

Ausgabe, betitelt «Kobsar von Tschyhryn», und 1860, 1867, 1869 die erweiterte. Erst 1906 erschien die vollständige Ausgabe, die, in 10.000 Exemplaren gedruckt, im Laufe eines halben Jahres vergriffen wurde. Der letzte «Kobsar» erschien in Wien 1915.

Schon in der ersten kleinen Ausgabe vom Jahre 1840 tritt Schewtschenko als reifer Dichter hervor und die acht Gedichte spiegeln die wesentlichen Seiten seiner lyrischen Poesie wieder: den Patriotismus, die Balladenstimmung, den kosakischen Geist und die sittlich-religiöse Idealität. Schewtschenko ist selbst der alte blinde Perebendja, von dem es in dem gleichnamigen Gedichte heißt, dass er die Kobsa spiele; und wer spielt, wird von den Leuten gekannt und von ihnen mit Dank belohnt.

Der dieses literarische Debüt einleitende Vorgesang («Dumy moji, dumy moji») gibt schon den Schlüssel zu der dichterischen Persönlichkeit von Schewtschenko. Das ganze Gedicht atmet die Sehnsucht des Verwaisten nach der Heimerde, die Liebe des Freiheitsfreundes zur verflossenen Zeit.

Kwitka schrieb nach dem Erscheinen des «Kobsar» an den Verfasser: «Beim Lesen sträubte sich mir das Haar. Mein Herz wurde wie zerrissen und es schwindelte mir vor den Augen. Ich drücke Ihr Buch an mein Herz.»

Ja, mit nur acht Gedichten hatte Schewtschenko fürwahr Wunder gewirkt. Es gelang ihm in der Tat, «zum alten Pflug eine neue Schar, ein neues Sech zu schmieden» und das Brachfeld der ukrainischen Literatur aufzupflügen, indem er «in die Furchen seine Tränen, sein inniges Herzeleid säte».

Das Erscheinen des „Kobsar“ war wirklich ein Meilenstein für die ukrainische Kultur und Sprache.

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«I AM PUNISHED, I SUFFER... BUT I DO NOT REGRET..!»

SHEVCHENKO IN THE PERIOD OF EXILE

The great poet, and realist artist Taras Hryhorovych Shevchenko, is one of the most outstanding masters of world culture. Shevchenko is truly a great artist of the people, as well as a national one. The great value of his artistic heritage is in that it expressed the interests of the Ukrainian people living in his own epoch. His life was extremely difficult and full of trials. Probably, the most exhausting part of his life was connected with his exile.

It happened on April 5, 1847, when he was arrested and without trial exiled.

Taras Hryhorovych was an active participant of “Kirilo-Mefodievsky Society”, a secret political organization that appeared in Kiev at the beginning of 1846 and existed till the spring of 1847. His revolutionary poems were circulated in manuscript copies, had become known to the Tsar. Approving the verdict, Nicholas I added with his own hand: “Under strictest surveillance, with the prohibition to write and paint.”

The poet later wrote of the Tsar's sentence: “If I had been a monster, a vampire, even then more horrible torture could not have been devised for me.”

In eight days Shevchenko was delivered to his place of exile - the far-off Caspian steppes. After the magnificent nature of Ukraine, the green banks of the Dnipro River, the picturesque avenues of beautiful Kiev and spacious southern steppes, Shevchenko viewed the wilderness with profound sadness.

Here began the hard and monotonous life of Private Taras Shevchenko. In the daytime, he went through the drills. In the evenings, sitting with the other soldiers in his stuffy barracks, Shevchenko listened to their unhappy tales about beatings and humiliations.

And yet, in his “prison without doors”, as he called it himself, Shevchenko in the period of ten years created the greater part of his wonderful works, which were filled with a deep and ideological meaning. Among them there also were portraits, landscape paintings and genre compositions. Of the portraits the most interesting are Shevchenko's self-portraits. During his first year in exile Shevchenko portrayed himself in a uniform of a rank-and-file soldier. Looking at his self-portrait, it is quite easy to see the poet's hurt and grief.

Shevchenko spent ten years in exile in the distant reaches of the Tsarist Empire. Difficult conditions of harshly disciplined army life undermined his health, but they could not subdue his spirit - on the contrary, his hatred of the Tsarist regime grew still more implacable. Nothing could break his ardent will to struggle and engage in creative work. “I am punished, I suffer... but I do not regret..!”, - Shevchenko said at the time of his most arduous ordeals.

Violating the Tsar's prohibition and disregarding all threats, Shevchenko secretly continued to write poetry. During his ten years of exile he composed many marvelous works, in which, disclosing his own

feelings and experiences, he expressed the cherished aspirations of all oppressed people.

At the beginning of 1848, a group of officers of the General Staff undertook a scientific expedition to explore the Aral Sea. Taras Shevchenko was offered an opportunity to join the expedition and gladly agreed. The main thing was that he would be rid of the tyranny of his harsh sergeant-majors, and would leave the stench of the barracks.

Shevchenko made many sketches and watercolors during the trip. He sketched the forbidding landscape of the Aral Sea and its shores with telling expressiveness, which became interesting artistic documents.

On Kos-Aral Island Shevchenko wrote a great deal. In his diary, he termed the poetry written in exile a “Prisoner's Muse”. It contained both lyrical pieces and poems. Shevchenko's lyric of the Kos-Aral period is a poetical record of his life in an “unlocked prison”. Other verses of the Kos-Aral cycle are of an intimate nature imbued with a mournful mood. However, there is no feeling of hopelessness in Shevchenko's poetry of that period. Through the misty curtain of the current reality, the poet discerned the bright outlines of the happy Ukraine-to-be without lord and slaves.

That winter Shevchenko composed many songs in the folk-song tradition - sad songs and merry ones, serious songs and jesting ones. During the same period, he wrote several autobiographical poems, which carried him back to his childhood and the years of his youth.

In 1850 the poet was sent to the far-away Novopetrovsk Fortress on the north-eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. For this time, he was strictly forbidden to write or paint. He was now watched more attentively.

But the poet did not give up. In his new place of exile, Shevchenko wrote a number of stories in the Russian language, the plots of which unfolded against the background of serfdom.

During the last years of exile, Shevchenko created one of his main compositions — a series of works entitled “The Parable of a Prodigal Son”. The works included in this series impress us with their deep thought, critical acuteness, with which the artist condemned the evils of surrounding reality. According to Shevchenko, “The Parable of a Prodigal Son” was supposed to be a satire on the savage habits and traditions of the Russian merchants, but it soon grew into a wrathful exposure of the whole system of autocratic serfdom.

Shortly before his long-awaited freedom, Shevchenko began to keep a diary in the Russian language. He began it “out of boredom”, as he put it

simply because he had “ a terrible desire to write” and because he wanted to practice writing.

He had no idea that his Journal (as he titled it, according to fashion) would become one of his most remarkable works. It is more than a biographical document. It is also a unique self-portrait of the man whom Nekrasov called “the most remarkable person of the Russian land” - a self-portrait that allows us to gain an intimate knowledge of the poet, his feelings, thoughts and political convictions.

When Shevchenko was finally released in 1857, during the reign of Tsar Alexander II, the poet seemed to have been born anew as though he had dumped the hard years of exile off his back: “It seems to me that I'm exactly the same as I was ten years ago. Not a single trait of my inner being has changed. Is that good? It is good!” he wrote in his Journal.

Literature

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