

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

POETRY OF TARAS SHEVCHENKO IN ITALIAN

by Curator Lubow Wolynetz

Among the many interesting and rare publications in our library, we have four small booklets in Italian published in 1932 and 1933 in Torino and Rome respectively.

The 1932 booklets entitled *UCRAINA* were compiled and edited by Mlada Lipovetzka and contain articles by her and others on Ukraine's history, history of Ukrainian literature, and translations of Shevchenko's poetry by Lipovetzka. The fourth booklet, entitled *TARAS SCEVCENKO: IL BARDO DELL'UCRAINA*, was written by Lauro Mainardi and contains selections of Shevchenko's poetry translated by Mlada Lipovetzka. Later, in 1942 she published in Milano a separate book of Shevchenko's poetry entitled *LIRICHE UCRAINE TARAS SCEVCENKO*. Versione, prefazione e note di Mlada Lipovetzka; adattamento di Cesare Meano.

Who was Mlada Lipovetzka? What was she doing in Italy?

According to the Ukrainian Encyclopedia, Mlada Lipovetzka was born Raisa Norlander in Volyn in 1894 but throughout her lifetime she went by the pseudonym – Mlada Lipovetzka. She was a talented singer and also a political and cultural activist, both in Ukraine during the short-lived Ukrainian Independence (1917-1921) and in Italy where she lived and worked until her death. In Italy she was engaged in writing and publishing informative articles about Ukraine and Ukrainian culture, and acquainting the Italian public with

Ukrainian folk songs by giving concerts.

When Ukraine became independent in 1917, the government established press bureaus in the capital cities of many western European countries in order to inform those countries about Ukraine and its political situation. Apparently, Mlada was attached to the press bureau in Rome, Italy, and contributed articles to the Italian newspapers, as well as, to the *La voce dell'Ucraina* which was published by the Ukrainian press bureau in Rome. She was also a member of the Ukrainian Women's delegation to the International Women's Suffrage Alliance Conference which was held in Rome May 12-20, 1923. The other members of this delegation were Sofia Rusova, Hanna Chykalenko-Keller, and Nina Onatska. Ukraine at that time was already occupied by the Bolsheviks, and conferences such as the above were an important forum for Ukrainian women to present true facts to the free world about Ukraine's situation under the Bolshevik occupation.

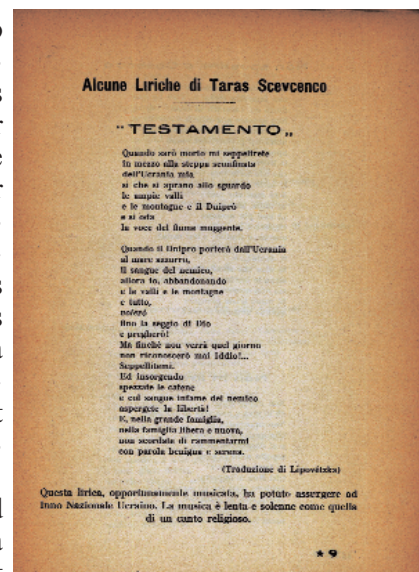
Apparently, after the downfall of the Ukrainian National Republic and its democratic government, Mlada did not return to Communist-occupied Ukraine but remained in Italy. She married Cesare Meano (1899-1957), a known Italian writer, poet and theater director. He edited or refined Mlada's translations of Shevchenko's poetry.

One of their close friends was the pianist and composer

Franco Alfano (1875-1954). Although Alfano was a gifted composer in his own right, he is best known for completing Puccini's opera *Turandot*. One of his song compositions entitled *Ninna Nanna de Mazzanotte* (Midnight Lullaby) was dedicated to Mlada.

The life and work of Mlada Lipovetzka is just another proof of an old adage: How one good and dedicated soldier in the battlefield can do a great deal.

An example of Mlada's translation of Shevchenko's poem is as follows:



Мені однаково

Мені однаково, чи буду
Я жить в Україні, чи
ні,
Чи хто згадає, чи
забуде
Мене в снігу на
чужині –
Однаковісенько мені!

В неволі виріс між
чужими,
І, не оплаканий
своїми,
В неволі, плачучи
умру,
І все з собою заберу,
Малого сліду не
покину
На нашій славній
Україні,
На нашій – не свої землі.
І не пом'яне батько з сином,
Не скаже синові: "Молись.,
Молися, сину! За Україну
Його замучили колись."

Мені однаково, чи буде
Той син молитися, чи ні...
Та не однаково мені,
Як Україну злії люди
Присплять, лукаві, і в огні
Її окрадену збудять...
Ох, не однаково мені!



Non m'importa

Non m'importa
Ch'io viva o non viva in Ucraina.
Che qualcuno si ricordi
O si dimentichi di me
Sepolto sotto la neve
In terra straniera!
Oh! Non m'importa!

Schivo vissi fra gli stranieri,
Morro così in schiavitù
Senza trovar alcun rimpianto
Senza lasciare alcuna traccia
Nella gloriosa Ucraina
La nostra – e non nostra – terra.
Il padre non mi ricorderà al figlio,
Non gli darà: "o
figlio mio
Prega! Per l'U-
craina
Lo straziarono così".

E non m'importa
Se quel figlio preghi o non preghi.
Ma m'importa, oh se m'importa
che la gente malvagia non seguiti
a tener l'Ucraina addormentata
per risvegliarla poi dissanguata e
sposata
al grande incendio,
Questo m'importa. Oh! Se m'im-
porta.

Non m'importa

Non m'importa
Ch'io viva o non viva in Ucraina.
Che qualcuno si ricordi
O si dimentichi di me
Sepolto sotto la neve
In terra straniera!
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Lo straziarono così".

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Se quel figlio preghi o non preghi.
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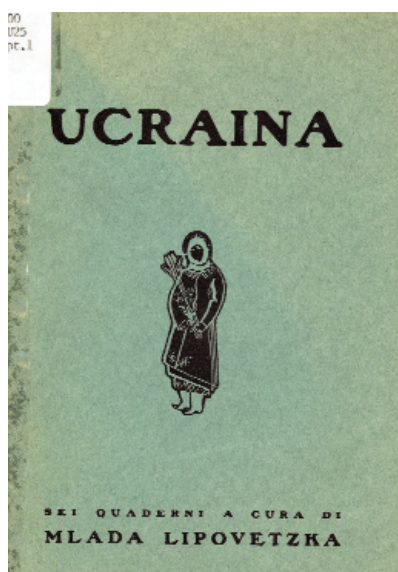
It Makes No Difference To Me

It makes no difference to me,
If I shall live or not in Ukraine
Or whether anyone 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.

Translated by Clarence A. Manning



P.S. I would like to acknowledge and thank the help of Olena (Halka) Galanti (a friend of mine who lives in Bologna) for her research findings on Mlada's marriage and friendship with the composer Franco Alfano. Olena is still looking for information about Mlada's concerts.

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