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Russian Agricultural Societies of the Late 19th – Early 20th Centuries in the Assessments of the Contemporary

*Rosyjskie towarzystwa rolnicze u schyłku XIX i na początku XX w.
w opinii współczesnych*

ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to the views of A. G. Shcherbatov on the role, tasks and significance of the agricultural societies of the Russian Empire at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. Shcherbatov was the Chairman of the Moscow Imperial Society of Agriculture and an official of the Ministry of Agriculture. His position largely determined the ideology of agrarian public organizations. He contributed to the formation of state policy in agriculture. A. G. Shcherbatov considered agricultural societies a simple and effective way to solve the agrarian question in Russia. The agrarian public organizations performed many functions. The most important task A. G. Shcherbatov considered was to improve the commercial profitability of agricultural societies and their competitiveness on the market. Their activities became more effective with the support of the state and zemstvos. Regional agricultural societies had their own specifics. Prior to the First World

PUBLICATION INFO			
			e-ISSN: 2449-8467 ISSN: 2082-6060
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SOURCE OF FUNDING: Financed from the author's own funds			
SUBMITTED: 2018.06.20	ACCEPTED: 2020.01.15	PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2020.12.21	
WEBSITE OF THE JOURNAL: https://journals.umcs.pl/rh		EDITORIAL COMMITTEE E-mail: reshistorica@umcs.pl	

War, these agrarian associations achieved significant results. The program of A. G. Shcherbatov on agricultural societies was to some extent realized.

Key words: agricultural societies, Russian Empire, A. G. Shcherbatov, agriculture, public organizations, Ukrainian provinces

An important factor in the positive changes in the agricultural sector of the Russian Empire in the late 19th and early 20th century was the existence of agricultural societies [hereinafter: AS]. They were massively created after the reforms of the 1860s and 1870s in almost all regions of the country. For a long time, there were disputes among the officials, zemstvo members, landowners, and professional agrarians about the aims and tasks of agricultural societies. The study of the contribution of these associations to the progress of agriculture and their significance in terms of changing public consciousness remains an urgent task for modern science.

The chronological scope of the article includes the period of the late 19th – early 20th century, the time of dynamic activity of the AS. The territorial framework covers the Russian Empire and, above all, the Ukrainian provinces.

The first publications about AS appeared in the 19th century and are represented by a wide range of literature. These are anniversary editions¹ and the books by experts, dedicated to certain aspects of the activity of these organizations². The works of the leading figures of the AS, in particular, A. G. Shcherbatov³ are, in this case, the most interesting.

In Soviet times, little attention was paid to the importance of the AS. It was considered that these public organizations hardly influenced the development of the agricultural sector of the country⁴. However, some

¹ *Историческая записка об учреждении Московского общества сельского хозяйства и воспоминания о действиях и деятелях Общества за истекшие 75-летие (1820–1895 гг.)*, ed. А.П. Перепелкин, Москва 1895; *Исторический обзор 50-летней деятельности Императорского сельскохозяйственного общества Юга России*, ed. М.П. Боровский, Одесса 1878.

² Е. Гордеенко, *О положении сельского хозяйства и земства в Харьковской губернии*, Харьков 1885; Б.С. Грабовский, *Краткий очерк 25-летней деятельности Минского общества сельского хозяйства*, Минск 1901; Р. Лец, *Между крупным заводским хозяйством и аграрным вопросом*, Сумы 1906; И.М. Рева, *Задачи сельскохозяйственных обществ и Киевское общество сельского хозяйства и сельскохозяйственной промышленности*, Киев 1891.

³ А.Г. Щербатов, *Значение и задачи сельскохозяйственных обществ*, Москва 1898; *idem*, *Сельскохозяйственные общества*, Москва 1894; *idem*, *Содействие московского земства сельскому хозяйству*, Москва 1911.

⁴ А.Д. Степанский, *Общественные организации в России на рубеже XIX–XX вв.*, Москва 1982.

issues, such as agricultural credit, were studied by Soviet historians⁵. After 1991, the works, including dissertations, the authors of which began to evaluate the activities of the AS more positively, have been published⁶. The main attention in these publications was paid to problems that can be combined with the theme 'the history of science and technology', while the actual social aspect of the activities of the AS remained in the dark.

In recent years, the monographs have been published in Russia in which agricultural policy in the country has been analyzed, its significance and consequences have been reinterpreted⁷. The work by A. A. Kurenyshev, dedicated to the Moscow Agricultural Society, which is characterized with new approaches. In his research, the entire period of existence of the all-Russian public organization was comprehensively studied. The author positively described the role of A. G. Shcherbatov as the Chairman of the Moscow Agricultural Society. A. A. Kurenyshev made conclusions about the gradual democratisation of the membership of the agrarian society and the achievements of the Moscow AS in the implementation of the agrarian reforms⁸.

The sources for this article are archive documents⁹, as well as the published statistical collections, address-calendar books, etc.¹⁰

The purpose of the research is to study the opinion of A. G. Shcherbatov on the tasks and significance of the activity of the AS.

The agricultural societies were the agrarian community organizations. 'Вольное экономическое общество' ('ВЭО') is considered to be the first such association in the Russian Empire. On the territory of the Ukrainian provinces, the first was the Imperial Society of Agriculture of the South of

⁵ А.П. Корелин, *Сельскохозяйственный кредит в России в конце XIX–начале XX ст.*, Москва 1988.

⁶ Б.Н. Миронов, *Социальная история России периода империи*, vol. 2, Санкт Петербург 2000; В. Колесник, *Подільське товариство сільського господарства і сільськогосподарської промисловості (1896–1918 рр.)*, Вінниця 2007; Л.М. Крот, *Роль земств Лівобережної України в модернізації сільського господарства (1864–1914 рр.)*, Київ 2009, self-review of the candidate's thesis.

⁷ А.П. Корелин, *Кооперация и кооперативное движение в России (1860–1917 гг.)*, Москва 2009; В.С. Дякин, *Деньги для сельского хозяйства (1892–1914 гг.)*, Санкт Петербург 1997.

⁸ А.А. Куренышев, *Сельскохозяйственная столица России. Очерки истории Московского общества сельского хозяйства (1818–1929 гг.)*, Москва 2013.

⁹ Rossiyskiy Gosudarstvennyy Istoricheskiy Arkhiv [hereinafter: RGIA], f. 398, f. 1571; Tsentral'nyy Gosudarstvennyy Istoricheskiy Arkhiv Ukrainy (g. Kyev) [hereinafter: TGIAU], f. 442; Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Khar'kovskoy Oblasti [hereinafter: GAKhO], f. 237; Gosudarstvennyy Arkhiv Odesskoy Oblasti [hereinafter: GAOO], f. 22.

¹⁰ *Справочные сведения о сельскохозяйственных обществах*, ed. В.В. Морачевский, Санкт Петербург 1911; А. Головки, *Сельскохозяйственные общества Харьковской губернии*, Харьков 1910.

Russia (Odessa), founded in 1828. Other ASes in the Ukrainian provinces were opened in the post-reform period. The most active provincial societies were AS in Poltava (1866), Kiev (1874) and Kharkov (1880). Provincial AS had branch offices. For example, the Kharkov AS has opened branches in Zmiyev and Kupyansk. Subsequently, their number increased. Some branches have become independent ASs. All-Russian AS ('ВОО', Imperial Moscow AS, All-Russian Society of Gardeners) spread their influence on the territory of Ukrainian provinces. In addition to general AS (in many areas of activity), there were also specialized ones: horse breeding, animal husbandry, horticulture, hop growing, viticulture and winegrowing, and others. On the Right-bank Ukraine the AS opened later. On the whole, the Ukrainian provinces had their own features. First, the Ukrainian provinces were a developed region of the Russian Empire, which left an imprint on the overall picture of economic life and activities of these public organizations. Secondly, the southern provinces, connected through the port of Odessa with major international trade, had experience of business activities on the market. Third, the national and social structure of landowners – activists of the ASes differed by regions. Thus, the members of the Right-bank Ukraine ASes were mainly Polish landowners. Fourth, the representatives of the AS were loyal to the existing system (with a few exceptions after the events of 1905–1907). They based their activities on the issues of education and economic transformations in the country.

If we consider the periodization of the activities of the AS, including the Ukrainian provinces, then they became relatively widespread (by the number of AS and their members) in the 1880s. Agrarian public associations gradually shifted from elite noble to all-class ones. To a certain extent, their numerical growth was the result of increased state funding, awareness of the leading officials of the Department of Agriculture of the importance of AS as a method to raise the country's agriculture, and the desire to avoid starvation in the future.

The activity of the AS was influenced by objective and subjective factors. The first ones include the state of agriculture in the Russian Empire, financing, the needs of the domestic market and the demands of international trade, the competition of the countries that produced agricultural products. Subjective factors comprise the enthusiasm of public activists, differences in mentality, mutual understanding and support of landowners, and the state policy in the agricultural sector.

The agricultural societies were founded as educational, but then gradually shifted from 'pure science' to practice. As time passed, their work covered a wide range of issues. The mechanism of the structure of the AS was simple. Local landowners united on the basis of common

interests, mutually beneficial cooperation. The employment of rural owners, the specifics of rural production, which required constant presence and care, did not allow them to actively 'advertise' their activities. Therefore, public opinion in Russia did not always pay attention to them. Nevertheless, the problem of the functioning of the AS was discussed in Russian society. This discussion was held at all levels from ordinary members of the AS to prominent state and public figures. So, the most interesting viewpoints on the significance, aims and tasks of the AS had been expressed by the Ministers of the Agricultural Department A. S. Yermolov, A. V. Krivoshein, writer I. P. Kapnist, the Secretary of the Odessa AS I. G. Palimpsestov, and the President of the Imperial Moscow AS A. G. Shcherbatov.

A. G. Shcherbatov¹¹ offered his program during the speeches at all-Russian agricultural congresses, agricultural exhibitions in different regions of the country, in the Ministry of Agriculture (as the head of the main Department of Horse Breeding), at meetings in Zemstvos. He prepared and published a number of works on agricultural topics, including ones specifically dedicated to the AS.

A. G. Shcherbatov developed the following problems:

¹¹ Alexander Grigoryevich Shcherbatov (1850–1915) – Prince, Russian statesman and public figure, economist, publicist, and traveller. Born in Saint Petersburg in a noble and rich family, the son of the Trustee of the Saint Petersburg school district, Prince G.A. Shcherbatov (1819–1881), the grandson of the Moscow military Governor-General, hero of the Patriotic war of 1812, Prince A.G. Shcherbatov (1776–1848). Received a good home education, knew several foreign languages. During the Russian-Turkish war of 1877–1878 he worked as the Commissioner of the Red Cross for the Ruschuk detachment in the Balkans and was awarded the order of St. Prince Vladimir of the 4th degree.

Prince A.G. Shcherbatov devoted a lot of time to agriculture. In 1892, he was elected President of the Imperial Moscow Agricultural Society. He worked in this position for 13 years. He contributed to the development of horse breeding in the Russian Empire. Horse stud farms of Prince A.G. Shcherbatov were suppliers of horses for the Imperial Court. He was also engaged in other social activities. So, in 1883–1891 he was elected Ruzsky uyezd Marshal of nobility of the Moscow province, in 1883 – was granted the rank of Kamer-Junker of the Highest Court, and in 1891 was appointed Commissioner for public works of the Samara province to help the hungry, in 1904 was appointed the Chief Commissioner of the Red Cross during the Russian-Japanese war.

He was an opponent of the Stolypin reform. A.G. Shcherbatov considered cooperation of small farms on the basis of the existing traditional community as a means to increase agricultural productivity. For him, Denmark's agriculture was an example for imitation. A.G. Shcherbatov's creative legacy: the books *Обновленная Россия; Государственно-народное хозяйство России в ближайшем будущем; Способы увеличить производительность крестьянского хозяйства*. With the beginning of the First World War, A.G. Shcherbatov became one of the founders of the 'Russian Union of Trade and Industry'. He was engaged in charity work, helping the front and the wounded. Alexander Grigoryevich Shcherbatov died in 1915.

1. Aims, tasks and significance of AS. Agrarian associations as a source of public initiative and a means to solve the issue of reforming and raising the country's agriculture.
2. AS and the state, their financing.
3. The place of AS in the structure of agricultural institutions.
AS as experts in discussing agricultural issues and technical assessment;
AS as the representatives of both a separate branch and a territory.
4. The relationship between AS and the Zemstvos.
5. AS and small-scale land ownership. Various forms of agricultural associations: AS, syndicates and associations. Holding congresses of rural owners.
6. The role of all-Russian AS.
7. Questions of commercial efficiency (sales, profit, loans, competition of other countries, etc.).
8. Problems of borrowing foreign experience.

According to A. G. Shcherbatov, agricultural societies were of primary importance for the development of agriculture. He referred to a wide range of issues as the tasks of the AS: increasing crop yields, profitable sales, improvements in animal husbandry, development of experimental business, etc. In his opinion, the importance of the AS was that these agrarian organizations should be a source of public initiative on the ground and a simple and effective means of reforming and raising the country's agriculture. Indeed, the results of the activity of these societies were significant at the beginning of the First World War. This was reflected in the quantitative growth of the AS, its specialization, involvement of the representatives of small land ownership into the work, a variety of initiatives, increased professionalism, economic profitability, and laying the foundations of an experienced business.

A. G. Shcherbatov particularly emphasized the importance of the public initiative that came from the AS: 'It is recognized as an axiom that in any enterprise and especially in agricultural, the success of the business depends above all on personal initiative and skill. It is recognized by the second axiom that the community action significantly increases the efficiency. And finally, the third axiom is that the simpler the solution of a large issue, the more correct it actually is'¹².

These three axioms were the foundation of the AS. The work of the AS

¹² 'Признано за аксиому, что во всяком предприятии, и между прочим и в сельскохозяйственном, успех дела больше всего зависит от личной предприимчивости и умения. Другой же аксиомой признается, что общность действия значительно увеличивает производительность. И, наконец, третья аксиома, что чем проще решение крупного вопроса, тем оно оказывается на деле наиболее верным'. А.Г. Щербатов, *Значение*, р. 2.

was based on the ability of the people in charge of the case. However, the mass of rural owners was so inactive and uninterested in their business that they did not understand either the significance of the AS or the value of agricultural machinery. A. G. Shcherbatov believed that not all rural owners were mentally and socially ready for transformations in the country. Some of them took a passive approach. However, the emerging market and the competition of the countries that produce agricultural products have become serious stimuli to reconsider their views. Agrarian public organizations, as well as other voluntary associations in the Russian Empire, became another factor in the implementation of reforms.

The next issue, which was reflected in the journalism, was the relationship between the AS and the state, and the financing of these organizations. Agricultural societies reported to the Department of Agriculture of the Ministry of Agriculture. As public organizations, they were guided by the Charter in their activities. After 1866, they were under the dual control of the Ministries of Agriculture and Internal Affairs.

The majority of AS, especially local (rural) had limited resources. Their budget consisted of membership fees, low profits from events (such as exhibitions), and private donations. It was possible to conduct commercial operations and develop an experienced business only with stable and sufficient funding. The Department of Agriculture provided annual subsidies. They were given for specific events (for example, an experimental field). Some amounts were transferred to the AS for the maintenance of its staff and mandatory expenses (salary of the secretary of the society, publication of newspapers, magazines, etc.). Part of the funding was provided at the local level. Most of the local expenses of the AS were paid by the zemstvos. In the 1890s, as a minimum, the Department of Agriculture recognized for each province the need to pay for the work of an agronomist, construction of an experimental field, and the maintenance of one secondary and several lower agricultural educational institutions. Accordingly, the central funding provided assistance to AS, created agricultural committees, maintained higher agricultural educational institutions, experimental fields, stations and laboratories engaged in scientific research.

However, throughout the studied period, the lack of funds remained one of the main problems of the AS. A. G. Shcherbatov on this occasion believed that it is necessary that the activities of the AS, to a certain extent, should be managed by the government, in order to give them a direction from the point of view of the state. In this regard, the establishment of the Ministry of Agriculture (1894) was an important point on the way to regulating the network of AS. Actually, this is how A. G. Shcherbatov

assessed this fact. 'These are the main principles on which state and public assistance to the development of agriculture should be based. And when there is no agricultural production and localities that do not have their own special institution that takes care of its agricultural needs, when the whole country is covered by a network of AS with strictly defined tasks and committees, when more general issues are discussed at Central congresses and in AS, then the state activities to promote agriculture will be on solid ground, and the successful and correct development of this sphere will be ensured'¹³.

However, he understood that in agriculture, where success depends on good will of individuals, orders and statements can be harmful to the cause. And he also saw the main strength of the Ministry of Agriculture in 'moral influence and the concern for the needs of agriculture'¹⁴. Government structures had important information and accumulated experience at their disposal. The Agricultural Department could give to any local agricultural society all necessary information about the state of affairs somewhere abroad or in another part of Russia. The Ministry of Agriculture also influenced the AS through the distribution of subsidies.

According to A. G. Shcherbatov, such cooperation could be achieved by such measures: 1. By notifying the AS in advance of the issues to be considered by the agricultural Council in such a way that the agricultural societies submit its proposals on these issues; 2. By giving the AS of various tasks of interest to the Ministry of Agriculture with the provision of necessary funds for agricultural machinery, as well as for sales, arrangement, and participation in exhibitions; 3. By annual convenes at the Ministry of Agriculture of the meeting of the AS chairmen to jointly discuss how best to perform the tasks assigned to them in order to develop conditions for the distribution of the annual amount assigned for the organization of exhibitions and for subsidies.

Among the issues discussed were the following: the place of the AS in

¹³ 'Вот те главные начала, на которых должно быть основано государственное и общественное содействие развитию сельского хозяйства. И когда не будет аграрного производства и местности, которые не имели бы своего специального учреждения, заботящегося о его сельскохозяйственных нуждах, когда вся страна будет покрыта сетью СХО со строго определенными задачами и комитетами, когда более общие вопросы будут обсуждаться на центральных съездах и в СХО – тогда государственная деятельность по содействию сельского хозяйства станет на твердую почву, и будет обеспечено успешное и правильное развитие этой сферы'. А.Г. Щербатов, *Сельскохозяйственные*, р. 7.

¹⁴ 'нравственном влиянии и заботе о нуждах сельского хозяйства'. RGIA, f. 1571, inv. 1, ref. no. 52, sheet 39.

the structure of agricultural institutions, the role of members of the AS as experts in discussing agrarian issues. ASes as representatives of not only the special industries, but also of territories.

If we talk about the place of the AS in the structure of agricultural institutions, then the opinions of officials, landowners and agrarians differed. A. G. Shcherbatov considered ASes to be institutions that can give an expert assessment and be, in fact, local bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture. In practice, the situation was more complicated, since these public organizations performed various functions, including representation in government bodies. It should be noted that until the 1890s in the Russian Empire the territorial AS (corresponding to the administrative division of the country) prevailed. This circumstance was one of the reasons for inactivity of the AS and the lack of sympathy and interest in them from the rural owners. Administrative-territorial units were often characterized by such a variety of agricultural conditions (often opposite or mutually exclusive) that the members of the AS corresponding to such zoning did not have a basis for common activities. At the beginning of the 20th century, the branch principle of division of the AS (including specialization) was recognized as more appropriate than the administrative-territorial one.

The absence at the AS of one dominant interest, which it could focus its activities on, and rural business owners were involved to participate in the common activity – became one of the causes of low productivity of the work and apathy of farmers for various activities of agrarian organizations at all. Some ASes were aware of this disadvantage and wanted to artificially create a 'live interest'. This explained the noticeable desire of part of the AS to give its activities commercial or commission character.

According to A. G. Shcherbatov, it was necessary to consider specialization as the main condition for reviving the efforts of the AS, so it was desirable to create AS with special tasks. For example, the organization of partnerships in the dairy business, the production of fine wool, flax, etc. Research and discussion of improved techniques for each of these industries (with a well-established subsidiary economy) brought together all representatives of each of these industries and contributed to the introduction of practical guidelines and techniques developed by science. Experience had shown that activities in this direction undoubtedly had a beneficial effect on the entire system of agricultural production. Proper activity of the AS was a sign of high development and education of agricultural classes and had been always accompanied by the use of modern agricultural machinery. In particular, this was due to the success of the AS in the Baltic provinces. According to A. G. Shcherbatov, the only local bodies of the Ministry of Agriculture could be only the agricultural societies. Where

there were no ASes, at the command of the Ministry of Agriculture temporary committees were to be created from local rural owners until there was an understanding among the local population about the need for AS.

An important issue was the relationship between the AS and the zemstvos. A. G. Shcherbatov believed that the role of zemstvos in relation to the AS was primarily in financing and mutually beneficial cooperation. Zemstvos could not be the representatives of agricultural interests. His reasoning was as follows:

1. 'The complexity of the duties assigned to the zemstvo institutions does not allow them to devote enough time to the consideration of every agricultural issue in its entirety.
2. Participation in zemstvo institutions of representatives of classes are not agricultural and have nothing to do with agriculture.
3. The complexity and peculiarity of the conditions that affect the public choice, which took into account not so much the qualities of the landowner, but the general economy or personal moral qualities, or authority in the society.
4. Combining economic and administrative functions in zemstvo institutions.
5. The timing of the activity of zemstvo institutions to the administrative divisions of the country has nothing in common with the economic division'¹⁵.

He believed that when developing technical issues, specialists-agrarians should be given the freedom to discuss and make decisions.

A. G. Shcherbatov criticized the proposal to consider zemstvos as local agricultural bodies. Zemstvo institutions, as we know, consisted of elected delegates that passed through one, two, or even three ballots to achieve their position. The zemstvo institutions had economic responsibilities for the area, but not exclusively agricultural ones. So, there was a huge difference between the two activities. A person can be very economical in building a house, in managing a hospital, in arranging roads, but he can be a poor farmer. Therefore, he believed that the zemstvo could conduct its

¹⁵ '1. Многосложность обязанностей, возложенных на земские учреждения, не дающая им возможности посвящать достаточно времени на рассмотрение аграрных вопросов во всей их полноте. 2. Участие в земских учреждениях представителей классов не земледельческих, ничего общего с сельским хозяйством не имеющих. 3. Сложность и особенность условий, влияющих на выбор гласных, при которых учитывались не столько качества хозяина-землевладельца, а общая хозяйственность или личные нравственные качества, или авторитет в обществе. 4. Совмещение в земских учреждениях функций хозяйственных с административными. 5. Приуроченность деятельности земских учреждений к административным делениям страны, ничего общего с делением хозяйственным не имеющих'. RGIA, f. 1571, inv. 1, ref. no. 101, sheet 1.

economic affairs very well and, at the same time, solve agricultural issues poorly. An example of this was the food issue, which, in his opinion, should have been resolved differently. 'For the zemstvo, the food issue is not to provide food to the population during the famine years, but to raise its productive forces by improving agricultural machinery'¹⁶. A. G. Shcherbatov noted that for the rich population one or two crop failures did not matter, that the best example was those provinces in which the AS and the zemstvos went hand in hand (for example, the Imperial Society of Agriculture in the South of Russia and the Odessa zemstvo).

There were few agricultural specialists in the zemstvos. First of all, this was due to the election procedure. A. G. Shcherbatov drew attention to this: '[...] everyone knows that in zemstvo elections, election balls are placed by people who are impartial, such people who, in their opinion, will most correctly and fairly decide public affairs. Another significant contingent elects the members of their party who would defend the private interests of their electorate. Where is it to agricultural interests? And when, after a double or triple voting, the provincial zemstvo council is recruited, it is only a matter of happiness and very rare happiness that a rural professional should join it. The chances of such happiness are diminished by the consideration that a true rural professional, devoted to his work, will find neither the time nor the desire to expose himself to all these hardships'¹⁷. In addition, the created economic or agricultural Council, to which local farmers were invited, was presided over not a man, elected by rural owners, and but a member of local administration or person invited by the administration. Accordingly, the program of questions was drawn up not in the interests of agriculture, but under the influence of one or another direction of the Zemstvo Assembly or Council. The Council was convened not at a more convenient time for the rural owners, but at a convenient time for the administration. It is unlikely that in this order,

¹⁶ 'Для земства продовольственный вопрос состоит не в обеспечении продуктами питания населения в голодные годы, а в поднятии его производительных сил посредством улучшения аграрной техники'. А.Г. Щербатов, *Содействие*, pp. 5, 6.

¹⁷ '[...] всем известно, что при земских выборах избирательные шары кладутся людьми беспристрастными, такими лицами, которые, по их мнению, будут наиболее верно и справедливо решать общественные дела. Другим же значительным контингентом избираются лица своей партии, которые бы отстаивали частные интересы своих избирателей. Где же тут до сельскохозяйственных интересов? А когда после двойной или тройной баллотировки набирается состав губернской земской управы, то это дело только счастья и счастья весьма редкого, чтобы в состав ее вошел сельский хозяин. Шансы на такое счастье убавляются еще тем соображением, что настоящий сельский хозяин, преданный своему делу, не найдет ни времени, ни охоты подвергать себя всем этим мытарствам'. *Ibidem*, p. 6.

noted A. G. Shcherbatov, it was possible to hope to collect rural owners at the administration. However, they were still more overwhelmed by the fact that their decision was not immediately enforced but was criticized in the Council and the Zemstvo Assembly, which could easily cancel the best initiatives.

The only explanation for the opinion that the zemstvo should solve agricultural problems and be a local body of the Ministry of Agriculture was that it had financial resources at its disposal. Defending his position, A. G. Shcherbatov compared the role of zemstvo in education and medicine.

A. G. Shcherbatov believed that the program of activity of the AS should not depend on external conditions and external influences, including zemstvo: 'The technically correct developed program, even if it is not executable at this time and under certain circumstances, still serves the cherished goal that should be kept in mind when performing it in parts, and practical activities are protected from serious mistakes'¹⁸. He puzzled his contemporaries: 'Why is there a completely different question about agriculture? Because our social consciousness has not yet grown to the understanding that agriculture is a science and an art, and not just a craft or a rest from other works. And that it requires hard efforts, great observation, and a lot of special knowledge. Why not give the zemstvo the same importance that is attached to it in relation to medicine and factory industry?'¹⁹.

Thus, he concluded that the role of zemstvo in agriculture is executive. Assistance from zemstvo to agriculture should be in the following aspects: agricultural education, arrangement of experimental fields, invitation of special instructors, support to a local AS. This work should be assigned to zemstvo as an indispensable duty under the program and according to the estimates developed by the Ministry of Agriculture.

A. G. Shcherbatov insisted that it is impossible even to agree with the timing of special agricultural institutions to zemstvo institutions in the form of agronomic councils, guardianship, etc. The mere fact that the

¹⁸ 'Выработанная технически правильная программа, хотя бы и не выполняемая в данное время и при известных обстоятельствах, все-таки служит той заветной целью, которую следует иметь в виду при выполнении ее по частям, причем практическая деятельность ограждается от серьезных ошибок'. *Агрономическая помощь в России*, ed. В.В. Морачевский, Петроград 1914, p. 240.

¹⁹ 'Почему относительно сельского хозяйства совершенно другая постановка вопроса? Оттого, что наше общественное сознание не доросло еще до понимания, что сельское хозяйство есть наука и искусство, а не только ремесло или отдых от других занятий. И что оно требует усиленного труда, большой наблюдательности и много специальных знаний. Отчего не придать земству такого же значения, какое придается ему относительно медицины и фабричной промышленности?'. RGIA, f. 1571, inv. 1, ref. no. 52, sheet 41.

appointment of questions for discussion and the presentation of reports must go through the councils and zemstvo meetings presented a great deal of inconvenience. The activity of these councils and trustees, aimed at fulfilling certain tasks, was involuntarily narrowed and instead of an independent comprehensive discussion of issues, it was reduced to the role of consulting institutions.

Finally, these agricultural organizations, dependent on zemstvo institutions, were undoubtedly influenced by personal relations, so that only the owners who had some contact with zemstvo took part in them, and many active owners who did not take part in public life remained aloof. Under the influence of the general administrative and economic nature of zemstvo activities, special agricultural bodies associated with them could lose their character of a well-known specialty and have a subordinate character.

Not everyone agreed with this understanding of the role and tasks of zemstvos. In addition, in practice, zemstvos often implemented a local agricultural development program. Thus, economic, agricultural and trustee councils were created, but their productivity and consistency of work with the AS differed in different provinces²⁰.

Another problem was the participation of small landowners in the AS. In relation to it, A. G. Shcherbatov's views on the community were reflected. He was an opponent of P. A. Stolypin's agrarian reform. He considered agriculture in Denmark to be a role model.

Some public figures rightly reproached the AS for representing only the interests of large and medium-sized land ownership, but not the interests of small farmers. And in order for the AS to have state significance, they must also support the interests of peasant land ownership. But even with the full implementation of these assumptions, due to the peculiarities of the Russian economic system, in which most of the land belonged to the mass of small owners on the rights of community or farmstead ownership, it is difficult for small landowners to have their representatives in the proposed agrarian organization because of their lack of literacy and large number of people.

The same conditions that caused the need for some government guardianship in matters of public administration made it necessary to organize the study and discussion of the needs of small land ownership on the initiative and with the close participation of the state authorities. However, A. G. Shcherbatov cautioned that the necessary participation

²⁰ RGIA, f. 398, inv. 75, ref. no. 12, sheets 7–8; TGI AU, f. 442, inv. 641, ref. no. 704, sheets 8–9.

of central and local authorities should not be of any interference. 'On the one hand, it should be explained that the peasantry of Russia is mainly an agricultural class. It is capable of farming, in many localities it sought to improve its system of agriculture, and therefore did not so much need external incentives to such from outside and agricultural training, as in assistance and guidance on the path already worked out by itself, and most importantly in attentive attitude to its needs and possible satisfaction. On the other hand, it should also be remembered that in agricultural activities any unnecessary interference from outside is ultimately reduced to regimentation, which kills the business, but does not give it life. Only with the personal conscious activity of the rural owners themselves, the most flexible and applicable to a variety of cases, it is possible to avoid it in a timely manner, without significant losses, frequent mistakes in any existing business. Raising agriculture should be based on developing farmers' sense of self-reliance and mutual assistance, which give them the necessary energy and initiative'²¹.

In journalism, they also discussed the actual organizational issues of the AS: the forms of agricultural societies (syndicates and associations), the holding of congresses of rural owners.

There were various forms of agricultural associations. A. G. Shcherbatov defended the position that agricultural syndicates cannot replace AS. Real agricultural syndicates are the offspring of the AS. Such syndicates could be revived only after the rural owners, through frequent communication in their own circle and joint discussion of special issues, got to know each other well, studied each other, and came to a common ground and action. This situation developed in the Kiev Society of Agriculture and Agricultural Industry. So, B. I. Khanenko founded the agricultural syndicate for

²¹ 'С одной стороны, следует пояснить, что крестьянство России было преимущественно земледельческим сословием. Оно способно к хозяйствованию, во многих местностях стремилось к усовершенствованию своей системы земледелия, а потому не столько нуждалось во внешних стимулах к таковым извне и сельскохозяйственному обучению, сколько в содействии и указаниях по выработанному уже им самим пути, а главное во внимательном отношении к его потребностям и возможном их удовлетворении. С другой стороны, следует тоже помнить, что в сельскохозяйственной деятельности всякое излишнее вмешательство извне в конце концов сводится к регламентации, которая убивает дело, но не дает ему жизнь. Только при личной сознательной деятельности самих сельских хозяев, наиболее гибкой и применяющейся к разнообразным случаям, возможно избежать своевременно, без значительных убытков частых во всяком живом деле ошибок. Поднятие сельского хозяйства должно основываться на развитии у земледельцев чувства самостоятельной деятельности и взаимопомощи, которые дают ему необходимую энергию и предприимчивость'. RGIA, f. 398, inv. 74, ref. no. 6, sheet 23.

the sale of grain abroad through the port of Odessa²². Although in the Russian Empire there were many examples where just because of the lack of training, the so-called agricultural syndicates turned out to be only trade or commercial enterprises. This was due to the fact that they had fallen into the hands of people who had nothing to do with agriculture, or because they were arranged by people who were called rural owners (who own land), but who were aliens to the agricultural industry in their interests. Syndicates could only serve to enrich individual people away from agriculture. According to A. G. Shcherbatov, the effective and broad activity of AS is a condition and a sign of the proper development of the agricultural industry.

He believed that it was generally more convenient and expedient to discuss the needs and conditions of a particular agricultural area at properly organized agricultural congresses. They should be conducted within a certain time frame, not by administrative division of the country, but by areas of agriculture. In the second half of the 19th century, three annual congresses were held in three main regions of the Russian Empire: Northern forest-field, Central agricultural and Southern fallow (the last included the Ukrainian provinces). In order for the congresses to be more effective, it was necessary that the program be prepared professionally and competently. The questions were not meant to be random, but to be selected according to pressing local needs. The very formulation of questions needed to be clear, exact and definite, so that different interpretations, misconceptions and misunderstandings were not allowed.

But more than in any other sphere, in agriculture (the main aim of which is to achieve practical results, i.e. the benefits of an industrial enterprise), one can expect the direct participation of rural owners and actual benefits only if the activities of the AS and the holding of congresses were based on practice and gave noticeable results. On the reasons for the lack of vitality of the AS and the low effectiveness of congresses in the second half of the 19th century in the Russian Empire, A. G. Shcherbatov recognized the lack of funds for the proper business organization of the first and the lack of bodies that would take into account and be able to implement the issues raised at the congresses and implement their decisions. These circumstances explained the distrust of public opinion in the activities of the AS and the congresses, which in many cases was really caused by the lack of practical development of the action program and the achievement of evident results.

²² Б.И. Ханенко, *Доклад Совету Киевского общества сельского хозяйства и сельскохозяйственной промышленности за 1891 год учрежденного при обществе временного комитета*, Киев 1892, p. 4; GAOO, f. 22, inv. 1, ref. no. 302, sheet 24.

Thus, according to A. G. Shcherbatov, the rapprochement of rural owners could be achieved by the following ways and means. First, by the AS and agricultural congresses, i.e. agricultural bodies whose task was either to apply agricultural science to local agricultural practices and to local conditions, or to find out in which direction and in what way state assistance is desirable. Second, by agricultural syndicates and associations. Such institutions that worked together for a common commercial benefit. In syndicates, the achievement of such a benefit meant a community of actions without direct material participation of their members in the enterprise. Agricultural associations were quite suitable for the general type of trade associations.

The role of all-Russian AS. A. G. Shcherbatov worked for some time (1892–1905) as the Chairman of the Imperial Moscow Society of Agriculture. As the head of the all-Russian AS, he was able to observe and test his ideas in practice and to be guided by experience. In general, he positively assessed the role and influence of all-Russian AS on the regional ones throughout the country. A. G. Shcherbatov was a good businessman and a highly qualified specialist in the field of agriculture.

At the highest government institution, which is given to take care of the interests of the agricultural sector, the work of the AS, which discussed agricultural issues throughout the country, should undoubtedly develop. The close connection that existed between the government's activities to promote agriculture and the efforts of all-Russian societies has always been recognized by the government and confirmed by the financial support of the state Treasury.

There is no doubt that the state assistance to the agricultural sector, based on all-Russian AS, has always found a lively and active help in them. The research and experiments carried out by the AS were subjected to competent criticism or distributed as an instructive example to the mass of rural owners. And thus, they certainly brought more significant benefits to the development of agriculture than their publication in the press. Finally, the value of the government subsidy given to the AS was increased by the fact that it caused gratuitous labour and private donations to expand the business. Philanthropy also extended to local AS events (such as exhibitions).

The activities of all-Russian AS, remote from local interests and not directly related to the case as local or special societies, undoubtedly had a different character from them. The task of the central societies is to discuss agricultural issues from a more general and more scientific point of view than societies with more highly specialized tasks can do. But in order that the activities of the central societies should not be limited to theoretical

discussions, but also have practical significance, they should involve not only representatives of agricultural science, but also the most prominent rural owners in their activity. The most fruitful participation of these people in the affairs of the AS should be ensured by the establishment of all subsidiary institutions that were necessary tools of agricultural science. The experimental field, the chemical laboratory, the experimental station for animal husbandry – these are the most important of them. No less, if not more, it was necessary to organize a competent consultation at the AS, which could pre-develop the issues to be discussed and express its opinion on them from a scientific point of view. This consultation included specialists in animal husbandry, botany, chemistry, soil science, entomology, and mechanics.

Questions of commercial efficiency (sales, profits, loans, competition from other countries, etc.). According to A. G. Shcherbatov, the abovementioned issues were among the most important in the activities of the AS in the period under study. It is the profitability and competitiveness in the foreign market that solved the question of the meaning of existence and was an indicator of the degree of economic expediency of AS.

AS can be considered as a means to 'survive' in the foreign market and withstand competition from other countries that produce agricultural products. A. G. Shcherbatov suggested various ways to solve the problem. These include profitable sales, preferential terms of transportation by rail, loans, etc.

Under the right conditions of sale and production, only those people who had an active agrarian organization could survive the economic struggle for existence. In the period under study, the fate of people was decided not on the battlefield, but on the world markets. One of the main tasks of the AS was to ensure profitable sales of agricultural products. This is all the more important because in fact in Russia, with cheap land and labour, there should not be an agricultural crisis. Indeed, if we compare the prices paid for the same items by the Russian buyer with the prices on foreign markets, we will find such a huge difference, going nowhere, that with direct relations between the places of production and the markets, rural owners could benefit from a significant increase in the price of goods and consumers from an equally significant decrease in sales prices. Thus, the task of the AS is to eliminate the causes of such an abnormal phenomenon and thus enable rural owners to take an active part in the storage, movement and trade of agricultural goods.

A. G. Shcherbatov believed that the profitability of sales has always been a condition for raising agricultural machinery. After all, agriculture has a solid base only if it is based on a commercial calculation.

No improvement made on a farm without a direct monetary benefit can be considered appropriate for its purpose. This means improving processing, purchasing new machines, melioration of the estate, and improving cattle breeding. It is necessary to make a preliminary precise calculation on paper what profit will be made from this and whether the cost will be profitable. Only under such conditions is it possible to protect yourself from major technical errors, since in industry in general and in agriculture in particular, the best expertise and evaluation is market expertise and evaluation. If there is a demand for raised livestock, wool, and grain and a profit is obtained from their sale, then agriculture is on the right path. These goods are devalued – this farm does not keep the right direction or goods are of poor quality.

Profitable sales are encouraging for all participants in the agricultural enterprise. If it is possible to give out more remuneration to employees, attract better forces to the business, it is more pleasant for the owner to introduce various improvements and spend money on the estate. In it, there is an interest in the business and initiative, many years of experience and skill. If there are no sales, prices are unprofitable, an owner is first to give up. He tries to make up for the shortcomings by saving in expenses, refuses to make technical improvements, reduces the salary of employees. And the overwhelming effect of low prices permeates the entire agricultural organism from top to bottom. For these reasons, the AS should have kept in mind, first of all, not questions about agricultural education, not questions about various technical improvements, but the question of ensuring profitable sales.

A. G. Shcherbatov drew attention to the cost and conditions of movement of agricultural goods by rail. The railway business in the 19th century was still new in Russia. Therefore, it is not surprising that the institution at the head of it had difficulty coping even with the technical side of the case. According to A. G. Shcherbatov, in the commercial sphere, with rare exceptions, it often proved to be insufficiently effective. In the commercial world, the urgency of delivery and conformity of goods to samples is always considered the absolute basis for the efficiency of the business. The railway departments did not always do either of these things correctly. Only the village owners themselves could help in this case. The experience of the Kharkov Society of Agriculture and Agricultural Industry can be called instructive. This was the first time in the Russian Empire that a special railway transport bureau was opened by the AS. Specialists of the Kharkov AS signed contracts between landowners and the Southern railway for the timely transportation of goods. In case of delays in the delivery of agricultural goods, the Railway Department paid fines to rural

owners. This system lasted until the beginning of the First World War, and then was cancelled due to the complexity of the wartime²³.

In addition, the task of the AS is to find out how to organize the compliance of agricultural products with the requirements of the markets and achieve the highest possible quality of goods not only at the production sites, but also when they are delivered to the market. It is also important to find out the minimum amount of overhead costs in the form of rail fares, sea charters, trade, and commission costs.

Closely related to sales questions was the issue of preferential and long-term credit and the related issue of special warehouses. The credit allows rural owners to wait for the most convenient time to sell their goods. 'In the absence of such credit, we can name many cases where the owner lost 50 kopecks from the Rubel or paid 60% per annum by an untimely sale, while at the same time having enough grain and other goods for their turnover'²⁴.

Problems of borrowing foreign experience. The study and use of foreign experience played a significant role in carrying out progressive changes in agriculture. Almost all public figures were unanimous in this. As a man of progressive views for his time, A. G. Shcherbatov did not consider the Russian Empire disconnected from the rest of the world. Traveling a lot around the world, he noticed and analysed foreign experience. First of all, what would be useful for his country.

In the period under study, The English Royal AS was worthy of imitation for holding congresses. It held part of its annual meetings in various places of Great Britain. This satisfied the need for congresses. The meeting of the Royal AS was all the more important because all the rich material created by many years of experience and the work of scientists, provided in a particular area at the disposal of landowners to explain their needs and ways to meet them. These meetings, in the form of their conduct very similar to the congresses, realized the main task of the English Royal AS, expressed by the motto: 'Practice with Science!'.

'There is no need to philosophize on the simplest of questions when the simplest solution of the question is the most correct. In this case, too, we have seen great progress in the agriculture abroad. We have seen the same thing in the Baltic provinces, that everywhere it is accompanied by proper agricultural organization. AS is the only way to raise agriculture. If they

²³ GAKhO, f. 237, inv. 1, ref. no. 1, sheet 124.

²⁴ 'При отсутствии такого кредита можно назвать много случаев, где хозяин несвоевременной продажей терял 50 коп. с рубля или платил 60% годовых, имея в то же время по ценности их достаточно зерна и другого товара для своего оборота'. RGIA, f. 1571, inv. 1, ref. no. 52, sheet 28.

do not exist, they must be created; if their activities are unproductive, they must be revived'²⁵.

It was deemed useful to borrow the necessary experience of other countries as well. As a good example of solving the problem of small peasant land ownership, he pointed at the agricultural organization in Saxony. It was divided into administrative units among 12 agricultural districts. In addition to ordinary activities, each society had a large number of peasant agricultural associations in its district. Every year the society hosted a Congress of representatives of these associations. And thus, the needs of smallholdings were clarified. In the Russian Empire, the beginning for such associations was loan and savings associations or peasant agricultural artels. Such associations mainly consisted of well-to-do peasants and landowners. In these associations, with the participation of an agronomist or one of the local rural owners, peasant agricultural needs were discussed, and then annual congresses of their representatives were convened at the AS.

CONCLUSION

A. G. Shcherbatov's opinion about the AS was authoritative. As the Chairman of the all-Russian AS and a Ministerial official, he defined the ideology of these societies. A. G. Shcherbatov contributed to the formation of the state policy in the agricultural sphere. The productivity of his ideas was quite high. The future showed the correctness of his views. A. G. Shcherbatov adequately assessed the economic situation in the country and the position of these societies in the structure of Russian agricultural life. He outlined the program for raising the agricultural sphere of the state, in which a significant role was assigned to the AS. His views were implemented to a certain extent. A network of agrarian public associations was established throughout the Russian Empire. In practice, they have proved their importance in the transformations of agriculture.

(translated by Margarita Sviridova)

²⁵ 'Нет необходимости философствовать в самых простых вопросах, когда наиболее простое решение вопроса наиболее верное. Так и в данном случае мы видели за границей громадные успехи в сельском хозяйстве. Мы видели то же самое и в балтийских провинциях, что всюду оно сопровождается правильной сельскохозяйственной организацией. СХО – единственное средство поднять сельское хозяйство. Если их нет, надо их создать, если их деятельность непроизводительна, надо ее оживить'. А.Г. Щербатов, *Значение*, р. 10.

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STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł poświęcony jest poglądom A. G. Szczerbatowa na rolę, zadania i znaczenie towarzystw rolniczych Imperium Rosyjskiego na przełomie XIX i XX w. Był on przewodniczącym Moskiewskiego Towarzystwa Rolniczego oraz urzędnikiem Ministerstwa Rolnictwa. Jego pozycja w znacznym stopniu determinowała ideologię społecznych organizacji agrarnych, jak również przyczyniała się do formowania polityki państwowej w odniesieniu do rolnictwa. A. G. Szczerbatow uważał, że towarzystwa rolnicze są prostym i efektywnym sposobem na rozwiązanie problemów agrarnych w Rosji. Tego typu organizacje spełniały różnorodne funkcje. Za najważniejsze zadania A. G. Szczerbatow uznawał rentowność towarzystw rolniczych oraz ich konkurencyjność na rynku. Działalność takich towarzystw stawała się bardziej efektywną przy wsparciu ze strony państwa oraz ziemstw. Regionalne towarzystwa rolnicze miały swoją specyfikę. Do początku I wojny światowej działalność organizacji agrarnych doczekała się znaczących rezultatów. Program A. G. Szczerbatowa dotyczący towarzystw rolniczych został zrealizowany w określonym stopniu.

Słowa kluczowe: towarzystwa rolnicze, Imperium Rosyjskie, A. G. Szczerbatow, rolnictwo, organizacje społeczne, gubernie ukraińskie

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