

Combine harvester “Yaroslavets” on the “bureaucratic fields” of the late Soviet era

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The turn of 1970s and 1980s was the period of the most severe crisis of the agricultural industry in the USSR. One of its most obvious signs were catastrophic transport and technological problems. «There still was lack of combine harvesters and tractors required for harvesting. In 1980, examination of 1,249 absolutely new agricultural machines revealed that only 8 of them met technical requirements»¹. Major domestic scientists pointed out the poor mechanization of the Soviet agriculture². Facing the deficiency and low quality of agricultural machinery, leaders of some regions of the RSFSR tried to solve the problem of agricultural mechanization using their own resources, through co-operation of local production structures. For example, in the second half of 1970s, the leadership of Yaroslavl Region came forward with the initiative of entering the batch manufacturing of forage harvesters suitable for waterlogged soils of this region. The production of «Yaroslavets» self-propelled forage combine harvesters (YASK-170) was arranged in close co-operation with directors of the largest production facilities on the site of Avtodizel Motor Plant. These harvesters were later recognized to be among the best in their class³.

The initiative of development and introduction of a new, high-performance combine harvester directly resulted from the instructions of the USSR leadership. Several sections of one of the most important documents of the 25th Communist Party Congress “The main lines of the USSR national economy development for the period from 1976 until 1980” referred to the necessity of developing the production of quality agricultural machinery. Thus, the provisions of Section II “Development of industry” related to the development of tractor and agricultural manufacture stated: “To arrange for production of agricultural machinery for crop farming for the amount of 2.8 billion rubles in 1980. The particular attention should be paid... that harvesting machinery manufactured should allow to preserve the quality of farm products. Develop the pro-

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¹ S. Schattenberg Leonid Brezhnev. The greatness and tragedy of man and the country. Moscow, 2018. P. 348.

² L. N. Denisova Dying Russian countryside: the Non-Black Earth Region in 1960-1980s. Moscow, 1996; M. A. Beznin, T. M. Dimoni Personal allotment as the indicator of withering away of agrarian society in Russia // Voprosy Istorii. 2019. Vol. 1. No. 12. P. 84—96.

³ M. A. Rutkovsky, L. M. Rutkovskaya Fifty years of the economics of Yaroslavl: early 1960s until 2010. Yaroslavl, 2011. P. 49.

duction of powerful machinery for... forage wafering". The document section related to union republics specified for "increasing of the volume of industrial products by 35—39% in the RSFSR. To arrange subsequent development of manufacturing of live-stock and crop farming machinery, tractors and agricultural machinery. To increase the production of high-performance grain combine harvesters and potato harvesters"⁴. The problem retained its significance five years later. M. A. Suslov's archive collection contains an interesting document — «Draft report to the Politburo concerning the five-year plan. October 3, 1981». It listed the differences between resolutions of the recent 26th Party Congress on the agricultural machinery («Main areas» section) and assignments of a new five-year period: «Let's just turn to the draft plan and we will see there a number of significant deviations from the «Main areas». The Plan does not provide for production of a high-duty cultivating tractor and a new grain harvester»⁵.

This article seeks to reconstruct the mechanisms of technological decision-making in the late socialism period⁶. The process of furthering of technological initiative (arrangement of batch manufacturing of «Yaroslavets» forage combine harvester) from the regional level to the union republic centre was studied in terms of regional lobbying phenomenon using comparative analysis of archive documents and verbal historical data. Such combined analysis of classical historical sources and interview data⁷ is to reveal new aspects in study of scientific and technological policy⁸ and mechanisms of interaction of regions and the centre in the late Soviet period.

The source base of our study consists of several main groups: unclassified archive documents of the Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, the Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History that were introduced into scientific discourse for the first time. First of all, these are documents of management and record keeping related to operation of both supreme party and state authorities of the union republic level (decrees of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, minutes of meetings of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, official letters of ministries and reports of departmental commissions) and regional soviet and party structures (official notes and letters of Yaroslavl regional committee and regional executive committee to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, "Folder of a deputy to the Supreme Soviet").

I conducted non-formalized semi-structured interviews⁹ of five representatives of

⁴ Materials of the 25th Communist Party Congress. Moscow, 1976. P. 190, 224.

⁵ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, collection 81, list 1, file 224, sheet 32.

⁶ The term «late (or late Soviet) socialism» is interpreted as «the period of about 30 years of the Soviet history from the end of Stalin's era until the beginning of perestroika (restructuring) (early 1950s — mid-1980s) when the Soviet system was considered by the majority of Soviet people and foreign observers as a powerful and solid system» (*A. Yurchak* It was forever until ended. The last Soviet generation. Moscow, 2014. P. 36).

⁷ *Yu. S. Nikiforov* Synthesis of classical and interdisciplinary methods in study of regional problems of the contemporary Russian history (1950—1980s) // *Vestnik of Kostroma State University*. 2019. No. 2. P. 79—85.

⁸ For example, see *A. B. Bezborodov* The power and scientific and technological policy in the USSR in the period from the mid-1950s till the mid-1970s. Moscow, 1997.

⁹ Audio records and transcribed texts with acknowledging signatures of interviewees are from the personal collection of the author. They were published in the form of educational book for students of the history department of Yaroslavl State Pedagogical University: *Yu. S. Nikiforov* The contemporary Russian history reflected in the interviews of regional elite: from the USSR to Russia through the lens of cultural memory. Yaroslavl, 2018.

local soviet and party leadership in 2017–2018 as part of the study. They were the Chairman of the Regional Council of Veterans T. N. Kolpakov (regional committee secretary for agriculture in 1970–1980s), the Chairman of office of the Russian Children's Fund S. N. Ovchinnikov (deputy chairman of the regional executive committee in 1970–1980s), I. A. Tolstoukhov (the first secretary of Yaroslavl city committee in 1979–1985, the first secretary of regional committee in 1986–1990), the Director of the Museum of Yaroslavl History V. V. Velichko (regional committee first secretary assistant in 1970–1980s), the professor of pedagogical university N. P. Voronin (rector of Yaroslavl State Pedagogical Institute named after K. D. Ushinsky, regional committee secretary for ideology in 1980s). The data obtained allow to reconstruct multiway combinations, which preceded management decision-making at the highest authority level and which are not often reflected in archive documents.

Describing historiography of this issue, we should mention fundamental monographs both general¹⁰ and immediately related to the scientific and technological policy¹¹. The monograph including interviews of paramount leaders of planning structures of the late USSR and the article containing the detailed analysis of management decision making procedure upon creation of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR¹² are of the particular interest. Scientists continually turned to the problem of bureaucracy in management decision-making. For example, describing the scientific and technological policy of 1960s, A. B. Bezborodov indicated a great number of structures involved in making of scientific and technological decisions: the State Committee of the Council of Ministers of the USSR for scientific research coordination, Academy of Sciences, Ministry of Higher and Secondary Vocational Education, other ministries and departments¹³. Archive documents show that the situation was still at least at the same bureaucratized level by the mid-1980s. Thus, the memorandum of the Deputy Director of the Central Economic and Mathematic Institute Yu. V. Yaremenko «Problems of formation of sectoral structure of economics in the long run» dated September 3, 1984 found in the N. I. Ryzhkov's fund, stated «excessive departmental centralization... when local initiative is inhibited»¹⁴. Regional policy in the USSR became the subject of study many times. Among the most fundamental works we should mention the publications of O. V. Khlevnyuk¹⁵. Note that a significant number of works on this subject, including collections of documents, are connected with the years of I. V. Stalin and N. S. Khrushchev¹⁶. However, re-

¹⁰ R. G. Pikhoya *The Soviet Union: history of power. 1945–1991*. Novosibirsk, 2000; V. A. Shestakov *Social and economic policy of the Soviet state in 1950s — mid-1960s*. Moscow, 2006.

¹¹ E. T. Artemov *Scientific and technological policy in the Soviet model of late industrial modernization*. Moscow, 2006; A. B. Bezborodov *The power and scientific and technological policy in the USSR...*

¹² Yu. Olsevich, P. Gregory *The Planning system in retrospect: analysis and interviews with the USSR leaders of planning*. Moscow, 2000. E. T. Artemov *Decision making in the Soviet management system (the case of creation of the Siberian Branch of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR)* // *Ural Historical Journal*. 2011. No. 3. P. 129–138.

¹³ A. B. Bezborodov *The power and scientific and technological policy in the USSR...* P. 123.

¹⁴ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, collection 653, list 1, file 39, sheet 387.

¹⁵ O. V. Khlevnyuk *The Regional power in the USSR in the period from 1953 till the end of 1950s. Stability and conflicts* // *National History*. 2007. No. 3. P. 31–49; O. V. Khlevnyuk *N. S. Khrushchev's fatal reform: division of the party apparatus and its results. 1962–1964* // *Russian History*. 2012. No. 4. P. 164–179.

¹⁶ The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party of the Bolsheviks and regional party committees, 1945–1953 / Prepared by V. V. Denisov, A. V. Kvashonkin, L. N. Malashenko, A. I. Minyuk, M. Yu. Prozumenshchikov, O. V. Khlevnyuk. Moscow, 2004; N. S. Khrushchev's regional policy. The

cent years show increasing interest in subsequent periods, major source studies of L. I. Brezhnev's period, including those related to his personality, were published¹⁷. It seems that Brezhnev's regional policy, which is characterized by foreign scientists as «confidence and protectorate» (S. Schattenberg) or «staff credibility» (Y. Gorlizki)¹⁸, objectively contributed to some rise of local leaders and their relative independency with respect to the centre. It's no coincidence that we may say about formation of the phenomenon of «political long-livers» among first secretaries in the large part of the USSR regions as from the second half of 1960s¹⁹.

It is necessary to refer to the term “lobbying” used upon setting the objective of this study²⁰. We consider the following definition to be the most capacious: «System and practice of realization of interests of various groups of citizens through organized influence on legislative and administrative activity of state authorities»²¹. Since the days of the USSR, this term has had a negative connotation and has been usually associated with events occurring in the Western countries, in particular, in the USA: «Underhand, hidden activity of representatives of different political circles, organizations seeking for a certain decision through the pressure, influence on lawmakers and other officials. Lobbying is characterized by behind-the-scene over-organization, persistent inclination to pursuing goals, commitment to the interest of narrow groups»²². However, similar features may be found in the Soviet management practice as well. Thus, the art of lobbying is shown as the key to success in relations with the centre in interviews of representatives of local leadership in 1960—1980s: «The possibility to solve resource problems of the region depended to the leader's ability, skills to «get limits»; «all new facilities that were not connected with defence required lobbying for the interests»²³.

Lobbying, at the same time, is an unformalized phenomenon and often illegal. In combination with the long tenure of regional leaders in office it led to inevitable psychological corrosion and professional deformation. Numerous letters of citizens with complaints against the first secretaries of party committees, which are stored in the Russian State Archive of Contemporary History fund “Subdivision of letters of the general department of the CPSU Central Committee (1953—1991)” demonstrate the growth of embezzlement of public funds, favoritism, abuse of discretion, corruption and moral degradation in the leaders' environment. For example, it is emphasized in a letter from a CPSU member, comrade M., that the staff of Kalininsky regional committee “spend more time on hunt and women than on work”, and that appoint-

Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR and local party committees. 1953—1964 / Prepared by O. V. Khlevnyuk, M. Yu. Prozumenshchikov, V. Yu. Vasilyev, Y. Gorlizki. Moscow, 2009.

¹⁷ L. I. Brezhnev. Working and diary records. In 3 volumes. Moscow, 2016.

¹⁸ S. Schattenberg Leonid Brezhnev. The greatness and tragedy of man and the country. Moscow, 2018; Gorlizki Y. Too much trust: regional party leaders and local political networks under Brezhnev // Slavic Review. 2010. No. 69.

¹⁹ For example, see Yu. S. Nikiforov The upward and horizontal movement: career trajectories of the leaders of the Upper Volga Regions in the late USSR // Klio. 2020. No. 10. P. 110—120.

²⁰ A. E. Binetsky Lobbying in the modern world. Moscow, 2007; V. A. Lepekhin Lobbying. Moscow, 1995; A. P. Lyubimov The history of lobbying in Russia. Moscow, 2005; N. N. Menshenina The political process: introduction to analysis. Vladivostok, 2001; S. P. Peregudov Corporations, society, state: evolution of relations. Moscow, 2003; A. I. Solovyov Political communications. Moscow, 2007; P. A. Tolstykh The lobbying practice in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. Moscow, 2006.

²¹ N. N. Menshenina, M. V. Panteleeva Lobbying. Yekaterinburg, 2016. P. 52—53.

²² Lobbying // Political Dictionary / Edited by V. F. Khalipov. Moscow, 1995. P. 79—80.

²³ Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 8, 20.

ment to office is done “based on loyalty, friendship and conspiratory relationships connected with theft and debauch”²⁴. All this happened against the background of the growing crisis phenomena in the life of the state and society. «Folder of a deputy to the Supreme Soviet», a very interesting source, tells about the problems of the specific region. In particular, the materials of the folder of Loshchenkov F.I., who was the first secretary of Yaroslavl regional committee, gave an extremely pessimistic vision of the social and economical dynamics: «Slow technical modernisation and mechanization, a high rate of manual labour, reduction in the number of workers, decline of production, high employee turnover, deterioration of capacity utilization, high loss of working hours (an increase from 0.54% in 1975 to 0.84% in 1980), social conditions and welfare of workers (accommodation)... poor supply of raw materials, shortage of components»²⁵. The last detail attracts special attention - that particular problem hindered the development of technological initiatives and projects, their successful implementation.

Turning to the research subject, I will refer to Kolpakov's interview, who spoke about the details of YASK-170 (“Yaroslavets”) harvester creation: “The harvester design itself was supervised by the chief designer of Yaroslavl Motor Plant G.D. Chernyshev. An engineering sample was ready by the harvesting campaign of 1978: it was tested in the extreme conditions of a very moist summer. Five more harvesters were produced during the winter”²⁶. Loshchenkov informed the chairman of the Council of Ministers A.N. Kosygin about this technological initiative in a letter dated November 13, 1978: «Striving to make their own contribution into implementing the decisions of the Plenum of CPSU Central Committee held in July, the workers of Yaroslavl association Autodiesel in a proactive manner in a short time frame created «Yaroslavets» self-propelled forage harvesters (YASK-170), which passed operational check». The reference to the implementation of a decision of a union republic center is an obligatory detail of any regional request. Further, the letter shows how argumentation system was formed, which was aimed at convincing of the project relevance. Competitive advantages of the new model were noted: «Tests revealed that «Yaroslavets» harvester showed a performance 25% higher in mowing the herbage of perennial grass than that of KSK-100 produced by Gomselmash and E-280 produced in the German Democratic Republic». High efficiency and reduction of economic costs were underlined («it replaces 4 rotary mowers KIR-1.5, releases 4 tractors and 3 mechanizers during forage conservation»), as well as low cost of domestic components («the harvester structure provides for components, which are serially produced by domestic industry, including abundant diesel YaAZ-M206 produced by Yaroslavl association Avtodiesel»). Finally, the local specifics was shown («critical need of agriculture in the field of... technology which meets the peculiarities of work in the Non-Black Earth Region /«Nechernozem'e»²⁷»). Similar argumentation was in place in another letter of the first secretary - to the deputy Chairman of Council of Ministers of USSR V.N. Novikov. The regional committee reported that “Yaroslavets” harvesters fully meet the peculiarities of operation in the unfavorable conditions of the Non-Black Earth Region /«Nechernozem'e» of RSFSR”, with an emphasis on “the urgent need

²⁴ Russian State Archive of Contemporary History, collection 100, list 5, file 241, sheet 40.

²⁵ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 82, sheets 12–13.

²⁶ Yu.S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... p. 31–48.

²⁷ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 3.

of the regional agriculture in high efficiency forage harvesters” and the possibility of the manufacturing facilities to produce 200—250 such harvesters in 1980. Separately, it was reported that “there is a positive feedback from Podolsk (Moscow) and Severo-Zapadnaya (Leningrad) machine testing stations of the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture”²⁸. Attention is drawn by the fact that the letters were sent to the Council of Ministers and to the CPSU Central Committee simultaneously. This circumstance emphasizes the dualistic nature of the Soviet regime. However, it was the Central Committee that played the key role in the management system - the center for making and controlling all the most important political and economic decisions, as well as for implementing personnel policy²⁹.

It is logical to assume that the natives of Yaroslavl were guided by pragmatism: proactive creation of a new technological sample for the agriculture sector, in addition to the implementation of plans for updating the machine train, should have caused a positive reaction from Moscow. Indeed, at the first stage, almost a year after the complaints, material consent was achieved. An extract from the minutes of the USSR Cabinet presidium meeting dated September 5, 1979, which contained information on state plan for economic and social development for 1980, stated: “Approve the proposal of the Yaroslavl CPSU Regional Committee (comrade Loshchenkov) on production of “Yaroslavets” high-performance self-propelled forage harvesters. Agree with the proposal of comrades Baibakov and Novikov on the production of 100 of specified harvesters at these facilities in 1980 and provide for a respective task in the project plan”³⁰. It is clear from the source that the launch of the regional technological initiative required positive resolutions from the key persons in the government (A.N. Kosygin, V.N. Novikov) and the State Planning Committee of the USSR (N.K. Baibakov).

The representatives from the regional “elite” explain in an interview how the draft permitting document was developed. Thus, S.N. Ovchinnikov, who held office of regional executive committee deputy chairman in 1975—1987, described in detail the long way of making a positive decision, which required coordination of various departmental interests: “The negotiations should have taken place in the State Planning Committee of the USSR ... it was important to establish a close business contact with the servants of the central administrative office in Moscow”. State Planning Committee department head, I.I. Tsvetkov, born in Uglich, Yaroslavl region, is among them. It was he who suggested the list of persons whose authorizations need to be obtained for the expedited submission of the project. Then the document was directed to State Planning Committee chairman, Baibakov, and after his approval it was signed by the chairman of the the Council of Ministers. “Andriyan Nikolaevich Andriyanov, department head of the Council of Ministers, another close acquaintance of our regional administration, contributed to the solution of the issue at the last stage. And only after the receipt of all authorizations did M.S. Solomentsev, the chairman

²⁸ *Ib.*, sheet 6.

²⁹ «Draft decisions were prepared in CPSU Central Committee administrative office, then they were submitted for discussion to decision-making bodies - Politbureau (Presidium) and Central Committee Secretariat. Each division of CPSU Central Committee administrative office was governed by the respective «working» secretary, who, in his turn, was governed by a Politbureau member who supervised a certain question pool (*N.A. Tregubov* Party and state administration office // *Soviet Cultural Diplomacy in the Cold War. 1945—1989*. Moscow, 2018. P. 38—39.

³⁰ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 4.

of the RSFSR Council of Ministers, decided to allocate funds from the Council of Ministers emergency funds”³¹. Due to the efforts of regional authorities new machines were introduced in 1979. On September 27 the regional committee’s managers reported: «The regional enterprises have in a proactive manner on a cooperative basis and as soon as was practically possible learned to produce «Yaroslavets» self-propelled forage harvesters (YASK-170). In accordance with the resources allocated in 1979 the first batch of machines in the amount of 45 pieces was produced in full»³².

The next stages of promoting the initiative are entering state tests and organizing serial production. Now it was necessary to pay attention to the structures engaged in expertise and coordination procedures. “Minutes of meeting at the State Committee of USSR for science and technology” dated March 12, 1980, dedicated to testing of forage harvesters, give an idea of the main actors of the process. Representatives of Union-Republic sectoral structures (one representative from the State Planning Committee, Ministry of Motor Industry, State Committee for Production and Technical Support of Agriculture of the USSR, Ministry of Agriculture; three representatives from the Ministry of Mechanical Engineering for Livestock and Forage Production of the USSR and the State Committee for Science and Technology) and the concerned parties (a representative of Gomselmash and three representatives from association Avtodiesel)³³ were present at the meeting. Another important participant is indicated in Loshchenkov’s letter to the CPSU Central Committee Secretary, M.S. Gorbachev, who supervised the agricultural sector - the All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences: «Presidium of Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences department for the Non-Black Earth Region /«Nechernozem’e» of RSFSR raised a question before the RSFSR Council of Ministers and USSR State Committee on Science and Technology on serial production of harvester YASK-170”³⁴.

As already mentioned, interdepartmental tests of the harvesters, carried out on Podolsk and Severo-Zapadnaya machine testing stations of the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture, confirmed its high performance (“best suitability for operation on water-logged soil in comparison with domestically produced (KSK-100) and foreign-made (E-281) similar machines”)³⁵. The performance of YASK-170 was 25% higher than the indicators of similar mass-produced harvesters. Compared to Belarusian and East German structures, it was successfully used on water-logged soils without damaging the surface layer and root structure of grasses.³⁶ Kolpakov also confirmed the need for a new model for the region, indicating the quantitative and qualitative issues of the previously used Gomselmash products: «We were given two harvesters a year, moreover, the Gomel harvester had low passability and sank in our fields in moist summers»³⁷. Due to such flattering reviews Yaroslavl regional committee managed to include the harvester into the economic development plan project for 1981—1985. In compliance with the Decree of the Secretariat of the Central Committee dated June 11, 1980 the State Planning Committee managed to «review, together with the Ministry of Agriculture, State Committee of RSFSR

³¹ Yu. S. Nikiforov *Contemporary Russian History...* P. 50.

³² Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 6.

³³ *Ib.*, sheet 37.

³⁴ *Ib.*, sheet 87.

³⁵ *Ib.*, sheet 46.

³⁶ *Ib.*, sheet 3.

³⁷ Yu. S. Nikiforov. *Contemporary Russian History...* P. 41.

for Equipment Provision for Agriculture, Ministry of Mechanical Engineering for Livestock and Forage Production, Ministry of Motor Industry the offer of Yaroslavl CPSU Regional Committee to produce YASK-170»³⁸.

But soon this initiative faced a number of unexpected obstacles at the level of sectoral structures of the Union-Republic center. A complex comparative analysis of archive documents and oral history data allows to give a relatively full view of conflict of regional and departmental interests. Thus, it may be concluded from the interview with Kolpakov that separate servants put obstacles due to “narrow parochial interests”: “State tests must be passed to launch serial production. Soyuzselkhoztekhnika was not interested in [it]. It was headed by L.I. Khitrin, who guarded the interests of Gomel Plant, which produced similar harvesters”³⁹. The study of his biography, which reveals a close relation with management and economic structures of Belarusian SSR, gives an answer to the question why the head of Soyuzselkhoztekhnika supported people from Gomel. Before moving to Moscow Khitrin worked there for more than a quarter of a century (1953–1979), passing from chief engineer of machinery and tractor station to the chairman of association Belselkhoztekhnika and deputy chairman of the republican Council of Ministers. It is logical to assume that he strived to support fellow townsmen by not allowing potential competitors to pass. The foregoing is smoothly fitted into the picture of influence of the factors of coming from the same area and regional lobbyism outlined above.

Archive documents confirm what was said by Kolpakov. The letter from the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture to Council of Ministers of USSR “On testing of off-road capability self-propelled forage harvesters” contained a detailed criticism of the Yaroslavl harvester, it was offered to “focus on fastest follow-up revision of KSK-100P harvester (Gomselmash)”⁴⁰. The same opposition was also found from the Ministry of Tractor and Agricultural Engineering⁴¹. In this critical situation Loshchenkov applied to Gorbachev for protection and assistance, sincerely expressing his bewilderment regarding the opposition: «Notwithstanding the fact that the USSR State Committee for Science and Technology positively assessed YASK-170 harvester in 1980 as a result of tests and recommended to continue its state tests in 1980, the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture unilaterally refused to continue the tests»⁴².

Probably the key role in further promotion of the “slowed down” project was determined by personal contacts and activity of regional lobbyists- representatives of regional party-Soviet nomenklatura (first and/or departmental regional committees secretaries, regional executive committee deputy chairmen and directors of enterprises), who were sent from time to time to the center for establishment of contacts, pursuing of regional interests, project promotion and knocking out limits. The above-mentioned Kolpakov was one of them. It may be concluded from his story that the fact of coming from the same area was a significant factor⁴³: «Our fellow townsman,

³⁸ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 71.

³⁹ *Yu. S. Nikiforov. Contemporary Russian History...* P. 41.

⁴⁰ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, 29, 32.

⁴¹ *Ib.*, sheet 108.

⁴² *Ib.*, sheet 87–88.

⁴³ Existence of informal territorial groups through which «regional interests were articulated, including recruitment and allocation of resources», is a characteristic feature of regional lobbying in USSR (*N. N. Men-*

USSR Cabinet deputy chairman's assistant, Vadim Vladimirovich Petrov, helped us to appoint a meeting with USSR Cabinet deputy chairman Z.N. Nuriev⁴⁴, who was convinced of the suitability and advantages of the Yaroslavl project. This information was confirmed in a letter from Loshchenkov to Gorbachev: «Only after USSR Cabinet deputy chairman comrade Z.N. Nuriev's intervention, an order was received from the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture to submit the harvester for tests in 1981»⁴⁵. The interview also contains details on the visit to Nuriev, who, «having taken in the situation, called the head of Soyuzselkhoztekhnika, Khitrin, using a «vertushka» (hot line), and demanded in a rough style to accept the harvester for state tests. Khitrin had to agree»⁴⁶. Analyzing this extract, I want to draw your attention to at least two important aspects of the mechanism for solving the problem: personal (the outcome of the case was determined by influence and political weight of a certain official) and procedural (the use of the “telephone right”).

After the episode with the powerful deputy head of the government the harvester was sent for field and laboratory tests. Such indices as motion speed, capacity per hour of pure work, mincing of mass along the cut length were tested under harsh conditions of boggy soil and demonstrated high performance. Description of advantages of YASK-170 over both production and retrofitted Gomselmash harvester prevailed in reports of departmental commissions: “In terms of weight: by 1,200 kg, in terms of fuel specific flow rate: up to 38%, in terms of specific metal content: up to 45%, in terms of working capacity: up to 40%, in terms of reliability: up to 35%, in terms of grass mowing losses: 6 times less; absence of expensive foreign-made hydrostatic transmission requiring special foreign-made oil”. Other advantages were also pointed out: “YASK-170 has much better passing ability”, “rational pneumatic drawing of operative parts of the drive is used in the structure”, “higher performance coefficient”, “better marketable state... in comparison with series-produced KSK-100”, “lower power consumption of the technological process”, “manual transmission with lower capacity losses” and “better view of operative parts”⁴⁷.

Thus, thanks to using informal ways of influence, Yaroslavl harvester was sent for state trials and, as it seemed, went to the next stage, i.e. batch manufacturing. However, archival documents demonstrate that throughout practically the whole 1981 there were periodical bureaucratic and resource problems that stood in the way of its complete launch. Besides, problems could be caused not only by countermeasures on the part of civil servants and lobbyists from other regions, but also by systemic problem with plan tasks would have to be reviewed. This circumstance that hampered introduction of any technical innovations was also discussed by famous economists like D.V. Valovoy, I.Ya. Birman and N.P. Shmelev in their works⁴⁸.

According to Loshchenkov, on one hand, formally, regulatory agencies dragged

shenina, M. V. Panteleeva Lobbying. P. 52—53.

⁴⁴ Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 41.

⁴⁵ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 88.

⁴⁶ Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 41—42.

⁴⁷ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 30, 101, 106.

⁴⁸ I. Birman Economics of Shortfall. New York, 1983; D.V. Valovoy Economics in Human Dimension (Essays and Thoughts). Moscow, 1988; D.V. Valovoy Economics of Absurdity and Paradoxes. Moscow, 1991; D.V. Valovoy From Stagnation to Collapse. Moscow, 1991; N.P. Shmelev, V.V. Popov At a Critical Point: Economic Transformation in the USSR. Moscow, 1989.

time (“lack of final conclusion with regard to harvester state trials hampered further manufacturing of the harvester... the whole year was lost”). On the other hand, objectively, there were serious problems connected with completing the model: “Until recently the State Committee of RSFSR for Equipment Provision for Agriculture and the Ministry of Foreign Trade of the USSR failed to completely resolve the issue of equipping the harvester with platforms and balers manufactured in the German Democratic Republic. Of 250 harvesters only 30 were equipped”⁴⁹. This scenario characteristic of all technological projects in the late USSR is of great importance for understanding the general procedure of managerial decision making. This process is connected with a great number of appeals to the highest government authorities. The very nature of economics of the 1970s—1980s was very aptly called “the economy of approvals or “bureaucratic market”⁵⁰. Back in 1979 in his letter to Kosygin, Loshchenkov insisted on provision of new credits and resources, including components, for the region: “Yaroslavl regional committee of the Communist Party of the USSR urges you, Aleksey Nikolaevich, to instruct the State Planning Committee of the USSR and the State Logistics Committee of the USSR to provide metal and required components produced by local manufacturers, as well as with E-286 platforms produced in the German Democratic Republic for harvesters production.” A similar request was included into the letter to Novikov with petition regarding additional supplies of scarce materials and components: «According to preliminary agreement with you, we hereby send you a list of required components, units, parts and materials subdivided by supplying ministries.”⁵¹ In his later letter to Novikov (dated April 15, 1980), Loshchenkov again asked him “to instruct the State Planning Committee of the USSR and the State Logistics Committee of the USSR to include manufacturing of 250 harvesters and their provision with metal and all components in 1981 plan of the Ministry of Motor Industry of the USSR... allocate resources to Yaroslavl association Autodiesel through special provision for the first half of the year on a quarter basis equally. The list of required components subdivided by supplying ministries is enclosed.”⁵² An interesting detail about the last two letters is a handwritten note “for addressee only”, which is indicative of personal agreement as a decisive factor in resolving the resource issue. Appeals themselves reveal the major ways of obtaining resources (in fact, the only way that is command and control way of “instructing”) and authorities connected with their allocation (the State Planning Committee of the USSR and the State Logistics Committee of the USSR). Apart from that, they reveal problems of domestic industry, which is incapable of fully supplying the model that is being prepared for production with parts.

“Agreements” did not stop at that. On May 30, 1980 the State Logistics Committee of the USSR sent a letter “On Additional Production of 100 self-propelled forage harvesters YASK-170 “Yaroslavets” in 1980”, in which it informed that “the opportunity was found to provide additional production of these harvesters with the majority of required components manufactured by production facilities of the Ministry of Motor Industry of the USSR, the Ministry of Tractor and Agricultural Machinery Engineering of the USSR, the Ministry of Machinery Engineering for Animal Husbandry and Feed

⁴⁹ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 88.

⁵⁰ V.A. Nayshul *The Ultimate and the Last Stage of Socialism // A Dive into Swamp*. Moscow, 1991.

⁵¹ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheets 3, 6.

⁵² *Ib.*, sheet 54.

Production of the USSR and the Ministry of Oil Refining and Petrochemical Industry of the USSR". The main problem regarding provision of Yaroslavl harvester with parts was connected with obtaining scarce platforms from the German Democratic Republic; this caused involvement of another two industry bodies: the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Traktoreksport into resolving the issue. In fact, the idea of the letter was to delegate responsibility for short delivery of components to these two bodies: "It seems appropriate to tell the Ministry of Foreign Trade to speed up the resolution of the issue and report on results to the Council of Ministers of the USSR."⁵³ It is worth noting that back in the letter dated March 19 Loshchenkov addressed N.D. Komarov, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade of the USSR, with a request for acquiring 250 platforms and 250 balers in the German Democratic Republic⁵⁴.

As a result, in his letter to Gorbachev Loshchenkov had to essentially ask to pressure central government authorities: "By informing the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR about the state of matters regarding manufacturing of... YASK-170 suitable for operation in the Non-Black Earth Region of RSFSR, the regional committee of the Communist Party of the USSR urges you to instruct the State Planning Committee of the USSR, on the basis of existing cooperation, to include annual production of 250 YASK-170 harvesters by production facilities of the region in the plan of social and economic development for 1982 and the 11th five-year period". This and other petitions in question include the same characteristics and descriptive words: high-performance, suitable for operation in the Non-Black Earth /«Nechernozem'e» Region and existing cooperation. Apparently, it is no coincidence. Such compositional structure and language of the letter had not only to demonstrate the efficiency of the model lobbying for and its relation to the general line of the centre (Resolutions of the 25th and 26th Congresses of the Communist Party of the USSR, the Development Programme for the Non-Black Earth /«Nechernozem'e» Region⁵⁵) but also to convince the centre in practical completeness of the project lacking just minimum resources. Turning to the linguistic features of bureaucratic appeals, we should mention a number of other clichés «travelling» from one letter to another: indication of the initiative nature of project and urgent machinery needs of the non-black earth regions for farming purposes, emphasis on early fulfilment of socialist obligations by working people of a region and constant glorification of the Communist Party Central Committee and particularly the general secretary («Following the directives of comrade Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev concerning creation of high-performance machinery»⁵⁶).

Notwithstanding all resource and bureaucratic issues, Yaroslavl households received 245 YASK-170 harvesters in 1979–1980⁵⁷. Technically, bureaucratic epic ended in 1982. We know from Tolstoukhov's interview that Gorbachev visited regional committee plenum in Yaroslavl in June 1982, and he «liked the harvester»⁵⁸. We may suppose, that this factor also played a role in securing its serial production. But

⁵³ *Ib.*, sheet 50.

⁵⁴ *Ib.*, sheet 33.

⁵⁵ See: Materials of the 25th Communist Party Congress. Moscow, 1976; Materials of the 26th Communist Party Congress. Moscow, 1981; Comprehensive Development Programme for the Non-Black Earth /«Nechernozem'e» Region. Moscow, 1977.

⁵⁶ Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheets 45–46.

⁵⁷ *M. A. Rutkovsky, L. M. Rutkovskaya* Fifty years of the economics of Yaroslavl... P. 49.

⁵⁸ *Yu. S. Nikiforov* Contemporary Russian History... P. 62.

later, the region management, which within almost four years strived for promotion of its initiative, faced an unexpected problem. Union republic ministries, having assessed the high performance characteristics of the harvesters, started to actively redistribute them into other regions⁵⁹, which caused justifiable anger from the regional committee. Loshchenkov sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR «On distribution of «Yaroslavets» forage harvesters YASK-170», where he wrote angrily: «We are deeply surprised that the Ministry of Agriculture of RSFSR issued an assignment for the production of harvesters for other regions without asking the opinion of Yaroslavl CPSU regional committee and Yaroslavl regional executive committee. Such actions may kill any sensible initiative»⁶⁰. He asked to review the possibility to «revoke this wrong decision».

The regional leader openly, definitely and rather bluntly expressed his dissatisfaction with actions of the republic agency, and this is full of suggestions and assumptions. Perhaps, the tone of the letter may demonstrate the high personal weight of the first secretary in the USSR top government echelons. That was referred to by his close officers, for example, his assistant V. V. Velichko who said that “the power of Loshchenkov was so great that he could easily call any leader of the country via the special communications line and we saw that”⁶¹. At the same time, the extended answer of the Ministry to the regional committee and regional executive committee (February 7, 1983), containing declinatory with bureaucratic clichés, was typical: «In pursuance of your letter on wrongfulness of distribution of forage harvesters YASK-170 the Ministry of Agriculture of the RSFSR informs that in view of the initiative of region on arrangement of their manufacturing all the batch of these machine was left in Yaroslavl Region during four years, besides, forage harvesters of domestic and foreign manufacturers were provided to collective farms and state farms from the centralized park... tractors T-150K with trailers were additionally delivered... The Ministry considered that fact and provided 114 YASK-170 and 6 KSK-100 combine harvesters to the Yaroslavl Region for 1983»⁶². This «repartee» shows that in the late USSR there were serious contradictions between sectoral and regional interests, which were described in memoirs of some local economic leaders⁶³.

After all, “the Yaroslavl combine harvester sample was recognized the best and green light to its manufacturing was given. 1,400 items were produced in 14 years (100 combine harvesters per year)”. According to Kolpakov, the successful state trial of YASK-170 was a notable example of lobbying for regional interests in agriculture⁶⁴. However, the disintegration of the USSR entailed with financial problems and the links between the facilities involved in co-operation for its production were broken,

⁵⁹ T. P. Kolpakov emphasized the value of this model: «The combine harvester YASK-170 was so good that other regions requested for it: we could obtain any machinery from neighbouring regions in exchange of our harvester» (*Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 42*).

⁶⁰ *Ib.*, sheet 109.

⁶¹ *Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 12*.

⁶² Contemporary History Documentation Centre of Yaroslavl Region, collection 272, list 270, file 512, sheet 66.

⁶³ The long-standing director of Rybinsk Aircraft Factory, P.F. Derunov, remembered a characteristic episode from the manufacturing practice: «The Perm designers were developing a new high temperature engine at the same time with us... the respectable community of designers saw us as debauchers who boldly invaded their protected area and disturbed the calm by their amateurish projects... The opponents of the upgraded engine achieved a ban on working on it... The association's hopes to upgrade engines for IL-62M aircraft were not realized due to imperfection of the mechanism of relationships between the designer and serial production» (*P.F. Derunov. Engine Builders. Rybinsk, 1998. P. 72—73*).

⁶⁴ *Yu. S. Nikiforov Contemporary Russian History... P. 41*.

and manufacturing of the harvester was stopped.

To summarize, we may distinguish three stages of decision-making with respect to a regional technological project. The first stage is obtaining of official approval of initiative and including it into a draft economic plan. At this level, it was important to win the consent and favourable resolutions from key persons of the government and the State Planning Committee. For this purpose, on the one hand, corresponding arguments for the project feasibility were developed. They included a mandatory ideological component (reference to connection of a regional initiative with the decision of central party and/or soviet authorities), an emphasis on the new model advantages to competitors (high efficiency, considerable cost reduction in the form of equipment and labour saving, low price to domestically manufactured accessories), indication of favourable expert opinions and “urgent needs” of a region resulting from the local specificity. On the other hand, informal mechanisms of influence were used: the fact of coming from the same area, building close business contacts with rank and file officers of the central apparatus, searching for persons whose approval was necessary for accelerated presentation of a project and obtaining their immediate written agreement. The first stage had to result in including of the initiative in a draft next plan of the USSR national economy development. Favourable opinions of key structures of higher soviet and party authorities, i.e. the Presidium of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, were requisite for this purpose. So, the formal mechanism of decision making by the higher leadership of country had a dualistic nature.

The second stage was successful passing of state tests. At this time a project could face obstacles at the level of sectoral structures of the union republic centre. They were caused by such factors as interests of particular officials, intersection of regional and departmental interests, apparent disregard and sabotage, bureaucracy. When analysing sources, we detected two ways of solving these problems. The first one is using of patron—client relations (regional committee first secretary turning to the Communist Party Central Committee secretary for the support). The second one is “access” of regional lobbyists not to rank and file officers but immediately to the higher leadership of the government. Channels of informal influence were selected as particular tools for solving bureaucratic problems: the fact of coming from the same area, personal aspect (influence and political weight of a certain representative of leadership) and procedural aspect (“telephone rule”).

Finally, the third stage was starting of batch manufacturing of a new technology. This had its own bureaucratic and resource problems. Contradictions between sectorial and regional interests and slowness of regulatory agencies and management structures (State Logistics Committee + related ministries) caused significant time expenditures upon project implementation. Under the circumstances, the main task of regional authorities was the struggle for allocation of new limits and additional resources, first of all, components. Attempts to solve resource and technological problems by appealing to respective agencies very often faced “the transfer of responsibility” from one sectorial structure to another. Personal agreement with a high official at the union republic level again appeared to be a determinant factor in solving resource issues.

In summary, we could reconstruct some key mechanisms of making technological decisions in the late USSR, reveal a long bureaucratic chain in the way of adoption and realization of a favourable decision, which chain very often delayed its implementation and reduced its efficiency, in terms of the phenomenon of regional lobbying through comparative analysis of archive documents and oral history data.