

## **NOVGOROD BRANCH OF THE PEASANT LAND BANK**

The problem of peasant land shortage in the Novgorod province in the late XIX century continued to be one of the most important. The reasons for this were laid in the consequences of the agrarian reform of 1861, which proved to be a difficult test for the peasant population, especially for the former serfs. First of all, it affected the size of their plots. If until 1861 the average size in the Novgorod province was about 9 desiatinas (desiatina – 1,09 hectare) of land for all categories of peasants (46.6 % of peasants had allotments of 5-8 desiatinas), then after the reform its average value fell to 5–6 desiatinas in 57 % of peasants, 20.3 % – had allotments of 6–7 desiatinas, in General, allotments decreased in 60-70% of the peasant population of the province [1, 2, 3]. In conditions of low soil fertility and harsh climate of the province, this amount of land for farming was clearly insufficient. In a similar situation by the early 80-ies of the XIX century there were 650 villages of the province [4].

The reform of 1861 also did not take into account the natural increase of the rural population, which by the 80s of the XIX century in the Novgorod province was 15–22 % [2, 5], and the number of landless peasants in 1884 reached 22.3 % (46 201 people) [6].

In this regard, the peasants tried to buy land at any opportunity presented to them. For 20 years – from 1863 to 1882 – peasant land ownership in the province increased by 430 thousand desiatinas (more than in any other province during this period) [6], however, this number was still clearly insufficient. The wider acquisition of real estate was complicated by the lack of funds, both for individual households and for entire rural societies. Thus, the opening of a branch of the Peasant Bank in the province, designed to assist peasants in improving their own economy, was very necessary and timely.

In the Novgorod province the Bank branch was opened in 1885, but its activity in comparison with other branches was relatively poorly developed even in the most active first years of its work. Of the 127 million rubles issued by the Bank in the loan to 1898, the share of the Bank branch of the Novgorod province accounted for only 1 million 79 thousand rubles [7]. Especially lively for the local branch of the Bank were 1886-1888, when the purchase of land with the assistance of the Bank amounted to 29 thousand desiatinas per year, and the loan – up to 200 thousand rubles per year. [7].

The first 5 years of his work were not only the most active, but also the most fruitful - issued more than half of all pre – war period loans (1885-1914) –1/3 of the total amount of land acquired with the assistance of the Department Thus, the main task assigned to the Peasant Bank in the Novgorod province, apparently, was performed in 1885-1890 years, when the bulk of the peasants who wanted and had the opportunity to purchase land, took advantage of the services of the local branch. After that, the Bank's activity both in Novgorod province and in the country shows a clear decline in consumer activity.

The approximate calculation of the total amount of land acquired by the peasants of the Novgorod province with the assistance of the local branch of the Peasant Bank for the period 1885-1913, exceeds 300 thousand desiatinas [6, 8, 9]. However, this figure does not look so large in comparison with the total amount of land purchased by the peasants of the Novgorod province by 1917. With almost 2 million 897 thousand desiatinas of allotment land, they purchased about 1 million 835 thousand desiatinas (63.5% of allotment) [10, 11], that is, with the assistance of the Bank – only about 1/6 of the part.

Thus, the Novgorod branch of the Peasant land Bank did not provide significant assistance to the local peasant population in the acquisition of land property for the entire period of its existence.

#### Literature

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