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to all translators, living and dead, whose translations are included in this work, and to the various authors and publishers from whose works quotations are here acknowledged. Special thanks and appreciation is hereby acknowledged to my secretary, Mrs. Ella Randall, for typing the manuscript.

JOHN PANCHUK.



**Taras Shevchenko (photo 1860)**





**Taras Shevchenko Monument in Kaniv, Ukraine**



**Taras Shevchenko Monument in Washington, D.C.**



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## PREFACE

*Even the most gifted translator is seldom able to reproduce faithfully the substance, form, and feeling of the original. The selected English translations of Shevchenko's TESTAMENT (ZAPOVIT) included in this work reflect the broad latitude of language which has been chosen by translators or which the travail or inspiration of rendering this poem into English produces.*

*The accompanying commentaries are intended to provide background references for greater insight into the meaning of some of the key words, ideas, and expressions as well as to describe something of the feeling and images they evoke in the mind of the Ukrainian reader. Occasionally they allude to some aspect of the poet's impact upon the course of national and cultural development of the Ukrainian people.*

*The memory of pleasant Sundays and holidays on our farm in southern Manitoba during the first two decades of this century when mother would read the KOBZAR to her Ukrainian neighbors, farmers' wives, who dropped in for an afternoon visit, dates my introduction to Shevchenko. It is an early boyhood legacy that has not faded from my memory.*

*This book is gratefully dedicated to her memory and to the memory of her beloved village schoolteacher in Bukovina, the talented Ukrainian writer, Eugenia Yaroshinska, who passed away in the prime of life in 1904.*

Дале у муну то по добавише  
Мене на месину

Среди стени у шум, окол  
на втрениом нивни,  
Водѣ мени изорото помни

И Јануаро и јуни  
Било видно било сумар.  
Јако гребел рекури

И иже во Сенте бониси  
Во Рамбе бониси дистри.  
Не забудиште пошлостима  
~~пошлостима~~ мединско <sup>до Франсије</sup> (медици)

М. М.

## TESTAMENT (ZAPOVIT\*)

Although the *Testament (Zapovit)* of Shevchenko defies translation, it has been rendered into fifty different languages. Over a score of English translations have come to light since the first attempt in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

The *Testament* is an exquisite lyric of three eight-line stanzas, each of which depicts mood, action, and vista. A subtle unity of the three stanzas, as inseparable as the magic cycle of life, death, and immortality of which they are symbolic, enhances its literary fame and its spell is comparable to the Psalms of David and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

The opening stanza enshrines the image of the most cherished natural landmarks of Ukraine and reveals the poet's ethnic and spiritual ties with his mother country.

The *Testament* expresses pragmatic and idealistic thoughts whose meanings have acquired ideological significance with the growing popularity of the poem. It has been sung as a national anthem and intoned as a requiem. It has been exalted as a proclamation of emancipation as well as a declaration of independence. It has been acclaimed as a legacy of hope and courage. It has been greeted as a herald of national rebirth and a trumpet call to arms. It has been quoted as a revolutionary slogan and chanted as a Tyrtaeon paean of insurrection. It has been invoked as the Ukrainian credo in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice. It has been proclaimed as the Ukrainian national hero's gospel of peace and the brotherhood of men.

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\* This poem was first printed in Leipzig, Germany in 1859 under the title "Thoughts" in a collection called *New Poems of Pushkin and Shevchenko*. The caption "Testament" (*Zapovit*) first appeared in the *Kobzar* published by Kozhanchikov in St. Petersburg in 1867. Nicholas Kostomarov was the first to give it that name.

<sup>1</sup> W. R. Morfill, *The Westminster Review*, N. S. Vol. 58, 1880.



The *Testament* reflects a spiritual and patriotic legacy composed in contemplation of death. A classic simplicity and harmony of word, sound, thought, and structural symmetry enhance the poem's timeless and universal appeal.

In the prophetic verses of the *Testament*, the poet's inexorable mission to light the path of freedom, justice, and truth transcends the grave for its fulfillment. Although his weary mind yearns for the solace of pleasant sights and sounds surrounding a somnolent village cemetery, his poetic vision discerns no asylum in death from the ends of his destiny.

Fate had wrested him from his native village in early boyhood, liberated him from the bonds of serfdom, and crowned him with the laurels of a national hero in early manhood. In death he would belong to the nation. Contemplating the imminence of death, the poet prays that his body be buried in the traditional tomb of the heroes of Ukraine, the high mound where, unlike the martyred dead, he would find no rest until Ukraine, his symbolic mother, would achieve peace and freedom. When I die, says the poet, bury me on a mound towering above the steppes of Ukraine whose spacious plains invite the winds of freedom to blow; on a mound from whose summit may be seen the crescent gorges through which the turbulent current of the mighty Dnieper winds and rushes with foaming rage over the rapids to the sea.

It is not surprising, when one recalls how mystic allegory with political overtones animates the sepulchral themes in several of his poems, that his own testamentary interment should evoke symbolic and allegorical images. The poet vows that the Dnieper's loud defiance of the tortuous river banks with their impeding rocks will not resound against "the dull and cold ear of death,"<sup>2</sup> but will be listened to and heard by him. In Ukrainian lore the Dnieper personifies an unconquerable spirit, eternal and animistic, actuated by intermittent spells of serene calm and irrepressible turbulence. In the ancient days of Prince Ihor's campaigns against the nomadic invaders of Ukraine, Dnieper, "the famed one," was renowned in song for piercing the stone hills in its rush to the southern steppes.

The poet did not pray for a simple grave in the village churchyard, however much he may have cherished in the past the soul-soothing song of the nightingale in the cherry orchard adjoining it. Instead, he chose the fierce roar of the mainstream of Ukrainian life as it tore asunder all obstacles on its dash to freedom. Moved by presentiment of death, he willed his soul to abide in Ukraine and await the day of judgment and the deliverance of his people from bondage. Not

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Gray, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*.

until Dnieper's turbulent current shall sweep the evil blood of Ukraine's oppressors to the sea, will his soul know repose, "spread her wings" and "heavenward fly." Like Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, he did not expect to find repose in the grave until, in the words of the prophet Isaiah so familiar to Shevchenko, "the Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked and the sceptre of the rulers"<sup>3</sup> and "gives them rest from hard bondage."<sup>4</sup>

The last stanza of the poem represents a dual transition. A transition from the mystical, allegorical communion of the poet's soul with the elemental forces of Ukraine voicing their defiance of all earthly shackles which impede their course to freedom, to an exhortation of his living countrymen to arise and shatter the political, social, economic, and psychic bonds which the evil landlords and alien rulers had imposed upon them.

This stanza also marks the transition in the poet's social and political development from the status of a celebrated minstrel of the wrongs suffered by his people to that of a chief advocate of dynamic action, rebellion, and annihilation of their oppressors. He invokes their former love of liberty to regenerate their servile spirits. He summons them from the slough of despair and the degradation of bondage to militant action that would transform submissive serfs into bold freedom fighters. As a poet-prophet he is the voice of God calling upon his children to assert their divine right to freedom. Inspired by the Ukrainian Kozak tradition and his intimate knowledge of the Old Testament prophets, Shevchenko's *Testament* expresses his own militant ire and divine wrath as well. Its prophecy "is the voice that God has lent to the silent agony, a voice to the plundered poor. God is raging in the prophet's words."<sup>5</sup> The poet, affectionately called father Taras and acclaimed as bard and prophet, admonishes his people to rely upon their own initiative in the struggle for freedom and to be prepared to shed torrents of evil blood to achieve it.

The concluding lines of the *Testament* strike a note of peace, unity, fulfillment, and express a conviction that Shevchenko's often expressed ideal—the brotherhood of free men—will be realized, though men must bleed and die for it, shedding evil blood "to quicken a new birth."

This Promethean spirit —

Triumphant where it dares defy  
And making death a victory,<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Isaiah*, Ch. XIV, 5.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, Ch. XIV, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets*, Harper & Row, 1963.

<sup>6</sup> Lord Byron, *Prometheus*.

yields in the last two lines to a serenity of spirit no less sublime than the feeling which animates the poet's conviction that his ideal will be realized. His recompense for a life devoted to the ideal? — A soft memory "to linger like twilight hues when the bright sun is set."<sup>7</sup>

Lacking perhaps the assurance of immortality such as the foremost poet of mighty Russia could confidently predict for himself when he wrote:

In death I shall not die, dissolve in useless dust,  
My spirit will live and be forever young,  
And men will praise me as perforce they must  
Where poets have loved and wept and sung,<sup>8</sup>

and shunning the modestly disguised testamentary concern of Francis Bacon: "For my name and memory, I leave to men's charitable speeches . . . and the next ages,"<sup>9</sup> Shevchenko humbly asked to be remembered with a kind word in the new and vigorous society of free men whose emancipation and liberation he fervently proclaimed. This was to be his recompense—the guerdon of his fame and token of immortality. In this final request his countrymen have not failed him. His memory is enshrined in their hearts for ages.

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<sup>7</sup> William Cullen Bryant, *The Old Man's Funeral*.

<sup>8</sup> A. S. Pushkin, *A Memorial*.

<sup>9</sup> Francis Bacon, *Last Will*.

## THE POETRY OF SHEVCHENKO

"The quality of Ukrainian spoken by Shevchenko established its potential to emerge as the literary language of Ukraine. It was the purest used by any of the writers of that period and its geographic location favored its dominant influence, which, in time, it actually achieved."<sup>1</sup>

"Shevchenko's poetry made a tremendous impression on the readers of his time. It was something new, immense, and colorful—both in substance and form. A poet could not produce such a revolutionary effect or find such a universal acceptance if it were not for the extraordinary qualities of his poetry or if he were not a first rate poet."<sup>2</sup>

"As the core of his literary language, Shevchenko took the common language of the people. He knew this language from childhood. He had learned countless folk stories and proverbs, and knew many folksongs. . . Shevchenko came from the depths of the subdued, downtrodden serfs to flash his creative genius. . . He elevated the language of the Ukrainian people to the level of a powerful literary, artistic weapon. . . Every word of Shevchenko is alive. It comes from the hearts of the people."<sup>3</sup>

Like Dante, "he created a language, itself music and persuasion. . . His very words are instinct with spirit; each is a spark, a burning atom of inextinguishable thought."<sup>4</sup>

"Kulich, one of the Ukrainian literary critics and historians, himself a poet of merit, said about our poet: 'The whole beauty of Ukrainian poetry was revealed to Shevchenko alone,' wishing no doubt, to

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<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan Ilarion, *Istoriia ukrains'koï literaturnoi movy*, "Our Culture Series," Winnipeg, 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Dmitri Cizevsky, *Istoriia ukrains'koï literatury*, UVAN, New York, 1956.

<sup>3</sup> Andrii Khvyliia, Preface to *Taras Shevchenko, Povne zibrannia tvoriv*, Vol. I, State Literary Publishing House, Kiev, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> P. B. Shelley, *A Defense of Poetry*, 1821 (1840).

say that no one penetrated as deeply as he the mysterious sources of the poetical treasure of the Ukrainian people and transformed in such a consummate manner the popular themes and devices of their folklore. The whole wealth of the popular poetry from the ancient epics of the twelfth century relating to the expedition of Prince Ihor, down to the *dumy* of the Kozaks, and charming lyrical folksongs, found its synthesis in the poetical works of Shevchenko. His power of expression, sweetness, tenderness, and delicacy of sentiment, his wealth of images and rhythmic harmony, all is to be found there, and therein lay the secret of his magic power over all persons who understood Ukrainian."<sup>5</sup>

"The immortality of Shevchenko the poet lies in his creation of a literary language for the people, capable of deep, historically authentic and refined concepts and generalizations by means of the most simple devices and most common expressions. Taras Shevchenko was not only a lyricist, but a poetic narrator, a story teller. He never created a poem merely as a structural expression without a visual picture; and he almost never left the visual picture obscure or lifeless."<sup>6</sup>

"Shevchenko's greatness is reflected in his achievement of artistic generalizations by use of most common words and imagery, without abstract concepts, without a mass of metaphors or complex symbols. He achieved synthesis through sheer process of versification, action in verse."<sup>7</sup>

"Shevchenko is one of the world's greatest masters of sound-imitation in writing. The delicate, organic melody of his lyrical poems ranks him with such musicians as Paul Verlaine."<sup>8</sup>

In an analysis of intimate appeals, emotional abstractions, "appeals to the soul, to fame, Shevchenko frequently turns to God whom he conceives as the omnipotent embodiment of supreme moral truth, truth not as an abstraction, but as a living, human truth, immanent in the poet's heart, which aches with the sufferings of the people."<sup>9</sup> His addresses to the heroes in his epic poems are worthy of note. According to Bulakhovsky, "Shevchenko is one of the most lyrical epic poets of the world, so much that epic portrayals in the exact sense of the word almost elude him. This is the source of his natural, native

<sup>5</sup> Dmytro Doroshenko, *Taras Shevchenko, The National Poet of Ukraine*, Ukrainian Publishing Co., Ltd., Winnipeg, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Marietta Shaginian, "Taras Shevchenko," Doctoral Dissertation, 1941, cited in P. Odarchenko, "Poetychna maisternist' Tarasa Shevchenka," *Shevchenko-Richnyk*, 3, UVAN, New York, 1954.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> L. Bulakhovsky, "Movni zasoby intymizatsii v poezii Shevchenka," as quoted in the *Shevchenko-Richnyk*, *op. cit.*

power, the great power of feeling which permeates his portrayals and the extraordinary sincerity of expressing the feeling which is felt by the reader. . . . There is a sharp distinction in Shevchenko's feelings towards the positive figures—martyrs and heroes— and the negative ones—the evil doers and the tyrants."<sup>10</sup>

Professor Clarence A. Manning, himself experienced in the frustrations of translating Shevchenko, stated: "Translation invariably destroys a certain poetic charm that is inherent in the original verse of the poet and there are very few poets who have been fortunate enough to secure an adequate rendering in a foreign tongue. This almost automatically hinders a proper appreciation of a foreign poet, especially if he is one of those tender spirits whose art is so closely connected with the music of his own language that the beauty vanishes at the first touch of the heavy hand of the translator."<sup>11</sup>

The subtle, melodiously creative qualities of his poetry elude translation and cannot be adequately appreciated or understood except in the original Ukrainian. "The language of poets has ever affected a certain uniform and harmonious recurrence of sound, without which it were not poetry, and which is scarcely less indispensable to the communication of its influence, than the words themselves without reference to that peculiar order. Hence the variety of translation; it were as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principles of its color, as seek to transfuse from one language into another the creation of a poet. The plant must spring from its seed, or it will bear no fruit."<sup>12</sup>

To one not conversant with Ukrainian language, the following impressions of Pindar, the Greek poet, from *The Greek Way* by E. Hamilton, will suggest the magic of Shevchenko in his native tongue:

"One feels 'life abundantly' within him, inexhaustible spontaneity, an effortless mastery over treasures of rich and incomparably vivid expression, the fountain shooting upward, irresistible, unenforced beyond description. But in spite of this sense he gives of ease and freedom of power, he is in an equal degree a consummate craftsman, an artist in fullest command of the technique of his art, and that fact is the other half of the reason why he is untranslatable. His poetry is all poetry, the most like music, not music that wells up from the bird's throat, but the music that is based on structure, on fundamental laws of balance and symmetry, on carefully calculated effects, a Bach fugue, a Beethoven sonata or symphony. One might almost as well try to

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Clarence A. Manning, "Taras Shevchenko as a World Poet," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1945.

<sup>12</sup> P. B. Shelley, *op. cit.*

put a symphony into words as try to give an impression of Pindar's Odes in English translation."<sup>13</sup>

In a preface to the six lyrics of Shevchenko rendered into English in 1911, the translator makes this comment: "But if a man leave immortal lyrics hidden from the Western World—it seems hard that he should go untranslated while waiting for the perfect rendering which may never come."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way*, New York, 1942.

<sup>14</sup> E. L. Voynich, *Six Lyrics from the Ruthenian of Taras Shevchenko*, Vigo Cabinet Series, No. 86, London, 1911.

## SHEVCHENKO AS A NATIONAL HERO

Among European national heroes of the nineteenth century, Taras Shevchenko stands out as extraordinary, enduring, and himself a hero in the epic life of his century. Born in the heart of Ukraine in 1814 into a family of peasant serfs and emancipated in 1838 through the efforts of a prominent artist and poet who had befriended him in St. Petersburg where his master had apprenticed him as student painter-decorator, Shevchenko's dynamic personality and genius illuminated the Ukrainian national revival and social reformation with the brilliance of a noon-day sun through the dark and sinister reign of Tsar Nicholas I.

In the annals of the national rebirth of submerged nations, Shevchenko's liberating role stands unmatched. "There are few poets in world literature whose works are so closely associated with the whole existence of their nation as those of the greatest poet of Ukraine."<sup>1</sup>

The doom of national oblivion which had enveloped Ukraine under the inexorable tide of Russian integration policies forged by Moscow's empire builders, Peter and Catherine the Great, as well as by their less renowned predecessors and successors, was forever dispelled by the magic of Shevchenko's muse.

If "all good poets are inspired" as Plato claimed, and merit the appellation of "liberating gods" as suggested by Ralph Waldo Emerson, or personify the "articulate voice of a nation" as affirmed by Thomas Carlyle, then Shevchenko exemplified all three attributes in his poetry and life history. As a "true and earnest poet, with a pulse of fire and mind of light," his genius and influence changed the destiny of his people and redeemed their colorful heritage of a love of freedom from annihilation by Russia.

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<sup>1</sup> Ostap Hrycay, "Taras Shevchenko and Ukraine Today," *The Trident*, September, 1939.



N. Kostomarov's statement that "poetry always takes the lead, always resolves a bold course, and in its wake, history, science, and practical endeavor follow,"<sup>2</sup> becomes a valid thesis when measured by the impact of Shevchenko's poetry on the successful rebirth of the Ukrainian nation. In the early decades after the founding of American independence, our literary critics were quite sensitive to the emotional wellsprings of national growth and progress as the following observation of Shevchenko's American contemporary critic suggests: "The real elements in the life of any people, the most interesting and valuable parts of their history, everything in them not shifting and empirical, may be said to constitute their poetry."<sup>3</sup>

Men of letters who have come under the spell of Shevchenko's personality and creative talent bear witness to his extraordinary influence as illustrated by the following quotations:

"Outstanding incarnation of the national genius, — such a man for Ukraine is Taras Shevchenko, one of the great masters of world poetry."<sup>4</sup>

"Shevchenko was in his country the national prophet in the true sense of this word. His inspired words aroused his people from lethargy, from the torpid inertia into which they had plunged as a result of their lost struggles for independence. Shevchenko's passionate appeal revealed to the Ukrainians the sentiment of national unity, inspired them with confidence in their national dignity, and gave them the wish to take their place among other nations."<sup>5</sup>

"The poet of Ukraine, he is also a poet of humanity. His works have more than a purely local significance. Today we realize as never before that freedom and truth and justice and mercy and brotherhood must be worldwide in scope and universal and eternal, if man is to be free and happy and peaceful. There are poets who express some of these ideals. There are none who speak out more clearly, more artistically, and more touchingly to men everywhere than Taras Shevchenko."<sup>6</sup>

"Shevchenko—our poet and first historian. Through his lips our entire nation sang of its fate... Every heart thrilled to his song...

<sup>2</sup> Yulian Okhrymowych, *Rozvytok ukraïns'koï natsional'no-politychnoi dumky*, Lviv-Kiev, 1922.

<sup>3</sup> Edwin P. Whipple, *American Review*, July, 1845.

<sup>4</sup> Clarence A. Manning, Preface to *Taras Shevchenko, Bard of Ukraine* by D. Doroshenko, United Ukrainian Organizations of the United States, 1936.

<sup>5</sup> Dmytro Doroshenko, *Taras Shevchenko, Bard of Ukraine*, 1936.

<sup>6</sup> Clarence A. Manning, *Taras Shevchenko, Selected Poems*, Ukrainian National Association, Jersey City, 1945.

Shevchenko was the first to ask our mute mounds, what they represent, and to him alone did they give an answer clear as God's word."<sup>7</sup>

"Among these gifted youth [in Kiev] appeared Shevchenko with his strong lament about the ill fate of his country. His song was, in effect, the resurrection paean trumpeted by the archangel. If there is any truth in the assertion that the heart revived, the eyes blazoned, and the brow of man shone with burning halo, then verily such phenomenon occurred in Kiev,"<sup>8</sup>

"Shevchenko's poetry has an epochal meaning for us. It made a nation out of an unenlightened ethnographic mass. It made possible forever the existence of a Ukrainian movement."<sup>9</sup>

"Shevchenko—Ukraine's foremost prophet, martyr and genius. The one object of his glowing poetry was to make his own people realize and cherish their essential distinction from the ruling branch of Eastern Slavs."<sup>10</sup>

"The Ukrainian spirit, though sorely tried, was not crushed; and in the second quarter of the nineteenth century a national movement set in which is by no means unworthy of being compared with the Greek, Serbian, and Italian revivals of the same period. . . Shevchenko became the incarnation of the awakened Ukrainian soul. To this day Ukrainians make pilgrimages to his tomb on the bank of the Dnieper and recite with heaving bosoms such verses as his *Testament*."<sup>11</sup>

"I do not know if in the world literature the heart ever cried out with such boundless longing and sorrow for one's native land; if a poet could be found who loved his country so much, fought and yearned for it so much. . . The singleness of Shevchenko's love for his native land and people is matched only by his own great hatred of serfdom and every form of abridgement of freedom. His fight against serfdom was a lifelong task and a self-imposed duty of our bard. No one in Russia struck such mighty blows against the system of serfdom as he did."<sup>12</sup>

"In his political poems (*The Dream, The Caucasus, Testament*, etc.) he spoke with such fiery vehemence about the right of the Ukrainian people to political independence as no one had before him or after him. His *Kobzar*—those blood-stained shards and fragments of the poet's heart offered for the spiritual nurture of his enslaved

<sup>7</sup> Panteleimon Kulish, "Choho stoit' Shevchenko yako poet narodnyi," *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> Panteleimon Kulish, "Istorychne Opovidannia," *op. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Yulian Okhrimovych, *op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> Edwin Bjorkman, *The Cry of Ukraine*, New York, 1915.

<sup>11</sup> Frederic Austin Ogg, *Munsey's Magazine*, Oct., 1918.

<sup>12</sup> Serhiï Yefremov, *Istoriia ukrains'koho pys'menstva*, Vol. II, Kiev-Leipzig, 1919.

people. He is immortal. He will forever inflame a hatred of all shackles."<sup>13</sup>

"He was a peasant's son, and has become a prince in the realm of spirit.

"He was a serf, and has become a great power in the commonwealth of human culture.

"Fate pursued him cruelly throughout his life, yet could not turn the pure gold of his soul to rust, his love of humanity to hatred, or his trust in God to despair."<sup>14</sup>

Taras Shevchenko endures as a national hero. Every successive anniversary since his death in 1861 adds to the luster of his fame as a poet and national hero. Vicissitudes of shifting political boundaries in the wake of neighboring aggressions as well as internal political and social upheavals which have scattered Ukrainians all over the world, merely enhance the poet's hold upon their affections and esteem. His literary, social, and political influence places him in the forefront with Dante, Shelley, Mickiewicz, Burns, and other great poets.

His stature as a national poet remains undimmed even in the Soviet Ukraine despite the doctrinaire anti-nationalist formulas of the Communist party to make him a Soviet prototype:

"Shevchenko will be read by people of different nations in accordance with their own particular views just as each succeeding generation interprets him in the light of its own understanding, each taking from his inexhaustible legacy of whatever at the given moment fulfills the most responsive and intimate need or aspiration.

"A subtle and everlasting spell permeates his poetry because of its ideal humanism and love of people which inspired artistic masterpieces of sublime beauty and because of the poetic insight which perceived through the gloom of ages the advent of a world of peace and happiness, in which new world<sup>15</sup> —

"There'll be no enemy — no foe  
And the earth shall know  
The one weal of mother and son —  
All men are as brothers thereon."<sup>16</sup>

Shevchenko's highest ideal was to serve the truth:

Teach me with guileless lips  
To tell the truth. Help me to  
Carry out this prayer to the very end.

<sup>13</sup> V. Levynsky, *Tsars'ka Rosiia i ukrains'ka sprava*, Montreal, 1917.

<sup>14</sup> "Ivan Franko," *Slavonic Review*, 1924.

<sup>15</sup> Oles Honchar, "Vin nalezhyt' vichnosti — vinok velykomu kobzarevi," *Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk*, Kiev, 1961.

<sup>16</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Arkhimed i Halilei*.

And when I die, place your son,  
O sacred one, in a coffin and  
O'er him shed at least one tear  
From your immortal eyes.<sup>17</sup>

If we accept the premise of the early American critic, E. W. Whipple, that "poetry, in the form in which it appears in literature, may be practically defined as a record left by the greatest natures of any age, of their aspirations after truth and reality above their age," we will begin to appreciate more fully the qualities which make Shevchenko's poetry endure. The following lines from the pen of William Cullen Bryant aptly describe the enduring legacy of Shevchenko to succeeding generations of freedom lovers:

The words of fire that from his pen  
Were flung upon the lucid page  
Still move, still shake the hearts of men,  
Amid a cold and coward world.

His love of truth, too warm, too strong  
For Hope or Fear to chain or chill,  
His hate of tyranny and wrong,  
Burn in the breasts he kindled still.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Muza*.

<sup>18</sup> William Cullen Bryant, *To the Memory of William Legget*.



## THREE YEARS (TRY ROKY)

In 1829, Taras Shevchenko, a fifteen year old orphan-serf, was ordered, along with several other household servants, to make a long journey to Poland where their young master, Colonel Paul Engelhardt, a wealthy landowner, was assigned to a cavalry command post. The servants' register listed Shevchenko's qualifications as interior painter.<sup>1</sup>

During the next fifteen years Shevchenko lived in foreign countries, but the long separation did not alienate or weaken his love for Ukraine, its language and its traditions. The years that he lived in Poland and Russia broadened his knowledge of the world beyond the village, sharpened his national and political awareness and influenced to a degree the role he was destined to play in the history of his people.

The rise of nationalism in southeastern Europe and revolutionary mutterings against monarchical imperialisms echoed in his ears. He heard of the French and American Revolutions and of the participation of some of the Polish patriots as volunteers in the American War of Independence. He read accounts of the establishment of a republican form of government in America and the basic principles of its Constitution and the Bill of Rights. He was an eyewitness to the Polish uprising in 1830 against the Russian occupation of Poland. He was exposed to the spirit of liberalism and romanticism in western literature and the dreams of social and political reformers of his day. In St. Petersburg he could not fail to hear the revolutionary ideas of the Decembrists.

Following his emancipation from serfdom while indentured to an artist decorator in St. Petersburg, Shevchenko's social and intellectual interests brought him in contact with Ukrainian liberals, who shared

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<sup>1</sup> Pavlo Zaitsev, *Zhyttia Tarasa Shevchenka*, Shevchenko Scientific Society, New York-Paris-Munich, 1955.

with the Czechs, the Poles, the Serbs, and the Bulgarians in the ferment of national rebirth, marked by the enthusiastic study of folklore, ethnography, literature, and historical past of their native countries. It is known that some of the Ukrainian liberals with whom Shevchenko became acquainted had come under the influence of the widespread Masonic movement of that period and the secret lodges, whose meetings were devoted to nurturing nationalistic, humanitarian, evangelistical, and revolutionary impulses for social and political reforms, such as the abolition of serfdom, the establishment of a public school system to reduce illiteracy, promotion of the brotherhood of men, fostering of ideals of social equality, political democracy, and religion through the establishment of Bible societies.

As a talented student of painting at the Imperial Academy of Arts, Shevchenko was loved and respected by his teachers. He favored the modernistic rather than the classical style and is considered by some as a forerunner of the much later impressionistic school of painting. As a literary figure, he had to his credit a sensational book of poems which he called *Kobzar* (*The Minstrel*), and a long epic poem called the *Haidamaky* (*The Haidamaks*), based on a bloody uprising of the Ukrainian peasants against the excesses of Polish landlords in the area near Shevchenko's native village.

The *Kobzar* contained ballads and lyrics based on authentic Ukrainian scenes and themes, nationalistically romantic in spirit and written with indescribable simplicity of expression, style, and purity of the Ukrainian language as spoken by the common people. "It [*Kobzar*] revealed all the wounds, all the aches, the whole tragedy of the Ukrainian people in their personal, national, and social life."<sup>2</sup> It could be truly said that at last Ukraine had produced its greatest national hero—a poet, "an articulate voice, . . . a man who spoke forth melodiously what the heart of it means."<sup>3</sup> The poet had read and come under the influence of the *Istoriia Rusov* (*History of the Ruthenian People*)<sup>4</sup>, written about 1770 and circulated among Ukrainians in manuscript form. Written during the period of the imperial expansion of Russia under Catherine the Great, the author of the book defended the autonomy and sovereignty of the Ukrainian state. He emphasized Ukraine's struggle for its ancient rights and privileges. He painted heroic portraits of the Ukrainian Kozaks and their *hetmans* and glorified their fight for Ukrainian independence, its democratic system and its traditions of personal freedom.

<sup>2</sup> Leonid Biletsky, *Kobzar—Taras Shevchenko*, UVAN, Winnipeg, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *Hero Worship and the Heroic in History*.

<sup>4</sup> Yulian Okhrymowych, *Rozvytok ukraïns'koï natsional'no-politychnoi dumky*, Lviv-Kiev, 1922, and Michael Vozniak, *Kyrylo-Metodiïvs'ke Bratstvo*, Lviv, 1921.

While much of Shevchenko's early poetry idealized the heroic aspects of Ukrainian history, its portrayal of the social, economic, and political injustices suffered by the common people, appealed to the downtrodden Ukrainian peasants as well as to the frustrated intellectuals and the half-denationalized gentry of Kozak ancestry. Though absent from Ukraine during the flowering of his creative talent and not a free man until the age of twenty-four, his poetical works stamped him as the national genius of Ukraine by the time he was thirty years of age. He was ready to return to Ukraine. In January, 1843, he wrote from St. Petersburg: "I wade through this fiendish mud and think of Ukraine."<sup>5</sup> Early that spring he returned to his native land.

In the period between his return to Ukraine in 1843 and December 25, 1845, Shevchenko produced a series of poems which he entitled *Three Years (Try Roky)*. The *Testament* brought the collection to a close on Christmas Day, December 25, 1845.

Referring to this period of Shevchenko's life S. Efremov says: "Shevchenko began to see and understand things better when he returned to Ukraine and came face to face again with his mortal enemy—bondage, which held millions of victims firmly in its grasp."<sup>6</sup> In addition to the universal misery resulting from the economic thrall-dom of the peasants, the imperial policy of Russification had produced moral stagnation and national decay which enveloped not only the peasantry but also the upper classes, the gentry, and the landlords.

Returning to his idealized, romantically pictured Ukraine, Shevchenko found the descendants of the former freedom-loving Kozaks reduced to renegade "Little Russians," politically denationalized lordlings, oppressive masters of their enserfed fellow Ukrainians.

"The poet reviewed his earlier concepts and reached new conclusions: He became convinced that our old glory, our history which was painted as a 'saga of free people' concealed, behind an array of lofty and noble deeds, much that is lusterless and sinister; that many of the national heroes were little less than mere puppets, lackeys, and henchmen of Moscow, scum of Warsaw, who sacrificed the blood of their countrymen in pursuit of selfish gains or spilled it recklessly in behalf of alien causes fighting foreign wars, leaving to us their sons, as a legacy, their shackles together with their glory."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Taras Shevchenko, "Lysty," *Povne vydannia tvoriv*, Vol. X, M. Denysiuk Publ. Co., Chicago, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> Serhii Yefremov, *Istoriia ukrains'koho pys'menstva*, Vol. II, Kiev-Leipzig, 1919.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, See Shevchenko's *Epistle (Poslaniie)* and compare with the following lines from Byron's *Ode to Venice*: "What have they given your



Wherever he visited Ukraine, stark, ugly reality confronted him and he sang bitterly: "Ukraine is gone to sleep, overgrown with weeds, mildewed. Her heart festering in bog and mire, her desolate hearths are become teeming snake dens. Even hope is denied to her children."<sup>8</sup> "All is still, all is sad, like the ruins of Troy." "The hills are silent, the sea undulates, the mounds are melancholy and evil men rule over the children of the Kozaks."

In the alchemy of Ukrainian national rebirth, the poems he wrote upon returning to his native land in 1843 have been described as "blood-encrusted fragments and shreds of the poet's heart offered as a spiritual nourishment for his enslaved people."<sup>9</sup>

In no country did the works of any great poet influence the course of his nation's history as did the works of Shevchenko. The following passage from an essay on *Poetry of America*, published in 1844 by an American reviewer, a contemporary of Shevchenko, illustrates the scope of such influence where conditions favor its impact on history:

"All high imaginative poetry transcends the actual sphere of existence. It grasps at the solution of the dark problems of man's existence and destiny. . . Its philosophy is not a dead formula, but a living faith, by which the value of institutions is to be tested, and in obedience to which all things must be ruled. It mingles with all interests of mankind and gives voice and form to its rights, its wrongs, and its aspirations. It is, as it were, the champion of humanity, declaring the infinite worth of the individual soul and, both in anathema and appeals, striking at all social and political despotisms. The force of its practical teachings, the influence of its lofty declarations of duty and freedom, depend on the fact that man is a spiritual being with thoughts and affections transcending the sensible world, and bearing a relation to a future as well as a present life."<sup>10</sup>

The intense and far reaching influence of Shevchenko's remarkable cycle of poems, entitled *Three Years*, satisfies the test of great poetry as defined by one of the most gifted poets of England, P. B. Shelley: "The most unflinching herald, companion, and follower of the

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children in return? / A heritage of servitude and woes, / A blindfold bondage, where your hire is blows."

<sup>8</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Chyhyryn* (1843), compare with Wadsworth's description of England in 1802 in his *Sonnet to Milton*: "a fen of stagnant waters; altar, sword and pen—have forfeited their English dower." Also P. B. Shelley's vision of England in 1819, wherein: "Rulers, that neither see, nor know, nor feel, / But leech-like, to their fainting country cling— / A people, starved and stabbed in the untilled field, / Religion, Christless, Godless, and book sealed."

<sup>9</sup> V. Levynsky, *Tsars'ka Rosiia i ukrains'ka sprava*, Montreal, 1917.

<sup>10</sup> Edwin P. Whipple, *Essays and Reviews*, Vol. I, Boston, 1850.

awakening of a great people to work a beneficial change in opinion or institutions, is poetry."<sup>11</sup>

Even the power of "rude jingles" was affirmed in feudal England where the harsh lot of the peasants provoked their revolt and found its hero in John Ball whose jingles were "the first predecessors of the pamphlets of Milton and Burke. Rough as they are, they express clearly enough the mingled passions which met in the revolt of the peasants: their longing for a right rule, for plain and simple justice; their scorn of the immortality of the nobles and the infamy of the court; their resentment at the perversion of the law to the cause of oppression."<sup>12</sup>

Unlike the first collection of the *Kobzar* which had brought him great renown as a brilliant Ukrainian poet, the new poems were circulated surreptitiously among friends in manuscript copies because of their inflammatory and promethean denunciation of the tsarist regime, its functionaries, the corrupt and oppressive social and economic system, and the ruthless denationalization of Ukrainian culture and national traditions. Instead of writing lyrics and ballads to match the success of his first collection and thereby enhancing his growing fame and stature as a popular romantic poet who had emerged from the toils of serfdom to attain literary stardom, he poured out his heart in eloquent and piercing utterances against the injustice and oppression of the rulers, against the degrading and renegade servility of the upper classes, against the deadly lethargy of the enslaved peasant masses.

"Never before had he written so much so indignantly, so openly. He felt as though he were standing at the crossroads and addressing all of humanity. He denounced vehemently both the seen and unseen enemy. He poured out into the new poems he was now writing—*The Epistle (Poslaniie)*, *The Caucasus (Kavkaz)*, *The Heretic (Yeretyk)*, and the translation of *The Psalms*—his profoundest thoughts, convictions, and beliefs."<sup>13</sup>

"Shevchenko's muse inveighed most vehemently against the iniquities of the mighty of this world."<sup>14</sup> The new Shevchenko harangued, denounced, exhorted, and entreated his countrymen everywhere—the dead, the living, and the unborn—to take a sincere look at their country, realize its plight, unite and break their chains. He urged them to "wake up," be human beings and realize that their strength, freedom, and truth is to be found at home in their own Ukraine and

<sup>11</sup>P. B. Shelley, *Defense of Poetry*, 1821 (1840).

<sup>12</sup>John Richard Green, *A Short History of the English People*, Vol. I, 1915.

<sup>13</sup>Oksana Ivanenko, *Tarasovi Shliakhy*, Kiev, 1954.

<sup>14</sup>P. Kulish, *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

not in a foreign country. His new poems blazoned out the truth with a pulse of fire. Their sublime thoughts pierced the night of dark despair like stars.

"With unprecedented force Shevchenko attacked in his poems the injustice and serfdom which existed in Ukraine and reminded the petty descendants of great Ukrainian patriots of their forgotten but glorious heritage."<sup>15</sup> "And for the sake of the 'least of these,' Shevchenko raised a revolt against the social and governmental systems, the religious order and even against God himself for seemingly permitting the masses of the people to suffer wrongs and cruel oppression."<sup>16</sup>

In a melancholy introspective mood, Shevchenko wrote a poem on December 22, 1845, which he called *Three Years*. It bares a soul-searching reflection by the poet on the events of his life during the three preceding years. Unnerved by a severe illness, perplexed by the harshness of his fate, dispirited by the hopeless stupor of his countrymen, the poet speculates whether he had not wasted away the last three fleeting years of his life. Whether he had not misspent his talent in vain outpouring of bitterness; whether he had not misjudged his people and misdirected his creative efforts towards an unresponsive and callously indifferent audience. He is dejected by the realization that scarcely any of the gentry who had rejoiced at his rise to fame and whose homes he had visited as a welcome guest, shared his deep feeling for the suffering humanity or were inclined to his ideas about social and economic reform or national awakening. He, too, may have wondered whether "it was his origin which made him a fashionable cult among the liberal intelligentsia of Russia of his time" as "in the Decembrist decades poets and revolutionaries had generally been of noble origin, but Shevchenko was a son of the people."<sup>17</sup> He began to feel that he was surrounded not by enlightened human beings but by "devouring dragons" who exploited and oppressed his enslaved countrymen. A feeling of dejection, frustration, and resignation pervades this epilogue to the collection of poems which he also called *Three Years*. "Do what you will" the poet says. "Whether you loudly denounce me or softly praise my thoughts, the days of my youth are gone forever and with them their happy, romantic words. In any event, you leave me cold. My heart will not turn to you. I do not know with whom I will share my thoughts hereafter."

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<sup>15</sup> S. Yefremov, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine—A History*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1940.

Thus closed the new collection of Shevchenko's most important series of poems, or at least it would appear that three days before Christmas in 1845, Shevchenko thought so. "With this collection (*Three Years — 1843-1845*) Shevchenko went out into the world to join as an equal, the supreme geniuses of the world—Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, and all other creators of the new national treasures, inimitable and surpassed by none," wrote L. Biletsky.



## CHRISTMAS DAY — 1845

Christmas morning 1845 dawned at the home of Dr. Kozachkovsky to find Shevchenko there, gravely ill and depressed. In the prime of life and at the height of his creative powers, the poet was suddenly confronted with the eternal questions: "Was this to be the end of everything? If I should die, what then?"

He was not afraid of death. It might even be a welcome relief from his suffering. He was concerned about his thoughts being orphaned before they could develop and take wing. He was concerned lest death snuff out his dreams of a new social and political order, extinguish the torch of the flaming word with which he had rekindled hopes of freedom in the hearts of his countrymen and made vivid again the image of truth and justice.

Would his people know how he had been consumed with anger and sorrow by their degradation under serfdom and their loss of political and national freedom?

My soul! Why are you so sad?  
Why do you weep! . . . Do you not see,  
Do you not hear the human cry?  
*The Dream (Son)*

Amidst bondage and untruth,  
Death-weary people are silent.  
*The Heretic (Yeretyk)*

We will send our soul on high  
To God himself to ask how  
Much longer shall tyrants reign.  
*The Dream (Son)*

Introspectively he wonders if the excitement stirred by his poetry would help ameliorate the plight of his people. Was his personal fame a fashionable literary effervescence or did it reflect a genuine appreciation of his deep convictions—his thoughts on the majestic

qualities of human dignity and love of freedom, apprehension of which had been dulled by serfdom and foreign rule?

Would his death plunge the spirit of his people into forgetfulness again? Never before had he felt so strongly, so intuitively the truth of the thoughts that had inspired his *Kobzar* and the *Three Years*. Death might take him, but never his thoughts. "Our thought, our song, shall never die, shall never perish," was not merely a line of verse. It was a new revelation of a rich heritage of his people. They recognized it as their national glory, recited it as an article of faith and as a self-evident gospel of truth.

Contemplating his own possible death that Christmas day in the city of Pereiaslav where Hetman Khmelnytsky had sealed the ultimate doom of Ukrainian freedom by his oath of fealty to the Tsar of Muscovy in 1654, Shevchenko's indomitable spirit irrevocably abrogated the treaty of misalliance between Ukraine and Russia. His prophetic spirit reached out for lucid thoughts and conclusions. He recalled the promise he made in a recent poem about the desolation of Subotiv, the home city of Khmelnytsky:

Ukraine will rise!  
And scatter the gloom  
Of bondage. The world  
Of truth will shine, and  
Enslaved children will  
Again worship in freedom!

Was the measure of his fame to be weighed and remembered by the note of resignation so poignantly expressed in his closing poem to the *Three Years* collection or by the tone of the invincible faith in ultimate victory of right and justice which had sustained him throughout his years of adversity?

He told himself that he was not afraid of death, but that he was afraid of something worse than death—a dreaded event he visualized only a few days earlier in the poem *Days Are Passing (Dni Mynaiut')*:

But it would be frightful  
To be shackled—to die  
In bondage. Worse yet —  
To slumber, to fall asleep  
In freedom and never  
Awaken again, leave no  
Trace of any kind of one's self,  
As though it mattered not  
Whether one ever lived or died.

As a glorifier of the struggles of his people for freedom and justice, acclaimed as a national poet, hero, and prophet, Shevchenko

in contemplating the imminence of death, was deeply conscious of his spiritual obligations to his people, a concern inseparably linked with his concept of "fame." And so on Christmas day, 1845, Shevchenko wrote the three immortal stanzas which came to be popularly known, after his death, as his *Testament*. The poet appropriately appended it as the closing poem of the *Three Years* collection. It was in effect as much his solemn covenant with his God and his countrymen as a testamentary request that his mortal remains be consigned to the Ukrainian hall of fame—the high mound, the traditional and symbolic tomb of the champions of freedom of Ukraine.

Leonid Biletsky's annotated edition of the *Kobzar* gives us a vivid comment on the genesis of the *Testament*: "It is Christmas day, a day of the birth of new life, a day of spiritual rebirth. Is this the day that he should leave Ukraine and everything dear to him and die? Never! Let me die; but my people must arise and live forever. And so Shevchenko composes a legacy for his Ukrainian people: Not death, but life; not a death, but a fight; not a clang of chains on their hands and feet, but 'rise and break your chains!' With this call to life and liberation, Shevchenko concluded his collection *Three Years*."<sup>1</sup>

The *Testament* exemplifies his remarkable talent for projecting the most profound thoughts and ideas into one or two lines of verse written with utmost simplicity and forged in harmonious melody of words. It epitomizes his love of Ukraine, its scenery, its history and its traditions. It blazons his militant zeal for social and political reform and for national awakening and rebirth. It concludes with a prayer that his name should not be forgotten in the society of free people. It represents not only an epitome but also a synthesis of his life, his ideals, and his indomitable faith in the triumph of truth, justice, and freedom.

The influence of his ideas, his crusading spirit, and his popular fame have endured and even increased with the passing of time. The peasant, the factory worker, the student, and the intellectual soon learned to recite and to sing the words of his *Testament*—not as a dirge, but as a hymn of social and national regeneration. They accepted it as Shevchenko's covenant to maintain posthumous vigil over Ukraine until the day when freedom returns, however much his soul may be yearning for peace from strife. Solemnly and reverently they chanted the pledge on each passing anniversary of his death, emphasizing his sublime defiance of death in the famous words "until then I know not God," which some have construed as denial or rejection of God.

<sup>1</sup> Leonid Biletsky, *Taras Shevchenko-Kobzar*, UVAN, Winnipeg, 1952.



We recall St. Paul's "O death, where is thy sting," as an expression of sublime faith in life after death and we remember Milton's mild reproach "Doth God exact day-labor, light denied?" Shevchenko's pledge that death will not be his journey's end nor a reprieve for his soul from continuance of strife in God's work on earth, is one of the most sublime poetical expressions in the annals of great literature.

In requesting burial on a high mound overlooking Ukraine, he establishes his tomb as a witness to his soul's presence which he charges to listen to and heed the rumblings of protest and discontent and to hold communion with those who aspire to freedom until freedom is achieved. Then only will he soar to God on high.

Much has been written on the meaning of the line in the *Testament* "until then I know not God." Some have cited the phrase as evidence for the claim that Shevchenko was an agnostic or an atheist.<sup>2</sup> The Russian Archbishop Nikon called him godless.<sup>3</sup> Professor Viazigin described him as "an enemy of the chief foundation of Holy Russia—the Christian religion."<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Metropolitan Ilarion says: "Shevchenko's language is highly and broadly religious, but such was Shevchenko himself from the day he was born. His kinship with God was intimate and genuine. God was his Father and Protector and his writings bear witness to this view. Shevchenko's whole life was one of extreme hardship and sometimes he lost his equanimity and spoke and wrote harsh words to his God, the Guardian; not because Taras was godless, but because his harsh sufferings drove him to despair and dejection."<sup>5</sup>

Some discerned in the phrase a spiritual conflict between his ideal of a righteous God and a God who permitted evil to beset his people and his beloved Ukraine. Leonid Biletsky in his four volume edition of the *Kobzar* reiterates the popular interpretation of the phrase to be found in several different annotated publications of Shevchenko's poems:<sup>6</sup> "Until then—meaning as long as the enemy

<sup>2</sup> Ivan Romanchenko, *Atëizm T. H. Shevchenka*, State Publications of Fine Literature, Kiev, 1962; also, D. F. Krasyt'sky and B. O. Lobovyk, *T. H. Shevchenko—Borets' proty relihii*, Kiev, 1956; Peter Krawchuk, *Shevchenko in Canada*, published by "The Ukrainian Canadian," Toronto, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> *Taras Shevchenko—Povne zibrannia tvoriv*, State Literary Publishing House, Kiev, 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Ilarion, *Hramatychno-stylistychnyi slovnyk Shevchenkovoï movy*, Winnipeg, 1961; also, I. Vlasovsky, *Shevchenko v svitli relihii-noï dumky*, Scientific Religious Institute, Bound Brook, N.J., 1961.

<sup>6</sup> Vasyl Simovych, *Kobzar*, Winnipeg, 1960; also, Bohdan Lepkyi, *Taras Shevchenko—Povne vydannia tvoriv*, Vol. I, Kiev-Leipzig, 1920.

remains in Ukraine—I do not know God. Shevchenko's works are permeated with the concept of God as a guardian of truth on earth. The bondage of Ukraine is the result of God's acquiescence. Accordingly, the poet is ready to renounce even God for allowing his people to suffer injustice."<sup>7</sup>

As Shelley before him in England, Shevchenko saw "religion controlled by chicane and despotism."<sup>8</sup> And so remarkably as in Shelley's case "all the accidents and circumstances of his condition, from birth to his death, concurred in placing the most naturally religious of poets in a position of antagonism to the outward forms of revealed truth."<sup>9</sup>

Many of Shevchenko's reviewers and critics were inclined to interpret the phrase as expressing a militant defiance of the deity that seemingly tolerates evil and inequity. The story of man's relationship to his God contains many examples of similar posture, notably in the works of the great poets of ancient Greece. The following line from Euripides, "If gods do evil, they are not gods," is viewed as "essentially a rejection of man's creating God in his own image, a practice that was to hold the world completely for centuries after him and is today more common than not."<sup>10</sup> The Christian man faced this dilemma fairly often: "In view of the preponderance of evil in the world, many Christians had encountered difficulty after abandoning belief in the devil, in accepting the identification of love with the Godhead."<sup>11</sup>

The *Testament* line in question is not essentially a reflection of the poet's antagonism towards God for inflicting misfortune and suffering on the Ukrainian people. Nor can it be construed as an expression of his actual antagonism towards the official church of Russia which abetted social and political injustice and wrongs.<sup>12</sup> The conclusion of the twentieth century commentators that Shevchenko refuses to recognize or acknowledge a God who tolerates evil seems, at first blush, a natural emotion to attribute to such an ardent foe of autocracy and corrupt authority as the poet showed himself to be. Philosophers and theologians over the centuries have described the spiritual conflict in many different ways:

<sup>7</sup> Leonid Biletsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Edwin P. Whipple, *American Review*, July, 1845.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Edith Thompson, *The Greek Way*, W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1930.

<sup>11</sup> Homer W. Smith, *Man and His Gods*.

<sup>12</sup> Marquis de Custine in *Journey of Our Time*, 1839: "Since the usurpation of temporal authority, the Christian religion in Russia has lost its spiritual value. It is one of the wheels of despotism, nothing more." (Eng. transl.).

"When first the opposition of facts and ideals grows fully visible, a spirit of fiery revolt, a fierce hatred of the gods, seems necessary to the assertion of freedom. . . From that awful encounter of the soul with the outer world, renunciation, wisdom, and charity are born and with their birth a new life begins."<sup>13</sup>

The ideas expressed in the above quotation underlie some of the basic concepts in Shevchenko's *Testament*, colored by an intimate, personal understanding of God based upon biblical stories, folklore, and even concepts whose roots stem from Greek mythology and pagan beliefs and rites. The phrase strongly suggests the orphic doctrine appearing in the writings of Empedocles and Pindar about the wanderings and exile of the soul: "of these now am I also one, an exile from God and a wanderer having put my trust in raging strife."<sup>14</sup> Shevchenko urges strife and bloodshed in his *Testament* as a means to achieve freedom. Strife is evil and causes separation from the good—the soul is "an exile from God." By union with God immortality is achieved. "At the end of the cycle of birth, men may hope to appear among mortals as prophets, song writers, physicians, and princes; and thence they rise up, as gods exalted in honor, sharing the hearth of the other immortals and the same table, free from human woes, delivered from destiny and harm."<sup>15</sup>

Having come under the influence of the Bible in early boyhood, Shevchenko was keenly aware of God as protector of justice and of the concept of the immortality of his soul in God. "Shall not the Judge of all earth do right?"<sup>16</sup> Then shall the dust return to earth as it was; and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."<sup>17</sup>

Religious philosophers seek to rationalize man's varying moods towards God under the impact of his environment. "Three forces operate in the world history: God, fate, and human freedom. That is why history is so complex. Fate turns man's personality into the playground of irrational forces of history. At certain periods of their history nations are particularly subject to the power of fate; human freedom is less active and man feels forsaken by God."<sup>18</sup>

In the treasury of Ukrainian folklore which Shevchenko knew so well, the personification of the soul abounds in fables, ghost stories, and stories with biblical references. The disembodied soul is a real,

<sup>13</sup> Bertrand Russell, *A Free Man's Worship*.

<sup>14</sup> F. M. Cornford, *From Religion to Philosophy*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1957.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, See Psalm 43-3,4: "O send Thy light and Thy truth:— / Then will I go unto the altar of God."

<sup>16</sup> *Bible*, Genesis, XVIII, 25.

<sup>17</sup> *Bible*, Ecclesiastes, XII, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholas Berdiaev quoted from the *History of Russian Philosophy* by N. O. Lossky, International Universities Press, New York, 1951.

vital personality in many of Shevchenko's poems. The poet counsels and converses with it. With the Psalmist he asks: "My soul, why are you so sad?"<sup>19</sup> It is frequently a messenger between persons separated by death and distance; "May the Kozak souls visit Ukraine."<sup>20</sup> "Then I will send my soul to God himself on high and ask how much longer are the tyrants to hold dominion."<sup>21</sup> In his poem *The Big Crypt* (*Velykyi L'okh*) an allegory, three disembodied souls exclaim:

We are now souls and not people!  
 God instructed Peter:  
 You will admit them to heaven  
 Only when the Muscovite shall  
 Carry everything away, when  
 He has excavated the Big Crypt.

It will be readily seen that the concept of the poet's soul keeping vigil over his tomb is a common metaphor as well as a symbolical act. Shevchenko considered his creative work as God-inspired. His whole life was dedicated to doing God's work. Death would orphan the ideas and thoughts propounded in the collection of poems he called *Three Years*. But he will not let them be orphaned. The poet pledges through the covenant of his *Testament* that his soul shall keep vigil at his mound in Ukraine to inspire and encourage his countrymen to fight for the truths he espoused.

Implicit in the injunction to be remembered after his death is the poet's vow that whenever the people shall make a pilgrimage to his tomb to honor his memory with song and prayer or eulogize him on anniversaries as their national hero and prophet, his soul will continue to grace the presence of the mound until truth, justice, and freedom are attained. His *Testament* is the ever present reminder of the tasks ahead of them. Only after they shall have attained their freedom will his mission, as expressed in his thoughts, and God's truth and word be achieved. His soul will then be free to seek its reward in heaven.

We are made to feel in the overtones of the *Testament* the poet's premonition that his fame and immortality may not survive his death unless the message is heeded. As long as the people continue to remember the message, his soul shall continue to participate in the mortal strife. Once the people overcome their enemies and baptize their new found freedom in the impure blood of the foe, his soul will surrender its vigil and soar to God on high. Then only may his people honor his name in peace, softly, gently in a great family of

<sup>19</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Son* (Psalm 42-5, 11).

<sup>20</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Zaspiv*.

<sup>21</sup> Taras Shevchenko, *Son*.

free men, as one of the immortals. Like the poet himself, Shevchenko's *Testament* became immortal in the annals of Ukrainian history, and

... till the Future dares  
Forget the Poet, his fate and fame shall be  
An echo and a light unto eternity.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> P. B. Shelley, *Adonis*.

## BIBLICAL INFLUENCES

Discussing Shevchenko's membership in the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius, the eminent Ukrainian historian Michael Hrushevsky wrote: "The Brotherhood, which was bound by no ties except fellowship, looked upon Shevchenko as upon some celestial beacon—and that with a great deal of justification. Older in years, eminently illustrious as a national poet, he encouraged his younger colleagues both through the strength and the ardor of his feelings in imparting to them his somewhat radical social views, cast in a biblical mould of expression which was best suited to the evangelistic motivation of the group's Christianity. The late Drahomanov conjectured that the influence of the Kievan Brotherhood had inclined him rather deeply towards the New Testament, but this appears to me to be unlikely. Biblical influences in the poetry of Shevchenko penetrate too deeply to be attributable to the impact of his Kievan colleagues, especially since they were evangelists in the narrow sense of the word; whereas, Shevchenko's poetry reflects the Old Testament influences.

"During all of his life Shevchenko remained under the influence of the poetic treasury of the Bible stories he had learned in his childhood days from the humble village deacon-schoolteacher. Especially the harangues of the prophets delivered with threats of retribution against contemporary social injustices and the king's misrule, matched his own fiery protests during this period. His friend Kozachkovsky relates that during Shevchenko's visit in 1845 he had observed the poet mark the passages in his Bible which appealed to him as most profound. In later years (1850-1860) the influences of the Old Testament poetry appear even stronger in his writings. Each inspired feeling or experience excited both biblical images and poetical references in his imagination. He hurls the thundering phrases of the prophets against the tsarist regime; from the Kings of the Bible he selects weapons for the destruction of the tsar. In the words of the

Psalmist, he preaches social morality and in vivid biblical hues, he paints the future kingdom of truth which is to be established on earth after the coming of the social revolution.

"Drahomanov aptly suggests the similarity of the writings of Shevchenko with the works of the English social reformers of the XVII century, the Puritan Independents, who also with the aid of Bible texts projected a new social system in England and led the uprising for its implementation. Epitomizing his political program, Tsar Nicholas with his council's blessing had his royal insignia inscribed with the motto: 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy and People.' This was enough for Shevchenko, the poet of the enslaved and dispossessed peasantry, as indeed for all the liberals in Russia of that time, to arouse an equally hostile attitude towards the imperial 'people,' imperial church and the autocratic despotism.

"'Byzantine Sabaoth,' he called the state church religion so much detested by him. The well-spring of his poetry is the religion personified by Jesus and his Mother, Mary, experiencing deep, human suffering. With what warmth he recounts the legend of the Irzhav Ikon portraying the Holy Mother weeping for the Kozaks. And his *Ode To Mary*: 'All trust in thee, my radiant heaven. On your mercy, I place all my trust, Mother. I beseech thee, most sacred power of all the saints, immaculate One, I beseech thee!' Does not this ode belong to the finest religious lyric poetry the world has ever seen?

"As a poet Shevchenko never tried to crystallize his religious views and reduce them to some order. That is why the contrasts between his anti-religious expressions about the 'official' God and expressions of completely sincere religious feelings when he speaks of his personal God—about 'that bright world' which never ceased to illuminate his soul, confused his critics and students, whose approach to his ideology or his sentiments was based on an extremely narrow line of demarcation: 'atheist or orthodox?'

"Some classified him as a deist or rationalist, others as Orthodox or Church Christian, and were amazed at the contradictions which such classification developed. He typifies one of the variants so common in the contemporary enlightened society, complex and never anchored within the folds of a church Christianity or, more generally, church-religion. Shevchenko as one of the most genial, intuitive personalities of our society, deserves serious and more profound study from this viewpoint."<sup>1</sup>

We know that in the late fall of 1846, Shevchenko re-read the Bible. In his letter dated October 23, 1845 to Arkadii Rodzianko, he

<sup>1</sup> Michael Hrushevsky, *Z istoriï relihiinoï dumky na Ukraïni*, Shevchenko Scientific Society, Lviv, 1925.

wrote among other things: "Since arriving at Myrhorod, I have not been outdoors once, and besides, there is nothing to read: If it were not for the Bible, one would go crazy. I contracted a terrible cold while walking from Khorol. I tried writing poetry, but such abominable stuff came from my pen that I am ashamed to handle it. I will finish the Bible, then I will begin again. I do not expect to get well soon."

To Shevchenko, the God of his childhood, the biblical God whose image animates his poetry was a just and righteous God, even though at times he wondered why the good suffered, the evil prospered, and God kept silent:

Tsars and serfs — are equal  
Sons before God;  
Ye shall die alike,  
Prince and humble slave.  
Stand up, Oh Lord, judge  
The Earth and the evil judges!  
For yours is the Truth and the Will  
And the Glory — the world over.<sup>2</sup>

Some day God will restore freedom to us,  
Will destroy bondage. We will praise thee  
Lord, with manifold praises.<sup>3</sup>

Like Moses, Shevchenko saw his people in bondage. Like Moses, he realized that only stern and bloody measures would set his people free. Experience had proved that freedom was not to be gained by daydreaming about the bygone days when Ukraine was free. It would come only when the waters of the river were "turned to blood" as foretold by God to Moses in promising the ultimate liberation of Israel from the Egyptian bondage.

Shevchenko's great love of his native Ukraine animates his translations of King David's ardent prayers to the Lord God of Israel, the protector and avenger of the Israelite nation. In translating the Psalms, the foremost bard of Ukraine attuned his harp to the eloquence of David's prayers for redress of the wrongs suffered by his people.

Lord, how long shall the wicked,  
How long shall the wicked triumph?<sup>4</sup>

His translation of the 149th Psalm is a martial paean against the wicked rulers of his country:

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<sup>2</sup> T. Shevchenko's translation of 82nd Psalm.

<sup>3</sup> T. Shevchenko's translation of 42nd Psalm.

<sup>4</sup> T. Shevchenko's translation of 94th Psalm.



We will sing a new song unto the Lord; —  
 With psaltry and cymbals, we will sing  
 How the Lord punishes the wicked and helps the just —  
 The righteous in their glory and the  
 Meek rejoice and praise the name of the Lord; —  
 And in their hands, keen, tempered,  
 Two-edged swords to execute vengeance  
 Upon the heathen and punishment upon the people.  
 They will bind their greedy kings with iron chains  
 And their nobles with hand-wrought fetters;  
 And upon the wicked destroyers they will  
 Pass their own just judgment;  
 And glory and honor shall be to them forever,  
 Glory to the righteous.

According to the Bible, David, a young shepherd boy, who played the harp, was selected by God to become king of Israel. Young David became the champion of freedom for his people when he faced Goliath without armor and sword and slew him. Translating the Psalms at the age of 31, when he was acclaimed a national poet hero of Ukraine, Shevchenko no doubt recalled his own orphan days as a young village shepherd who assisted the deacon-teacher to read the Psalter at funerals until he virtually knew the Psalms by heart. David was 30 years old when he began his reign as King of Israel. The image of David, the poet warrior of Israel, loomed significantly inspiring to Shevchenko, the poet hero of Ukraine, in December of 1845.

"From the depths of despair, from their hopeless situation under the yoke of the Philistines, Israel within a few decades climbed to a position of power, esteem and greatness. All that was the work of David, the poet and singer of psalms."<sup>5</sup>

The imagery reflected in the mind's eye, upon reading Shevchenko's *Testament*, is engendered in biblical concepts of a righteous God, administering justice, inflicting punishment upon the wicked, rewarding the just, extending forgiveness, and accepting reconciliation.

The Hebrew concept of "God as an administrator of justice"<sup>6</sup> is reflected in the American revolutionary and constitutional traditions and symbolism. Shevchenko yearned for the day when Ukraine would have its own George Washington with a new and just system of laws under a righteous God. Politically he was a kindred spirit of Jefferson and Lincoln.

When I think about slavery, I shudder to think  
 that there is a just God.

<sup>5</sup> Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, W. Morrow & Co., New York, 1956.

<sup>6</sup> E. Barrett Prettyman, *The Nation's Business*, June, 1962.

The God who gave us life, gave us liberty  
at the same time.<sup>7</sup>

Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not  
for themselves, and under a just God, cannot  
long retain it.<sup>8</sup>

We see this concept eloquently reaffirmed by Wendell J. Brown in his essay on "What Liberty Is," published in the *American Bar Association Journal*:

"In the search for a firm understanding of what liberty is, time and again I have returned to the thought that wherever men have dared to think in terms of a free nation for themselves and their posterity, they have thought in terms of a just and righteous God."<sup>9</sup>

The evidence appears to be overwhelming that Shevchenko's revolutionary views on economic and social justice reflected his own personal experiences and reaction to the system of serfdom and foreign domination. They were fully developed and expressed by him in his poetry long before he had any contact with the writings of personalities of the Russian revolutionary liberals for whom the Soviet writers and party functionaries claim an important influence on Shevchenko's ideological development. The pragmatic malcontents and messianic reformers of the Bible supplied the higher inspiration for Shevchenko. All of his major poems affirm the Jeffersonian belief that the natural rights of man came from God—a conviction in the minds of the people who supported the American Revolution that the liberties of a nation are the gift of God. "We do not claim them under the charters of kings, or legislators, but under the King of Kings," as Jefferson expressed it.

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Summary View of the Rights of British America*.

<sup>8</sup> Abraham Lincoln, Letter to H. L. Pierce, 1859.

<sup>9</sup> *American Bar Association Journal*, Vol. 47, March, 1961.



## MOUNDS

### A. SHEVCHENKO'S MOUND

Shevchenko's request to be buried on a mound was fulfilled. Death overtook him in February of 1861 in St. Petersburg where he was buried.

Late in the spring of the same year his body was returned to Kiev for burial in his beloved Ukraine. The sad, solemn homeward journey of the poet's remains culminated in universal popular homage, solemn religious services, and oratorical acclaim in Kiev.

Almost a two mile long procession followed the cortege to the bank of the Dnieper where the coffin was placed aboard a steamboat to be carried downstream from Kiev on the swift current of the mighty father Dnieper to the city of Kaniv.<sup>1</sup>

From Kaniv, a vast throng of peasants who had come from miles around, accompanied the hearse, a Kozak wagon hand-drawn by his bereaved countrymen, for miles over the ancient Kaniv hills until they reached the highest elevation whose summit overlooked the wide sweep of the Dnieper and the broad panorama of Ukrainian valleys and grassy lowlands. There on May 22, 1861 at 7:00 o'clock in the evening, Shevchenko was re-buried on top of Monk's Hill, which the people immediately renamed Shevchenko's mound.

Under the guidance and inspiration of Shevchenko's artist friend, Gregory Chestakhivsky, peasants and artisans from the Kaniv area gathered boulders and brought up large quantities of earth to raise a high mound over Shevchenko's grave.<sup>2</sup>

The authorities discouraged visitors to the mound, and constant obstacles were placed to its maintenance and repair. The Russian

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<sup>1</sup> P. L. Shestopal, *Mohyla T. H. Shevchenka*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, Kiev, 1954.

<sup>2</sup> Viacheslav Davydenko, "Ne zabuly pomianuty," *Svoboda Almanac*, Jersey City, 1961.

government would not permit the purchase of the site for a permanent memorial, and allowed only a leasehold interest to be acquired. Close friends of the poet persisted in providing for its care and maintenance, particularly B. Shevchenko who at one time had been authorized by Taras Shevchenko to acquire the site for a home the poet dreamed of building on the Dnieper. Periodic improvements were made despite administrative discouragements.

A new cross was ordered in 1883, but it was impounded by the police for about a year because the four lines of Shevchenko's poem which were to be inscribed on the tablet were offensive to the Russian government. These were:

Love your Ukraine.  
Pray God for her;  
Love her in adversity,  
Love her in her most critical hour.

In time Shevchenko's mound became a mecca for Ukrainian pilgrims from all walks of life. In 1914 the Russian government placed the mound under military and police guard to prevent the observance of the centennial anniversary of the poet's birth.

In the wake of the rebirth of the Ukrainian Republic in 1918, monuments of Shevchenko sprang up all over Ukraine and in the far corners of the world wherever Ukrainians are found.

In 1964 in observance of the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the poet's birth, a heroic bronze monument of Shevchenko was dedicated in Washington, the capital city of the United States, pursuant to a joint resolution of Congress, thus adding to the great American heritage of freedom —

One spirit to the souls our fathers had,  
One freeman more, America, to thee.<sup>3</sup>

## B. UKRAINIAN MOUNDS

Shevchenko was the first to ask our silent mounds what they are. And to him alone they gave an answer—clear as God's word.<sup>4</sup>

"On the banks of the Dnieper, in the provinces of Kiev and Poltava, almost every mile of the plain boasts a high mound, even tens of mounds in some areas. What do these numerous and somber

<sup>3</sup> Lord Byron, *Ode to Venice*.

<sup>4</sup> P. Kulish, "Ruska pys'mennist'," *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

mounds on the banks of the Dnieper say to the observant heir of Ukrainian heritage?

"They speak of freedom and bondage.

"My beautiful, sturdy and freedom-loving Ukraine sorrowfully filled its large and countless mounds with corpses of its own free men and its enemies. She did not suffer its fame to be sullied; she trampled underfoot her foe and oppressor, dying free and undaunted. That is what the mounds and ruins signify. That is why your songs, my proud countrymen, are sad and sorrowful. Freedom inspired them. Heavy and lonely bondage gave voice to them."<sup>5</sup>

The above is Shevchenko's personal account of Ukrainian mounds, which like the river Dnieper, blend in his mind the natural and symbolic in the Ukrainian heritage, so vividly expressed in his poetry.

Mound builders lived in Ukraine even in prehistoric times. One of the earliest reports on the burial of important people on the banks of the Dnieper is reported as follows by Herodotus: "The tombs of their kings are in the land of the Gerrki, who dwell at the point where Borysthenes (Dnieper) is first navigable. Here, when the king dies, they dig a grave, which is square in shape and of great size. There the body of the dead king is laid in the grave prepared for it, stretched upon a mattress; after this they set to work and raise a vast mound above the grave, all of them vying with each other and seeking to make it as high as possible."<sup>6</sup>

An Arabian traveler of the tenth century, Ibn-Dust, made the following report on the burial of the dead in Ukraine: "When an important person among them dies, they dig a large barrow, resembling a large house and bury him in it fully clothed including the golden bracelets which he wore. Further, they place in the mound much food, jars filled with liquids and coins. Finally they immure his beloved wife close to the entrance where she dies."<sup>7</sup>

In his *Istoriia Ukrainy vid starynnykh chasiv*, P. Kulish, Shevchenko's close friend, has the following interesting account of the mounds in Ukraine: "A visitor is amazed even today to see how many burial barrows, protective walls, sentry mounds and other earth fills are to be found in this fertile land. Some of the mounds and city walls remain from the Varangian invasions or from earlier prehistoric times. Some were erected during the wars with the Tatar hordes—many remain from the days, according to the song, when the Kozak blood mingled and congealed with the Polish during their endless wars.

<sup>5</sup> T. Shevchenko, "Mandrivka z pryemnistiu ta i ne bez morali," *Tvory*.

<sup>6</sup> Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, tr. by George Rawlinson, Book IV, Ch. 1, The Modern Library, New York, 1942.

<sup>7</sup> M. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941; see also Ivan Tyktor, *Velyka istoriia Ukrainy*, Winnipeg, 1948.

"All new Ukrainian settlements began with an earth wall built around them. Out on the steppe, they erected high mounds within sight of each other so that the lookout sentries could see each other and warn the settlers against the Tatar raiders. The lookout mounds stretched from settlement to settlement. In that way Ukraine could tell from whence to expect an attack.

"Even the Polish crown soldiers during their sojourn on the frontier in times of peace were required, under military orders, to erect observation mounds. In Ukraine there developed a special professional class—the so-called mound builders. Court documents and other papers frequently mention them on a par with the sulphur workers who erected sulphur kilns, brewers who worked in distilleries, wine-makers who fired ovens and polished kettles. The mound builders were highly regarded by the Kozaks in their campaigns against the Polish magnates. Every Kozak encampment could depend on them for quick protection by means of an earth rampart and a trench.

"The face of Ukraine is scarred everywhere with earth mounds. They are the silent chroniclers of the gallant defenses of our country against the pagans and of its struggle against the rapacious magnates."<sup>9</sup>

The mounds were sacred symbols of Ukraine's sacrifices for its freedom. As such, Shevchenko regarded their excavation by the Russians as desecration by a hated ruler of Ukraine:

My cherished mounds  
The Moskal tears asunder.

Having silenced him by banishment into distant Siberia, Moscow is capable even of the physical destruction of Ukraine, Shevchenko fears:

Maybe Moscow has consumed Ukraine by fire;  
Emptied the Dnieper into the Black Sea;  
Gouged open the high mounds,  
Our glory — Dear God,  
Have pity, Dear God.

To Shevchenko, the mounds were mute witnesses, visible symbols of the past glory of a free Ukraine and in that sense an inspiration to fight for liberty:

I sing — the high mound opens.  
The Zaporozhians (Kozaks)  
Pour over the wide steppe to the sea.

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<sup>9</sup> P. Kulish, *Istoriia Ukraïny od naidavnishykh chasiv*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

Recall the righteous Hetmans,  
Where are their mounds ?

High are the mounds,  
Dimly silhouetted  
Like the hills,  
As they converse softly  
With the wind in the fields  
About liberty — witnesses  
Of our tradition and glory,  
Whispering about freedom.

It is fitting for you,  
My minstrel friend,  
To visit the mound,  
There to sing and reminisce.

All those mounds — they are all  
Filled with our corpses.  
That is where freedom sleeps.  
It fell gloriously — it fell with  
Our Kozaks.

Count A. K. Tolstoy (1817-1875), an acquaintance of Shevchenko, who had spent the early years of his life in Ukraine, so loved Ukraine that he called it "his fatherland." In his poem *The Mounds*, the spirit and the lore of the Ukrainian mounds speaks through the following lines:

There's a mound towers high in the Steppe land,  
In a loneliness sublime,  
Where has slumbered a giant and hero  
Since the olden, olden time.

Oh! Bravely then the musicians  
Bent over their strings of gold  
To the dead 'neath the mound in the Steppe land  
Gave glory and praise untold :

Oh! Proud Hero, thy people forever  
Will cherish thy memory  
And age upon age shall perish  
But not the thought of thee!

And if ever the mound in the Steppe land  
Is leveled and flat like the plain,  
Thy glory shall circle the earth ball  
And the stars shall tell it again.





## THE STEPPE

The word steppe is of Ukrainian origin and is of masculine gender. Curiously enough, its Russian counterpart is of feminine gender.<sup>1</sup> Although descriptions of the characteristic Ukrainian steppe date back to the dawn of recorded history, the term is of comparatively recent origin. In the famous Ukrainian epic of the twelfth century, *The Tale of Ihor's Armament (Slovo O Polku Ihorevi)*, the steppe is referred to many times but always by the word *pole* or field.

### A. STEPPE — GRASS AND WOODLAND PLAIN

"In the steppe region, the steppe is not the only plant formation. Above all we must differentiate between the meadow steppe of the transition zone and the real steppe of the south, as well as the desert steppe in some districts of Crimea and the Caucasus. Besides this shrub formation, meadow-woods (*luhy*) and real forests are found in the steppe region.

"In the vegetation of the meadow-steppe, grasses and herbs predominate. Of the grasses, the steppe species are the most characteristic (*tyrsa, kovil'*); of the herbs, the lily-like growths. The grass in the northern part of the steppe region is very luxuriant and thick and attains great heights, although the times when a rider and his horse might disappear in the grass belong to the past. High weeds and thistles form thickets of great luxuriance. In the spring, when the first young grass begins to sprout up, and the blossoming herbs convert the steppe into a carpet of flowers, when everything is resplendent with the fullness of life and beauty, then the Ukrainian steppe presents a wonderful picture. But this picture is not lasting. The heat and the drought transform the fresh, green, primitive color

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<sup>1</sup> Vladimir I. Dal, *Slovar russkoi movy*, St. Petersburg-Moscow, 1909.

into yellow and brown. Grasses and herbs wither and die away, and only the roots and seeds preserve the living power of the plant, surviving the autumn drought and the severe cold of the winter, once more to wrap the steppe in a bridal gown in the spring."<sup>2</sup>

## B. LURE OF THE ZAPOROZHIAN STEPPE

"The waist high grass of the steppe, surged and billowed like the restless sea, undulating in furrowing troughs and collapsing crests before the sudden breeze and reflecting yellow, blue and red floral hues in its wake. Streaming from the cloudless sky, the warm rays of the sun beat on the surface like golden rain striking each blade of grass and herb stem, as they exhale fresh, fragrant coolness.

"Inhale deeply and you crave for more of the fresh coolness with the fervor of a thirsty wanderer panting in the scorching heat for the cool waters of a pool he stumbles upon during a midsummer drought. Nothing but the divine grass is visible as far as the eye can see between the earth and sky.

"Grasshoppers and locusts swarm under every bush and every blade of grass, flitting from flower to flower like the bright hued butterflies. Eagles and cranes circle high like dark cloud specks in the bright sky above. Falcons preyfully hover in one place, flapping their wings as though impaled on a garland snare. As the grass billows and crackles, an antelope startled by the sudden rustle, dashes with winged speed, its head held high and its antlers caressing the nape of its neck. Everything around you is alive, breathes, tinkles and whistles. In the distant haze loom enchanted ponds, dreamy, gently undulating. Shadowy islands and tapered mounds appear, then suddenly vanish as the green grass billows over the steppes again.

"The steppes of the Zaporozhian Ukraine are a pleasing sight and make the heart mellow. Melancholy thoughts possess the soul and lure it to soar into the unknown, for there is no haven for it on earth just as there is no refuge for a man in the limitless steppe."<sup>3</sup>

No one escaped completely the lure of the steppe. Josef Bogdan Zaleski, the eminent Polish poet and contemporary of Shevchenko, captured its spell in the following lines of his poem *The Steppe (Step)* :

Steppe, dear Steppe, you are our mother,  
All things we heired from you.

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Rudnytsky, *Ukraine, The Land and Its People*, New York, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> Oleksa Storozhenko, "Marko Proklyatyi," *Tvory*, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1911.

You gave Phantasie as brother,  
Children of one birth we grew.  
Then make us rich again,  
You gave us song, a second brother,  
Song, the soul of our Ukraine.

Russian poets, too, had journeyed into the steppe or lived on the estates in the steppe and succumbed to its subtle fascination as well as to its traditions of freedom. While living on his father's estate in the steppe, A. V. Koltsov fell in love with a beautiful Ukrainian peasant girl who was a serf. His grief, when the poet's father sold her to another landowner, is felt poignantly in the melancholy poem *The Steppe in Spring*:

Spacious steppe — land mine,  
Lonely steppe — land mine,  
Why so sadly now  
Dost thou look at me?

Where's thy splendor gone,  
Where's thy emerald green,  
And dew-pearls fine  
Of thy flower-caskets?

Where have gone the days,  
Where from dawn to dusk,  
Thou didst hear them sing  
All thy merry birds?

Richly didst thou spread,  
Like a tapestry,  
And the morning pink  
Touched thee like a blush,  
Even on the midnight black  
Gently the wind  
Aye! Caressingly —  
Bent to kiss thy breast  
Bent to comfort thee  
Or as mothers do,  
Sang beside thy sleep.

Night transforms the fascination of the steppe into new magic of shadow, scent, sound, and color in Nicholas Hohol's (Gogol) story of the Zaporozhian Kozak, Taras Bulba:

"In the evening a great change comes over the steppe. All its many hued expanse caught the sun's last flaming reflection and darkened gradually so that the dusk could be seen closing over it, painting it dark green; the vapors thickened: every flower, every herb breathed forth its scent, and the whole steppe was redolent. Broad bands of rosy gold, as if daubed on with a gigantic brush,

stretched across the dark, blue tinted fields; here and there shreds of fluffy, transparent clouds gleamed whitely, and the freshest and most enchanting of breezes stirred the surface of the grass, gentle as sea waves and softly caressed the cheek. All the music that had resounded in the day was hushed and replaced by another. The spotted marmots crept out of their holes, sat on their hind legs and made the steppe resound with their whistling. A swan's cry was wafted, ringing silvery in the air, from some secluded lake.

"After supper the Kozaks turned their hobbled horses on the grass and lay down to sleep, stretching themselves out on their cloaks. The stars looked down upon them. Their ears caught the teeming world of insects that filled the grass, their rasping, whistling and chirping, which, magnified the still air, rang clear and pure in the night and lulled the drowsy ear. If one of them happened to awake and arise he saw the steppe spangled far and near with sparkling glowworms. At times the night sky was illuminated in spots by the distant glare of the dry reeds burning on the meadows and riverbanks, and then, dark flights of swans, winging their way northward, were suddenly lighted up by a silvery-pink gleam, and it seemed as if red kerchiefs were flying in the dark heavens."

### C. THE STEPPE — THE MATRIX OF STRIFE AND FREEDOM

The steppe influenced profoundly the history of Ukraine and molded the spirit of the Ukrainian people.

"The home of the Ukrainian people is the vast and fertile prairie stretching from the Carpathian mountains eastward to the Sea of Azov. Here the aboriginal Slavic tribes from which the Ukrainians descend lived from time immemorial. But while God favored the land with His gifts, man was not left to live there in peace and abundance. Because of the richness of the country, neighboring peoples have always looked upon Ukraine with envious eye. From prehistoric times Ukraine has been a battlefield between east and west, north and south. Waves of nomadic tribes of Iranian and Altaic origin, coming from beyond the Caspian Sea, have beat upon the Pontic steppes in constant succession for ages."<sup>4</sup>

Long before the emergence of the Ukrainian state in the 9th century, many different cultures had flowered in and vanished from the steppe, leaving in their wake a story of adventure in an environment favoring equality of opportunity for the colonizers, fortune seek-

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<sup>4</sup> George Vernadsky, *Bohdan, Hetman of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941.

ers, refugees, marauders and restless dissidents of all kinds to compete with one another and with nature for the rich bounties of the steppe. "Here freedom flourished," is the way Shevchenko described the environment of the steppe.

When the early Ukrainian kingdom whose domain encompassed many principalities, crumbled before the periodic and devastating onslaughts of the nomadic Tatar hordes of Asia, the princes of Poland and Lithuania picked up the pieces and through dynastic ties and military conquests absorbed the Ukrainian lands. In the process of assimilating and replacing Ukrainian institutions of government and the democratic practices and customs of the Ukrainian people, the foreign rulers encountered stiff and often irreconcilable opposition. From their earliest political period, the Ukrainian people whose ethnographic settlements occupied the land area between the Polish and Russian people, have been distinguished by a basic democratic ideal, the principle of a *viche* or moot or folk parliament founded on a custom of settling administrative, legislative, and judicial issues and proposals by an assembly of free men. This custom recognized equal political rights of each individual in society. The customs and traditions had the quality of common law administered by elective officials and an independent system of church or parish courts having jurisdiction over social, economic, moral as well as religious cases, administered by popularly elected clergy.<sup>5</sup>

The basic ideal of the Great Russian nation is the principle of absolutism which the people respect to the degree that they always waive in its favor all of their individual freedoms. Absolutism has always been the historic ideal of the Russians.<sup>6</sup>

The dominant political ideal in Poland has always been the rule of the aristocracy.<sup>7</sup>

Ukraine's wars with these neighbors were waged not only in defence of its territorial integrity but also for the preservation of its democratic system and traditions of freedom. The history of the causes that led to the war of Ukrainian Independence and the war of American Independence as well as the spirit of the two nations have much in common. American historians who found that "the idea of sovereignty of the people, the modern world's dominant ideal of democratic rule, may be said to have originated, in the days of Elizabeth and James, with those small congregations of separatists

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<sup>5</sup> Volodymyr Antonovych, *Korotka istoriia kozachchyny*, Kolomyia, 1912; and R. Lashchenko, *Lektsii po istorii ukrains'koho prava*, Prague, 1923.

<sup>6</sup> V. Antonovych, *op. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

who asserted their right to meet and worship in their own way,"<sup>8</sup> will be agreeably surprised to find that in the steppes of Ukraine, the characteristic Ukrainian political ideal, the ideal of the sovereignty of the people, was reasserting itself in the democratic practices and traditions of the Ukrainian Kozaks and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as early as the 16th century.

"Under the Kozak banners, our Ukraine, held in contempt and scorned by its neighbors, showed to all the world that it could, even in the seventeenth century, expel from its land savage and inhuman rulers and establish the people's will and sovereignty in place of the politically entrenched one."<sup>9</sup>

The struggle waged by the Ukrainian Kozaks to preserve their liberties, franchises, and immunities and their republican form of government as symbolized by the Sich is comparable to the struggle between the American colonists and the English King and Parliament. "The ever-recurring clash between the provincial governor, symbol of the monarchical principle in government and the assembly, symbol of the democratic principle, worked incessantly to awake the colonial sense of divergence between the American interests and those of England. . . The leveling effect of the primitive life on the frontier of the British Empire had developed a spirit of individualism and separation."<sup>10</sup>

Many of the factors that led to colonization in America were characteristic of the colonization of the steppe by the Ukrainians. The ascendancy of the Polish aristocratic rule over Ukrainian territory in the 16th and 17th centuries created unrest and upheavals among the oppressed and dispossessed Ukrainian population.

"The gentry and the nobility had no responsibilities but enjoyed many privileges; they were freed from military service and the payment of taxes; they possessed legislative power and made selfish use of it; they elected judges and other high officials from among their own number; they were given the crown lands for life use, to be managed like personal estates; they alone could hold political and ecclesiastical offices. . . In the absence of law and justice, they were accustomed to settle everything by force, even the king being forced to submit to their dictation."<sup>11</sup>

"The peasants were deprived of all their rights, civil and personal as well as political. In their desperate position there was no

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<sup>8</sup> Claude H. Van Tyne, *The Causes of the War of Independence*, Boston and New York, 1922.

<sup>9</sup> P. Kulish, "Istoriia Ukraïny," *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

<sup>10</sup> Claude H. Van Tyne, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> M. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941.

legal recourse. Two alternatives were left to them—rebellion or flight; of these they chose the latter."<sup>12</sup>

They escaped individually and in small groups into the steppe. "Here were no masters of the earth. Here no one had yet arrogated power and privileges unto his autocratic self. Here the common man—fugitive, serf, vagabond, nonconformist, bandit, whoever he might be, whatever his social and racial origin—might still assert his will and profess the dignity of his person. He still had the chance to initiate and cultivate his own democratic community."<sup>13</sup>

"This is exactly what the Kozak did. At first he was a peaceful tiller of the soil or a wanderer in search of food, freedom, and a new life. Fighting was a means to an end—physical survival. But alone he was no match for the galloping tribesmen or the roving Moham-medan enemy. Besides, he was unaccustomed to solitude. He came from a village and was irrepressibly gregarious. He craved for society and companionship. For purposes of defense and comradeship he banded together with others—strangers, wayfarers, adventurers like himself."<sup>14</sup>

"After the year 1570," writes the Ukrainian historian P. Kulish, "beyond the cataracts, on the islands of the lower Dnieper, far from the Polish gentry, a Kozak brotherhood was founded where all were equal. This brotherhood founded the famed Zaporozhian Sich, which kept large supplies of arms and gunpowder, where chivalry was instilled into the young Kozaks and where no women were allowed under any pretext."<sup>15</sup>

"What sustains Ukraine, if not the Zaporozhian Sich? What sustains the Sich if not the ancient, immemorial customs? No one can tell when the knighthood of the Kozaks began. It began in the days of our famous forebears the Varangians (Vikings), who sought world glory over land and sea."<sup>16</sup>

"Anybody could join the Kozak society: no one was asked who he was, to what religious denomination he belonged or to what nation. Community, according to the conception of a Ukrainian, is not at all that of the Russian *mir*. Community is a voluntary assembly of people. Whoever wishes can take part in it, and whoever does not, is free to leave it. Thus it was in the Zaporozhian region. Whoever wished to join it, did so; whoever wished to leave it, could do so at will. According to the popular conception, every member of the com-

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Maurice Hindus, *The Cossacks*, Garden City, 1945.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine—A History*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1940.

<sup>16</sup> P. Kulish, "Chorna Rada," *Tvory*, Vol. V, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.



munity is in himself an independent individual, self-sufficient and self-governing. His duties with regard to his community are contained only in the sphere of those relations which establish a connection between its members for the purpose of mutual defense and general convenience."<sup>17</sup>

"Essentially the Kozak was a serf who made his way to freedom. He was the voice of protest against the social inequalities and political barbarities of his age, the sword of vengeance against those responsible for both."<sup>18</sup>

"In time these voluntary bands expanded, their power became greater. They not only fought off attacks but launched onslaughts of their own on enemy hideouts or passing trade caravans. The more closely they drew together, the more they realized the need for common usage, the readier they were to work out a body of unwritten laws and customs to govern their relations to one another and the outside world. Out of these bands and communal associations there grew up, about the middle of the sixteenth century, two Kozak states, one was on the Don, the other on the Dnieper—the first made up largely of Russians, the other of Ukrainians. The Don republic lost much of its independence, though not its rebelliousness, in 1614, but the one on the Dnieper (Ukrainian) held out until 1775."<sup>19</sup>

"Equality and liberty were the supreme law and custom of the Dnieper republic (the Zaporozhian Sich)... The governing body of the republic was the *Rada* (Council) which was a kind of folk parliament. It had power of life and death over all members, including the hetmans. Every Kozak enjoyed the right to participate in the *Rada*, and once a year the chief hetman rendered a report to this body. If he abused his powers, the *Rada* could sentence him to death. He was subject to recall before his term of office expired."<sup>20</sup>

"Far and wide grew the fame of the Dnieper republic. The absence of class distinctions, of authoritarian rule, of the subjugation of one man by another, attracted an ever-growing stream of adventurers... The Kozak was the champion crusader of folk democracy... Like the immigrant to America, the Kozak was a pioneer and a colonizer, but unlike the immigrant he was a soldier."<sup>21</sup>

"But in a short time these happy settlers suffered a great disappointment. The nobles like a plague of swarms of mosquitos, followed them to the frontier and as soon as the land was well settled

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<sup>17</sup> Nicholas Kostomarov, *Istorychni doslidy i monohrafii*, Vol. IX, St. Petersburg, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Maurice Hindus, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

and relieved of raids by the Tatars, began to claim it. Those who believed that they had freed themselves forever by settling 'on God's land' found that the nobility and institution of serfdom followed them over here."<sup>22</sup>

The American colonial settlers experienced somewhat similar land "grabs" after they had staked out desirable farm lands, cleared them through backbreaking labors and erected local defenses against the Indian raiders. Wealthy merchants and politicians from New York "secured enormous land grants by connivance with disreputable governors, notably Fletcher and Cornbury, and it was said that by the time Fletcher left, three quarters of the entire available land in the colony had been granted to thirty persons, one grant under Cornbury being two million acres."<sup>23</sup> "Some settlements were made out on the frontier, but these were perpetually harried by the demands of the landlords."<sup>24</sup> If, when they tramped westward with their families and few belongings, they held courage and hope in their hearts, they also lodged bitterness there against the colonial rich whom they deemed responsible for their plight."<sup>25</sup>

Just as the "colonial assemblies" in America, "were even as early as the 17th century, conscious of their rights which prompted them to challenge royal authority,"<sup>26</sup> so the Ukrainian Kozaks challenged the authority of Polish kings and tycoon landlords to abridge their rights or to discipline them. "Where others are fighting with words and speeches, they fight with deeds."<sup>27</sup> The Kozaks made the assumption (worthy of John Adams, the philosopher of the American Revolution) that "they were subject to no other authority than that of their elective officials, and that they were free from any responsibility but that of military service. They claimed that they did not have to pay any taxes, work for the nobles, or humble themselves before the power of the nobles or their courts. Moreover, they believed that they had the right to collect from the rest of the population, including the townspeople and the servitors of the nobles and the

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<sup>22</sup> M. Hrushevsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America*, Boston, 1931.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* Note: "Again and again, and in all of the thirteen original colonies, it must have seemed to the actual settler of small means that every hand was turned against him to prevent his becoming a man of property, the owner of at least fifty acres, and thus a free man who could vote." Steward H. Holbrook, *Dreamers of the American Dream*, Garden City, 1957.

<sup>26</sup> Yov Boretsky, the Metropolitan of Kiev, as quoted from his famous protest of 1621 in *Narys istorii Ukraïny*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, Ufa, 1942.

<sup>27</sup> M. Hrushevsky, *op. cit.*

king, all the supplies needed for war."<sup>28</sup> In addition to military obligations, the members of the Sich brotherhood practiced various crafts and engaged in agricultural pursuits. There were carpenters, shoemakers, tanners, bakers, millwrights, wagoners, gunsmiths, bookkeepers, clerks, farmers, dairymen, beekeepers, herders, saddlemakers, tailors, hunters, fishermen, and civil administrators. A pattern of dual form of military and civil government developed on a broad basis of voluntary association of free men, each doing his share of work. Any newcomer had a free choice of the unit he wished to join. Some 38 military and administrative units constituted the Sich brotherhood which owned and managed all the assets in common. Land and its resources such as the forests, meadows, streams, and the various land rights were divided by lot annually among the administrative units for cultivation and utilization.<sup>29</sup>

Many colonists chose to stake out private plots of land beyond the commons of the Sich. Such settlers married and raised families. Domestic trade and commerce developed; markets flourished and international trade attracted many foreign merchants and caravans. In the towns religious and educational centers were founded. "One of the prominent aspects of cultural uplift in Ukraine during this period is the spread of learning and centers of learning. In the second half of the 17th century, many schools appeared in Ukraine—Jesuit, Protestant, Catholic, Uniate, and Orthodox."<sup>30</sup>

Printing presses were established. Books were published and small-scale manufacturing developed. Religious brotherhoods on the pattern of craft guilds arose to promote not only their business interests, but to preserve the Ukrainian Orthodox religion with its own independent clergy and church courts from the encroachments of the Catholic Church and of the Polish state and gentry. The backwash of the Protestant Reformation created a religious ferment also in Ukraine, but the rival Orthodox and Catholic faiths continued to dominate the religious strife with the emergence of a compromise in the form of a Uniate Church in areas where Polish influence was most dominant.

Gradually, "this alteration in national life increased the number of the Kozaks and their importance and they became a great social force, powerful enough to oppose the whole manorial system of Po-

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<sup>28</sup> Nataliia Polonska-Vasylenko, "Do istoriï povstannia na Zaporizhzhzi," *Symposium*, UVAN, New York, 1952; also, Volodymyr Sichynsky, "A French Description of Ukraine 300 Years Ago," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 1, New York, 1950.

<sup>29</sup> *Narys istoriï Ukraïny*, op. cit.

<sup>30</sup> M. Hrushevsky, op. cit.

land and to hold out promise of freedom for the masses of the Ukrainian people and the destruction of the nobility."<sup>31</sup>

In the decisive Revolution of 1648, the Ukrainian Kozaks under their great elected leader, *Hetman* Bohdan Khmelnytsky, crushed the Polish aristocratic rule in a series of military campaigns which culminated in virtual restoration of the Ukrainian national independence as a Kozak Republic. The war was immensely popular with the masses. It stemmed the Polonization of the Ukrainian upper classes and restored the national loyalties of the Kozaks who had been in the service of the Polish crown and the Polish magnates and princes. It made the downtrodden, exploited, and enslaved Ukrainian peasant a free man as well as a veteran of the war of national liberation.

Many popular heroes emerged during the bitter and bloody conflict to inspire patriotic fervor and preserve in song the exploits and glories of Kozak freedom, born, nurtured, and won on the Ukrainian steppe. "During the heroic age of Ukrainian history, when the sturdy Kozaks fought in innumerable campaigns and in many parts of Europe, Ukraine was a sort of no-man's land, a dangerous frontier region, the scene of many fierce campaigns, where the Kozaks maintained a turbulent independence amid the contesting ambitions of Russia, Poles, Turks and Crimean Tatars, who maintained an independent state, subject to the hegemony of the Turkish Sultan, until the eighteenth century. It is this exposure to constant danger that imparted to the pioneer Ukrainians many qualities of American frontiersmen: daring, self-reliance, skill in all the arts, and tricks of war with merciless and cunning enemies. The borderland (Ukraine) was a hard school; only the brave and the strong were likely to survive. And this old frontier, before it was finally pacified and brought under orderly administration, produced its full quota of Ukrainian popular heroes, some historical, some legendary."<sup>32</sup> The dash, the daring, the skill, and the military exploits of Ethan Allen, Benedict Arnold, Nathaniel Green, Daniel Morgan, Anthony Wayne, Marquis de Lafayette in the American Revolutionary War had their equally famous prototypes among the Kozak leaders serving under Bohdan Khmelnytsky in the Ukrainian revolutionary war of 1648. He was the George Washington of the Ukrainian Independence movement:

"In a sense Bohdan (Khmelnytsky) may be called the father of modern Ukraine. The Ukrainian revolution would certainly have come even without him, but it was owing to his skillful leadership that the various elements of the movement—political, social, national,

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<sup>31</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, *The Ukraine, A Submerged Nation*, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1944.

<sup>32</sup> George Vernadsky, *op. cit.*

religious—were welded together to create or rather recreate a Ukrainian nation. Although the state he built up did not last more than a century, the very fact of its existence during this span of time gave a tremendous impetus to the Ukrainian national spirit. By creating a national Ukrainian government in the seventeenth century, Bohdan realized for the people of his time the traditions of the old Kievan state, just as Ukrainians of our days may look to Bohdan's time for the historical background of their own aspirations."<sup>33</sup>

In one of his earliest poems dedicated to a Ukrainian writer, Shevchenko laments the vanished glory of Ukraine and exclaims:

Strike up your lyre! Let the  
Whole unwilling world hear  
What happened in Ukraine!  
Hear of her desperate struggle;  
Why the Kozak glory  
Was world renowned!<sup>34</sup>

The poet recalls to mind Ukraine with its limitless steppes, the raging rapids of the wide Dnieper, the mounds and says:

There Kozak freedom  
Was born and flourished.

If such thoughts reflect literary romanticism, they also invite the students of history to discover where popular democracy and sovereignty of the people had its birth and glorious history. Long before the unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," the Ukrainian Republic of the Zaporozhian Kozaks was practicing these "self-evident" truths on a large scale. In the Ukrainian Kozak Republic these principles were actually the way of life for every resident without regard to his ethnic origin, religious faith, economic status or social rank. As pointed out by the early Ukrainian historian P. Kulish, "the Ukrainian spirit contributed through many bloody sacrifices to its national fame by espousing the human ideal of the equality of rights of each individual."<sup>35</sup>

When one considers that the Ukrainian democratic system of government was founded by uneducated peasants, toilers of the soil, without benefit of the ideas of such political philosophers as John Milton, John Locke, Jean J. Rousseau, and talented lawyers and pam-

<sup>33</sup> P. Kulish, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Taras Shevchenko, "Do Osnovianenka," *Kobzar*.

<sup>35</sup> P. Kulish, "Istoriia Ukraïny," *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

phleteers like John Adams, James Otis, Thomas Jefferson, and Thomas Paine, and flourished for two hundred years amid hostile systems and aggressive neighbors, Shevchenko's lyric outbursts about the glory of Ukraine is "romanticism" in its most admirable form. Did not Voltaire observe that "Ukraine always aspired to freedom"?

"The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries may be considered the heroic age in Ukrainian history. It was during this period that the Zaporozhian Kozaks carried out their most daring exploits, that the Ukrainian people freed themselves from Polish rule by means of a widespread national and social uprising. Most of the deeds and memories and associations that helped to stimulate the later Ukrainian sense of nationality stem from this period."<sup>36</sup>

The Ukrainian settler of the steppe "did not regard liberty as a mere comparative release from tyranny." They possessed, as Burke said of the English colonists in America, "a fierce spirit of liberty,"<sup>37</sup> stronger than in any other people of the earth. The French historian Jean B. Cherer wrote in 1778, "the Ukrainian Kozaks preferred the inconvenience of hard campaigns to the peaceful life of slaves. We learn from their history how the fathers transmitted to their sons their feeling of pride in independence as a priceless heritage and the slogan 'death or liberty' as their sole legacy, which was handed down from father to son together with the ancestral arms."<sup>38</sup> Commenting on the Sich brotherhood, Harmsworth noted in his *History of the World*, "the Ukrainian race seemed qualified to put into practice the idea of universal equality and freedom. All the Slavonic world will be proud of this free state."<sup>39</sup>

The history of the Zaporozhian Kozaks is the history of two hundred years of struggle to preserve individual, political, and religious independence against the forces of despotism, autocracy, and foreign aggression. Kozakdom was basically a democratic, republican political system of government developed by the Ukrainian people to preserve personal liberty and to promote private enterprise and initiative in opposition to the feudal system of serfdom, manorial economy, class privilege, central government, and established state reli-

<sup>36</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, *op. cit.*

<sup>37</sup> Claude H. Van Tyne, *op. cit.*; see also Nicholas Chubaty's "The Ukrainian Independence Movement at the Time of the American Revolution," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. V, No. 3, New York, 1949.

<sup>38</sup> Jean B. Cherer, *Annals of Little Russia*, Paris, 1778. (Alexis de Tocqueville: "The Anglo-American relies upon personal interest to accomplish his ends and gives free scope to the unguided strength and common sense of the people; the Russian centers all the authority of society in a single arm. The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude."—*Democracy in America*, 1831).

<sup>39</sup> D. Snowydy, *Spirit of Ukraine*, New York, 1935.

gion. It is an illuminating page of history: "Fate decided to make the Kozaks the bearers of a new idea of great importance to European civilization. This idea, the seeds of which had been planted in Holland, which burst forth into full bloom in America two hundred years later, and one hundred years later in Europe, was that of national self-determination as opposed to the idea of the divine right of kings. The Dutch, the first European champions of this new idea, had risen against the monarchy of Philip II of Spain in the name of the not clearly formed but well felt principle of national self-determination. Some score of years later Ukraine again brought up this principle and heralded it into the limelight."<sup>40</sup>

The Kozaks were the swift "eagles," the "knights" of the steppe. They protected their country and their free institutions against the intrigues and attacks of their neighbors, the Poles, the Russians, the Turks, the Tatars, and the Germans. "He (Shevchenko) feels the thrill and admiration of all free humanity for that wild and turbulent life of the Zaporozhian Sich, that spirit of ordered liberty which alone can make free men work together for a common cause. That is the spirit that underlies his picture of the Kozak victories, whether they were won against the Poles or the Turks. Free men who are willing to combine under an able leader are more than a match for the obedient slaves of a ruler, be he a crowned head or a self-appointed dictator. *Hamaliia*, *Ivan Pidkova*, sections of the *Haidamaky* all breathe this truth and that is why Shevchenko when he lets his mind travel over the Ukrainian past glorifies the democratic manners of the hetman and the Kozaks."<sup>41</sup>

As long as Kozakdom flourished, freedom reigned in Ukraine. This is the glory of Ukraine which is such a dominant note in Shevchenko's poems. It was bred in the steppe; it flourished in the steppe; it was fiercely defended in the steppe. Freedom and the steppe are symbolically synonymous in Shevchenko's poetry. "The Kozak wars with Turkey and the khans of Crimea were of great significance not only for Ukraine but also for other European countries, which were threatened by Turkish expansion."<sup>42</sup>

With all its romantic and heroic aspects, the endless struggle in the steppe, was, in the opinion of some Ukrainian observers, a contributing factor to the downfall of the Ukrainian republic in the long run. It dissipated the energies of the people and hindered the development of a stable government. The tendency of the Kozak leaders

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Clarence A. Manning, "Taras Shevchenko as a World Poet," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 2, 1945.

<sup>42</sup> *Narys istorii Ukraïny, op. cit.*

after the period of Khmelnytsky to ape the Polish landed aristocracy as a privileged class undermined the confidence of the rank and file of the Kozak masses in many of their leaders and played into the hands of the Russian tsars.<sup>43</sup>

"Their history from the seventeenth century until recent times has been filled with flaming outbursts against individuals and governments and groups and classes that tried to oppress them, against Polish aristocrats and Muscovite officials of the past, against Soviet commissars and Polish gendarmes in more recent times. But the ideal of a free, self-governing Ukraine is still to be achieved."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Isaac Mazepa, *Pidstavy nashoho vidrodzhennia*, "Prometei," Munich, 1946.

<sup>44</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, *op. cit.*





## THE DNEIPER

The Dnieper is the main stream of Ukrainian life. On its shores and tributaries, the movements of early peoples filtered out cultural and racial strains which the centuries have blended into dominant Ukrainian strain of the Slavic race. The Ukrainians have become the masters of the Dnieper basin. The early Hellenic, Roman, Tatar, Teutonic, and Scythian influences as well as the impact of the many nomadic tribes have submerged into the realm of ancient history and archaeology.

Early records and strong traditions suggest that the Scandinavian explorers of the Viking period succeeded in establishing a strong ruling dynasty in Kiev on the high banks of the Dnieper in the ninth century as the beginning of the Ukrainian national state called *Rus'*, which is not to be confused with the "Russia" of the Muscovite tsars of a much later date.

The waters of the mighty Dnieper were the scene of the mass conversion of Ukrainians to Christianity when Prince Volodymyr of Kiev adopted Christianity as the official religion of Ukraine. After the mass baptism, the Ukrainians dumped into the swift waters of the Dnieper their ancient pagan gods, representing such forces of nature as the sun, the wind, thunder, and lightning.

Ukrainian mariners and buccaneers sailed its length in swift skiffs, sped over its rapids and spread the sails of their galleys to the winds of the Black Sea in raids on foreign trade and assaults on the ports of the Pontus in search of war booty, venturing even into the straits of the Bosphorus to storm Byzantium, the present Constantinople. Tatar and Turkish raiders followed its course in driving into captivity Ukrainians seized for the slave markets in Turkey, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Italy, Spain, and other Mediterranean countries.

The Kozaks reclaimed the Dnieper basin from a depopulated wilderness exposed to raiding nomads, and made it safe for travel,

trade, and farming settlements. They fortified its shores and island strongholds beyond the rapids as a haven for democracy and personal freedom. Ukrainian villages and cities sprang up on its shores and on many of its tributaries. In the basin of the Dnieper and its surrounding steppes, the arts of war and peace developed in an environment of the greatest personal freedom then known in Europe. The Dnieper became renowned in song and story. Shevchenko was born and died under its spell. His ancestral home was not far from the Dnieper. It inspired his art and his poetry. The *Kobzar* reflects the whole course of modern Ukrainian history in scenes and action along the Dnieper and its tributaries. Shevchenko's personal freedom, so recently redeemed from serfdom, was again cut short by his arrest, and subsequent banishment to Siberia for life, just as he had crossed the Dnieper on a ferryboat and was stepping ashore in Kiev. Finally, it was on the wide "tide" of his mighty "father," the Dnieper, that Shevchenko's mortal remains were borne by boat from Kiev to Kaniv in 1861 for final burial on his beloved high mound on the shores of the river.

The opening chord of Shevchenko's immortal *Kobzar* introduces us to the restless, turbulent spirit of the Dnieper river, the father of Ukrainian waterways:

Roars and moans  
The Dnieper wide;  
And the furious  
Wind doth chide.<sup>1</sup>

In a twelfth century Ukrainian epic, the Dnieper is personified as the "son of glory" who had pierced the stone mountains of the Polovtsian land.<sup>2</sup> The personification of the Dnieper in the poetry of Shevchenko assumes many aspects. The river lore is reflected in many references to fairy tales, history, and physiography in the works of Shevchenko.

To the poet "there is nothing more beautiful in God's world than the Dnieper." His poetic fancy pictures the Dnieper as a "suckling child" in the moonlight, a "parched brother," a stern "father." He is the avenger of Ukraine's wrongs:

The day of Judgment will come;  
Dnieper and the mountains  
Will speak. Your childrens'  
Blood will deluge to  
The sea in hundred streams!<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Prychynna* (Bewitched), 1838.

<sup>2</sup> *Slovo o polku Ihorevi*, translated into modern Ukrainian by S. Hor-dynsky, Philadelphia, 1950.

<sup>3</sup> T. Shevchenko, "Poslaniie," *Kobzar*, 1845.

He is venerable like the prophet-sage:

Like our Dnieper wide,  
His words gushed and  
Fell deep into the heart.<sup>4</sup>

Less than a year before his death, Shevchenko was negotiating for a plot of land overlooking the Dnieper where he could spend his declining years. He wrote to his "brother" Bartholemew on May 15, 1860: "In the spring, God willing, I will return to Ukraine. In the meantime, try and obtain a plot of land, either on this or the other side of the Dnieper, provided only that it is on the Dnieper."<sup>5</sup> Earlier he wrote to his brother: "I am mailing you a hurried sketch of the house. Study it and build it as you know best, provided it is of oak and has a round glass-enclosed porch overlooking the Dnieper."<sup>6</sup>

In a prophetic and serene contemplation of death, the river Dnieper concludes with recession-like anticipation the very last lines of poetry Shevchenko ever wrote February 25, 1861:

And in paradise, by the Styx,  
As though on Dnieper's shore,  
In the primeval sylvan nook,  
I'll build a little hut,  
And plant an orchard there;  
When you visit my shady haven  
We'll share, my princess, the grand view;  
Dnieper and Ukraine, we'll  
Recall; the pleasant villages  
In woodland dells; the high  
Mounds on the steppes, and,  
We'll raise a joyous song.<sup>7</sup>

### THE DNEIPER — STATUS

The Dnieper is the third largest river in Europe, after Volga and the Danube. The length of its course is more than 1,420 mi. The region it drains includes 194,000 sq. mi., not much less than the whole of France. Among the streams of the globe the Dnieper ranks thirty-second. The ancient Greeks called it Borysthenes or Danapras. In the *Tale of Ihor's Armament*, the great Ukrainian epic of the 11th century, it is identified by its poetic name *Slavutytsia*, the Famous One.

<sup>4</sup> T. Shevchenko, "Prorok," *Kobzar*, 1848.

<sup>5</sup> "Lysty," *Povne vydannia tvoriv Tarasa Shevchenka*, Vol. X, M. Denysiuk Publishing Co., Chicago, 1960.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Chy ne pokynut' nam, neboho*, St. Petersburg, 1861.

## THE DNEIPEP — UKRAINIAN STREAM OF LIFE

"To the Ukrainian people the Dnieper bears the same significance as the Volga to the Russians, the Vistula to the Poles and the Rhine to the Germans. The Dnieper is the sacred river of Ukraine. Like a divinity it was honored by the old Polonians, the founders of the ancient Ukrainian state of Kiev, *Slavutytsia* was the name given it by the Ukrainians of the monarchy. It was esteemed as a father and provider by the brave Zaporozhian Kozaks, the champions of Ukrainian liberty. For many centuries the Dnieper has played an important part in the folklore and literature of Ukraine, in traditions and fairy-stories and folk-tales and in thousands of folk songs; since ancient times it has been sung by all Ukrainian poets, from the unknown bard of the epic of *Ihor*, to the greatest of all Ukrainian poets, Taras Shevchenko, and so on, down to the youngest generation of the poets of Ukraine. To all of them the Dnieper is the symbol of Ukraine, of its life and of its past. Not without cause did Shevchenko ask to be buried on the mountain shore of the Dnieper, 'that I may see the endless plains and the Dnieper and the crags of its bank and hear the rushing of the Rushing One.' For no one is able to repeat the impressions which fill the soul of every Ukrainian when he looks down from this beautiful observation point of Shevchenko's grave upon the majestic river below. How many thoughts then arise about the glorious, and yet so unspeakably sad, past of Ukraine, about its miserable present and the great future toward which the nation tends amid great difficulties, as does the Dnieper toward the Black Sea over the rapids. We do not wonder that the Dnieper has become the national sanctuary of Ukraine. With this river are connected all the important events of the historical life of Ukraine. The Dnieper was the father of the ancient Ukrainian empire of Kiev; by way of the Dnieper a higher culture made its way into Ukraine; on the Dnieper the Ukrainian Kozak element developed, which, after centuries of subjugation, gave the Ukrainians a new government. The Dnieper river has since hoary antiquity been the most important channel of intercourse between the north and south of Eastern Europe; it has been the means of connecting Ukraine with the sea and the cultural realm of Southern Europe."<sup>8</sup>

## THE DNEIPEP — ITS SPELL

"The Dnieper is beautiful on a calm day when it glides along in full flood, unconstrained and unruffled, through woods and hills.

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<sup>8</sup> Stephen Rudnytsky, *Ukraine, The Land and Its People*, New York, 1918.

There is not a ripple; not a sound. You look and you cannot tell whether its majestic expanse is moving or not, and you almost fancy that it is all made of glass and that, like a blue mirror-surfaced road, measureless in breadth and endless in length, it winds and twists over a green world. On such a day even the bright sun likes to have a peep at it from its great height and dip its hot beams into its cool glassy waters. The woods along the banks appear to enjoy nothing better than to see themselves reflected in its waves. Smothered in green foliage, they and the wild flowers, too, crowd together along the margin of the flowing waters and, bending over, gaze into them, never for a moment tiring of this pastime, never for a moment averting their admiring, radiant glances from the stream, and they smile at it and they greet it, waving their branches. But they dare not look into the Dnieper in midstream; none but the sun and the blue sky gaze into it there. Rarely will a bird fly as far as that. Glorious one! There is no river like it in the world.

“Beautiful, too, is the Dnieper on a warm summer night when every living creature is asleep—man, beast, and bird. God alone majestically surveys heaven and earth and majestically shakes his robe of gold and silver, scattering a shower of stars. The stars shine and twinkle over the world and are reflected together in the Dnieper. The mighty river finds room for them all in its dark bosom. Not one star will escape it, unless indeed it is extinguished in the sky. The black woods, dotted with sleeping crows, and the mountains, rent asunder long ago, which overhang the flowing river, try their utmost to cover it up, if only with their long shadows, but in vain! Nothing in the world could cover up the Dnieper. Blue, Deep, Deep, Deep blue, it flows on and on in a smooth flood at midnight as at midday, and it can be seen far, far away, as far as the eye of man can reach. Playfully snuggling up the banks, as if seeking for warmth in the chill of the night, it leaves a silvery trail behind, gleaming like the blade of a Damascus sword; but the river, the deep blue river, falls asleep again. The Dnieper is beautiful even then, and no river in the world is like it. But when dark clouds scud like uprooted mountains across the sky, when the black woods sway wildly and are bent to their roots, when the mighty oak is riven asunder, and lightning, zigzagging through the clouds, suddenly lights up the whole world—then the Dnieper is truly terrible. The mountainous billows roar as they dash themselves against the hills, and when, flashing and moaning, they rush back, they wail and lament in the distance. So the old mother of the Kozak laments when she sees off her son, as he leaves for the army. A high-spirited, but good lad, he rides off on his stallion, arms akimbo and cap at a rakish angle; but she, sobbing, runs after

him, seizes him by the stirrup, catches his bridle, and wrings her hands over him, shedding bitter tears."<sup>9</sup>

#### THE DNIEPER—SHEVCHENKO'S MOUND AT KANIV

"From Kaniv, the Dnieper again turns southeast which course it follows as far as Dnipropetrovsk. The Kaniv mountains have the appearance of a crescent, slightly bent to the west and prominently rising above the right bank elevation of the Dnieper Plateau. The highest elevations of the Kaniv mountain crescent are those of Buchach, Kaniv, and Moshnohir.

"The strata of the Kaniv hills are irregularly furrowed and in some places torn from their roots. The irregular stratification is the result of the movements of the earth's crust especially of the easterly layer of the Dnieper stone mass. During the glacial period when the ice layer moved along the Dnieper valley, it crushed the strata, broke them, mixed them up, and moved them to different locations. The mixed furrows sometimes took on the appearance of huge fish scales overlapping one another. Such is the structure of the Kaniv hills.

"The high Kaniv hills are cut through by numerous gorges. From the Kaniv heights unfolds a broad vista of the undulating dips of the hills, of the wide sweep of the Dnieper, of forest-covered sandy foothills and the grassy lowlands of the Dnieper. Amid the wide forested valleys where the Kaniv plateau dips, spreads the city of Kaniv. It is mentioned in the historical annals as early as 1144. The area around Kaniv was settled during the Trypilian culture, physical relics of which are frequently found there.

"Not far from Kaniv on the downward course of the Dnieper, on the high Monk's hill, amid a colorful forest with white birches lies buried the great bard of the Ukrainian people, T. H. Shevchenko. In 1939 a monument was erected on his mound. Near the mound a museum was built.

"Around the mound of Taras Shevchenko flourish groves of trees, in accordance with his wishes—groves of pine and elm, century old pear trees. At the foot of the ravines erupt springs of crystal clear water."<sup>10</sup>

"The Dnieper Plateau has the outlines of a longish, irregular polygon. The configuration of the surface of the Dnieper Plateau is varied. The Dnieper Plateau embraces two long strips of plateau

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<sup>9</sup> Nicolai V. Gogol (Hohol), *The Terrible Vengeance*, 1830-1831, tr. by David Magarshack, Doubleday & Co., New York, 1957. See also I. Nechui-Levytsky, "Nich na Dnipro," *Vybrani tvory*, State Publishing House of Ukraine, Kharkiv, 1928.

<sup>10</sup> V. Bodnarchuk, *Radians'ka Ukraïna*, Kiev, 1958.

which stretch along the right bank of the Dnieper. The height of these strips of plateau is negligible, the highest points attaining just 190 meters near Kiev, 240 meters between Trakhtemyriv and Kaniv.

"The declivity of the right bank of the Dnieper is much torn by gorges, and everywhere we see picturesque rock piles. The steep bank appears, especially to a plain-dweller, like a chain of mountains and is even called 'the mountains of the Dnieper.' The idea of a 'mountain bank' of the Dnieper, therefore, need not be rejected outright. The aspect of Kiev and the Shevchenko barrow is one of the most beautiful in the entire Ukraine."<sup>11</sup>

### THE DNEIPER IN THE DAYS OF HERODOTUS

"The fourth of the Scythian rivers is the Borysthenes. Next to the Ister, it is the greatest of them all; and, in my judgment, it is the most productive river, not merely in Scythia, but in the whole world, excepting only the Nile, with which no stream can possibly compare. It has upon its banks the loveliest and most excellent pasturages for cattle; it contains abundance of the most delicious fish; its water is most pleasant to the taste; its stream is limpid, while all other rivers near it are muddy; the richest harvests spring up along its course, and where the ground is not sown, the heaviest crops of grass; while salt forms in great plenty about its mouth without human aid, and large fish are taken in it of the sort called sturgeon, without any prickly bones, and good for pickling. Nor are these the whole of its marvels. As far inland as the place named Gerrhus, which is distant forty days' voyage from the sea, its course is known, and its direction from north to south; but above this no one has traced it, so as to say through what countries it flows."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> S. Rudnytsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, tr. by George Rawlison, The Modern Library, New York, 1942.





## UKRAINE: NAME, AREA, PEOPLE

"The name Ukraine is of Slavic origin and has four different meanings in the Ukrainian language: 1. borderland; 2. any remote area; 3. country in general; 4. the habitat of the people constituting the Ukrainian nation and of their culture."<sup>1</sup>

"The name 'Ukraine' is of considerable age. It was first used in the Kievan Chronicle of 1187. After the 'union' of Ukraine with Muscovy in 1654, a new political designation was introduced for the Ukrainian territory and people. This was 'Little Russia'. The Muscovite tsars having become overlords of Ukraine adopted the high sounding title of 'Tsar of the Great and Little Russia.' The Russian government having adopted the name of Little Russia as the official designation of Ukraine went as far as to prohibit in the nineteenth century the use of the names Ukraine and Ukrainian."<sup>2</sup>

"At present Ukraine is one of the 15 Republics of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics. The population is 80% Ukrainian. In 1956 it was 40,600,000. Its present political area is 232,000 square

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<sup>1</sup> I. Mirchuk, *Ukraine and Its People*, Ukrainian Free University Press, Munich, 1949. Also, *Ukraine: A Concise Encyclopaedia*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1963; *Entsyklopediia Ukrainoznavstva*, Vol. I, Shevchenko Scientific Society, Munich-New York, 1949; *Ukraine. The Land and Its People*, Ukrainian Alliance of America, New York, 1918; *Velyka istoriia Ukraïny*, publ. by Ivan Tyktor, Winnipeg, 1948; Mykola Arkas, *Istoriia Ukraïny*, 3rd ed., Ukrainian Publishing Co., Kiev-Leipzig, 1920; Nicholas Chubaty, "The Meaning of 'Russia' and 'Ukraine,'" *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. I, No. 4, New York, 1945; P. Kovaliv, "The Name of Ukraine in Foreign Languages," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. VI, No. 4, New York, 1950.

<sup>2</sup> D. Doroshenko, *History of Ukraine*, The Institute Press, Edmonton, 1939. Also: M. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941; W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine, A History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1940; Clarence A. Manning, *The Story of the Ukraine*, New York, 1947; William Henry Chamberlin, *The Ukraine, A Submerged Nation*, The MacMillan Company, New York, 1944.

miles, which makes it larger than France, Italy, Spain or Germany. From east to west it extends more than 800 mi. and almost 600 mi. north and south."<sup>3</sup>

"The oldest historic name for the Ukrainian territory is 'Rus', probably of Scandinavian origin, and designated the political entity of the Kievan state. Originally 'Rus' applied solely to the southern part of Eastern Europe, while the northern parts were called Muscovy. After the battle of Poltava in 1709, Tsar Peter the Great extended this name to the whole empire and entered it into the official European nomenclature. The Ukrainians retained the historic name 'Rus' when they became a part of the Lithuanian and Polish states.

"Although the Muscovite princes, who united under their sway all 'Great Russian' territory, had some right to call their state 'Rus' since they were descended from Rurik, the Scandinavian prince who founded the Kievan state, their neighbors, the Ukrainians, Poles and Lithuanians as well as western Europeans, usually called the country Muscovy and the inhabitants Muscovites. In the 17th century, the compounded name 'Rus'-Ukraine' was used to denote the present Ukraine."<sup>4</sup>

In every deed, Russia stripped Ukraine of everything; she even appropriated its very name 'Rus', she annexed its history of pre-Tatar times, she declared the language was a Russian dialect."<sup>5</sup>

"It was the land where the Kozaks developed and it is small wonder that the people, faced with the loss of their traditional name, selected this term (Ukraine) which bore witness to the most heroic period of their history. The word made its way despite official prohibition, for to the Russians the land was always Little Russia and to the Austro-Hungarians, Ruthenia. Ukraine might occasionally be used to include the two sections but it was always dangerous. It was as Ukraine and under the Ukrainian banner that the Republic fought in 1919 and 1920. It was under this title that the Soviets conquered the young country and deprived it of its independence and it was under this title that they introduced it to the United Nations Organization. Ukraine exists today on the territory of ancient 'Rus' where it has been since the dawn of history and where it will remain."<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> V. Bodnarchuk, *Radians'ka Ukraïna*, Kiev, 1958. Also: Clarence A. Manning, *Twentieth Century Ukraine*, Bookman Associates, New York, 1951; Roman Smal-Stocki, *The Captive Nations*, Bookman Associates, New York, 1960.

<sup>4</sup> D. Doroshenko, *op. cit.*; Clarence A. Manning, *op. cit.*; Harold Lamb, *The March of Muscovy*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1948; *Narys istoriï Ukraïny*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, Ufa, 1942.

<sup>5</sup> Clarence A. Manning, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

"The Ukrainians are a people of peasants... Mother Earth is particularly characteristic of the entire Ukrainian peasantry even in our own days... The profound love of the Ukrainian for the beauties of his nature spring from his connection with the soil, a love which seems to be firmly anchored in the depths of his soul. This aesthetic sense which is nurtured by natural forms, is reflected by the deep longing to express beauty of form, harmony of color and originality of theme in domestic surroundings, in dress or in utensils of everyday life. Aesthetic and not practical considerations always play the most important part, whether it be in the construction of a church, the planning of a garden around a cottage, the weaving of an apron or kerchief, the making of a table or a bench.

"It is obvious that the very rich and valuable folk music and no less rich and original folk poetry are also based on laws of aesthetic pleasure, derived from intimate intercourse with nature and experience of her beauties.

"Taras Shevchenko, the intellectual leader of the Ukrainian people and the national poet, was indissolubly bound to the black soil of his home, *glebae adscriptus*, the son of a serf. Shevchenko, as a poet, was the people itself, so that external events in his life acquire symbolic significance for the entire nation."<sup>7</sup>

"One of the finest traits in the Ukrainian national character, a trait that is commemorated in some of the most powerful verses of Shevchenko, is the love of liberty."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> I. Mirchuk, *op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> William Henry Chamberlin, *op. cit.*



## THE LURE OF UKRAINE

Ukraine in all its aspects is the omnipotent muse that inspires Shevchenko's poetry. It is an intimate bond and dominant influence which manifests its presence in scenes, feelings, discourses, allusions, allegories, symbols, precepts, and personifications in his poems.

Taras Shevchenko was born in the southern part of the province of Kiev—the very center and heart of Ukraine. "This was a beautiful and picturesque part of Ukraine. The villages were literally engulfed by the beautiful orchards. The beneficent nature filled the soul with the most benign lyrical sentiments and steeled it to resolute and active defiance of tyranny and oppression."<sup>1</sup>

It was the land of his forefathers, the peasant toilers of the fertile soil, whose attachment to their village homes, to the cultivated fields, and to the broad steppes whose freedom they defended as Kozak minutemen, was in their blood, their songs, their rituals, and their traditions. It was a charmed and enchanted land:

There is no other Ukraine.

The silvery moon shines upon Ukraine.

Cherished land, pleasant domain,  
My beloved Ukraine.

That is Ukraine, that is  
My beloved, my native land.  
Its spacious plains,  
Its mounds and ruins,  
It's my father's sacred land;  
I love you, Ukraine,  
Your silken prairies,  
Your green bowers,

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<sup>1</sup> Leonid Biletsky, *Kobzar—Taras Shevchenko*, UVAN, Winnipeg, 1952.

Dnieper's meandering banks.  
I love you eternally,  
With a new found love.<sup>2</sup>

It is thus that Shevchenko expresses his feelings about Ukraine.

The semi-legendary spell which Ukraine casts over the people who are exposed to it evoked an Elysian tribute from Joseph Vereshchynsky, the bishop of Kiev in 1590:

"Whosoever shall savor of Ukraine, he will remain, for she lures individuals of every nationality as a magnet attracts iron. The reason for this '*genius loci*' is because Ukraine is blessed with pleasant sky, good weather and a land so fertile that it attracts and entices everyone to it. Without hesitation, I can paraphrase the words of St. Paul to apply to Ukraine: 'Neither the eye of man has seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man felt, what God has provided in Ukraine for those who love Him.'"

While in Siberian exile, Shevchenko noted in his diary the following nostalgic recollection of Ukraine:

"In Ukraine it is entirely different. There the villages and even the towns hide their attractive white houses behind the cool shades of the cherry orchards. There the lowly peasant farmer surrounds his home with the bounties of the eternally cheerful nature and pours out to his God his soulful song, hopeful of a better life, some day. Oh my poor, my lovely, my cherished country! How soon will I be able to breathe again your sweet, life-giving air?"<sup>3</sup>

Even the somber Russian succumbed to the lure of Ukrainian environment in Shevchenko's day:

"I love the Little Russian villages. Their charm is irresistible—white huts reflecting the shadows of the luxurious green trees covering the hillside. Your first glimpse tells you that the dweller is in friendly communion with nature, that he loves his home and does not needlessly depart from it. It is different in Great Russia where you seldom see any growing thing beside the 'izba' and the master is seldom at home. His home is only a place in which to sleep as he hurries from one place of employment to another."<sup>4</sup>

The foremost Russian poet Pushkin caught the charm of a night in Ukraine in his famous poem *Poltava*, a tragic epic about Hetman Mazepa:

<sup>2</sup> T. Shevchenko, "Haidamaky," *Kobzar*. Compare Sir Walter Scott's "This is my own, my native land" in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*.

<sup>3</sup> "Dnevnyk," *Povne vydannia tvoriv Tarasa Shevchenka*, Ukrainian Publishing Co., Kiev-Leipzig, 1919.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Pogodin, Professor of Moscow University (1842), quoted from V. Sichynsky's *Chuzhyntsi pro Ukrainu*, 5th ed., Augsburg, 1946.

"Peaceful is the night in Ukraine, limpid is the sky. The stars glitter. The drowsy air knows not how to overcome its languor. The leaves of the silvery poplars barely tremble. From on high the peaceful moon shines down on *Bila Tserkva*, lighting up the old castle and the gardens of the brave hetman."





## UKRAINE — PANORAMA

"The geography of a country is the stage upon which the drama of the history of the people unfolds. The stage for the drama of the history of the Ukrainian people was located under the open sky and by the beaten highway from Asia to Europe."<sup>1</sup>

Renowned actors and actresses have performed on this stage since the Ukrainian drama began to unfold. The plays in which they performed have affected the destinies of tribes, nations, empires, and involved bloody clashes between three major religious faiths.

Even before the curtain went up on the first scene a thousand years ago, such outstanding performers as the classic Hellenes, the gifted Scythians, stern Goths, awesome Huns, bold Vikings, nomadic Avars, and plundering Tatars, had crossed and recrossed its open stage in the prelude to the drama itself whose central figure, Ukraine, emerged and developed under various names through centuries and thousands of scenes and vicissitudes of history.

We will throw the spotlight of historical detail on some of the scenes so as to illuminate the background of Shevchenko's source of inspiration as well as the meaning of his poem, the *Testament*, to generations of Ukrainians.

### THE EARLY CONFEDERATE STATE

From the ninth to the eleventh century, many small states and principalities sprang into being in the territory of Ukraine, then called 'Rus.' Racial kinship and family ties of the rulers linked most of them, and this made possible the existence of a loose confederacy with the Grand Prince of Kiev at its head. The city of Kiev was the political and intellectual hub of Eastern Slavdom and was so recognized by the outside world. Christianity took root in Kiev and spread eastward and westward.

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<sup>1</sup> Elias Shlanka, "Ukrainian Geography," *The Trident*, March, 1941.

Frequently the principalities were compelled to make common cause in defense of their cities and trading posts against the invading nomadic tribes from Asia. "Of all the European peoples, the Ukrainians always had to be the first to oppose these steppe plunderers." <sup>2</sup>

Many of the qualities which distinguished the rulers of Kiev and other Ukrainian princes, such as great love of freedom, spirit of independence and adventure found their counterpart in the deeds and songs of the Ukrainian Kozaks several centuries later. Not the least of them was the ideal uttered by Prince Ihor during his campaign against the invading hordes of the Polovtsians: "It's better to be slain than to be enslaved." <sup>3</sup>

### DEVASTATION AND DECLINE

"In the thirteenth century Ukraine crumbled before the onslaughts of Genghis Khan's Tatar hordes from central Asia. Its fertile plains were laid waste; Kiev and other cities reduced to ashes (1240). Thousands of men and women were carried into captivity; other thousands died of starvation; the surviving population pushed northward and northwestward, especially into Galicia, in quest of safety.

"Here began the unhappy chapters of Ukrainian history which have continued with hardly a relieving touch to the present day. After the Tatar wave receded, the fugitives repossessed themselves of their old homes. But the opportunity to build a great and enduring Ukrainian state had passed; for in the meantime other states had risen to the north which coveted the southern lands and were powerful enough to bring them under control.

"The first state to extend its sway over the weakened Ukrainians was Lithuania, which had suffered little from the Tatar incursion. For two hundred years the Lithuanian kings bore sway with moderation; but after 1569, when Lithuania was joined with Poland, bringing Ukraine into subjection to that turbulent kingdom, the rule of the foreigner became extremely oppressive." <sup>4</sup>

### REVOLT AGAINST POLISH AND RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM AND NATIONAL REBIRTH

The Polish economic "system of a dependent and unfree peasantry" expanded into Ukraine. To escape oppressive hardship and

<sup>2</sup> Stephen Rudnytsky, *Ukraine, The Land and Its People*, New York, 1918.

<sup>3</sup> *Tale of Ihor's Armament (Slovo o Polku Ihorevi)*, 1185 A.D. Compare this sentiment with similar Kozak views and the following from the *Declarations of Causes by the United Colonies*, Philadelphia, July 26, 1775: "Being with one mind resolved to die free men than to live slaves." Also Shevchenko: "Better to have not been born, / Better to have drowned, / Than to live as a bondsman, / And provoke God's ire" /.

<sup>4</sup> Frederic Austin Ogg, *Munsey's Magazine*, October, 1918.

exploitation under the aristocratic landlords who received new grants of land in Ukraine from the Polish crown, thousands of peasants sought refuge in the open expanse of the Ukrainian steppe, where Kozak freedom offered them protection and adventurous livelihood.

"These frontiersmen of the borderlands (which is the literal meaning of the phrase 'Kozaks of Ukraine') had created a certain amount of security along the frontier by repeated victories over the Crimean Tatars. In the middle of the sixteenth century, a Kozak band under the leadership of Vyshnevetsky founded a settlement beyond the rapids of the Dnieper river. This group, known as the Zaporozhians (from the words *za porohy* 'beyond the rapids') won a wide reputation as fighters and freemen. The fugitive peasants flocked to join them. There followed a rapid increase in the population and a short period of prosperous independence.

"But the Union of Lublin (1569), which officially merged Poland and Lithuania, opened these lands to acquisition by the Polish landlords at a time when western Europe's demand for wheat increased greatly. The fertile lands of the feather-grass steppe suddenly assumed an entirely new importance. The fortunate or far-sighted nobles were able to get tremendous grants of this land, which they hastened to occupy with peasants. This new wave of migration overtook the fugitives. Within half a century, the population of Ukraine increased tenfold, and troubles increased by the hundreds. The landlords were mostly Roman Catholic; the peasants and Kozaks, mostly Orthodox. The Kozaks and their associates had run away from precisely the system of serf labor which the newly arrived landlords were determined to introduce. The Kozaks had been free and independent. The Kozaks of Ukraine—virtually all the peasants in Ukraine considered themselves to be Kozaks—counted themselves *sui generis* and refused to fit peacefully into the Polish pattern."<sup>5</sup>

Intermittent revolts of the peasants and Kozaks were crushed, but a large-scale revolt spearheaded by the Zaporozhian Kozaks under the leadership of Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky in 1648 received widespread popular Ukrainian support. Polish forces were defeated in one battle after another and Khmelnytsky became master of Ukraine. Moscow watched the Polish Ukrainian struggle with a growing interest and Ukraine soon became a bone of contention between Poland and Russia.

Ukraine kept alive its national traditions and cherished its heritage of freedom throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries despite the tsarist government's ban on all hostile manifestations of

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<sup>5</sup> Warren Bartlett Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Union*, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1958.

Ukrainian nationalism. When the tsarist regime collapsed in 1917 and with it seemingly the Russian empire, Ukraine emerged as an independent republic. The pent-up cultural and national emotions knew no bounds in the flowering of rebirth. Even Moscow's subsequent reassertion of its colonial domain under the aegis of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic did not stem the tide of national purpose and national unity.

Although today Russia remains as the supreme imperialistic power in the world, her dominion over the satellite nations rests upon ruthless terror and coercion rather than upon voluntary union or political loyalty. So it is with the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

### PHOENIX AT THE CROSSROADS

The scourges of Genghis Khan's Golden Horde, the raids of the incendiary and slave-hunting Tatars, the marauding incursions of the Ottoman viziers, the aggressive wars of Polish kings and princes, the imperialistic invasions and partitions by the Hapsburg emperors, German rulers and fuhres, tsars of Muscovy and their Red successors, have left their bloody imprints upon Ukraine at every crossroad and acre of land. Yet neither singly nor in alliance were any of them successful during the course of centuries in effacing her name off the stage. Silhouetted more prominently than ever on the map of Europe, Ukraine mocks her enemies and detractors who tried to suppress her and hide her name under such counterfeit labels as "Little Russia," "South Russia," "Little Poland," "Ruthenia," who either denied that Ukraine ever existed or claimed that at most the name was variously a romantic invention of misguided intellectuals, a diabolical talisman coined in Vienna or Berlin to undermine the integrity of the Russian Empire, a pawn in the schemes of Polish imperialists for a Polish state from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Historians of both Poland and Russia have staged semantic "blackouts" by making it appear that Ukraine was merely a geographical term meaning borderland or frontierland without any historical pedigree or legitimate basis for a separate national statehood or political independence of its people.

"From the beginnings of historical life of Eastern Europe, for one thousand two hundred years, the Ukrainian race has resided in this region, and has been able not only to preserve its boundaries, but after heavy losses, to regain and even to pass beyond them. And this continued through centuries of stress, through bloody wars, after loss of the first and second national governments, and under the merciless pressures of neighboring states and peoples." <sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Rudnytsky, *op .cit.*

Aggressive actions of her neighboring suitors in this drama, the Russians, the Poles, the Germans, and others merely accentuated the strong will of Ukraine's peasantry to resist denationalization as well as her determination to preserve her own culture. She has survived every onslaught and calamity of war, aggression, and cultural strangulation. The deeply ingrained pattern of unquenchable aspiration for individual and political freedom, economic and social equality, and common justice, unfolded under every test with a vitality such as to make even the monolithic Soviet Russian state uneasy today concerning the durability of its current integration of Ukraine into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as Peter the Great and Empress Catherine the Second were uneasy in similar ventures two and a half centuries ago.

"The viable greatness of the Ukrainian nation is revealed most significantly in the fact that, deprived of its religion, political, military, educational, and intellectual leaders, it was able to produce an independent literature and create consternation in the ranks of the all powerful architects of the unification of the Russian Empire. To look upon a Muscovite as a relative and call him "uncle" is a futile gesture. While he might be grateful for our military and moral assistance, he seeks to efface us as a people; he wants us to forget who we are and what our national rights are, he wants us to have no goals, no respect, and no significance in the world."<sup>7</sup>

As Professor Mirchuk points out, "It is characteristic for the Russian's view of the world that he definitely rejects the personal and always seeks to take his stand on a certain intellectual collectivism."<sup>8</sup> The Ukrainian on the other hand is both an idealist and an individualist. Despite his melancholy history he is, paradoxically enough, an eternal optimist as Voltaire pointed out over two hundred years ago. "In spite of the overwhelming catastrophes that have constantly shaken the historical existence of the people to its foundations, in spite of the terrible persecutions to which the heart of the nation, its peasantry, has been exposed for centuries, hope of a better future was never dead, and indeed, it rose afresh at the very time when, judged by objective standards, there were practically no prospects of improvement."<sup>9</sup>

The finale of the dramatic struggle between these two protagonists on the Ukrainian scene is not yet in sight. The plot of the drama is not yet resolved. The roles of the hero and the villain remain un-

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<sup>7</sup> P. Kulish, "Zazyvnyi lyst do ukrains'koï inteligentsii," *Tvory*, Vol. VI, "Prosvita," Lviv, 1910.

<sup>8</sup> I. Mirchuk, *Ukraine and Its People*, Ukrainian Free University Press, Munich, 1949.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

changed. The vigor and subtlety of performance is undiminished. The tragedy of Ukraine in its Promethean struggle for freedom still tugs at the heart strings of millions of Ukrainians in every part of the world.

## UKRAINE UNDER THE TSARS

During the nineteenth century, the Russian empire claimed an area which stretched from the eastern border of Prussia to the coast of California, or considerably more than half way around the globe.<sup>1</sup>

Its genesis was of Finnish-Slav amalgam around Moscow in the thirteenth century. A brooding lust for autocratic power, dominion and territorial expansion, nurtured by a succession of Grand Princes of Muscovy during several centuries of the protective isolation of Mongol-Tatar supremacy, erupted into violence and conquest in the wake of Moscow's emancipation from subserviance to the Asiatic Khans.

Muscovy's neighbors were thus exposed to a new brand of Eurasian imperialism which the tsars and their boyars had mastered under the tutelage of their former Tatar overlords. Abetted by the "inevitable logic of geography,"<sup>2</sup> Russia's early expansion was spurred by ambitious tsars, seeking water "outlets" and "windows to the west," as well as by restless frontiersmen, seeking new homes in virgin lands. "Russian tsars, not content with their broad domain in Europe and Siberia, stretched their acquisitive hands into central Asia, Persia, Manchuria, and Mongolia and looked hungrily on Turkey, Tibet, and Afghanistan," according to an American scholar.<sup>3</sup> Aggressive aggrandizement of Russian imperialism was symbolized from time to time by such messianic formulas as the defense and propagation of the Orthodox faith and the fulfillment of its "manifest destiny" in

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Bartlett Walsh, *Russia and the Soviet Union*, The University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1958.

<sup>2</sup> George Vernadsky, *A History of Russia*, rev. ed., Yale University Press, New Haven, 1944; Harold Lamb, *The March of Muscovy*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1948.

<sup>3</sup> Parker Thomas Moon, *Imperialism and World Politics*, The MacMillan Co., New York, 1926.



establishing Pan-Slavism as a unifying force in a new world order under Russian hegemony.

Ukraine engaged the attention of the tsars early in the seventeenth century. In the cauldron of trouble brewing in Ukraine as a result of Hetman Khmelnytsky's successful revolt against Poland, the Russian tsars saw an opportunity to extend Moscow's sphere of influence into Ukraine. This was achieved by entering the Ukrainian stage in the guise of a "protector." The next pose was that of a "reclaimer" of territories over which Prince Volodymyr the Great of Kiev reigned as the grand sovereign of the Kievan realm. The "reclaimer" aspect has as much historical validity as any claim of France upon Germany or vice versa by virtue of the fact that both France and Germany were once part of the Empire of Charlemagne.

The treaty of Pereiaslav signed in 1654 was a treaty of military alliance characterized by a personal protectorate of the tsar of Muscovy over Ukraine.<sup>4</sup> Russian historians have described the treaty variously as a "union" as well as a "reunion." To accommodate the latter concept, they referred to Ukraine as "Little Russia." The Russian imperialist version represented Ukraine as merely a name for the "fringe" area of southern Russia, inhabited by "Russians" who spoke a "southern dialect," and declared that Ukraine was an integral part of "Russia" as early as the 12th century.

Commenting on the treaty of Pereiaslav, a noted Russian professor of international law, L. P. Rastorgoueff, said: "In carrying on negotiations with Russia, the Ukrainians were very careful to limit the union to a mutual military and financial support, and to guarantee Ukraine a full autonomy, including the right to elect their own hetman (chief of state) without any interference from Moscow.

"Ukraine enjoyed what may be called a constitutional government. Ukrainian towns were organized as self-governing bodies on the German model, the laws were codified, education was making rapid strides in the country, and the city of Kiev was proud of its academy, where many learned scholars received their education. The tsars became a constant menace to the liberties of Ukraine, because the Russians, whose political ideas were purely eastern, developed a thoroughly autocratic system of government and did not conceal their hostility to the free regime prevailing in Ukraine. The hetmans,

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Yakovliv, *Dohovir Bohdana Khmel'nyts'koho z Moskvoini, 1654*, New York, 1954; Viacheslav Lypynsky, *Ukraina na perelomi, 1657-1659*, Dniprosiuz, Kiev-Vienna, 1920; Sokrat Ivanytsky, "Did the Treaty of Pereiaslav Include a Protectorate," *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 8, 1954; Series of papers on the Treaty of Pereiaslav in *The Ukrainian Quarterly*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1954; L. P. Rastorgoueff, *The Revolution and Unity of Russia*, The Grotius Society, Vo. III, 1917.

therefore, used every opportunity to get rid of the sovereignty of Moscow." <sup>5</sup>

Hetman Khmelnytsky's successful revolt against Poland and his subsequent delivery of Ukraine to the protectorate of the tsar of Muscovy failed to settle the conflicting imperialistic claims of Poland and Russia to Ukrainian territory. Through much of the seventeenth century, "the Ukrainians were struggling for independence from both Poland and Russia." <sup>6</sup>

Resentment against the Russian interference in the internal affairs of Ukraine and the systematic violation of "ancient rights, liberties, and privileges" so highly prized by the Ukrainians, culminated in Hetman Mazepa's secret military alliance with Charles XII of Sweden, aimed at severing all political ties between Moscow and Ukraine. With the defeat of the Swedish forces under Charles XII in the Battle of Poltava in 1709, the doom of Poland as a serious rival of Russia for Ukraine was sealed. Russia became the avowed and acknowledged champion of the imperial supremacy of strong states over their weaker neighbors against all claims for political independence and all strivings for separate nationality." <sup>7</sup>

The forbearance of Peter the Great to abolish completely the autonomy of Ukraine in the wake of his decisive military victory over Sweden bears eloquent testimony to the vitality of Ukrainian national and political life in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Although he placed "the higher administration of Ukraine under Russian control—as regards Ukrainian internal affairs, he left them untouched, not because he had much respect for the treaty of Pereiaslav (1654) but because Russia was not ready to undertake the task of governing a country politically, socially, and economically more developed than herself." <sup>8</sup>

Territorial and governmental vestiges of Ukrainian national and political autonomy survived until the echoes of the French and American Revolutions hardened the resolution of the former German princess, Catherine II, Empress of Russia, to eliminate the restive subject states on the fringes of her empire lest the revolutionary virus of national independence should endanger her imperial claims to them.

History records that a few days before the American colonists in Massachusetts wrote their heroic prelude to the American Revolutionary War of Independence at the battle of Bunker Hill, Catherine the Great ordered her favorite and trusted general, G. Potemkin,

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<sup>5</sup> L. P. Rastorgueff, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> V. Levynsky, *Tsars'ka Rosiia i ukrains'ka sprava*, Montreal, 1917.

<sup>7</sup> F. S. Creasy, *Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World*, London, 1851.

<sup>8</sup> L. P. Rastorgueff, *op. cit.*

to launch a decisively powerful military invasion of Ukraine. In a surprise attack on June 4, 1775, by fifty regiments of lancers and hussars and ten thousand infantrymen, the hundred-year-old Ukrainian republic whose military stronghold was the renowned island fortress, Sich, below the rapids on the Dnieper, was completely destroyed.<sup>9</sup>

Some three thousand Zaporozhian Kozaks escaped to the shores of the Black Sea where they re-established their traditional military government of the Kozak Host. But most of the Kozak leaders were lured by the Empress to remain in exchange for the privilege of entering the ranks of Russian gentry with equality of rank and the assurance of holding their lands on condition they were willing to accept Russian administration of Ukraine.<sup>10</sup>

Catherine's military annexation of Ukraine into the Russian empire ended the voluntary treaty of protection negotiated in 1654 between Russia and Ukraine. She decreed the complete integration and Russification of Ukraine. In the decade following 1775, Catherine distributed close to eleven million acres of Ukrainian land to her favorites and relatives.<sup>11</sup> Ukrainians were free men and women until 1783 when Catherine decreed them to be serfs.<sup>12</sup> The grants of land carried with them the ownership of the peasant serfs living in the villages.

The Empress introduced serfdom in Ukraine both as a defensive measure against uprisings and as a method of minimizing the internal differences in the social and economic systems of Russia and Ukraine.<sup>13</sup> "Even under the most human conditions, serfs had no right of personal freedom or individual liberty. They lived on sufferance. A serf could be bought or sold, given away or bequeathed with or without his family, just as if he were a pig or a duck. He could be punished by fines, flogging, imprisonment or exile. He could be deprived of any right to use the land for subsistence."<sup>14</sup> As chattels they were offered for sale in the market place, delivered to government authori-

<sup>9</sup> Maurice Hindus, *The Cossacks*, Doubleday & Co., Garden City, 1945. Also: M. Hrushevsky, *A History of Ukraine*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1941.

<sup>10</sup> W. E. D. Allen, *The Ukraine, A History*, Cambridge University Press, 1940. Also: W. B. Walsh, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> D. Doroshenko, *History of Ukraine*, The Institute Press, Edmonton, 1939. Also: W. E. D. Allen, *op. cit.*, and M. Hrushevsky, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Alexander Herzen, *Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, London, 1858.

<sup>13</sup> Mykola Arkas, *Istoriia Ukraïny*, 3rd ed., Ukrainian Publishing Co., Kiev-Leipzig, 1920.

<sup>14</sup> W. B. Walsh, *op. cit.*

ties as military conscripts for 25 years of service, and often gambled away at card games by their owners.<sup>15</sup>

Prince G. Potemkin, who received the largest share of spoils from Catherine's annexation of Ukraine, bequeathed tens of thousands of acres of land to his relatives. One of his heirs was a wealthy Russian-Finnish magnate, Baron Engelhart, who was the owner of the village in which Shevchenko was born.<sup>16</sup> Like his parents, Shevchenko was a serf—a human chattel held in bondage and compelled to perform services for his master.

When Shevchenko was born in 1814, "Ukrainian land was divided among neighboring monarchies and rulers. Everywhere in our land, foreign landlords settled. Our peasant communities became separated one from the other. Thus our Ukraine was subjugated and partitioned, the people separated, and the very thought of freedom and national unity was suppressed."<sup>17</sup>

Taras Shevchenko was twelve years old when one of the most despotic and autocratic of the Romanovs, Tsar Nicholas I, ascended the throne of Russia in 1825. He began his reign by crushing the Decembrist Revolt, a culmination of the widespread liberal ferment among the intellectual classes and military officers of Russia, generated by their recent exposure to western thought during the Napoleonic wars. Secret societies organized by them to foster such reform movements as abolition of serfdom, penal military colonies and even autocracy itself, though sorely crippled by Nicholas, left their impact on writers, artists, and other intellectual classes in general.<sup>18</sup>

Tsar Nicholas recognized and deplored the evils of serfdom but he feared the consequences of its abolition even more. While the autocratic power of the Russian emperor was absolute in theory, history shows that in actual practice, the assent of the land-and-serf owning nobility, the *dvorianstvo*, was indispensable to the survival of his imperial authority. "Each landowner was, in effect, the agent of the tsar and governed his estate in the tsar's name. The landlord was responsible for maintaining order, and for seeing that the villages on his estate met their financial obligations to the government and supplied the conscripts or recruits for the army."<sup>19</sup> Thus both the governmental and economic structure of the empire was based

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<sup>15</sup> Paul Zaitsev, *Zhyttia Tarasa Shevchenka*, Shevchenko Scientific Society, New York-Paris-Munich, 1955.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Michael Drahomanov, *Z pochyniv ukrains'koho sotsialistychnoho ruchu*, Ukrainian Sociological Institute, Vienna, 1922.

<sup>18</sup> W. B. Walsh, *op. cit.* Also: *Taras Shevchenko, 1814-1861. A Symposium*, Mouton & Co., 1962; Yulian Okhrymovych, *Rozvytok ukrains'koi natsional'no-politychnoi dumky*, Lviv-Kiev, 1922.

<sup>19</sup> W. B. Walsh, *op. cit.*

on serfdom which was made up of the largest single segment of the population. Abolition of serfdom endangered the stability of the entire imperial system of government and threatened the survival of the ruling and governing classes which were largely dependent upon the system of serfdom.

How the genius of Shevchenko's muse struck effectively at the foundations of Russian imperialism, autocracy, serfdom, and landlordism, and made him a hero of the enslaved millions as well as the acclaimed prophet of Ukrainian national rebirth and independence, is the epic story of the nineteenth century.

Russia's admirers are inclined to overlook the fact that there is nothing in Russia's long history to provide Russian writers of the nineteenth century with any heritage of personal or political freedom as possible themes or background for their inspiration. There was a heritage of political, economic, and social despotism. Aggressive imperial expansion and the subjugation of newly conquered nations consumed much of the country's energy. The Russian people had no history or tradition of freedom such as the Ukrainian people had. Ukrainian folk songs, traditions, historical places, and monuments reflected and perpetuated the by-gone days of personal, political, and national freedom of the Ukrainians. Shevchenko revived their love of freedom and of Ukraine in his poetry.

In the decades when Russian political writers and philosophers were popularizing Russian Orthodoxy, Pan-Slavism, and Russian nationalism in the writings of Ivan Kireevski, Alexis Khomiakov, and Ivan Aksakov, the youthful bard of Ukraine unmasked the false glamor of the classic formula of Tsar Nicholas' reign—"Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism"<sup>20</sup> and exposed its hideous ingredients of despotism, bigotry, chicanery, oppression, and Russification. His poetic genius distilled the essence of his people's suffering, their grievances and their aspirations in the eloquently melodious verse of their mother tongue, unmarred by the foreign "Muscovite" words and phrases.

He called his poems his "thoughts," his "children." He called his native land his "widowed mother" Ukraine. He spoke of "truth," of "freedom," of "justice," and of the Kozak glory when Ukraine was free and her sons—her "eagles" and "knights,"—the Kozaks fought and died to preserve their heritage of freedom. He was called "father" Taras affectionately and acclaimed as a prophet and seer. He was one of them and they understood and loved him.

It is not at all surprising that no Russian writer of that era achieved the distinction of being recognized as "first and truly a

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

people's poet." The pillars of Russian literature in Shevchenko's day, Alexander Pushkin, Mikhail Lermontov, Ivan Goncharov, Vissarion Belinsky reached only a small minority of the people. Their audience was limited to a tiny literate circle scarcely able to support a combined circulation of less than 12,000 of all the leading periodicals published in Russia.<sup>21</sup> An American historian characterized this literary oasis in these words: "they wrote, talked, discussed, and acted primarily for each other."<sup>22</sup>

Unlike the prominent Russian revolutionaries of the middle of the nineteenth century, such as Alexander Herzen and Nicholas Bakunin who came from the ranks of wealth and privilege, or N. Chernishevsky, the son of a distinguished priest and descendant of a long line of clergymen, Shevchenko was born a serf and, except in the art of painting, had no formal or academic education. Yet without striving or design, he became the spokesman of the vast majority of the Ukrainian population—the peasantry. His popularity in Ukraine was universal. Ukrainian landowners, descendants of the Kozak leaders, students, university professors, writers, artists, and members of the professions, acclaimed him as a national genius.

While the Russian "revolutionaries of the period dreamed of doing things for the people and to the people, they were not in a position to do anything *with* the people or *by* the people."<sup>23</sup> Shevchenko went among the people, visited in their villages, homes, and fields; talked with them, sang with them, and wept with them. His impact on the Ukrainian gentry and intellectual groups was equally electrifying.

Shevchenko's famous countryman, Nikolai Gogol, preferred to write his immortal stories in Russian and gained the distinction of "the first genius of Russian prose."<sup>24</sup> Shevchenko's muse would not allow him to proselyte his birthright and he became the national hero and immortal bard of Ukraine.

Shevchenko's first love was the art of drawing and painting which he mastered with distinction. The celebrated Russian painters of that period, Briulov and Venetsianov, became his teachers and close personal friends. On the other hand, not one of the Russian writers "would do a thing to alleviate his harsh destiny." But, said Maxim Gorky, "why Shevchenko was left unrecognized by them and why they did not read him and appreciate him—this I cannot explain."<sup>25</sup> The superior attitude and disdain of the "Little Russian" on the part

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Michael Vozniak, *Kyrylo-Metodiius'ke bratstvo*, Lviv, 1921.

<sup>25</sup> Maksym Gorky, "Pro Shevchenka, vinok velykomu Kobzarevi," *Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk*, Kiev, 1961.

of some of the literary critics and literateurs of Russia as well as the difference in language might explain why Shevchenko's popularity was largely in his native Ukraine.

In 1839, when Shevchenko was 25 years of age, Marquis De Custine gave the following impressions of Russia in his book *Journey of Our Time*:

"Everywhere I hear the language of philosophy, and everywhere I see oppression as the order of the day... The Christian religion in Russia has lost its spiritual value. It is one of the wheels of despotism, nothing more."

Shevchenko was arrested in April of 1847 by the tsar's secret police on information that he was a member of a Ukrainian secret society whose aims were the overthrow of the existing social and political system of government and the establishment of an independent Ukrainian state on the basis of political equality with other Slavic nations. Shevchenko was found guilty and was sentenced to penal servitude for life in a remote Siberian military outpost. The imperial decree of banishment was endorsed in the tsar's own hand with an added penalty forbidding Shevchenko to paint or write.<sup>26</sup>

The investigation, trial, and sentence revealed Shevchenko's revolutionary spirit, as well as his Ukrainian nationalism to be dangerous to the Russian imperial crown and the political integrity of the Russian empire. Count Orloff, chief of the crown security police, reported to the tsar that "Shevchenko gained a reputation among his friends as an eminent Ukrainian writer and for that reason he is both harmful and dangerous. His popular verses are capable of sowing throughout Ukraine ideas which could take root and ripen into the belief that the era of the Hetmans was a fortunate one, that the return of the Hetmans would be a boon and create the possibility of Ukraine existing as a separate state."<sup>27</sup> A study of Shevchenko's influence on the Ukrainian national sentiment prior to his arrest indicates that his fiery spirit and the popularity of his poetry fanned the smoldering embers of a Ukrainian separatist ideology. "We are certain that in 1843 and 1844, the views with which Shevchenko visited Ukraine as a spokesman of a free, democratic, and independent Ukraine were already taking shape."<sup>28</sup>

N. Kostomarov, an eminent historian and a member of the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius, the secret society whose members, including Shevchenko, were arrested by the tsar's secret police, records in his memoirs that when he first met Shevchenko and the lat-

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<sup>26</sup> Michael Vozniak, *op. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Yulian Ohkrymovych, *op. cit.*

ter read for him his poems, *The Dream* and *The Caucasus*, he was seized with consternation. "I realized," wrote Kostomarov, "that Shevchenko's muse was tearing asunder the curtain shrouding the life of the people. And it was a fearful, sweet, painful and ecstatic sight to behold. Poetry always takes the lead and always steers a bold course in the wake of which history, science and practical action follows. The muse of Taras cracked open an underground crypt which had remained securely locked and sealed for many generations under many locks and seals. It opened a highway for the sun's rays to illumine, for fresh air to circulate, and human curiosity to explore."<sup>29</sup>

"Indeed, Shevchenko's muse, anticipating the policies of the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius, formulated his ideology of the independence of Ukraine with great clarity and more pronounced views. The sentiments of independence permeate like an indelible red streak through all of his creative works, commencing with the youthful romantic poems and ending with the philosophical lyrics before his death. The poet's attitudes changed, his personal experiences and views changed. The ideal of the political independence of his people became the beacon light of his whole life and influenced all of his works. Even before the organization of the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius when the idea of political independence of Ukraine was nothing more than the 'voice crying in the wilderness,' and after the disintegration of the Brotherhood when its members renounced and expressed doubts about the basic principles of the society, Shevchenko adhered steadfastly to his views with the intrasigence of *Cato's ceterum censeo*."<sup>30</sup>

For this reason the poetry of Shevchenko is of epochal significance to us. It made a nation out of an unenlightened ethnographic mass; it shattered forever the possibility of coexistence of the Ukrainian movement as a mere 'South Russian' provincialism. It was the political content of Shevchenko's poetry that made him a national prophet rather than the style and form with which his creative genius imbued it.

Before Shevchenko, Ukrainian patriotism could mask its identity under the aegis of the black eagle and the white star; after Shevchenko, anyone wishing to follow him could no longer remain a Russian patriot."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*





## UKRAINE UNDER THE COMMISSARS

The centuries old struggle of Ukraine to free itself from the yoke of Russian subjugation culminated in the Ukrainian declaration of independence on January 22, 1918. "This is an epochal moment," exclaimed Prof. M. Hrushevsky, the first president of the Ukrainian National Republic. "Ukraine is liberated from the bonds by which the malevolent policies of Moscow's tsars had shackled her," he added, echoing the memorable lines from Shevchenko's *Testament*.<sup>1</sup>

This epochal event dramatically materialized Tsar Nicholas' apprehension that Shevchenko's poetry might engender ideas of an independent Ukraine and the overthrow of tsardom. The first revolutionary government rejected Ukraine's claim to freedom. Ultimately, when power was seized by the Communist party, it became evident that the Commissars had no more intention of tolerating an independent Ukraine, despite Lenin's expedient declarations of its right to secession and self-determination, than did the tsars of Russia or the provisional government which followed.<sup>2</sup>

Hoping to capitalize on ethnic appeals for recognition in the course of the civil war between the White generals and the Communists, the commissars were quick to exploit Shevchenko's popularity by the expedient of honoring him as a Ukrainian representative in their proposed "hall of fame" roster of distinguished artists, writers, scientists, political, and civic leaders. The propaganda publicity regarding the friendly gesture by the Russians towards the Ukrainian national hero was calculated to make political capital among the Ukrainians who were then in the mood for the overthrow of Hetman

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hrushevsky, *Vil'na Ukraïna*, Ukrainian Printing and Publishing Association, New York, 1918.

<sup>2</sup> Theodore B. Ciuciura, "Lenin's Idea of Commonwealth," *Annals*, Ukrainian Academy of Arts and Sciences in the U.S., Vol. X, 1962-63.

Skoropadsky who had wrested political power from the Ukrainian National Republic.

To impress a large number of Ukrainian conscripts gathered in Moscow for mobilization into the Red Army, that city was hastily chosen for a dedication of a Shevchenko statue on November 3, 1918.<sup>1</sup> With the overthrow of Hetman Skoropadsky by the group united behind the Ukrainian National Government, Moscow again hastened to exploit the poet's popularity among the Ukrainians by falsely representing Shevchenko's ideals as being advanced by the Soviet Government, while the Ukrainian National Government, which stood for complete political independence from Russia, was only a reactionary tool of the western capitalists engaged in burning Ukrainian villages, shooting and hanging Ukrainian workers and peasants.<sup>2</sup> Within ten days after the Ukrainian National Government reestablished its power in Ukraine, the Council of People's Commissars of the Russian Federated Socialist Republic unveiled, on November 29, 1918, a statue of Shevchenko on the avenue of "Red Stars" in St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia. It was a broad-shouldered bust resting on a very high unbalanced pedestal, inscribed with crudely lettered dedication which read: "To the great Ukrainian peasant-poet, Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko, 1814-1861, from the Great Russian People." The strains of the communist hymn, "The International", featured the mood for the Russian communist hierarchy assembled for propaganda purposes.<sup>3</sup>

A remarkably similar exploitation of Shevchenko's name was repeated by the Russian rulers in 1964, some 46 years later, when they hurriedly unveiled a statue of Shevchenko, without any prior publicity, just a few days before the much publicized unveiling of Shevchenko's statue on June 27, 1964, in Washington, D.C. by the former President, Dwight D. Eisenhower. The statue in the American capital was authorized by a joint Resolution of Congress, approved on September 13, 1960, and its realization made possible by thousands of American Ukrainians who contributed to the monument fund.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note that this "battle of statues" in the cold war between Washington and Moscow as the bizarre unveiling in Moscow and the formal dedication in Washington, just seventeen days later, with 100,000 Ukrainians from the free world attending, was

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<sup>1</sup> Viacheslav Davydenko, "Ne zabuly pomianuty," *Svoboda Almanac*, Jersey City, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> *Taras Shevchenko, povne zibrannia tvoriv*, Vol. I, State Literary Publishing House, Kiev, 1935.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Europe's Freedom Fighter*, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, 1960.

referred to in the June 29, 1964, issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, was actually started by Moscow as early as 1918, just four years after the tsarist government had barred all centennial observances of Shevchenko's birth.

The symbolic affinity and popular identification of Shevchenko with the national rebirth of Ukraine and the aspirations of its people for freedom, saw his name again emblazoned on the Ukrainian banner of war in 1918 with the ancient enemy—Russia. The deadly pall of Russification which had encrusted Ukrainian institutions and urban society under tsarism was rapidly dissolving before the spontaneous surge of Ukrainization. The magic name of Shevchenko led all the rest in the explosive revival of Ukrainian literary, cultural, and national heritage. "Ukrainian poet!", exclaimed A. Nikovsky, one of the Ukrainian nationalist leaders in 1919, "Imperial Russia, ideologists of absolute central authority, internationalists, domestic pundits—must all bow their heads before him, that mighty, unconquerable wielder of a rusty pen! Poet, the victory is yours! Shevchenko has achieved for us a victorious Ukrainian Revolution!" The tide of Ukrainization defied the efforts of the Commissars to stem it for a number of years after they had reduced Ukraine by military aggression to the subservient status of a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The conflict for national survival entered the cold war stage and was waged "in the minds of men." The condescendingly expedient recognition of Shevchenko by the "big brother" (the Russians) as a Ukrainian peasant-poet, enabled A. Richytsky, a Shevchenko expert with nationalist leanings, to apply the new Marxist dialectic to the evaluation of Shevchenko's role and influence on the course of Ukrainian history. Published in 1923, under the title "Taras Shevchenko v Svitli Epokhy" (Taras Shevchenko In the Light of an Epoch), his essay developed the thesis that Shevchenko's enserfed peasant origin constituted the basis of his Ukrainian nationalism and accounted for his hatred of the Russian tsars which in time grew into a universal denunciation of the tsarist rule and absolutism within the whole Russian empire and not only as it affected his native Ukraine. The author asserted that sociologically, Shevchenko reflected the classic hostility of the propertyless peasantry against all propertied classes as well as the system of government which nurtured economic inequality with its attendant corruption and oppression of the poor.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Richytsky had traced the history of Shevchenko's nationalism to his social and economic environment as well as his

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<sup>1</sup> *Taras Shevchenko, povne zibrannia tvoriv, op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Ostap Hrycaj, "Z novoï literatury pro Shevchenka," *Nova Hromada*, V-VI, Vienna, 1924.

early idealization of the Ukrainian national heroes, brought the author violent condemnation during the heyday of Stalin's dictatorship: "It would appear that Richytsky considered Shevchenko as a nationalist from beginning to end," declared Soviet Ukrainian critics. "Richytsky failed," they charged "to show that every kind of nationalism is a bourgeois weapon and he thereby treated the creative works of Shevchenko as the gospel of Ukrainian nationalists and fascists who represent Shevchenko to be a nationalist poet, whom they have made into their standard-bearer."<sup>9</sup> "Richytsky virtually endorses the 'fascist' theory that the Russians are all enemies of Ukraine."<sup>10</sup> The Russian fear of Shevchenko's national appeal among the Ukrainians led to Richytsky's repudiation even though he was the first writer under the aegis of the communist regime in Ukraine to advance the thesis that Shevchenko was the original communist revolutionary prototype by virtue of his fiery championship of the cause of the enserfed peasants—"the predecessors of the twentieth century proletarian classes."<sup>11</sup> His essay cited French, German, Spanish, Italian, English, and Slavic poets who had sung about the lot of the poor and the down-trodden, and concluded that no poet or literary figure in world literature was so completely dedicated to the cause of the victims of social and economic discrimination or had so ennobled the lowest classes of society as Shevchenko had done in his poetic works.

The Commissars under Stalin decreed that all manifestations of Ukrainian nationalism were intolerable to the communist doctrine of complete subordination of all non-Russian national interests to the Soviet system of society. To espouse anti-Russian nationalism was to court banishment or liquidation.<sup>12</sup> To extol alleged Russian literary and revolutionary influences on Shevchenko was to court official recognition as illustrated by the following quotation from a study published by the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR: "The philosophical, aesthetic, and socio-philosophical views of T. H. Shevchenko were formulated under the profound influence of the Russian revolutionary democrats—M. H. Chernishevsky, M. O. Dobroliubov, and O. I. Herten."<sup>13</sup>

The flowering of Ukrainization was stunted when the Commissars struck at the heart of Shevchenko's Ukrainian nationalism—the

<sup>9</sup> *Taras Shevchenko, povne zibrannia tvoriv, op. cit.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Ostap Hrycay, *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> Yaroslav Bilinsky, *The Second Soviet Republic*, Rutgers University Press, 1964.

<sup>13</sup> H. P. Yizhakevych, *Pytannia rosiis'ko-ukraïns'kykh movnykh zviazkiv*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, Kiev, 1954.

peasantry—by uprooting millions of peasants from the soil and transplanting them into harsh labor camps in Siberia. The scourge of famine which visited Ukraine also aided the Commissars in the liquidation of millions of peasants who starved to death because all relief was intentionally withheld by the Soviet government.

Even top Communist party officials like Nicholas Skrypnyk, a friend of Lenin's, were purged for espousing Ukrainian nationalism in the symbol of Shevchenko, allegedly concealed behind the following type of utterance: "It was under the banner of Shevchenko that Ukrainian working masses arose at long last; under the banner of Shevchenko they rushed into battle against tsarism, and it was under his banner that victory was being achieved."<sup>11</sup>

When the complete works of Shevchenko were published in the middle thirties in Kiev, the lengthy preface bears witness to what extent the image of Shevchenko had been perverted by Russian communist demands of that decade. He was depicted as indebted to prominent Russian contemporaries for his progressive ideas rather than to the profound influences of his Ukrainian background and harsh personal experiences. Those who held contrary views were branded as "despicable nationalist traitors."<sup>12</sup> All references to Shevchenko's nationalism were qualified by communist "hate" words such as "bourgeois", "reactionary", "fascist." His revolutionary status was downgraded to a "bourgeois democrat," "a peasant revolutionary," or simply as "a child of his epoch." In the footnote explanations to Shevchenko's poem in which he expresses yearning for the coming of a Ukrainian Washington, Soviet writers excuse his preference for the American national hero by explaining that Shevchenko was not a Marxist or communist democrat but a "bourgeois democrat." "He dreamed of a Ukrainian Washington, that is to say, he yearned for the establishment of a bourgeois system."<sup>13</sup>

The Ukrainians in the free world everywhere deplore Soviet distortions of his writings and life-long ideals, and condemn Russian utilization of Shevchenko's national popularity as a vehicle for Sovietizing Ukrainian culture and misrepresenting Ukrainian aspirations for national and political independence from Russia. Only in lands outside the Soviet Union is there any freedom to portray the image of Shevchenko as reflected in his poems: "There are few poets in the world literature whose works are so closely connected with the whole existence of their nation as those of the greatest poet of U-

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<sup>11</sup> E. Shabliovsky, *Shevchenko i Rosiis'ka revollutsiina demokratia*, Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kiev, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> *Taras Shevchenko, povne zibrannia tvoriv*, op. cit.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

kraine. His spirit inspired his nation to rise from the dead and to behold the stately road of freedom, leading toward the faint, glimmering light of a new day hidden in terrible gloom. Shevchenko's flaming prophetic spirit has pointed out our road for us, he is the originator and the first ideologist of Ukrainian nationalism. What was done and what will be done in the name of our national independence is still based on that immortal poem, *Zapovit*, written during a severe illness in 1845 in Pereiaslav. This poem has become our political testament and was reverently sung during our last battle for freedom."<sup>11</sup>

Another keen student of Shevchenko provides no comfort for the Russian and Ukrainian communist thesis that Shevchenko was not an anti-Russian nationalist:

"Shevchenko was not only the first Ukrainian intellectual who entered into an ideological conflict with the Russophilism of his countrymen, but he may have been of all the revolutionaries, the greatest enemy of Russia. Shevchenko detested official Russia as a democrat, regarded the Russian tsars as primarily responsible for the enslavement of the Ukrainian peasant masses; as a federalist and an exponent of the policies of SS. Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, he abhorred concentration of political power in central authority, as a political radical and a republican who detested monarchies, autocracies, and tsars, and finally as a Ukrainian patriot who saw not only in the Russian government but also in the Russian citizenry, the chief culprit of the destruction of Ukrainian national freedom and culture. He idealizes those leaders in Ukrainian history who defended Ukraine's independence against Moscow. Before Shevchenko, Ukrainian patriotism could mask its identity under the wings of the black eagle and the white tsar; after Shevchenko, anyone wishing to follow him, could no longer remain a Russian patriot."<sup>12</sup>

The real test of Soviet views and policies towards Shevchenko is to be found in official Soviet publications in Ukraine. They all reflect an unabashed literary and cultural servility and subservience which are no less decreed than they are symbolic of the Soviet Russian grip on the life and cultural "freedom" of the captive nations integrated by force into the Russian modern empire, commonly known as the Soviet Union.

To extol Communist party dogmas and its messianic aims under the banner of Lenin-Stalin or Lenin-Khrushchev, etc., to pay homage to the "big brother" as personified by Russia, to feign ideological in-

<sup>11</sup> Ostap Hrycay, "Taras Shevchenko and Ukraine Today," *The Trident*, September, 1939.

<sup>12</sup> Yulian Okhrymovych, *Rozvytok ukrains'koï politychno-natsional'noi dumky*, Lviv-Kiev, 1922.

fluence of Russian writers and intellectuals upon their Ukrainian counterparts during the last two centuries are solemn obligations imposed by Moscow on all Soviet Ukrainian writers at the peril of censorship, literary and political ostracism, and even exile and capital punishment.

The pattern of Russification of Ukrainian culture and nationality emphasizes submergence and not equality of everything Ukrainian.

Communist writers minimize the significance of Shevchenko's nationalistic tendencies and play up his fearless and fiery denunciation of the tsarist regime and the economic and social oppression of his people.

However, whenever the image of Shevchenko as a national hero will serve their purpose by emphasizing his love of Ukraine whose freedom and independence he espoused, the leaders of the Kremlin will give unstinted leeway to patriotic appeals as they did in 1943 during the German military occupation of Ukraine.

"Listen, comrade! The tomb of Shevchenko, the entire land of Shevchenko, appeals to you, freedom fighter.—Hurry to the rescue! The land of Taras calls for vengeance against the evil oppressor. Mortal combat boils on both banks of the Dnieper for the freedom of Ukraine, for the land of Taras."<sup>19</sup>

To minimize any local wrath against the scorched earth policy of Stalin in destroying Ukraine's historical monuments, the following gesture was designed to propagandize the Russian communist leaders as liberators of Ukraine: "November 6, 1943, Kiev. During the first hour of liberation of Kiev from the German occupation forces, there assembled before the monument of Shevchenko—N. S. Khrushchev, Marshal of the Soviet Union, Zhukov, General Vatutin, representatives of the arts and literature: Alexander Dovzhenko, Nicholas Bazhan, Yurii Yanovsky. Khrushchev removed his cap and exclaimed: 'Look, Taras Hryhorovych, see what they have done to Kiev!'"<sup>20</sup>

History records that the early Christians communicated with one another by means of symbols and allegories to escape persecution by Roman authorities. Many Soviet Ukrainian writers, who must serve their foreign masters in Moscow to survive, appear to have found ways and means to communicate Shevchenko's ideals and aims to their countrymen by giving to Caesar what is Caesar's—the pagan Soviet symbolism of hammer and sickle, the passwords, Lenin-Stalin and the stereotyped party slogans, and by giving to the Ukrainian people the image of Shevchenko as a national hero and his *Kobzar* as

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<sup>19</sup> Dmytro Kosaryk, "Zhyttia i diial'nist' T. Shevchenka," *Radians'kyi Pys'mennyk*, Kiev, 1955.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



the symbolic gospel of the Ukrainian liberation movement. They have mastered the flexibility of communist dialectics in literature and the indispensability of acknowledging the motherhood of communist ideology (Marx) and the fatherhood of the Soviet state (Lenin-Stalin). The duality of Ukrainianism and Sovietism achieved in the works of some of the writers is so transparent in its allegorical and nationalistic meanings as to be almost naive.

This phenomenon is aptly illustrated in the following condensed extracts of two short stories written in 1942 by Yurii Yanovsky, a prominent Ukrainian Soviet writer (deceased) in carrying out Moscow's directive to utilize Shevchenko's image for patriotic appeals during the German occupation of Ukraine. The first one, entitled *Shkoliar (Student)*,<sup>21</sup> plays up Shevchenko's influence on a thirteen-year-old war orphan hiding in the cellar of his home during the German occupation of his village:

"Now, I am the only Ukrainian left in the village. My surname is Shevchenko. I like that surname. The walls of my 'hideaway' are decorated with pictures of our own people—Lenin, Stalin, and Taras Shevchenko. Their eyes tell me that we will vanquish the fascists. I have a *Kobzar* of Taras Shevchenko and have resolved to memorize it completely.

"If the parasites capture me and try to hang me, I will recite to them the words of father Taras Shevchenko. I will never make peace with the fascist invaders. I visualize a bright dawn as I read the *Kobzar*; I have a vision of mother gently stroking my head and, like Taras Shevchenko, I am again living in my native land among my own people."

The second story written in December of 1942 is intended as a patriotic anniversary piece and it is entitled *Testament*.<sup>22</sup> Just as the first story was inspired by Shevchenko's autobiographical poem in which the poet recalled an episode in his own life as a thirteen-year-old orphaned shepherd boy, so the second story is adapted to symbolize Shevchenko's *Testament*, with a double-edged allegorical meaning.

The story is about an elderly retired worker, a Soviet patriot who was captured and forced to "trudge quietly, barefoot over the snow covered road to his gallows erected at a site overlooking the Dnieper river."

"At night the partisans removed the corpse and buried it on a hill overlooking the Dnieper. From the clenched fist they recovered a crumpled note. This was a testament, a message transmitted to his own people after his death:

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<sup>21</sup> Yurii Yanovsky, *Tvory*, Kiev, 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

'I bequeath to you a barren land, devastated by the fascist boot. I bequeath to you, my children, the ruins of the beautiful Ukrainian cities which were burned by the savage Teutonic horde.

'We have known many invaders during the last thousand years of our history, and where are they? Where are their mounds? Where are their evil skulls from which the fire of their greedy eyes has expired, the lying tongue has rotted away and the ravenous maw has turned to dust? They are all gone, see to it, children, that none of them return.

'I foresee that in a few years you will again rebuild and glorify our famous Soviet Ukraine.

'Plant a small oak, from my garden, in the little plot overlooking the Dnieper so that remembrance of me may live among you.'"

Despite the rigid political controls of the Communist party system, the genius of the Ukrainian people cannot be contained. Shevchenko's spirit breaks through the bonds of censorship and communist propaganda in the writings of a number of Ukrainian Soviet authors to carry a double-edged message to the Ukrainians shackled by the Russian communist brand of tyranny. His *Testament* has not been forgotten nor its message dimmed by time and events:

He was the poet. His thoughts, his dreams,  
His feelings, his prophetic songs, —  
Kindled hopes among the people,  
And called slaves to freedom.

Flows the Neva. Flows the Dnieper to the sea;  
Years have passed. What now do we see?  
Who, as though living, communes with us?  
Who will live forever, and who forever is dead?

Whose name do we hear all around us?  
Here is a park whose flowers greet us —  
In place of Emperor Nicholas,  
Rises a bronze-cast Taras.

Live on, poet, in bronze and granite,  
Live on, poet, in memory of mankind.  
Live in songs, live in your "Testament" —  
In righteous fame and immortality!"

In a biographical novel about Shevchenko, a Soviet Ukrainian writer gives us a glimpse of his appeal to the downtrodden and oppressed today in the following scene describing the poet's reflections as he trudged wearily on a winter day in 1845 just before Christmas to

<sup>22</sup> Liubomyr Dmyterko, "Pamiatnyk," *Ukrains'ka Radians'ka Poezia*, Kiev, 1951.

seek rest and medical treatment at the home of his friend, Dr. Kozachkovsky, near the Dnieper river:

"Taras loved the Dnieper in all seasons. Dnieper—the irrepresible, by ice, winds, and snows unsubdued. When covered with ice, he is sluggish, but he will churn and race with the first rays of the spring sun—will crack and shed his winter fetters.

"And so will the people. They, too, are sluggish. Freedom is not a gift to be delivered as reward for wishful waiting.

"The people, the countless legions of the oppressed and ill-fated people must themselves arise and fight for it."<sup>21</sup>

As the poet's thoughts groped for a meaning to his own life and the use he had made of his talents, he suddenly realized that death no longer held any fears for him. His mission was clear, if only his people would respond to his call "to tear the shackles off their feet and achieve their cherished freedom." No longer perturbed by the mystery of death or how long his people would remember him after death, the poet stops to contemplate his final resting place on the height overlooking the Dnieper from which the panorama of a Ukraine with its new, great, and free family will unfold before the gaze of whoever shall ascend his mound. Death shall be conquered when the people shall hear his *Testament* and rise up.<sup>22</sup>

Whatever the personal feelings and convictions of Soviet writers might be, Soviet literary standards require formal obeisance to the Communist party line which decrees, among other things, that in extending recognition to Shevchenko as a national hero, his revolutionary zeal being of peasant origin, pre-communist, and nationalistically motivated, is not entitled to a niche in the Valhalla of the genuine heroes of the Soviet "paradise."

In the official English language publications of the Soviet Union, all the vibrant hues of Shevchenko's Ukrainian nationalism are filtered out prismatically to reflect only the revolutionary rays of his poetry. The Russian communist screening process shows up a poetic genius who was born a serf and became a "democratic revolutionary ideologist of a peasant uprising in Ukraine," whose poetry did much to heighten the national and social awareness of his countrymen, not to regain their national independence from Russia, but "equality" with the Russians.<sup>23</sup>

Contrast the above official Soviet view with the following observation by a Ukrainian political analyst and journalist currently living in the United States: "The actuality of the situation in Ukraine

<sup>21</sup> Oksana Ivanenko, *Tarasovi shliakhy*, Kiev, 1954.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> "Taras Shevchenko, Poet and Revolutionary," *USSR*, February, 1961.

under the aegis of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the colonial regime of Moscow, the policies of Russification in all cultural activities, economic exploitation, and complete political subjugation—these are the identical conditions which give to Shevchenko's *Zapovit* today the significance and vitality they gave to it in 1845 when it was written."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ivan Kedryn, "Shevchenko i Ukraïns'ka politychna dumka," *Svoboda Almanac*, Jersey City, 1961.



## SHEVCHENKO'S UKRAINE

Shevchenko's talent for drawing and painting developed early, shaped his destiny, and decreed his emancipation from serfdom. Other facets of his gifted personality found expression in other artistic media. He was a connoisseur of music and the dramatic arts. He was not only an enthusiastic collector of Ukrainian folksongs, but he was himself a melodious singer of them. His pen as well as his brush created exquisite color and word-tones, revealed a keen perception of form and feeling, which enabled him to communicate his ideas and thoughts vividly, precisely, and with economy and simplicity of words. As a poet of rare talent and genius, he ranks with the immortal bards in world literature.

Of the many subtle devices of word and sound for which the spontaneously creative quality of his poetry is distinguished, an unobtrusively pulsating pattern of contrast gives it a sublime and incisive vitality. The balanced interplay of diverse forces, actions, ideas, feelings, scenes, and personalities makes each poem a symphonic record of the strife experienced by his native Ukraine and reflected in his own Promethean career. His poetic works etch the thorny path of a pilgrim in search of the ultimate truth as he evaluates and synthesizes the conflicting forces of life, culminating in release from strife upon achievement of justice and freedom, the attributes of man reconciled to his God.

We discern in his poetry how the experiences of his enserfed family, personal adventures, and the impressions of natural beauty amid human suffering evoked a profusion of contrasting impulses, images, and concepts. We seem to enter a realm of experience where "the sweetest songs tell of saddest thought," and "heard melodies are sweet but the unheard are sweeter." A blind minstrel, the *Kobzar* is our guide to the natural paradise that is Ukraine and the hell that the system of serfdom has brought in its wake. We listen to the prayers of the innocent maiden, the yearning of the widow, and the

exhortations of the brave Kozaks; we hear the blasphemy of the despot and the shackled serf, the sighs of the despairing exile. We stand in awe before the tall mounds stretching across the steppe where the glory of the fallen Kozaks "illumines the gloom of their graves." In the words of the poet, we converse with father Dnieper and mother Ukraine as we listen by the light of the pale moon to the song of the nightingale in the cherry orchard. With the poet we seem to ask—"Heaven? Look around and ask what's happening in that heaven!"<sup>1</sup>

The natural beauty of Ukraine was deeply engraved in the sensitive mind of Shevchenko as a boy and the ideal never left him during the many years he was expatriated from his native country:

I grew up in alien land;  
I am growing gray in alien land.  
In my loneliness, there is nothing  
Lovlier on God's earth than  
The Dnieper and our glorious country.<sup>2</sup>

Just as suddenly as the idealized image of Ukraine flashes into view it fades into the dark shadows:

Everywhere in that famous Ukraine,  
People are yoke-harnessed by  
The landlords. Fettered are  
The expiring sons of Knights.<sup>3</sup>

The next scene is beamed in the perspective of Shevchenko's thoughts through the prism of fluid and contrasting lights and shadows of an idealistic and realistic perspective:

If you do not see this evil,  
Then things appear to be  
Serene and pleasant in Ukraine.  
Dnieper, lovable and affectionate  
Like a child sucking at  
His mother's breast, appears  
Amidst the hills. — Around  
Him stretch ample villages  
Peopled by happy people.  
That's the way it would be, maybe  
If there were no trace left  
Of landlords in Ukraine.<sup>4</sup>

Again and again, the contrast between the ideal and the real evokes strong feelings about his Ukraine:

<sup>1</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Yakby vy znaly, panychi (If, Lordlings)*.

<sup>2</sup> T. Shevchenko, *I vyris ya na chuzhyni (I Grew Up in Alien Land)*.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

Recently, I visited in Ukraine,  
That most beautiful of villages,  
The one in which mother  
Cradled me to sleep, toiled  
At night to earn enough  
To buy a candle offering to  
The Immaculate One — of whom  
She asked good fortune for her child.  
It is well, mother, that you  
Died young, or you might  
Curse Her for the talent she  
Vouchsafed to me. It  
Is dreadfully horrible in  
That village. People wander  
There, emaciated, black as earth.  
The green orchards are parched.  
The ponds are weed infested.  
Desolation scars the villages  
Like fire. In silent torpor and  
Bondage, the people trudge  
To till the fields, leading  
Their children by the hand.<sup>5</sup>

This desolate picture of the children of once free Kozaks, trudging silently in the shackles of serfdom and leading their young ones not in the direction of freedom but deeper into slavery, evoked fiery lines from Shevchenko, reminiscent of the following stirring verses from Lord Byron:

The fiery souls that might have led  
Thy sons to deeds sublime,  
Now crawl from cradle to the grave,  
Slaves — nay the bondsmen of a slave.<sup>6</sup>

Ukraine for Shevchenko is the country which has been transformed from the paradise of freedom to the hell of serfdom by Catherine the Great, Empress of Russia and her aristocratic favorites:<sup>7</sup>

Look around and ask —  
What's happening in that heaven?  
In that meadow, in that house,  
In that heaven — I saw hell,  
Bondage, hard toil — not even  
A respite for prayer. My good  
Mother, worn by toil and privation,  
Went to the grave in her prime.  
Our father, mourning with his

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> G. G. Lord Byron, *The Giaour*.

<sup>7</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Velykyi l'okh (The Big Crypt)*.



Children (young and naked)  
Succumbed to his cruel fate  
And died in serfdom.<sup>8</sup>

To Shevchenko, Ukraine is his beautiful native land from which he was expatriated by force. His grief and longing for his beloved native land were intensified by the harshness of his penal servitude in the faraway, bleak, foreign land—Siberia.

In this farway prison,  
There are no words, no tears,  
There is nothing. Even Almighty  
God is not around here.<sup>9</sup>

I recall Ukraine and tremble.<sup>10</sup>

My heart grows cold to think  
I'll no longer live or die in Ukraine.<sup>11</sup>

It is hard to live in bondage,  
In a desert; but people live there.  
What shall I do? Die?  
But hope, brother, does not die.<sup>12</sup>

I feign would die. — But  
Ukraine, the winding Dnieper,  
And you my friend, will  
Not let me ask of God  
This boon.<sup>13</sup>

I do not curse my fate —  
I only pray to God:  
Dear God, do not let me  
Die in alien land,  
In bondage.<sup>14</sup>

Oh send my soul some hope  
At least. If not — then send  
My tears to my Ukraine.  
For her, dear God, my life is  
Spent. Maybe I'll rest easier  
In alien land, if they  
Remember me now and then.

<sup>8</sup> T. Shevchenko, *If, Lordings*.

<sup>9</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Lichu v nevoli dni i nochi (I Count the Days and Nights)*.

<sup>10</sup> T. Shevchenko, *A. O. Kozachkovs'komu (To A. A. Kozachkovsky)*.

<sup>11</sup> T. Shevchenko, *V nevoli tiazhko (It's Hard in Prison)*.

<sup>12</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Ne dodomu vnochi iduchy (While Not Homeward Bound)*.

<sup>13</sup> T. Shevchenko, *To A. O. Kozachkovsky*.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

My heart grows numb at  
 The thought that I may be  
 Buried in alien land —  
 And these thoughts be buried  
 With me! And no one  
 Remember me in Ukraine.<sup>15</sup>

Love Ukraine,  
 Love her in her most critical hour;  
 In her last, most desperate moment  
 Pray God for her!<sup>16</sup>

For Shevchenko Ukraine is his "ill-fated mother" who has lost her freedom and has become a serf, toiling for a rapacious foreign master.

Ukraine, Ukraine, my mother dear!  
 My heart quavers when I recall you.<sup>17</sup>

My beloved Ukraine  
 Why are you plundered?  
 Why, mother, are you dying?<sup>18</sup>

In Shevchenko's poetry Ukraine is presented as a person and as mother country. Symbolic of Ukraine is his famous poem *Kateryna*, —the peasant maiden seduced and abandoned by a Russian soldier.

Ukraine is the indigent, grief-stricken widow, whose children are exploited and despoiled by the inhuman and insatiable upper classes who own the land and the people that work it.

Weep, Ukraine!  
 Childless widow!<sup>19</sup>

They torment the widow  
 To exact the poll tax due.  
 Her only son they take,  
 And send in chains  
 To serve the tsar.<sup>20</sup>

My cruel suffering,  
 I'll hide behind the cloud —  
 And to you, Ukraine,  
 My ill-fated widow,  
 I will fly from behind

<sup>15</sup> T. Shevchenko, *I Count the Days and Nights*.

<sup>16</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Chy my shche zhidemosia znovu (Will We Meet Again)*.

<sup>17</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Tarasova nich (Taras Night)*.

<sup>18</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Rozryta mohyla (Pillaged Mound)*.

<sup>19</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Son (Dream)*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

The cloud to visit  
 And talk with you. We  
 Will counsel with one another;  
 Nightly unburden of our woes,  
 And wait until your young ones  
 Grow up and rise against the foe.<sup>21</sup>

For Shevchenko, Ukraine is the home of the Zaporozhian Kozaks, whose valor and exploits in countless struggles were the bulwark for over two centuries of individual and political freedom of the people, whose glory and fame were preserved in songs and ballads of the wandering minstrels, the *kobzars* of Ukraine.

These are Kozaks,  
 There is no landlord here.  
 We all lived as equals in freedom;  
 We all died as equals for freedom.  
 We will all arise. — But God  
 Knows when that will be.<sup>22</sup>

Hearken to the blind minstrel's  
 Song, sorrow laden, about Ukraine,  
 Love her! Love the truth about her.<sup>23</sup>

At Ukraine's cry of alarm, the eagles came!<sup>24</sup>

Oh dear God of Ukraine,  
 Let not the free Kozaks  
 Die captive in alien land.<sup>25</sup>

There in the spacious steppe is freedom.<sup>26</sup>

To Shevchenko, Ukraine is the country of the steppes over whose landscape stretch myriads of silent mounds, mute reminders of the bloody wars of Ukrainian Kozaks to preserve their heritage of freedom. The steppe is the land where freedom once flourished. The wind, the sea, and the mighty Dnieper personify the forces of nature which nurtured the unbridled spirit of freedom and resistance to foreign aggression and bondage.

All Ukraine  
 Is covered with the high mounds. Look,  
 Child, all those mounds, all of them  
 Are filled with our noble corpses,

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Buvaie, v nevoli inodi zhadaiu* (*In Prison, I Recall*).

<sup>23</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Haidamaky*.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Hamaliia*.

<sup>26</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Markevychu, N.* (*To N. Markevych*).

Tightly packed, — That's freedom asleep!  
It fell gloriously; it fell with the Kozaks.<sup>27</sup>

May the Kozak souls visit Ukraine,  
It is pleasant and freedom is boundless there.<sup>28</sup>

Shevchenko's Kozak personifies in the romantic lines of Thomas Moore:

One who, no more than mortal brave,  
Fought for the land his soul adored,  
For happy homes, and altars free, —  
His only talisman, the sword,  
His only spell-word, Liberty.<sup>29</sup>

Ukraine is a nation "lulled to sleep by evil men." It is "weed-infested, mildewed, sunk in mire and muck," because the healthy, invigorating features of freedom, justice, and truth have been suppressed.

A land of carcasses and slaves  
One dreary waste of chains and graves.<sup>30</sup>

Her own unwise sons are responsible for the desolate inglorious state of affairs and scenes of ruin and bondage, the hetmans and Kozak leaders who were willing to barter freedom for Moscow's grant of rank and privilege.

Such, dear God, deeds did we  
Perpetrate in our heaven,  
Upon your just earth!  
We made hell out of paradise,  
And asked you for yet another.<sup>31</sup>

Shevchenko despairs of the plight, degradation, and oblivion to which his beloved country has sunk. He asks himself:

I wish some one would speak  
Sense to me — that I may know  
For whom I write and why;  
Why I love my Ukraine so?  
Is she worth the sacred flame?<sup>32</sup>

<sup>27</sup> T. Shevchenko, *In Prison, I Recall*.

<sup>28</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Dumy moi (My Thoughts)*.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh*.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> T. Shevchenko, *If, Lordlings*.

<sup>32</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Khida samomu napysat' (Shall I Write An Epistle To Myself)*.

The pageant of his country's shame —  
 While every tear her children shed  
 Fell on his soul, like drops of flame.<sup>33</sup>

Shevchenko wonders what personal obligation he may have to ameliorate the conditions of his beloved country:

We ask one another:  
 Why were we born?  
 To do good or to do evil?  
 What is the purpose of our life?  
 Why do we strive,  
 And before attaining die?  
 By what kinds of acts  
 Dear God, shall I  
 Be judged on earth?  
 It were better that  
 Children bondage-born  
 Did not grow up to offend  
 And bring obloquy  
 Unto you, Holy One.<sup>34</sup>

Why has God permitted such suffering and loss of freedom in his Ukraine is a question that Shevchenko asks himself throughout his life.

Cherished land, my beloved Ukraine!  
 Why are you plundered and ravaged?  
 Why are you dying, mother?  
 Did you not worship God  
 Early each morning? Did you  
 Not teach your children manners?<sup>35</sup>  
 And maybe, no, I do not know,  
 But it seems that you  
 (For without your will, God,  
 We would not suffer naked in heaven).  
 And maybe you, yourself, from on high  
 Are scoffing, dear Father, at us  
 And counseling, maybe, with the  
 Landlords how to rule the world.<sup>36</sup>

The usual joy and praise unto  
 You, the Holy One,  
 For your wonderous deeds?  
 Bosh. — Praise for no one —  
 Only blood, tears and profanity —  
 Blasphemy on everything —  
 No! No! There is nothing sacred

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Moore, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Odyn u druhoho pytaiem (One Another We Ask)*.

<sup>35</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Pillaged Mound*.

<sup>36</sup> T. Shevchenko, *If, Lordlings*.

On earth anymore . . .  
It seems to me that, already,  
Even You — the people have cursed.<sup>37</sup>

I love my poor Ukraine so  
That I too would blasphemy,  
Even lose my soul for her.<sup>38</sup>

The voice of the *banduryst*, the wondering minstrel, speaks through Shevchenko, the poet. It has been aptly stated that "poetry is the protest of genius against the unreality of actual life."<sup>39</sup> "Poetry is indeed something divine"<sup>40</sup> according to Shelley. In Shevchenko's Ukraine the blind minstrel, the *kobzar*, personifies the poet who is inspired of God to remind his people of their past glory as free people. The poet proclaims:

We will send our soul on high  
To God himself to ask how much  
Longer shall the tyrants reign.<sup>41</sup>

Like the Psalmist he cries out:

We do not worship alien Gods,  
We beseech you:  
Save us, deliver us  
From the scorn of the foe.<sup>42</sup>

It will not be the same to me,  
If evil men shall lull Ukraine to sleep,  
And awake her when she's burned and robbed.<sup>43</sup>

Freedom is God's highest gift to man; a slave defames and offends God. Man must assert his right to freedom. It is better to strive for freedom even if we perish, than to tolerate misuse of freedom. The divine spark in man is the gift to choose between good and evil.

Oh dear God of Ukraine, let  
Not freedom loving Kozaks  
Perish in alien bondage.  
It is shameful here; it is shameful there,  
For a Kozak to arise from an

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Dream*.

<sup>39</sup> Edwin P. Whipple, "English Poets of the Nineteenth Century," *Essays and Reviews*, Vol. I, Boston, 1853.

<sup>40</sup> P. B. Shelley, *A Defence of Poetry*.

<sup>41</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Dream*.

<sup>42</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Psalm 94*.

<sup>43</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Meni odnakovo (It Is All the Same to Me)*.

Alien tomb and come before  
Your throne to pray for just  
Judgment, with his hands  
In shackles — for all to see.<sup>44</sup>

The Kozaks personify the champions of freedom. To him the Kozak is he:

Who, though they know the strife is vain,  
Who, though they know the riven chain  
Snaps but to enter in the heart  
Of him who rends its links apart,  
Yet dare the issue — blest to be  
Even for one bleeding moment free,  
And die in pangs of liberty!<sup>45</sup>

Like Samuel Adams who was always sure that the hand of God was in the affairs of men, Shevchenko always turned to God for inspiration and restoration of freedom:

Without your will, God,  
We would not wander naked in heaven.<sup>46</sup>

Some day God will restore our freedom  
And destroy our bondage.  
We will praise thee, God,  
With all devout praises.<sup>47</sup>

We are reminded in so many of Shevchenko's "rebellious verses" for which he was banished by the tsar for life into a distant military penal colony in Siberia, of the spirit of defiance to foreign domination as expressed by the American patriot James Otis: "There can be no prescription old enough to supersede the law of nature and the grant of God Almighty, who has given all men a right to be free."<sup>48</sup> Shevchenko's *kobzar* is the psalmist who sings of the eternal truth and proclaims that truth is righteousness. He is the prophet-seer who prophesies the inevitable triumph of truth and righteousness and the rebirth of Ukrainian freedom. The poet's word is God's word. He proclaims with scriptural fervor and conviction that truth shall prevail and make Ukraine free.

We believe in Your power,  
And in Your living word:  
Truth will rise, freedom will rise;<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Hamaliia*.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Moore, *op. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> T. Shevchenko, *If, Lordlings*.

<sup>47</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Davydovi psal'my*, 52 (*Psalms of David*, 52).

<sup>48</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Psalms* 53, 136, 146.

<sup>49</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Kavkaz (The Caucasus)*.

The day of judgment will come,  
Dnieper and the mountains will speak.  
The blood of your children will flow  
To the sea in hundred fold streams.<sup>50</sup>

Send me the sacred Word,  
A mighty voice of the holy truth;  
Give strength to the feeble soul  
To speak with tongues of fire,  
So as to liquify the Word  
That it may thaw the human heart.  
Spread it over Ukraine,  
That Ukraine may revere it.<sup>51</sup>

Ukraine will rise, and  
Banish the night of bondage.  
The world of truth will shine  
And the once shackled children  
Shall worship in freedom.<sup>52</sup>

Shevchenko's Ukraine is a beautiful, rich country, populated by God-fearing, freedom-loving, socially and individually humane and pleasant people who were enslaved and exploited by wealthy foreign landlords and semi-denationalized Ukrainian underlings of the Russian autocracy and the established church of Moscow. His God-given talents were dedicated to the abolition of serfdom and the economic and political emancipation of his people. Shevchenko idealized a Ukraine without "serf or master" and gave full scope to this vision in his poems.

The poetry of Shevchenko reveals his sharp awareness of the social injustice and national wrong suffered by Ukraine. While he had made acquaintance with the movement of the Decembrists in the middle forties, and some utopian socialist groups as well as with the existence of the Polish independence movement, ideologically, Shevchenko's political and national profile was largely influenced by his Ukrainian orientation and rebellion against foreign domination and serfdom, introduced and supported by Moscow. We discern in his utterances and actions much of the same zeal and political ideals we see in the American revolutionary patriots and so widely popularized by the romantic poets during the early part of the 19th century. The Russian government saw in his poetry an incitement to rebellion against authority calculated to overthrow the tsarist regime, to be followed by the rebirth of a free and independent Ukraine, a status

<sup>50</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Poslaniie (Epistle)*.

<sup>51</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Neofity (Neophytes)*.

<sup>52</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Stoit' v seli Subotovi (Subotiv)*.



Ukraine had enjoyed before the tsars of Moscow had abrogated and destroyed Ukrainian national and political liberties.

In his poems the attainment of brotherhood and equality of nations and peoples is a recurring theme. Finally, the poet sees his Ukraine as a country which takes its place as a member of a large, emancipated, and free family of nations, with equal justice under the law, turning back on strife, fratricidal wars, and living in peace and harmony.

Shevchenko turns to Washington and the American revolutionary history for the realization of his ideals.

How long must we wait for  
A Washington, with a new and  
Just law? We'll bide our time;  
We know someday he will come.<sup>53</sup>

It is the same spirit which brought young Marquis de Lafayette to serve with George Washington in the American War of Independence. "It was not for America's own sake, however, but because America was for him the fresh, cool body of liberty. To this young dreamer, descended from the great family of Noailles and sick of the long oppression of monarchy, the American Revolution was the promise of a new beauty and a new freedom for the whole kingdom of mankind. . . ." "The moment I heard of America," he said with simple boyishness, "I loved her. . . what man has not his little America?"<sup>54</sup> In that, he forecast Shelley, Byron, Hugo, and the romanticists of the next century, and we can add Shevchenko.

Shevchenko's revolutionary thoughts had their genesis in the feelings and sentiments of the toilers of the soil from whom he arose and in the history and traditions of the fierce opposition of the Ukrainians to encroachment upon their liberty. While he was exposed to the views of Russian radical writers such as Belinsky, Chernishevsky, and Nekrasov, they were not able to reveal anything new to him respecting the evils of autocracy or serfdom. He was ahead of them in the vigor of his fiery condemnation of the system and in preaching revolutionary changes. In addition their liberalism was circumscribed by their nationalistically Russian horizons. They were intellectual liberals to whom Ukraine was "Little Russia" and Shevchenko a talented "Little Russian poet." They did not understand or subscribe to the whole of Shevchenko's truth and righteousness, to his Ukrainian nationalism as well as his social and economic views.

In Shevchenko's poems, the name of his country is always Ukraine, his cherished and beloved Ukraine. There is no other name

<sup>53</sup> T. Shevchenko, *Yurodyvnyi (The Possessed)*.

<sup>54</sup> John Hyde Preston, *Revolution 1776*.

for his native land in his poetry. In his letters and his prose writings he sometimes refers to it as "Little Russia," the official designation given by the Russian government to Ukraine. In doing so he underscored the subjugated status of Ukraine and the Russification processes of Moscow with all their depressing consequences—despotism, oppression, serfdom, national and cultural apostasy.

Steadfastly till the very end, he sought for righteous men, apostles whose espousals of individual rights and political independence were rooted in the laws of God as well the laws of nature. The Otis Smith, the John Adams, and the Thomas Jefferson type of liberals appealed to his political philosophy. How often he proclaims that tolerance of slavery is an indignity to the human soul and an offense to God himself, since God created man in his own image! This is the sentiment so eloquently expressed by Justice Wilson in the famous *Chisholm vs. Georgia*, Supreme Court decision.

Man himself, free and honest, is, I speak as to this world, the noblest work of God.<sup>55</sup>

This concept of freedom as a gift of God motivated our American leaders and lawmakers:

"Reason and freedom are our own; we are to use, but cannot resign them, without rebelling against Him who gave them; that to invade them is to encroach on the privileges we receive from God and traverse the design of Infinite Goodness."<sup>56</sup>

A few months before his death in 1861, still waiting for such leaders to emerge in his own country, Shevchenko wrote:

Days and nights go by —  
Meditating, hands clasped  
Around my head, I wonder  
What delays the apostle of  
Truth and Revelation.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> *U.S. Supreme Court Reports*, 1793.

<sup>56</sup> *U.S. Congress Debates*, 1802-3.

<sup>57</sup> T. Shevchenko, *I den' ide i nich ide (The Days Pass)*.



## IN HOC SIGNO

In the annals of the Ukrainian struggle for independence, the *Testament* became the simple but eloquent gospel of the oppressed. Its lyric alloy of requiem and militancy turned serfs into mettlesome insurrectionaries. Whether read, sung or recited, it revived memories of Kozak fame and glory, whose leitmotiv was a fearless love of freedom and independence. Its exalted tone pierced the miasma of Russification engulfing Ukraine as an aftermath of Russian conquest and occupation in 1775.

Its appearance in the middle of the last century contributed to the awakening of a submerged national consciousness. A non-Ukrainian can scarcely comprehend its clarion eloquence because of the subtle association of ideas and imagery projected in a language vitally expressive and rich in folk song heritage of endless struggle for personal and national liberty. The ridicule and disdain exhibited by Russian officialdom towards the Ukrainian language in which Shevchenko wrote his poetry, endeared the people all the more to the native charm and eloquence of the *Testament*. In it the Ukrainian people recognized their voice, their hopes, their aspirations and regained a sense of their national dignity and destiny.

The overtones of the Decembrist movement in Ukraine appeared strangely alien in comparison with the ferment and excitement produced by Shevchenko's collection of poems, the *Kobzar*. The catalytic effect of the *Testament* increased greatly after the poet's death. Whatever shades of meaning or scope of the message it conveyed to the people, they valued its innate spirit and indigenous origin. The *Testament* was as native and familiar to them as the broad steppe where freedom frolicked with the wind as it caressed the ancient Kozak mounds silhouetted against the horizon. It was as native and familiar to them as the resounding rapids of the Dnieper and as poignantly moving as the ballads sung by the blind minstrel in the village square.

The fact that some of the foremost Russian writers like Pushkin, Rylev, and Shevchenko's compatriot, Nicholas Hohol, exploited Ukrainian themes and drank deep from the sparkling springs of Ukrainian history and Kozak exploits caused no envy, but did intensify the feeling of national pride and adoration for Shevchenko for preferring to remain a Ukrainian poet and not seeking a niche in Russian literature. Shevchenko's epic life and his poetical genius restored to the people of Ukraine the stimulus for the love of freedom and independence once provided by the fame and exploits of the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Kozaks in defense of freedom. His popularity extended beyond the Ukrainian sphere. His warm personality, his unsophisticated liberalism, and universal humanitarianism endeared him to some of the foremost Slavic liberals of his day.

He fostered ideals of the brotherhood of men, cultural and national equality, and political and economic freedom of the people within the Russian empire.

In his lifetime, he was branded as dangerous to the integrity of the Russian empire, to the tsarist regime, and to the established church of Russia. The communist successors of the tsars inherited the latter's fears regarding Shevchenko's nationalism. But the success of the Ukrainian National Revolution made it impossible for them to ignore Shevchenko as a national hero. Lenin was quick to recognize the image of Shevchenko in exploiting Ukrainian grievances against the tsarist regime. Referring to the tsar's ban in 1914 on all official observances of the 100th anniversary of Shevchenko's birth, Lenin said: "The ban on the observance of Shevchenko's centennial celebration was such an amazing, marvelous, extraordinarily rare, and favorable event for fomenting agitation against the government that one could not imagine more auspicious grounds or occasion for agitation."<sup>1</sup> The Communists quickly resolved the dilemma which Shevchenko posed for them as a nationalist and a revolutionary at the same time, by the simple expedient of ignoring his nationalism and eulogizing and exploiting his ideas of universal justice and freedom, underscoring his humble origin, and widely quoting his fiery denunciation of all forms of despotism.

In this manner the Communists exploited the dual import of the *Testament* by capitalizing on the aspirations of the people for an independent Ukrainian state and for economic and agrarian reforms. "Virtually every generation of revolutionary fighters for social and national emancipation of the peoples of the Russian empire turned to

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<sup>1</sup> V. I. Lenin, *Works*, Vol. XX, 1961.

Shevchenko's *Testament*.<sup>2</sup> The Soviet press disdainfully dismissed Shevchenko's unremitting denunciation of Russian subjugation as well as his separatist sentiments as merely base, anti-Russian distortions of the poet's works by the Ukrainian nationalists.

In recognizing Shevchenko as a Ukrainian national hero, the new rulers of Russia hope to integrate Shevchenko and Ukraine into the modern Soviet empire, and thereby give them the appearance of culturally and nationally distinct and separate entities but deprive them of all substance as such. In the Russian communist dialectic, the goals of democratic and national freedom of Shevchenko's *Testament* have been achieved at long last through the Bolshevik revolution and the fraternal solicitude of Russia, the big brother. Yet the admonition of the *Testament* "to rise and break their chains" has become the most widely and popularly quoted quatrain in Ukraine today. The seeming incongruity between the Russian and Ukrainian concept of the *Testament* arises from the diverse ideological viewpoints of the two antagonists. Moscow claims Shevchenko as one of its own Ukrainian "democratic-revolutionary" heroes who antedated and anticipated the Bolshevik revolution and the overthrow of tsarism. The Ukrainian nationalists claim Shevchenko as a prophet of economic and social justice, political freedom, national independence and as a great literary genius.

The extraordinary popularity of the *Testament* among the Ukrainians of all shades of political opinion, social or class status, and religious belief enhances its unique ideological significance. Regardless of the vicissitudes of political party in power or under what country's flag they may live, the Ukrainian people have accepted the *Testament* as a gospel of their national aims which they are determined in their minds to fulfill. In every corner of the world, nationalist and federalist, Communist and anti-Communist, Orthodox and Catholic, young and old, they all sing its words and melody without inner discords.

Whenever and wherever the memory of Shevchenko is honored, they recall, as they sing, his equally popular *Friendly Epistle*, in which the poet admonishes:

"Come, my brothers, and embrace  
Each your humblest brother,  
Make our mother smile again  
Our poor, tear-stained mother!"<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> H. A. Nudha, *Zapovit T. H. Shevchenka*, Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR, Kiev, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Vera Rich, *Taras Shevchenko: Song out of Darkness*, London, 1961.

Reciting the *Testament*, they stand on common ground under its talismanic spell, reminiscent of another historic insignia with the legend—“*In hoc signo vinces!*”

## **SELECTED TRANSLATIONS**





## TESTAMENT

*When I shall die, bury me on  
A mound that soars above  
The broad encircling steppe, in yon  
Ukraine I dearly love;  
That from its crest — the boundless plain  
Steep bends, and Dnieper stirred  
To rage and roar in loud refrain,  
Might be seen, might be heard.*

*And when the river's mighty flood  
Incarnadine, shall wash away  
To the azure sea, hostile blood  
From out Ukraine, that day  
I'll leave the hills and endless plain,  
Leave everything — and soar  
To worship God himself again —  
I'll know not God before.*

*Bury me — arise and wrench  
Your chains. With the evil gore  
Of malevolent foe your freedom drench,  
That it may flourish evermore.  
And in the great new family,  
Emancipated, free,  
Do not forget to remember me,  
Softly, kindheartedly.*

(Translated by John Panchuk, 4/15/64)

## THE TESTAMENT

*Dig my grave and raise my barrow  
By the Dnieper-side  
In Ukraina, my own land,  
A fair land and wide.  
I will lie and watch the cornfields,  
Listen through the years  
To the river voices roaring,  
Roaring in my ears.*

*When I hear the call  
Of the racing flood  
Loud with hated blood  
I will leave them all,  
Fields and hills; and force my way  
Right up to the throne  
Where God sits alone;  
Clasp His feet, and pray —  
But till that day  
What is God to me?*

*Bury me, be done with me,  
Rise and break your chain,  
Water your new liberty  
With blood for rain.  
Then, in the mighty family  
Of all men that are free  
Maybe, sometimes, very softly  
You will speak of me?*

(Translated by *E. L. Voynich*, 1911)

**ZAPOVIT**  
**(Legacy)**

*When I am dead, then let me slumber  
Underneath a mound,  
'Mid the rolling steppe, with precious  
Ukraine earth around;  
That the mighty girth of acres,  
Dnieper's craggy shores  
I may gaze on, and may hearken  
How the blusterer roars.*

*When it bears away from Ukraine  
To the azure sea,  
Foeman's blood — then I'll depart from  
Mountain-side and lea;  
These unheeding, I'll be speeding  
Even unto God,  
There to pray. But till that happen  
I'll know naught of God.*

*Grant me burial, then uprising  
Shatter every gyve;  
Drench with evil blood of foeman  
Freedom, that it thrive.  
And my name in your great kindred,  
Kindred free and new,  
Ye shall cherish, lest it perish —  
Speak me fair and true.*

(Translated by P. Selver, 1914)

## MY LAST WILL

*When I die, then bury  
Me upon a mound  
'Mid spacious steppes, in Ukrainia,  
Beloved soil around.*

*That yonder fields, widely stretching,  
I may be adoring.  
Mighty Dnieper with his windings  
I may hear him roaring!*

*When he bears from Ukrainia  
Into the blue sea  
Blood of foeman, then the meadows  
And hills dear to me,*

*Will I leave all, hasten soaring,  
Ev'n to God I'll go,  
There to pray, but until then  
God I do not know.*

*Bury me, and then arise  
Your fetters tear asunder,  
Sprinkling with foeman's vicious blood  
Your freedom safe thus render.*

*And in the coming Kinship great,  
Kinship new and free  
Forget not to gently, kindly,  
Sometimes speak of me.*

(Translated by John Yatchew, 1933)

## MY TESTAMENT

*When I die, let me be buried  
In beautiful Ukraine,  
My tomb atop a hillock high  
Amid the spreading plain,  
So that the fields, the boundless steppes,  
The Dnieper's plunging shore  
My eyes could see, my ears could hear  
The angry river roar.*

*When from Ukraine the Dnieper bears  
Into the deep blue sea  
The blood of foes . . . then will I leave  
These hills and fertile fields —  
All, all I'll leave and fly away,  
I'll fly right up to God  
To sing His praise . . . But till that day  
I recognize no God.*

*Oh bury me and rise ye up  
And smash your heavy chains  
And water well with evil blood  
The freedom of Ukraine.  
And in the great new family,  
The kinship of the free,  
With kindly and gentle word  
Remember also me.*

(Translated by John Weir, 1961)

## TESTAMENT

*When I die, then make my grave  
High on an ancient mound,  
In my own beloved Ukraine,  
In steppeland without bounds  
Whence one may see wide-skirted wheatland,  
Dnipro's steep-cliffed shore,  
There whence one may hear the blustering  
River wildly roar.*

*Till from Ukraine to the blue sea  
It bears in fierce endeavour  
The blood of foeman — then I'll leave  
Wheatland and hills forever:  
Leave all behind, soar up until  
Before the throne of God  
I'll make my prayer. For, till that hour  
I shall know naught of God.*

*Make my grave there — and arise,  
Sundering your chains,  
Bless your freedom with the blood  
Of foemen's evil veins!  
Then in that great family,  
A family new and free,  
Do not forget, with good intent  
Speak quietly of me.*

(Translated by Vera Rich, 1961)

## LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

*Raise my body to a summit  
Building green the wheaten plain  
Looking out and ever outward  
On horizons of Ukraine.  
Let me know beyond forgetting  
Steppe and mountain, gorge and hill.  
Let me listen to the Dnieper  
In his torment rage and spill.*

*When the Dnieper flowing scarlet  
Washes out into the sea,  
Field and mountain shall release me,  
Loose me from mortality,  
And the spirit of my brethren  
Freed at last, shall set me free.  
God denying, I deny Him.  
I deny eternity.*

*From the carrion carcass spoiling  
On my grave, your liberty,  
Thrust the flesh and flowering freedom,  
Wrench your chain, your stone from me.  
Of a world assembly joining  
Faith and freedom to one trust,  
Lift your nation tall, resplendent,  
In my name, my humble dust.*

(Translated by *Myra Lazechko Haas*, 1961)



## WHEN I AM DEAD

*When I am dead, bury me deep  
Within the funeral mound.  
Bury me out in the wide steppe  
In Ukraine's beloved ground,  
And where the boundless stretching fields  
Forever may be seen,  
And the steep banks of the Dnieper  
Roaring along between.*

*And when the Roarer from Ukraine  
Bears down to the blue sea  
The enemy's blood, those fields and mountains  
Will see the last of me;  
For then I shall leave them all at last  
And soar up into the skies  
With a blessing for God — but now, meanwhile,  
No god I recognize.*

*Bury me deep, but yourselves rise up  
And break your chains in glee!  
And with the oppressor's evil blood  
Sprinkle liberty!  
And when that great new family's born,  
The family of the free,  
O have a kindly and peaceful word  
With which to remember me.*

(Translated by Jack Lindsay, 1939)

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