

## Sourcework: 2. Social Conditions in the Countryside

### Introduction

• The Industrial Revolution had not started in Russia until the 1880s but by 1900 Russia produced more oil than any other nation and had the fifth largest economy in the world. However,...

### Life in the countryside

• 80% of the population were peasants still living in villages and farming using out of date methods. Their conditions had not improved much since **Emancipation**. A rapidly growing population, low agricultural productivity and the increasing sub-division of their land meant that increasing numbers of peasants could not support themselves. Underfed, poorly paid and over taxed, growing numbers of peasants were forced to seek employment in the towns and cities adding to the overcrowding there. They joined, and swelled, the numbers of the urban poor to form a new and numerically growing working class in the large towns.

### Source 1: Picture of a Russian Village



### Source 2: A police report written in 1905

'Very often the peasants do not have enough allotment land and cannot during the year feed themselves, clothe themselves, heat their homes, keep their tools and livestock, secure [keep] seed for sowing and, lastly pay all their taxes and debts.'

### Source 3: An English visitor to Russia at the end of the 19th Century described the inside of a peasant's hut as follows:

'A small hut about twelve feet square - with a door through which a medium-sized man can only go by stooping - the floor made of earth, the ceiling so low that a tall man cannot stand upright, tiny windows letting in little light...the whole building made of thin wood...the entire family lives in this room, sleeping on benches and on the floor all together, men, women, children and cattle.'

### Questions on the peasantry

1. In rank order of importance, list what you consider to be the three most serious problems facing the Russian peasantry in 1900. For each problem, use a quote from a source to back up your idea. Be prepared to explain why you ranked your ideas in the way you chose.

## Agriculture: The Stolypin Reforms – TEACHER COPY

### Source 1: What Stolypin did

**Redemption payments to the Mir were cancelled**, and peasants were given free ownership of their land.

Peasants now had more money to develop their strip, and more willingness to do so now they knew it would stay in their family. **Cheap loans were offered by a “Peasants’ Bank”** to encourage capitalistic peasants (“Kulaks”) to buy up neighbouring plots and consolidate their holdings into larger, more efficient farms.

Peasants who sold their strips on in this way could just become wage labourers; but they could also choose to accept a **government grant** to populate uncultivated parts of the Empire in Western Siberia, or simply migrate directly into the new and expanding cities.

### Source 2: Evidence of success

These reforms helped to expand Russia’s agricultural base to a great extent, over 1.5 million settled in Siberia between 1907-1909, a sizeable increase on the 4.5 million already there. By 1916, twenty four per cent of the households in European Russia owned their own land and many more were in the process of doing so.

### Source 3: Evidence of failure

- Massive tracts of the best land were still owned by 130,000 or so major land owners - including the Tsar and royal family.
- The peasants were still pathetically represented in the Duma, and subject to severe repression by the police and local authorities.

	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?
<b>1. Lack of Migration</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...to cities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peasants could not leave the land because they had mortgages to pay to the Mir (village commune) for their land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cancel / reduce repayments; but no money for Lords – could create unrest?</li> <li>Pass on the debt to the new village moved to?</li> <li>Internal passports to ensure this works?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redemption payments to the Mir were cancelled,</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ...to new villages</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peasants who sold their strips on in this way could just become wage labourers; but they could also choose to accept a <b>government grant</b> to populate uncultivated parts of the Empire in Western Siberia, or simply migrate directly into the new and expanding cities.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Lack of Productivity</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land in the commune is being wasted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population pressure and subdivision of land is creating smaller, less efficient strips.</li> <li>• Mortgage payments and poor productivity (see above) mean few profits; strips are too small to allow machines to be used.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mir should re-allocate plots so that families’ plots are all together</li> <li>• Expand boundaries of the village to bring in more land (other people owe the land next door – it should be nationalised)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cheap loans were offered by a “Peasants’ Bank” to encourage capitalistic peasants (“Kulaks”) to buy up neighbouring plots and consolidate their holdings into larger, more efficient farms.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peasants are unable (too poor) to invest in machinery</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redemption payments to the Mir were cancelled, and peasants were given free ownership of their land.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peasants are unwilling to invest in the land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The land is given back to the Mir on the death of the family to be re-allocated; so peasants have no incentive.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apply a principle on primogeniture to the land.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redemption payments to the Mir were cancelled, and peasants were given free ownership of their land.</li> </ul>

## Postscript: The Assassination of Stolypin

On September 18, 1911, in a period of growing industrial unrest, Stolypin was shot in the Kiev Opera House by a revolutionary called Bogrov. He died several days later.

### **This account of Stolypin's assassination was taken from the web.**

Stolypin took his seat in the first row of the orchestra. Overlooking the stage and the orchestra was the Tsar's box where the monarch sat with two of his four daughters, the grandduchesses Olga and Tatiana. During the second intermission, Stolypin stood up next to his seat with his back to the stage. A young man in evening clothes, Bogrov, walked solemnly down the aisle to stand next to Stolypin who gave him a puzzled look.

Bogrov calmly reached beneath his cape and pulled out a Browning revolver. Just as calmly he aimed this at the Prime Minister and, at almost point blank range, fired two shots, the bullets striking Stolypin in the chest and sending him crashing to the thickly carpeted floor.

Bogrov was punched and kicked as two guards officers dragged him up the aisle. One man reached out and slammed his fist into the assassin's face, knocking out his two front teeth. In the lobby, a large throng surrounded him, trying to lynch him from a chandelier. Police guards rushed forward and saved the assassin, dragging him into a small room off the lobby. Here he sat bleeding from his wounds but laughing maniacally. He had totally fooled and surprised his police bosses.

"I've done my job," Bogrov sneered. "I have found the assassin!" He spread out his arms, then slowly brought his right hand close to his chest and poked it with his finger. He was then beaten unconscious before being dragged out a side door and taken to the police station where he was to await a trial that took place a short time later. Bogrov had no defence, proclaiming that he had struck down an oppressor in the name of the revolution. He was convicted and hanged. By then, Stolypin was dead. He lingered for five days, then died and was honoured by the Tsar.

### **Nicholas II was with Peter Stolypin when he was assassinated at the Kiev Opera House on 18th September, 1911.**

During the second interval we had just left the box, as it was so hot, when we heard two sounds as if something had been dropped. I thought an opera glass might have fallen on somebody's head and ran back into the box to look. To the right I saw a group of officers and other people. They seemed to be dragging someone along. Women were shrieking and, directly in front of me in the stalls, Stolypin was standing. He slowly turned his face towards me and with his left hand made the sign of the Cross in the air. Only then did I notice he was very pale and that his right hand and uniform were bloodstained. He slowly sank into his chair and began to unbutton his tunic. People were trying to lynch the assassin. I am sorry to say the police rescued him from the crowd and took him to an isolated room for his first examination.

### **General Polivanov, diary entry on the death of Peter Stolypin (19th September, 1911)**

What a distressing feeling! Not to speak of the loss for Russia, I feel a personal bereavement. I was under the charm of this man. I delighted in him, I was proud to think that he was satisfied with my work. When I said goodbye to him on 6th September after the Cabinet meeting, as usual I tried to catch his eye. He stood by his chair, tall and upright, and his fine face looked healthy and tanned. It was on the 9th September that for the last time I heard his manly voice on the telephone.

**Optional Task:** Produce a news report of this event. Include an introduction by the anchorman, and interviews and tributes from some of the key people involved. Focus on what problems Stolypin solved etc.



**REACTION: THE ATTEMPT TO DIMINISH THE POWER OF THE DUMA**

*"Curse the Duma...it is all Witte's doing" (Nicholas II, 1906)*

Although Stolypin instituted some progressive economic reforms, the regime's political policies were reactionary and destructive.

**Elections to the First Two Dumas: The Fundamental Laws.**

Although the October Manifesto had implied that the Duma would be a truly representative body with real power, the Fundamental Laws backtracked significantly on this promise:

- The Duma would only be called when the Tsar wanted it, and he could dissolve it when he wished.
- The Duma could only advise the Tsar and offer opinions on his policies. It could not initiate legislation itself.
- Thus the autocratic power of the Tsar was undamaged.

	When?	Dominant Party	Relationship with the Tsar
<b>First Duma</b>	May-July 1906	Kadets	Most people elected to the First Duma were anti-government. The largest party was the Kadets, who wanted a constitutional monarchy. So the Tsar dissolved the Duma and authorised Stolypin to embark upon a notorious wave of repression.
<b>Second Duma</b>	March-June 1907	Social Democrats	During elections to the Second Duma the Tsar's police intimidated many Kadets into not standing for election. This backfired: 65 Social Democrats were elected instead. As a result, the Second Duma was dissolved too.

**Election to the Last Two Dumas: The 3<sup>rd</sup> June Reform.**

In June 1907, Stolypin passed a reform which made the voting system even more biased in favour of the conservative nobility. Under the new system, the vote of a working man was 20 times weaker than that of a landowner.

	When?	Dominant Parties	Relationship with the Tsar
<b>Third Duma</b>	1907-1912	Oktobrists, Monarchists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opposition grows from below:</b> The new Duma was packed with moderates. So, the Russian masses, feeling ignored, turned against Tsardom out of frustration.</li> </ul>
<b>Fourth Duma</b>	1912-1917		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Opposition grows from above:</b> The Duma members grew increasingly resentful of being ignored by the Tsar, who did not give them any important legislation to debate.</li> </ul>

**Tasks**

Produce a short announcement from the Tsar of between 150-200 which seeks to justify his handling of the Duma between 1906-1917. This will help you assess more thoroughly whether his policies were justifiable or not.

## **Essay Plan: "The Tsarist Regime was on the verge of collapse even before the outbreak of World War One" - Discuss**

### **Assessed Essay**

- This is your first "real" history essay at IB.
- It is due in on the first Thursday back after half term.
- The Thursday lesson will start with an end-of-unit factual test covering our studies of Nicholas II so far.

### **Introduction**

- Historians agree that World War One had a major part to play in the collapse of the Tsarist regime in 1917.
- However, whilst some historians argue that without World War One the regime would have survived, other historians argue that the War merely accelerated something that was already inevitable.

### **Structuring your investigation (to be further discussed in class)**

#### **Geography: Russia's fundamental problems**

#### **Economics (a) Industry and Witte**

#### **Economics (b) Agriculture and Stolypin**

#### **Politics**

People - The Tsar / Rasputin / Alexandra

Policies – 1904 War / 1905 Revolution / October Manifesto / Dumas / Parties

#### **Discussion points:**

Where do we bring in *assassination* of Stolypin?

Where do we bring in *dismissal* of Witte?

Where do we bring in social conditions in town / country – as a separate "social" section, or within the "Industry" and "Agriculture" sections?

Where do we mention the revolutionary parties (SRs, SDs?)

#### **Within each section:**

(a) Outline the "positives" for the regime – successes, strengths and so on.

(b) Outline the "negatives" for the regime – failures, weaknesses and so on.