86TH CONGRESS } HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES { DOCUMENT
2d Session } { No. 445

Europe's Freedom Fighter

TARAS SHEVCHENKO
1814–1861

A DOCUMENTARY BIOGRAPHY OF UKRAINE'S
POET LAUREATE AND NATIONAL HERO

UNITED STATES
GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
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HOUSE RESOLUTION 524

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MAY 11, 1960

Mr. LESINSKI submitted the following resolution; which was referred to the Committee on House Administration

JUNE 7, 1960

Considered and agreed to

RESOLUTION

Resolved, That there be printed as a House document, with an illustration, a biographical documentary of the life and character of Taras Shevchenko, known as the great Ukrainian poet and champion of liberty.

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FOREWORD

There is a rapidly growing interest on the part of Americans in the affairs and history of Eastern Europe. The conditions and challenges of our times demand and intensify this necessary interest. Needless to say, it is in our own national interest to cultivate and broaden this intellectual concern so that the products of our knowledge and understanding may be wisely and pragmatically applied toward our survival as an independent and free Nation.

As this thriving interest expands and deepens, new names and new places will emerge within the compass of our knowledge. Those who fought for freedom and those who perpetuated tyranny and despotism will be ordered accordingly in our minds. In this inevitable process the name of Shevchenko and the place of Ukraine sooner or later will be understood and appreciated by Americans generally. This is particularly true because the two are inseparably bound with man's persistent struggle for expanded freedom, the struggle which is crucial for us.

One of the chief reasons for this documentary biography of one of the most outstanding freedom fighters in Eastern Europe, within the tyranny-ridden Russian Empire itself, is, of course, to facilitate and abet this mounting American interest in the invincible forces at work in the imperial successor to that empire, the present Soviet Union. Another reason is the fact that 1961 marks the Shevchenko Centennial, the hundredth anniversary of the death of this immortal East European freedom fighter. Free and honest men will celebrate the year in informed memory of the enduring works of Shevchenko in the service of freedom: totalitarians in Moscow's present far-flung empire will distort these works in a futile endeavor to claim this historic figure as one of theirs.

Concretely, why should every thinking American know the significance of this Centennial, the historic meaning of Shevchenko, and the fundamental importance of his Ukraine and the other captive non-Russian nations in the U.S.S.R.? Clearly, there are six basic reasons justifying the necessity of such knowledge:

(1) For quite a number of years now, we have been told—and rightly so—that we should understand other peoples and other nations in our own interest as well as in the interest of truth itself. In response to this sound urging, this brochure is an open invitation to learning about another nation and its personification. The prime motivation behind it has no relation to any sentimental attachment to a figure that existed a hundred years ago; rather, it is a live and intelligent recognition of his perennial spirit in the present and for the future. This is not just a literary memorial of things accomplished in the past but, more so, an important means to utilize in our day the work and the symbolic value of an immortal so that victory over the dark forces of Russia's imperialist totalitarianism may be assured. The man is buried on the bank of the Dnieper near the town of Kaniv,

but as the English author, W. R. Morfill, puts it, "The tomb of the poet is the object of special reverence among his countrymen, the Mecca of the Ukrainian patriots."

(2) The observance of the Shevchenko Centennial by free men everywhere goes beyond the person of this champion of liberty. Shevchenko has a symbolic and inspirational value not for just a few people but actually for over forty million and countless more. As concerns his native Ukraine alone, we are dealing in essence with a nation of over forty million, which happens to be the largest non-Russian nation behind the European Iron Curtain and the second largest nation within the U.S.S.R. itself. Subtract this captive non-Russian nation from the U.S.S.R. and Moscow's economic, military, political and cultural claims, largely built upon imperial piracy, become heavily deflated.

One need only delve into the record of the anti-communist and anti-imperialist Russian resistance on the part of the Ukrainian nation from 1918 to present date in order to grasp the full meaning of Shevchenko. This record is readily accessible even in the archives of our own Government, the reports of the Select House Committee on Communist Aggression and also of the House Un-American Activities Committee and others. Indeed, our memorials bear a much broader significance. They impinge with striking effect upon the hearts, the minds and souls of millions of people. Thus, in the incessant cold war it is vitally important for us, in favor of our own American interests, to symbolize in every respect our friendship and spiritual affinity with the large Ukrainian nation. As early as 1877, Charles Dickens well perceived the power of Shevchenko and his writings when he observed that Ukrainians "worship the memory of Shevchenko."

(3) A further observation which deserves equal emphasis is the fact that Shevchenko is not only a national figure of a given people but is also a luminous personality in the whole course of contemporary East European history. Beyond peradventure of doubt, his role forms a prominent chapter in the fight of humanity for freedom. His works dwell not only on the oppression of the Ukrainian people but also on the enslavement of every other nation raped by the Russian masters, which means the Poles, Lithuanians, Georgians and many other non-Russian peoples. He strongly protested the denial of civil rights to the Jews in the Russian Empire of the White Tsars, and fought persistently and courageously for the freedom of nations and the liberties of individuals. As the contents of this brochure disclose, his solid stature in world literature is also a point of fact not to be overlooked. A contemporary of Abraham Lincoln, he, too, dedicated his life to the emancipation of nations and men from the bondage of Russian imperialism and totalitarian tyranny.

(4) Our Great Tradition and all that it uniquely entails has rubbed off on many nations and innumerable people throughout the world. Shevchenko is a crystal-clear example of this irresistible process. His works make explicit reference to Washington, and the ideals, progress, and just laws of our Nation, founded ultimately upon the moral and political principles enshrined in our Declaration of Independence, constitute a powerful source of inspiration and hope to Shevchenko and his Ukraine.

(5) There can be no doubt that despite the genius of freedom thought found in Shevchenko's writings, Moscow will, through its formidable propaganda organs, pollute and distort his contributions to humanity in the course of the Centennial. The Russian totalitarians have had to reckon with the immense popularity of the Bard among the Ukrainians and other peoples. Their attempts to degrade him as a "Ukrainian bourgeois nationalist" have seriously backfired. Spuriously, they characterize him as a "revolutionary democrat" who fought against Russian Tsarism but not against Russian imperialism and colonialism in behalf of the independence of Ukraine and other subjugated non-Russian nations in the former white empire. In brief, a reading of Shevchenko will convince any objective person that he belongs to us, not to tyrannical Moscow, past or present.

(6) Finally, it will be recalled that in July 1959, Congress passed an extremely significant measure, namely the Captive Nations Week Resolution. For the first time our Government recognized the essential fact that there are even more numerous captive nations within the U.S.S.R. than exist in so-called satellite Europe. Shevchenko's Ukraine is one of them, the largest in all of captive Europe. It is evident that this document is genuinely in the spirit and intent of that resolution, which is now Public Law 86–90.

There is a good deal of foolishness in our thinking about the Soviet Union. Our lingering misconceptions and myths about this uneasy empire structure only contribute to the success of Moscow's worldwide propaganda of deceit and lies. We consistently give vent to the impression that the Soviet Union is a gigantic monolith, flexing its military, economic, and political muscles. The overriding fact is that it is the very opposite of a monolith or a "nation." Actually, the existence of the majority captive non-Russian nations within the so-called state of the U.S.S.R. shows it to be an unsteady empire and a prison house of nations, capable of crumbling under a real test of comparative strength. For us, their existence is as great—if not more so—a deterrent against the outbreak of a hot global war as the strength of our composite military posture.

The U.S. celebration of the Shevchenko Centennial will demonstrate to Moscow that we are perfectly aware of and sympathize profoundly with the freedom aspirations of the Ukrainian people and other captive nations in the present Red Russian Empire. It will also show that we proudly take Shevchenko as our own and view with repugnance Moscow's brazen exploitation of his name and his works. For truly he was in the vanguard of national and individual freedom in Eastern Europe, the striking antithesis of traditional Russian totalitarianism. Our memorial to him plainly symbolizes the spirit of Washington which Shevchenko called and died for in all of captive Europe and Asia. This unforgettable figure lived one hundred years ago, but by his words, soul and thought he is with us today in the fight for world freedom and the liberation of the numerous subjugated nations under the yoke of imperialist and colonial Moscow.

In this noble spirit, the essays in this document furnish many rich insights into the nature of the hero and the challenges of his times which substantially were no different from those facing us today. Words are inadequate to express fully our popular gratitude for the efforts and clear foresight of the Honorables Paul C. Jones of Missouri, John Lesinski of Michigan, Alvin M. Bentley of Michigan,

John W. McCormack of Massachusetts, Jacob K. Javits and Kenneth B. Keating of New York, Theodore Francis Green of Rhode Island and many others who advanced the idea of appropriately observing the Shevchenko Centennial. Their unstinting aid and the superb assistance offered by the members and staff of the Senate Rules Committee, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson of Texas, and Senator Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois will long be remembered. This biographical document would not have been possible without the special efforts of the prominent and distinguished Representative of Michigan, the Honorable John Lesinski. The magnificent cooperation of the membership and staff of the House Administration Committee in the preparation of this document draws our everlasting thanks.

Moreover, the solid contributions provided by the several testimonies on Shevchenko in March 1960 have laid a firm groundwork of understanding for the Centennial. The testimonies are available for reading purposes in the offices of the House Administration Committee. They were prepared and submitted by Representative Bentley, Senator Javits, Dr. Lev E. Dobriansky, chairman of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, Dr. Roman Smal-Stocki, president of the Shevchenko Scientific Society, Mr. Dmytro Halychyn, president of the Ukrainian National Association, Mr. George Wolynetz, Jr., national commander of the Ukrainian American Veterans, and Mr. Mykola Lebed, president of the Prolog Research and Publishing Association.

LEV E. DOBRIANSKY, *Georgetown University.*

PUBLIC LAW 86-749

Authorizing the erection of a statue of Taras Shevchenko on public grounds in the District of Columbia.

Whereas throughout Eastern Europe, in the last century and this, the name and works of Taras Shevchenko brilliantly reflected the aspirations of man for personal liberty and national independence; and

Whereas Shevchenko, the poet laureate of Ukraine, was openly inspired by our great American tradition to fight against the imperialist and colonial occupation of his native land; and

Whereas in many parts of the free world observances of the Shevchenko centennial will be held during 1961 in honor of this immortal champion of liberty; and

Whereas in our moral capacity as free men in an independent Nation it behooves us to symbolize tangibly the inseparable spiritual ties bound in the writings of Shevchenko between our country and the forty million Ukrainian nation: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That (a) any association or committee organized for such purpose within two years from the date of the enactment of this joint resolution is hereby authorized to place on land owned by the United States in the District of Columbia a statue of the Ukrainian poet and national leader, Taras Shevchenko.

(b) The authority granted by subsection (a) of this section shall cease to exist, unless within five years after the date of enactment of this joint resolution (1) the erection of the statue is begun, and (2) the association or committee certifies to the Secretary of the Interior the amount of funds available for the purpose of the completion of the statue and the Secretary determines that such funds are adequate for such purpose.

SEC. 2. The Secretary of the Interior is authorized and directed to select an appropriate site upon which to erect the statue authorized in the first section. The choice of the site and the design and plans for such statue shall be subject to the approval of the Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. Such statue shall be erected without expense to the United States.

H.J. Res. 311 (86th Cong.) APPROVED SEPTEMBER 13, 1960.

TARAS SHEVCHENKO

EASTERN EUROPE'S CHAMPION OF LIBERTY

1814–1861

"When will we receive our Washington,
With a new and righteous law?
And receive him we will some day . . . !"
—SHEVCHENKO.

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CHAPTER I

TARAS SHEVCHENKO*

By Clarence A. Manning

It was an ominous time for the poet himself. Then came the Polish revolt of 1831 and the Russian armies stormed Warsaw and destroyed the little autonomy that had previously existed in that land. Nicholas was suspicious of new outbreaks and was constantly on the watch for any new malefactors who might venture to preach the hated liberal ideas.

It was just at this moment that a young Ukrainian serf, Taras Shevchenko, arrived in St. Petersburg, little dreaming of the changes that a few short years would make in his life.

He had been born on February 25, 1814, in the little village of Morintsy in the district of Kiev and was therefore a Ukrainian of the right bank of the Dnieper. His father, though a serf on the estate of Vasily Vasilyevich Engelhardt, was able to read and write. His mother was also of a superior type and the boy always respected her memory and admired her, even though she died when he was nine years old. His father married again but the step-mother was not kind to him, and when his father died in 1826, the twelve year old Taras was left as an orphan amid the hard conditions of serfdom.

He had already been attracted to painting and he made several attempts to study with various local painters, but his experiences were so unpleasant that he finally gave up and returned to his native village to pasture the cattle. A new attempt to get permission to study brought from the overseer of the estate merely an order to serve in the bakery, but his failure there was so evident that he was appointed instead a page in the mansion.

This gave him at least the opportunity to feast his eyes on the beautiful works of art that it contained and encouraged him in his early attempts to copy them. He had to do this secretly and when his master discovered his copying and painting, the boy was soundly flogged. Nevertheless, Engelhardt, like many other nobles of the day, liked to have educated serfs on his estate, and since Taras seemed competent, he took the boy with him first to Vilna and then after the outbreak of the Polish revolt to St. Petersburg and apprenticed him to the painter Shirayev.

Shevchenko learned relatively little here and life was very hard, but he had the opportunity to make the acquaintance of the Ukrainian artist Ivan Soshenko. This was a piece of good fortune, for Soshenko soon introduced him to Karl Petrovich Bryulov, the most fashionable painter of the day. Bryulov was then at the height of his fame. He was of a French Huguenot family which had long been domiciled in Russia and had been allowed to Russianize his name.

*Extracted from author's *Ukrainian Literature, Studies of the Leading Authors*, Ukrainian National Association, Jersey City, 1944.

—Release From Serfdom—

It was this man who took an interest in the young serf and desired to have him as a student, but no serf could be admitted to the Academy. Engelhardt refused to give Shevchenko his liberty but finally offered it in return for 2500 rubles. To secure this sum, Bryulov painted a portrait of the Russian poet, Zhukovsky, and this was sold in court circles by a lottery. The money was easily raised and on April 22, 1838, Shevchenko, then twenty-four years of age, became a free man, just one year after the death of Pushkin. He commenced his formal studies at the Academy of Art and finished the course in 1845 as a free artist.

Probably as early as 1837 he had begun to write poetry but his writings began to attract attention only after he was set free. In 1840 he brought out a slender volume, the first edition of the *Kobzar*, at the expense of a Ukrainian landowner Petro Martos, whose portrait he was painting. There was something new and startling in the quality of this first work with its emphasis upon the decay of the old Ukraine and the pictures of the sufferings of the people. It was typical of the spirit of Shevchenko that one of the poems, *Katerina* (named after his beloved sister) portraying the sufferings of a Ukrainian girl betrayed by a Russian lover, was dedicated to Zhukovsky. Incidentally, it may be mentioned that Zhukovsky was himself the illegitimate son of a Russian officer and a Turkish girl who had been captured in war.

He then set to work upon the *Haydamaki*, his longest and greatest poem. He finished it in 1841 and published it in the same year.

In 1843 he paid a short visit to Ukraine, and everywhere he was received with the greatest honors as the Ukrainian poet *par excellence*. He was entertained by the various magnates, including Prince Repnin, the governor, who was of Ukrainian origin, and his daughter Barbara. He visited his native village, and he could not fail to be impressed as he never had been with the hardships which the people were compelled to undergo.

As soon as he completed his course in the Academy, he returned to Ukraine and spent the summer of 1845 travelling around the country, visiting the sites of famous buildings. He soon found a position in the Archaeological Commission where his skill in painting stood him in good stead.

He finally settled in Kiev and soon found himself among a group of enthusiastic young men and scholars, including Nikolay Ivanovich Kostomariv and Panteleimon Kulish. Filled with the enthusiasm of youth and stirred by those revolutionary currents which were preparing the movements of 1848, they organized the Society of Saints Cyril and Methodius, for the purpose of creating a great free union of all the Slavonic peoples under a republican form of government. It was typical of the change that had taken place in Russian and Ukrainian life since the time of the Decembrists that this new movement was headed not by members of the gentry or army officers but by a group of professors, scholars, and men of letters. The naturally radical instincts of Shevchenko and his ardent patriotism for Ukraine led him to associate himself with them and he shared their dreams as well as their activity.

—Tsarist Imprisonment and Exile—

The authorities soon heard of the movement and acted swiftly and savagely to suppress it. Apparently its existence was revealed to the authorities on February 28, 1847. The matter was referred to St. Petersburg and on April 5, Shevchenko and his friends were arrested. An investigation and trial followed, and on May 30 he received the verdict that he was to be enrolled in the army in the Orenburg Independent Corps with the rank of private, and the tsar added in his own handwriting, "under the strictest supervision with the prohibition of writing and drawing."

Shevchenko had been a free man for only nine years. Now he was back in bondage under an even more intolerable yoke, torn away from his beloved Ukraine and condemned to live as a soldier in the most remote area of eastern Russia on the borders of Asia. At first his service was none too rigorous, for sympathetic commanders attached him to two expeditions to explore the Sea of Aral and allowed him to make sketches for the records of the expedition. When this came to the attention of the authorities in Petersburg, the privileges were speedily revoked and the tsar's instructions were carried out literally. Finally Shevchenko was sent to the fortress of Novo-Petrovsk.

After the death of Nicholas I, the new tsar Alexander II pardoned him in 1857. Influential friends in the capital interceded for him and he heard in May that he was to be liberated, but the official formalities were slow and it was the end of July before he was finally released, and he was able to start on his way home. He had reached Nizhny Novgorod on his way to Petersburg, when he was again detained, for his amnesty had not given him the right of residence in either of the capitals. It was March, 1858, before he was able to go further and even then he had to remain under police supervision. On his way to St. Petersburg, he stopped at Moscow to visit his friend Shchepkin, the celebrated actor, and he was kindly entertained by the Aksakov family.

In St. Petersburg, he resumed his studies at the Academy of Art, and he renewed many old friendships, especially with Count and Countess Feodor Petrovich Tolstoy, who had been instrumental in securing his release. At their home he met such literary men as Count Aleksyey Konstantinovich Tolstoy, and in fact all of the conservative and liberal group of cultured writers, who appreciated the real value of art, literature, and freedom.

In 1859 he secured permission to pay another visit to Ukraine for the first time in twelve years, and he spent the summer dreaming of marriage and of securing a little home for himself on the banks of the Dnieper. It was all in vain. On his return to St. Petersburg, he did succeed in securing the liberation from serfdom of his family but that was all. His health began to fail and he died the day after his birthday on February 26, 1861, just on the eve of the liberation of the serfs.

—Nine Years of "Freedom"—

It was a sad life that Shevchenko had led. Out of his forty-seven years, he had been a serf for 24, in the army 10, and under police supervision for three and a half, so that there were only nine years under which he could feel himself a free man to come and go as he

would. There is hardly any other writer of the same prominence to whom fate was so uniformly unkind. Yet despite it all and despite all the obstacles which he had to face, he had succeeded in placing Ukrainian literature on its feet as a recognized literature; and it is highly significant that whatever may have been his radical ideas, he retained to the end the friendship and confidence of the Russian aristocratic writers far more than he did that of the liberals. Even Turgenev did not fail to look at him with some hesitation and the liberal critics utterly failed to understand his feelings of love and sympathy for Ukraine. On the other hand, Apollon Grigoryev, one of the Slavophile critics, ranked him as a poet above Pushkin.

—*Patriot of Ukraine*—

From his earliest writings Shevchenko was the patriot of Ukraine. The fate of the Kozaks and the misfortunes of his unhappy people were constantly in his thoughts, and in his early works, in accordance with the Romantic currents of the day, he idealized the life which they had lived, the stern and bitter conflicts which they had waged for independence and he glorified the *kobzars*, the folk bards, who alone preserved for posterity the memory of the heroic deeds of the Ukrainian past.

The *Kobzar* marked an epoch in modern Ukrainian literature. For the first time a poet had arisen to pour out his heart in his native tongue and to express the sufferings of his people and their past. Shevchenko was not like the earlier authors who had developed Ukrainian but who had also worked extensively in Russian. He did very little in the Russian language and even that little belongs to the most unimportant part of his work. He was a Ukrainian first, last, and always and he never was attracted by any of the compromises that were so convenient and popular.

The publication of the *Haydamaki* was the greatest poem of Shevchenko and the masterpiece of Ukrainian epic poetry. It goes back to the last struggles in Western Ukraine in the eighteenth century. His grandfather had told him stories of this struggle, the Koliivshchina, which spread fire and sword through part of Ukraine in 1768.

In the preface the poet speaks in the same mood, bewailing the invariable tendency of the day to treat Ukrainian themes as a source of gaiety and merriment while "Ukrainia's weeping." To him a country and a culture that had produced such warriors as the bards had sung of was not something to be mocked and treated as of small esteem.

The prologue and the epilogue show us the enthusiasm of the poet and his spirit. Shevchenko was not bloodthirsty. He was not a military man.

—*Imperialist Moscow, the Chief Enemy*—

The visit to Ukraine in 1843 seems to have made a great difference in his ideas. The first ideal of Shevchenko was the free Kozak state, the Sich where the men made and unmade their officers, and he emphasized in his early poems the great struggle of these lovers of freedom. Later in the Hetman state, the rights and privileges of the ordinary Kozaks had been largely curtailed and a new form of aristocracy had grown up among the Ukrainian people. It was this new race of aristocrats that had made the treaty of Pereyaslav with Moscow

and had fashioned the Russian yoke upon the Kozaks. Much as he admired Bohdan Khmelnitsky, he could not help feeling that this act was the cause of all the troubles of Ukraine. He was not enough of a student of history to appreciate the complications of the situation in which Bohdan found himself, and he did not see the difference between the great Hetman and his lesser followers who allowed themselves to be deluded and deceived by the Muscovite ambassadors in the seventeenth century. Perhaps there was more than a grain of truth in the artistic insight of the poet, but he differed sharply with the scholars of his day, including his friend Kostomariv, and went on his own way. He was more fascinated by the figure of Mazepa who joined with Charles XII of Sweden against Peter the Great than he was with Bohdan. From 1843 on, Moscow and the Russians were for him the chief enemy of Ukraine. He was still free and had not yet met the personal disillusionment with the Russian regime. Still his return to Ukraine and the startling effect that the sufferings of the serfs made upon him seem to have swung his sympathies into a social channel and away from the romantic pictures of life in the Sich.

This is the theme of the *Great Grave* (*Veliky Lyokh*), a curious but effective mystical poem, in which under various forms Shevchenko pictures the past, the present, and the future of Ukraine. The lost souls come from three crucial periods of Ukrainian history. One had cooperated with Bohdan in surrendering to Moscow, the second opposed Mazepa in his attempts at liberation, and the third had aided Catherine in abolishing the Sich. Then come the three crows, the Ukrainian which recognizes what has happened to bring the land to its doom, the Polish which expresses the fate of Poland and the Muscovite which boasts of its success. There are the poor singers who in their misery are endeavoring to collect alms for praising Bohdan. Finally, there is the excavation of the graves, the little one where lie the bones of Bohdan and the great one in which are buried the spirit and the independence of Ukraine and which will also one day be excavated so that the nation can rise again. The poem is one of the most famous of Shevchenko's and perhaps nowhere does he express more powerfully and bitterly his disapproval of the oppression of Ukraine by Moscow and the Russians.

—*Humanist and Champion of Peoples*—

In the *Caucasus* he sympathized with the still continuing struggle of the mountaineers to maintain their independence from the Russian yoke. He sees the pathos of the natives, and he compares it with the fate of Ukraine before the Moscow arms.

At the same time, Shevchenko commenced to pay more attention to the suffering that he observed among the poor of his country. He had alluded to social ills in *Katerina*. Now he repeats and repeats the same message as in the *Hireling* where the poor deceived girl never confesses to her son that she is his mother, until she is on her death bed. All her life long she has had to treat him as the child of the kindly couple who have taken her in and given her protection when her own parents had cast her out. The sufferings of the girl at the hands of Muscovite lovers and the cruelty of the village toward those who have transgressed its moral code weighed upon his soul, and more than once he returns to this theme which was to be one of the chief subjects which he treated in later days.

Another result of the dreams of the Society of Saints Cyril and Methodius is the *Heretic*, dedicated to Safarik and singing the praise of the great Czech patriot, Jan Hus, who was burned at Constance for his religious and political views. Yet the treatment of Shevchenko is characteristic for he sees in Hus not so much the national hero or the great scholar as he does the representative of the common people.

A deeper and more tragic note appears in his works as the hour came for his arrest. There is more of the purely personal lyric, more of a feeling of pessimism as he realizes that he had attained a certain freedom for himself but that this only laid upon his shoulders the heavier burden of securing it for his own people. He could not enjoy his personal success while he remembered that his people and his family were still in bondage. More and more he came to draw inspiration from the Old Testament and the sufferings of Israel.

His arrest threw these new feelings into the foreground, and during his confinement in St. Petersburg he produced a surprising quantity of excellent songs which expressed his sorrow and his discouragement. Let us take the following as an example:

It makes no difference to me,
If I shall live or not in Ukraine
Or whether any one shall think
Of me 'mid foreign snow and rain.
It makes no difference to me.
In slavery I grew 'mid strangers,
Unwept by any kin of mine;
In slavery I now will die
And vanish without any sign.
I shall not leave the slightest trace
Upon our glorious Ukraine,
Our land, but not as ours known.
No father will remind his son
Or say to him, Repeat one prayer,
One prayer for him; for our Ukraine
They tortured him in their foul lair.
It makes no difference to me,
If that son says a prayer or not.
It makes great difference to me
That evil folk and wicked men
Attack our Ukraine, once so free,
And rob and plunder it at will.
That makes great difference to me.

As the rigors of imprisonment became still more severe, Shevchenko tried his hand at prose in various stories which he dated from before his imprisonment, but he seems to have done this in an effort to avoid the tsar's prohibition of writing and drawing. We must mention two poems of this period. One is the *Prophet* in which he sets forth the value of the poet as a proclaimer of the divine ideals, but the unappreciative people reject and kill him and choose a tsar in his place. The other is *To the Poles*, in which he laments the feud that had been stirred up to destroy the harmony that had once prevailed between the free Poles and the free Kozaks. The poem is far removed from the glorification of the Kozak wars in the poems of the *Kobzar* and the more romantic dreams of a free Ukraine, but Shevchenko in his life and thinking had passed from the right bank of the Dnieper to the Hetman state and he realized the many conflicting elements that had wrecked Ukrainian existence. He saw now that they were more serious and more complicated than he had once believed, and from this time on he rarely alluded to those old battles and never with anger that had once been so manifest. It is, however,

interesting that he never relented in his distrust of and hostility of the Russians and in his condemnation of the tsars for their destruction of the rights of the Sich and the free Kozaks.

—Nero and the Tsar—

On his release from captivity, Shevchenko dashed off in a few days one of his great poems, the *Neophytes*, a tale of ancient Rome and the persecution of the early Christians, dedicated to his friend Shchepkin. We can hardly fail to see in this as in the other poems of the ancient world the influence of his old master Bryulov, who had laid the basis for his fame by his scenes from classical antiquity. Yet the story of the young Christian whose heroic martyrdom for the faith finally converted his mother to Christianity, and faith in the Crucified was perhaps a symbol of the spreading power of Ukrainian self-confidence. The comparison between the tyrannical Nero and the Russian tsar was so evident that it terrified some of the poet's friends who feared that new misfortunes would come upon the poet. None did, but it is a tribute to the courage and unbending loyalty of Shevchenko to his ideals that he never wavered in them even at the most critical times. His message of freedom and of kindness he would not dilute or hide, no matter what it might cost him personally or how more timid men might take to cover.

Nevertheless, Shevchenko had returned a broken man. He produced one more long poem, *Maria*, a story of the Blessed Virgin which differs in some ways from the ecclesiastical tradition. For this he was denounced as irreligious. Yet that is hardly the word to be used, for there is a deep religious feeling in the work and if he has violated the sacred story to make more poignant the character of the Blessed Virgin and to equate her life history with that of the suffering Ukraine, the poem does not deserve the severe abuse that has been directed against it by the more literal-minded. He aimed to show the apparent overwhelming of the right and the temporary triumph of evil, but he never had in his own mind any doubt as to the final outcome, whether the time of waiting and of suffering were long or short.

—Poet Laureate of Ukraine—

The importance of Shevchenko cannot be overemphasized. He was the greatest of the Ukrainian poets and he was more than that. He was the first writer who was purely and thoroughly Ukrainian, who dared to dream of a Ukrainian language and literature that would be completely separate from Russian and would have an independent place in the world.

He had started his career with the romantic dream of perpetuating the memory of the conflicts between the Kozaks and the Poles and of reviving the old days when the free Kozaks were able to carve out a precarious liberty for themselves and their people. Experience and observation taught him that that was impossible. He always valued the positive ideals of the old days, he realized the courage and the heroism of the leaders and still more of the ordinary man of the time. But he soon saw that that was not enough and that those days would not return. It was necessary to build for the future, and he considered all that had passed since that fateful treaty of Pereyaslav the unfortunate consequences of a mistake.

That led him to differences of opinion with many of his most intimate friends, for some of them were hoping against hope that there could be some settlement on the lines proposed by the great Bohdan. Shevchenko did not believe it possible and he dared to express his beliefs. To him a free Ukraine meant exactly what it said, a Ukraine that would be completely independent in every sense of the word, that would not be subject to interference by any foreign ruler, especially the Russian tsar.

—Immortal Poet of the Slavonic World—

He had an ardent democratic and revolutionary faith in the common people and he recognized that they were the very backbone of the Ukrainian stock. In his lifetime he was friendly with many of the more enlightened members of the Ukrainian nobility and with many of the conservative writers of Russia. Never did he compromise his beliefs that the new order was to be founded upon the rights of the common man who must be educated to enjoy his new privileges. His ideas were often in close agreement with those of the Russian radicals, but he did not have much personal contact with them for his belief in a liberal and radical solution of the Ukrainian question on its own territory shut him off from their refusal to recognize the Ukrainians as distinct from the Russians.

He was a peasant, but he realized also that all was not well within the peasant communities and in the peasant way of life. They were cruel and merciless to one another, for example, in their dealings with girls who had transgressed the moral code, and it was impossible to blame all this upon the external oppression to which they were subjected. It was perhaps a result of serfdom and of self-protection but it was an attitude that needed to be changed if Ukrainian life was to be enlightened. He felt from his own experience what the people could achieve if they were awakened to a sense of their own responsibilities, and he worked in every way to help them. He understood the need of education and of progress, and he did not try to conceal what he felt with the result that he gave us realistic pictures of peasant life, avoiding both undue idealization and excessive condemnation of the people's weaknesses, for he knew that much of this was due to ignorance.

Born a serf and later a soldier in the Russian army, he accomplished with few opportunities for formal education an amazing amount. He took the Ukrainian language as it had been developed by Kotlyarevsky and his followers and by the force of his own genius made it into a language capable of expressing the most refined emotions and fully adequate to all the needs of modern literature. He voiced in that language and in no other the thoughts and aspirations of his people. He had completely separated Ukrainian from Russian and started it along an independent course, and he had made himself its greatest literary master. Taras Shevchenko, the son of a serf with his fanatical faith in the victory of democratic ideals and despite all obstacles, made himself one of the great poets of the Slavonic world, and his fame will live as long as that of any of his contemporaries in the other literatures. No one of them believed more firmly or voiced more clearly an unyielding and uncompromising belief that democracy, truth and freedom would win the day and no one worked harder or suffered more to bring it about.

CHAPTER II

BARD OF UKRAINE

By D. Doroshenko*

Before we write about Shevchenko, the national poet of Ukraine, let us say a few words about his native country which was better known in Western Europe about two centuries ago than it is now. The latter may appear a paradox, but to be convinced of its truth it is only necessary to read the books of quite a number of travellers and historians, French, English, Dutch, Italian and German, who wrote at that time about Ukraine. The first of these and the best known was Guillaume Levasseur de Beauplan, author of the *Description de l'Ukraine* (1640). The first English translation of this very interesting and reliable book appeared in 1704. Among the historians let us name Pierre Chevalier who wrote *Histoire de la guerre des cosaques . . .* (1663), translated into English by Edward Brown in 1672. In the XVIIIth century the best known work about Ukraine is that of Jean Sherrer, author of the *Annales de la Petite-Russie ou Histoire des Cosaques de l'Ukraine* (1788). English travellers such as Edward Dan Clarke and Joseph Marshall, historians such as Bernhard Connor, professor at Oxford, and Charles Whitworth, diplomat and politician, give in their respective books an account of what they themselves saw in Ukraine or repeat information culled from other sources, chiefly French and Dutch.

We shall not enter into the causes why Western Europe formerly showed more interest in Ukraine than it did in the XIXth century. No doubt it is because this country disappeared from the political arena, which we consider to be a great misfortune for Europe. It is certain, however, that in the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries there were far more books and information about Ukraine than there were in the XIXth.

—*Ukraine Always Aspires for Freedom*—

It is interesting to note that travellers who visited the country and historians who wrote about it were moved not only by a desire for information but manifested sympathy with the Ukrainian people and their ardent aspirations for liberty. All readers of Voltaire know his words in his *History of Charles XII of Sweden* about the Ukrainians, allies of this king against Russia: "L'Ukraine a toujours aspiré à être libre."

Yet it is impossible to assert that during the XIXth century there was no mention of Ukraine in European letters. It is enough to name Prosper Merimée and Alfred Rambaud for France and W.R. Morfill and George Rolleston, professors at Oxford, for England,

*Excerpts from author's *Taras Shevchenko, Bard of Ukraine*, United Ukrainian Organizations of the United States, New York, 1936, p. 59.

and their articles about Ukrainian folklore and literature in English reviews[1] in the 70's and 80's. At present, *The Slavonic Review*, edited by the professors of the School of Slavonic Studies, King's College in London, keep in touch with the national and literary movement of the Ukrainian people. But to tell the truth, the Ukrainian problem is among the questions that are the least known and studied in Europe, though by no means the least important.

The poetical works of Shevchenko occupy quite an exceptional place in the life of the Ukrainian people. If the great national poets of West European nations, whether by laying down new paths in literature or opening new horizons to thought, have been more or less forerunners of great moral or esthetic movements and have contributed to the revival of national sentiment in their native countries, 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 been 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.

Shevchenko left a volume of poems entitled *Kobzar*, a name familiar to every Ukrainian. This volume is a kind of poetic microcosm or an enchanted mirror wherein Ukraine as a whole finds its reflection—its past and its present. After the appearance of this volume "young" Ukrainian literature took its place among the other Slavonic literatures.

—*Initiator of New Literature*—

We said "young" Ukrainian literature. It is a purely conventional term that does not mean that Ukrainian literature began at this date, nor in the year 1798, with the publication of the *Eneid Travestied* by Kotliarevski, which is considered the starting point of the modern period in Ukrainian literature, its "Renaissance." The origin of Ukrainian literature goes back to the XIth century. The Muscovites were at that date a nation in formation and also made use of this literature. This is the reason why Russians even now appropriate to themselves the origins of Ukrainian literature.

Ancient Ukrainian literature can boast of many a brilliant and immortal page, among which are the *Chronicles* of Kiev, Volhynia and Galicia, as well as the epic of the *Expedition of Prince Ihor*. But this literature made use of an artificial language, based mostly on the Slavonic idiom used by the church and distinct from that spoken in the country. In its successive development this language, exposed to different influences, underwent changes but always kept its exclusively learned character as distinct from the vulgar tongue. It is under the conditions of this lingual parallelism that the spiritual life in Ukraine went on for several centuries: State and Church, Law and Learning used this artificial language, the people used the other. The written literature was couched in the first, whereas in the latter was created by the people the wealth of the oral tradition, especially the beautiful epics known as *Dumy* of the Cossacks about which Professor W. R. Morfill and G. Rolleston wrote with such enthusiasm.

[1] *The Athenaeum*, The Saturday Review, The Westminster Review.

It is at the end of the XVIth century that the Muscovites adopted the literary Ukrainian language. And not only the language but also, as is now admitted by the Russians themselves (for instance Prince Trubetzkoi, professor at the University of Vienna), the Muscovites renounced their own literary tradition in order to adopt that of the Ukrainians and then transferred it to their own ground. Under Peter I, the literary Ukrainian language became the official language of the Russian Empire, but detached itself from its prototype under the influence of spoken Russian.

In Ukraine, the land of its origin, this old artificial language and its literature fall into disuse during the XVIIIth century. Kiev is superseded by St. Petersburg and Moscow and becomes a provincial place. Young Ukrainians prefer the newly founded Universities of St. Petersburg and Moscow to the old Academy of Kiev. Literary and scientific forces are also attracted now towards the capital of the empire. In the future there would be an official and literary language in the Russian Empire common to both Russians and Ukrainians, and two popular idioms for everyday use—the Russian and the Ukrainian.

If this came to be realised, there would be for Ukraine, after the downfall of her political as well as cultural independence, the complete disappearence of the Ukrainian nationality. But this danger was averted by the vitality of the historic tradition in Ukraine, fortified by the great modern idea of a nation as a distinct unit. At the same time as the pillars of the Ukrainian State collapsed, when the Hetmanat and the Cossack constitution were abolished, the Ukrainian people received a new medium to express their national individuality: Ukrainian authors abandoned their ancient artificial language, refused the Russian, and adopted the living Ukrainian tongue spoken by the common people. Ivan Kotliarevski, in 1798, was the first to introduce this language in literature and thus opened a new period of the Renaissance of Ukrainian literature.

At the beginning of the XIXth century, Ukrainian authors were innovators not only in the matter of the language but also by introducing new ideas. They gave to modern Ukrainian literature a wholesome and democratic impulse and introduced human feeling. Thus, Gregory Kvitka as early as 1829, long before George Sand and Auerbach, introduced into literature the simple life of a peasant and discovered sincere and noble sentiments under the thatched roof.

But in order to draw inspiration from these treasures, to throw a bridge between the past and present, briefly, to build up the poetical synthesis of national aspirations, a poet of genius was needed. A genius alone could give to the young Ukrainian literature the right to influence the life of the Ukrainian people, and this could not be expected from more modest talents such as Kvitka, Kotliarevski, Artemovski, Hrebinka and others. That genius was Taras Shevchenko.

—*The Shevchenko Genius*—

At the beginning of his poetical career Shevchenko was under the influence of Romantic literature, Russian and Polish. Without doubt he began by imitating the romantic poets he knew, Mickiewicz and Joukovski. But this imitation is only superficial, for Shevchenko has his own means of expression and treats his romantic subjects in his

own manner. The wealth of Ukrainian folklore was to him an inexhaustible source of subjects and themes.

Besides the fairy world of the Ukrainian folklore, Shevchenko's early poetical works are deeply rooted in the glorious and tragic memories of Ukraine. We find here an intense patriotic feeling. The past of Ukraine was to him not only a source of sad memories and melancholy meditations, but an open wound that continued to bleed.

This conception of Ukrainian history was nourished in him by contemporary historical writers, especially by the anonymous work widely read at that time, *The History of the Ruthenians*. The German traveller Kohl, who visited Ukraine in 1838, speaks of this book as most widely known in all classes of society. The powerful imagination of the poet created an image of the past, a kind of a heroic poem: the image of a people proud and independent, fighting for their liberty first against the Turks and Poles and then against Muscovite absolutism and tyranny. The Ukrainian nation succumbed exhausted in these wars. The descendants of free Cossacks were dragging heavy chains of serfdom. The shadows of the national heroes fighting for Ukrainian national liberties revived in his imagination. In his ears resounded the clamor and uproar of battles. He becomes the bard of the Cossacks and recalls their past glory. In his epic poem, *Haidamaky*, he records the fury of the popular rising of 1768 where cruel and dramatic episodes abound.

—*The Patriot and His Times*—

His poetical interpretation of Ukrainian history is in keeping with the historical conceptions of his time. In the historical and ethnographical works of his contemporaries, Markevich's *History of Ukraine*, Sreznevski's *The Antiquities of the Cossack Zaporog*, the writings of Kulish and Kostomariv—everywhere we see the same glorification of the Cossacks Zaporog, the Hetmans and the Otamans.

Though having, in his early poems, idealised the past of Ukraine, Shevchenko could not but feel the contrast existing between the glorious heroic times and the present sad condition of the population. After his visit to Ukraine in 1845 we see a marked change in Shevchenko's poetical work. Before this he knew only that part of Ukraine subject to Polish domination. Now he visited the Ukraine of the Hetmans, that part of the country which preserved for more than a century its comparative independence and its national aristocracy. These Ukrainian nobles greeted Shevchenko now as their national poet.

But the impression made on Shevchenko by the social conditions here was not better: there also the past glory of the free Cossacks was no more, and the people also were enslaved. The Ukrainian nobles, bought over by the Russian government with privileges and rights over their own countrymen, had forgotten the national traditions, forgotten the glorious past of their country, and were wallowing in crass materialism.

—*Captive Poland and Ukraine*—

He no longer viewed the historic past of Ukraine in the same idealized fashion. The idealization of the Cossack epoch gave place to a more critical view that sees the causes of present misfortune in

the errors and faults of the national heroes themselves. Whereas before, Shevchenko directed the point of his weapon against Poland and the intrigues of the Jesuits, his chief enemy is now to him the power that swallowed Poland as well as Ukraine: it is Russia, or more exactly Russian Czarism. It is to the absolutism of the Russian Czars that he now ascribes the causes of all misfortunes that befell Ukraine. It was Catherine II that introduced serfdom in hitherto free Ukraine as late as the end of XVIIIth century. The Russian Czars destroyed the ancient liberties of the Ukrainian people. All his wrath, all his indignation are now concentrated on two chief representatives of Russian Czarism: Peter I and Catherine II. A series of poems, most powerful and violent, are directed against these two monarchs, who, in the eyes of the poet, embody Russian despotism and tyranny.

The most perfect works of the poet, from a literary viewpoint, belong to this period until his imprisonment in 1847. Among his political poems, *A Dream* and *The Caucasus* best perhaps express his political opinions.

A Dream is a fantastic satire, inspired in form perhaps by Dante, but wholly original in content. He sees himself transported in a dream from Ukraine to St. Petersburg and shows us the panorama that opens before his eyes: the Russian capital built in the midst of swamps and marshes on the bones of thousands and thousands of workmen who perished in the most unhealthy working conditions on this poisonous soil. The next scene is an audience with the Czar and is drawn with expressions of the bitterest sarcasm. He shows us also the shadows of the Ukrainian Cossacks who were ordered in masses from their native land to the building works of St. Petersburg and found their death in the swamps. Appearing, too, is the shadow of the Hetman Polubotok who died in the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul for having defended before Czar Peter the rights and liberties of Ukraine. All these tragic shadows accuse the Czar of cruelty and deceit. The monument of Peter I set up by Catherine II, with the inscription on it, "To the First from the Second," that was glorified as a symbol of the greatness of the Russian Empire, victorious and invincible, by the Russian poet Pushkin in his poem *The Rider of Bronze*, wakes in the heart of the Ukrainian poet quite different reflections:

> This is the "First" who crucified our Ukraine,
> And the "Second" gave the finishing stroke to the victim.

—Freedom of All Enslaved Non-Russian Nations—

In the poem *The Caucasus*, Shevchenko does not linger over the beauties of the landscape that captivated the Russian "Byronists", Pushkin and Lermontov. He dwells no more on battles and romantic episodes of the war with the natives, that furnished so many happy subjects to those two poets. To Shevchenko, as to Shelley, the Caucasian mountains is the place where:

> From the dawn of the world
> The eagle tortures Prometheus:
> Every day pierces his breast
> Tears out the heart . . .

—the symbol of the sufferings of the human race and its aspiration to the divine fire of liberty for which so many heroes have given their lives.

The indignation of the poet turned to the Russian Czars, particularly Nicholas I and his system of imperial expansion which extinguished every spark of liberty on the expanses of the Russian Empire: "from Moldavia to Finland in all tongues, all keep the silence of happy contentment," says Shevchenko in derision. He further accuses the Czars of "having spilt a sea of blood and tears big enough to drown therein all the Czars and their descendants."

The poet scourges this cruel political system that knows nothing better than "to build prisons and forge chains." He does not stop there; he accuses the whole of contemporary civilisation with its hypocrisy, its cupidity, this spirit of false Christianity that the Czars, under the guise of bringing civilisation, wish to introduce into their vast empire from the newly conquered Caucasus to the unlimited, unexplored Siberia.

But the poet is no pessimist, he does not lose hope, he is certain that: "The spirit is immortal and free in spite of the tyrants, and human speech cannot be stifled." He is sure that "liberty will rise from the dead, though in the meantime there are flowing rivers of blood."

—Shevchenko Looks To Washington—

In another poem, *The Feeble-Minded* (*Jurodyvyj*), Shevchenko cries out:

> . . . when,
> When will we receive our Washington
> With a new and righteous law?
> And receive him we will some day . . . !"

When we think that this burning poem was written at the time of wars for the conquest of the Caucasus, wars that roused the enthusiastic patriotism of Russian poets and of Russians on the whole, we can understand the impression this poem made on his contemporaries. It was also one of the reasons for the cruel persecution of our poet by Czar Nicholas I.

Shevchenko bore this hatred of Czarism all his life. He preserved it during the years of exile and returned as the same enemy of despotism. A number of his last poems concern despots, tyrants, autocratic rulers not only in Russia but everywhere in the world. The hatred he bore towards Czarism is only equal to his hatred of slavery: to him these two phenomena were intimately related.

—Fighter Against Serfdom—

The introduction of serfdom in Ukraine, as late as the end of XVIIIth century, met with considerable opposition. In Ukrainian literature the starting point of the moral protest against it was *The Ode on the Desolation of Slavery*, written in 1787 by Count Kapnist, a Ukrainian patriot who sought abroad, namely in Prussia, support for the national aspirations of Ukraine. The Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius, as we have already seen, had for its immediate object propaganda against serfdom. Shevchenko especially fought against it and contributed much to its abolition by influencing

liberal public opinion which at that time, directly after the Crimean defeat and the death of Nicholas I, played an important part and induced the young Czar Alexander II to initiate liberal reforms. The influence of some of Shevchenko's poems in bringing about the abolition of serfdom could be compared with the effect of the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on the abolitionist campaign in the United States.

—Shevchenko Meets American Aldridge—

Together with the Bible, Shevchenko's favourite reading was Shakespeare, especially after having seen Aldridge in St. Petersburg, one of the best known Shakespearian actors of the time. He was a Negro from the United States, and was introduced to the London stage through Kean. The two former slaves became friends, and Shevchenko left a record of this friendship in his various sketches from *Othello*, where Aldridge played the leading part, and also his portrait in pastel.

—A Light of Humanity—

As an apostle of liberty and enemy of all kinds of oppression Shevchenko goes beyond the narrow limits of his country and those of the Russian Empire. In his poem *The Heretic or John Huss*, he gives us the glorification of the Czech reformer, champion of religious tolerance. John Huss is represented not only as a religious reformer but as a prophet of social equality. The culminating point of the poem—the death of Huss at the stake—is the real glorification of the victory of spirit over the body.

According to Alfred Jensen, the Swedish scholar and author of one of the latest biographies of our poet, "Taras Shevchenko has been not only a national poet, but also a universal genius, one of the lights of humanity."

—Red Moscow's Distortion of Freedom Fighter—

Today in Soviet Ukraine, the puppets of Moscow try to represent Shevchenko not only as the prophet he was, but as the ideologist of the coming social revolution. They say that Shevchenko was well up in the theoretical problems of socialism and "proofs" are being found by them that, in the beginning of the 40's he was intimately connected with the followers of Fourier who had Petrashevski as their leader in Russia. In order to prove that Shevchenko sympathized with a social revolution, his editors and commentators in the present Russian Empire go so far as to falsify the text of his poems, eliminating his words on God and religion, changing whole expressions, substituting other words, in short—all that does not agree with communistic doctrines.

It is certain that having joined the Brotherhood of SS. Cyril and Methodius, Shevchenko's sympathy for liberty was deepened. But in my opinion sufficient emphasis was not laid upon the fact that Shevchenko, during his visits to Ukraine, frequented much the society of Ukrainian nobles among whom at that time there were persons holding advanced liberal views on politics and all social questions. In fact, his closest friends were among the members of the Ukrainian aristocracy: Lizohub, Tarnovski, Princess Repnin, Count de Balmain,

General Kucharenko, who did not abandon him during the hardest times of his exile. Their letters, their anxiety about him and the steps they took on his behalf in order to alleviate his misfortune prove their solicitude. They appreciated him especially as a national poet, and their influence on him was certainly important.

Can we, as is only too often repeated by the Red totalitarians today, consider Shevchenko as an ideologist of the Bolshevik type of revolution? Evidently not. Those who assert it quote certain passages, especially from the *Testament*, where the poet appeals to his countrymen "to break the chains. . . ." They do not wish to understand that Shevchenko was far from desiring a bloody revolution, but that he foresaw it menacing the dominating classes unless they made the decision to set their serfs free. He appealed to the whole Ukrainian nation, nobles and peasants, entreating the nobles to renounce their privileges and try to bring about a good understanding between the classes.

> Brothers, embrace the feeblest among you,
> That the mother may smile through her tears.

It is with these lines that Shevchenko closes his "Epistle to my country, living, dead and unborn."

It was not in the least in Shevchenko's nature to incite people to cruel actions prompted by the spirit of vengeance. It would be an error to consider his Muse as an instrument of violence. It is necessary to remember that Shevchenko was a profoundly religious man, that the Bible was his favourite book, especially during the years of exile, and that this influence left a marked stamp on his poetical work. Not only did he take biblical texts as mottos for several of his poems, but he also left translations and paraphrases of a number of Psalms and fragments of the Prophets. His whole work is deeply impregnated with a sincere faith in God as the supreme ideal of justice and goodness.

The idea of love and mercy runs through Shevchenko's poetic work from one end to the other. His most cruelly abused characters, his martyrs, his most tragic heroes forgive their oppressors and tormentors. In the *Neophytes*, the Christian martyrs forgive Nero; the unhappy man in the *Vagabond* forgives the seducer of his sweetheart, the squire of their village, though he had an opportunity of satisfying his craving for vengeance. This high idea of mercy puts the work of Shevchenko on the highest level that human sentiment can reach.

—*National Hero of Ukraine*—

Shevchenko's poetical works exercised a powerful influence on Ukrainian literature and the Ukrainian national movement. A. Grigoriev, the well known Russian literary critic, called Shevchenko "the last bard and the first great poet of a great new Slavonic literature." These words convey some idea of the place that Shevchenko occupies in Ukrainian literature. On the other hand, Kulish, speaking at the burial of the poet, said: "all that is really noble in Ukraine will gather under the banner of Shevchenko."

His volume of verse, the *Kobzar*, has been, since its first appearance, the most widely read book in Ukraine. It is a kind of national Gospel. The memory of the poet is the object of exceptional venera-

tion, and the day of his death (which is also his birthday) has ever since been celebrated as a national holiday.

The grave of the poet is an object of pious pilgrimages. As early as 1876, Emile Durand, a French scholar visiting Ukraine, wrote:[2]

> The grave of the poet is never solitary. As soon as the first sunbeams in the spring have melted the snow that covers the country, pilgrims of a new fashion, merry lay pilgrims, come from all sides and stop at the foot of the barrow. They make their meals in the open air sitting on the grass, recite and sing the poems of the poet according to their free fancy. It would be impossible to find elsewhere a poet to whom the almost illiterate crowd would thus render homage such as is usually reserved for sanctuaries or saints.

—World Acclaim of Hero—

This homage has increased considerably since then. The popularity of Shevchenko and his influence is not limited to his native country. In 1860, his poems were translated into Russian by the best Russian poets. Several new editions and translations have since appeared, not only in Russian, but also in Polish, Bulgarian, Serbian, Czech and other languages. Bulgarian literature especially was influenced to a great degree by the poetical work of Shevchenko. The Bulgarians had fought so long for their national independence that they, more than others, found sympathy with his ideas of national independence.

Besides the translations into Slavonic languages, there are also those in French, German, English, Italian, Swedish. In England there appeared in the *Westminster Review* (1880) a biography of Shevchenko, and in 1911 a collection of Shevchenko's poems in a beautiful translation by E. L. Voynich, with a biography of the poet, was produced. A. J. Hunter published in Winnipeg, in 1922, a volume of his excellent translations of Shevchenko's poems with biographical fragments; and in 1933 there appeared, also in Winnipeg, a volume of Ukrainian Songs and Lyrics, translated by Honore Ewach, which contains half a dozen of Shevchenko's short lyrical poems.

The name of Shevchenko is to his countrymen a symbol of national sentiment and of aspirations to national independence. Likewise, his work is for a foreigner who would wish to know the life, the soul and the spirit of the Ukrainian people, a true mirror which marvellously reflects the spiritual image of Ukraine.

[2] In the *Revue des deux Mondes*.

CHAPTER III

TARAS SHEVCHENKO AND WEST EUROPEAN LITERATURE

By Jurij Bojko*

Dr. Gustav Sprecht gives a just description of Shevchenko's extraordinary destiny. The Ukrainian poet, he believes, expressed in his work the spirit of the Ukrainians and their ideals with such power and manysidedness that he became the symbol of his country to the same extent as Homer was the expression of Hellas and Virgil of the Roman Empire. Moreover, no later European poet reflects the national essence of his people so universally as Shevchenko was able to do. Even Dante, the tercets of whose *Divine Comedy* are still heard in everyday speech, did not become the expression of the spirit of all Italy. And to an even smaller degree was the national spirit of their respective countries expressed by Cervantes, Molière or Tolstoy. Shevchenko alone in recent times became the symbol, spiritual leader, and spokesman of all the fundamental aspirations of an entire nation.[1] These statements of the German scholar go far towards the understanding of Shevchenko's originality.

For, indeed, in no other country did so many people die in the struggle for freedom under the banner of a poet's slogans of national liberation; nowhere was the name of a poet, reviled by the occupying power, ever surrounded with such a halo of mystical holiness as in Ukraine; and nowhere else did industrial workers declare a political strike in honour of a national poet. All this could happen only in Ukraine. The works of Shevchenko are to be found in every peasant's cottage; a number of them long ago became folk songs; and sales of the complete *Kobzar* exceed eight million copies. This alone makes Shevchenko deserve a distinct place in the pages of world literature. But he can claim such a place also for other reasons. The Russian literary historian, D. V. Ovsyaniko-Kulikovsky, wrote in 1911 that Shevchenko was first a poet of national renascence and secondly a poet belonging to humanity. In his opinion, Shevchenko's lyrics are imbued with such beauty that they are unsurpassed even by the lyric poetry of Pushkin, Goethe, Schiller, or Heine.[2] Professor O. Kolessa thought that Shevchenko's lyric poetry could be compared in expressive power with the romantic part of Heine's lyric poetry, but whereas in Heine's *Lieder* eroticism predominated, the poetry of Shevchenko presented "the complete scale of varied emotions from personal sorrow to *Weltschmerz*".[3] One of the first German critics of Shevchenko, Franzos, admired the versatility of the poet's talent, because he

*Selections from writer's essay in The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. XXXIV, No. 82, London, Dec. 1955.

[1] Gustav Sprecht, "Schewtschenkos Sonderstellung in der neueren Weltliteratur" in *Taras Schewtschenko, der ukrainische Nationaldichter. Beiträge zur Ukrainekunde*, publ. by Ukrainisches Wissenschaftliches Institut, Heft VI, pp. 22-25.

[2] M. Plevako, *Shevchenko i krytyka (Evolyutsiya pohlyadiv na Shevchenka)*, "Chervonyy Shlyakh," 1924, pp. 47-48.

[3] O. Kolessa, "Shevchenko i Mitskevich", *Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*, 1894, vol. III, p. 150.

possessed the mastery of four fundamentally different branches of poetry, viz he showed with deep penetration various situations in the social order, unfolded the scenes of an historical epic, and demonstrated his mastery both of the pure lyric and of political verse.[4]

—*Shevchenko In True Perspective*—

It would be possible to continue this list of opinions of individual authorities who appropriately note the value of Shevchenko's genius against the background of world literature. But this cannot hide the sad fact that Shevchenko is still undeservedly neglected by the great histories of world literature, and even if he is allotted a place there, it is entirely out of proportion to the greatness of his talent. Moreover, even now the definition of Shevchenko's place among other great writers is made in a cursory manner on the basis of a general impression. Among many hundreds of books dealing with Shevchenko's work not a single one gives a scholarly estimate of Shevchenko's place in the history of world literature. What is more, it can be definitely stated that even now the one-sided populist traditions of evaluation, which began with Dobrolyubov's review of *Kobzar* [5] and with Kostomarov's article about our poet,[6] still linger on.

It is through these erroneous ideas about the poet that the extremely unfortunate comparisons of Shevchenko can be explained. Completely inadequate, for instance, is the comparison of Shevchenko with the second-rate Russian poet Kol'tsov or with the third-rate poet Slepushkin—comparisons which appeared in their time in the pages of European publications and were inspired by Russians. Such comparisons only destroyed all interest for the poet by making him no more than a representative of the "Little Russian" people.

Count de la Bart, a student of French romanticism, has compared Shevchenko with Mistral.[7] Such comparison obscures the significance of the fundamental ideas of Shevchenko's poetry. It is known that the work of the Provencal poet represents in principle the trend of ethnographic provincialism, and in this respect it would be at most possible to contrast him with Shevchenko. At first Mistral was a federalist, but after the 1870–71 war his federalism gradually withered away, and the writer became a French patriot. Shevchenko, on the other hand, was a consistent Ukrainian nationalist who hated Moscow, and his ideas about nation and state became more and more crystallised in the course of his life.

—*Shevchenko and Burns*—

The comparison of Shevchenko with the Scottish poet Robert Burns, which has been repeated many times without thorough investigation, can be regarded as only in part appropriate; and as it is usually expressed without reservations, it must also be regarded as inspired by populist ideas about the Ukrainian poet.

Shevchenko was indeed acquainted with the works of Burns. From the preface to the reprint of the Chyhyryn edition of *Kobzar*, which did not materialise, we learn that he preferred Burns to Scott, because

[4] C. E. Franzos, *Vom Don zur Donau. Die Kleinrussen und ihre Sänger. Cultur-Bilder aus "Halb-Asien,"* Leipzig, 1878.
[5] N. Dobrolyubov, *Polnoye sobraniye sochinenij*, St. Petersburg, 1911, vol. IV.
[6] N. Kostomarov, "Poet Shevchenko" (*Russkaya Starina*, 1880, no. 3).
[7] Count de la Bart's article in *Sbornik, posvyashchonnyy pamyati T. G. Shevchenka*, Moscow, 1912.

Burns, as a poet of the people, clung more closely to his national roots, whereas Scott devoted his powers to the service of English literature.[8]

The social radicalism of Burns, his compassion for the lot of the peasant—these were also the *motifs* that make him akin to Shevchenko. But in his own social protest Shevchenko went further than Burns. Burns was at one time an exciseman. Money troubles, grumbling about poverty, marked his everyday life, and these vanquished the poet, so that the exciseman was compelled to abandon the ideas of the French revolution. But nothing of the sort happened to Shevchenko. His courage and dignified bearing during interrogations in the Third Department of His Majesty's Secret Chancery command respect. And, having spent ten years in exile, Shevchenko wrote in his journal:

> All this unspeakable grief, all kinds of humiliations and insults have passed, as if without touching me. . . . No trait of my inner self has changed. . . . And from the depth of my heart I thank my Almighty Creator that He did not permit my terrible experience to touch with its iron claws my convictions, my shining child-like beliefs. Some things became brighter, more rounded, assumed more natural dimensions and appearance. But this is the result of the serenely circling old Saturn and by no means the result of my bitter experience.[9]

It is unnecessary to show that such a moral attitude left an indelible impress on all Shevchenko's poetry, and in this the Ukrainian poet cannot be compared with Burns at all. Burns was enthusiastic about the national historic romanticism of Scotland and he was its inspired singer. But he did not become either a national prophet or a tribune. He was the last flower of the rich garden of Scottish poetry. He did not pave for Scotland the way to its national renascence; on the contrary, the progressive provincialisation of Scottish life began in his time.

—*The Cosmopolitan Bard*—

To make Shevchenko depend on Burns is very dangerous. Although it may be justified in some respects, yet for the uninformed it conceals essential sides of Shevchenko's genius and can therefore create the impression that Shevchenko was a poet of the provinces and grew up only out of elementary folk-song traditions. And thus the immense problem of Shevchenko's general culture and his literary culture, of his connection with many phenomena of European literary development, has been disposed of. "There were no books that did not fall into his hands," says Panteleymon Kulish of his friend Shevchenko; and so far as Russian books of the period are concerned, there is not much exaggeration in Kulish's words. In the heat of controversy with Russian criticism, which did not stop short of any means to deliver a blow at our poet, Shevchenko advanced the thesis of the unoriginality of Russian literature.[10] And here the poet indeed succeeded in finding the Achilles' heel of his opponents. The Russian literature of this period was not only to a great extent marked by imitation, but also the great majority of literary works published at the time were translations from West European literatures. And while we find in Shevchenko little trace of the study of Russian literature, to the originality of which he maintained a critical attitude, he widely used its translated treasures.

[8] Svyentsits'ky, *Shevchenko v svitli krytyky i dyenosty*, L'vov, 1922.
[9] T. Shevchenko, *Sobraniye sochineniy v 5 tomakh*, Moscow, 1949, vol. V, p. 65.
[10] Svyentsits'ky, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7, 17-18, 20 *et passim*.

After the publication of Professor Zaytsev's booklet *Shevchenko and Poles*, in which it was shown that he had constant and numerous relations with the Poles, it would be difficult to assume that Shevchenko only imperfectly knew Polish, which he had already learnt in early adolescence. Moreover, one must not underestimate the extent to which Polish was for the poet a wide gate into the world, more particularly into the world of Western literature. Shevchenko's knowledge of French was probably such as to allow him to read French works in the original. Academician O. Biletśky asserts that Shevchenko read Richardson's *Clarissa* in the French adaptation by Jules Janin.[11]

On the basis of Shevchenko's novelettes, correspondence and "Journal", it is possible to define that wide circle of authors with whose works our writer was familiar. Such a list was compiled by L. Bilets'ky.

From among the authors of antiquity it perhaps included Homer, whose songs Shevchenko compares with the epos of the *dumy*, giving preference to the latter, Herodotus, Plutarch, Vergil ("Georgics"), Horace, Ovid . . . Livy, and also various Latin and Greek authors of the Christian epoch. From among the authors of modern Europe it perhaps included the Italians—Dante, Petrarca, Boccaccio, Ariosto, Tasso; the English—Shakespeare, Defoe, Richardson, Goldsmith, "Ossian", Gibbon, Burns, Byron, Walter Scott, Dickens; the Germans—Goethe, Schiller, not to mention Körner, casually referred to, and Kotzebue, who was a "must" to the great lover of the theatre. The list of the French, if compiled on the basis of existing data only, would obviously be incomplete. We note in it Voltaire, Chateaubriand, Béranger, Barbier, Dumas (*père*), Eugène Sue (criticised by him), Balzac; and hypothetically let us place in it at least some Encyclopaedists of the 18th century as well as Utopian socialists of the 19th.[12]

—*Romanticist and Realist*—

As a romanticist, Shevchenko had a deep feeling for the essence of romantic culture and the manifold richness of its spiritual content, and he found in romanticism his distinctive place. Examine closely his poem *Perebendya*, and in the image of the lonely singer who sits on a mound in the steppe, who is alien and incomprehensible to men in his longing for the sublime, you will perceive the complex stratification of the ideas of the romantic school.

Professor L. Biletśky, having analysed Shevchenko's ballads, considers that our poet together with Heine completed the development of the genre of the romantic ballad in world literature, in forming it with structural fullness.[13] In our opinion, it must be added that in his ballads Shevchenko continued and raised to a higher poetic level that romantic realism which was initiated by Gottfried August Bürger with his *Lenore*. Translations from Bürger are a landmark in the development of the romantic style in Russia: they were not merely read, but read with enthusiasm. In imbuing his romanticism with realistic elements the author of *Lileya* went further than Bürger. He introduced the social element into the ballad (cf. *Lileya*, *Topolya*), and for the horrible he substituted the mysteriously wonderful. The transformation of the girl into a poplar inspires not horror, but an infinite mournfulness about the eternity of human misfortune. His water-nymphs are not repulsive, they are only fate in the shape of a

[11] O. Biletśky, "Shevchenko i svitova literatura" in *Zbirnyk Akademiyi Nauk USSR, Pamyati Shevchenka*, Kiev, 1939.
[12] *Ibid.*, p. 211.
[13] L. Biletśky, "Balyady Shevchenka" in T. Shevchenko, *Tvory*, Warsaw, 1934, vol. II, pp. 332-33.

mysterious being which pursues a human being and brings death at the threshold of happiness (cf. *Prychymna*). The atmosphere of impassioned lyricism, in which the narrative of the ballad unfolds itself, constitutes Shevchenko's unique originality.

The vagueness of the positive aims of romanticism was foreign to him. He always had in mind concrete national and social evils, and in his struggle against them he knew no compromise. German romanticists like Novalis and Schlegel sought to fuse poetry with life through the poetisation of life. Man had to submerge himself in his poetic vision, become part of it, and thus find the meaning of life. Shevchenko was opposed to all this. Earthly passion and pain stirred him, the sufferings of Ukraine and of the enslaved village made his heart bleed. It was not, with him, the escape of man into the kingdom of dreams, but the fulfilment of a dream, an ardent call to the realisation of a social Utopia.

—*Attitudes Toward German Thought*—

Shevchenko was acquainted with German romanticism not only in its literary manifestations but in its philosophy and painting.[14] However, his attitude to the German romanticists was very critical, because he saw in them an "incorporeal idealism", divorced from the realities of life, and extremely doctrinaire. Neither the exalted catholicism of some of them nor the exaggerated individualism of others, which almost substituted a deified ego for God, was acceptable to Shevchenko.

Of the German romanticists, the author of *Kobzar* admired those writers whose works, while exhibiting some elements of the romantic approach to reality, stood high above the common run of German romanticism at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. They were Schiller and Goethe.

The elegiac contrast of the transitoriness of human life as compared with eternal nature is typical of many romanticists. We find these thoughts expressed in almost the same way in, for instance, Chateaubriand's *Voyage à Jerusalem*. But for Shevchenko, we repeat, it is only an occasional *motif*. Instead, we find his work stamped with historiosophical universalism in a greater degree. This is eloquently attested by the poem "I mertvym, i zhyvym, i nenarozhdenym zemlyakam moyim v Ukrayni i ne v Ukrayni moye druzhnyeye poslaniye". Not only does this poem grasp with great precision and novelty for its time the essence of certain features of the historical development of Ukraine, but its very title shows that Shevchenko profoundly realised, in the light of the Hegelian absolute, the continuity of historical and spiritual development through the generations.

—*Protest Against Serfdom*—

As we can see, Shevchenko was abreast of contemporary historical method. His understanding of the historical process was based on the latest achievements of philosophical thought. Romantic social universalism found its expression in the Utopian poem "Isaiya. Hlava XXXV (Podrazhaniye)", and in the "Podrazhaniye XI psalmu".

Of Biblical *motifs*, by which romanticists were so enthralled, Shev-

[14] T. Shevchenko, *ed. cit.*, Moscow, 1949, vol. V, p. 98.

chenko chooses only those which can serve as vehicles for the expression of his own feelings and vision of the future in harmony with his social Utopia and his political and national prophecies. Social Utopia captures Shevchenko's inner vision. Setting out from the universal romantic concept that "children of both kings and beggars are the children of Adam", the poet paints a vision of the future. Shevchenko emphasises the social element in his version.[15] Instead of "the unclean" he puts "masters", and in another variant of the manuscript simply "kings". For "the redeemed" he substitutes "slaves". As a result of this change, the poem comes to life with contemporary colouring and sounds like an oratorio, like a hymn in honour of the victorious march of God's justice, which liberates the poor and punishes evildoers for their crimes. No other European literature has a comparable protest against serfdom, and there is no other poet of genius sprung from the serfs who has illuminated the ugliness of serfdom with such shattering effect as has Shevchenko. And here it is the realistic elements of Shevchenko's poetry which come out most clearly.

—*The Individualist*—

Individualism is the second main idea which exhibits the properties of romanticism. Here, too, Shevchenko's position is peculiar. O. Konys'ky has stated that Shevchenko studied Byron and liked to quote him in conversation. But the "demonic" individualism of Byron's characters is altogether alien to Shevchenko's poetry: he does not normally depict the type of hero who does not withdraw from society but lives in it as a mysterious, satanic being, as a majestic shadow, surrounded by melancholy, as one who carries within himself a wound, into the secret of which none can penetrate.[16] Only once does Shevchenko present an image of satanic individualism in the figure of Mykyta which appears in the poem *Tytarivna.*

"The Byronic cult of a titanic individualism, disillusioned, hostile to the masses, often criminal . . . was foreign to Shevchenko," says Professor P. Fylypovych. "But a strong personality," he continues, "who does as he feels, having at the same time the sympathies of the masses (e.g. Ivan Pidkova, Honta, Zaliznyak, and others); who fights against injustice (e.g. John Huss); who leads the people toward their national and social liberation—does capture the poet's imagination." [17]

—*Patriotic Love of Country*—

And here at last we approach the third and most essential feature of Shevchenko's romanticism, namely nationalism. It is this feature which permeates his entire work. National passion with Shevchenko is all-consuming. In it there repeatedly echo the ardent *motifs* of complete self-denial, of self-sacrifice for the sake of the native earth, of willingness to endure the greatest sufferings, and of the oblation of the poet's soul for her sake. With whom can Shevchenko be compared here? Professor O. Kolessa finds analogies in the *Irish Melodies* of Thomas Moore, the poet of the struggle for national liberation of Ireland, and he compares Shevchenko's *Zapovit* to Leopardi's *All' Italia.*[18]

[15] T. Shevchenko, *Tvory*, ed. by I. Franko, L'vov, 1907, vol. II, p. 335.
[16] O. Konys'ky, "T. Shevchenko v ostanni chasy svoho zhyttya" (*Zapysky Naukovoho Tovarystva im. Shevchenka*, 1897, vol. II, p. 25).
[17] P. Fylypovych, "Shevchenko i romantyzm" (*Zapysky Istorychno-Fil. Viddilu UVAN*, 1923, vol. IV, p. 16).
[18] O. Kolessa, *V chest' T. Shevchenka*, L'vov, 1906.

In our opinion, even more to the point would have been a comparison of *All' Italia* with *Rozryta mohyla.* The expanded image of Mother Ukraine, who "like an orphan weeps on the Dnieper", reminds one so much of the image of Mother Italy, the former mistress of half the world, who is now covered with blood and dishonoured, and weeps over her miseries.

—*Hungary's Petöfi and Ukraine's Poet*—

Shevchenko had not read the works of the out-and-out Hungarian Sándor Petöfi, and the latter did not know Shevchenko's poetry; yet these two authors provide an example of instructive analogy. Leaving aside the fact that Shevchenko is a poet of wider range than Petöfi, we find, nevertheless, that the fighting spirit of the political lyricism of both poets strikes very much the same note. For does not Petöfi's call to hang kings sound like Shevchenko's?

> May hangmen cut them off,
> Those tsars, the hangmen of humanity.[19]

In 1848 Petöfi calls for a holy war against the Russians. He believes that Hungary will bear up in the difficult struggle against the tsar's army, and will protect her women and children, and the graves of her fathers. He believes in victory, because Hungary's God fights for His country. Petöfi's God endures the sufferings of the Hungarian people. Do we not find the same thing in Shevchenko? The icon of Our Lady sheds tears together with the Zaporogians over the misfortunes of Ukraine, and those most pure tears become the punishment of Tsar Peter "in his sudden journey", his defeat on the Prut.

Petöfi's revolutionism developed in the whirlwind of national elation, in the campaigns of the Hungarian national army, and was sustained by hope of victory. Shevchenko's nationalist revolutionary attitude was sobered down in the atmosphere of dark reaction inside the Russian Empire, in the cells of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul and in the barrack life of exile. Comparison of the two figures discloses Shevchenko's greatness. Petöfi has deservedly obtained a place of honour in the history of world literature; Shevchenko still waits for such a place.

—*Poland's Mickiewicz and Ukraine's Bard*—

Of the poet of revolutionary political romanticism, Adam Mickiewicz influenced Shevchenko most profoundly of all. The very character of this influence illustrates best the originality of the author of *Kobzar.* Mickiewicz's poetry especially appealed to him. In the memoirs of Afanasyev-Chuzhbyns'ky we find evidence that Shevchenko translated the poems of the Polish poet into Ukrainian.

Information has been preserved that during the 1840's Shevchenko sent his poem *Kavkaz* to Mickiewicz in Paris through a member of the Cyril and Methodius fraternity, Savych.[20] At that time the spiritual leader of "Young Italy", Mazzini, was preaching the idea of the unity of revolutionary Europe. Mickiewicz also established revolutionary international contacts. In the second half of the 1840's he was busy publishing the newspaper *Trybuna ludów* and in 1847 he

[19] T. Shevchenko, *ed. cit.*, L'vov, 1907, vol. II, p. 95.
[20] Doroshkevych, *Etyudy z Shevchenkoznavstva*, Khar'kov-Kiev, 1930, pp. 93–5.

left for Italy in order to organise a Polish legion there to fight for Italian independence. Something of Mickiewicz's activities of this kind had also become known to Shevchenko when he decided to send his *Kavkaz* to Paris. In the light of this fact, the scope of Shevchenko's revolutionary programme becomes wider, his intention of joining the common front of young national liberation movements is disclosed, and the historic importance of *Kavkaz* is enhanced.

Mickiewicz's influence on Shevchenko is observed mainly in the poem *Son* (The Dream). When Shevchenko paints the Muscovite desert here, we see rising before us the images of snow-clad wastes unfolded in Canto III of Mickiewicz's *Dziady*. The idea for the poem *Son*, borrowed from Mickiewicz, is further developed by Shevchenko, broadly and boldly in the wide-range picture of the Russian empire, in satirical flexibility, and in irreconcilability to the entire Russian world.

While seeing in the Decembrists, as Mickiewicz did, both heroes and martyrs of liberty, Shevchenko viewed Muscovy as merely a hostile foreign country. Shevchenko, who understood and felt Pushkin's talent, saw in him primarily the genius of a rapacious empire [21] and did not hesitate to throw at him the scornful appellation of "poetaster."

—*The Shakespearean Influence*—

Shevchenko had a passion for Shakespeare. In the 1840's, while travelling in Ukraine, he used to carry with him a little volume of Shakespeare's plays in translation. And when he was in exile, he would remind his friends from time to time to send him the works of Shakespeare. Shortly before Shevchenko's death the prominent Negro tragedian, Aldridge, came to St. Petersburg on a tour. The poet, who did not know English, was nevertheless able to strike a close friendship with him. When Aldridge played *Othello* in English, Schevchenko was present at the performance. During an interval the painter Mikeshin looked into the dressing room and saw the Negro actor sitting in an armchair, and Shevchenko, with tears streaming from his eyes, expressing his admiration of the performance.

The innate modesty of the author of *Kobzar* enabled him to assess his own powers realistically. The feeling for his own calling, on the other hand, did not permit him to imitate blindly. But his love of Shakespeare was strong, and he closely studied the creative method of the English playwright. Indirectly, we can assert the influence of *Richard III*. The fifth act unfolds Richard's dream before the battle, when the shades of the victims he has killed appear to the sleeping king, utter their imprecations over him, and invoke his defeat. Did not this scene leave its mark on the poem *Son*, in the episode where the souls of the martyred Cossacks hover over the monument of Peter I and hurl curses at him? Is this not the same mood, the same condemnation, and the same prophecy of unfailing retribution? Shevchenko found in Shakespeare the impulses that others could not give him.

[21] T. Shevchenko, *Kobzar*, Prague, 1876, vol. I, p. xii.

—The Influence of Dante—

Dante's genius, towering over the centuries, always captivated Shevchenko's attention, and he consciously sought parallels in his poetic imagery. We see this in the poem *Irzhavets*, where the horrors of Ukrainian reality are compared with the inferno of the *Divine Comedy:*

> My beautiful country, rich and opulent!
> Who has not ravaged thee? If one were to recount
> The true history of any
> One of our gentry, one could horrify
> Hell itself. And old Dante
> Would be amazed at a petty landowner of ours.[22]

One of his captivity poems begins with a variation on the words with which Francesca in the *Divine Comedy* begins her monologue:

> There is nothing more bitter than to recall
> Freedom in captivity.[23]

That this is no chance coincidence of phrase, but a conscious literary reminiscence, we see from the poet's letter to Bodyansky on November 15, 1852:

Dante says that in our life there is no greater grief than to remember past happiness in misery. The great Florentine spoke truly, and I feel it now in myself every day.

When the world finally recognises Shevchenko, the Ukrainian poet will enter the pantheon of literature as one of the greatest humanists.

[22] T. Shevchenko, *ed. cit.*, L'vov, 1907, vol. II, p. 33.
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAN AND THE SYMBOL

By W. K. Matthews*

Personality and reputation are not commensurate terms, for although they are obviously connected, the connection between them is not organic. A man may be greater or less than his reputation, and his reputation may grow or diminish in harmony with the fluctuating fashions of thought. Essentially a man's reputation is not a projection of his personality, as the branch is of the tree, but rather a reflection, like his image in a mirror, and this being so, it is determined by the nature of the reflecting surface—here the human environment—which is clearly subject to the influence of place and time. The career of Taras Shevchenko illustrates all these things, except the ebb of a reputation, for in the ninety years since his death his fame has grown unabated with the turbulent growth of Ukrainian self-consciousness. Today he is still the symbol of his country's unslaked passion for freedom from tyranny in all its forms as he once became in the first flush of youthful ardour.

The advent of Shevchenko was sudden and startling and carried the more responsive of his compatriots off their feet in a wave of fervent admiration. Such a poet had not been known in Ukraine before. His vivid, singing, emotional verse, both lyrical and narrative, had a familiar ring and movement, for it was the language of Ukrainian folk-song with its recognisable epithets, subtle stressing, and simple charm of manner. And yet it was not folk-poetry. The poet's personality shone through the words with an unmistakable radiance, and it was the personality of a man who loved his country not only in the aureoles and heroisms of its past, but even more in its contemporary state of abject humiliation. This man, moreover, was acutely aware of social and national injustice and was not afraid to indict his people's enemies and to make them feel the sting and lash of his tongue. Here apparently was another Burns, yet, all in all, Shevchenko was more influential than Burns, for the latter lived and died in the Age of Enlightenment, when interest in the lot of the downtrodden was only just beginning to win the attention of serious, compassionate men.

—*The Burns–Shevchenko Comparison*—

The comparison with Burns, whom Shevchenko knew at least by repute, is instructive. The differences between the two poets are probably as considerable as the similarities, and perhaps the most glaring difference is that of legal status. Although a man of the people, Burns was a free man, whereas Shevchenko was born a serf,

*Excerpts from writer's essay *Taras Ševčenko*, Association of Ukrainians in Great Britain, London, 1951, p. 15.

who obtained his freedom only at twenty-four and only to enjoy it for nine out of the forty-seven years of his life. This is a fundamental fact in Shevchenko's biography and cannot be too often or too strongly emphasised. It set the tone of his poetry; it inclined him to identify himself with the meanest of his compatriots, who till 1861 were the chattels of mainly Russian landowners; it gave him his strong feeling for the soil of Ukraine; and it enabled him to see clearly the social and national evils which beset his unhappy country.

Shevchenko also differs from Burns in being an artist not only in words, as Burns was, but with brush and pencil. Indeed, Shevchenko the artist was as widely known in his own time as Shevchenko the poet. And there is a third point in which the two poets are different: Burns' freedom was never circumscribed and marred by imprisonment, whereas Shevchenko's freedom was merely a brief interval in a life of ignominious duress.

—*Patterns of Shevchenko's Verse*—

We can now briefly review the subject-matter of Shevchenko's verse. Like the technique which it informs, this is varied, but can be reduced to a number of dominant patterns. There is, first, the recurrent theme of the seduced girl, which obsessed Shevchenko and may have been partly suggested to him by both Russian and Ukrainian authors, but the obsession of the theme was due to the fate of his first love, the village-girl Oksana Kovalenkova. Less personal are the historical themes centered in the exploits of the Cossacks and the haydamaks, which may be resolved into symbols of the struggle of the Ukrainian people against foreign oppression. Shevchenko's very life is bound up with the theme of the exile's longing for his homeland, which is as intense in the lyrics of his St. Petersburg days as in those which he wrote in the Caspian steppes.

Other attitudes which show no slackening of intensity are those of opposition to the Tsarist order and of anti-clericalism, the second of which has led the Soviet critic to diagnose atheism in Shevchenko. Opposition to Tsar and Church, as the executive organs of Russian tyranny, which supported the minor, if no less galling tyranny of the Russian landowners, was innate in our poet, whose childhood knew the hair-raising stories of his grandfather and whose manhood had felt the heavy hand of Nicholas I and his henchmen.

—*The Personification of Ukraine's Thirst for Independence*—

We began this essay with an attempt to detach Shevchenko from his reputation and we have considered him apart from it. Let us now consider him as a symbol, for this is one of the forms which a man's reputation may invest. All Shevchenko's literary work is closely bound up with his love and longing for Ukraine. It is only in the concrete visual detail of painting that his thoughts seem at times to be completely removed from his native landscapes and memories. Now it is the patriotic aspect of Shevchenko's work, especially of his poetry, which first endeared him to his compatriots and has since made him the personification of the Ukrainian's thirst for liberty and independence.

One might interpose here that the patriot Shevchenko of, say, the celebrated "Testament" (Zapovit) of 1845, in which he calls on his own to bury him and to rise and break their chains, and, echoing a passage of La Marseillaise, "to spatter freedom with evil enemy blood",—that this Shevchenko is only a fragment of a much larger whole, that his patriotism is only one aspect of his many-sided personality. There is no denying that his patriotism plays a highly important part in his poetry and has been rightly chosen by nationally-minded Ukrainians for special emphasis.

But the realisation of the ideal expressed in Shevchenko's words is prevented by circumstances for which Ukrainians themselves are not collectively responsible. An intolerant alien power still presides, as it did in Shevchenko's time, over the destinies of their country and has even succeeded recently in uniting under its control all the Ukrainian-speaking lands. The presence of that power has led to an exodus of Ukrainians from Ukraine in moments of crisis since the emancipation of the serfs after Shevchenko's death made collective movement possible. In consequence of this a notable part of the Ukrainian people now lives outside the national frontiers. The existence of such a body of emigrants [1] is a sure sign of an abnormal state of things at home.

Shevchenko's story is that of his native land in microcosm. No wonder then that his inspiring words are especially treasured by all those of his compatriots who have experienced the bitter anguish of exile and who still love and have not lost their faith in a regenerate Ukraine.

[1] Cf. the Irish emigration to the U.S.A. after the potato famine in the 19th century.

CHAPTER V

SHEVCHENKO AND THE JEWS

By Roman Smal-Stocki*

Recently I discussed one of the most important characteristics of Taras Shevchenko's ideology: his fight not only for the liberty of Ukraine but of all nations enslaved by Russian imperialism, from Finland to Rumania, from Poland to the far Caucasus and Turkestan.

This defense of the right to self-determination of the non-Russian nations inside the Russian Empire (which before World War I constituted in that Russian prison of nations a majority of nearly 58 percent against the Russian minority of 42 percent) grew up out of Shevchenko's struggle against the serfdom of the peasantry, whose descendant he was. Thus being against the serfdom of the peasants, who then were like the cattle property of their masters, Shevchenko was also against the serfdom of the non-Russian nations which were converted into colonial serfs of the Russian-Muscovite nation, represented by its divine right autocrat, the Russian Tsar. Both ideas were deeply rooted in his Christian world outlook which envisaged the brotherhood of all nations.

—In Defense of Oppressed Jewry—

I mentioned in this connection that Shevchenko also defended the rights of the Jews in the Russian Empire. Here I should like to present my evidence in full, because I am aware that this fact is little known not only to our fellow American scholars of Jewish descent but also of Ukrainian descent.

As a matter of fact, this defense of the Jews by Shevchenko was well known before World War I amongst Jewish leaders in Austrian Bukovina. I remember that Benno Straucher, a prominent Jewish leader, called it to the special attention of Stephan Smal-Stocki, then professor at the University of Czernowitz-Chernivtsi (presently under the Soviet Union).

Let me now present the material available in the United States for this case.

Taras Shevchenko was severely punished for his revolutionary poems and activities by Tsar Nicholas I, the gendarme of Europe, who also crushed the Polish (1830) and Hungarian (1848) revolutions. As you know, he was exiled. After ten years he finally was amnestied, and on March 27, 1858, he returned to St. Petersburg.

There are many Russian and Ukrainian reports describing his reception in the capital by the large Ukrainian colony and by Russian liberal circles. For the Ukrainians, Shevchenko was a national hero

*Selected parts of a paper prepared in dedication to the memory of the Ambassador of the Ukrainian National Republic to Great Britain, Hon. Arnold Margolin. Shevchenko Scientific Society Study Center, Chicago, Ill., 1959, p. 11.

and martyr, but liberal Russians also looked up to him as a man who suffered for his struggle against Tsarism. He frequented the salons of Count Tolstoy, where he met the Russian élite of writers, scholars, public personalities, artists, actors, and musicians. There he met not only the Ukrainian elite of that time: Marko Wowchok, Kulish, Hulak Artymovsky, Kostomarov, Aivazovsky, Bilozersky and others, but also such leading Russians as Turgenev, Chernyshevsky, Leskov, Kurochkin, Zhemchuzhnikov, Polonsky, O. To stoy, and many others.

The chief problem discussed then was the emancipation of the serfs. Every really Christian and civilized person was deeply ashamed to face daily in the Russian Empire an institution which disappeared in England in the fourteenth century. This problem was logically connected with the equalization of the civil rights of all subjects of the Tsar. It was just at that time that an attack against the Jews appeared in the journal *Illustratsia.* The clear aim of the attack was to eliminate the Jews from the discussed reforms in order to continue their discrimination. An already existent public opinion in St. Petersburg strongly disfavored the idea of continued discrimination against the Jews, and soon a protest was drafted by Chernyshevsky.

A whole series of writers, scholars, and public figures of the capital signed this protest, which later was widely used by the Jews outside the Russian Empire for the mobilization of liberal public opinion against their persecution in the Tsarist Empire.

Since her unification Germany was the rising intellectual and political power inside Europe and served as a clearinghouse of information about the Russian Empire for the whole West. Serving in this role, Germany became a center for the defense of the Jews against the Russian persecutions. It was therefore natural that a German translation of a Russian book was published. The book originally appeared in 1891 in St. Petersburg, titled *Russkie Liudi o Yevreiach,* but soon disappeared. Apparently it was bought out by the government and destroyed. Only one single copy was preserved and subsequently deposited in the British Museum Library in London. It is a collection of statements in the defense of the Jews by subjects of the Russian Tsar of different nationalities: Russian-Muscovites, Ukrainians, Poles, Germans, and from different professions: soldiers, priests, educators, diplomats, etc. The German translation is titled: *Die Juden in Russland, Urkunben und Zeugnisse Russischer Behoerden und Autoritaeten.* Ausdem Russischen Uebersetzt von August Scholz. Berlin, 1900. Concordia Deutshe Verlags-Anstalt.

—Shevchenko Signs Statement in Defense of Jews—

There on pages 241–44 is the following statement, which I give in photostatic copy: "Protest russischer Schriftsteller von 1858" [statement provided in Shevchenko hearing in the House].

Let us now evaluate the fact that Shevchenko signed this protest in defense of the civil rights of the Jews:

(a) Terminologically one must keep in mind that *"russische Schriftsteller"—"Russian writers"*—identifies not nationality but the imperial citizenship or better yet "subjectship" of the said persons who signed the protest.

(b) It was rather seldom that Ukrainians and Russian-Muscovite writers and intellectuals formed a common front, but it happened in this case for the defense of the rights of the Jews. It is clear that for the Ukrainians it was a matter of principle which was basic for the rights of all non-Russian nations in the Russian Empire.

(c) Not only Schevchenko but also Marko Wowchok, P. Kulish, the scholar Kostomarov and others signed the protest. This indicates that it was a jointly decided action by the nucleus of the Ukrainian Hromada which then existed in St. Petersburg.

(d) Shevchenko, after ten years of exile, was then in St. Petersburg enjoying great moral and political prestige. He did not hesitate to put his name under the statement in defense of the Jews in spite of the fact that he risked immediate retaliation by the police under whose supervision Shevchenko was in St. Petersburg. This action was definitely an act of moral courage.

(e) The participation of Shevchenko in such a political public act, together with Chernyshevsky, surely alarmed the police. Therefore, his later arrest during his visit to Ukraine was, in my opinion, partly connected with this act; partly it was prearranged by police provocateurs who provoked him with various questions and then gave the police authorities false reports.

(f) In the time of serfdom in the old Polish Commonwealth and later in Tsarist Russia, the Jews in fact often administered this immoral and frightful institution of serfdom over the peasantry on behalf of the absentee landlords, from which even Orthodox churches of the Ukrainian serfs were not excluded.[1] In his previous historical poems there are traces of a just indignation by Shevchenko against the Polish nobility and its Jewish collaborators in the exploitation of the serfaged peasantry.

Returning from exile, Shevchenko was faced not with history but with the urgent problem of the abolition of the serfdom of persons, which logically widened for him to an abolition of the serfdom of the non-Russian nations; that means their freedom and civil rights.

Shevchenko believed that "where does not exist the holy liberty, there never will be a good [social system]." In this "holy liberty" were included also the Jews. Shevchenko prayed: "and give *all* of us on earth brotherly love"—including in it also the Jews. The coming emancipation of the serfs and the elevation of them to human beings with civil rights should include, according to Shevchenko's opinion, also the discriminated Jews in the Russian Empire.

[1] Cf. G. F. Abbot, *Israel in Europe* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1907), pp. 238-39.

CHAPTER VI

SHEVCHENKO AND WOMEN

By Dr. Luke Myshuha*

It was in 1914, when in the Tsarist Russian Empire the government forbade the observance of the 100th anniversary of the birth of Taras Shevchenko, that an aged peasant deputy, Mershchi, stood before the Russian Duma and said:

Everything that has been said from this rostrum, everything that has been written in the last few days about the popularity of Taras Shevchenko among the Ukrainian people, all that is nothing in comparison to the reality of how the common Ukrainian peasant population loves and respects this poet. Whoever was at the tomb of Shevchenko may have seen how the peasants en masse travel to that mound in order to pay tribute to the earthly remains of their beloved poet; may have seen how with bared heads they sing and recite the creations of Shevchenko; may have seen with what piety they enter the chamber where hangs the portrait of Shevchenko; may have noticed how they talk before that portrait as if they felt the presence of a great spirit, and how they walk on tip-toes and talk in whispers. Only in churches do the people behave that way. Whoever was in a Ukrainian village may have seen that practically in every house there hangs in the place of honor, all decorated with embroidered scarfs, the portrait of Shevchenko and before it lies the *Kobzar*. And practically every literate and illiterate person knows this *Kobzar* by heart. Whoever knows this will not say that only the intelligentsia-separatists are interested in the commemoration of Shevchenko. In this celebration are interested all the Ukrainian people who sacrifice their hard-earned money for the erection of the memorial to the poet. For almost fifty years the Ukrainian people have been celebrating Shevchenko's anniversaries. As a rule, requiem Mass is held, while here and there plays or literary lectures are given.

And further on this deputy went to ask why it was that the government forbade the people even to pray for this Christian, this Taras.

Why? Is it because Shevchenko was a peasant poet, having come from the peasants; is it because he is, as the bureaucratic circles would say, a muzhik poet? . . . But, gentlemen, everything has its limits. You may deny the people education, close all our libraries and educational centers. You may take from the school libraries in Ukraine all the popular publications about village farming, about cooperatives, about hygiene . . . and all of this because they were written in the people's language. You may prohibit the children in school from singing their beloved folk songs and from reading the Ukrainian translations of Krylov's fables. And in the end, you may prohibit the erection in Kiev of the memorial to Shevchenko, but, dear Sirs, there is no human power that can prohibit a people to love him whom they have deified. I think that it is time in Russia to recognize what the whole world has recognized already. It is time to recognize that fact that Taras Shevchenko himself has already built a memorial to which the people's path will never overgrow with weeds.

That is how in the Russian Duma in Petersburg, sixty-three years after the death of Shevchenko, the memory of him was defended by a descendant of one of those slaves whom Shevchenko had in mind when he wrote:

. . . I'll glorify
The mute, down-trodden slaves
And as a sentinel o'er them
I'll place the mighty word.

*Selections from author's work by the same title, Ukrainian National Association, Jersey City, N.J., 1940, p. 95.

With his "mighty word" Shevchenko defended the "slaves" and at the same time came in defense of the woman—the greatest victim of the then prevailing social system.

—The First Love—

In the thirteenth year of Shevchenko's life, while he was grazing sheep beyond the village, he suddenly felt extremely happy. This was the first ray of love penetrating his heart; an innocent and an unconscious love, but powerful enough to leave its trace throughout his life. These feelings Shevchenko paints later when as a poet he relates how it all happened to him. He was minding the sheep, when all at once the sheep, the heavenly sky, the village,—everything, faded from his sight. Taras looked at the lambs but they were not his lambs; and

I turned to see the village dwellings—
But there were none that I could claim,
For God bestowed upon me nought;
And many tears trickled down,
Bitter tears . . .

It was then, when Taras was overcome with tears, that "she" came.

. . . . At the roadside,
Not far from where I stood,
A girl was picking hemp
And heard my sighs and sobs;
She came to me to seek
The cause, then wiped my tears
And kissed me on the cheek.

and with this kiss

It seemed as if the sun shone forth,
As if the world and all there was—
The fields and woods—were mine to keep;
And we, with merriment, went forth
To water someone else's sheep.

This girl, Oxana, who picked hemp, does not leave Shevchenko's memory throughout his life. In all the women that he met during his lifetime, he always unconsciously searched for that something which would remind him of his "pleasant, curly Oxana."

Shevchenko mentions this Oxana again in his poem *To Oxana K.* written in 1841 in Petersburg—in the memory of what happened in the distant past.

. . . . Oxana, kindest of all strangers,
Remember that orphan of years gone by
Who, though dressed in tatters, used to feel happy
Whenever he saw your beautiful face;
The one whom you without a word
Had taught to speak with eyes and soul;
With whom you laughed and grieved and wept;

An eminent critic of Shevchenko, Paul Zaitsev, wrote about this Oxana in his article entitled "The First Love of Shevchenko": "Thus his first love affair left in the soul of the poet an everlasting impression, and never will that tender flower, that unfortunate curly-haired Oxana die in the wreath of his glory."

—"*Maria*"—

Shevchenko entertained the thought which was born during his exile when he wrote to Princess Repnin that he wanted to "depict the mother-heart of Mary, Mother of Our Saviour." Out of this wish was born the poem *Maria* (Mary). In this poem the life of the Mother of Our Saviour does not correspond to that presented in the Gospels, but the portrait of the Divine Mother does not suffer on account of it. To Shevchenko, Mary was the divine strength of all the saints. He appeals to Her for help.

Behold, Oh Blessed Queen! and see
This dispossessed humanity:
These slaves, and lend them strength and will
To bear their chains, and like Our Friend,
Your Son, to bear the cross until
They reach the goal—the common end.

Shevchenko's Mary is the mother whom elderly Joseph saves from disgrace and from being stoned to death. Shevchenko's Mary is the thoughtful mother whose attention is all centered on the welfare and character of her son. His Mary is the mother who goes to drudge at work in order to bring up properly her child. Shevchenko's Mary is she who understands her noble son.

She is the humble mother who:

. . . Would, so quietly, retreat
To fetch some water from the well
With which to offer him a drink
And bathe his tired aching feet

"Glory be to Thee, Our Mother," sings the poet. Glory to Thee for having bolstered the spirits of your son's disciples, for being instrumental in their going out into the world, in order to

Spread love and truth throughout the world.
And Thou, with grief upon your heart
And wandering from day to day,
From hunger perished on the way.

This "Maria" of Shevchenko was and is, to this day, the reason for an accusation of profanation which is aimed against the poet. But this Mary, according to one of Shevchenko's critics, came from under the pen of the poet—

. . . immaculate and holy. The poet prays to Her in words as good as those in the prayer books . . . She became divine through the unexpressible sorrows and unsounded sufferings with which Shevchenko's "Maria" climaxes the portraiture of all his mother suffers.

—The Victimized Woman—

On many occasions Shevchenko left his quarters and wandered nightly through the streets of Petersburg. And here again he saw the woman as a victim of the wanton city, a victim of the ugly social conditions.

The night was foggy, very cool,
And down the Neva river-stream
Were slowly drifting what did seem
Like ice floats, underneath the bridge.
And I—it was quite late that day—
Was walking, coughing on the way.
I looked and saw before me: girls.
Each one of them was someone's daughter
Who now was led to worse than slaughter,
By some demented maniac
Who staggering was chasing them
As if corralling home some sheep . . .
What is the matter with this world?
And where is justice? Woe to all!
The naked and the starving souls
Of little girls are driven like
A flock "to pay the last of debts"
To feed the filthy city nests!
Will judgment come? Will czars, their tools,
Be tried and punished on this earth?
Will people ever see the truth?
They should . . .

CHAPTER VII

THE RELIGION OF SHEVCHENKO*

By Clarence A. Manning

What was Shevchenko's attitude toward religion? The best critics of the poet, whether they are Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, or Protestant, have come to the conclusion that he was fundamentally a religious man but that at times he employed certain phrases which have allowed the advocates of militant atheism to claim him for their party. Yet to prove their point, this latter group is compelled to believe that he distinctly concealed his own thoughts to satisfy the dictates of the censorship in a way that he did on no other subject, and their comments are so biased that it is difficult to take them too seriously.

There can be little doubt that, especially after his visit to Ukraine in 1843, Shevchenko was carried away by his bitterness over the lot of the Ukrainian people. This is expressed again and again in his attack on the official representatives of the Russian Orthodox religion, which had been definitely bureaucratized by Peter the Great, destroyer of Ukrainian freedom; and Shevchenko could not resist the temptation to attack the Church on all counts. Thus in both the *Dream* and the *Caucasus* there are lines that reflect his distaste for the established Church of Russia as a tool of the Tsar.

On the other hand there are remarkable examples of Shevchenko's deep interest in the religion of the people. We must remember that the Russian occupation of Ukraine had led to a transfer of the clergy from the supervision of Constantinople (where it had been during the great days of Kiev) to Moscow and that the change bore as hard upon the religious life of the villages as it did upon the political and cultural. The Russian Tsars were trying to standardize and organize everything under their own supervision and upon their own system, and while they did not change in any important degree the native rites and practices, they tried to fit them into a different framework.

Nowhere in the whole of the poet's writings does he cast any shadow of contempt or brand as superstitious the peasant practices of making the sign of the cross or of lighting candles or praying. The normal religious life of the village where it concerns the peasants and God he treats with the greatest respect. Similarly he makes absolutely no attacks upon the teachings of Christ, on His pleas for brotherly love, on the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. The birth of Christ and the redemption of humanity form the central point in the entire history of mankind. He acknowledges and glorifies His teachings, even if at moments of vexation he complains that God is waiting too long, is allowing too much innocent blood to be shed, too many abuses to continue on this planet.

*Excerpts from author's *Taras Shevchenko, The Poet of Ukraine*, Ukrainian National Assn., Jersey City, 1945.

—The Bible: Source of Themes—

Besides this, there is abundant evidence that Shevchenko knew the Bible thoroughly. In his letters from exile, he writes to Princess Repnina that he read the Gospel constantly and he asked her to send him also a copy of Saint Thomas à Kempis. He declares that only a Christian philosophy could encourage a person in his hopeless position. We certainly do not need to assume that in these passages he was writing only with an eye to the effect that it would produce upon the Princess, his friends in the capital and the censors.

More than that, Shevchenko drew heavily upon the Bible for themes for his poems, especially in his later years. A favorite device might almost be called a meditation upon the Old Testament, particularly upon passages where the ancient prophets condemned severely the abuses and the faults of their own day. Then in a direct manner he used the present situation in Ukraine to illustrate the great truths of the past.

The religious development of the poet thus seems to move along with the general development of his thought. In the poems of the early period through the *Haydamaki* and *Hamaliya*, when he was interested in picturing the romantic tales of the Kozaks, he accepts without a murmur the popular rites and devotions. There is a deep sincerity in the picture of the priests blessing the army before the uprising of the *Haydamaki*. It is a scene of deep piety and also one that a cynic could easily have turned into an attack on religion. The same is true of the prayers of the Kozaks in prison in *Hamaliya*. Even in *Katerina*, while he recognizes the harsh treatment of the poor mother, he goes little further than to ask God why such things are allowed to exist on earth.

—Christian Law and the Poet—

It was after his visit to Ukraine in 1843 that the horrible position of his people burst upon him with all of its terror, cruelty, and injustice. To him the violation of the Christian law of love and charity was the overwhelming fact in life. He became openly rebellious against every institution—whether religious or civil—which seemed even remotely to imply toleration for a social order that could be so near a hell on earth. Yet even in his attacks on these institutions, we can always feel the underlying belief of the poet that religion and God are being deliberately misrepresented and that all would be well, if we could only break through the iron wall that seems to surround this world and penetrate the mystery beyond. There is much of the spirit of Job in these poems, although the author could not at all times hold fast to his vision of God's justice and mercy.

His arrest and imprisonment undoubtedly had a definite effect upon him. We know from his letters to Princess Repnina and others that he attended church services during his stay in the fortress. Later he endeavored to secure permission to decorate both a Roman Catholic and an Orthodox chapel and it can hardly be supposed that he did this only to have an opportunity to draw and to paint. It was rather the feeling that he could dedicate some part of his work to God at the moment when it seemed impossible for him to carry on his work for his country.

On his return to St. Petersburg, he was of course thrown into company with the fashionable radicals of the day with their deliberate and unadulterated atheism, and we might expect that he would give some definite sign of their influence. He does nothing of the kind. Rather he turned to the Old Testament for its harsh judgments on kings and rich men who robbed and oppressed the poor and the downtrodden. He had long dreamed of analyzing the character of the Blessed Virgin as a typical mother and it is this that he does in *Mary*.

An additional sign is his *Primer*, which he secured permission to publish only a few months before his death. It was definitely written for the Sunday Schools which were springing up in Ukraine under the new order. Shevchenko introduced a large amount of religious material into it, and he shows again in this the same interest in seeing the social ideas of Christianity worked to the fullest possible extent. It would have been so easy for him to have created a purely secular book, had he been so inclined.

—*Life, One of Religious Interest*—

Thus at every stage of his life, we can find distinct traces of the religious interests of Shevchenko. He was no trained theologian, he was not a mystic, he was not a man who sought to evade the troubles of earth by taking refuge in heaven. He felt that here on earth there was a crying need for reform and human brotherhood and he never indicated for a second that there was any other possibility for achieving this than through the pure and applied teachings of the Gospel.

Despite all criticisms, the overwhelming impression that the poems, the stories, and the letters of Shevchenko leave upon the careful reader is that he is a man who profoundly appreciates the Crucified and Risen Saviour and who is only too ready to support his teachings and suffer from his fellowmen. Some of his outbursts may be extreme but it is very doubtful if a single intelligent reader has ever found his faith shaken by any poem of Taras Shevchenko. His prayers and invocations are no sham, no attempt to curry favor or to escape responsibility. They are a product of a believing mind and a great soul.

APPENDIX

The Honorable John Lesinski in the House of Representatives, June 25, 1960, Regarding the Centennial Anniversary in 1961 of the Death of the Ukrainian Patriot, Taras Shevchenko

Mr. Speaker, at the outset I desire to extend sincerest gratitude to my colleague, the gentleman from Missouri [Mr. Jones], and the able members of his Subcommittee on Memorials for bringing House Joint Resolution 311 to its first step toward final enactment. I was privileged to participate at the hearings conducted in connection with this proposal, and I fully realize the vast amount of study and consideration which was applied by that subcommittee. I also wish to compliment the sponsor of the resolution, the gentleman from Michigan [Mr. Bentley], for the wholehearted enthusiasm and followthrough he furnished in bringing this legislation thus far.

In 1961, Ukrainian people all over the world will observe the centennial anniversary of the death of Taras Shevchenko. An account of his heroic life and splendid literary creations are indeed inspirational to all freedom-loving men and women.

Such an idealistic undertaking should understandably be endorsed by the Congress as a very important factor during this cold war of ideologies between the United States and the Kremlin. Today, as 45 million Ukrainians enslaved by Communist Russia work unselfishly and unceasingly to rid themselves of the despotic rule of Moscow, they do so by holding up this shining exponent of true liberty, Taras Shevchenko, as their symbol of inspiration and incentive. (Congressional Record, June 25, 1960, p. A5518.)

The Honorable Alvin M. Bentley Before the Committee on House Administration, March 31, 1960

Mr. Chairman, we must realize that there are about 45 million Ukrainians who are enslaved by Communist Russia, despite their unceasing efforts and struggle to get rid of the alien and despotic rule of Moscow. To them Taras Shevchenko is a national prophet and symbol of their dreams and aspirations, their ideals and hopes.

It is true that the Soviet Government has done everything to remake Shevchenko to its own Communist image. Most of his fiery anti-Russian and anti-despotic poems were "purged" and re-edited to suit the veering Communist line. But for true Ukrainians, be they behind the Iron Curtain or in the free world, Shevchenko remains eternally the same: The intrepid and indefatigable fighter against tyranny and oppression, who was for the freedom and emancipation of all the oppressed and persecuted.

It was Taras Shevchenko, the great Ukrainian poet and advocate of freedom, who for the first time called on the Ukrainians to hope and expect their own George Washington. In 1857, in his poem, *Yurodyvy* or freely translated, "The Feeble-Minded", he attacked all tyrants, czars and oppressors, and all enemies of human freedom and decency.

It is extremely important for the American people to know that 103 years ago Taras Shevchenko, poet and prophet of the enslaved Ukrainian people, pointed to George Washington, founding father of our great Republic, as a symbol and liberator of the American people from the colonial rule of a foreign power, a liberator whom he considered a model and predecessor of a similar liberator of the Ukrainian people. The Ukrainians, through this reference of Shevchenko to the Father of Our Country, knew over a hundred years ago that George Washington liberated America and established a "new and righteous law," that is a true democracy, a rule of the people, by the people and for the people.

In erecting a statue of Taras Shevchenko in Washington the United States will give full expression to its understanding and appreciation of Taras Shevchenko and all that he means to the brave and noble Ukrainian people. Such a step would constitute a great psychological weapon against the Communist propaganda systematically being disseminated among the Ukrainians to the effect that only Moscow is a friend of the Ukrainian people, while the United States and other Western Powers are "capitalist enemies" of the Ukrainian people, bent upon their "enslavement and exploitation."

This step is all the more important because in Ukraine under the Communist rule special preparations are underway now to observe the 100th anniversary of the death of Shevchenko with the usual Communist propaganda fanfare to the effect that Shevchenko was a "true proletarian" poet and fighter for "Communist emancipation," which obviously would be a total misrepresentation of the great Ukrainian poet and fighter for freedom (hearing, March 31, 1960).

Senator Jacob K. Javits

Taras Shevchenko was a bard of freedom. In 1917 it was the poetry of Shevchenko that inspired the Ukrainian movement for independence and encouraged the Ukrainian National Republic in its desperate struggle, alone and unaided, to protect itself against the aggression of the Russian Communists. It was Shevchenko's poetry that encouraged the Ukrainians, forced within the Soviet Union, to continue their struggles for freedom and in World War II encouraged and fostered the Ukrainian opposition to both fascism and communism.

It is only fitting that the statue of such a national hero, who taught the American ideals of patriotism and service to man, should stand in the capital of the United States (House hearing, March 31, 1960).

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