

TARAS ŠEVČENKO: SEIN LEBEN UND SEIN WERK. Edited by *Jurij Bojko* and *Erwin Koschmieder*. Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1965. xvi, 492 pp. DM 68.

This book is a collection of materials on Shevchenko and translations of his selected works, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the poet's birth. Two prominent Slavists edited this collection, which they claim to be the largest of its kind in the German language. The book is designed both for readers interested in literature in general and for specialists.

Some ten essays of unequal length, ranging in subject from Shevchenko's biography to the evaluation of his talent as a painter, engraver, and sculptor, form the section of the book dedicated to literary criticism. Excerpts from his correspondence, his diary, the reminiscences of his friends, and translations of selected poetical works constitute the rest of this first part. Each essay adds certain data or some new aspects to the already known mass of material about Shevchenko, his life, and his works.

To the lesser known facts belongs the mention that Alexander II, like his predecessor, considered Shevchenko a dangerous political criminal—he personally crossed out his name twice from the amnesty list. After his return from exile in 1857, Shevchenko was considered more of a martyr for the cause in the St. Petersburg literary salons than was Dostoevsky, despite the common knowledge that Dostoevsky was subjected to a severer punishment.

In view of Shevchenko's acquaintance with the creations of various poets and writers, the authors of the articles draw comparisons between some of his writings and those of Hugo, Chateaubriand, Shakespeare, Byron, Burns, Mickiewicz, and Sandor Petöfi, to name only a few. The assertion that Shevchenko was strongly influenced by Russian literature, stressed time and again by Soviet literary critics, is also extensively dealt with and rejected. Belinsky's negative attitude toward the poet's first attempts to write in Ukrainian is notorious. How completely groundless was Belinsky's prophecy, expressed in 1842 in *Otechestvennye zapiski*, in reference to the fate of Shevchenko's poems and to the formation of the Ukrainian literary language, may be seen clearly today. He was wrong in predicting that the vernacular in which Shevchenko wrote his early creations could never become the literary tongue used by a nation. Soviet literary critics try hard to minimize or ignore these opinions of Belinsky.

The poetry section, some 150 pages, contains translations of various poems chronologically arranged from 1839 to 1861. The translations are by a number of authors, some of them great poets in their own right, such as Ivan Franko. Selections represent a cross section of Shevchenko's poetry: lyrical, philosophical, historical, political, religious, romantic and realistic, short and long. The quality of the versification is uneven. The lack of an index in a book of this length makes it difficult for the reader to consult the text. The incidental drawbacks are, however, more than set off by the wealth of material and its professional arrangement and presentation.

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