

## Stolypin – Essay Plan

How important was the work of Stolypin in delaying the downfall of the Tsarist autocracy?

### Introduction

- appointment as Prime Minister
- his period of office
- briefly outline his main policies
- make some reference to the question

### Development

- Stolypin crushes the revolutionaries
- brutal ,savage repression.....outline his methods.
- “Stolypin’s necktie”

- Reasons for industrial growth..... creates employment.
- Industrial workforce relatively subdued.
- Decline in unrest 1906 – 1911.

- Reasons for the peasant reforms.
- State clearly what Stolypin was trying to achieve.
- Perhaps insert an opposite quote

- The Stolypin land reforms..... a detailed account of his main policies.

- Assessment of the land reforms
- Success..... what the reforms actually achieved
- Criticisms.... give a balanced assessment
- Show an awareness of the debate among historians

### Conclusion

- Sum up the main points.
- Directly answer the question.

## Stolypin's Reforms.

By 1905, when Stolypin was forty-four, he had risen to become governor of the province of Saratov. In that year of revolution he made himself notorious for his cruelty to peasants and revolutionaries. His later actions, especially his ruthless treatment of Jews and Poles, further justified this reputation. The field courts martial and extraordinary powers given to governor-generals were responsible, between September 1906 and May 1907, for the execution of more than 1,100 people.

The Tsar, who had long resented Witte, found an opportunity to dismiss him in April 1906. For a few months Nicholas indulged the aged Goremykin as prime minister but, in July, he turned to the recently appointed Minister of the Interior, Peter Arkadievitich Stolypin, and asked him to become Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Stolypin's background was that of the landed, provincial gentry. After University he had entered the government service and by 1903 had risen to the rank of Governor of Saratov province, on the lower Volga. The severity of his measures in suppressing what had been a turbulent province during the disorders of 1905-6 made him notorious among the peasants but brought him to the attention of the Tsar.

On taking office Stolypin had two main objectives; to repress disorder and terrorism and to introduce far-reaching land reforms.

### Stolypin Crushes The Revolutionaries.

Peter Stolypin was appointed president of the Council of Ministers in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution. Like Witte before him, he was dedicated to strengthening tsardom in a time of crisis. He was a political conservative, whose anti-liberalism was clearly expressed in his fierce suppression of opposition between 1906 and 1911. His statement, 'suppression first and then, and only then, reform', expressed his basic attitude. However, he judged that, where possible, reform should be introduced as a way of lessening the social bitterness that produced opposition.

On taking office Stolypin stated 'the Revolution must be suppressed' though he also believed in reform. The continuing terrorism, including an attack on the Prime Minister, let Stolypin to agree to the establishment of Field Courts-Martial on 19 August, whereby military tribunals could deal with cases without investigation or delay. Between August 1906 and April 1907 when the law lapsed, 1,144 people were executed by these courts (and over 2,000 by ordinary courts over a longer period). Later, in November 1907, a Duma deputy coined the phrase 'Stolypin necktie' to characterise the noose – and the jibe stuck.

Repression worked and in October 1906 the British ambassador stated 'public opinion is not (as) revolutionary as it was a year ago' though he conceded that this did not mean people were any more reconciled to the continuation of the regime. Stolypin's crackdown did not simply consist of executions, there were searches and arrests (1,400 in Warsaw alone in one day), the press was muzzled and the Kadets were targeted (especially the Vyborg deputies).

### Stolypin's Agrarian Reforms

Repression, however, was only one half of Stolypin's policy. He combined with it two basic ideas regarding the peasant. Both marked a notable advance on previous governmental reasoning. First, Stolypin argued, the peasants could be used to defeat the revolution; second, that to do this the Government must free them from the commune and permit them to acquire private property.

The ultimate idea was to introduce almost completely free trade into the buying and selling of land. The more able peasants would then emerge as small landed proprietors with a strong stake in the existing order; and they would hold in check the less able, who were destined to dwindle into a landless rural proletariat. In Stolypin's words, 'the Government relied not on the feeble and the drunk, but on the solid and strong'.

*Peter Stolypin*, prime minister from 1906 to 1911, made determined efforts to win over the peasants believing that given twenty years of peace, there would be no question of revolution. Redemption payments were abolished and peasants encouraged to buy their own land (about 2 million had done so by 1916 and another 3.5 million had emigrated to Siberia where they had their own farms). As a result there emerged a class of comfortably-off peasants (called *kulaks*) whom, Stolypin hoped, the government could rely on for support against revolution.

Stolypin's main device for resisting revolution was agrarian reform. He believed that if the peasants could be turned into loyal supporters of the regime they would become a reliable bulwark against revolution. He sought to create a new class of independent landowners by attacking the institution of the village commune. Stolypin's measures can be summarised as follows.

1. In 1906, all restrictions on peasant movement, including the power of communes to refuse members permission to leave, were removed.
2. Peasants were permitted to sell their plots or to request consolidation of the strips into individual holdings which then became the private property of the head of the peasant household.
3. In 1907, all outstanding redemption payments were abolished.
4. The Peasant Land Bank issued loans to enable individual peasants to purchase more land. Crown and State lands were made available for this purpose and, as a result, peasant holdings increased.
5. A resettlement programme was organised to move peasants out of the overcrowded areas of central Russia. Between 1906 and 1913, three million peasants moved to Siberia and Central Asia, settling on lands which the government had made available.

Legislation did much to improve the lot of the peasants. In 1905 redemption payments on land being purchased by the peasants were abolished. In 1906 and 1910 came the famous Stolypin land reforms. Stolypin recognised the deep-seated aspirations of the Russian peasant to own and manage his own land, and saw that peasant discontent had been a major factor in the abortive revolution of 1905. His reforms therefore aimed at creating a prosperous class of peasants which would provide a firm basis of political support for tsarist governments. Thus he set out to break the hold of the *mir* over the individual peasant and by the end of 1906 decrees had been issued allowing the peasant to leave the *mir* when he wished or, if he remained, to consolidate his strips of land in one place and to hold them permanently. Communal responsibility for taxation was ended.

## Assessment of Stolypin's Policies

Stolypin's measures achieved some success:

These measures had an immediate impact. In the first two years some 15% of the peasantry took up new opportunities. By 1914, 25% had left the communes and 10% had consolidated their holdings. Given that Russia's peasant population was around 100 million in this period, this was a huge and rapid change.

To a large extent Stolypin's reforms were genuine and helped to improve the life of the peasants. He gave peasants the right to pay for their land to be separated from the mir and oversaw the administration of the dismantling of the redemption payment scheme. His own schemes were designed to create a prosperous class of conservative, independent farmers (kulaks) able to buy their land from the mir outright. He promoted voluntary migration to Siberia to alleviate land hunger and between 1907 and 1909 over two million people moved eastward. He sold huge tracts of Crown and state land to the Peasant Land Bank for sale to its clients.

1. The authority of the Mir and of the land captains was reduced since peasants were free to leave the village.
2. Redemption payments ended in 1907 as promised in 1905.
3. There was a substantial amount of land transfer not only between landlords and peasants but also within peasant ranks. Poor peasants sold out to prosperous peasants who were developing large farms. The amount of land rented increased with peasants paying either money rents or paying through sharecropping and labour.
4. Colonisation of Siberia, the Steppes and Central Asia was a great success even though about a sixth returned. These new lands produced wheat, livestock, and dairy products such as eggs and butter for export. The new settlers were drawn from peasant rather than noble ranks and gradually a new type of society developed composed of self-made men, farmers and merchants.
5. Farming methods improved, not only on the large estates but also on peasant holdings especially on the compact farms. Machinery and artificial fertilisers were introduced. In 1911 European Russia had 66,000 reapers and West Siberia 36,000. Co-operatives started to appear in villages, providing credit and savings facilities, loans to buy livestock, tools, fertilisers and land though there was limited progress in co-operative marketing. Russian agricultural produced grain for home consumption and for home consumption and for export, raw cotton, sugar-beet and tobacco.

## Historian F

Stolypin's reforms were not an unqualified success. Two points are significant in this regard: the rate of applications to leave the communes and consolidate holdings was declining after an initial rush; and "Stolypin" peasants (those who had taken advantage of his reforms) were mostly to be found in the more prosperous agricultural areas, notably the black earth regions of the South Russian and Ukrainian steppe.

If Stolypin had been granted twenty years of peace the land reforms might have transformed rural Russia, but in the short term they were not by themselves enough:

1. The problem was only partly one of land redistribution. Russian agricultural techniques were so backward that the yield in crops remained low despite private ownership.
2. Stolypin's reforms took no account of the growth in rural population which greatly outstripped the amount of land made available, thus the basic problem of land hunger remained.
3. The rate of private ownership varied enormously among the various provinces of Russia, depending on the system of land tenure.

However, the reforms did not go far enough – despite some apparent structural developments, the real economic and social structure mostly remained unchanged. One third of the peasants remained landless, while 30,000 landlords were in possession of 76 million hectares of agricultural land. Only 10 per cent of all peasant households were in a position to take up the offer to separate land from the mirs. Farming methods and equipment were still primitive and farmworkers lacked even basic items such as metal ploughs; one third of farms were without stock.

## The Development of Industry Under Stolypin

Although Stolypin's main concern was the peasants, he did not neglect Russia's industrial development. From 1908 onwards substantial growth took place in the coal, iron and steel industries. Railway building also proceeded but not at the pace of the 1890's. At the outbreak of war in 1914 Russia was still sadly deficient in the provision of both roads and railways. However, industrial growth had created employment and there were few signs of unrest among the workers during the period 1908-14.

The attempted transformation of the countryside was only one aspect of Stolypin's work. He and his successors in the third and fourth Dumas also sought to bring peace to Russia's cities. The industrial workforce between 1907 and 1912 – the Stolypin Duma years – was relatively subdued.

A new surge of industrial activity had occurred after 1907, partly fuelled by a rearmament programme made necessary by the disastrous war against Japan and by the developing tensions in Europe. Work was created. St Petersburg's large engineering firms benefited in particular. The St Petersburg industrial workforce grew by over a third, to almost a quarter of a million, during these years. But the city could not cope with an expansion of this scale. Incoming factory workers had no choice but to squeeze into the existing shanty dwellings which had been thrown up beside the factories. Conditions were deplorable.

How effectively did Stolypin maintain the authority of the Tsarist state in the years after 1905?

How important was the work of Stolypin in delaying the downfall of Tsarist autocracy in Russia?

To what extent did the work of Stolypin succeed in suppressing challenges to the authority of the Tsarist state in the years after 1905?

“Given time, Stolypin's work might have saved Tsarism.” How far do you agree?