

## Vladimir Nesyaev (Shushenskiy District, Krasnoyarsk Province)

### A Tractor Got Arrested in the Field

The “Krasnoyarskiy Rabochiy” (Krasnoyarsk Worker), newspaper, April 29, 2004

A tractor was working in a field. Admittedly, it was not brand new, but it had been just overhauled at the “Niva” machine shop, the one in Kazantsevo village of the Shushenskiy district. The tractor was the first time out of the shop, taken in a hurry to a test run: soon there would be harrowing and then planting. But Ivan Sadakov was mistaken in thinking that the tractor was the property of the agricultural enterprise which he headed, though they just paid not a few thousand rubles for repairs. It was no longer theirs. That what explained to him the court marshals. They came accompanied by police, stopped the tractor at the field border, and put arrest on it.

Just a few days later, the tractor, model MTZ-80 produced by the Minsk Tractor Plant, was sold together with the seeder confiscated along with the tractor, together with the plow and with the mower. The entire lot went for 10 000 rubles (*about \$300*), which is less than if it had been sold for scrap. The combined power rake - hay turner went for 6 500. The fully equipped timber truck that Sadakov had prepared for leasing (the proceeds were to go to buy seeds and fuel) was sold for 55 000, the “Volga” sedan – for 72 000. One does not have to be an expert to realize that these are not just fire-sale prices – they are laughable. The timber truck, for one, could have been pushed in a twinkling for at least 200 thous.

What is owed should be paid up; there is no arguing about that. But each agricultural producer of the Shushenskiy district is in debt for a million and a half rubles, on average. The debts have accumulated through years of mismanagement, irresponsibility, and sometimes plain theft committed by former managers, but it is their successors who have now to deal with the consequences. And what is the hardest to bear for the local producers is that their vehicles and agricultural machinery are being arrested now, at the approach of the planting season, when they cannot do without them.

Formally, the court marshals cannot be blamed, especially since they have no right to transfer the arrested property to anyone. To deal with this property, the Federal Property Fund has a

representative in the district: a municipally owned company called “The Trading House”. And this is how it deals with it.

Two MTZ brand tractors, in running condition, were driven all the way from Kazantsevo village and sold for 16 500 rubles (*about \$600*). In Subbotino village, the marshals arrested every movable piece of machinery they had there, all nine of them. A fully operable loader, a modification of the tractor model DT-75, and the UAZ four wheels drive truck were sold for 35 000 rubles. Director of the agricultural enterprise “Subbotino” begged the head of “The Trading House”, Arkadiy Paka, to go slow with the sale promising to find money to buy back the machinery. He did find money, almost the next day, but when he returned to Shushenskoe he found out that it was already sold.

Again, formally, there is nothing “The Trading House” can be accused of: the law does not require of the trader that he should necessarily put forfeited real estate on auction or take movable property on consignment and openly put it on sale. A trader could just as well sell it to any client he wants to on the basis of a buyer - seller agreement. And this is what they do, with no regard to actual market price of the goods, and to the ruin of the agricultural producers.

The producers would have been in a much better shape, if the trader were doing it differently: instead of, say, selling 20 units of machinery for peanuts, the trader would sell 5 for their real price and that would extinguish the entire producer’s debt. Or, at least, sell those 20 units, but add commission to the price, so you could keep a part of it as a profit from the deal, and give another part to the impoverished producer. This would have helped him somewhat to face the planting season.

However, “The Trading House” almost never does it the ways that would benefit both the producer and the “The Trading House” itself, despite always being in the red. Then it is not clear why the district administration has given the green light to establishing this firm under its own auspices, and in whose interests it acts. Certainly not in the interests of the Shushenskiy agricultural producers, for whom the coming season promises not be an easy one, as it is, without further complications.

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