

GLEB USPENSKY'S POPULISM

**THE POPULISM OF GLEB USPENSKY
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCES TO HIS
VILLAGE TRILOGY**

**by
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Uspensky in his works: IZ Derevenskogo Dnevnika,
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Contains a preface and five chapters. Chapter I sketches Uspensky's life. Chapter II outlines the development of Populism and Populist literature. Chapter III contains an analysis of Uspensky's literary style. The various peasant types are examined in Chapter IV. Chapter V gives a summary of Uspensky's most important findings about the nature of the Russian peasant and an evaluation of his contribution to Russian literature.

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PREFACE

Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky is undoubtedly the most popular and the most prominent Populist writer in the history of Russian literature. Although he was a very unusual person and an original writer, he nevertheless represents in many respects the typical Russian intellectual of the second half of the nineteenth century. A study of the success of his literary career and the development of his Populist ideas will reveal the tragic destiny of the Russian intellectual of this period as well as the rise and fall of Russian Populism.

Uspensky's role as a Populist writer is to be seen in his works, where he focuses his attention on the "humiliated and the wronged," on their poverty and brutality. A vivid description of this dark aspect of village life is given in his village trilogy, where all the vulgarities and monstrosities are acted out on the village stage. While tending to celebrate the moral stamina of the Russian peasant, he never failed to give a true picture of the sordid and seamy side of village life. Unlike the romantic and idealistic intellectuals whose picture of the Russian peasant was both unrealistic and untrue, Uspensky was willing to sacrifice his idealistic notion of the

peasant in order to give us a true picture of the Russian peasant. He constantly warned the Populists against overidealization of the character of the peasant, because he felt that the peasant was still on a very low level of development.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine and to analyse the different village types as found in Uspensky's major works. The chief works under consideration are: Iz Derevenskogo Dnevnika, Krestyanin and Krest'yanskii Trud and Vlast' Zemli. It is in these works that we find the various village types both in the pre-emancipation and post-emancipation periods. In addition, an analysis is made of Uspensky's literary style.

All quotations, unless otherwise stated, are from G.I. Uspensky, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1956. References to secondary sources are indicated in the usual fashion.

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CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Gleb Ivanovich Uspensky was born on 13 October, 1843, in the small provincial town of Tula, 105 miles south of Moscow. He spent his childhood and youth in Tula and Chernigov, where his father worked as a civil servant.

According to one of his relatives, D. Vasin,¹ Gleb Ivanovich had a happy childhood. Indeed, he had every reason to be happy; he was the family favourite, surrounded with love and attention and also a very popular student at school, where his name constantly appeared on the honours list.

Nevertheless, Uspensky himself did not regard his childhood and youth as happy. In his Autobiography, written in 1883 at the request of the editor Pavlenkov, Gleb Uspensky wrote:

"Вся моя лучшая жизнь, вся обстановка моей личной жизни до 20-ти, обрекла меня на полное затмение ума, полную погибель, глубочайшую дикость понятий, неразвитость и вообще отдаляла от жизни белого света на неизмеримое расстояние.

¹Н.К. Михайловский, G.I. Uspensky kak Pisatel' i Chelovek, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii Gleba Uspenskogo s Kriticheskoi Stat'ei N.K. Михайловского. St. Petersburg, 1909, Vol. I & II, p. LXXII.

Я помню, что я плакала беспрестанно, но не знала от чего это происходит. Не помню, чтобы до 20 лет сердце у меня было когда-то на месте".²

In view of the semi-political context in which it was written, this statement is possibly an indirect indictment of the rigidly autocratic Nikolaevan epoch. Most important of all, it reveals Uspensky to be sensitive, receptive and profoundly emotional.

Some of his prominent characteristics were perhaps inherited from both sides of the family. There seems to have been a congenital mental sickness on the Uspensky side which too often resulted in suicide.³ Gleb Ivanovich's generation was not spared this heritage. His first cousin, Nikolai Uspensky, a very promising populist writer of the 1860's killed himself, while Gleb Ivanovich himself was later to die in a mental hospital, after ten years of tragic effort to defeat the dark side of his nature. On the maternal side of the family, there were many talented members who were devoted to art, particularly music, although not one of them ever achieved any marked success, largely, it seems, because of unsympathetic parental

²G. Uspensky, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1956, Vol. IX, p. 182.

³N.K. Mikhailovsky, G.I. Uspensky kak Pisatel' i Chelovek, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii Gleba Uspenskogo, St. Petersburg, 1909, I & II, p. LXXI.

attitudes.⁴ It seems very possible that an inherited family inclination towards art on the one hand, and a predisposition to mental disorders on the other coincided in the person of Gleb Ivanovich.

One of his sisters, E.I. Marchenko,⁵ declared that, even as a boy, Gleb manifested an extraordinary, almost morbid sensitivity, and an innate talent for observation. Even while too young to understand the problems of life, he nevertheless observed injustices based on the Russian social order. Furthermore, he noted in others primitive egoism and hypocrisy, engendered by "the dark side" of human nature, which he later named "the swinish elements." The wounds inflicted by the hard realities of life produced a strange union of love and hate.

Uspensky's first conscious recollections belong to the dark period of Nikolaevan rule. This was the time when public life in Russia was strictly regimented, when military discipline and uniformity were introduced into every avenue of life for the purpose of raising for the Tsar a generation of obedient and slavish servants. Serving the Tsar was regarded as a sacred duty before God and the

⁴Ibid., p. LXXII.

⁵P.M. Zinov'ev, Letopisi, Iz Archiva Gleba Uspenskogo, Moscow, 1939, Vol. IV, p. 482.

people, and there could be no greater success than the achievement of a higher rank in the complex Nikolaevan hierarchy. Disrespect towards these enforced ideals, and indeed disobedience of any kind were inhumanly punished. Young Gleb Ivanovich was horrified by the punishment meted out to his fellow students in the Tula high school, and on one occasion he was present at the cruel flogging of some prisoners on the town square. Such scenes terrified him and left a morbid imprint upon his hypersensitive psyche.

He met many poor, humiliated men not only on the city streets, but also in his own home, where they used to come and plead for help from his influential father. He heard the moving stories of petitioners, witnessed the religious ecstasies of the pilgrims who often stopped to rest at his home, and saw, too, the desperate penury of the numerous beggars. For these, he harboured a special feeling of pity and not infrequently returned home from school "only in the scraps of his shirt which he had torn to pieces and gave to some sick beggar."⁶

The oppressive patriarchal character of Nikolai's regime was paralleled and reinforced by an already highly patriarchal way of life in the Russian middle class. Moreover, in Gleb Ivanovich's own family the paterfamilias,

⁶M. Mogilyanskii, Gleb Ivanovich v Chernigovskoi Gimnazii, Vsemirnyi Vestnik, 1904, No. 4, p. 567 (Trans. mine).

Gleb Sokolov, was at the same time head of the Tula civil administration. For all his honesty and respectability, Gleb Sokolov did not inspire the love of his own family. Rather, he inspired a relationship based on fear. He controlled the lives of every member of his large family, was passionately devoted to the Tsar and so forced his children into the imperial civil service, regardless of their natural leanings.

In his story Na Starom Pepelishche, with its indubitably autobiographical note, Uspensky describes the atmosphere in such a family. Early childhood experiences of mental and physical cruelty, of dissimulation and humiliation, seriously disturbed his mental equilibrium and led to the early appearance of a strong sense of unhappiness and subconscious feelings of guilt. Later, this was to develop into the typical "sickness of conscience" of the sixties and seventies. Toward the end of Uspensky's life, this psychological complex was to culminate in a morbid inner struggle between good and evil.

While still a student at the Chernigov high school, Uspensky followed the achievements of contemporary writers and the discussions between leading critics in the progressive papers "Kolokol" and "Sovremennik." Like the majority of politically minded young Russians, he accepted the popular socialist ideas of that period. Besides this,

he displayed a special interest in literature by taking an active part in the production of the school paper "Molodye Pobegi." This interest probably increased even further under the influence of the fame enjoyed at that time by his cousin, Nikolai Uspensky.

In 1861 Uspensky finished high school and went to St. Petersburg to study law. This year may be regarded as the turning point in his career—the beginning of his life as a Russian intellectual. His studies were never completed due to the closing of the University following student demonstrations, in which he took an active part, and the expulsion by the authorities of those involved. Wishing to continue his studies, he applied in the summer of 1862 for admission to Moscow University, but was not accepted because he did not have sufficient money to pay his fees in advance. He could not expect any support from home, and did not want to return to his provincial hometown, and so found a position, modestly paid, as a proofreader for the "Moskovskie Vedomosti." Thus commenced his independent life.

In the same year (1862) he made his literary debut, publishing two stories: Idilliya in the "Zritel' Obshchestvennoi Zhizni" and Mihalych in Tolstoy's "Yasnaya Polyana." The success enjoyed by these two stories profoundly affected the further course of life. From that

time he devoted himself entirely to literary work, finding in it the realisation of his inner artistic aspirations and the expression of his political ideas.

Direct contact with the nihilistic youth and the revolutionary intelligentsia of St. Petersburg and Moscow influenced Uspensky very strongly: his unconscious feeling of aversion towards the life of the old generation emerged as a conscious condemnation of the "fathers." He decided to forget completely his entire past life, which had isolated him from the rest of the world, and resolved to build his spiritual life with only his "personal means."⁷ This decision was typical for a young nihilist of the period who, while unable to destroy the old way of life, found it necessary at least for the time being to forget it, in order to live on "somehow."⁸

This decision was not an easy one for Gleb. It is true that he succeeded in building a new life, different in many ways from the old one. But he could not entirely forget the past. For a long time afterwards it lived in his memory and troubled his soul. The memories of his childhood and youth found their expression in the best pages of his early literary productions, which were mainly

⁷G. Uspensky, ibid., Vol. IX, p. 183, (Trans. mine).

⁸Ibid., Trans. mine.

devoted to realistic descriptions of the urban life of the Russian lower classes.

The stories published during 1864-65 in "Russkoe Slovo," "Iskra," "Biblioteka Dlya Chteniya" and "Sovremennik" had already secured for Uspensky an important place among the most popular writers of the sixties, along with Reshetnikov, Levitov and Pomyalovsky, and he was generally acclaimed as the most promising young populist writer.

Uspensky started to publish in 1866 in "Sovremennik" a collection of stories and sketches about the slum life of a Russian provincial town. This work, the Manners of Rasteryayeva Street immediately secured a place for him in the Russian literary world. Indeed, it gave to the Russian literary history a new term—Rasteryayevshchina. For not satisfied with the mere representation of reality in a literary work, as were some populist writers, Uspensky penetrated deeper into the very essence of the problems of the Rasteryayevan way of life and showed clearly that the complex force of dehumanisation of the little man—Rasteryayevshchina—consists of two main factors, which create the Rasteryayevan types. These are, first, abnormal and amoral social relationships, and second, man's own passivity. Like Obломovshchina, Rasteryayevshchina has its roots partly in the Russian feudal social system, but

also to some extent in the very nature of the Russian man. Thus it was that Rasteryayevshchina had survived the fall of serfdom, and continued to play a decisive role in Russian life.

Uspensky points out that the Rasteryayevan man has no will of his own; he humbly bows to the unjust order of life. Such a man is crushed by constant poverty and by his own desperation. He has lost his human dignity and has developed the psychology of a slave. "Надо постоянно бороться"⁹ is the basis of his philosophy. Moreover, there was no hope for any change. Uspensky considered, until the man from Rasteryayeva street abandoned this pessimistic attitude towards life.

The Manners of Rasteryayeva Street, which Uspensky began publishing in "Sovremennik," was completed in 1866 in "Zhenskii Vestnik." When "Sovremennik" and "Russkoe Slovo" were closed after Karakozov's attempted assassination of Alexander II in April 1866, Uspensky had a difficult time, because of the severe censorship, in finding a paper where he could publish Medik i Patsienty, the sequel to the Manners of Rasteryayeva Street. Finally, he was permitted to publish it in "Zhenskii Vestnik," but it had to be presented as a separate work and in a substantially

⁹Ibid., Vol. I, p. 239.

modified form. Uspensky wrote in connection with the modification he had to make:

"При всем моем глубоком желании, чтобы пьяницы мои вели себя в дамском обществе поприличней, все они до невозможности нахли водкой и оокружали меня. Но что ж было делать? Я их умля и приодел, и они стали только хуже, а правды в них меньше".¹⁰

Uspensky found it impossible to live from his pen at this juncture, following Karakozov's attempt on the Tsar's life, when so many periodicals were closed down, and was forced to work for a while as a teacher in a small town in the province of Tula, and later as a clerk in Moscow. His work with "Otechestvennye Zapiski" in 1868, beginning with his well-known story "Budka," marked a return to his Bohemian way of life, to travelling and intensive writing. By 1869 the first chapters of Razoren'ye appeared, and it continued to be published over a three-year period ending in 1871.

Thematically, Razoren'ye is the continuation of Manners of Rasteryayeva Street. Uspensky indicated this in the introduction to the first edition of his selected works (1883-1886):

"Много "Растеряевского" перешло и в "Разоренке", которое есть в сущности та же "Растеряева улица", только в новых

¹⁰Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 177.

условиях жизни". II

In this work Uspensky presents a picture of life in a provincial town in the first years after the emancipation. Powerfully, in a style reminiscent of Shchedrin, he depicts the obsolescent forms of the old order, and the last days of its representatives.

Razoren'ye successfully ended the first period of Uspensky's literary activity. The 1870's, the second period of his artistic writing, are mainly devoted to rural subjects. This transition was regarded by Uspensky himself as the most important turning point in his literary career, although he never exhausted the literary potential of urban life.

This expansion of artistic themes resulted both from the demands of Populism, which at the end of the 1860's had taken definite shape, and from Uspensky's own search for harmony in life.

One might have expected the beginning of the 1870's to be a very happy period of his life. His talent was proven and he was popular with the reading public. Shchedrin, Nekrasov and Mikhailovsky gave him every possible support, appreciating him as a unique man and a purposeful

¹¹ Ibid., p. 178. (The spelling "Razorenie" here is Uspensky's own.)

writer. At that time, he fell in love and married A.V. Baraeva, herself a successful literary translator, who showed a great understanding for Uspensky's artistic work.

Yet, Uspensky was not happy. The general situation in Russia was very difficult for such a free-minded writer, who felt that the constant struggle with the censorship was restricting his talent and even threatening to destroy it completely.

But more telling reasons for his spiritual disquiet were his own particularly acute form of "sickness of conscience," which pervaded the '60's and '70's, and his vain searching for harmony within and around him.

He became increasingly conscious of the power of the "dark side" of human nature and so frustrated that he decided to leave Russia. In the Spring of 1872 he arrived in Paris and spent the period from 1872 until 1877 abroad, returning from time to time to Russia. This period yielded a new cycle of stories—Novye Vremena, Novye Zaboty, in which he discussed capitalism from a negative and typically populist viewpoint and was accused for his pains of idealizing the feudal past. Disappointed as he was in bourgeois Europe, Uspensky nevertheless found his stay there to be helpful in restoring his mental energies. It enriched him intellectually, crystallized his thoughts, and strengthened him in his democratic convictions:

"Я мало писал об этом, но многому научился, много записал доброго в мою душевную родословную книгу на всегда..."¹²

As with every aspect of Uspensky's life, this stay in Western Europe was reflected in his literary work. Through some of Uspensky's stories and through several letters to his wife and friends, one can see that the "good", mentioned in this connection in his Autobiography, refers to two events: his visit to the Louvre to view the Venus De Milo and his friendship with the Russian revolutionaries G. Lopatin, D.A. Klements, S.M. Stepnyak-Kravchinsky, Ivanchin-Pisarev and others. Both events had a salutary effect upon him, and in his own words, "straightened him out."¹³

In May of 1872 Uspensky wrote to his wife that he had seen the Venus De Milo, that at the beginning he could not understand her, but felt only that she was filling his soul with an indefinable joy and hope. It was not until twelve years later that he fully explained in the story Vypryamila his understanding of the Venus De Milo as the incarnation of a harmonious human being, and her healing influence upon him.

¹²Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 186.

¹³Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 232.

According to him, the creator of this sculpture had as his most important purpose: "Ознакомить человека - мужчину, женщину, ребенка, старика,- с ощущением счастья БИТЬ ЧЕЛОВЕКОМ, показать всем нам и обрадовать нас видимой для всех нас возможностью быть прекрасным..."¹⁴ This sublime hope of realizing a harmonious being inspired Uspensky and aroused in him dreams of a bright future, and a desire to work actively towards perfecting his image. At the end of the story Uspensky concludes: "Великое художественное произведение укрепляет меня в моем тогдашнем желании идти в темную массу народа".¹⁵

While the Venus De Milo was for him a symbol, a prophecy of a future perfect man, the revolutionaries he met in Paris best exemplified the active striving toward the realization of the ideal society. Their enthusiasm, no matter how unrealistic, and their stoicism awoke in Uspensky a great liking and a life-long admiration for them, which are reflected in many of his stories and expressed directly in the pamphlet Shila v Meshke ne Utaish¹⁶ and in which he urged them: "Делайте ваше дело,

¹⁴Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 253.

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 255.

¹⁶Published in 1876 in London in the underground paper "Forward," edited by P. Lavrov.

не отчаивайтесь".¹⁷ He stressed that their work was not in vain, and that revolutionary ideas were spreading in spite of all restrictions by the Russian authorities.

The revolutionaries discussed different questions of the day in the presence of Uspensky. They agreed that the revolutionary work had to be continued, in spite of setbacks, but some disagreements arose on the question of the real nature of the Russian peasant and of the methods to be applied in the revolutionary work among the people. They were firmly convinced that Russia's future lay in the peasantry, and that therefore Russian intellectuals belonged in the villages.

There was no doubt in Uspensky's mind that the Russian village needed the help of the Russian intelligentsia, and Russian socialists required a deeper knowledge of Russian village life in order to work more usefully among the peasants. It may be said that the revolutionaries whom he met in Paris encouraged him to go to the Russian villages, stressing the nobility and usefulness of such work. In fact, Uspensky felt that with his writing he was usefully serving the same revolutionary idea to which they were devoted.

Only later, after the imprisonment, exile or

¹⁷G. Uspensky, Ibid., Vol. III, p. 3.

execution of many of the revolutionaries whom he knew, respected and loved, did he feel strongly that he had not given to the revolutionary cause as much as he ought to have given, and had wanted to give. A letter to his friend Sobolevsky shows that he had always wanted to join the revolutionaries in their active fight against absolutism: "Надобно ДЕЙСТВОВАТЬ, и действовать ПРЯМО! "Ты, писатель, отвечаешь и тому-то и тому-то? Ну так докажи, Беда тебе будет? Да этого нам нет дела. Мы ведь не боимся расстреливать подлецов,- умирать. Ты должен быть не зайцем, боющимся всего этого. Если вы, писатели, пишете то-то и то-то,- то и на деле покажите". Это все верно, правда сущая, но я уже напуган. Вдохну, обдумаю, не много укреплюсь и, поверьте, сделаю ТАК! Если ж я не сделаю так,- то все чепуха, вся жизнь вадор, сочинение, пустяки, презренные пустяки".¹⁸

An equally strong influence was exerted upon Uspensky by the Russian volunteers whom he joined in Serbia in 1876, although his experiences and thoughts of this period could not be expressed fully in his literary work because of the strict censorship. When Uspensky returned from Serbia in 1877 he went to a Russian village in the province of Novgorod. The reason he explained as thus:

¹⁸Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 420. (1887).

"Подлинная правда жизни повлекла меня к источнику, то есть к мужику".¹⁹

At that time, he was under the sway of the teaching of Agrarian Socialism and of Mikhailovsky's ideas concerning the harmony of peasant life. The first deep penetration by Uspensky into village life was a great disappointment to him and painfully disabused him of his populist notions. This disillusionment found its expression in his first major work about the Russian village, the cycle of stories Iz Derevenskogo Dnevnika (1877). In it he sought to show with realistic pictures of villages the existence there already of capitalism and its demoralization of the Russian peasant. Thus the sanguine Populist hope that Russian could bypass capitalism was in vain. Not entirely discouraged, however, he preserved his faith in agrarian socialism as the free destiny of Russia and continued to study Russian village life and the nature of the Russian peasant.

From that time on, Uspensky was to spend most of his time in villages. In 1878 he worked as a clerk and his wife as a teacher in the village of Skolkovo. The summer of 1879 was spent in a cottage in the country near St. Petersburg, and the following summer near Chudovo. In 1881 he bought a house in Sabrintsi near Chudovo, which later on became his permanent residence.

¹⁹ Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 186.

His further observations on village life yielded two cycles of stories, Krest'yanin i Krest'yanski Trud (1880) and Vlast' Zemli (1882) which, together with Is Derevenskogo Dnevnik, may be regarded as a trilogy of Russian village life.

In these works, Uspensky depicted the Russian peasant as a product of the soil who had been demoralized by the capitalist system. He argued that Populism was based on false premises, namely that the Russian peasant was socialist by nature and that the obshchina was an ideal form of communal life.

However, he continued to be well liked among the Populists because of his idealization of agricultural labour, his preaching of socialism, and his criticism of capitalism.

Between 1883 and 1885 the first edition of his collected works appeared, in eight volumes, and soon after he received general recognition on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his literary activity. The most valued testimonial of all was a letter he received at that time from fifteen workers which to him was proof that he had achieved his purpose of writing not only about the people but also for the people.

They expressed their opinion on the significance of Uspensky's literary work in these simple words:

Мы, рабочие, грамотные и неграмотные, читали и слушали ваши книги, в которых вы говорите о нас, простом сером народе. Вы о нем говорите СПРАВЕДЛИВО, так что мы думаем, кто бы из образованных людей ни прочитал ваши книги, всякий ПОДУМАЕТ о нас, о нашем темном и светлом житье, если только у этого человека доброе сердце".²⁰

At the end of the 1880's, Uspensky devoted himself to the study of such new phenomena in Russian society as peasant migrations, the problem of illegitimate children, the transformation of peasants into industrial workers, and so on.

In addition to a large number of stories, sketches and traveller's accounts, there appeared a collection of stories—Zhivie Tsifry—which is most typical for this period as a reflection of his ideological and artistic values.

Uspensky wished to write a cycle of stories around the central theme of the power of capital, by analogy with the power of the soil. Zhivie Tsifry was planned as a part of this future work which was never completed, however, due to the interruption of his literary activity by a serious mental disorder. Uspensky's correspondence reveals that as early as 1883 he started to complain about his health.

²⁰Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 137.

Even his friends noticed the change in him. He fell prey to a deepening melancholy. One of his contemporaries, I.I. Popov, gave this description of the later Gleb Uspensky: "Уже с первой встречи образ Успенского ярко запечатлелся в моей памяти. Худощавый среднего роста, а может быть, и несколько выше, блондин, с рыжеватой бородкой, глубокими, грустными серо-голубыми глазами, с особенной морщинкой на лбу между глаз, которая придавала лицу Успенского еще более скорбное выражение. С первой же встречи он произвел на меня впечатление вадушевного, искреннего человека, проникнутого любовью и участием к другим... От его грустного лица, его вдумчивых, нестрадавших глаз веяло какой-то особенной добротой, и он казался человеком не от мира сего. Я не помню Гл.Ивановича громко смеющимся, веселым: его печальная, мягкая улыбка еще более усиливала выражение страдания, никогда не сходящего с его лица".²¹

Uspensky was popular not only as a writer but very much liked as a person too. His unique charm is described thus by V.G. Korolenko: "Он был один, сам по себе, ни на кого не был похож, и никто не был похож на его. Это был

²¹I.I. Popov, Gleb Uspensky, Letopisi, Iz Archiva G. Uspenskogo Moscow, 1939, Vol. IV, p. 445.

уник человеческой породы, редкой красоты и редкого нравственного достоинства".²²

His difficult life, filled with family duties and feverish literary work, accelerated the development of Uspensky's guilt complex towards his relatives and society and finally caused a disastrous psychological state akin to schizophrenia which manifested itself in such extreme forms as to require immediate clinical care. The clinical diary of Dr. Sinani, who treated Gleb Ivanovich from 1892 until his death, reveals the whole tragedy of Gleb Uspensky's mental state to have its roots in his childhood:

"С самого его заболевания и до сих пор в его сознании идет борьба между двумя началами: началом справедливости и началом, неясно выражаемом, но противоположенным первому. Ему кажется, что его Я раздвоенное, состоящее из двух личностей борющихся друг с другом. Первая личность есть ГЛЕБ (Успенский), вторая личность есть Глеб ИВАНОВИЧ Успенский,... Как ни борется Глеб, но ему очень трудно не только уничтожить, убить Иванонича, но даже устоять против власти его".²³

For ten painful years his family and his friends witnessed the agonizing mental struggle from which his death

²²V.G. Korolenko, Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1955, Vol. VIII, p. 43.

²³W.K. Mikhailovsky, G.I. Uspensky kak Pisatel' i Chelovek, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, St. Petersburg 1909, Vol. I & II, p. LXXIII.

in 1902 finally came as a merciful release.

CHAPTER II
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Despite the large-scale suppression of individuality and free thought during the reign of Nikolai I, the development of progressive ideas was not completely halted. These ideas showed themselves with unusual force after the accession of Alexander II to the throne in 1855. As a result of the liberal measures taken by the young tsar, Russian literature was encouraged to become the most popular social stage, where the realities of Russian life were reflected and revolutionary ideas found their best expression.

The Russian intelligentsia was at that time mainly occupied with the destiny of their motherland. In connection with this, the first and most important question which presented itself was serfdom. The unsuccessful Crimean war showed clearly that the economic and political situation was progressively worsening under the misguided policies of Nikolai I. The situation urgently demanded a change in the backward feudal system, the most formidable obstacle to Russia's progress. It was the humanitarian aspect of serfdom, rather than its economic implications, to which the intelligentsia primarily directed their

attention. Their opinions, expressed through progressive papers, literary works and open letters to the authorities, can be summarized in the words of Herzen's demand, written in 1855 to Tsar Alexander II: "Государь, дайте свободу русскому слову, уму нашему тесно, мысль наша отравляет нашу грудь от недостатка простора, она стонет в цензурных колодезях, дайте нам вольную речь!.. нам есть что сказать миру и своим! Дайте землю крестьянам! Она и так им принадлежит! Смейте с России позорное пятно крепостного состояния, залечьте синие рубцы на спине наших братьев, эти страшные следы презрения к человеку!"¹

It was evident that the Russian thinkers and writers had much to say. The literary period from 1855 until 1861 is often called the "honeymoon" of Russian literature, because of the appearance of a large number of literary creations, of which the most outstanding are: Shchedrin's Provincial Sketches (1856), Turgenev's Rudin (1856), Tolstoy's Sevastopol Sketches (1855-56), Goncharov's Oblemov (1859), Nekrasov's best poems (1856-60), and Ostrovsky's The Thunderstorm (1859).

The majority of the writers of that period deliberately elaborated social themes, openly raising the problem of serfdom. The characters they depicted were generally

¹Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Istoria Russkoi Literaturi XIX Veka, Moscow, 1910, Vol. XII, p. 71.

regarded as typical of Russian society and served to substantiate the theory that human character is chiefly determined by environment. Dobrolyubov stressed the fact that Oblomovka must inevitably produce Oblomovs and that the "Kingdom of Darkness" provides perfect conditions for the growth of blind obduracy.

Consequently, literature posed the question of the necessity of social change in Russian society, proclaiming in the words of Chernyshevsky:

"Ототражите наружные обстоятельства, и быстро просветлеет ум человека, и облагородится его характер".²

The liberalism of Alexander II seemed promising, and many Russians placed enthusiastic hopes in him. But after the famous decree of 19 February 1861, it seemed to them that these hopes for the future had been too optimistic, and perhaps even unrealistic. The Reform was important as the first step toward constitutional democracy. But the Russian intelligentsia expected more than this; they had dreamed of a complete transformation of Russian life, and of the creation of a just society.

The manifesto of 19 February also failed to satisfy the peasantry, who obtained personal freedom but lost economic security. Although released from the landlords

²N.G. Chernyshevsky, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1950, Vol. IV, p. 228.

they remained tied to the village communes, since the land was given not to individual families but to the mir. They were unequal before the law, subject to special regulations and courts.

According to the Russian intelligentsia, the emancipation of the serfs succeeded only in creating conditions for the free development of capitalism, and in directing Russia towards a gradual acceptance of the western social pattern. This, as well as the fact that the Tsar remained an unrestricted autocrat, resulted in a strong reaction among the Russian intellectuals.

The revolutionary spirit of the intelligentsia became dominant after the emancipation because of the prevailing elements of the raznochintsy. Under the influence of Herzen, Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov, the youth of Russia abandoned the old theories about constitutionalism and devoted itself to utopian socialism, founded on the basic ideas of the French socialists and their applications to Russian conditions by such thinkers as Lavrov and Mikhailovsky. They accepted with enthusiasm the humanistic and idealistic aspects of socialism. Their final split with liberalism was manifested at first in Nihilism, in the conflict between the old and the new, between fathers and sons. In the sixties Nihilism was to change and assume a definite political shape, known as Radicalism and, later, as Populism.

In the summer of 1861 Mikhailov and Shelgunov, two young intellectual leaders of the Russian youth, had written the manifesto To the Young Generation, in which they openly called for a revolution and stressed the intelligentsia's role as leader of the people.

"We turn to the young generation because in it are the men who can save Russia. You are its real force; you are the leaders of the people. You must explain to the people and army all the harms done by the Tsar's power."³

The youth of Russia took upon itself the solemn duty of telling the truth to the people, of changing the fatherland, and of fulfilling the centuries-old messianic idea of Russia's role in future world history.

After the emancipation the student protests against tsarism in the capital intensified and echoed throughout Russia. On the occasion of the closing of St. Petersburg University in 1861 Ogarev wrote in "Kolokol": "Let them close; university youth, spread throughout Russia, will act as a unifying agent between the various classes. To become a free man it is essential to go to the people."⁴

The Populist goal was thus formulated. To free themselves from their ancient debt to the nation, the Russian

³F. Venturi, Roots of Revolution, New York, 1964, p. 249.

⁴Ibid., p. 231.

"repentant nobility" and raznochintsy devoted themselves to the welfare of the Russian people. The basis of their Populist ideology—utopian agrarian socialism—was Herzen's belief that the obshchina and artel' are the nuclei for the development of the future Russian ideal society. Under the influence of Chernyshevsky's opinion that further peaceful development was impossible, they became inclined towards revolution. The Populists' optimism had been evoked greatly by Bakunin's claim that the Russian people, revolutionary by their very nature, were ready for a revolution.

At the beginning of the sixties, Russian youth became conscious of its revolutionary strength and of the fact that it represented an important political progressive force in the life of Russia. The intelligentsia started their revolutionary work in the name of the masses, but they felt that they were not of the same milieu as the people. Their desire to penetrate into the world of the common man was reflected in the Populist literature of the sixties. The experience of the first political party, Zemlya i Volya (established in 1862-63), and in particular Karakozov's attempted assassination of Tsar Alexander II, showed clearly that they were working without the support of the people. The intelligentsia's first actual attempt at union with the people was realized in the movement "to

the people" which took place in the early seventies.

The youth of Russia was encouraged by Chernyshevsky to abandon the parasitic life, and to become practical men.⁵ Later, by the end of the sixties, they were directed towards the Russian village by the preaching of Lavrov and Mikhailovsky.

At that time the unconscious idea of a debt to the people had reached the surface and found its best expression in the well formulated and influential ideas of Lavrov and Mikhailovsky.

In his Historical Letters (1870), P.L. Lavrov pointed out the determining historical role of the "critically-thinking individual" and developed, parallel with the idea of the intelligentsia's debt to the people, the idea of the "razumnyi egoism": "Я синому с себя ответственность за кровавую цену своего развития, если употребляю самое развитие на то, чтобы уменьшить зло в настоящем и будущем. Если я развитой человек, то я обязан это сделать, и эта обязанность для меня весьма легка, так как совпадает именно с тем, что составляет для меня наслаждение".⁶

K.N. Mikhailovsky developed further Lavrov's anthro-

⁵ N.G. Chernishevsky, What is to be Done?, 1863.

⁶ Ovsianiko-Kulikovskii, Istoria Russkoi Literaturi XIX Veka, Moscow, 1910, Vol. IV, p. 54.

pological view of history, supplementing it with the objective "organic" theory of the evolutionary progress of society. He also stressed that the duty of the Russian intelligentsia was to devote all their abilities to the service of the people, but he described this as a heroic sacrifice. The idea of heroism and suffering was to become the typical expression of the nature of the Russian intellectual of this period.

In his essay What is Progress? (1870), Mikhailovsky pointed to the Russian village as being the prototype of a higher type of social system, which had only to be elevated to a higher level of social development (i.e. civilization) in order to achieve a perfect, socialist society. Mikhailovsky developed a theory of Subjective socialism, the basis of which is individualism and not collectivism. The centre of his utopia is the perfect individual, who is not alienated by the division of labour in society, but who attains perfection only by the division of labor between the organs of his body. The prototype of the perfect individual was found by Mikhailovsky in the Russian peasant.

The summer of 1874 is known as the "mad summer." Thousands of the young Populists, including all kinds of socialists (Bakuninists, Lavrovists, Jacobins and others), went into the Russian villages with the purpose of spreading

socialist propaganda, and of preparing the people for a socialist revolution. The psychology of the "mad summer" is cogently explained by Professor F. Venturi: "The movement 'to go to the people' was a collective act of Rousseauism, and in Rousseauism political factors are inextricably mixed with the desire to express long-repressed feelings. There, too, the political content cannot be separated from the desire for a break with the civilization of their fathers, and from passionate longing for liberation which took as its banner the repudiation of learning in order to find a true, healthy and simple life."⁷

This movement was a failure in the sense that it did not bring the anticipated results, but successful in that it represented the political baptism of Russian youth, who thus became conscious of the necessity of organized political work and conspiracy, and of the impossibility of realizing social changes without first achieving political freedom. The most important result of their experience was a new, realistic picture of the Russian peasant: anti-political and even anti-socialist, the peasant was interested only in a new distribution of land. The spirit of traditional collectivism was already lost, the obshchina

⁷F. Venturi, Roots of Revolution, New York, 1964, p. 503.

had become only the administrative unit; the new elements in the Russian village, kulaks and miroveds, were undeniable proofs of the existence of capitalism. The Populists' hope that Russia could avoid capitalism was destroyed, but the belief in socialism continued to be the most popular political conviction of Russia's intelligentsia.

The inimical attitude of the government towards the "peaceful" work of the Populists among the people, and the hostility of the peasants towards the "strange pilgrims," caused a change in the method of Populist propaganda.

Some of the Populists, convinced that the Russian people were not yet capable of a revolution, decided to proceed gradually in the field of propaganda among the peasantry; this brought them close to the policy of the liberals. Others accepted Tkachev's teaching of the necessity of the revolutionary elite and proclaimed terrorism as the only solution. Throughout the second half of the seventies and eighties a series of assassinations occurred, culminating in the assassination of the Tsar-Liberator in 1881. Disagreements on the question of the revolutionaries' course of action were very often the main cause for the splitting of the illegal political parties which were organized during these two decades.

The Populist-socialist propaganda was much more

successful among the Russian workers than among the peasants. This fact, and the optimism of "scientific" socialism, influenced the majority of populists in the 1860's to abandon the ideals of agrarian socialism in favour of Marxism.

The development of the populists' ideas and their active methods of work were reflected in Russian literature in the 1860's and 1870's. Even in the 1850's literature presented the intelligentsia's philanthropic interest in the common people of Russia. Literature, although realistic, developed a strong tendency toward idealization of the peasant and a typically dogmatic plea for the little man. Turgenev, Grigorevich and Pisemsky, introducing peasants into literature, presented their miseries for the most part objectively. However, they described their characters as rather too good-natured and intelligent, regarding them, under the influence of the Slavophiles, as the embodiment of the Russian spirit and the foundation of the whole of Russia.

"Правда, эти первые попытки были крайне несовершенны; если некоторые из них много стоят по своей чистой художественности, то во многом случаем далеко не представляя того глубокого знания народной жизни, какое требуется от русского писателя".⁸

⁸A. Shabolevsky, Бодяженіуа, 3rd edition, St. Petersburg, 1903, Vol. I, p. 127.

These writers saw in the people only what they wished to see, ignoring the elements which did not fit into their ready-made images of the Russian people and its spirit. Separated by class differences, they were still far from a deep understanding of the real world of the little man. Therefore, it is only natural that their works reflected many elements of their own lives and ideals.

At the beginning of the sixties, the intelligentsia's interest in the common people became stronger and deeper. The intellectual youth of Russia, which had overcome its simple curiosity and its purely ethnographic interest in the unknown world of the common people, wanted to find out more about the foundations of the people's life, and to probe deeper into the psychology of the little man. According to the new-born idea of Russian agrarian socialism, and to the intelligentsia's demands on art, there appears a new literary hero from among the masses.

A great number of young Populist writers appeared in Russian literature. They were mainly attracted to the journals "Sovremennik" and "Russkoe Slovo" and later to "Iskra" because of the strongly Populist-socialist tendency of these journals. All of them were very much influenced by Chernyshevsky, Shchedrin and Nekrasov, who were then the leading figures in the revolutionary and literary world of Russia.

The Populist writers of the sixties had much in common: they belonged to the same generation and shared similar Populist ideas. Their lives were mostly unhappy, difficult and of short duration, and only a few, such as Reshetnikov, Levitov, Pomyalovsky, succeeded in being recognized as highly promising writers. These too, however, at the very beginning of their literary careers strongly influenced the further development of Russian literature towards Populism.

Although this Populist literature was in essence a further development of the Russian realistic school founded by Pushkin and Gogol, its many original features were sufficiently distinctive to suggest to the Russian reading public that a new literary school had emerged.

The literary method remained basically the same: realism enriched with naturalistic and ethnographic details; but the artistic approach of the new writers towards literature was completely different. The fact that the creators of the "new" literature were principally raznochintsy in origin distinguished them from the old school and lent their literature its fresh, typically democratic character and revolutionary spirit.

The social origin and way of life of the raznochintsy brought them closer to the people than had been the intelligentsia of the past decade. Moreover, they studied

the life of the people more profoundly, almost scientifically, in order to give a truthful picture of Russia.

Plekhanov pointed out: "Писатель является не только ВЫРАЗИТЕЛЕМ выдвинувшей его общественной среды, но и ПРОДУКТОМ ее... он вносит с собой в литературу ее симпатии и антипатии, ее мирозерцание, привычки, мысли, даже и язык".⁹

The Russian intellectuals of the sixties were practical men, interested more in science and politics than in philosophy and abstractions. The majority of them abandoned the mildness of liberalism as well as the narrowness of Nihilism. Russian youth proclaimed itself materialist and socialist, while preserving a typically Russian idealism.

Ethics concerned them much more than aesthetics; they were fond of the poetry which "appears in the deeds rather than in the words."¹⁰

Under the influence of Chernyshevsky, the Russian intelligentsia accepted the utilitarian view of art. The Populists stressed the importance of literature as a progressive social tendency, and sharply condemned art for its own sake. The Populist literature of the sixties and

⁹G. Plekhanov, Избранные философские произведения, Moscow 1958, Vol. V, p. 42.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 42.

seventies reflected Populist demands, exaggerating social themes and political ideas and considering as secondary and as almost unimportant the question of form, style and even language.

Comparing the "new" writing with that of the Golden Age of Russian literature, critics of aesthetics regarded it as decadent, although they admitted it to be impressive, significant and generally popular. The custodians of literary purity might have forgiven the Populists the strongly political tendency and journalistic style of their work had the latter not ignored the usual artistic formalities.

We may remember, furthermore, that the great Russian stylist Turgenev had a certain tendentious role and employed certain journalistic elements, in order to comment on his epoch. His works, however, lose little of their intrinsic artistry since he always maintained his sense of proportion and succeeded in veiling his more extreme literary singularities by expressing them through the mouth of his characters.

If one considers the epoch when Russian Populist literature developed, then one inevitably obtains the same impression as the Russian critic Skabichevsky—that the chaotic ferment in Russia's social life was reflected in the dynamism and polemics of this new literature.

In his essay Life in Literature and Literature in Life (1882) Skabichevsky wrote of the epoch: "Жизнь наша до такой степени осложнилась, перепуталась, а главное дело вышла из своей колеи, что разобраться в этом хаосе не в состоянии была бы никакая литература, хотя бы она состояла сплошь из одних Шекспиров".¹¹

Dealing with constantly changing phenomena and with characters who were new and yet prosaic, the Populist writers not only artistically described but also studied and analysed Russian reality. And this study was not a cold and objective analysis made at a distance; the Populist writers were a part of that reality and they participated in it with their whole being, heart and intellect. In writing about the Russian people, the Populist writers also reflected realistically their own lives, thoughts and feelings.

In this true reproduction of one of the most interesting periods of Russia's history lies the greatest value of the Populist literature. "Произведения наших народников беллетристов надо изучать так же внимательно, как изучаются статистические исследования о русском народном хозяйстве или сочинения по обычному праву крестьян".¹²

¹¹A. Skabichevsky, Sochineniya, St. Petersburg 1903, Vol. II, p. 61.

¹²G. Plekhanov, Isbrannye Filosofskie Proizvedeniya, Moscow, 1958, Vol. V, p. 47.

While it is true that Populist literature does not possess the artistry and the sophistication of the literature which precedes it, certain features, however, make it interesting and important even for the reader of today.

Populist literature is thematically much broader than Russian literature had ever been before. In addition to the traditional hero of Russian literature—the representative of the Russian intelligentsia—there was a gallery of new characters typical of all strata of Russian society: petty bourgeois, impoverished nobility, village priests, lower bureaucrats, urban proletariat, kulaks, poor peasants, beggars, drunkards, prostitutes, convicts. In a word, the real, many-sided face of Russia emerged in Russian literature.

It is of interest to note the Populist attitude towards the people, and their treatment of the masses in their writings. The Populist writers depicted different types of urban characters—not so much for their artistic appeal as interesting individuals, as for their representation of various social classes. In so doing, they went further than Gogol and wished to discover what created such a being as Akakii Akakievich, and they disclosed that he is one of the results of the general order of life. Searching further for typical Russian characters created by an unjust

social order, they unearthed various negative types which were on various levels of human degeneration and degradation.

It was impossible for Populist writers to avoid dark colours in their portraits of common men. However, the sting of Populist satire was directed not so much at the characters as at the social conditions which were responsible for the creation of these unhappy creatures. No matter how negative, backward and inhuman were the heroes, the Populist writers considered them the victims of circumstances, and therefore not really responsible for the evil which had produced them and which they in turn themselves propagated. A Rousseauistic belief in the goodness of human nature saved the Russian intelligentsia from extreme pessimism, and for this reason there always runs through Populist writings a thread of hope for the possibility of a transformation of Russian society.

The Russian town in Populist literature is pervaded by a sombre, heavy atmosphere, for it represented a depressing mixture of the backwardness inherited from serfdom and the demoralisation engendered by the new capitalistic order in Russia. Following the example of Shchedrin, all the Populist writers adopted the same critical attitude towards the Russian town, and presented a full picture of the conditions of life of the Russian urban lower stratum of the second half of the nineteenth

century.

Under the influence of Rousseauism and Slavophilism, the Russian Populists had developed a particularly sentimental attitude towards the Russian peasantry, which was reflected in the tendency of early Populist literature to idealize the Russian peasant. This may have been not so much a conscious idealization, as a wish to treat the Russian little man "po-chelovecheski," and to find in him only a suffering fellow human being.

This tendency was intensified throughout the sixties, and at the beginning of the seventies the idealistic image of the Russian peasant was completed as a result of the appearance of Mikhailovsky's theory of progress.

The Russian peasant was presented as a kind of historical riddle: oppressed by serfdom, treated through the centuries as an animal, backward and miserable, he nevertheless succeeded in developing the best human traits and, in spite of all social reforms, had preserved the ideal, unique system of the obshchina and the mir.

During this period the intelligentsia saw in the peasantry a symbol of Russia and made a cult of it, while for the Populists the muzhik became the focal point of their subjective socialism.

It is true that there were some attempts at a different, less dogmatic and more objective approach

towards the peasantry. The talented young writer Nikolai Uspensky was the first among the Populists to abandon this sentimentality. His new objectivity, although praised by Chernyshevsky, was sharply condemned by the majority of the intelligentsia, for he had dared to unveil another side of the picture. He described the peasants as entirely coarse, ignorant, superstitious and disposed towards drunkenness, and showed clearly that they lived a purely physical life, governed for the most part by animal instincts rather than by humanitarian ideas. This treatment of the peasants brought down on Nikolai Uspensky's head Populist charges that he scorned the peasants, and refused to see the truth about them.

For all their materialism and socialism, the Populists were really pure idealists whose concept of the unique socialistic nature of the Russian peasant was so precious to them that some of them found it difficult to accept the obvious truth, even after the unhappy experiences of the "mad summer." The numerous vices of the peasantry observed during their first direct contact with the Russian village were considered by the Populists either as the heritage of serfdom or as new features imposed by capitalism; in any case they regarded these vices as something which had no roots in the real nature of the Russian peasant.

This optimistic and deluded view of the Russian Populists found its best literary expression in the works of Zlatovratski and Zasodinski, who combined a natural optimism with their Populist beliefs. While acknowledging the influence of capitalism in Russia, they regarded it as a phenomenon typical only of the Russian cities and believed that the village spirit of traditional collectivism was stronger than the influence of individualism.

Their antagonist was Gleb Uspensky, who in the seventies devoted his talent to the peasant problem of the day. He was much more realistic than Zlatovratski, and possessed a greater sensitivity to the negative phenomena of life. Despite his allegiance to Populism, he adhered strictly to the principle of literature's truthfulness to life. Thus he presented the Russian village life as he saw it, observing and analyzing it not as a Populist, but as an objective observer. It was painful for him to experience the destruction of his own Populist illusions, and certainly it was not an easy task to proclaim the existing Populism a mere utopia. Through the representation of realistic pictures of life, he proved that capitalism, the new order in life, already existed in Russia and not only in the cities and the nearby countryside, but even in the remote villages. Capitalism was emerging in the Russian villages hand in hand with civilization, bringing

not only kerosene lamps and iron ploughs, but a change too in the psychology of the Russian peasant.

Uspensky discussed some of the basic Populist illusions about peasant life, and threw fresh light on the realities of village life.

The decay of the obshchina was now evident to all; whereas formerly it had meant a commune of equals, it was now split up into different classes and represented a peasant commune of kulaks, middle class peasants and beggars. The functions of the obshchina and mir differed from the ideals which the Populists ascribed to them. To prove this, Uspensky adduces a striking example of an old peasant and his two small grand-daughters who are starving in one of the wealthy villages in the Samarskaya district, known as "The granary of the Russian land." The words of that old man sound sad and ironical, and echo painfully in every reader: "Итак жеру!"¹³

Uspensky cites to the Populists another impressive example. An orphan, Fedusha, abandoned by the obshchina of the village Sychogo, is forced to become a petty thief, advancing later to the rank of a horse-thief. Apprehended after an attempted theft, he is lynched by his own villagers. "Ох, отцу моему родные..." poor Fedusha impres

¹³G. Uspensky, Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1956, Vol. IV, p. 110.

his fellow villagers, "ведь я..., ваш земляк, сичовокий".¹⁴

Through the discussion of these and many similar cases of the negligence of the rural obshchina towards the members of its lower strata, Uspensky shows the existence of great injustice and the lack of simple and honest human relationships in the Russian villages.

A further problem which concerned Uspensky was the rapid development of kulachestvo. Not only did the mir make no efforts to halt this trend but it even encouraged its success by selling pieces of communal property to individuals, as well as the rights for the opening of taverns and water-mills, although ultimately these practices proved detrimental to the prosperity of the commune. The day of the patriarchal elder was now over, and his function was now carried out by a kulak or a peasant soon to be elevated to this class.

The general attitude of the peasants towards the kulak was not as antagonistic as it was presented by the Populists; rather, there existed a kind of respect and admiration for those men who had succeeded in raising themselves from the peasant level to become "gentlemen."

The Russian peasant discovered that the way to become rich was not always entirely honest, or at least it was

¹⁴Ibid., p. 150.

dishonest in the sense that it destroyed the balance of equality in the communal system of peasant life. But the peasant did not pass judgement on his rich neighbours, believing that he himself would answer to God for his deeds.

G. Plekhanov wrote in his essay about Uspensky: «Самый наблюдательный, самый умный, самый талантливый из всех народников-беллетристов, Гл. Успенский, взявшись указать нам "совершенно определенные", реальные формы народного дела, совсем незаметно для самого себя пришел к тому, что подписал смертный приговор народничеству».¹⁵

The works of Uspensky certainly do represent a severe criticism of romantic Populism as it flourished in the seventies, but this was by no means the unintentional or unconscious process as described by Plekhanov. Uspensky purposely unveiled all the misconceptions of Populism, believing that Populist socialism would have more success and fewer disappointments if constructed on a realistic basis. He therefore refused to create a "chocolate peasant," by depicting the life of the muzhiks in unrealistic colours. Some of his fellow-Populists and liberals failed to understand his criticism, and condemned him as anti-Populist.

¹⁵ G. Plekhanov, Избранные философские произведения, Moscow, 1958, Vol. V, p. 71.

Uspensky nonetheless was a true Populist, and his love for the people was expressed with sincere feeling throughout his works. He believed that in the Russian peasant there was a latent power, which, if directed by the intelligentsia, could change the life of Russia.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF USPENSKY'S LITERARY STYLE

Gleb Uspensky not only follows in the best realist tradition of Russian literature, but he is also an original artist and literary innovator. He belongs to the critical realists and is regarded in the USSR as a predecessor of Socialist Realism. To describe Uspensky only as a realist and Populist would be too general, since his realistic technique is most unusual and his Populism has to be understood in a very broad sense.

Uspensky is not an artist who impresses with the perfection of style or depth of philosophy, nor is he a writer who achieved popularity by writing amusing stories according to the tastes of the pleasure-seeking reading public. Rather he impresses the reader with a kind of roughness, incompleteness and journalistic superficiality, which the majority of critics usually described as the great vices of his artistry. Judging on the basis of traditional literary criteria, one must concede that, despite the indisputable talent of the author, Uspensky's work is to some degree a victim of his roughness.

If one accepts Tolstoy's view that every good writer has his own style and form, then Uspensky's stylistic

characteristics may be regarded as peculiarities which make him original. To understand properly the main characteristics and idiosyncrasies of his style and to give them a proper evaluation one must know Uspensky's basic aesthetic attitude towards life and art.

As a young writer he came under the strong influence of Chernyshevsky's materialistic teaching. Building his own conception of beauty mainly on the former's aesthetics, he supplemented it later under the influence of Mikhailovsky's ideas. Uspensky's view of "beauty" and "ideal" may be best seen in his story Vypryamila, where he presents three images which have symbolic significance for him.

The Venus De Milo is a symbol of real beauty, of a harmonious ideal human being, which, it is hoped, will be realized in the physical and spiritual perfection of Man in the future. In such an understanding of beauty it is not difficult to recognize Chernyshevsky's statement that "Прекрасное то существо, в котором видим мы жизнь такую, какова должна быть она по нашим понятиям".¹

Secondly, Uspensky describes a peasant woman whom he had once seen working in a field. This peasant woman was for him the personification of the beauty of work and

¹N.G. Chernyshevsky, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1949, Vol. II, p. 10.

activity.

A further image, painted against a dark background, is that of a "girl with an austere face, almost a type of nun."² The girl's face had impressed him strongly:

"Глубокая печаль - печаль о не своем горе, которая была начертана на этом лице, ... была так гармонически слита с ее личною, собственною ее печалью..."³

Uspensky saw in her the incarnation of the beauty of martyrdom and sacrifice. His contemporaries easily recognized in this girl a description of Vera Figner, a well-known Populist and revolutionary, who had heroically devoted her entire life to the cause of the Russian people.

It may thus be seen that Uspensky's understanding of aesthetics is based on his belief that beauty cannot be and must not be separated from the reality of life. According to him, real beauty has, in addition to pure aesthetic value, a certain social significance as an ideal which is the expression of the people's most cherished hopes. Therefore, the beauty of work and sacrifice are for him the two main elements of aesthetics, through which only may be achieved the highest harmony of life.

²G. Uspensky, Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1956, Vol. VII, p. 236.

³Ibid., p. 236.

Uspensky does not deny the profound value of the existence of beauty in art; he simply attaches much more importance to harmony in life than in art. He himself was not so much concerned with artistic form and style, as with the content of his works. His writings praise highly the poetry of the labour in the fields and glorify the beauty of sacrifice on behalf of the people, for in labour and in sacrifice he saw the true beauty of life.

He acknowledged the great significance of Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoyevsky and Goncharov, regarding them as writers who present Russian society "с самыми крупными, самыми замечательными своими работами".⁴

However, he sharply condemned art for art's sake. In the story Vupryamila, Uspensky criticized Fet's poetic glorification of the Venus De Milo as a representation of feminine beauty alone, pointing out that "сью минуту в Париже найдутся тысячи тысяч дам, которые за полю заткнут Венеру Милосскую по части смешногого естества".⁵

Uspensky drew a clear distinction between belles-lettres and Populist literature, stressing their different aims. In his view, a book should have a purpose, such as:

⁴Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 47.

⁵Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 235.

"Выяснив нам все ошибки, уклонения, падения и т.д. (которые мы сами бы хотели отвратить, чувствуя, что в этом "жизнь") и тем самым лишив нас аппетита повторять то же самое, а главное, отравив нашу мысль тягостной необходимостью НЕПРЕМЕННО ДУМАТЬ ПРАВИЛЬНО И ПРАВДИВО, то есть умертвив в нас своеволие, прихоть, фантазию - эти самая книга на последней странице преподносит нам целый воз, тяжело нагруженный камнями горя человеческого, и неопровержимо доказывает, что нам надобно одвинуть с места этот непосильный, тяжелый груз".⁶

While Populist literature presents a thorough study of the peoples' life, and therefore is didactic literature, belles-lettres, in Uspensky's opinion, is pure art "ежедневно стремящейся доставить читателю эстетическое наслаждение или просто удовольствие, потеху, развлечение..."⁷

Uspensky regarded the Populist literature as still being in its embryonic phase of development. The Populists are still engaged in the "черная работа",⁸ hence Populist literature, from an artistic point of view, lags behind

⁶Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 54.

⁷Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 49.

⁸Ibid., Vol. V, p. 165.

belles-lettres but is more progressive in its social function. Belles-lettres is not able, Uspensky pointed out, "изглядить с души истинно интеллигентного и совестливого русского человека того пятна и явны, которую он не может не чувствовать ежеминутно, зная, что он виноват перед "человеком"". ⁹

The new literature, devoid of artistic adornment and strictly utilitarian, was contemptuously regarded by some critics as the literature of "THE SLUMS."¹⁰ In his answer to these critics, Uspensky stressed that Populist literature arose in the name of "неприкрашенной правды" and was concerned primarily with ethics rather than with aesthetics.

"О мужике все очерки, а о культурном обществе романы..."¹¹

wrote Uspensky, commenting that the content of Populist works determined greatly their artistic form. His own writings may be regarded as the best examples of this. Throughout his entire career, Uspensky displays little interest in perfecting his artistic technique. He specialized in a few literary types and had no desire to experiment with new forms of writing. Short literary compositions, such as sketches, feuilletons, vignettes,

⁹Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 429.

¹⁰Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 114.

¹¹Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 47.

were more suitable to Uspensky for his fragmentary representation of reality in literature than was any other form. Furthermore, he was the type of artist who today would be called a "modern," a writer who does not like to be limited by traditions. In a letter to his friend Kamensky, he wrote about his preparation of the work Из Рамуатной Книжки: "Я решил все, что думано и что есть у меня в башке теперь, привести в некоторый порядок и печатать так, как думается в самой разнообразной форме, не прибегая к крайне стеснительным в настоящее время формам повести, очерка. Это будет и очерк, и сценка, и размышление,- приведенные, как я сказал, в некоторый порядок, т.е. расположенные так, чтобы читатель знал, почему этот очерк следует за этой сценой".¹²

As may be seen from the above quotation, Uspensky preferred to devise his own genres and to organize his material into "некоторый порядок", in which it is difficult to recognize any one existing literary form because of the mixed elements taken from various short forms of composition. Even Uspensky was scarcely able to draw a formal difference between his sketches, stories or notes, and therefore, often puts under the title of his works a vague description of the content, such as "Отрывки из

¹²Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 258.

записок", "Очерки и рассказы", "Из разговоров", "Письма с дороги" and so on, leaving it to the reader to find for himself a distinction between the various works.

Only briefly in his literary career did the idea of a novel obsess Uspensky. The "amazing nature"¹³ of the Russian revolutionary Lopatin, whom he met in Paris in 1875, inspired him to start the novel Udaloi Dobryi Molodets. The main character was to be a true positive hero of Russia, with Lopatin as the prototype. Uspensky had finally found material worthy of a novel; he described the life of Lopatin thus: "ЭТО ЦЕЛАЯ ПОЭМА".¹⁴ Although at that time, Uspensky was an experienced writer who had mastered his artistic technique, the novel was for many reasons never written; the most important of these seems to have been the restrictions imposed by the official Russian censorship: "Не знаю, что может европейский читатель почерпнуть в русской литературе. Она убита в самых лучших своих стремлениях и приведена к тому, что писатель, садясь за работу, думает о том, чтобы не написать так, как он думает".¹⁵

Uspensky was the first Russian writer to use the

¹³ Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 291.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 291.

¹⁵ Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 454.

principle of a cycle of sketches, unifying them thematically and ideologically, and thus creating an original literary form. Some of his cycles of sketches are so successfully constructed that they impress the reader as being novels about provincial or village life. Consequently, it is not strange that the critic Skabichevsky regarded Razoren'e to be a novel, because it is evident that the author would have needed only a small effort to organize the sketches into the framework of a novel.

Uspensky's originality appears further in his avoidance of traditional literary patterns in the compositional structure of his writings. He rarely follows the classical literary method of simply unfolding a plot and eventually bringing the story to a tidy conclusion. Predominantly he organizes his stories in an unusual manner. The originality of his composition lies in its great simplicity, based on his main artistic principle that a literary work has to reproduce life faithfully. Therefore, he did not exert any effort towards constructing an effective artistic composition, but rather presents the reader with nothing more than an eyewitness account, reproducing exactly what he had seen or heard. This principle gave him great freedom in starting or stopping a story at any given moment, provided that it is true to life. The story Kvitantsiya, for example, seems to be incomplete and from an artistic point

of view it is more a sketch than a complete story. In it, Uspensky describes only what he had witnessed: a young seamstress arrives at the station as the train is leaving. She is in despair because this had been her last chance to see her illegitimate child, whom she had been forced to give away. In a few simple words Uspensky describes a realistic and complex human drama. But, unexpectedly, he ends the story as soon as the seamstress leaves the station, ignoring the reader's curiosity, which has now been aroused. To another writer this would serve only as the introduction to a full story of the girl's life or of the child's destiny. But for Uspensky, this little sketch had achieved a purpose; he disclosed to the reader how many dramas are hidden in statistical data, and succeeded in evoking in him a feeling of sympathy for the young mother and a wish to do something in order to change the abnormal phenomena of Russian life.

As a writer, Uspensky was very closely tied to reality. In his literary works he drew very little on his artistic imagination. Everyday life provided not only the main events described in his works, but also the smallest episodes. Uspensky's contemporaries and friends could recognize the descriptions of familiar places and also find live prototypes for the majority of his characters. Thus, the Manners of Rasteryayeva Street presents an accurate

picture of the city of Tula: the majority of the characters in the work had their prototypes among Uspensky's own family and acquaintances. The villages described in Uspensky's writings on rural themes actually existed in Russia, only under different names. Uspensky's friends with whom he used to spend the summer holidays easily recognized some of the peasant characters, because Uspensky had accurately preserved their essential features.

Uspensky travelled widely in order to find material. He made notes of everything he observed; interesting episodes of the simple people's life which he had witnessed or heard about, descriptions of various characters he had met, typical or unusual expressions of the different classes, professions or districts. This method of taking notes on the people's life was typical of the majority of the populist writers, and lends their works a certain documentary value. Using this method, Uspensky did not repeat the mistake of some Populist writers, who had created only stereotyped characters from their notes, a method which resulted only in destroying the effect of realism they wished to create. This method provided Uspensky with a richness of realistic detail and gave his writings more verisimilitude, plasticity and vividness.

Although a naturalist, Uspensky never presented simply a photo-copy of life. He had not only the valuable

gift of observation, but also an extraordinary talent for characterization. A concrete fact or phenomenon from life serves him only as his starting point, as a prototype around which he collects more and more material, progressively, adding to it both some typical and some general characteristics. The rich knowledge which Uspensky had about Russian reality and the people enabled him to create three-dimensional pictures of life, which are artistically interesting as episodes from the life of the individual and in a more general sense as reflections of Russian reality as a whole.

Uspensky has a great talent for creating individual characters, who are at the same time very typical of Russian society. Depicting them as concrete examples of life, Uspensky strives not only to represent reality, but also to understand it. He shows an analytic tendency in his studies of life and people, and his own discoveries about the laws of development of social relationships are disclosed to the reader through literary images. Therefore, the majority of his characters are not so much interesting as unique individuals, they are important as the social types which serve to represent typical Russian life.

Uspensky's process of creating literary images usually consists of well-formed ideas about the life and

nature of the Russian man, which are transformed into artistically vivid characters. Thus the Manners of Rasteryayeva Street presents a gallery of various human types which, in different ways, express the same basic idea of Rasteryayevshchina. The characters in Razoren'e and in Uspensky's peasant trilogy are the bearers of the main idea of the conflict between the old and new ways of life. By means of this artistic method, it was possible for Uspensky to construct cycles by uniting a large number of stories around one central idea.

Some of Uspensky's characters are typical in that they have today a symbolic significance. The policeman Mimretsov, the main character of the story Budka, who constantly repeats "ТАМЪТЪ" and "НЕ КУМАТЪ" became the symbol of the tsarist regime's oppression in Russia. Similarly "Mr. Coupon" is widely known as the incarnation of capitalism in Russian. The best example of Uspensky's method of creating such typical characters may be seen in his story Nakonets - Nashli Vinovatogo! In this story he describes the type of man who lives under new conditions in Russia which prevail during a period of constant change. To characterize the ability of such a man to accommodate himself to the new conditions, as well as his deep insincerity, Uspensky uniquely compares him with an ordinary Russian meat-jelly.

"Когда студень лежит на блюде среди обеденного стола, то малейшее движение вилок, тарелкой немедленно отражается на нем; он трепещ не только от того, что тронули блюдо, но даже от тяжелых шагов прислуги; он впечатлителен даже и громким звукам. Кто-то из обедавших чихнул, и студень тотчас "отозвался" трепетом! А разрешите его, ведь лед льдом, холод внутри его ледяной, точно мороженное".¹⁶

Uspensky has a strong tendency to depict characters in sketches. His works provide a large number of characters drawn in only a few lines. In these sketches, Uspensky shows his extraordinary talent for noticing and stressing the most essential feature of a man, and of building a literary image which is fully rounded psychologically, although with the use of only a few words. Beginning a story about the unusual and tragi-comical adventures of the magician Kapiton Ivanov, Uspensky characterizes him with these words: "Робость, проглядывавшая в глазах мага, скоро совершенно овладела им, когда я предложил ему сесть и выпить стакан чая. Стоило громадных усилий, чтобы, наконец, усадить его. Кое-как, после продолжительных увещаний, он согласился и сел на кончик стула. Во все это время он не забывал помахивать, закрывая рот рукой, потрагивая шею, закидывая за галстук махры истерзанных воротничков".¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., Vol. VI, p. 39.

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. I, p. 197.

The image of this poor man is already complete. It is evident that the constant struggle with poverty has determined his character.

Uspensky's technique of describing his characters is more static than dynamic, displayed more in disclosures than in chronological development over a long period. Usually, he presents to the reader a fully-formed man by revealing the man's more important features. This method of characterization is closely bound up with Uspensky's style of narration. Very often there is a story-teller, or the characters themselves speak about their own lives. In this way it is left to the author to add only a few lines or remarks. Uspensky never attempts to tell everything about a character, but only those things which he regards as typical and important; he never tries to dramatise the hero's life or make it more interesting. The common man, and his simple life with its every-day worries, is the main hero of Uspensky's writings.

Uspensky's artistic medium for creating his characters is his accurately-chosen language. Lifelike speech, individualized and truly realistic, makes the characters impressive and true-to-life. If necessary Uspensky uses colloquial expressions, professional jargon or unusual words, and sometimes even preserves the phonetic peculiarities of the pronunciation of the character in question.

"Сколько, говорю, угодно, хоть два дня буду ругать их - у нас на это хватит..." Двинул я так-то - покатались со смежу мой господа. "А умеешь ругаться? хорошо умеешь?" - "Сколько вам угодно". Хохочут, помирают. Тут один из них выскочил - толстоморденский этакий, ба-альшой тоже мешок петербургский, генерал полный: "Валей, говорит, меня, мерзавец этакий! Посмотрим, говорит, точно ли ты мастер!" - "Извольте, говорю, ваше сиятельство!" Сел в мой тарантас еще с одним, надо быть, генералом: "Делай!" говорит. Ну я и принялся!.. Так всю дорогу, братцы мои, до самой станции, уж как только я его не поливал, то есть и так и этак... Все десять верст я его садил всячески, то есть уж хуже не надо, - грохочет!.. Зальется, зальется, а я-то ему: "ах ты, барабанная палка, ах ты..." Ну, то есть все горло у меня пересохло, осип, покуда до станции-то доехал. "Ловко, говорит, молодец!" Выкинул-таки, ребята, синюю бумагу... Праве слово, выкинул. С тех пор, как чуть что: "Где Кузряни?" Сейчас меня... С тех-то пор я маленько и того... Дай ему бог здоровья! Ха-ар-роший человек!

- И кажинный раз - ругай?

- Эно ты!.. Поди-же, обругай его так-то!.. В каком духе человек. Иной раз он тебя и в волости выдерет за какое-нибудь слово... Так он тебе и дался ругать! Авось не дурак. Главная причина только, что с ругательств с этих я ему пондравился... вот в чем расчет".¹⁸

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 40.

The whole flavour of the people's language is best expressed in dialogues which occupy an important place in Uspensky's writing and play a large role in contributing realism to his style. Uspensky is undoubtedly a linguistic artisan. He freely uses all his resources to make the language richer and more realistic. The wealth of Uspensky's literary language, its simplicity and immediateness, and its closeness to popular speech, contributed to the wide appeal of his writings and to his popularity among all classes of the Russian people.

His vivid use of Russian provides an important foundation for the journalistic aspects of Uspensky's literary works. Only Uspensky's exciting, impressive and humorous style saves his journalism from being tedious or obsolete.

Journalistic elements are well represented in his writing and greatly influence his style. The use of journalistic elements is not restricted to Uspensky alone; it is the main feature of Populist literature. It was not altogether a novelty, because Russian literature had even before this been connected with journalism. The permanent restriction of freedom of expression in Russia caused an unusual interweaving of journalism and literature.

Russian thinkers, politicians and journalists found in literature a way to give their commentaries on actual

events and to express their progressive political ideas. The Populist writers, on the other hand, made wide use of journalistic method in order to influence their contemporary readers and thus to achieve the utilitarian aim of literature. The interweaving of pure art and journalism was sometimes so successful that it is difficult to determine exactly where literature ends and journalism begins.

The use of journalistic elements was, however, exaggerated by the Populist writers, because they were more sociologists¹⁹ than artists. They were not so much concerned with presenting aesthetic pleasure to the reader, as with teaching the people about the social and political relationships in Russia.

At the beginning of the sixties, Uspensky used the journalistic element in moderation; as a result, his works from that period are often regarded as his best literary creations. In his early literary works was reflected that period of Populism when the Russian intelligentsia had only vague Populist ideas, and therefore restricted itself mainly to the criticism of the existing negative phenomena of Russia. Later, in the seventies, when Populism had inow achieved its final political form

¹⁹G. Plekhanov, Isbrannye Filosofskie Proizvedeniya, Moscow, 1958, Vol. V, p. 46.

and possessed a unified theory, Populist literature became a field for discussion, and the events and characters depicted in Populist writings served to prove the correctness of Populist theories. At that time, journalistic elements began to predominate in Populist literature in general, and particularly in the works of Uspensky.

Uspensky advocated the need for social change in Russian life and sought to promote the progressive role of the Russian intelligentsia. Throughout his works Uspensky elaborates on so many topics of the day that he became well known as a typical writer of "zibodnevovost'". He discusses different Russian problems, devoting particular attention to those of village life. Usually he takes an actual fact from life, such as the need for establishing a journal for the peasants, the effectiveness of teaching in the village schools, the meaning of a topical dispute for the independence of the European worker, the value and the benefit of female labour in industry, and so on. He then elaborates them artistically, i.e. analyses them through literary images and, at the same time, directly addresses the reader and develops imaginary polemic. Finally, according to the proofs taken from reality, he attempts to make a synthesis, although more often he leaves this to the reader, believing that the logic of life will impose the proper conclusion on the reader. In this

way, the reader becomes an active accomplice of the writer's experience and study, which doubtless was very exciting for Uspensky's contemporaries.

It must be admitted that this is not fascinating for modern readers because the majority of the problems discussed no longer exist. However, the journalistic parts of Uspensky's writings are not entirely devoid of interest, nor of artistic value. His journalism takes the form not of cold tedious discussions, but of humorous polemics which succeed in conjuring up the real Russia of that time for the present-day reader. The critic Byalyi pointed out that the main principle of Uspensky's journalism is emotionalism.²⁰ It is due to this feature of his journalistic style that the animated and exciting words have preserved their vitality, and the author as a man remains close to the reader.

In connection with his journalism and emotionalism, another peculiarity of Uspensky's style deserves mention: his subjectivity. In speaking about a realist writer, "subjectivity" immediately implies a negative characteristic. But Uspensky's subjectivity is of a unique type. In the story Kvintantsiya Uspensky wrote:

"Я пацокань"

²⁰G.A. Byalyi, O nekotorykh osobennostyakh Realizma Gleba Uspenskogo, Uchenye Zapiski, Len', No. 229, Seriya Filologicheskikh Nauk, Vyp. 30, 1957, 180.

процессе моего мышления... без всякой утайки".²¹

Clearly this shows that Uspensky was subjective in the sense that, as an author, he takes an active role, narrating in the first person instead of the third, and expressing openly his own attitude towards reality.

Throughout almost all of his writings, Uspensky makes his own confession, leads the reader through the entire process of his observation and meditation, although presenting them realistically. All that he experienced, his hopes and disappointments, found a place in his stories. In his autobiography he declared: "Все же, что накоплено мною..., все это пересказано в моих книгах, пересказано поспешно, как пришлось, но пересказано все, чем я жил лично".²²

Writing in this way Uspensky came to symbolize for others the artistic image of a typical Russian intellectual of that time. However, his works cannot be regarded simply as a diary, because his own thoughts and feelings were presented as a secondary consideration, as a mere reflection of objective reality, which was Uspensky's primary concern. This kind of "subjective" writing impresses the reader more than does a cold and indifferent representation of life. Speaking of his reaction to one of Uspensky's stories,

²¹G. Uspensky, Ibid., Vol. VII, p. 497.

²²Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 186.

Korolenko writes: "Помни, что одного из этих рассказов ("Квитанция") я уж не мог дочитать громко до конца: это была сплошной вопль лучшей человеческой души, вконец истерзанной чужими страданиями и неправдой жизни, в которой она-то менее всех была повинна".²³

As a painter of Russian reality, Uspensky was highly objective. The typical phenomena he observed and described are reproduced realistically and judged objectively. He almost "transferred" life into literature, without any artistic adornments or adaptation to his own illusions or hopes. He even objectively criticized some of his own Populist misconceptions, taking objective reality as indisputable proof. In his literary works as well as in his private life, Uspensky appreciated truth above everything. His devotion to truth is described by N.K. Mikhailovsky: "Он не то что НЕ ХОТЕЛ написать неправду,- это слишком мало,- он НЕ МОГ органически, по коренным свойствам своей природы не мог написать ее".²⁴

If the principle of truthfulness is taken as the main criterion in evaluating a literary work, then Uspensky has to be appraised highly, because he succeeded in the

²³V.G. Korolenko, Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1955, Vol. VIII, p. 43.

²⁴N.K. Mikhailovsky, G.I. Uspensky kak Pisatel' i Chelovek, in Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, St. Petersburg, 1909, Vol. I & II, p. LXXXVI.

artistic generalisation of his material and in presenting a truthful representation of life.

In addition to the restriction imposed by the official censorship, the great "asceticism"²⁵ of his style also had a limited affect upon Uspensky's talent.

As a stylist, Uspensky may be characterized as an ascetic, because he intentionally avoids all the usual artistic adornments and "superficial" stylistic effects. It seems that one of the main causes of Uspensky's tendency towards concise narration and use of thumb-nail sketches is to be found in his asceticism. In his writings, one finds hardly a complete description of a landscape, or a lyrical passage, although from a few examples it could be shown that Uspensky had a genuine ability for observing and understanding beauty in nature and in art.

The description of a landscape given in the story Knizhka Chekov demonstrates both Uspensky's ability to give a poetic description and his own restriction of his pure artistic strivings.

"Лес, темневший по окраинам этой холмистой равнины, был лес глухой и дремучий; летом, в самый разгар полуденного зноя, в глубине этого леса чувствовалась прохлада, пахло влажной землей, и нога вязла в гниющих и тоще влаж-

²⁵ I. Franko, Izbrannye Sochineniya, Moscow, 1951, Vol. V, p. 329.

ной листвы. Солнцу было трудно проникнуть сквозь густую чащу ветвей и листьев, и только иногда луч его, как алмаз, блеснул где-нибудь на поверхности быстрого ручья, гремящего по оврагу, совершенно затерявшемуся в обильной растительности... Глушь и тишина царствовали здесь поразительные: лес стоял словно заколдованном сне".²⁶

Immediately after this, Uspensky continues the description, contrasting the natural richness of the forest and fields with the indigence of the peasants who live there: "Кое-где торчали черные, нищенские деревеньки, виднелся тощий скот и тощий человек, носивший уже клочку "вора" и "неплательщика", потому что действительно покушался прорваться в эти дебри за дровами, за ягодами, за рыбой, норовил урвать тайком, а что "следовало" платить - платил не иначе, как из-под палки".²⁷

Uspensky did not completely succeed in repressing his lyricism; it appears throughout his works in emotionally-coloured words, in unusually constructed sentences, or in excited expressions of sympathy for human suffering.

The best feature of Uspensky's style is definitely his humour, which was unanimously characterized by his contemporaries as "laughter through tears." Uspensky's

²⁶G. Uspensky, *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 14.

²⁷*Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 15.

humour comes out spontaneously and forcefully, without any deliberate intention of entertaining the reader. It is closely connected with his realism; the ugly and ridiculous, which are very often united in life, provide Uspensky with humorous material. These two elements of the comic are united in Uspensky's treatment of humour with a third element—pity, which he feels and transfers to the reader. Therefore his humour, which appears in different forms from plain humour to deep irony and sharp satire, is always full of sadness and dark tones.

In the Manners of Rasteryayeva Street there is a scene which has the elements of farce: a drunken husband, hearing the voice of his angry wife, hides himself under a counter in the tavern. Such an action on the part of a man usually provokes a laugh from the reader. But the reader finds it impossible to laugh, knowing that the wife is not a shrew, but an unhappy woman who is trying to save her last dress, stolen by her husband and pawned for money to spend on drink.

This kind of humour, typical of Uspensky, has basically the same quality which characterizes the humour of Gogol and Dostoyevsky, and serves as a foil to the tragic element in life.

His humour very often changes into satire; then it acquires a strong, sharp element of social criticism. This

is expressed only in ironical barbs, in play on words, or in ambiguous Aesopic language. Nevertheless, this type of humour succeeded in its purpose of criticizing the negative aspects of Russian life.

Uspensky's humour saves his narration from monotony and lends an immediacy to his style. While he gave freedom of expression to his natural gift of humour, Uspensky did not develop the other facets of his artistic potential, because of the idea of utilitarianism in literature which was dominant at that time. As I. Franko pointed out:

"(Он) мог бы быть великим художником, но не хочет, так как его темы, на которые он пишет, овладели им, сделали его апостолом и учителем, вместо того, чтобы он сам охватил их, сгруппировал и осветил некустарственным светом единой художественной концепции".²⁸

²⁸I. Franko, Izbrannye Sochineniya, Moscow, 1951, Vol. V, p. 329.

CHAPTER IV

THE PEASANT TYPES IN THE SIXTIES

More than ten years after the emancipation of the peasants Uspensky actually went into the Russian village and started a profound study of Russian rural life. The results of the Reform of 1861 were evident; it was obvious that Russia had stepped into a new era of her history, into capitalism, and that the new social system affected not only the economic side of the people's life, but also, more or less, the psychology of every Russian man.

In his writings, Uspensky presents a rich and colourful gallery of various portraits typical of the period of great social ferment which occurred after the Reform of 1861. Many social types characteristic of the Russian feudal system were in the last stage of decay at that time and some new classes were in the process of forming.

The changes in the Russian social structure were most remarkable and evident in the Russian villages because of the sudden appearance of a sharp social differentiation among the peasants. Uspensky analysed the various social and economic factors which caused the

change in the life of the Russian village and paid particular attention to the new characteristics which consequently occurred in the nature of the Russian peasant.

He studied the Russian peasantry from Moscow to the Caucasus and Siberia and discovered that, in spite of the existing geographic, economic and ethnographic differences, the peasantry of Russia represented a homogeneous group with "one spirit, one nature, and one character."¹ The basis of the peasants' spiritual similarity Uspensky considered to be "homogeneous conditions of life, based on homogeneous labour."² Uspensky explains: "От Перми до Тавриды, у стен Кремля, у стен Китая - везде одна и та же соха Марья Андреевна, одни и те же ожидания весны, лета, зимы и осени, одна и та же зависимость от природы".³

The homogeneous character and collective spirit was fully developed and enforced in the conditions of the Russian feudal system. On the one hand, the complete dependence on nature, and on the other hand the complete obedience to the feudal lord prevented the development of individualism among the peasants. A Russian peasant was

¹G. Uspensky, Ibid., Vol. V, p. 198.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

only a man from the immense mass, a small part of a "human ocean"⁴ who, if separated from the wholeness, is insignificant and indistinct. Uspensky writes about this: "Отделить из этой миллионной массы единицу, хоть, положим, нашего деревенского старосту Семена Никитича и попробовать понять его - дело невозможное... Семена Никитича можно понимать только в куче других Семенов Никитичей".⁵

Thus Uspensky never separates a peasant from the peasant mass, nor depicts him as an unique, unusual individual. He always stresses that Ivan Afanasev or Ivan Ermolaevich or any other character represents always an ordinary, typical villager who lives, thinks and feels like millions of other Ivans or Mikhails.

Although Uspensky created a large number of peasant images artistically well described and individualized, there is no character which could justly be called the hero of a work. The peasantry of Russia as a whole appears to be the main hero of Uspensky's literary works on the village themes.

To evoke a composite impression of rural living in post-1861 Russia, Uspensky presents the reader with

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

delineations of several different villages. Not only does this method produce a realistic comprehension of the workings of rural life, but it allows also an insight into the sociological strata of the peasants themselves. Analysing these peasant types, one can see that they appear in basically two variations; a patriarchal type which was created centuries ago and a new type of peasant who emerges in the first years after the Reform. It is the latter who is soon to be the typical peasant of a capitalist Russia.

In the years when Uspensky studied the Russian village, the so-called patriarchal type still constituted the majority of the Russian peasantry, but already started to show the first signs of change which were characterized by Uspensky as demoralisation. In the new conditions of life, it was inevitable that the patriarchal type must modify, must develop some new elements in his nature, preserving some of his old basic characteristics.

According to Uspensky, the patriarchal type is a real peasant, spiritually close to nature. He is tied so closely to the soil he toils that agricultural labour is the only form of work which actually exists for him, in which he sees the only meaning of life and the only justification for his own existence.

The first example of such a peasant is to be seen in

the character of Ivan Afanas'ev in Uspensky's Из Деревенского Дневника.

Ivan Afanas'ev, a peasant from the village of Slepoe-Litvino, is described by the author as "a rare example of a 'peasant' in the full meaning of that word, a man who is inseparably linked with the soil."⁶ This man represents a part of a union with his own field, a union which is harmonious, free and easy, based on the principle that "добро добывается добрым". This harmonious relationship, centuries old, is now unscrupulously disturbed by the new way of life, by the demand of the new times: "Денег подавай!" put in front of Ivan Afanas'ev as well as in front of every Russian peasant. From the very moment of liberation from his landlord, Ivan Afanas'ev hears the constant repetition: "денег подавай!", from his village elder, from the tax collector, the village merchant, the miller and sometimes from a tavern-keeper.

The land which Ivan Afanas'ev possesses appears to be insufficient to provide his family with more than bread alone—they were even deprived of this in the years of famine. He is therefore forced to leave the fields and seek another source of income. As a real peasant Ivan's whole nature is against it and he complains:

⁶Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 43.

"Как же я брошу землю, помилуйте, сделайте милость?..
Ведь мы землей всю жизнь живем!"⁷

"Money, money" appears to be the only answer to Ivan. It echoes painfully in his mind while he looks at his broken straw roof, at his unsown fields, at his hungry children. On the one hand his own penury and the necessities of his household and on the other the heavy obligation of land-tax dictate to Ivan the only escape—to leave the village. Thus, to find money, Ivan Afanas'ev begins his life-long Odyssey and starts to struggle desperately for money.

Ivan Afanas'ev cherishes the hope that in the near future he will succeed in earning enough money to settle his household and repay all his debts. Then he will be able to begin proper work on the fields, which is for him the source of sadness and bitterness and also of unutterable joy.

Ivan Afanas'ev's first attempt to better his financial situation is in the field of small trade. With borrowed money he buys some merchandise well liked in villages, such as scarves, chints, earrings, needles, gingerbread and similar items. He goes through the neighbouring villages offering his small fortune. At the end of

⁷Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 44.

the first day he finds that he has been selling at a great loss, that he is simply ruined. That same evening, as he sits dejected, gloomy and silent, eaten by worries and sadness, a miracle happens; several young peasant lads, returning from a youth gathering, stop at his home and ask for gingerbread. Ivan Afanas'ev sells all the gingerbread he has to them at a big profit. Encouraged by this, he invests all the money he has in gingerbread and for the next two days he sells it successfully until the third day when the majority of his fellow-villagers, following his example, put an end to his as well as their own trade.

Ivan barely returns the money he has borrowed and decides to abandon trade forever, concluding that this job is not for a simple peasant. He realizes that trade implies a great risk, talent and even good luck, and so he says: "Бог с ней и с торговлей, не наше это, крестьянское, дело!.." ⁸

After a while Ivan tries again to find salvation. This time he spends his last money on a train ticket and full of optimism arrives at St. Petersburg. A relative of his finds for him a good job in a rich house but Ivan unexpectedly refuses to take it. After a few days living in the big city, he becomes afraid of the city crowd, of

⁸Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 46.

that "alien" people, and feels completely lost. He is so terribly homesick that he leaves St. Petersburg and goes three hundred versts on foot to reach his village. After this experience he decides never again to leave his home. "Бог с вами совсем, с местами... Я на одном хлебе просижу - по крайности дома".

But the cry "Денег подавай!" pursues him and poor Ivan Afanas'ev looks again for a new job. It happens that at this time work is available on a canal near lake Ladoga and Ivan goes there, enticed with ten rubles given to him in advance. He spends six months on the canal in unbelievably poor conditions of life and work and returns home penniless and in poor health, and lucky in that he succeeds in returning home at least alive. "И уж как рад дому-то, как рад своей соломенной крыше, печке, этому жидкому, кислому, "своему" квасу".¹⁰

Happy when on his own and when working on the fields, he will soon recover physically and aspiritually. Although he has no real desire to leave the farm, it will not be long before Ivan Afanas'ev starts to sigh and speak of a job: "Ждали бы хоть на пять рублей в месяц, то есть верных, какое местечко было, - кажется, сейчас бы пошел. Правое слово!"¹¹

⁹ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 47.

¹⁰ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 109.

In spite of all the disappointments, Ivan Afanas'ev is optimistic about the future. He naively believes that somehow he will find money and become again a real peasant, and independent. There is no bitterness in his soul; he accepts life as it is, with a stoicism worthy of admiration but also of sharp criticism.

After analysing the general conditions of country life in Russia, the unsuccessful work of the obshchins and peasant banks, as well as the relationships, Uspensky concludes that all attempts by Ivan Afanas'ev to better his economic position are condemned in advance to fail. However, there is another important reason for Ivan's inevitable failure, the reason hidden in his typically peasant nature. As a real, "coarse"¹² Russian peasant, Ivan Afanas'ev is unable to dodge, to dissemble and to deceive, and consequently, unprepared for a new way of life which is forced upon the peasant in Russia. The world in which he used to live was small but simple and harmonious. In that world the soil was of central importance and therefore Ivan Afanas'ev shows neither interest in nor understanding of anything outside this world. When he is

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 44.

forced to leave his world, he loses confidence in himself, feels lost and almost dead, until he returns back to the soil.

"Иван Афанасьев - такой истинный земледелец, истинный крестьянин, что самый лучший заработок не в силах был бы заглушить в нем тоски по земле, по тому разнообразию явлений, которыми окружен труд земледельца, связывающий его душу и мысль и с небом, и с землей, и с солнцем красным, и с звездами ясными; с вьюгами, дождями, метелями, морозами, со всем созданием божьим, со всеми чудесами этого божьего создания..."¹³

The work on the fields absorbs all his physical strength and fills up his whole spiritual life. Separated from the soil, he stops being a real peasant and thus becomes an incomplete, inharmonious human being. His spiritual bond with the soil Uspensky describes in these words:

"Он связан с ней, с землей, и со всем, что переживает она в течение года, связан, как муж с женой, даже теснее, потому что они, в самом деле, живут почти как одно целое".¹⁴

The completeness of Ivan Afanas'ev's psychological dependence on the soil is clearly shown in an episode of

¹³ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 44.

¹⁴ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 213.

his life which was witnessed by the author himself.

Uspensky interceded on behalf of Ivan Afanas'ev with one of his rich friends who gave him a good job. The job commanded a comfortable salary and was convenient for the peasant, who had to supervise an estate and tend cattle only during the winter; during the rest of the year he was free to work on his own farm. Uspensky even persuaded his friend to send some money in advance to Ivan, knowing that he was in desperate need.

Very soon Uspensky became disappointed in his protégé. Ivan Afanas'ev came to work two weeks late and in this way his honesty was questioned. He excused himself by explaining that he had had to celebrate the christening of a child and had spent all the money he had. Thus he had no money to pay for the trip to the estate and so had waited until he had succeeded in selling some sheep.

Instead of making good use of the opportunity given him to better his economic position and then celebrate and treat the neighbours, he recklessly spent the last money, sold his sheep and made much worse a situation which was already bad.

A week after Ivan Afanas'ev started on the job, a letter came to the owner of the estate in which Ivan informed him that he was leaving because of many important reasons. Thus Uspensky describes Ivan's letter:

"Он так нагло лгал, выставляя такие невероятные причины к своему удалению, что мы уже более не могли сомневаться в способности Ивана к надуванию: он сломал ногу, вывихнул бок, его ударило "сверху" по голове балкой, и словом - Бог знает что!"¹⁵

On the same piece of paper, but on the opposite side, was a letter addressed to Uspensky in which Ivan wrote:

"Простите моей подлой глупости, что с господином должен поступать обманом; ничего больше нету, как без своих жить не могу - все думается".¹⁶

This episode proves that Ivan Afanas'ev has, beside all the virtues which characterize a real peasant, some imperfections which are the most serious obstacle to his success.

Rural life and agricultural work make Ivan Afanas'ev, a coarse Russian peasant, physically as strong as a giant and spiritually harmonious. Only such a peasant, says Uspensky, was able to endure the inhuman physical strain of the work necessary on the fields and the difficult, long period of slavery during the Tartar yoke and serfdom. At the same time this life made him too dependent on soil

¹⁵Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 108.

¹⁶Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 108.

and in a way spiritually limited. In his own home, in his own field, the peasant is a man worthy of admiration. When separated from his village environment he loses all his strength and becomes as weak as a child. When far from his home Ivan Afanas'ev is "пуглив, как ребенок, бонтся темной комнаты, за "тыщу" рублей не решается выйти на крыльцо ночью. Все ему чужое, всего ему боязно, страшно, дико..."¹⁷

Ivan Afanas'ev is also a typical product of Russian feudalism. Through the ages his worth was measured only in terms of his physical strength. Moreover, he himself used to think in the same way. The thought that he was not free, that he belonged to the landlord did not trouble him much, because he was raised with the idea that he was born only to work. He was taught to protect the interest of his landlord, which coincided with his own interest, by working on the field as best he could. Now that he is free, his own interests are much wider; he has to take care of taxation, marketing and different obligations to the village commune, to none of which has he been accustomed.

"Ни в какой иной сфере, кроме сферы земледельческого труда, ... мысль его так не свободна, так не смела, так не напряжена, как именно здесь, там, где соха, борона, овцы, куры, утки, коровы и т.д."¹⁸

¹⁷ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 109.

¹⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 32.

From one point of view, Ivan Afanas'ev's life is miserable and absurd. He works on the fields from his childhood to his death, subordinating his whole life to the single ideal—"a good harvest." He devotes his whole strength to the soil but the result is almost zero—"только что снт".¹⁹

However, there is no effort on his part to change his ideals, nor his world-outlook. It seems to Uspensky that the Russian peasant tied to the soil by a mystical power remains a slave.

The "secret" of the peasant life Uspensky discovered later, after living longer among the peasants and analysing more profoundly their peasant nature. His discovery Uspensky reveals in the words Krest'yanin i Krest'yanskii Trud and Vlast' Zemli as a theory of the power of the soil and the poetry of agricultural work.

In the work Krest'yanin i Krest'yanskii Trud Uspensky presents his artistically best-rounded peasant character—Ivan Ermolaevich. While Ivan Afanas'ev was for the writer a kind of an enigma, Ivan Ermolaevich was the one who solved the enigma for him.

Uspensky had a chance at the Lyadno estate in the Province of Novgorod to observe closely for a year the life

¹⁹Ibid., Vol. V, p. 27.

and work of a peasant family, the Belyaevs, whose head served him as the prototype of Ivan Ermolaevich.

Uspensky defines Ivan Ermolaevich as an ideal patriarchal Russian peasant, an "aristocratic-peasant soul,"²⁰ because he is devoted solely to agriculture. He is one of those old peasants who strictly believes that he, as a real peasant, has to produce everything on his own farm. Therefore, he always sharply criticizes the peasants who are abandoning their fields and are chasing the odd ruble. Uspensky writes: "Вся эта возня не-за случайного рубля глубоко противна крестьянской, аристократически-крестьянской душе Ивана Ермолаевича".²¹

Ivan Ermolaevich remains unspoiled by civilization, although he has accepted some innovations like kerosene lamps and industrial cotton. Civilization which came to the Russian village firstly in the form of blue paper bank-notes has had destructive influence on the village men and caused a change in the patriarchal type of peasant. However, thus far Ivan Ermolaevich has resisted demoralization and preserved his typically patriarchal peasant world outlook and his inherited peasant ideals. Not impressed by money, he is still in love with fields of rye. At the same

²⁰Ibid., Vol. V, p. 110.

²¹Ibid.

time he remains far from being enlightened and therefore far from being truly civilized. He is still in the Middle Ages, in darkness and ignorance, he lives almost in the same way as his ancestor used to live a hundred years ago.

As the majority of peasants, he has an aversion to the new things and methods. When Uspensky shows him a barometer he is amazed at such "a useful thing for a peasant."²² As soon as the barometer starts to show "changeable weather" he loses confidence in it and returns to the old way of looking at the sky and stars as a more reliable method.

His knowledge is very limited. Even such a simple thing as a calendar is not familiar to him. Months and years are remembered only by events connected with agricultural work, religious holidays or weather disasters. Thus Uspensky describes one of his conversations with Ivan Ermolaevich:

"- Какой у нас нынче месяц идет? - спросит бывало Иван Ермолаевич: - октяб?

- Какой октябрь - июль...

- Я их месяцев-то, не знаю, как их прозывать-то...

Много ведь их..."²³

For Ivan Ermolseovich, there are too many months to be

²²Ibid., Vol. V, p. 112.

²³Ibid., Vol. V, p. 13.

remembered by name, but it is not difficult at all to recognize and know by name every cow, sheep or even a chicken, and not only his own, but also those of his neighbours.

Illiterate, he is "deadly afraid"²⁴ of any kind of paper. In newspapers he is not in the least interested because it is not a "peasant matter." However, it happens, only once, that Ivan Ermolaevich asks Uspensky about the news, wanting to check about a rumour spreading among the peasants of a monstrous mare ("кобыла не кобыла")²⁵, which seems to have fallen from the sky and on which is written a prophecy. In that prophecy is something about the future distribution of land to the peasants which they eagerly desire. "Land" is that magic word which awakes Ivan's curiosity and attention.

Even Ivan Ermolaevich himself is conscious of keeping up with the times. "Something unknown, incomprehensible, something coming from far, far away frightened Ivan Ermolaevich."²⁶ In one such moment, he decides to send his son to school, saying: "Минутку надо учить! прона-

²⁴Ibid., Vol. V, p. 12.

²⁵Ibid., Vol. V, p. 16.

²⁶Ibid., Vol. V, p. 72.

день, верное слово, пропадешь!" 27

Although a member of the village obshchina he does not participate in anything except the distribution of land, flour or liquor. When the mir divides yearly the land which the village possesses to the peasants, making out of it a ceremony organized to perfection, then Ivan Ermolaevich and other peasants like him participate fully in order to insure that every "soul" receives a just proportion, or, as they used to say, "чтобы носком непременно в пятку попадало".²⁸

Ivan Ermolaevich is politically apathetic; he knows nothing of his rights, about the work of the Zemstvo or the newly established peasant banks. He has no ambition to partake in the work of the mir and expresses no respect for those elected, whom he calls "real dogs."²⁹ He is not conscious yet that indifference to the interests of the commune indirectly leads to the decay of his own economy and the development of kulachestvo. Uspensky shows this by an example: there is a swamp, impassable during summer, between the village and the nearest town. The peasants must sell their products as soon as they are

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 22.

²⁹ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 25.

ready. The kulaks buy these same products for much less than their actual worth. Because they are well to do they can afford to wait until winter, when the swamp is frozen, then cross it and go into the city and sell the goods at a great profit. Uspensky criticizes them justly:

"Тысячу лет не могут завалить болота на протяжении четверти версты, что сразу бы необыкновенно увеличило доходность здешних мест, а между тем все Иваны Ермолаевичи знают, что эту работу "на веки веков" можно сделать в два воскресенья, если каждый из двадцати шести дворов выставит человека с топором и лошадь".³⁰

The favourite idea of the Populists—collective work on the village land and equal distribution of the products—seems to be a strange and unacceptable idea for Ivan Ermolaevich, because by nature he is a strong individualist.

The peasant individualism is not a new characteristic. It existed always in their nature, although hidden and undeveloped. In the new conditions of life developed after the liberation, individualism in peasant nature starts to grow quickly, suppressing the spirit of collectivism. Consequently the obshchina is dying out and becomes only a governmental administrative unit and even a kind of obstacle to success to the progressive peasants. Instead

³⁰ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 22.

of uniting their physical power and means of production and in that way lightening the hard tillage, improving production and, most important, eliminating village pauperism, the Russian peasants, poor and rich, stood firmly on the standpoint of individualistic farming, because they did not believe in the possibility of realising socialist ideas.

It must be admitted that there is a certain logic in Ivan Ermolaevich's explanation of his negative attitude towards collectivism.

"- Нет! Куда! Как можно... Тут десять человек не поднимут одного бревна, а один-то я его как перо снесу, ежели мне требуется... нет, как можно! Тут один снажет: "бро-сай, ребята, пойдём обедать!". А я хочу работать. Теперь как же будешь - он уйдёт, а я за него работаю! Да нет - невозможно этого! Как можно! У одного один характер, у другого - другой!.. Это все равно, вот ежели бы одно письмо для всей деревни писать..."³¹

Looking from aside with the eyes of a city man there is nothing ideal in Ivan Ermolaevich's life and character. He still lives in a tormenting, everyday struggle for his existence as the generation lived before him. His life seems to be an everlasting chemical process; the peasant appears to be only a point in the eternal chemical circulation: he devotes his strength to the soil and at the

³¹Ibid., Vol. V, p. 64.

end, completely exhausted, goes to soil himself, becomes a part of it. Uspensky says:

"Жизнь и смерть для человека, имеющего дело непосредственно с природой, слиты почти воедино".³²

Uspensky compares a peasant's life with the life of a tree. Both of them are resigned to their fate and humbly contemplate the process of their own exhaustion. However, Uspensky is conscious that peasant life is not merely a vegetative existence, that the man himself is bound to be felt and heard. His joy and sadness, his happiness and tears, his trials and tribulations are indelibly human. Uspensky writes:

"... Меня поражает и бесплодность труда, бесплодность ПО ОТНОШЕНИЮ К ЧЕЛОВЕКУ, к его слезам, радостям и к зубов-ному его скрежету..."³³

Uspensky wanted to discover why man and his suffering are neglected in the peasant world and why the peasants, in spite of all the torments in their life, remain tied to the soil.

Accidentally, a little event in Ivan Ermolaevich's life unveiled this secret to Uspensky: Ivan Ermolaevich found a profitable job—foraging calves and when they are

³²Ibid., Vol. V, p. 69.

³³Ibid., Vol. V, p. 18.

fat enough, selling them to the butchers of St. Petersburg. Once he had bought a calf from an old woman and was glad it looked good and healthy, as he had bought it cheaply. However, it happened that the calf, used to being fed on oatmeal, refused to take the milk offered. Ivan and his wife tried to force it to drink milk but without success. What was new and surprising to Uspensky in this scene was Ivan Ermolaevich's excited, dramatic voice, full of sadness and disappointment when he complained about that stubborn calf. Ivan scolded the calf with these words:

"Вот он! Поглядите на него, на проклятушего, и смотреть-то на него, на проклятого, тошно!"³⁴

His voice suddenly resurrected in Uspensky's mind a memory of a man, an artist whom he used to know and who once "in exactly the same dramatic tone"³⁵ complained about some restoration work done on the Venus de Milo.

After analysing the scene with the calf and comparing Ivan Ermolaevich's behaviour with the artist's reaction to the restoration of the Venus de Milo, Uspensky comes to the conclusion that the calf evidently disturbed the "artistic side"³⁶ of things in the farm and thus offended

³⁴Ibid., Vol. V, p. 18.

³⁵Ibid., Vol. V, p. 29. (Trans. mine)

³⁶Ibid., Vol. V, p. 30. (Trans. mine)

Ivan Ermolaevich in the intensity of his "artistic aspirations."³⁷

The episode with the calf opens for Uspensky a new outlook on the Russian peasant life; it is obvious that Ivan Ermolaevich is not working so hard only to be fed or to pay the tax but because the agricultural work satisfies his artistic strivings, fills his soul with the poetry of creative work.

The poetry of work gives to the Russian peasant the meaning of life, the satisfaction and strength to endure the constant torments of peasant life. Agricultural work with its complexity forms the basis of the peasant outlook, of his interests and his social and family relationships.

According to Uspensky peasant life now, when illuminated and explained by the conditions of agricultural work, is meaningful and justified. Although Ivan Ermolaevich's life seems contradictory, it is full of inner harmony; every thought, every action in Ivan Ermolaevich follows the demand of his agricultural ideals.

Analysing more profoundly the conditions of agricultural work, Uspensky admitted that Nature has the basic influence on the Russian peasant character, that Nature is the most important determining factor in the

³⁷Ibid., Vol.

inner peasant harmony. Nature cruelly, indifferently and even maliciously, with tyrannical power rules over the Russian peasant. It teaches him to obey unconditionally every power, even a power which is "without any control, peculiar, capriciously whimsy and indifferently brutal."³⁸

Nature's submissive pupil Ivan Ermolaevich, an ordinary Russian peasant, learned to obey and endure everything. The idea of unconditional obedience is deeply rooted in his nature—he suffers even "without thinking, without asking for any explanation."³⁹ He conscientiously follows, throughout his whole life, two basic rules learned from Nature: "повинность" and "повелевай".

Nature demands from him total obedience but at the same time it gives to him, to the head of a family, the power of a monarch, a monarch who always remains a loyal subject of Nature. Thus, Ivan Ermolaevich rules over his household and asks every member of the family to subordinate completely and sacrifice his whole life to the farm. He, taught by Nature, is indifferent to the misfortune of others; he simply says: "такая уж ему, стало быть, участь".⁴⁰ He is cruel even to his own

³⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 40 (trans. mine).

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 71.

family. No one is spared from heavy labour; there is no mercy, nor pity for those old and weak and unable to fulfill their duties.

Uspensky characterizes Ivan further:

"Случайности природы он сосредоточивает в Боге. Случайности всемогущей политики - в царе".⁴¹

Ivan Ermolaevich is deeply religious and faithful to Orthodoxy. His religious belief has much in it of pantheism, which can be seen in a prayer he teaches his son:

"Верую во единого Бога отца,... и в небо и землю. Видимо невидимо, слышимо неслышимо..."⁴²

The Russian peasant, taught by Nature, is firmly loyal to the Russian Tsar. There is no other relationship between them than the relationship between an absolute master and an obedient servant. The Russian peasant always thinks in this way:

"Царь пошел воевать, царь дал волю, царь дает землю, царь раздает хлеб. Что царь скажет, то и будет..."⁴³

Anything ordered from above the Ivans humbly obey:

⁴¹Ibid., Vol. V, p. 33.

⁴²Ibid., Vol. V, p. 24.

⁴³Ibid., Vol. V, p. 33.

"возьми и связи... возьми и развязки"; "застрели", "освободи"⁴⁴...

The peasants will kill and be killed without even knowing what they are fighting for. They only know that the Russian Tsar ordered it, and even when he orders them to kill their fellow peasants, comments Uspensky bitterly, they kill, without question, without any sense of guilt.

These most typical characteristics of the Russian peasants—total obedience and extreme passivity developed under the direct influence of "Mother Nature"⁴⁵ are the basis of a typical peasant philosophy which Uspensky describes as:

"Все, что дает жизнь, все принимается, потому что ничто не имеет отдельного смысла, ни я, ни то, что дала жизнь..."⁴⁶

Uspensky points out that this is the philosophy of Platon Karataev, this is Karataev fatalism.

Ivan Ermolaevich is another Platon Karataev; his life has no meaning as a separate life.

"Она имела смысл только как частица целого, которое он

⁴⁴Ibid., Vol. V, p. 201.

⁴⁵Ibid., Vol. V, p. 200.

⁴⁶Ibid., Vol. V, p. 201.

постоянно чувствовал".⁴⁷

The philosophy of the Platons and the Ivans, their submissiveness and passivity, provided a basis for the development of another Russian type—the plunderer. "To separate these two types one from another is impossible," says Uspensky, "they always existed side by side with each other."⁴⁸

In the work Vlast' Zemli Uspensky elaborated further the idea of the basic role which the soil played in the moulding and development of the Russian peasant character. According to Uspensky it was the strong influence of the soil that enabled the peasant to develop as a harmonious, though not perfect, being.

Peasant life was wholly governed by the same principles that prevailed in nature. Consequently, his life reflected the same harmony and "justice" as found in Nature.

"Но хоть в природе и все - правда, но не все в ней ласково. Посмотрите-ка, какой веселый лес на горе, какие там веселые "птичек хоры" или какой он молчаливый и торжественный ночью, а между тем в то время, когда он молчит, и в то время, когда он весь поет и зеленеет, какое идет в

⁴⁷ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 200.

⁴⁸ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 201.

нем поедание друг друга!.. Все поедает друг друга каждую минуту, и все каждую минуту рождается вновь...⁴⁹

The biological principle of the survival of the fittest was also the dominant principle in the village life. This deterministic principle prevented the peasant from developing his individuality; he was a captive of "Mother-Earth," who controlled his entire life and imposed upon him her own sense of morality and justice. Being thus determined the peasant did not feel responsible for anything.

"Раз он делает так, как БЕЛИТ его хозяйка-земля, он ни за что не отвечает: он убил человека, который увел у него лошадь, - и невинен, потому что без лошади нельзя приступить к земле; у него перемерзли все дети - он опять не виноват: не родила земля, нечем кормить было; он в гроб вогнал вот эту свою жену - и невинен: дура не понимает в хозяйстве, ленива, через нее стало дело, стала работа. А хозяйка-земля требует этой работы, не ждет".⁵⁰

It should be stated that Uspensky was not greatly impressed with the new way of life introduced into the villages after 1861. As a matter of fact, he felt that both the harmony and simplicity which existed before were now

⁴⁹Ibid., Vol. V, p. 168.

⁵⁰Ibid., Vol. V, p. 119.

being destroyed. While the peasant was emancipated from serfdom, he was left to fend for himself. A new labour force, wholly unskilled, was released in Russia. This diminished the importance of the soil and also lessened its power as well as the sheer beauty of tillage. This inevitably affected the very foundation of peasant life and disturbed the centuries-old harmony of the peasant soul. The new time put the emphasis on the accumulation of capital rather than on tilling the soil, which used to be regarded almost as a sacred duty.

While there were still a few peasants who tried to adhere to the old way of life, the majority began to adopt the new ideas forced upon them by contemporary conditions. In his Vlast Zemli, Dzerzhinsky describes for us the transformation of the Russian peasant, taking his examples from the village reality. We are introduced to the peasant Ivan Petrov, nicknamed "Prosykha" in the following scene:

"Виджу я, как Ленинон, почти болезненным поступь по-
дошел он к куче кое-как наваленник в углу двора поленьев,
которые Иван Вяжск расколоть на дрова, как он, вместо то-
го, чтоб принтять за работу, принялся обемки руками креп-
ко-накрепко парашать свои голову, держа подмышком шапку,
как поток, нахлобучив эту самую шапку на голову, потогнал
кучу поленьев ногой, обутью в рваный вяжский сапог, и как,

опять-таки вместо того, чтобы взяться за топор, стал раз-
минать плечи, стараясь достать кулаком до середины спины...⁵¹

Here we get a picture of the new peasant who is a complete contrast to the image of the patriarchal hard-working peasant described in Krest'yanin i Krest'yanski Trud. Ivan Petrov is not interested in work. All he wants is enough money to get drunk. He is quite conscious of his position and sadly states: "Нет, видно, мне я не человек".⁵²

He has lost all sense of truth. He has become a liar and a defrauder and squanders his ill-gained money on drink. He is described by Ivan Ermolaevich as a "weak man,"⁵³ his weakness being of a spiritual rather than a physical nature. He has lost all will-power to control his alcoholism, and has become indifferent to his condition.

Ivan was not always like this. He used to be highly respected by his fellow-villagers. He used to be considered an "eager"⁵⁴ tiller of the soil, a man with "golden hands."⁵⁵ In a word, he was a man of "first

⁵¹Ibid., Vol. V, p. 99.

⁵²Ibid., Vol. V, p. 100.

⁵³Ibid., Vol. V, p. 95 (trans. mine).

⁵⁴Ibid., Vol. V, p. 100 (trans. mine).

⁵⁵Ibid., Vol. V, p. 102.

quality."⁵⁶ Ivan Petrov has now descended to the lowest rung of the social ladder, namely, the village proletariat. Uspensky implies here that the Russian peasant, when separated from the soil, inevitably loses his sense of balance and becomes a victim of the negative influences of the post-Emancipation period.

Ivan Petrov, who typifies the new peasant type, is depicted as a "spoiled"⁵⁷ and greedy creature. His job as a despatcher at a railway station gave him a real taste of the lazy, unproductive life. He now had ready cash to squander on pleasures of the flesh and in the process he forgot his wife and children. After living such a life for a while he lost his human qualities and changed into a person without conscience, "like the worst kind of swine."⁵⁸

The ideal of "Mother-Earth" was still deeply ingrained in Ivan's inner being. In spite of the fact that his material position was greatly improved, he was dissatisfied with his present condition. His happiness is still closely connected with the work in the fields. Ivan's nature is essentially a working nature; he is living a meaningful life only when working.

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Ibid.

Ivan's "sweet life" was brought to an end when the stationmaster learned of his drunken and debauched life. His return home as described in the following episode is almost like the story of the Prodigal Son.

"... да на-а-и дал мне (лицо рассказчика вдруг про- сияло) хо-с-орошего леща, да как начальник эксплуатации набавил мне (детская радость разлилась по лицу его) в загривок, да как в подвижном составе наколотили мне бока, - так я, братец ты мой, сотворил крестное знамение, да точ- но как из могилы выскочил, воскрес, да по морозу, в чем был, без шапки, - домой!.. Очутился я на дворе гол и наг, и все у меня в разорении, а рад был - истинно, как из мерт- вых воскрес. Слава тебе, господи! Слава тебе, царица не- бесная! Опять я - человек, опять я сам себя отискал..."⁵⁹

Ivan's story is the story of every coarse Russian peasant after 1861. Having been brought up to be an obedient and dependent being, the sudden "freedom" thrust upon him was more of a burden than an asset.

"Полная воля", то есть неведомая пустая даль, без- граничная пустая ширь, страшное "иди, куда хочешь"..."⁶⁰

Ivan thus returns to his home where he could once again be close to the soil and enjoy the old patriarchal way of life.

⁵⁹Ibid., Vol. V, l. 106.

⁶⁰Ibid., Vol. V, p. 116.

Unfortunately, for Ivan and for all Russian peasants, a return to the old way of life is no longer possible. In the new order of life, the patriarchal peasant was destined ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ to die out, to modify slowly into a new peasant type, either into a village proletarian or a village kulak.

The kulak represents the new peasant type. He is a man who is no longer dominated by the "Mother-Earth" mystique, and therefore is free to build his own destiny. This new type is vividly described by Uspensky in his work Is Derevenskogo Dnevnika, in the character of Mikhailo Petrov.

Mikhailo Petrov was only a child when the emancipation of the peasants occurred. The emancipation did not affect the relationship inside the family because his father, who belonged to the old patriarchal system, ruled his family with an iron hand. When young Mikhailo wanted to leave the village for St. Petersburg, his father would not hear of it. Mikhailo had to wait to realize his plans until after his father died. Mikhailo found work in a rich house in St. Petersburg, where he managed to save up two hundred rubles, which enabled him to return to his village and to get married.

Having tasted city life, Mikhailo found village life "heavy and absurd."⁶¹ He was now trying to find a way out

⁶¹Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 97.

of this monotonous and meaningless life. In order to achieve this purpose, he knew, as "an intelligent man,"⁶² that he would need money. His wife Agrafena, as a "clever woman" and a "good wife"⁶³ was in full accord with his plans. They had already decided to go to St. Petersburg, when a group of technical students came to the village. Five of them found lodging in Mikhailo's home. With the tacit connivance of Mikhailo, Agrafena was willing to sell her body to these students, for which she was paid well. This new income enabled Mikhailo to buy some cattle, a pair of horses, and he even started to build a new house. His fellow-villagers considered him to be a clever and enterprising young man and he was soon elected village elder.

"Вся деревня знала, что они с женой пошли в ход с нехорошего; но это самое уменье, это знание "как пойти", как повернуть делами,- это-то и побеждало всех".⁶⁴

Greedy Mikhailo and his wife Agrafena were not satisfied with the income they gained from the students. Agrafena managed to seduce a wealthy gentleman who became for them a gold mine. This latest "income" enabled the

⁶²Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 99.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 101.

Petrovs to realize their plan. They thus managed to become the "first village men."⁶⁵ Their new social status does not however, change their characters. They are wicked, greedy and wholly obsessed with the idea of wealth and material possessions. Strangely enough, Mikhailo and Agrafena have become for the rest of the villagers the ideal type which they wish to emulate.

Another example of the new peasant type is to be found in Gavriilo Volkov, a character from Vlast' Zemli, who is described as a man who is wholly captivated by the money ideology.

"Деньги - вот самое ВЕРНОЕ среди продолжительнейшей сумятицы и толкучки противоречивых, а главное - почти всегда неопределенных явлений жизни, которые эта жизнь давала ему".⁶⁶

It was quite obvious to Gavriilo that being wedded to the soil, one barely ekes out a living and that money is the only road to a better life. He first tried to accumulate money by being thrifty. But this did not have any results. He decided to embark upon trade; in his case, it was hay. At first he tried to be honest, but little by little he defrauded his customers by filling his bales with rotten hay. He was apprehended and punished for his deed.

⁶⁵ Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 103.

⁶⁶ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 187.

Gavrilo, who was not embittered by his lot, sought to revenge himself on his fellow men. The chance came when Gavrilo caught a person hunting ducks in a state forest. He took it upon himself to arrest the hunter. Instead of being rewarded for this "deed," Gavrilo was punished for his arbitrary action, and was regarded by his fellow-villagers as a fool. Malice and envy were now growing rapidly in his soul, together with a great avidity for money. His life's philosophy became simple: "грабить надо, больше ничего".⁶⁷

In Gavrilo and Mikhailo Uspensky sees the typical post-emancipation peasant. Instead of emancipating the peasants, the new order actually enslaved them. Injustice, greed, and man's inhumanity to man, became the lot of the peasants. The Russian peasant finds the injustice of the new order of life worse. Now his own fellow-peasant is oppressing him, his brother is humiliating and punishing him.

Ivan Petrov, because of his disrespect to the village elder, was condemned to a flogging by the mir. The following is a description by Ivan of his flogging:

"Вот тут меня и растянули!.. Тут я потерял свой смысл, и стна, и совесть... Ну вот с этого времени я и потерял себя."

⁶⁷ Ibid., Vol. V, p. 190.

Всего себя потерял! Все мне тоска, свет не мил, двор
пустой... Только и есть кабаки".⁶⁸

The flogging killed in him any vestige of human personality and caused him to lose any belief in human justice.

The picture of the new peasant type portrayed by Uspensky is dark and pessimistic. Yet, Uspensky did not completely despair of the future. In this dark picture he could still perceive a ray of light which would come through the indefatigable work of the Russian Intelligentsia.

⁶⁸Ibid., Vol. V, p. 190.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

"В ком не воспитано чувство свободы
Тот не займет его; нужны не годы -
Нужны столетья, и кровь, и борьба,
Чтоб человека создать из раба".¹

Gleb Uspensky is undoubtedly one of the most interesting Populist writers in Russian literature. He combines within himself a strange union of two opposite elements—idealism and realism.

Uspensky accepted the "Mother-Earth" mystique as being an expression of the true life of the Russian peasant. In this respect he was a romantic. He believed that the peasant who was close to "Mother-Earth" was liberated from all the evils of modern civilization. At the same time, he was optimistic enough to believe that the hard lot of the Russian peasant could be improved by the efforts of the Intelligentsia.

Uspensky was in search of truth, justice and harmony, all his life. He dreamed of man's final attainment of

¹N.A. Nekrasov, Sochineniya, Moscow, 1959, Vol. I, p. 118.

perfection and the realization of an ideal, perfect society. This romantic dream found full expression in his literary works, where he exalted and idealized the power of the soil and its effect upon the peasant. While Uspensky was at heart basically a romantic, he did not refrain from levelling his criticism at the Populists and their naive romantic attitude towards the Russian peasant.

Uspensky did not overlook the actual life of the peasant in all its hardships and privations. In his literary works he did not yield to his romantic notions, so dear to the Populist world-view. In portraying the life of the peasant in the post-emanicipation village, he was completely objective and presented realistically the hard conditions that prevailed there. This was to him the best proof of the falsity of the Populist romantic world-view.

Uspensky's criticism of the Populists was that they idealized the Russian peasant out of all proportion and that they regarded him as "живой памятник всего, чего не увидишь в двадцати шести томах истории Соловьева".²

The fact was that they knew very little about the true nature of the peasant. In both their innocence and ignorance they believed that the Russian peasant was the

²G. Uspensky, Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 280.

Incarnation of truth, goodness, love and natural beauty, and in addition, a born revolutionary. It was Uspensky who disabused the Populists of their romantic notions by unmasking the peasant and by showing his real nature. He showed that the peasant was human, ignorant, and hard-working. Because of his strong attachment to the soil, the peasant came under its influence and developed certain characteristics and a mode of life peculiar to his agrarian environment. Uspensky succeeded in showing that the true peasant nature was basically conservative and anti-revolutionary. The peasant slavishly accepted external domination, whether it be his master or a government official or the village priest. This must have been a terrible blow to both the pride and the idealism of the Populists.

In Uspensky's works we see the Russian peasant as a hard-working person, solely devoted to the soil, who in spite of privations and hardships, managed to preserve in himself peace and harmony. These aspects of the Russian peasant greatly appealed to Uspensky and his admiration for the simplicity of the peasant life knew no bounds. He regarded these features as natural developments, almost mechanically, without any conscious effort on the part of the peasant.

"Народная жизнь в огромном большинстве самых величественнейших явлений удивительна, стройна, гармонична, красива ПРОСТО ТАК".³

It should be pointed out that Uspensky was not blind to the negative aspects of the Russian peasant. He was quick to note that the peasant was not the ideal, perfect man as visualized by the Populists. On the contrary, his individualism, apathy, disregard for his fellow peasants, cruelty, obedient and passive acceptance of power were shown to constitute part and parcel of his personality. Uspensky points this out quite clearly:

"Мы охотно верим в дурное влияние на деревню масс пришлых элементов, но никоим образом не можем только ими объяснить деревенского кулачества, то есть выделения среди деревенской массы личностей, эксплуатирующих эту самую массу. Беда именно в том и состоит, что кулачество - явление не наносное, а внутреннее, что это не пятно, которое можно стереть, а язва, органический недуг".⁴

It is obvious that Uspensky was unfavourably disposed towards the new conditions in the Russian village. He was very critical of the kulak, but at the same time did not hesitate to give his positive features. We see the kulak as a very strong and firm character, who stands

³Ibid., Vol. V, p. 216.

⁴Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 403.

apart from the mass of peasants. He is ambitious, has tremendous energy and is highly intelligent. He shows that he is quite independent of the soil mystique and fosters the idea of freedom and self-respect.

Uspensky's role as a Populist writer was considerable. He succeeded in disabusing Russian intellectuals of their romantic and Populist views, and eventually was responsible for the shaking of the very foundations of Populism. This he did by presenting the truth about the real nature of the Russian peasant. In the article Gor'kii Uprek⁵ he frankly admitted that the Populists had failed to prevent the development of capitalism in Russia.

"Мы все-таки не можем не видеть "сухой правды" нашей жизни именно в этом горьком упреке К.Маркса: мы лишаемся самого прекрасного случая, который когда-либо представляла народу история, чтобы не переживать ВСЕХ перипетий европейского зла".⁶

The sentiments expressed in this article were, of course, not shared by many of his contemporaries, who said that he was a "real hero"⁷ to have dared to state such

⁵This article was written as a comment on K. Marx's letter to Mikhailovsky. Printed in 1877 in "Otechestvennye Zapiski."

⁶Ibid., Vol. IX, p. 172.

⁷A Skabichevsky, Sochineniya, St. Petersburg, 1903, Vol. II, p. 82.

unpopular views.

In spite of the fact that many contemporary radicals regarded Uspensky as a conservative and even a reactionary, his popularity did not diminish during the seventies.

"Революционная молодежь, раскрывая "Отечественные Записки", искала прежде всего статью Михайловского и рассказ Успенского..."⁸

His stories reveal the bitter truth about the nature of the Russian peasant as well as his deep and sincere love for the plain people of Russia.

Uspensky's works are very popular in the Soviet Union, as may be seen from the new editions that are being published there. His works are mainly praised as the "художественные иллюстрации к трудам Ленина, посвященным развитию капитализма в России".⁹

Uspensky's literary works are a veritable "encyclopedia of the real life"¹⁰ of Russia during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Uspensky presents the actual life of the Russian peasant in a realistic manner, without any embellishment

⁸V.M. Figner, Polnoe Sobranie Sochinenii, Moscow, 1929, Vol. V, p. 477.

⁹I. Ryabov, Gleb Uspensky, Moscow, 1954, p. 83.

¹⁰O.V. Aptekman, Obshchestvennye Tipy v Sochineniyah G.I. Uspenskogo, in G.I. Uspenskiy (sbornik statei) "Nikitinskiye Subbotniki", Moscow, 1931 (trans. mine).

or exaggeration. He is sincere and objective in depicting the rural life in all its aspects. The rich, vivid language and his subtle humour greatly enhance the value of his work. The message of brotherhood, freedom and the inherent value of human personality, as found in his many stories, is still pertinent to the twentieth century as it was for nineteenth-century Russia.

To sum up, Uspensky's contribution to Russian literature is his particular genre, which consisted of stories in cycles connected by a central theme. By identifying himself with the large masses and by using their own language, Uspensky became the true people's writer. This undoubtedly accounts for his popularity among the Russian people even today. His literary style lacks artistic embellishment because of a journalistic manner of writing such as we find for instance in some of Chekhov's stories. He tends to be verbose and uneconomical in his descriptions.

We may therefore conclude that Uspensky's basic contribution lies in his faithful presentation of the life and nature of the Russian peasant and the Russian intelligentsia of the second half of the nineteenth century.

His works convey the important message: freedom is the most valuable feature of a human being which the majority of the Russian men do not possess. In Uspensky's

opinion the Russian man has to struggle within himself to destroy the inherited feeling of slavery and at the same time to fight to achieve his political freedom. Uspensky believes that the Russian intelligentsia will have the leading role in accomplishing this evolutionary and revolutionary task.

How difficult a task it was for the Russian man can be seen in the statement of M. Gorky in which he speaks about the same typical feature of the Russian man which was pointed out by Uspensky:

"Русский человек всегда ищет хозяина, кто бы командовал им извне, а ежели он перерос это рабье стремление, так ищет кому-то, который надевает себе изнутри, на душу, стремясь опять-таки не дать свободы ни уму, ни сердцу".¹¹

¹¹ M. Gorky, Istoriya Russkoi Literatury, Moscow, 1939, p. 259.

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