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M. M. Zavadovsky's Participation in the Elections to the USSR Academy of Sciences: An Overview of Archival Materials 1938–46

Abstract

The article analyzes two unsuccessful attempts of Mikhail Mikhailovich Zavadovsky (1891–1957), prominent specialist in the field of physico-chemical biology, parasitology, endocrinology, and developmental biology, Academician of the Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences (1935), to become a member of the USSR Academy of Sciences that took place in 1938–39 and in 1946 and possible reasons for his failure. The historical literature devoted to Zavadovsky is scarce; the history of his election to the USSR Academy of Sciences has never been studied, and thus, studying it would be an important step towards creating thorough biography of the scientist. When writing this article, such basic methods of historical research as narrative and prosopographic ones have been used. To achieve the declared goal, identification and analysis of relevant archival sources has been carried out. The documents on Zavadovsky's election discovered to date are preserved in the Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences; of them of the greatest interest are two scientist's personal files from the collection of personal files of candidates for full and corresponding members of the USSR Academy of Sciences balloted in 1939, materials from Zavadovsky's personal fond, and materials from the fonds of the Department of Mathematical and Natural Sciences of the USSR Academy of Sciences, the Department of Biological Sciences of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and the Secretariat of the Presidium of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The article shows that in 1938 Zavadovsky was nominated a candidate for full membership in the USSR Academy of Sciences by a group of scientists representing various research and educational institutions, as well as by the Moscow State University. However, his candidacy did not pass the first filter in the election process, a special commission of the Department of Mathematical and Natural Sciences of the USSR Academy of Sciences, created to discuss candidates for full members of the Academy. Probably, this happened because he had to compete in the elections with T. D. Lysenko and his associates; in any case, there was criticism of Zavadovsky as Lysenko's antagonist and it even reached public sphere. In 1946, Zavadovsky made a second attempt to be elected, already in status of the Stalin Prize laureate, which he received in the same year; this time he was nominated as a candidate for full member of the USSR Academy of Sciences by the Academic Council of the Faculty of Biology of the Saratov State University. However, he faced certain formal obstacles. The Department of Biological Sciences of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR had five full member vacancies: two in botany, two in microbiology and biochemistry, and one in evolutionary physiology; thus, Zavadovsky, nominated in zoology, was unable to take part in the election for formal reasons. L. S. Stern's proposal to consider him as physiologist (which was true) could not be implemented, as unidentified government commission classified Zavadovsky as geneticist, and he was to be discussed in this group in the status of a candidate for corresponding member of the Academy. Due to objective reasons, he could not compete with specialists in the field of genetics and was not elected, although showed very decent voting results. Summing up, it can be stated that Zavadovsky failed in his election to the USSR Academy of Sciences not because he did not deserve the title, but for formal, personal, and political reasons.

## Keywords

Historical sources, M. M. Zavadovsky, Academy of Sciences of the USSR, elections, Moscow State University, Saratov State University, V. I. Lenin All-Union Academy of Agricultural Sciences, T. D. Lysenko.

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