

Agriculture: The Stolypin Reforms

Political Reactionary?

- **Peter Stolypin** replaced **Sergei Witte** as Prime Minister in July 1906.
- Stolypin had a reputation for brutality. In his role as a provincial governor he had been so brutal that the hangman's noose was known as '**Stolypin's necktie**'.
- When he came to office his first task was to stamp out revolutionary activity. Courts-martial between 1906 and 1907 executed 1,144 people. Revolutionary leaders were hanged or exiled. Many fled overseas, including Trotsky and Lenin.
- He was also hated by non-revolutionary parties because he dissolved the first two Dumas and changed the electoral law to make it even more conservative.



Social Reformer?

- Nevertheless, although he was brutal in his treatment of the political parties, Stolypin realised that reforms were essential if autocracy was to survive. Through the reforms he put into effect, he hoped to create a "new class of prosperous peasants" who would support the Tsar.

What were the main features of Russian agriculture at this time?

- The serfs were emancipated (set free) in the 1860s.
- The local Lord was ordered to give the village a large amount of land to support itself.
- The Lord was compensated by the Tsar.
- The Tsar himself was compensated by the village commune (Mir) in instalments over a 49 year period. The Mir collected this money from the peasants of the village.
- During this time, the Mir would not allow peasants to leave the commune.
- The Mir gave each peasant a strip of land, separated from the others by a fence / hedgerow.
- When peasants died, the land was taken back by the Mir and re-allocated: members of the same family did not necessarily inherit it.
- Over time, as populations grew, strips became smaller and families often had strips which were spread out widely across the village.

Task 1:

Complete column [1] of the table overleaf using the bullet points above.
Complete column [2] following a classroom discussion

Task 2:

Complete columns [3] and [4] using the following three sources (the information for which will be given to you by your teacher).

Source 1: What Stolypin did

[information to be provided by your teacher]

Source 2: Evidence of success

[information to be provided by your teacher]

Source 3: Evidence of failure

[information to be provided by your teacher]

	1. How have current rules created this problem?	2. What do you think should have been done to solve it?	3. What did Stolypin do?	4. Assessment
1. Lack of Migration				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ...to cities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• ...to new villages				

2. Lack of Productivity			
• Land in the commune is being wasted			
• Peasants are unable (too poor) to invest in machinery			
• Peasants are unwilling to invest in the land			

Conclusion

- **Positives for the Kulaks:** By 1914, one-quarter of peasants owned their own land and half of these had started to become “Kulaks” by buying up neighbouring plots from peasants who in turn moved into the cities or to new farms (1.5 million people moved to Siberia, for example)
- **Negatives for ordinary peasants:** Stolypin failed to tackle the fact that the major landowners were still not taxed and owned the vast majority of the land already under cultivation.
- **Conclusion:** Stolypin himself recognised that his plan was a long term solution, he reckoned on twenty years of peace to put them to full effect.

“MAIN TASK”: Overall judgement on Stolypin’s policies

“With twenty years of peace, Stolypin’s reforms would have solved Russia’s agricultural problems”. Outline how far you agree with this statement by completing the following two sentences:

- Agriculture faced serious problems in Russia in the years before 1914...(outline the main problems here)
- In some respects, Stolypin’s policies strengthened Russia before 1914. For example,...(outline the successes here)
- However, in other respects Stolypin’s policies arguably undermined Russia before 1914. For example,... (outline the failures here)
- In conclusion,...(reach a balanced judgement here)

To round off, add further points to your answer using the worksheet you completed whilst playing the Virtual Tour Around Tsarist Russia computer simulation at www.activehistory.co.uk.

NOTE: You will return to the “Main Task” in the next couple of lessons and develop this answer with specific reference to the economic and social impact of his policies.