

УДК 94(477):[63:061.2 «189/190»]

DOI: 10.26565/2225-6505-2018-27-04

**THE “RUSSIAN GRAIN” AND AGRARIAN ORGANIZATIONS
IN THE EARLY XX CENTURY**

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Метою статті є вивчення діяльності товариства «Русское зерно» з розвитку сільського господарства Російської імперії. Автором проаналізовано, що воно було засноване для підтримки аграрної реформи П.А.Століпін. «Русское зерно» мало більш практичну спрямованість у порівнянні з іншими сільськогосподарськими товариствами. Дослідником звертається увага на те, що основний напрямок роботи включав стажування селян за кордоном у зразкових господарствах. Товариство співпрацювало з іншими аграрними організаціями. Автором зроблена порівняльна характеристика діяльності об'єднання «Русское зерно» з Петербурзькими зборами сільських господарів і Північним сільськогосподарським товариством. У статті також вивчені взаємини з громадськими аграрними організаціями українських губерній. «Русское зерно» активно пропагувало ідею про запозичення корисного і необхідного зарубіжного досвіду. «Русское зерно» припинило своє існування з розпадом Російської імперії в 1917 році. Автором зроблено висновок про ефективність і перспективність діяльності даної аграрної організації.

Ключові слова: товариство «Русское зерно», Російська імперія, сільське господарство, аграрні організації, українські губернії.

Целью статьи является изучение деятельности общества «Русское зерно» по развитию сельского хозяйства Российской империи. Автором проанализировано, что оно было основано для поддержания аграрной реформы П.А.Столыпина. «Русское зерно» имело более практическую направленность по сравнению с другими сельскохозяйственными обществами. Исследователем обращается внимание на то, что основное направление работы включало стажировку крестьян за границей в образцовых хозяйствах. Автором сделана сравнительная характеристика деятельности объединения «Русское зерно» с Петербургским собранием сельских хозяев и Северным сельскохозяйственным обществом. В статье также изучены взаимоотношения с общественными аграрными организациями украинских губерний. «Русское зерно» активно пропагандировало идею о заимствовании полезного и необходимого зарубежного опыта. «Русское зерно» прекратило свое существование с распадом Российской империи в 1917 году. Автором сделан вывод о эффективности и перспективности деятельности данной аграрной организации.

Ключевые слова: общество «Русское зерно», Российская империя, сельское хозяйство, аграрные организации, украинские губернии.

The purpose of the article is to study the activities of the “Russian Grain” society on the development of agriculture in the Russian Empire. The author analyzed that it was founded to support the agrarian reform of P. A. Stolypin. “Russian Grain” had a more practical focus than other agricultural societies. It was provided with all possible assistance from the government and the heads of the agricultural department. The researcher draws attention to the fact that the main direction of work included training of peasants abroad in model farms. Landowners had an opportunity to improve their knowledge and practice. The company cooperated with other agrarian organizations. The author made a comparative description of the activities of the association

“Russian Grain” with the Petersburg Assembly of Rural Owners and the Northern Agricultural Society. The article also explored the relationship with the public agrarian organizations of the Ukrainian provinces. The “Russian Grain” actively propagated the idea of borrowing useful and necessary foreign experience. The society had far-reaching plans. However, the situation was complicated by the consequences of the events of 1905-1907, the instability of the economy. The “Russian Grain” ceased to exist with the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917. The author made a conclusion about the effectiveness and prospects of the activity of this agrarian organization.

Key words: *the “Russian Grain” society, Russian Empire, agriculture, agrarian organizations, Ukrainian provinces.*

The history of public organizations that acted in the interests of agrarian development of different regions of the Russian Empire has not been sufficiently studied in historical science. In historical studies there are scattered individual references to the actions of certain associations or individual representatives of them [2, 3, 5, 9, 12]. One of the little studied is the experience of the “Russian Grain” society and its impact on the upswing of peasant farms.

In connection with the foregoing, the purpose of this article is to consider the emergence, program and theoretical attitudes, as well as the activities of the above-named society, its place in the system of other public organizations working in the field of agrarian transformations of the early XX century. The territorial framework covers the European part of the Russian Empire, chronological - the time of the existence of the “Russian Grain” society from 1908 to 1917.

The sources for our study are the documents of the Russian State Historical Archive (St. Petersburg). These funds are F.398 The department of Agriculture, F.403 The Society “Russian Grain”, F.448 Northern Agricultural Society, F.1571 Krivoshein Alexander, most of which is introduced for the first time in scientific circulation. Among the published sources, it is necessary to note the reports of agricultural societies, explanatory notes of their activities [1, 4, 6–8,11].

In the beginning of the XX century the public thought of Russia continued to seek effective ways to solve the agrarian question. The situation was complicated by the events of 1905-1907. Among the various organizations that contributed to the implementation of agrarian reforms in the country, it is necessary to note the agricultural societies. In the indicated period, they were massively opened throughout the country, including in the Ukrainian provinces. These were public associations engaged in educational and practical work. State and public figures sought the best form of such organizations for important transformations in the agrarian sector. One such company was the “Russian Grain”, founded on the initiative of P. A. Stolypin and with the support of A. V. Krivoshein. The strategic goal of this association was to promote the Stolypin agrarian reform by borrowing foreign experience. The name “Russian Grain” can be considered conditional, because the work was carried out in various areas of agriculture.

The “Russian Grain” society was established in 1908 (the charter was approved on September 2) under the chairmanship of P. A. Stolypin in order to promote the rise of agriculture. To fulfill its task, the society sent peasants abroad, as well as exemplary farms of the Russian Empire for practical study on the site of cultural management of agriculture and related crafts. Originally it was under the jurisdiction of the St. Petersburg mayor. In 1913, it was transferred to the Main Administration of Land Management and Agriculture. The first meeting of the founding members was held on November 9, 1908. The management bodies were the Council, the General Meeting and the Audit Commission. At its organization 52 permanent and temporary commissions were established. After the death of P. A. Stolypin, the “Russian Grain” was under the auspices of the head of the agricultural department A. V. Krivoshein. In 1913, the society joined the All-Russian Agricultural Chamber. In 1917, in connection with the change of the state system in Russia, it ceased its activity [14, f.1571, op.1, spr.52, ark.40].

The "Explanatory Note" noted that "the Society aims to promote, primarily to young people, the acquisition of knowledge and the study of cultural practices in the field of agriculture, agricultural crafts and crafts by providing them with places of pupils or workers from the owners of practitioners both in Russia and abroad" [6, P.1]. According to the members of the "Russian Grain" society, the current system of public education, upbringing and practical training in Russia required a radical change, or at least a substantial addition. In the opinion of the authors of the document, at the beginning of the XX century, all the activities of both the government and private institutions were directed primarily toward the elimination of scarcity of lands, strip farming, various financial, economic and other upheavals, as well as the mental development of the people with the help of schools and books. The members of the "Russian Grain" society, however, believed that apart from what has been said, it is extremely necessary to take care mainly of the purely practical education of the masses, the fostering of love for work, diligence and accuracy in them, and especially by accustoming them in a visual way to the newest cultural methods of agriculture". All this could be learned only in one school - the school of life. This school is more difficult than the ordinary one: therefore, for the reasonable and successful passage of its large population, it requires even more intensive efforts of the intellectuals and friendly support of the people themselves. The "Russian grain" takes the initiative in this great cause and expects from all citizens of the state extensive moral and material assistance" [6, P. 2].

At first, the "Russian Grain" set itself the immediate tasks. On the one hand, it was a search for owners with an exemplary cultural economy. On the other hand, the task was to choose capable young men who are striving to improve in this or that branch of labor. In every given case, the society ascertained detailed conditions for the placement of the selected young men as pupils or workers of the locality where the specialty chosen by the youngest flourished and where the most suitable climatic, soil and other living conditions were most favorable. After sending their pupils to their places, the society followed faithfully for their successes and facilitated their return to their homeland.

Already at the very beginning, support groups or individual clubs were formed (in accordance with paragraph 28 of the charter of the "Russian Grain" Society) in London, Paris, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Prague, Budapest, Lublin, Zagreb, and in some provincial and district cities of Russia. The founders of the organization hoped that in the future such branches would open in a number of cities of the Russian Empire [14, f. 398, op. 74, spr. 36, ark. 9].

Russian peasants annually went to practice and study tours (excursions) to Moravia, Denmark, the Baltic States and other countries. In 1911, nine people from the Valkovsky and Zmiev districts of the Kharkov province went to an excursion abroad [14, f. 403, op.1, spr. 12, ark. 21]. In 1914, 11 people were sent from Kharkov province and 14 people from Kherson. Most of the peasants were between the ages of 30 and 50. The main expenses for practice and training abroad were borne by the state. The total cost of an excursion to the Moravia and Bohemia for 10-12 days per person was 4545 rubles. For interns, the trip cost 87 rubles for everyone [7, P. 19]. Documents were issued with the assistance of the "Russian Grain" society. The cost of the internship depended on the country, duration of stay, living and nourishment conditions, travel, as well as the internship program itself. The foreign passport was issued quite quickly, as for the bureaucratic structures of the Russian Empire (from several days to a month). For those interns who traveled abroad through St. Petersburg, the capital tours were organized, including the Winter Palace. A special benevolent attitude to society was shown by A. V. Krivoshein, the chief governor of agriculture and land management.

During the excursion to the Moravia, Bohemia and Germany, peasants got acquainted with exemplary farms, agricultural schools, museums, laboratories and a dairy school. Much was held on personal ties, friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation. Special thanks to the representatives of the "Russian Grain" expressed to the chief guardian of the agricultural societies of Moravia, professor Y. A. Psot, who "born the whole weight of excursions on his shoulders" [14, f.403, op. 1, spr. 12, ark. 23]. The peasants, especially in large groups, were accompanied on a tour by

specialists. For example, agronomists of the Poltava province I. V. Lebedev and Kharkov – V. A. Yablonovsky [7, P. 18].

In general, the “Russian Grain” maintained close relations with local agrarian organizations, including the Ukrainian provinces. Over time, the number of trainees was planned to increase. This interaction took place in several forms. Agricultural societies were looking for peasants who wanted to take internships abroad, engaged in “advertising” this society in the province. Their goals coincided, because both organizations hoped for a result - changes in the consciousness of landowners. A weak place in the program of agrarian societies was small landownership. However, agricultural associations have retained the desire to work with peasant farms. The landlord savings were by then more advanced. In most cases, the latter could themselves, without significant government assistance, innovate. Psychologically and socially large farmers were ready for change. They could study foreign experience on their own. The rise of the middle, and especially of small peasant landownership, according to the plans of the founders of the "Russian Grain" society, was to create a revolution in agriculture, improve the skills of the agricultural population.

As the documents show, for all the time of “cultural exchanges” there was only one unfortunate incident. The peasant who came to Germany learned from his mentor-manager that he would still have to work on the farm as a pupil. The frightened “disciple” quickly folded things and returned home. Verily, the organizer of the trip punished lazy one with punitive sanctions. After all, labor in the farm was as valuable experience as excursions.

The reaction of the peasants was interesting to the possibility of overseas business trips and trips themselves. They agreed to these exchanges with caution, but after the return they “got inspired” with new ideas and tried to introduce what they saw abroad on their farms.

The situation changed after the outbreak of the First World War. Those peasants who, by the beginning of the war, were in Europe and the Baltic provinces, made various decisions regarding the continuation of their familiarization activities. Some of them even wanted to stay, for example, in the Moravia and Bohemia. Others through the Russian Embassy persistently tried to return to their families to their homeland [14, f. 398, op. 76, spr. 10, ark. 68].

One of the specific aspects of the work of the society was the work to assist interned interns and their families in Germany. In 1916, there were 62 interned interns. By the holidays they were sent gifts: tea, cigarettes, crackers. Agricultural department issued a benefit of 60 rubles per year, they were sent quarterly to an adult for 15 rubles. Rations were sent to the amount of 2,5 rubles per adult and 1,5 rubles per child for month [14, f.403,op.2,spr.13,ark.1,4].

As the archive materials show, the “Russian Grain” society hoped to continue work in the post-war period. So, already in 1916 an agreement was reached to send peasant trainees to the UK for training in the pig industry (in 1917). These plans were not implemented.

We must emphasize that the “Russian Grain” society differed from other agricultural associations, for example, the Petersburg Assembly of Rural Owners and the Northern Agricultural Society.

Thus, the very idea of organizing the «Petersburg Assembly of Rural Owners» (1864-1917) was borrowed from the experience of Europe, primarily Britain. For a long time, the Smithfield and Central Farmers' Agricultural Clubs successfully operated. Russia at that time had not got such an association, which had the features of a daily open club (from time to time gathering for business and scientific discussions). The agricultural department, when considering the issue of opening a new society, put only one condition: it should be called not a club, but an assembly. The Charter of the Society was signed by Alexander the II in 1863, but the factual activity began in the following one.

There were 55 people in the list of the assembly founders. V. I. Veshnyakov, B. A. Golitsyn, A. P. Zablotsky and others were among them. They were representatives of the local nobility, who lived in St. Petersburg. Many of the founders, occupied important positions in the administration, were scientists, banking and publishing. In the first years of its existence, the assembly had more than 600 members. In 1867, their number decreased to 400 people. Despite the fact that the wits

called the organization "potato club", the work was carried out not only among local landowners but also at the all-Russian level. Many members lived in St. Petersburg for official work or business. Therefore, when discussing any issues, the participants in the discussion referred to the conditions and practice of farming in virtually all areas of the country. And the problems were various, and had great importance. The meetings were convened only in the winter.

The Petersburg meeting of the rural masters carried out theoretical and practical work. The first was the description of various localities of the country in their natural-historical and agricultural aspects. In 1864, a large number of those present gathered a report of the entrepreneur V. A. Poletika (publisher of the «Birzhevyye vedomosti»), who raised the question "Is Russia an agricultural state?" The following year he also made a report on the importance of the railway in the development of Russian agriculture [10, P.9].

Practical activities of the St. Petersburg meeting of farmers were modest. In 1865, the joint-stock company «Rabotnik» was established on the initiative of N. V. Cherneyev. It had offices abroad, sold agricultural equipment and machines to the landlords. A scholarship was established for the training of agronomists. In November 1867, at his initiative, a congress was held, at which the question of agrarian education was discussed. The congress was attended by representatives of science and agricultural societies. For practical lessons, it can also be attributed the awarding of the winners of agricultural testing competitions (for example, I. M. Gedeonov), the publication of popular agricultural literature. On the whole, it must be stressed that the problems of the meetings tended to gradually shift from broad themes to narrow ones. These adjustments were made by life itself, which requires the interaction of science and practice. Meetings of 1902-1905 had on the agenda mainly special agro- technical topics.

Thus, in comparison with the "Russian grain", the Petersburg meeting of rural masters was elitist. For a long time, the admission to society was limited. Membership in this organization was used for patronage, acquaintance and networking. Participants in the St. Petersburg Assembly of Rural Owners were engaged in leisure activities, including board games and banquets. Already at the turn of the century, the nature of the work of this society began to change gradually. In general, the evaluation of the activities of this club is contradictory. Thus, these two societies had the same goals, but different forms of work, and both contributed to the progress of the country's agriculture.

The Northern Agricultural Society was a brilliant example of a "classical" agricultural society (1880-1924). It did not have the status of the All-Russian. However, the scale of its activities could be attributed to regional or provincial. The association served 16 provinces of the north of Russia [14, f.448, op. 1, spr. 305, ark. 66]. The "office" of the Northern Society was also located in the capital. This facilitated the work on the coordination of actions with the agricultural department, gave close contacts between the employees of both organizations guaranteed timely and sufficient income of financial resources. In general, the society was more democratic in its composition. Although its members consisted mainly of large and medium-sized landowners, independently operating their own economy and existing at the expense of profits from agricultural production. Covering a wide range of issues (agriculture, livestock, experimental and forestry crafts, etc.), the Northern Society was comparable to most of the "average" agrarian organizations of the country, including in the Ukrainian provinces. Compared with it, the society «Russian Grain» had a narrow focus. It preferred not quantity, but quality worked for the future. And on the whole, serious government support gave tangible results. If the "Russian Grain" was the "brainchild" of P. A. Stolypin and A. V. Krivoshein, then the Northern Society relied on broader sections of the rural intelligentsia, scientists, officials and landowners.

The Northern Agricultural Society existed for more than 40 years as a large cultural and educational organization. The main task of its activity is measures to improve agriculture. It worked during the NEP. The Bolsheviks used the specialists of this association to raise the country's agrarian sector (in other conditions and other methods).

Thus, the comparative characteristics of the activities of the company "Russian Grain" with the Petersburg Assembly of Rural Owners and the Northern Agricultural Society testifies that the

“Russian Grain” first of all concentrated its efforts on actively propagating the idea of borrowing useful and necessary foreign experience. Thanks to his activities, including in the Ukrainian provinces, in the first place, peasants had the opportunity to improve their knowledge and practice. From the Ukrainian provinces, the most active participants were the representatives of the Kharkov and Kherson provinces. The documents of the company confirm that it had far-reaching plans, seeking to deploy work for a long-term perspective. The results of its activities achieved in the prewar period were promising. In our opinion, it was the events of 1914–1917 did not allow the society to turn into one of the “weighty players” of agrarian transformations.

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