

**THE HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
OF PETER ARKAD'EVICH STOLYPIN'S REFORMS**

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A B S T R A C T

The beginning of the twentieth century in Russia, especially the years around 1905, was a period of deep, severe economical and political crisis. It was heightened by the lost war against Japan in 1904-1905 and the violent social disturbances of 1904-1907. It was also a period of great social, political and ideological upheaval. Efforts were made to save and preserve the economical, social and political system, to reform it, to change it profoundly as well as to overthrow it through revolution. Those years can be described as a turning point in Russia's history, an era of struggle about the future direction of Russian society.

One of the attempted solutions to the most important Russian problems of that time was the set of measures and reforms proposed in 1906-1911 during the prime-ministership of Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin. His policies and his efforts to implement them have been the subject of heated discussion and controversy among politicians, political thinkers and historians, as well as among whose whom they affected.

This thesis is devoted to an examination of Stolypin's reforms and their effect on the economic, social and political development of the Russian Empire. Their relevance today is suggested by the renewed attempts of the successor states of the Soviet Union to privatize land ownership and at last solve the agrarian problems which Stolypin's assassination and the coming of the First World War cut short. It is this that makes a fresh appraisal of Stolypin timely.

R É S U M É

Le début du vingtième siècle en Russie, et particulièrement les années aux alentours de 1905, était une période où régnait une profonde et sévère crise économique et politique. Ce fait était augmenté par la guerre perdue contre le Japon en 1904-1905 et par les émeutes sociales de 1904-1907. C'était aussi une période de grand bouleversement social, politique et idéologique. Des efforts étaient faits pour sauver et préserver le système social, politique et économique, pour le réformer, le changer profondément, mais aussi pour, le renverser par la révolution. Ces années peuvent être décrites comme un point tournant dans l'histoire de la Russie, une époque de combat concernant l'orientation future de la société Russe.

Parmi les solutions avancées pour résoudre les plus importants problèmes russes de ce temps, figurait l'ensemble de mesures et réformes proposées de 1906 à 1911 sous le gouvernement du premier ministre, P.A. Stolypin. Ses objectifs politiques et ses efforts à les réaliser furent l'objet de chauds controversés débats entre des politiciens, les penseurs et les historiens, et parmi ceux que ses idées affectaient.

L'objectif de cette thèse est de procéder à l'examen des réformes de Stolypin et de leurs effets sur le développement économique, social et politique de l'Empire Russe. L'intérêt de ces réformes est suggéré aujourd'hui par les essais renouvelés des états qui ont succédé à l'Union Soviétique, de privatiser la propriété de la terre et d'enfin dénouer les problèmes agraires que l'assassinat de Stolypin et l'arrivée de la Première Guerre mondiale ont empêché. Ce sont ces faits qui donnent une nouvelle estime de l'oeuvre de Stolypin aujourd'hui.

Chapter I

The economic, social and political situation in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century.

The land is the pledge of our future strength.

The land is Russia!

P.A. Stolypin, *Speech to the Duma*

There is one fact that has never been denied by anyone who has any real first-hand knowledge of the Russian people. And that is that they very rarely cheat one another. An almost boundless good faith prevails amongst them.... The petty differences that arise are quickly settled either by the elders or by the commune: everyone abides by such decisions without reservation.

A. Herzen, *From the Other Shore*

I simply cannot see our common people as custodians of Christian truth, though I am filled with compassion for their cruel lot; for as soon as one of them makes a little money and climbs out of his poverty he immediately turns into a "kulak"....

K.D. Kavelin, *A letter to F.M. Dostoevsky*

Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century was an absolute monarchy. An autocratic Tsar exercised full legislative and executive power through a hierarchically organized bureaucracy¹. The state was divided administratively into 87 provinces (gubernias) except Finland². The lowest level of the administrative division was the district or uezd. The absolute power of the Tsar and his administrative apparatus was tempered somewhat in the field of justice by a judiciary which through the Statutes of 1864 had acquired a certain independence, as well as the elective organs of local self-government, especially the zemstvo assemblies in the provinces, which were also established that year. These zemstvos were confined to 34 provinces of Central Russia. Their political authority was limited, but they provided a podium for liberal elements of the nobility and for professional and business representatives who gained valuable practical experience through the zemstvos.

Russia was a multinational Empire, but it was governed as a unitary state, Finland and to some extent Poland being exceptions. The Grand Duchy of Finland enjoyed political autonomy since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Sweden surrendered it to the Tsar. Some elements of autonomy, especially in cultural and religious spheres existed also in Poland. The population of the Russian Empire was divided on national, class and religious lines. The

¹ The concise picture of the Russian political system before 1905 is presented by Marc Szeftel, "The Form of Government of the Russian Empire prior to the Constitutional Reforms of 1905-06", in Essays in Russian and Soviet History in Honor of Gerold Tanguary Robinson, ed. by J.S. Curtis, N.Y. 1963, pp.105-119.

² The present study deals largely with the European part of Russia. Siberia, Finland and Poland are mentioned only in so far as they are pertinent to the main theme.

differences between particular groups were not only economic, cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic but also legal and institutional, defined and sanctioned by law. There were taxpaying "estates" (classes) including peasants, artisans, Jews, colonists who settled in Russia after the time of Catherine II, national minorities, merchants, and nontaxable classes including hereditary and honorary nobility, clergy and other persons with advanced academic degrees³.

This type of division into separate classes was used for political and administrative purposes, for example in the election law providing for the zemstvo assemblies. The peasantry, or "persons of village condition", were legally separated from the rest of the population by special institutions and were governed in part by the peculiar judiciary system and by laws differing from the Civil Code. Categories of landowners were also differentiated in statistic data and official documents according to their legal status. Peasants did not lose the status of their particular "estate" even after moving to the cities⁴. There were also distinct legal regulations set aside for Jews, Old Believers, religious sectarians and non-Orthodox religious denominations⁵.

Russia was a predominantly rural society, 112,700,000 or 87.4 per cent of its inhabitants (according to the population census of 1897) living in the

³ Schaeffer Conroy, M. Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin. Practical Politics in Late Tsarist Russia, Boulder, Colorado 1976, note 6, p.80.

⁴ The legal regulations concerning the peasantry are presented below.

⁵ On this see the chapter below on the Stolypin Reforms. The social and religious doctrines of Russian religious sects and their customs are described in Robinson, G.T. Rural Russia under the Old Regime, Berkeley 1960, pp.45-48 and by Treadgold, D.W. "The Peasant and Religion", in The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, ed. by Vucinich, W.S. Stanford, 1968, pp.72-108.

countryside and 16,300,000 or 12.6 per cent in cities. A similar ratio was true of the 50 gubernias of European Russia, where the peasantry numbered about seventy nine million⁶. These peasants by taste and tradition were petty cultivators. Traditional farming was for them not a mere occupation but a mode of life. They derived their ideology from the villages they lived in, with which they continued to maintain ties even after they moved into cities⁷. Moreover, agriculture was the most important sector of the Russian economy and cereals held the first place among exports from Russia⁸. Industry was still poorly developed in Russia at the end of the nineteenth century, the number of persons engaged in handicraft exceeding the number employed in factories⁹. However, at the turn of the century, during the administration of Sergei Witte as Minister of Finance, in the decade 1892-1903, industry and railways developed relatively rapidly¹⁰.

6 Liashchenko, P. History of the National Economy of Russia to the 1917 Revolution, N.Y. 1949, p.273. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.94. Lewis, R. and Leasure, J.W. "Regional Population Changes in Russia and the U.S.S.R since 1851" *Slavic Review*. XXV. Dec. 1966. pp.663-68.

7 More than five million persons legally classified as peasants were found in cities during the census of 1897. Robinson, G.T., op. cit. p.289.

8 The average export from Russia of the four principal cereals in 1896-98 was 7,943,497 tons. See Pavlovsky, G. Agricultural Russia on the Eve of the Revolution. N.Y. 1968. p.113.

9 Robinson, G.T., op.cit. p.105.

10 Throughout the 1890s Russian industrial growth was more than eight per cent of the average annual rate. In 1890 there were 38,141 factories with 2,373,400 workers and output valued at 3,438 million rubles. Gerschenkron, A. "Agrarian Policies and Industrialization: Russia 1861-1917" in The Cambridge Economic History of Europe, Cambridge. 1965, Vol.VI, p. 764; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p.112.

Thus, due to her predominantly social and economic character, agrarian problems were crucial to fin-de-siecle Russia. Most of her internal problems were in some way linked to peasant issues. 160,875,000 desiatins¹¹ of land in 47 Provinces of European Russia in 1905 were held by peasants. 49,768,000 desiatins belonged to the nobles, 145,233,000 were held by State and Imperial family, 276,000 by the Peasants' Land Bank and 31,601,000 desiatins by others¹². The general organization of Russian agriculture before 1905 was created by the Emancipation Act of February 19, 1861 accompanied by seventeen *Statutes Concerning Peasants Released from Bondage*, and by later legislation.

The Statutes of Emancipation deal primarily not with individuals but with groups and group-functions¹³. Collectivism, in one form or another, was the dominant form of peasant organization in Russia. The rural commune as an economic organization (*obshchina*) and as a political unit (*mir*) was the most important peasant institutional framework before 1905¹⁴. There were two main kinds of rural commune. In one land was repartitioned periodically, while the other one was hereditary. The first one was typical for central and southern Russia, the second one was more common in the western and south-western provinces incorporated into the Russian Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. After the

¹¹ *Desiatina* - measure of land-area, equal to 2.70 acres.

¹² Robinson, G.T., op. cit. pp. 270-271.

¹³ Ibid. p.66

¹⁴ The literature concerning the Russian rural commune is truly voluminous. Only a minuscule portion of this literature is cited in this thesis, some of it being listed in the bibliography.

emancipation there were approximately 140,000 peasant communes in European Russia with a membership of 22,396,069 "revision souls" i.e. registered males 10 years old and above. In 1905 more than nine million allotment holding peasant households or 76.7 per cent in 52 provinces were in repartitional communes. Approximately 43 per cent of all arable land in European Russia was under communal control. On the other hand, only 471,565 peasant households of the total of more than 11 million households in European Russia held privately owned plots of land¹⁵.

Controversies over the Russian rural commune concerned its legal status, its origin and influence upon the historical development of Russia and its future role in the economic and social development of the country. According to the "organic view" represented by K.P. Pobedonotsev and S.V. Pakhman, the rural commune was a legal entity that owned the land itself. According to the another school of thought, the "mechanistic" view represented by K.D. Kavelin, the commune was only an association of private owners. Post-emancipation legal regulations supported the first point of view because they gave control of land to the communes, wherever they existed¹⁶.

Another crucial controversy about the rural commune concerned its origins. In this particular debate, few of the participants made any attempt to be impartial. Most of those engaged in it had ideological preconceptions.

15 Watters, F.M. "*The peasant and the Village Commune*" , in The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, op. cit. pp.146,149,151; Robinson, G.T. op.cit. pp.120,211.

16 Watters F.M., op.cit. pp.49-50; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.10; Riasanovsky, N.V., "*The Problem of the Peasant*" in The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, op. cit. p.282.

Slavophiles, Populists (narodniks) and their political successors adapted one interpretation; their opponents, the Statist legalistic school of historiography, and Westernizers or Westerners, took another.

The Slavophiles considered the Russian peasant commune a unique self-governing institution which had existed since the earliest times. Populist economic historians later in the nineteenth century supported this line of thinking because they too were interested in proving that the Russian economy was destined to develop in a non-capitalist path of its own.

For Statist historians, on the other hand, the Russian rural commune was in fact the product of government legislation and practices going back only to the sixteenth century. According to them, the commune had been useful to both the state and the serf-owner nobility because it could serve as the guarantor for the fulfillment of peasant duties. The same school of historiography also emphasized the fact that the rural communes did not evolve in Byelorussia and Ukraine, which were culturally close to Russia but separated from her politically.

The two sides in this celebrated controversy often used mythical and romantic idealizations of the Russian peasantry to support their arguments. Thus, K.S. Aksakov saw the commune as a natural union of men with its roots in early Slav tribal organization, while Kavelin - a leading Westernizer - saw the archetype of the peasant in Russia as being a landowning *domovladyka*¹⁷.

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For details of historical debate about the origins of Russian rural commune, see Petrovich, M.B., "The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Historiography", in The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia. op.cit. 191-230. The doctrines of the Slavophiles are described in Christoff, P.K. An Introduction to Nineteenth Century Russian Slavophilism. A Study in Ideas Vol.I-IV; Riasanovsky, N. Russia and the West in the Teaching of the Slavophiles. Cambridge,

Ethnographic descriptions of the Russian rural commune in the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century were also ideologically biased. The most influential of these were by the German scholar, enthusiast and "discoverer" of the Russian rural commune, Baron August von Haxthausen and by a highly dedicated Populist, S.M. Kravchinsky¹⁸.

This historical debate had some influence on the later political controversy unleashed by Stolypin's reforms. Some of his contemporaries would assert that the commune drew its strength and vitality chiefly from above, while others argued that it was a popular creation. If the latter proposition were true, then its antiquity deserved further protection, preservation and even expansion in social life. The contrary opinion held the commune to be obsolete and doomed to natural decline. Others again believed that since the commune was the creation of the state, it was only logical that it could be also liquidated by state action¹⁹. All these positions were related to the broader issue of the proper role of the state in society, or what today would be called "interventionism". But economic considerations that is to say problem of agricultural

1956; Walicki, A. The Slavophile Controversy. History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth Century Russian Thought, Oxford, 1975.

¹⁸ Haxthausen, F.A. The Russian Empire. Its People, Institutions and Resources, London, 1856 and Studies on the interior of Russia. Chicago, 1972.; Stepniak (S.M. Kravchinsky), The Russian Peasantry: Their Agrarian Condition, Social Life and Religion, London 1905. For description of rural commune, see also Stadling, J.J. In the Land of Tolstoi: Experiences of Famine and Misrule in Russia. London, 1897.

¹⁹ The political debate and its participants in the period of Stolypin's Reforms is more broadly presented in the later chapter.

productivity, or the commune's place in the Russian economy as a whole, were noticeably absent in the arguments advanced by its supporters²⁰.

The emancipation of the peasants involved substantial redemption payments to landowners which were guaranteed financially by the State. Redemption payments and taxes were assigned to the rural commune as whole. These payments were carried collectively by the commune as a basic administrative unit (*mir*) even in areas where the redistributational field-commune (*obshchina*) did not exist. To the government this mechanism was very useful because it secured payments and simplified their collection and execution²¹.

The value of the rural commune to the officialdom laid in another less obvious but important aspect. Fear of the urban proletariat as the principal source of social unrest was very strong in Russian government circles after the revolutions of 1848 in Europe. Western style capitalism and the proletarianization of the masses had been seen by Russian officialdom, as well as by Slavophiles and their successors, as the main source of modern misery and social degeneration. Government did not welcome the development of a distinct urban working class and preferred therefore urban labourers to preserve their ties to the countryside²². In achieving this goal, the rural commune was very useful for it

²⁰ Gerschenkron, A. op.cit. pp.748, 751, 798.

²¹ Ibid.p.746-748, Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 118.

²² Zelnik, R.E. "The Peasant and the Factory", in The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, op.cit. pp.182-185; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p.119.

continued to exert control over its members even after they moved to the cities²³.

The institution of the rural commune was also highly valued by the Government for other political reasons. Peasants in general, up to the beginning of the twentieth century, were considered loyal supporters of the Tsar, Mother Russia and Orthodoxy. Political stability seemed to be assured by the traditionalism implicit in an agrarian society, a view supported by the Ministry of Internal Affairs up to the period of social upheaval at the beginning of the twentieth century²⁴. To the military too the rural commune was a convenient source of recruits. Finally, there was the cultural perception of the rural commune by the Russian political establishment which shared the Slavophile faith in the genuine and unique Russian character of this institution²⁵.

The essence of the Russian rural commune was the collective holding of the land, which was periodically repartitioned among individual peasant households²⁶. The forests, pastures and meadows were in common usage. Reparti-

23 Von Haxthausen had also argued that the commune would prove a barrier against the development of a proletariat. "As long as this system exists, no hereditary proletariat can emerge and form itself in Russia", as quoted by Gerschenkron, *op.cit.* p.750.

24 Gerschenkron, A. *op.cit.* p.781.

25 In 1890s even Count S.Witte, the promoter of industrialization and modernization of Russia, supported the rural commune because he regarded it as a traditional Russian institution. Gerschenkron, A., *op. cit.* 782. (Witte S. Yu. *Vospominaniya*, Vol.I p.446). Later Witte changed his mind, as is discussed below.

26 This is sometimes confused, in the popular understanding of this institution, with the collective cultivation characteristic for the later Soviet collective agricultural institutions.

tion was practiced in order to equalize the economic situation of households and their ability to pay the taxes and redemption²⁷. The redistribution system was very complicated. It had to take into account the quality of land, its location and the technology of the three-field system. The open-field system, i.e. scattered narrow strips of land, were unavoidable for this kind of organization. Each household cultivated from a few to several such strips. The consequence of this system was the compulsory cropping and use of the land.

The other non-agricultural functions of the rural commune were limited self-government, the redistribution of financial obligations and the joint responsibility for their payment, the enforcement of compulsory labor in the case of payment arrears, control over the migration of commune members and the right to propose the banishment to Siberia of petty criminals and troublesome members²⁸.

The post-Emancipation rural commune, contrary to some of its enthusiasts, was not a fully voluntary organization created and maintained by the free will and desire of its members. The land was allotted by the Emancipation to the peasant households, but put in the control of the commune. The allotment of the land was compulsory. Ex-serfs did not become mobile individuals in a market

²⁷ Criteria of repartitions varied from region to region. They were made according to the number of census "souls", to workers per household, to the "eaters" (all members of the household) or according to the number of married couples. Gerschenkron, A. op.cit. p.745; Watters, F.M. op. cit. p. 138.

²⁸ More than one-third of the exiles to Siberia at the end of nineteenth century were sent there by village communes. Kennan, G., Siberia and the Exile System., N.Y. 1891, vol.I.pp. 79-80, vol.II, p.458.

economy, but were instead required to accept a plot of land. If a peasant wished to leave his commune, there were numerous restrictions. The consent of the communal assembly was required as well as that of the head of the household; nor could the peasant leave without paying all the household taxes for the current year and half a household's share in redemption payments. Moreover, for administrative purposes the peasant was considered after all this still a member of the commune! Altering land tenure or consolidating land-holding were impossible without the consent of two-thirds of the commune assembly. There were also numerous restrictions for purchase and sale of allotment lands. Leaving the commune, its dissolution and changes in the land tenure were further restricted by the laws of 1882, 1886 and 1893²⁹.

Thus post-emancipation peasants, through membership in communes, remained virtually bound to the land. This was to the advantage of communes which needed as many members as possible to share joint financial responsibilities; and it was also advantageous to landlords. It assured them a source of cheap labor, as well as eager tenants for their land. The administrative and juridical authority of serf-owners over peasantry was replaced by the authority of the commune, which, in its turn, was controlled by the State bureaucratic apparatus, especially by the Land Chiefs (*Zemskie Nachal'niki*). Those were appointed by governors since 1889. The Land Chiefs limited communal self-government by intervening in the redistribution of land, reviewing proposals for sale,

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Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 752-5; Pavlovsky, G., op. cit. p. 119; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 74-80, 91, 112-113, 211; Watters, F.M. op. cit. pp. 139-140; Emmons, T. "*The Peasant and the Emancipation*" in The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, op. cit. pp. 45-47.

consolidating allotment land and separating it from the commune. They were also given juridical authority over peasants in petty crimes, and were empowered to punish peasant officials elected by the commune³⁰.

The extensive intervention of the state in agrarian affairs, and its strong support for the existing system, was in harmony with its recognition of the importance of the peasantry as the most numerous class in Russian society. Some authors even claim that in Russia, throughout the nineteenth century, there was a consistent government policy of peasant protection³¹. Indeed, there was a striking coincidence of sympathies where the rural commune was concerned between government officials, Slavophiles and Socialists, in their Populist and later Social-Revolutionary currents. All of them admired the commune, and idealized the peasantry as a class free from the corruption and depravity of urban society³². Slavophiles saw it as the survivor from the "Golden Past", Populist

³⁰ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 119,121,132; Watters, F.M. op. cit. 141,146. The role of the state in the field of agriculture in Russia of that time is presented in magisterial detail by D.A.J. Macey in Government and Peasant in Russia, 1861-1906: The Prehistory of the Stolypin Reforms, Dekalb Illinois, 1987.

³¹ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p.64. This was certainly the case in the preferential treatment of peasants in Poland, the Baltic and in Western provinces.

³² August von Haxthausen, op. cit. p. 416; Konstantin Pobedonotsev quoted in Gerschenkron, A., op. cit. p. 789; Malia, M., "Herzen and the Peasant Commune", in Simmons, E. ed. Continuity and Change in Russian and Soviet Thought, Cambridge. 1955.

Two contrasting pictures of the peasantry are represented in the Russian literature of that time. Compare the idealized descriptions of peasants in the writing of Stepniak, Herzen and Leo Tolstoy with the critical opinion expressed by Mikhail Pogodin (quoted in Riasanovsky, N.Y. op. cit. p. 263) and the naturalist early novels of Maxim Gorky; see also Fanger, D. "The Peasant in Literature", in The Peasant in Nineteenth Century Russia, op. cit.

Socialists as the vehicle to the "Socialist Paradise" of the future, and reactionary conservatives as the barrier against revolution, and counterweight to the subversive intelligentsia.

A contrary view of the peasantry was expressed by Russian liberals who looked forward to the Western-style modernization of their country, as well as by Marxists who stressed the importance of the proletariat as the leading social force³³.

Is an objective appraisal of the Russian rural commune possible? As an institution it certainly assuaged the peasantry's traditional land hunger. By giving peasants land, the commune ensured economic and social security but on a very low level; and it was unable to save them from poverty and periodic famine³⁴. Yet the equalizing role of the commune satisfied some general postulates of egalitarian justice felt by peasants and theoretically dear to large sections of the intelligentsia. The commune also developed some capacity of collective action and mentality vis-a-vis the government and the entrenched authority of the nobility³⁵. This has not been sufficient to prevent most

pp. 231-262.

³³ The change, to the some extent, of Russian Marxists' position on agrarian problems is presented later, in the chapter about Stolypin's reforms.

³⁴ Stadling, J.J. In the land of Tolstoi; Crowell, E.W., The Russian Famine of 1891; Robbins, R.G. Famine in Russia, 1891-1892, N.Y. 1975.

³⁵ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 789; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 80. See also the different view represented by D.A.J. Macey: "The Peasant Commune and the Stolypin Reforms: Peasant Attitudes, 1906-14" in

twentieth century economists from being very critical of the commune. From their point of view, it represented a system which promoted technological backwardness, in any case inevitable in an open-field system with narrow strips of land. Owing to compulsory cropping it killed economic incentive. The lack of security continuous repartition entailed was also responsible for impeding technical improvements in agriculture. And by restricting population mobility, it also undermined the Russian Empire's industrialization and internal colonization³⁶.

The household was the basic peasant collective institution. The allotment of land not in communal tenure belonged jointly to the household interpreted as a juridical person by the Senate (in its role as the Supreme Court of Russia). In communes, the allotment was assigned for cultivation to the household. It was jointly responsible for its share of taxes and redemption payments. Members of the household had the right to share the use of land implements and animals. The household in its internal structure was patriarchal. The household was controlled by the commune in all cases concerning division or alienation of the allotment.

Land Commune and Peasant Community, ed. by Bartlett, R., N.Y. 1990, p. 222. According to Prof. Macey, the post-emancipation Russian repartitional commune seen as a conflict-resolution mechanism was not the embodiment of innate peasant egalitarianism but rather of a deep-rooted peasant egoism.

- 36 Watters, F.M. op. cit. pp. 152,157; Gerschenkron, A., op. cit. p. 765; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 82-84; Robbins, R.G. op. cit. pp.4,6,10. A different argument is represented by Kingston-Mann, E. "Peasant Communes and Economic Innovation: A preliminary Inquiry" in Peasant Economy, Culture, and Politics of European Russia, 1800-1921, ed. by Kingstoon Mann, E. and Mixter, T., Princeton 1991, pp.23-51 and Bideleux, R. "Agricultural Advance under the Russian Village Commune System", in Land Commune and Peasant Community in Russia, op. cit. pp. 196-218. Both maintain that the communal land tenure system in Russia was not an obstacle to the development and improvement of agriculture. R. Bideloux calls also into question the occurrence of a famine in 1891-1892.

This control increased after 1886, when the division of property within the household required the consent of its head and two-thirds of the commune members. That permission could still be reversed by the Land Chief³⁷.

The *volost'* created after the Emancipation represented peasant self-government at the highest level. It included a number of communes, and was a purely peasant organization with its own assembly, judges and elders, who were elected by the participating communes³⁸. The cooperatives and other associations created for particular economic purposes begun in the 1860s and which were truly voluntary, proved very rare in the Russian countryside up to 1905³⁹.

The peasantry was not a homogeneous class. It was diversified economically due to the initial pre-emancipation status and due to geographical location. The former state peasants, on the average, had larger allotments and lower financial obligations per unit of land. Differences between the rich and poor peasants within the same village were more common in Western provinces, where the hereditary tenure of land prevailed⁴⁰. The differences between particular peasant groups influenced their later different attitudes towards Stolypin's reforms.

37 Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.66-7, 74; Watters, F.M. op. cit. pp. 137; Gerschenkron, A. op.cit. p.772.

38 Emmons, T. op. cit. p.53; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.21, 79.

39 Ibid. p.126

40 Ibid.p.9; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp.74-76; Cossacks, described in Robinson, G.T. op. cit.92, were the prominently distinct group of the population in the Russian countryside. They played an important political and military role in the Civil War after the Revolution of 1917.

The economic situation of the peasantry at the beginning of the twentieth century was generally unsatisfactory. It was characterized by insufficient land holdings, an overpowering financial burden connected with redemption payments and continuing technological backwardness⁴¹. The general lack of forests and the insufficient size of meadows and pastures in the allotment lands prolonged the economic dependency of peasants upon the neighboring estates⁴².

The average size of peasant holdings in Russia was larger than the average farm in Western Europe. But their productivity was much lower in Russia than in Western Europe and in the United States due to the prevailing backward three-field system and the lack of technology⁴³. The peasant allotment holdings in Russia were insufficient to support big peasant families and to cover redemption payments, even though they were spread out forty-nine years. Taxes imposed by different levels of administration and the indirect taxes on basic products consumed by peasants were an added burden. Hence the enormous arrears in payments. They exceeded, in the period 1896-1900, the current obligation which the State was attempting to collect⁴⁴.

⁴¹ For a somewhat different appraisal of the peasantry's economic situation see E. Kingston-Mann and R. Bideleux; as indicated in fn 36 above.

⁴² Robinson, G.T. op.cit. 89.

⁴³ Ibid. p.97-98 and note 24 on p.290; See also statistic data for 1890s in Bideleux, R. op. cit. pp. 210-211.

⁴⁴ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.96.

The Russian peasantry at that time was largely illiterate and isolated from the world outside. According to the census of 1897, only 20 per cent of the peasant population was literate⁴⁵.

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Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 127; Schaeffer Conroy, M. op.,. cit. p.10; Curtis, J.S. "Peasant and the Army" in The Peasant in Nineteenth-Century Russia, op. cit. p. 115. There was a big disproportion of literacy between the sexes. According to the 1897 census, 11,431,000 males and 3,923,000 females in the village population of European Russia were literate. The Army trained soldiers to read and write, and so did the Church.

CHAPTER II

The Crisis of 1904-1906 and the Urgency of Reforms

The commune saved the Russian people from Mongolian barbarism and from Imperial civilization, from the Europeanized landlords and from the German bureaucracy. Communal organization, although strongly shaken, withstood the interference of the state. It survived fortunately until the development of socialism in Europe.

A. Herzen, *From the Other Shore*

The old village commune with its social estate basis, the attachment of the peasant to the soil, the routinism of the semi-feudal countryside came into the sharpest conflict with the new economic conditions.

V.I. Lenin, *The New Agrarian Policy*

As long as the peasant remains poor, as long as he has no land of his own, as long as he is forcibly held in the grip of the commune—so long will he remain a slave.

P.A. Stolypin, *Speech to the Duma*

In the years 1904-1905 Russia faced a deep economic, social, political and cultural crisis. The situation of agriculture and the peasantry deteriorated rapidly with overpopulation and increasing land-hunger. By the 1890's the peasant population was increasing at the rate of nearly one million per year, which caused the diminution of land holding per capita and per household¹.

A further hardship came with the fall in prices of agricultural products at the end of the nineteenth century². The peasant remedy for land-hunger was leasing land, but this was economically ineffective. Over 14 per cent of the land used by peasants at the beginning of the twentieth century was rented, but the average rent per desiatina was usually higher than the peasant's average net income from a desiatina of his own allotment³.

At the same time there was the economic decline of the agricultural enterprises of the nobility. They lacked capital and they were hit hard by the low prices of agricultural products⁴. The "vicious circle" set up by a weak industry and a technologically backward and organizationally archaic agriculture impeded the development of the whole Russian economy. Industry needed a broad internal market, the influx of a qualified labor force and a supply of food for the urban population. The countryside needed advanced technology, a market for its produce and employment for its demographic surplus. Both industry

¹ Emmons, T. op. cit. p.70; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 94.

² Watters, F.M. op. cit. pp 153-155.

³ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 99-100, 243. "Peasantist" mentality was one of the causes for preference of land-renting over wage-work.

⁴ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp.102-104. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.131.

and agriculture were weakly developed in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century, and in existing social, legal and cultural circumstances, they could not satisfy their mutual needs⁵. The major handicaps were a "peasantist" mentality, the archaic organization of agriculture and the virtual bondage of the population to the soil through rural communes. "Price scissors" existing at that time in Russia, i.e. expensive industrial products and relatively cheap agriculture products, were typical for undeveloped agricultural countries. This situation was caused by protective tariffs, weak industry and indirect taxes which were the important sources of State revenue⁶.

This crisis situation deepened the discontent of the peasantry and was further deepened by the cultural, legal and economic gulf between "society" i.e. the westernized upper classes and the "narod". Moreover, this division was exacerbated by the ideological conflict within educated "society" between the political establishment and the mostly liberal or revolutionary intelligentsia. University students had largely turned against the government, military service being considered by them as dishonorable⁷. The crisis also had a national dimension with conflicts and ethnic disturbances in Finland, Poland, the Baltic and in the Caucasus.

The crisis was heightened by the lost war against Japan in 1904-1905, a war which - as in the Crimean conflict - showed up Russia's social weaknesses. The defeats suffered by the army and navy against Japanese forces triggered a

⁵ Ibid. p.88.

⁶ The revenue from indirect taxation was in 1899 more than three and a half times as much as from redemption payments and direct taxes. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.96.

⁷ Curtis, J.S. op. cit. p.131.

social discontent, the demoralization of the military, and a sharp decline in the prestige of autocracy. On the other hand, the war demonstrated the urgent need for reform. The crisis was expressed domestically by the revolutionary uprisings and terrorist activities of the political opposition, as well as the disturbances which began in the rural areas before the war, in 1902. This was followed by strikes and riots in the cities among factory workers in the period 1904-1907. The peasant upheavals were directed mainly against landlords, were usually spontaneous and economic in character but they were also influenced, to some extent, by returning soldiers and workers, and by activists from revolutionary parties⁸.

The situation in Russia during this period became so unstable that it threatened the whole social and political structure of the State. It prodded the Government at long last to proceed with political and social reform. Hence the Manifesto to Improve the State Order which Nicholas proclaimed on October 17, 1905⁹. It promised to grant several civil rights and to create a representative political institution in the form of the State Duma.

The new political system took shape with the Fundamental Laws of April 23rd, 1906¹⁰. The Tsar retained ultimate authority. He shared legislative power with the Duma and the State Council, but had an unqualified veto over their acts.

⁸ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 152-155.

⁹ An English translation may be found in Documents of Russian History 1914-1917, ed. by Golder, F.A., Gloucester, Mass. 1964, pp. 627-8.

¹⁰ Szeftel, M. The Russian Constitution of April 23, 1906. Political Institutions of the Duma Monarchy, (Brussels 1976) includes an English translation of this document, as well as a comprehensive description of the Russian political system of that time.

He also had an exclusive initiative for revising the Fundamental Laws. Moreover, the Tsar determined also the length of the Duma's session and could dissolve the Duma at will. One third of the budget was beyond the Duma's control. According to the Election Law of December 11, 1905, elections were indirect and electors were divided into separate classes according to their legal social status. In fact numerous election irregularities occurred at the lowest level of the local peasant election assemblies, where the Land Chiefs influenced the choosing of candidates¹¹. The political system created in 1906 had a "hybrid" character with two sources of authority and two sets of principles opposing each other. One of them was rooted in autocracy, hierarchical obedience being combined with bureaucratic legality, so that government was still felt to emanate from the traditional "batiushka-Tsar". The other set of principles was derived from the political philosophy of constitutional government. It claimed the supremacy of law over any person and institution and recognized the general principle of government from below, that is to say popular sovereignty as enshrined in the Duma and by the institutions of local self-government¹².

Such a "mixed" system inevitably heightened the conflicts and tensions within the "obshchestvo" or "society" constituting the acknowledged and articulate part of the body politic. Thus it is that efforts were made to restore the old fully autocratic system at the same time that liberals sought to preserve and to improve the system created by the October Manifesto and the Laws of 1906, while

¹¹ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p . 179.

¹² Szeftel, M. op. cit. 118.

radicals tried to shatter the new system either through parliamentary action or revolution.

The reactionary tendency was represented by some Court dignitaries, part of the bureaucracy and the nobility, and by the Union of the Russian People¹³. The liberals were split into the Union of 17th of October, i.e. the "Octobrists" and the Constitutional-Democratic Party or "Cadets". Octobrists supported, in general, the system created by the October Manifesto. Cadets wanted to transform the existing system into a constitutional monarchy, a decisive role being then assigned to representative bodies which would guarantee broad civil rights for the people. Liberal conceptions were also shared by zemstvo circles and some associations of the nobility¹⁴. The radical revolutionary parties, on the other hand, who wanted to overthrow the existing system through revolution were represented by the two main organized groups, the populist Socialist Revolutionaries and the marxist Social-Democrats¹⁵.

13 The organization founded late in 1905, dedicated to Autocracy, Orthodoxy and Nationality. They preferred to submit the Duma to an only consultative role. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.183-4; Schaeffer Conroy, M. op. cit. pp.28-29.

14 The ideology and program of Russian liberals of that time are described in Fisher, G. Russian Liberalism, Cambridge, Mass., 1958; Karpovich, M. "Two Types of Russian Liberalism: Maklakov and Miliukov" in Continuity and change in Russian and Soviet Thought, op. cit; and Miliukov, P. N. Russia and Its Crisis, London 1962.

15 The positions of particular political, ideological and social currents are presented here only in very general terms. Some of these positions changed according to tactics in particular political situations. There were also significant differences and polemics among the leaders and members of the same party, as for example, in fierce and vicious polemics between Lenin and his Party comrades.

Up to the crisis of 1904-1906 the land-owning nobility was the class which supported the traditional organization of peasant agriculture¹⁶. But the nobility, at least its significant part, began to change its orientation during the period of social upheaval, which was most violent in those areas where the rural commune was predominant¹⁷. By 1906, anti-commune sentiment among the nobility had grown considerably. The national congress of the Marshals of Nobility in Moscow, in January 1906, called for measures easing the consolidation of peasants' land and the dissolution of communes. At the same time, it was strongly against land expropriation. It called for the inviolability of private property and proposed ways for an increase in peasant holdings through colonization, the partial sale of State Lands and an increased activity of the Peasants' Bank. Similar ideas were expressed at the First Congress of Representatives of the Nobles' Societies at St. Petersburg in May of 1906. The speakers attacked very strongly the peasant commune as "the nursery of socialist bacilli". This Congress in its Most Humble Address to the Tsar stated among other things, that "the recognition and confirmation of the full property-right of the peasants in respect to the lands in their possession is a primary need of the national life. The strengthening of property-rights among the peasants... will increase their attachment to that which is their own, and their respect for that which belongs to others"¹⁸.

¹⁶ Some authors from this class, however, considered the rural commune as an obstacle to agrarian productivity and advocated individually owned, separated farmsteads. This opinion was expressed, among others, by a cousin of Peter A. Stolypin, Dmitri A. Stolypin, as early as in 1892. Schaffer Conroy, M. op cit. p.1.

¹⁷ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.153.

¹⁸ Ibid. pp. 182-183.

The liberals proposed some financial relief for the peasants, the broadening of their civil rights, new allotments from the State and Imperial land, and public assistance in colonization. They allowed also, but only "when necessary", in instances "of importance to the State", the partial expropriation of private land, with State compensation for proprietors¹⁹.

Radical remedies for agrarian problems by the revolutionary parties were based on the principle of compulsory expropriation of the nobles' land. But those parties were divided very sharply in their general philosophy about the role and importance of particular social classes and branches of the economy. They also expressed opposite opinions on peasant communes.

As ideological successors of the nineteenth century Populists, Socialist Revolutionaries considered the peasantry as the most important and worthy social class in Russia. They believed the peasant commune to constitute the institutional base for the future collectivist Socialist system which would avoid the ills of agriculture under capitalism. They also proposed the expansion of the communal system to the whole of Russian society²⁰.

The program of marxist Social-Democrats on agrarian problems in Russia was ideologically complex and was frequently changed. Generally, they recognized the urban proletariat as the leading, most important, revolutionary social class. Its natural ally in the village, from an ideological point of view, was supposed to be the landless rural "proletariat". Up to 1905, they supported only

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 164, 180-1. The position of liberals of different stripes on agrarian problems was similar at that time. The wider differences between them occurred later, during the discussion of Stolypin's reforms.

²⁰ Ibid p.140.

lukewarmly the demands for more land for peasants. They were also against the laws supporting the repartitional rural commune. This position was taken "with the object of clearing away the remains of the servile order, ...and in the interest of the free development of the class-struggle in the village."²¹

The peasants' opinions on agrarian problems were difficult to assess due to their cultural isolation. The All-Russian Peasants' Union was the most active peasants' organization in 1905. Its congresses called for the abolition of private property of land, because it is not the product of human hands, but the common property of the whole people. But specific Union proposals for the organization of agriculture after the abolition of private property were much less clear. They were influenced by both the Social Revolutionaries and the Social Democrats. Generally, these proposals looked for something like a repartitional commune on a national scale²².

The crisis and danger of peasant rebellion also compelled governmental circles to rethink their agrarian policies. Three governmental commissions were appointed in 1901-1903 to consider them²³. Sergei Witte, the head of one of these

²¹ Ibid. pp. 141-143; The significant differences within the Social-Democratic Party between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks were expressed more clearly in the period of Stolypin's reforms.

²² Ibid. pp. 160-163, 172. The real influence and representativeness of the Peasants Union was doubtful due to its semi-conspiratorial character and domination by activists. The number of delegates to the congress from particular provinces varied from one to forty five. The Union's calls for the boycott of elections to the State Duma were unsuccessful.

²³ *Commission for the Investigation of the Question of the Change during the years 1861-1900 in the Well-being of the Village Population of the Central Agricultural Provinces as Compared with other Parts of European Russia; Special Conference on the Needs of Rural Industry, under the presidency of Sergei Witte; Editing Commission of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.* Robinson, G.T. op.

commissions completely changed his opinions on the institution of the rural commune. His commission produced a lot of critical material on the commune's shortcomings. Witte expressed his views on this topic in a Memorandum concerning the Peasant Question, written in 1904, and in a report to the Tsar in January 1906. He stressed the economic weakness of the communal system and its resemblance to the "theoretical constructions of socialism"²⁴. But government circles and influential officials were still divided in their assessment of agrarian problems. Minister of Internal Affairs, Plehve blocked the work of Witte's commission. After his death, strong anti-commune opinions in this Ministry were expressed by the deputy minister V.I. Gurko, but opposite opinions were still expressed by the Minister of Internal Affairs, P.N. Durnovo and the Chairman of Council of Ministers I.L. Goremykhin²⁵. Indeed, official support for the existing organization of agriculture was still maintained in official documents at the highest level²⁶.

Yet, apart from general discussion on agrarian problems, the Government did make some significant decisions in this field at that time. The first important change in long-established policy came in 1899, with the abolition of

cit. pp. 145-146; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. 91,121.

²⁴ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 188-189; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p.791.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ *The Imperial Ukase Given to the Senate Concerning Establishment of a Provincial Conference for a Review of the Legislation Concerning the Peasantry* from January 8,1904 stressed the "inviolability" of the communal system and the necessity to preserve the peasantry as a special "estate".
Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. 785.

joint responsibility for taxes in rural communes with hereditary tenure. On March 12, 1903, joint responsibility of repartitional rural communes for taxes and redemption payments was also abolished in most of the Provinces. This strengthened the importance and financial independence of households and removed the uncertainty of their financial situation²⁷.

The Manifesto of August 11, 1904 abolished corporal punishment of the peasants by the volost' courts²⁸. The peasants up to that moment were the only social class subjected as yet to this humiliating punishment. Its liquidation removed one of the causes of their legal inferiority vis-a-vis the rest of the population.

The Tsar's *Manifesto to Better Conditions and Improve the Well-Being of the Peasant Population* issued on November 3, 1905 was the economical addition to the political promises of his October Manifesto²⁹. It reduced by half the redemption payments for 1906 and cancelled entirely by January 1, 1907 the still due balance of this obligation³⁰. This Manifesto also promised measures for

²⁷ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 146; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. 121; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. 785. The abolition of joint commune responsibility for financial payments conformed to recommendations of the Ministry of Finance, being aimed against the position of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

²⁸ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 209; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 786.

²⁹ The English translation is in: Documents of Russian History 1914-1917, op. cit. pp. 628-9.

³⁰ This significant financial and legal relief for the peasantry was made with relatively low cost for the State Treasury. Only 670.3 million rubles from the scheduled total 2,012.1 million were so far repaid by peasants, but these payments amounted annually to only 6.4 percent of the total tax revenue, and their collection was very costly. The main beneficiaries of this decision were the former State peasants.

increasing Peasant Land Bank activity, thus assisting peasants to purchase land.

Some significant changes in the organization of the State administration for agricultural affairs were also made at that time. On May 6, 1905, the Ministry of Agriculture and State Domains was renamed the Central Administration of Land-Settlement and Agriculture. The colonization of Asiatic Russia was transferred by the same decision from the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Internal Affairs to this newly formed Administration. It clearly meant emphasis on agricultural and social aspects of colonization over previously military and police priorities. The Land-Settlement Commissions were established in Provinces and Districts on March 4, 1906³¹.

All of these partial reforms still did not change the organization of Russian agriculture. But the abolition of joint financial responsibility by the rural commune removed one important reason for the State's support of this institution. The organizational reforms provided the administrative apparatus necessary for active state policy. The opinions of a significant part of the bureaucracy and nobility on the organization of agriculture and on the social problems of the peasantry were gradually changed during the crisis. The urgency of the reforms was also felt in many other spheres of State activity. An attempt at complex reforms was made by the Government in between 1906-1911, under the administration of Stolypin as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and it is to these reforms that we turn next.

Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 780, 786-7.

31 Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. op. 122.

CHAPTER III

The period of Stolypin's Reforms 1906-1911

I believe that real action, real reforms are necessary.

.....

The enemies of statesmanship would like to choose the road of radicalism, the road which leads to the severance of ties with Russia's historical past, with her cultural tradition. They want great upheavals, but we want a great Russia.

P.A. Stolypin, *Letter to D.N. Shipov and Speech to the Duma.*

Peter Arkad'evich Stolypin, born on April 2, 1862, was well prepared by his social, professional and intellectual background to cope with the Government's problems. By origin a nobleman and a landowner in his own right, he was well acquainted both through practical management and education with the problems of agricultural production. His university thesis (1885) was on tobacco growing in Southern Russia. On graduating he served in the statistical department of the Ministry of Agriculture and State Domains where he acquainted himself with agricultural problems from the perspective of the central agricultural bureaucracy. In 1889 he began his service as the district Marshal of Nobility in Kovno province and personally managed the family estate there¹. He founded an agricultural society which included peasants as well as big landowners and provided them with the means for business cooperation².

As the district Marshal of Nobility, he not only represented the interests of his class but dealt also with the peasantry's problems and with the whole agricultural situation in the district³. From 1899 to 1902 Stolypin served as the provincial Marshal of Nobility for the Kovno province. In May 1902, he was appointed Governor of Grodno province, a post he occupied for ten months. His duties as a governor included, among other things, the chairmanship of the provincial Conference on the Needs of Agricultural Industry, headed centrally by Witte. In the spring of 1903, Stolypin was appointed Governor of Saratov province. Interestingly, the places of Stolypin's public activity, Kovno, Grodno

¹ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.4; Bock von, M.P. Reminiscences of My Father. NY.1970. p.32.

² Ibid. p.12.

³ Conroy, S.M. op. cit. p.5.

and Saratov, were provinces which differed from each other sharply. This allowed him to enlarge significantly his experience and to look into different sets of problems.

Grodno and Kovno provinces were in the north-western part of the Empire. There it was hereditary land tenure that prevailed. Russians comprised a small proportion of the population there, Lithuanians being the overwhelming majority among the peasants in Kovno province, and Byelorussians being the majority in Grodno province. Of the big landowners a majority were Poles. A significant Jewish population lived in the towns of this region⁴. Saratov province, in East-Central Russia, had an overwhelming predominance of repartitional rural communes. Almost 40 percent of land belonged to the big landowners⁵. This province was affected hardest by the social disturbances in 1905. The losses to landowners there were over 9.5 million rubles, that is to say, according to the estimates of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, close to a third of the total losses in all the internal provinces⁶.

Thus Stolypin himself saw the problems of Russian agriculture at first hand, and he became familiar with them over an extended period of time and could compare different points of view as seen from various administrative perspectives. As a big landowner himself, an official district and provincial representative of the nobility and as the highest provincial official in different parts of the Russian Empire he brought to them an understanding that was exceptional. His experience and competence exceeded, of course, the merely

⁴ Ibid. pp. 4,6.

⁵ Ibid. pp.11.

⁶ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.174-175.

technical problems of agriculture. In Kovno and Grodno provinces he had to deal with national or nationalist issues. As the governor he also had to face the complexities wrought by industrialization and the specific problems created by the delayed rise in Russia of an urban proletariat. As the governor of Saratov province he learnt also how to use the apparatus of repression when confronted by social disturbances.

On many vital social problems, however, Stolypin's views were influenced not only by his own experience, but by foreign models, especially by what he observed during his frequent visits to Germany while living in Kovno province. He was impressed by the Prussian organization of agriculture, the prosperity of individual peasants, the diligence and the standard of living of workers as compared with their Russian counterparts⁷. He was also impressed by German universal and compulsory education, and by its patriotic spirit⁸. During his tenure as a governor, Stolypin was also interested in public law, being influenced by the writings of Professor N.M. Korkunov. Korkunov was able to reconcile an enlightened conception of the *Rechtsstaat* with conservative views of autocracy. He dealt also with the theory of self-government and with the legal position of Finland within the Empire⁹.

During his earlier career, Stolypin established friendly personal contacts with representatives of the local nobility and moderate liberals close to the zemstvos, such as N.N. L'vov, A.V. Zenkovsky, D.N. Shinov¹⁰. The continuation

7 Bock op. cit. p.22..

8 Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.10.

9 Ibid. p.16.

10 Zenkovsky, A.V. Pravda o Stolypine. N.Y. 1957. pp.201,204,208,209.

of these contacts provided him with an independent source of opinions and information about the situation in different provinces.

His experience in the Western provinces, his observations in Germany and his experience in Saratov province decisively formed Stolypin's opinions on the organization of agriculture. And his attitude to the commune became increasingly critical, as may be seen in his reports on the work of the provincial Conference on the Needs of Agricultural Industry in Grodno and in the annual report to the Tsar for 1904¹¹. He saw the poverty, illiteracy and archaic structure of the countryside as the main causes of social unrest. His experience convinced him of the necessity of deep reforms and changes in many spheres of Russian life and State organization¹².

With such experience, opinions and convictions, Stolypin entered the highest echelons of power in Russia. On April 26, 1906 he was appointed Minister of Internal Affairs and on July 7, 1906 he was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers, while retaining his previous post.

The urgency of reforms and even some specific programs were already discussed before Stolypin's advent to power, but the attempts at implementation were blocked by indecision and arguments within the Government¹³. The far reaching program of agrarian reforms was officially published on June 20, 1906,

¹¹ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. 9,13. Stolypin's opinions on this subject are presented more broadly later.

¹² He expressed this conviction in a letter to D.N. Shipov: "I believe that what is needed is real action and real reform". Quoted in Gerschenkron, op. cit. p. 790.

¹³ The differences of opinion and political struggle between S.Witte, V.I. Gurko, V.K. Plehve, P.N. Durnovo and I.L. Goremykhin are mentioned above, p. 28.

being then delayed by opposition in the Duma and by the indecisiveness of I.L. Goremykhin, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers at that time¹⁴. Stolypin's energy and his strong convictions in favor of reforms changed the situation. His dual sources of power as Minister of Internal Affairs and Chairman of the Council of Ministers gave much-needed consistency to his policies. In the former position, Stolypin directed a large part of the provincial administration and the police. This ministry was closely concerned with the many spheres of State activity. Its Land Section dealt with agriculture and the peasantry, which it did with the help of the Central Administration of Land-Settlement and Agriculture. The Department of General Affairs of the Ministry was responsible for Jewish and other nationality affairs, for Administrative personnel policy, and for relations with Marshals of Nobility. The Chief Administration for the Affairs of the Local Economy supervised, among other things, the institutions of local self-government. The Department of Foreign Religions supervised denominations other than Orthodoxy¹⁵. The concentration in Stolypin's hands of the power of the Minister of Internal Affairs and of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers strengthened greatly his position, gave him the opportunity to inspire and to coordinate the reforms in spheres beyond his immediate jurisdiction and removed the possibility of a paralysing conflict between the holders of those two posts, which so often occurred in the past.

¹⁴ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 194-195.

¹⁵ Conroy, M.S. p. 37.

The general program of reforms was published in the Autumn of 1906 and was represented by Stolypin in the Duma on March 6, 1907¹⁶. The most significant and advanced in implementation were numerous reforms and measures dealing with the problems of agriculture. The main legal acts affecting the peasantry were the Decree of November 9, 1906 Supplementing Certain Stipulations of the Law Presently in Force Regarding Landownership and Land Utilization of Peasants, the Law of June 14, 1910 Concerning Changes in, and Supplement to, Certain Stipulations Regarding Peasant Land Possession, and the Law of May 29, 1911 Concerning Land Organization. Peasant problems were also regulated by the Decree of October 5, 1906 Concerning Abrogation of Certain Limitations on the Rights of Rural Residents and Persons Belonging to Some Other, Previously Taxpaying Status¹⁷.

Technically, the new legislation concerning the land settlement did not introduce any entirely new principle but simply represented an extension of the provisions contained in the legislation of 1861. But in fact, this legislation and accompanying measures meant a complete change to previous agrarian policy. The main goals of the new government policy were the reorganization of agriculture and the extension of the land area in peasants' possession. The desired reorganization of agriculture meant a destruction or at least a diminution of the rural commune together with the open-field system and the creation of individual peasant holdings. Thus the legislation of 1906-1911 made it easier for members of a commune to leave it as well as to convert repartitio-

16 Shapiro, L. Russian Studies, London 1986, p. 94; Stolypin, P.A. Speeches in the State Duma and in the Council of State 1906-1911 (in Russian). N.Y. 1990, pp. 36-46.

17 Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 788, 793-4, 796.

nal tenure of the land into hereditary ownership. It also made it legally feasible to dissolve the commune and consolidate peasant holdings¹⁸.

Escape from the rural commune was rendered much easier than in the past. Under the Decree of October 5, 1906 the head of the household and the commune lost control over the passports of its members. The same act also abolished joint responsibility for public obligations where it had not been done in 1903. The cancellation of the redemption payments removed also the peasant's ties to his allotment as enforced by the restrictive laws of 1893. The decree of November 9, 1906 permitted the sale of the house-and-garden plots outside the commune and the sale, without the consent of the commune assembly, of separated strips with accompanying use-right to undivided communal lands. This allowed the whole household to leave the commune without alienation of land and with some financial means to settle elsewhere¹⁹.

Under the decree of November 9, 1906, "every head of a peasant family, holding allotment land by right of communal tenure, was entitled at any time to claim the appropriation to him as private property of his due share of the said land"²⁰. There were no attempts made to find a claimant's share in aggregate redemption payments. Here Stolypin's reforms favored the actual possessors of the land. The holder was entitled to receive all the strips cultivated by his household if a general repartition was not carried out in that commune for the

¹⁸ This legislation was very complex and detailed, dealing with the numerous different situations. Only the general description of this legislation is presented here with the emphasis on the points creating the new trends in the organization of the agriculture.

¹⁹ Robinson, G.T., op. cit. pp. 209-211, 228; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 787-8, 793.

²⁰ Quoted in Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 123.

last twenty four years. If such a repartition had been carried out, then the claimant had to pay for surplus of the land at the original redemption rate, much lower than the current price of the land. This regulation was assailed by the opponents of Stolypin's reforms as the robbery of the collective by the individual²¹. The conversion of the repartitional communal tenure of land into a hereditary ownership was greatly expanded under the law of June 14, 1910. It proclaimed such conversion in all the repartitional communes where the general redistribution of the land had not been carried out since January 1, 1887²².

From the point of view of ideology underlying Stolypin reforms, the enclosed individual holding with consolidated land was the best solution to Russia's agrarian problems²³. Hence, under the new legislation, any householder in the repartitional commune could demand the consolidation of his share of the land²⁴. Under the decree of November 9, 1906, in a commune with a hereditary

21 Ibid. pp. 123-4; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.212; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 794.

22 Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 125; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 213; Gerschenkron, A. p. 794.

23 This was explicitly expressed in the provisional rules for land-organization technique accompanying the instructions to the Land-Settlement Commissions from June 19, 1911; "The fundamental purpose" of the land-settlement was "the formation of independent farms through the concentration in one place of all the lands of different types and of various tenures which pertain to a given holder". Quoted in Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 224.

24 There were some differences concerning this matter between the law of 1906, 1910 and 1911. The later legislation strengthened the position of the individual demanding a consolidation against the will of the commune. The law of May 29, 1911 insisted on the consolidation of individual holdings, being carried out simultaneously with the conversion of such holdings into hereditary ownership. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 219; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 130.

tenure the two-thirds majority of the peasant assembly could reject the open-field system and carry out a consolidation of all the holdings. The law of June 14, 1910 reduced the required vote on that matter to a simple majority. The law of May 29, 1911 allowed the division and separation of previously undivided communal lands such as meadows, pastures and forests. This law provided also that non-allotment lands could be included along with the communal allotments in the readjustments leading to consolidation of holdings²⁵.

Inevitably Stolypin's reforms also weakened the household, a basic collective in the organization of agriculture. On the one hand, the decree of October 5, 1906 diminished the personal control of the head of the household over its members, their migration and earnings. On the other hand, the agrarian legislation of that time strengthened the control of the head of the household, at the expense of the other members, over the allotment land and implements for its cultivation. The heads of households, as individuals, had the right to demand the conversion of repartitional land into hereditary ownership. Under the decree of November 9, 1906 "individual peasant holdings.... are the private property of the heads of the households, in whose possession they are"²⁶. The junior members of the household lost without indemnity their rights to allotment land and the right to demand a partition of the household holding for their own benefit²⁷.

25 Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. 794; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 125; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.218-219, 223.

26 Quoted in Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 124.

27 Antsiferov, A.N. Russian Agriculture during the War, New Haven, Connecticut. 1930, p. 20; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 227. Some exceptions in that matter were made in favor of household members who were not descendants of its acting head.

While aiming at the destruction of the previous organization of peasant agriculture, Stolypin's agrarian reforms attempted simultaneously to secure and even to strengthen the position of the peasantry, as a social class, in the Russian economy. For this purpose, there were certain restrictions for the disposal of allotment land owned by individual peasants. Mortgage of such land to any person or private institution was forbidden. Under the decree of November 15, 1906 it could be mortgaged only to the State Peasant's Land Bank for the purpose of buying additional land or of financing agriculture improvements. The transfer of allotment land was permitted only within the peasant class. The law of June 14, 1910 limited the amount of allotment land purchased by an individual peasant in the same district. He could not buy allotment land exceeding the area of six maximum size "soul-allotments" fixed at the time of Emancipation²⁸.

The State Peasants' Bank, founded in 1882, greatly extended its role in the period of Stolypin's reforms as an active organ of land settlement and internal colonization²⁹. It worked as a credit institution for peasants and as a participant in selling land, purchasing it from the nobility for resale to peasants at a reduced price³⁰. The decrees of August 1906 increased signifi-

²⁸ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 221; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp. 128-9. The restrictions described above did not apply under the Law of May 29, 1911 to the allotment land enclosed in a single consolidated holding along with the non-allotment land. But the owner could choose to subject such holding to restrictions referring to allotment land.

²⁹ The brief history of the State Peasants' Bank and evolution of its policy up to 1906 is presented in Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp. 147-154, and Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 769-70.

³⁰ In 1906, the State Peasants' Land Bank paid an average price of 108 rubles per desiatina of land, and next offered it for resale to peasants at the average price of 71 rubles per desiatina. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 198-9.

cantly the reserve of land at the Bank's disposal. The Bank could obtain estates mortgaged in other credit institutions and was authorized to sell the State Land in European Russia and the land belonging to the Imperial Family. The decree of October 14, 1906 reduced the interest rates of this Bank to 4.5 percent, the level of the Bank of the Nobility³¹. The policy of the State Peasants' Land Bank at that time clearly reflected the ideas and goals underlying the whole set of Stolypin's agrarian reforms. The Bank usually offered to sell the land from its own reserve in enclosed compact holdings and gave preferential treatment to clients willing to buy such holdings³². This deliberate policy thus supported Stolypin's intention to increase the proportion of individual buyers of land and to propagate the enclosed peasant farms in the regions in which they were otherwise unknown.

The legal framework for the new policy of Siberian peasant colonization was set up in 1904 and 1905, but the consistent realization of this policy began only in the course of Stolypin's agrarian reforms³³. It was considered part of the comprehensive agrarian policy of that time, along with the reorganization of peasant agriculture and with the land-settlement action of the State Peasants' Land Bank. Asiatic Russia was divided into Colonization Districts with

³¹ Ibid. p.199; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 154.

³² 88.2 per cent of the whole area offered for sale by the Peasants' Land Bank in 1913 was made up of enclosed holdings. The poorer peasants willing to use purchased land as an enclosed farm could obtain Bank loans up to the full price of the land. Ibid. pp. 155, 159.

³³ For a brief description of the earlier colonization of Siberia see Pavlovsky, op. cit. pp.161-164, and Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 109-110.

a staff of administrative officers, surveyors, agricultural experts and a supply of subsidized agricultural implements. The colonization of Siberia was entirely a State action with the State as the sole exclusive owner of almost all the land there and with licenses for emigration issued by officials of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Those licenses entitled settlers to reduced fares, the grant of loans and temporary remission of taxes and liabilities³⁴. The importance of this activity was confirmed from the point of view of the Government by the tour of Siberia in 1910 by Stolypin and the Minister of Land-Settlement and Agriculture, A.V. Krivoshein. Their Memorandum suggested greater economic stimulation of settlement in certain regions and extending to Asiatic Russia the sale of State land. A bill concerning this problem was introduced in the Duma in 1913, but was not passed before the war³⁵.

Stolypin's agrarian reforms were actively implemented and supported by the administrative state apparatus. Land Chiefs made the appropriate decision under the Decree of November 9, 1906 when the communal assembly did not consent to the peasant's demand for the conversion of repartitional communal land into hereditary ownership. An important role in the consolidation of land was also played by the Land-Settlement Commissions. According to the instruction of 1906, they were told to cooperate in this process at the request of the peasants. Under the law of 1910, the Commissions decided whether the peasant's demand for consolidation of the land should be met. Since 1911, the execution of all reallocations of land was made by the Commissions, chiefly at public expense. In 1911, direct state control over implementation of agrarian reforms was

³⁴ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp. 165, 167.

³⁵ Ibid. pp. 172-3.

extended by the appointment of Regional Plenipotentiaries of the Central Committee of Land Settlement. They supervised, controlled and coordinated the whole process of land-settlement in their regions. In conflict situations all of these State officials tended to act in favor of tenure individualization and land consolidation³⁶. The Government was also engaged in propaganda activity to promote the reforms. This was done through press and book publications, by the "farm advisors", the promotion of model farms and organized visits of peasants to the western provinces to show them the advantages of the individual farms³⁷.

Stolypin's agrarian reforms, described briefly above, met with extensive critique during debates in the Duma and in the State Council³⁸. Count Olsufiev, an exponent of the opinions of the conservative nobility, expressed the traditional, patriarchal attitude towards the peasantry by repeating old Slavophile arguments that it had no real sense or desire for private ownership³⁹. A similar opinion was also, somewhat unexpectedly, expressed by the

³⁶ Ibid. p. 123; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 219, 222, 224; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 795, 797.

³⁷ Macey, D.A.J. op. cit. p. 224.

³⁸ Arguments used during those debates were sometimes somewhat different from the real motivation of the adversaries. Only some typical examples of those arguments are listed here. More broad discussion of different attitudes to Stolypin's reforms and of different opinions about them is presented below. A comprehensive presentation of the agrarian debate in the Second Duma is to be found in Lenin, V.I. The Agrarian Programme of Social-Democracy in the First Russian Revolution, 1905-1907. Collected Works, Moscow 1972, vol. 13 pp. 366-421, and Tokmakoff, G. "Stolypin and the Second Duma", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, vol. L, No. 118, Jan. 1972. The agrarian debate in the Third Duma is discussed in Tokmakoff, G., P.A. Stolypin and the Third Duma. An Appraisal of the Three Major Issues. Washington. D.C. 1981, pp. 33-58.

³⁹ Shapiro, L. op. cit. pp. 96-7.

leader of the liberal Constitutional Democrats, P.N. Miliukov, who said that "the ideal of small individual ownership is not a Russian ideal and still more, not a Russian reality"⁴⁰. Witte criticized the "bureaucratic character" of Stolypin's agrarian reforms and their compulsory enactment - in his opinion - against the will of the peasants⁴¹. Even some Ministers, such as the Minister of Finance, V.N. Kokovstov, and the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, A.V. Obolensky, expressed some reservations about Stolypin's policy and believed that agrarian reforms could be achieved more gradually⁴².

The representatives of the Left generally denounced Stolypin's reforms as favorable to the rich at the expense of the poor. A. Kropotov, member of the Labor Group in the Duma (*Trudovik*) claimed that the effect of those reforms was to deprive a member of the rural commune of his traditional right to have land allocated to him for his subsistence⁴³.

Yet Stolypin's agrarian reforms and the government's support of them initiated a process of significant change in the Russian countryside. The conversions to hereditary ownership of allotment land, the physical consolidations and enclosures of land, buying of non-allotment land by the peasants and

⁴⁰ Quoted in Tokmakoff, G. P.A. Stolypin and the Third Duma, p. 35. Different opinions, however, were expressed by other Cadet deputies, such as A. Shingarev and the influential F. Rodichev. Ibid. p. 38.

⁴¹ Ibid. pp. 51-52, 54-56.

⁴² Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 46 and note 10 on p. 81.

⁴³ Shapiro, L. op. cit. p. 97.

the colonization of Siberia all contributed to this⁴⁴. Up to 1906, under the old regulations, only about 150,000 peasant households converted their repartitional allotments into hereditary holdings⁴⁵. By January 1, 1916, the conversion into hereditary ownership of the land in accordance with the provisions of the Decree of November 9, 1906 had been completed in 40 provinces of European Russia in about 2 million cases, with more than 500,000 applications pending. Around 22 percent of the heads of households in repartitional rural communes obtained in such a way the ownership of around 14 percent of the aggregate land of those communes⁴⁶.

According to data of the Ministry of Finance for 1912, the Law of June 14, 1910 concerning the conversion of land tenure in the non-active repartitional communes affected about 3.5 million or more than one-third of the households belonging to the repartitional communes, with about 31 million desiatins of land. Up to the end of 1915, documentary confirmation of the conversion of land tenure in this way were issued upon applications in about 417,000 cases⁴⁷.

These processes changed the balance between different kinds of peasant land tenure in a significant way. In 1915, only about 5 million of peasant households with allotment land remained in the repartitional rural communes.

⁴⁴ Mainly the quantitative outcome of Stolypin's reform is presented here. Their interpretation, consequences and the possible long-term trends caused by them are discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁵ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 119.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 213; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 133; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 795; Shapiro, L. op. cit. p. 97.

⁴⁷ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 132, 134; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 122, 214.

About 5.6 million peasants held allotment land in "documented" hereditary ownership and 3 million households held the land considered by the law of June 14, 1910 as hereditary property, but did not yet have the documents of ownership⁴⁸.

The physical consolidations and enclosure of the land changed the countryside and agriculture more radically, but it was a quantitatively smaller phenomenon. Prior to Stolypin's reforms, about 20,000 enclosed holdings with a total area of about 200,000 desiatins were formed on allotment land in the western part of Russia⁴⁹. During Stolypin's reforms, Land Settlement Commissions received more than 6 million applications for physical readjustments of the land. Up to 1917, they consolidated about 1.3 million or 10.7 per cent of peasant allotment holdings with an area of more than 11 million desiatins or 9.5 per cent of the total allotment land⁵⁰.

There was also a rapid increase in the purchase of non-allotment land by peasants. In 1906-1914 they bought more than 9.5 million desiatins of such land. Most of those purchases were made through the State Peasants' Land Bank. During 1896-1905, the Bank had helped to transfer into the hands of the peasantry a total of 5,864,245 desiatins of non-allotment land. The average number of

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 215. Prior to the period of Stolypin's reforms about three million peasant households held allotment land in communes with hereditary tenure.

⁴⁹ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p.119.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 135; Robinson, G. op. cit. p. 225; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. 797. The two main kinds of farms with consolidated land in Russia were *khutor* and *otrub*. *Khutor* was a separate homestead which consolidated all the holder's land, i.e the land upon which the house and other buildings were to be found. *Otrub* referred to consolidated land cultivated by the peasant who still lived in a village. *Khutors* formed a minority of consolidated farms.

transactions was 4,525 per year. 7,566,000 desiatins of non-allotment land was bought by the peasants through the Bank during 1906-12, and the average number of transactions was 36,651 per year. About 75,000 khutors were established during 1910-15 as a result of the activities of the Peasants' Land Bank and the total number of khutors and otrubs sold by the Bank during 1906-16 was about 280,000. A very significant change during the period of Stolypin's reforms was in the composition of the buyers of the non-allotment land through the Peasants' Land Bank. In the years 1896-1905, the percentage of individual peasants among the buyers of land through the Bank was 2.4 per cent. It increased to 38.8 per cent for the years 1906-12. This increase was even more significant among the buyers directly from the Bank's own reserve of land. The percentage of the individual buyers in this category increased from 3.2 per cent in 1906 to 94.6 per cent in 1913⁵¹.

In 1914, a total area of 170,461,000 desiatins of land was in the hands of the peasants and Cossacks in 47 provinces of European Russia. Nobles sold 10,210,000 desiatins of land in the period 1905-1914 and in 1914 they owned 39,558,000 desiatins. 1,258,000 desiatins of the land belonging to the Imperial Family were sold to the State Peasants' Land Bank in the period of Stolypin's reforms, and 239,000 desiatins of State land were sold directly to the peasants. In 1914, the Imperial Family owned more than 6 million desiatins of land, and the State owned more than 137 million desiatins of land in European Russia. But more than 85 per cent of the State land was located in the extreme north and northeast of Russia and it included a large proportion of forest and wasteland.

⁵¹ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp.155-9; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.229, 236-7.

The land area held in reserve by the State Peasants' Land Bank increased in the period of Stolypin's reforms from 276,000 desiatins in 1905 to 2,281,000 desiatins in 1914. All other owners held more than 31 million desiatins⁵².

Most of the individual conversions provided for by Stolypin's reforms occurred shortly after their implementation. 72 per cent of such conversions were made in the period of 1908-10, and 20 per cent in the period of 1911-1913 when the annual number of conversions amounted to about 1.5 per cent of the 1906 number of communal heads of households. On the other hand, there was no visible decline of demand for the consolidation of land⁵³.

In the period of 1894-1903, the average emigration to Asiatic Russia was nearly 115,000 persons per year. It increased significantly during the period of Stolypin's reforms but the numbers fluctuated from year to year. An average emigration during 1907-1909 was more than 570,000 persons per year, and for the period of 1910-1914 it was nearly 238,000 persons per year. The population of Siberia and the Steppes increased from more than 6.5 million in 1897 to nearly 12 million in 1916. The area of land cultivated in Siberia and the Steppes increased from an average of 4 million desiatins for the period of 1901-5 to nearly 9 million desiatins in 1916⁵⁴.

Stolypin's agrarian reforms did not liquidate legally and *de facto* the old system of agriculture. The law of May 29, 1911 provided that in the case of the general consolidation of the repartitional rural commune, the minority which

⁵² Ibid. pp. 134-6, 268-272.

⁵³ Gerschenkron, A. pp. 796-7.

⁵⁴ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 109, 250-1; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp. 177-9.

wished to remain in the communal system could preserve such a system on a compact plot of the land⁵⁵. Some features of the communal organization such as the compulsory crop-cycle and common pasturage after harvest persisted in the open-field system of cultivation even after conversion of the land tenure into hereditary ownership⁵⁶.

Stolypin attempted to fulfill, at least to some extent, the promise of the Decree of October 17, 1905 concerning the population's civil rights. Measures undertaken in this area included the removal of some legal inequities between particular social, national and religious groups. The modifications were proposed and partially implemented in the legal position of the peasantry, the Jews and the non-Orthodox religious denominations.

The peasant's personal rights and freedoms were extended mainly by the Decree of October 5, 1906, mentioned already above, and generally by the significant diminution of the communal organization of agriculture. Communes lost control over the migration of their members, the right to condemn them to forced labor in the case of debts, and control over divisions of family property. Peasants gained the right to a free choice of occupation and to choose more freely their place of permanent residence. An internal passport could be issued without any limit of time. Peasants could also enter government service and vote in the landowners' zemstvo curia if they possessed a certain amount of land. When they settled in cities, they were under the jurisdiction of the

55 Ibid. p.128; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 220.

56 Ibid. p. 218.

general non-class laws being in force there⁵⁷. The mutual interdependence between the peasant's personal rights and the communal system was entirely reversed in the period of Stolypin's reforms. Before that, the restraints on the peasant's personal right to emigration strengthened the importance of the commune, and the rigid communal system of organization of agriculture curtailed greatly the peasant's freedom. After 1906, an increase in the peasants' personal rights weakened the commune's control and the general diminution of the communal system enlarged peasants' freedom to choose their form of land cultivation and to participate in land trade. Those reforms did not liquidate entirely the legal distinctiveness of the peasantry, however. Many Russian laws, especially in their bearing on the organization of agriculture and land trade, still regulated distinctive peasants rights, duties, usages and institutions. The inheritance of allotment land, irrespective of the kind of tenure, was still governed not by the civil code but by local peasant customs⁵⁸.

About six million Jews lived in the Russian Empire at the beginning of the twentieth century. Their permanent residence was legally limited, in principle, to the so called Pale of Settlement, an area covering twenty five western provinces acquired by Russia through the partition of Poland-Lithuania in the eighteenth century. The legal discrimination against Jews was greatly expanded in the 1880s' and 1890s'. They were forbidden to live permanently outside towns. Settlement outside the Pale required individual permission from the Minister of Internal Affairs. Jews were also restricted at that time in

⁵⁷ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. pp. 787-8; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 45; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 209-10.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 222.

their choice of occupation and access to education. They were barred from participating in municipal self-government, and their practice of law required permission from the Minister of Justice. There was also a *numerus clausus* for Jewish students in universities and secondary schools⁵⁹. Stolypin supported the removal of some of those restrictions because they caused a negative image of Russia abroad besides arousing Jewish hostility towards the Russian state⁶⁰. In the Autumn of 1906, the Council of Ministers under Stolypin's direction approved the proposed decree concerning Jewish rights. According to that proposal, Jewish heads of households were permitted to live in cities outside the Pale if they were engaged in trade for a minimum of ten years there, and generally Jews would be treated equally with others in trade and industry. Jews would be also allowed to lease land inside the Pale but were prohibited to buy land⁶¹.

The Tsar rejected the proposal submitted by the Council of Ministers, as too favorable for Jews. During 1907-1910, the Council of Ministers approved proposals on Jewish participation in municipal government, the quotas permitted larger Jewish entrance into secondary schools and introduced the right of Jewish

⁵⁹ Seton-Watson, H. The Decline of Imperial Russia, N.Y. 1960, pp. 158-160.

⁶⁰ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 49. The attitudes and opinions of the Russian government on Jews are presented in detail by H. Rogger, "Russian Ministers and the Jewish Question, 1881-1917", California Slavic Studies, Vol. 8 (1975).

⁶¹ P.A. Stolypin was personally against allowing Jews to lease land. His motivation on this point was pro-peasant and anti-capitalist. Jews, in his opinion, would exploit the peasants by sub-leasing land for high payments. Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 49.

merchants to live in Moscow⁶². On the other hand, the Council of Ministers rejected in 1910 proposals on the abolition of laws restricting Jews to the Pale and proposals postponing the enactment of quotas for Jews in trade and industrial schools⁶³.

The October Manifesto of 1905 promised freedom of conscience. Discriminative laws in that area mostly concerned Old Believers and religious sectarians considered as schismatics and dissenters from the Orthodox faith⁶⁴. More than 10 million of them lived in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century⁶⁵. Stolypin submitted in 1906 and 1907 two proposals of laws with respect to religious minorities. The proposal of 1906 concerned Old Believers and with some exceptions, sectarians. It gave them the right to worship and recognized the validity of their marriages. In a general sense the proposal of 1907 concerned all non-Orthodox denominations. It gave them permission to

⁶² Ibid. p. 50. The permitted number of Jewish members of city duma, according to proposal, was still lower than before 1892, and the rights to live in Moscow were still very limited.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 51. The comprehensive presentation of Jewish problems in the Russia of that time is to be found in Frumkin, J. ed. Russian Jewry 1860-1917, London 1966 and in Baron, S.W. The Russian Jew under Tsars and Soviets, N.Y. 1964. The legal position of the Jews is presented in detail in Wolf, L.ed. Legal sufferings of the Jews in Russia, London 1912.

⁶⁴ They were considered as the rivals of the true Orthodox faith among the Russian population, mainly among peasants, and some of their doctrines were hostile to the Tsar, the State, the social system and prevailing morality. The attitude of the Government to long established denominations such as Catholicism, Protestantism, Buddhism and Islam were more tolerant because these were popular mainly among national minorities living on particular territory. Their better treatment was also caused by diplomatic considerations.

⁶⁵ Treadgold D.W. op. cit. p. 81; Conroy M.S. op. cit. 75.

transfer from one faith to another, and provided for marriages between persons of different religions. Stolypin also proposed the abolition of civil and political discriminations against the non-Orthodox, the abolition of laws prohibiting the spreading of heresy and dissenting beliefs. Stolypin's proposals concerning the freedom of belief and the rights of the non-Orthodox were not approved by the Council of Ministers⁶⁶. The reforms proposed in that field did not lead to the recognition of the equality of all the religious denominations in Russia. Both Stolypin personally and the whole government still supported the supremacy of Orthodoxy as the Russian official State religion⁶⁷.

Reforms of the law and the judiciary system were directly linked to the civil rights of the whole society and its particular groups, especially peasantry. The Decree of October 5, 1906 diminished the judiciary role of the Land Chiefs. They lost the power to punish the peasants for petty crimes without any formal legal process. The jurisdiction in those cases was restored to the elected justices of peace as before 1889⁶⁸. This change of jurisdiction meant that in this matter the peasants had the same status as other groups. It also meant a strengthening of their civil rights by substituting legal process exercised by independent, elected judges for an arbitrary administrative jurisdiction exercised by government officials.

Further steps in the same direction were made by the reforms concerning the volosts' courts. Their jurisdiction was materially reduced and they were

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 76-77.

⁶⁷ Stolypin's opinions on that topic was expressed in his speech to the Duma on May 22, 1909. Stolypin, P.A. op. cit. pp.177-185.

⁶⁸ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit.787; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.45; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p.209.

given a greater independence⁶⁹. The arrogance and irresponsibility of officials was lessened to some extent by the removal in 1906 and 1907 of an administrative immunity for criminal acts committed on duty. Some reforms of the law affecting all citizens and providing for more flexibility in penal policy were also proposed. The bill passed in 1909 allowed a conditional release of prisoners. In the same year Stolypin's government also introduced to the Duma the important and innovative bills in the Russian legal system - the bill on personal inviolability and the bill on deferred punishment. These proposals were not approved because of the difference of opinion on them between the Government and the Duma⁷⁰.

Stolypin and his administration also paid attention to industrialization and problems of industrial workers although much less than to agriculture and problems of peasants. The government announced the plans for the extension of the transportation system and for the intensive economic development of far-eastern Siberia⁷¹. The problems of the industrial proletariat had been long neglected in Russia and the labour legislation of the 1880s had little practical value⁷². Stolypin proposed measures for improving the health care of workers, social insurance for them and an advantageous modification of laws regulating conditions of work. He announced the desire for less direct government interference in labor disputes and promised at the same time more freedom for

69 Ibid.

70 Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 104-5.

71 Stolypin, P.A. op. cit. p.44.

72 Zelnik, R.E. op. cit. p.44.

workers' professional organizations. The government promised also to abolish penalties for economically motivated strikes⁷³.

A large part of Stolypin's reform program was devoted to the reorganization and improvement of the administrative government apparatus and of the institutions of local self-government⁷⁴. Local government in Russia before Stolypin had been characterized by dependence on the central authorities and by a diffusion of power. Local officials and agencies were subjected directly to the particular ministries and did not cooperate with each other on the local level. The governor of the province was overwhelmed with duties but had little authority over agencies belonging to ministries other than the Ministry of Internal Affairs⁷⁵. The district government had an essentially class character, the dominant role being played by the marshal of nobility. The governor of the province did not have direct authority over the marshals and the central government did not have a supraministerial representative on the district level⁷⁶. The professional quality of the local officials was poor. There were no education and experience requirements for the position of governor and most of them were chosen from the St. Petersburg bureaucracy. The district marshals of nobility,

⁷³ Stolypin, P.A. op. cit. pp. 43-44; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 44.

⁷⁴ The proposals of reforms in this field were very complex and specific. Only their general characteristic is presented here. For a detailed description of those topics see Conroy, M.S. op. cit. 51-75; Conroy, M.S. "Stolypin's Attitude toward Local Self-Government", Slavonic and East European Review, XLVI, 107 (July 1968) pp.446-61; and Szeftel M. The Russian Constitution of April 23, 1906. Political Institutions of the Duma Monarchy.

⁷⁵ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 52.

⁷⁶ Ibid. pp. 58-9.

formally not government officials, but playing an important administrative role, were usually negligent in their duties⁷⁷. The officials of the middle and lower ranks had small salaries which encouraged corruption. Thanks to his own experience, Stolypin was well aware of such deficiencies; and the proposals for the local administration's reorganization were developed under his personal supervision. According to the Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs, S.E. Kryzhanovsky, Stolypin was interested in creating a decentralized system of the federal type. The country, according to this plan, was to be divided into eleven large regions with elected assemblies, with division of power between the central and local legislative bodies. However this plan was never seriously considered due to the Tsar's opinion that it might weaken the unity of the empire⁷⁸.

The proposals submitted to the Council of Ministries in 1906 and 1907 were much more modest. They were aimed at establishing a cohesion in local government, providing a check on the activities of the local officials, and at the raising of their quality. A candidate for governor recommended to the Tsar would thus be approved earlier by the Council of Ministers. The Governor's position as the main representative of the central government in the province was to be strengthened. All orders important for provincial life would pass through his hands. The cohesion of a provincial government and its better cooperation with the institutions of self-government was to be achieved by the establishment of one Provincial Council to replace the previous provincial committees and boards.

⁷⁷ Stolypin presented data showing that in 1908 less than half of them fulfilled their responsibilities even partially. Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 59.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 54; Stolypin, op. cit. pp. 9-10.

It included the governor, his deputies, the highest provincial officials of various ministries and agencies, and the leaders of the self-government institutions. An increase in the legality of the local administration's activities was provided by the establishment of the provincial disciplinary assembly. It enjoyed jurisdiction over bureaucrats and elected officials⁷⁹. Stolypin's proposals of 1906 on the district and volost' administration abolished the class character of the government in those administrative units. District administration was modeled on the provincial pattern, with the representative of the central government and with the district council⁸⁰. To raise the ethical and professional quality of bureaucracy, Stolypin proposed also salary increases in administration, the requirement of higher education for the officials of high rank and the requirement of at least a three year term in the provinces for any official aspiring to posts in the central administration⁸¹.

Stolypin's proposals for local government reform met with the strong opposition of the ministers, some governors, Tsar's advisers and influential groups of the nobility. Some ministers feared the further increase in the power of the Minister of Internal Affairs and the diminution of their own power in provincial and district affairs. Supporters of autocracy claimed that reforms would diminish the Tsar's power. Members of the nobility denounced the diminution of the role of their class representatives in the districts. Thus,

79 Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 55-6.

80 Ibid p.59.

81 Ibid p. 56.

although these proposals were discussed and modified through 1909, owing to continued opposition they were never put in effect⁸².

Some reforms of the central level of administration were also linked to the problems of local government. In 1907 the Council for Local Affairs (*Soviet po Delam Mestnago Khozyaistva*) was activated as the advisory body in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. It included representatives from the zemstvos and the local administration which were appointed by the central government. It was commonly called Predduma because its role was to discuss legislation concerning local affairs prior to its introduction into the Duma⁸³. Stolypin probably had ambitious plans for reform of the central administration too. According to A.V. Zenkovsky, he planned to create numerous new ministries and significantly strengthen the role of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers by establishing his rights to propose ministers and to approve every report submitted to the Tsar⁸⁴.

The institutions of local self-government at the end of the nineteenth century were considered to be hardly compatible with the autocracy system and were greatly restricted in assuming new powers and financial sources for their activity. They were also restricted by the interference of the local administrative officials. The legislation of 1890 reduced also the peasants' representation in the provincial zemstvo assemblies. The official opinions of that time on self-government were expressed by Witte's 1899 memorandum against

⁸² Ibid. pp. 57-60.

⁸³ Ibid pp. 62, 69-71.

⁸⁴ Zenkovsky, A.V. op. cit. pp. 73-87; Conroy M.S. op. cit. pp. 73-75. Claims of A.V. Zenkovsky about Stolypin's opinions and projects on those topics are not confirmed by the other sources.

the extension of zemstvos⁸⁵. Since 1902 the government attitude to the self-government institutions changed, so that the reforms in this field could now also be considered. As governor of Grodno, Stolypin supported the increase of zemstvo activity. In 1906 he proposed decentralization in economic and social matters and asked the top administration officials to draw up lists of matters which would be transferred to self-government institutions⁸⁶.

Expanding and democratizing the scope, territory and activity of local self-government was an integral part of Stolypin's reform program. The decree of October 5, 1906 removed the restrictions introduced by the law of 1890. It gave the peasants greater freedom in the selection of their representatives for zemstvo assemblies. This Decree also reduced administrative interference in self-government institutions and removed some restrictions on their financial policy⁸⁷. Further self-government reforms were submitted by Stolypin in legislative proposals for discussion in the Council of the Ministers in early 1907 and in his speech to the Duma on March 6, 1907⁸⁸.

His reforms proposed widening local self-government as modelled on the provincial zemstvos, i.e. by basing it in districts, volosts and village settlements. In other words, Stolypin wished to get rid of the exclusive class character of self-government in those administrative units. His proposed all-class self-government system on all levels meant a strengthening of its repre-

⁸⁵ Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 124; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 132; Szeftel, M. op. cit. p. 117; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 61.

⁸⁶ Ibid. pp. 61-62.

⁸⁷ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 109; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 125.

⁸⁸ Stolypin, P.A. Speeches... op. cit. 39-41.

sentative character and further integration of the peasantry into the rest of society. The activity of the self-government institutions was to be increased by the further removal of taxation restrictions, the establishment of zemstvo control over roads and ports with no strategic importance and putting at the zemstvo's disposal some local police forces⁸⁹. The decisions of self-governmental institutions could be annulled by the local bureaucracy only if they contradicted the law. The list of matters demanding confirmation by administrative officials was shortened and the approval of self-governmental officials by the government was confined only to the chairmen of the self-governmental assemblies⁹⁰.

The reform projects also proposed significant democratization of self-government. They restored the right of Jews to participate in the municipal self-government and lowered the property and tax qualifications for voters in elections to the self-government institutions⁹¹. The introduction of the zemstvo system into the Western provinces in 1911 expanded the territory of self-government, being an important part of Stolypin's policy to unify the government system of the Empire⁹². Cooperation between self-government institutions and government administration was provided by the proposed establishment of

⁸⁹ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.65.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ The election law was complicated and different on every level of the self-government. It is presented in detail in Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.66, 68.

⁹² The problems concerned the western zemstvos, the heated discussion about them and the constitutional crisis linked to that issue are presented in detail in Conroy, M.S. op. cit. 120-123, 174-176 and Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. pp. 123-165.

Provincial and District Councils, and by the activation of the Council for Local Affairs. Reforms proposed by Stolypin limited the discretionary interference of the local bureaucracy in self-government activities but preserved the preponderance of government officials in those mixed bodies. On the other hand, the reform projects established direct supervision of the central government over local self-government institutions. The Minister of Internal Affairs was to be the ultimate overseer of volost and village self-government and obtained also some control over provincial and district zemstvos⁹³.

Stolypin's concept of self-government and his reforms in this field were modelled on Western Europe and based on the state theory of self-government, prevailing at that time among political theorists and represented in Russia by Professor N.M. Korkunov. Self-government, according to that theory, is carrying out the tasks entrusted by the State, which is to say that any self-governing body is thus accountable to the State⁹⁴.

Although the reform projects proposed the liquidation of the exclusive class character of self-government, the election law maintained some class distinctions. A minimum number of representatives from the nobility and from the peasantry was set, and a maximum number of representatives from other classes. The principle of "personal representation" for the wealthiest persons, who did not need to be elected, ensured the role of great landowners in

93 Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 66-68.

94 Korkunov, N.M Russkoe gosudarstvennoe pravo, St. Petersburg 1905, vol.2 pp.353-364; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.63-64 and note 112 on p.87.

provincial and district self-government, as well as that of well-to-do peasants in village self-government⁹⁵.

Stolypin's reforms of self-government met with wide opposition from different social and political groups. Bureaucracy and government circles, represented among others by Witte, had an aversion to the the whole principle of self-government. Representatives of the nobility opposed abolition of the class character of self-government. They and the all-zemstvo congress of July-August 1907 opposed the tax qualification replacing property requirement for suffrage. Zemstvo assemblies generally also rejected changes in the election law aimed at greater representation of peasants. Representatives of self-government institutions in the Council for Local Affairs opposed the state theory of self-government. Zemstvo leaders proposed that they themselves supervise self-government institutions at lower levels. At the same time, Cadets and Social-Democrats in the Duma called for universal and unqualified suffrage at the local self-government level⁹⁶. Due to this differentiated opposition, most of Stolypin's projects on local self-government were never implemented⁹⁷. The introduction of the zemstvo system to the six western provinces was passed by the Duma, rejected by the State Council in 1911, but implemented through Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws.

⁹⁵ Ibid. pp. 67,68 and notes 115,116 and 122 on pp. 87-88.

⁹⁶ Ibid. pp. 66-72; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. pp.126-7. Some significant differences in attitudes toward local self-government were to be found among Social-Democrats, Mensheviks and Bolsheviks. Lenin at that time was against local self-government with its "inherent nationalist-federalist nonsense". Lenin, V.I. op. cit. vol.13 pp.332-334,412.

⁹⁷ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.69.

The development of education was an important part of Stolypin's comprehensive program to modernize the country, to integrate society and to raise the peasantry culturally and economically. Previously education was certainly neglected in Russia. State expenditure for that purpose in 1908 amounted only to 3.2 per cent of the total state revenue⁹⁸. Some conservative circles of the nobility considered mass education unnecessary and even dangerous because it could lead to the growth of subversive ideas. Contrary to such opinions, Stolypin emphasized the unifying influence and ideological use of schools "teaching the state language and bringing up the Russian citizen"⁹⁹. Proposals concerning education submitted by Stolypin's administration called for compulsory and universal primary education, an increase in teachers' salary, increase in the number of schools and teachers, and the development of the secondary schools providing technical and agricultural education. The establishment, management, inspection and supervision of the primary schools were to be provided by the Ministry of Education with some subsidiary role for local self-government institutions¹⁰⁰. The bill passed in 1908 established free, compulsory, four-year education for all children from ages eight to eleven¹⁰¹. Only about half of those children were actually enrolled in schools in 1914; however, in that period there was some real progress in literacy and education of Russian society as a whole. The number of literates among the army recruits increased from 49 per cent in 1900 to 73 per cent in 1913. The number of primary schools

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 79.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p.10.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. pp.44,79.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 80.

increased, between 1908 and 1914, from about 100,000 to about 150,000¹⁰². Government policy concerning higher education was inconsistent and unstable, being influenced by the political situation in universities. Stolypin's circular of September 1906 recognized the autonomy of the universities, but gave the police power to supervise and interfere in cases of revolutionary activity. The Decree of September 1908 prohibited university education for women, contradicting Stolypin's earlier statements on that subject, but it was cancelled in November 1908¹⁰³.

Stolypin also planned a through reform of the police. At the end of 1906, he appointed for that purpose an interdepartmental commission under the chairmanship of the Assistant Minister of Internal Affairs. Its proposals were published in 1911. They were aimed at raising the qualification of policemen and at greater integration of different branches of the police. Whole police forces in the province were supposed to be under the authority of the governor. Stolypin also planned an enactment of a bill determining police powers and duties. This reform of the police was never implemented¹⁰⁴.

During Stolypin's administration, the Ministry of Finance proposed a modernization and simplification of the tax system by the establishment of a progressive income tax. It was aimed at the increase of state revenue by taxing

¹⁰² Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 256. According to other estimates, there was an increase from 65,000 primary schools with 3.5 million students in 1896 to 122,000 schools with 8.1 million students in 1915. Florinsky, M.T. Russia, A History and An Interpretation, N.Y. 1963, vol.2, pp.1236-7.

¹⁰³ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 101-103.

¹⁰⁴ Stolypin P.A. Speeches. op. cit. p.41, Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.36,55.

the upper classes and at lessening, to some extent, the tax burden on the poor¹⁰⁵.

The changes in the law regulating election to the Duma and in the legal status of Finland made during Stolypin's administration were distinct from other reforms of that time because they undermined the universal principle previously established in national elections and diminished Finnish self-government. The new election law was regulated by the Decree of June 3, 1907. It eliminated about one third of the electorate, reduced the representation of national minorities and strengthened the position of property owners at the expense of professional circles and poor peasants¹⁰⁶.

The legal status of Finland within the Russian Empire and the prerogatives of Russian government concerning Finnish affairs were regulated by the Law of June 17, 1910. It curtailed greatly the autonomy of Finland since the authority of the central government now embraced all that was considered of "general or imperial interest"¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰⁵ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.44.

¹⁰⁶ It disenfranchised about 9 million peasant voters, those employed in the towns and those who were not the heads of the households. The number of people qualified to vote in St. Petersburg was reduced from 126,389 to 87,981. As a result of implementation of the new electoral law, one elector represented 250 big landowners, 1000 owners of industrial or commercial enterprises, 15,000 urban lower class, 60,000 peasants and 125,000 industrial workers. Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.162. The details of the electoral law and its implications are presented in Levin, A. The Third Duma: Election and Profile, Connecticut, 1973.

¹⁰⁷ The legal and political problems concerning the "Finnish Question" are presented in detail in Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 123-136, in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. pp. 69-121 and in Kirby, D. ed. Finland and Russia 1808-1920. A Selection of Documents. N.Y. 1976.

The political and legislative process used by Stolypin for the implementation of his reform program and the outcome of those reforms were influenced greatly by the nature and construction of the Russian political system, by social and political situations and a balance of power there at that time, by Stolypin's political opinions and ideological outlook, and by attitudes of social classes, political groups and influential personalities to him and his policies. All those circumstances formed a very difficult context for implementing Stolypin's reform program. He had to deal with a newly created political system at a time when participants in Russian political life were still inexperienced to deal with it. His institutional and actual power were limited. Due to the huge size of the country and the time lag in communication, he had weak control over policy implementation. His authority was derived from the Tsar's prerogatives and the duration of his tenure depended exclusively on the Tsar's will. All Ministers were individually responsible to the Tsar what could cause lack of political solidarity between them and difficulties in working out a consistent and comprehensive policy. The legal implementation of Stolypin's reform project required the agreement of the Council of Ministers, the Duma, the Council of State and the Tsar. It was very difficult to obtain such an agreement in Russian circumstances at that time due to profound political and ideological differences between those bodies¹⁰⁸. Stolypin's reforms were proposed in a period of prolonged political turmoil and general

¹⁰⁸ The work of the Russian political system during the period of Stolypin's reforms is described in detail in the previously cited works of M.S. Conroy and M.Szeftel, and in Hosking, G.A. The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907-1914. N.Y. 1973.

unpopularity of the government¹⁰⁹. Stolypin was perceived as a foe by both the Left and the reactionary Right. For the Left, he was the author and the executor of severe repressions, the reactionary representative of an existing order which should be eradicated. For the reactionaries, his policy of reforms and attempts to work with the Duma and self-government institutions were incompatible with the sacred - for them - principle of autocracy¹¹⁰. Some chauvinists and extreme Russian nationalists condemned Stolypin's moderate policy toward national and religious minorities¹¹¹. The First and the Second Dumas were dominated by parties devoted to further radical changes of the political and social system of Russia¹¹². They also had their own programs of agrarian reform, all of them based on the compulsory expropriation of nobles' land which was incompatible with the position of Stolypin, the Tsar, and the organizations of the nobility. Cooperation between the government and Duma in working out the reform program and its implementation was in such circumstances impossible. The First Duma was dissolved on July 9, 1906 immediately after Stolypin's appointment as Chairman

109 The country was in a vicious circle of government repressions on the one hand, and of terrorism by the opposition on the other. From September 1906 to May 1907, courts martial sentenced to death 1,144 persons. During 1906-1908 several thousand government officials there were killed. Conroy, M.S.. op. cit. pp. 91,94,98; Strakhovsky, L.I. "The Statesmanship of Peter Stolypin: A Reappraisal" in Adams, A. ed. Imperial Russia After 1861. Peaceful Modernization or Revolution?, Boston 1965, p.61.

110 Shapiro, L. op. cit. p.93; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p.191.

111 On the hostility between P.A. Stolypin and Dr. A.I. Dubrovin, the founder of the reactionary and anti-semitic Union of Russian People, see Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.30-31.

112 For political composition of the first and the second Dumas see Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 192,200-201; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 15 and Conroy M.S. op. cit. pp. 158.

of the Council of Ministers. The Second Duma, even more radical in composition and attitudes, did not pass any proposal from Stolypin's comprehensive reform program and was dissolved on June 3, 1907¹¹³. On the other hand, the Council of State was dominated by conservatives who were also often ill-disposed towards Stolypin's reforms. The ideological and political discrepancy between the reformist Stolypin administration and the more radical Duma on the one hand, and the more conservative Council of State on the other, could and did lead to legislative deadlock¹¹⁴. Stolypin's reform proposals also had strong opponents at the Imperial Court where he was also personally disliked, in the bureaucratic apparatus, and among influential personalities of that time¹¹⁵. Stolypin's pro-reform active social and political base was relatively small. It included part of the bureaucracy, especially in the Ministries of Internal Affairs and Agriculture and, in the field of agricultural reforms, some influential groups of the nobility. Stolypin's program was supported in the Duma, with some reservations, by the Octobrists¹¹⁶.

¹¹³ The reaction of Social-Democrat deputy I. Tsereteli to Stolypin's comprehensive reform program as "tossing us a few scraps of reforms... incapable of satisfying anyone" was typical for the Duma's attitude. Quoted in Shapiro, L. op. cit. p.95.

¹¹⁴ For example, Stolypin's proposal on the volost' self-government, in May 1911, was significantly amended by the Duma as too undemocratic and the amended version was rejected by the Council of State as too democratic. As a result, none of reforms in this field were never implemented. Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 69.

¹¹⁵ S.Yu. Witte, otherwise also reform oriented, was Stolypin's personal foe and the opponent of his reforms. See numerous excerpts from Witte's speeches and a commentary about them in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit.

¹¹⁶ See the memoirs of A.I. Guchkov, V.I. Gurko, S.E. Kryzhanovsky, A.V. Zenkovsky the Duma debates.

Under these circumstances, the legislative process was characterized by frequent use of article 87 of the Fundamental Laws allowing the enactment of the Tsar's decrees between the Duma's sessions. Fifty eight matters, including very important agrarian and civil rights reforms, were implemented in that way from July 1906 to February 1907¹¹⁷. Later, such important acts as the new election law of June 3, 1907 and the western zemstvos bill of March 14, 1911, were also enacted under that article. This way of legislating was more efficient since it saved time and created a *fait accompli* difficult to reverse. But it led to doubts about the legality of some of Stolypin's reforms which were in operation for a long time without the Duma's required confirmation. The enactment of the new electoral law in 1907 was clearly illegal as contradictory to the letter of article 87, and could be considered a *coup d'etat*¹¹⁸. But according to others, this act saved the principle of parliamentary representation and led to a more workable Duma, while reactionary circles pressed the Tsar to retreat entirely from the system created in 1905 and 1906. Stolypin apparently also had softened more undemocratic proposals for new electoral rules¹¹⁹. He defended the use of article 87, stressing the urgency of reforms in circumstances of crisis, and defended the legality of his action as the expression of the Tsar's will and the Tsar's prerogative to use exceptional measures at exceptional times¹²⁰. The overuse of article 87 and apparent abuses of legality for the implementation of some of Stolypin's reforms were caused to

¹¹⁷ Conroy M.S. op. cit. p.43.

¹¹⁸ Shapiro L. op. cit. p.96.

¹¹⁹ Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 199; Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 163.

¹²⁰ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.29, 158.

a great extent by the political circumstances described above, but on the other hand, those abuses themselves deepened conflicts and tensions on the Russian political stage. Thus, the crisis caused by Stolypin's manoeuvres in the implementation of the Western zemstvos bill alienated his supporters in the Octobrist party and severely weakened his political position.

While the legal implementation of Stolypin's reforms depended greatly on political circumstances, the factual implementation of the reforms, already enacted legally, depended to a great extent on the attitudes of the concerned social classes and groups. The attitudes of peasants to Stolypin's agrarian reforms were expressed more by their practical reaction than by the speeches of peasant deputies in the Duma¹²¹. The departures from the rural communes were not confined to any one economic level of the peasantry. The extension of this movement was greater in the southern, south-western and western parts of the Empire, smaller in the centre and in the north. This corresponded to the degree of commercialization of peasant farming and to the familiarity of the local peasantry with enclosed land holdings¹²².

121 Many of them belonged to the so called Labor Group and were influenced by socialist ideas of Social Revolutionaries or Social Democrats, although there were also peasant deputies supporting Stolypin's reforms. Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 192, Lenin, V.I. op. cit. pp. 380-88. 394-400; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p.38.

122 Robinson, G.T. op. cit.233; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. pp. 133, 136-9; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 796. The peasants' attitudes to Stolypin's reforms are also discussed in Macey, D.A.J. "The Peasant Commune and the Stolypin Reforms: Peasant Attitudes, 1906-1914".

CHAPTER IV

Assessments and controversies concerning Stolypin's Reforms

A second Peter ruled Russia - a Peter as energetic and tireless as the first, as concerned for the productivity of the people's labor, as radical a reformer, but with ideas that distinguished him from Peter the Great.

A. Solzhenitsyn, August 1914

Stolypin's reforms and policies have been the subject of heated discussion and different interpretations. What were his underlying motives and aims? What was the philosophy underlying them? Above all, did his attempted agrarian reforms, so relevant again in view of what Yeltsin's government is trying to do today, would have any long-term influence on the development of Russia?

It has been widely held, certainly by Soviet historians before Pere-stroika as well as by Robinson, perhaps the most influential of the earlier Western sources on the subject, that Stolypin's reforms were prompted exclusively by what was in the interest of the nobility, or the State (what in Marxist terms amounted to the same thing). Others, including some Western scholars, have argued that Stolypin had the welfare of society as a whole in mind, and especially that of the peasantry. There has also been controversy about whether Stolypin's reforms were proposed exclusively for political motives or whether they were prompted also by genuine economic considerations. His motives were, of course, complex but to what extent are the subjective motives of reformers also significant?¹ Their analysis, in addition to helping appraise the Russian system of that time, may serve as a guide for predicting its further development. But far more often such analysis has in fact been ideologically motivated in the light or darkness of the agrarian crisis the October Revolution failed to resolve and which is still haunting the leaders and governments of CIS. Yet the opinion that Stolypin's policies were motivated by the vested interests of nobility can be supported by numerous facts. Stolypin did after all reject the idea of compulsorily expropriating the land disproportionately owned

¹ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p.790.

by his own class. His anti-commune agrarian reforms resembled to some extent the proposals of the nobility in 1906². Similarly, the State Peasants' Land Bank functioned to the benefit of the big landowners because of the high prices paid to them³. Nor, again, is it surprising that Stolypin's reform proposals preserved the nobility's prominence in local self-government. The new electoral law of June 3, 1907 also conformed to demands nobles' societies made in November 1906 and February 1907, placing the control of the Duma in the hands of "men of property"⁴. According to Stolypin's opponents, "we see here in the person of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers not the minister of the whole country, but the minister of 130,000 landlords. Ninety million peasants are nothing to him..."⁵.

Hence, some have claimed that the anti-commune agrarian reform was simply a manoeuvre to avoid land expropriation⁶. Yet, Stolypin's reforms were far from

2 See chapter II above.

3 Lenin, V.I. op. cit. pp.389-90; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.198-9.

4 According to G.T. Robinson, "the new election law was essentially a confirmation of the old alliance between monarchy and nobility - an alliance which might be expected to act in the name of Autocracy, Orthodoxy, Nationality - and now as before in the name also of one other cause : Landed Property." Ibid. p. 202.

5 Duma's deputy Vasyutin quoted in Lenin, V.I. op. cit. p. 399.

6 According to G.T. Robinson, reformers hoped that "when the head of the household became the individual proprietor of a consolidated allotment, he would ... have more respect for the property-rights of the near-by landlord." Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 264. Quite an opposite opinion regarding reforms and land expropriation was expressed by G. Pavlovsky, op. cit. pp. 115-16. He pointed out that most, by far, of usable land was already in the hands of the peasants as a class. He maintained that land expropriation "could not improve the position of the peasants to any marked extent", and that "obviously, if the organization of the countryside and, in particular, the systems of tenure, were not changed, the crisis

being wholly popular among the entire nobility. His proposals for the reform of self-government met with particularly strong opposition from its organizations.

Indeed, many of Stolypin's reforms were explicitly motivated by interests that transcended any one class. The reform of civil and religious rights, for example, benefitted all of Russian society, while measures to enlarge and secure the possession of the land in the hands of the peasantry, the reform of education and judiciary, and measures concerning industrial workers improved the condition of several constituencies. Such instances may be cited to support the opinion that well-being of the broad masses, especially that of the peasantry, was what, in the final analysis, interested Stolypin⁷.

If so, his reforms were also clearly motivated by his conception of the State, a conception so much at variance with the ideology both of liberals and socialists. As a conservative of the *Rechtsstaat* variety - an idea revived in a rather different context by Gorbachev - Stolypin believed, unlike any Anglo-Saxon politician of his time in the supremacy of the State in Russian life. He most certainly did not perceive popular sovereignty as being a source of political authority. Strengthening the Minister of Internal Affairs' control over self-government could prevent any local interest group from abusing power

would only be staved off for perhaps a generation."

7

This opinion was expressed by Shapiro, L., op. cit. p. 97, and by Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 198: "His agrarian program was designed to help reduce the poverty and misery... and enable [peasants] to improve their conditions by their own efforts... The most notable feature of Stolypin's administration was his endeavor to raise the standard of living of the peasants". A completely different opinion was voiced by G.T. Robinson, op. cit. p. 203. He maintained, while recognizing some improvement in the peasants' situation, that "a whole mass of agrarian legislation [was] designed in part to deflect or defeat their demands, but in a small part actually to satisfy them".

for its own ends. The proposed reforms of the local and central administration were motivated by Stolypin's desire to strengthen, unify and upgrade the state apparatus, not necessarily a conservative urge, since it was expressed at varying stages both by Gorbachev and Yeltsin. Moreover, his fiddling of the election law and his limitation of Finnish autonomy, which are usually dismissed as counter-reforms, were also consistent with his underlying motive - that of strengthening State apparatus. This priority was of course dictated by Stolypin's commitment to breaking the wave of revolution and to promoting social stability. This too is not difficult to understand in our own day in view of the rising clamor for law and order among citizens of the USSR's successor states. Stolypin was also concerned by the need to maintain the Russian Empire's image abroad⁸.

The political motivation for Stolypin's reforms has led to the serious charge by an eminent economist that they were not considered nor conceived in an economic context⁹. If this is indeed so, why did Stolypin as early as 1902 and again in 1905 emphasize in his official reports to St. Petersburg that the change in land tenure is necessary to improve the productivity of peasant agriculture? He argued too that the change was essential in order to avoid a severe economic crisis¹⁰. Indeed, Stolypin participated in organizing the

⁸ For example, see Stolypin's argument, presented in the previous chapter, for the improvement of Jewish rights.

⁹ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 792. Here it is stated that "once more, the age-long primacy of politics over economics in Russia had asserted itself". The same author makes an unjustified contrast in this regard between Stolypin and his predecessor Witte.

¹⁰ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp. 9,14.

national congress of specialists in the local economy¹¹; and the Minister of Agriculture, Krivoshein, also asserted in the Duma on November 10, 1908 that economic development would be the government's principal concern. Krivoshein also explained that Stolypin's agrarian reforms were based on economic analyses showing the worldwide trend toward smaller agricultural units, individually owned and cultivated¹². Economic considerations were also explicitly cited in regulations concerning the implementation of reforms, technical and financial assistance being provided to the peasants for the improvement of their holdings and cultivation¹³.

Thus we can say that Stolypin's comprehensive reform program paid attention, although sometimes not sufficiently so, to the interests of all classes of Russian society, while securing at the same time a prominent position for the nobility. His emphasis on the interest and power of the State and on the importance of effective government was not in tune with developments in North America or Great Britain in the same period, but given the traditional weakness of local self-government in Russia, hardly surprising.

What was, it may well be asked, Stolypin's underlying social ideal? Zenkovsky relates that Stolypin dictated to him in 1911 a project of reforms leading to a model of the state which for that time can be considered decidedly liberal. It included universal suffrage, full civil rights, equality of all citizens, extensive social programs, broad authority of self-government

¹¹ Zenkovsky, A.V. op. cit. p. 204.

¹² Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 40 and note 48 on p. 63; Macey, D.A.J. op. cit. p. 223.

¹³ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp. 224-5; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 797; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 117.

institutions and cabinet-type central government with the dominant position of the prime minister¹⁴. Some of those proposals described by Zenkovsky contradicted legislative projects Stolypin actually submitted and the very existence of such a radical plan has not been confirmed by other sources¹⁵.

According to S.E. Kryzhanovsky, Stolypin also thought about applying the federal model to the administrative organization of the Russian Empire¹⁶. But it cannot be denied that actual projects concerning the reform of the government apparatus and local self-government, while providing for the participation of grass-roots elements in politics, meant for Stolypin rather the strengthening of what in today's Russian political idiom is called "The Centre".

The main controversy surrounding Stolypin's political philosophy has been focused on his opinions regarding a constitutional system and his attitudes to representative institutions. According to the British ambassador, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Stolypin stated that "[his] own ideal was the British Constitution", but some time was needed to reach that goal in Russia¹⁷. He criticized the Cadets for their desire to transplant British forms of government and law without taking into account Russian conditions, history and culture¹⁸. In reality, Stolypin had to act within the system created by the October Manifesto of 1905 and the Fundamental Laws of 1906. This is why his supporters and political allies turned out to be those who upheld that system in the Duma.

¹⁴ Zenkovsky, A.V. op. cit. pp.73-113.

¹⁵ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.73-74.

¹⁶ See previous chapter of this thesis.

¹⁷ Cited in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. note 5 on p.205.

¹⁸ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p.15.

Unlike his predecessor Goremykhin, Stolypin was eager to cooperate with the Duma. He attended its sittings and took part, often fervently so, in its debates. Stolypin acknowledged that the "representative regime was already taking root" and stated that parliamentary institutions "however imperfect.... brought about a radical change in Russia"¹⁹. This has led some historians to voice the opinion that support for the idea of a constitutional monarchy was central to Stolypin's political outlook. In this views, "he [was] an institutionalist who wanted to create the machinery for constitutional government, and was engaged in conducting a transitional phase from autocratic to constitutional rule"²⁰. However, Stolypin's other statements and actions indicated that he still considered the "autocratic" Tsar as the highest authority. Nor he was sure that Russia in fact did have a constitution²¹. His justification for frequent and legally doubtful use of the Tsar's decrees for legislative action was conformable with that outlook. It could support Hugh Seton-Watson's opinion that Stolypin "was in favor of cooperating with the elected representatives of the people, provided that they did what he wanted. But when his policies met with opposition, he had no respect either for the electorate or the law"²².

19 Quoted in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. pp. 195-6.

20 Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. pp.193-4.

21 See the recapitulation of Stolypin's press interview cited in Conroy, op. cit. 29. The Constitution, according to Stolypin's opinion, meant an agreement between the people themselves or a contract between the crown and the people, while the October Manifesto and the Fundamental Laws of 1906 were given by an autocratic Sovereign.

22 Quoted in Shapiro, L. op. cit. p.95.

While Stolypin's attitudes towards existing representative bodies were somewhat ambivalent and unclear, his numerous statements and reform proposals indicate that he desired a stable political and social system supported by majority of the population. This entailed, so he believed, transforming the peasant masses into economically independent citizens aware and conscious of the common good²³.

The major and most important part of Stolypin's reform program was consistently devoted to that goal. The agrarian reform was to create individualistic small and middle peasant proprietors. The reforms of the civil rights and the judiciary system were to diminish the legal differences between social classes and to raise the social status of the peasantry. In addition, educational reforms were to disseminate the appropriate State ideology among the masses, to raise their patriotism and civic consciousness. Furthermore, the reforms of self-government were to democratize, to some extent, the political system and to include the peasants gradually in local politics.

Those peasants-citizens with material interests at stake would end up, so Stolypin wished and believed, politically conservative. He considered a class of small proprietors as the "basic cell of the State and its very nature as adversary of all destructive theories"²⁴. Stolypin hoped to rebuild on that

²³ "It is necessary first to create the citizen, the peasant proprietor... and when this problem is solved the civil state and the qualities of citizen will of themselves come into existence in Russia... The great task will be creation of strong individual proprietor, the most hopeful support of the state and of enlightenment and this will be unswervingly carried out by the Government". Quoted in Conroy, M.S. op. cit. pp.46-7.

²⁴ Quoted in Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 790.

basis a strong viable Monarchy, supported by an enlightened nobility and a conservative, prosperous, individualistic peasantry, loyal to the Government. This idea was expressed by his famous "wager on the strong", a notion which is considered by some as the essence of his entire policy²⁵. "The government has placed its wager on the sturdy and the strong - on the sturdy individual proprietor who is called upon to play a part in the reconstruction of Tsardom on strong monarchical foundations"²⁶. Stolypin served that goal despite the opposition of reactionaries, radical liberals and revolutionary socialists who all had agendas and conceptions of the State and Society different to this.

What was the potential long-term influence of Stolypin's reforms on the economic, social and political development of Russia? Changes in the distribution of land-ownership during the Stolypin era led to the expansion of peasant land holding²⁷. Peasant farming, due to sales and renting accounted in 1916 for about 90 percent of the arable land²⁸. The sale and the exchange of land among peasants led to the adjustment of formal ownership to factual possession and cultivation. It meant a transfer of land ownership from a nominal peasant engaged mainly in other occupations to a real cultivator²⁹. So called "prole-

²⁵ G.T. Robinson used this phrase as the title for the whole chapter about Stolypin's reforms.

²⁶ Stolypin, P.A. Speeches... op. cit. pp. 149,150. As cited in Robinson, op. cit. p. 194.

²⁷ See statistical data in the previous chapter.

²⁸ Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 39.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 142.

tarization" affected less than a fifth of the land sellers³⁰. Economic polarization of the peasantry did not turn out to be excessive as Lenin claimed. There was no strong indication that land sales resulted in a big concentration of land within the class he referred to as the *kulaks*. In 1912 a big majority of the peasants cultivated middle-size holdings³¹. Technological progress and improvement in the productivity of peasant agriculture were clearly visible by the end of that period, although agriculture generally remained backward in comparisons with Western Europe and the North America. Modern agricultural machines were still very rare in Russia. Most were owned individually. The peasants with middle-size holdings accounted for most of those who implemented improved methods³².

The expansion of large-scale industry and the growth of urban population during the years 1906-1914 were significant. Industrial output increased at the

30 Ibid. p. 143.

31 Ibid. p. 140-3; Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 234-236, 241, 261. On the issue of land concentration, Robinson and others do not agree.

32 Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 243-4, 254; Pavlovsky, G. op. cit. p. 140. Records of 15,480 peasant households before 1914 showed that 1,478 among them owned machinery independently, and 321 shared such equipment. These figures support the view that peasant individualism grew as the result of Stolypin's reforms. G.T. Robinson, however, rather emphasized the fact that even before the 1917 Revolution the collective holding of complex equipment was not altogether unknown in Russian villages. The absence of full comparative data on the differences in economic performance between particular kinds of peasant holdings do not allow for a definitive assessment of Stolypin's reforms in that area. According to G.T. Robinson, there were only uncertain indications of higher economy prosperity in consolidated holdings, Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.237-8.

rate of 6 per cent per year³³. The period of 1906-1914 was characterized by general improvement in the economic condition of the Russian population as a whole. The real wages of industrial as well as of agricultural workers increased³⁴. The overall mortality rate for the years 1911-13 was significantly smaller than for the years 1901-5, although it was still much higher than in Western Europe³⁵. The better economic situation of peasants is further confirmed by the substantial reduction, in 1910 and in 1912, of their tax arrears³⁶. Social disturbances and revolutionary activities in the countryside also decreased although appropriations and enclosures of land were accompanied there in some cases by conflicts and friction³⁷.

One of the models for Russia's development in Stolypin's time was the so-called "Prussian road to Capitalism". It was predicted by Lenin and other leftist opponents of Stolypin. According to that vision, the large estates of nobility secured as a result of Stolypin's policy would become the source of the burgeoning capitalist economy. Ensuing and drastic peasant polarization

³³ Ibid. p. 249; Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p. 800. This industrial progress, according to Gerschenkron, probably could not have been attained without the simultaneous modernization of agriculture.

³⁴ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. 248-250.

³⁵ Ibid. p.253.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 264.

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 231, 264; According to G.T. Robinson, "the visions and the violence of 1905 were replaced (partially and for the time being) by a campaign of working, saving, and buying".

would lead to the growth of rich "rural bourgeois" and to the pauperization and proletarianization of dispossessed masses³⁸.

But was this scenario confirmed in the course of the implementation of Stolypin's reforms? A considerable amount of land passed from landlords to petty landowners. The landlords as well as businessmen from the cities did not become the pioneers and beneficiaries of capitalist agriculture and a so called rural proletariat was not numerous. The legislature acts implementing agrarian reforms explicitly secured the ownership of allotment land for peasants and prevented the big concentration of this land in the hands of the few³⁹. This could support the view that Stolypin's reforms, if war had not prevented their full implementation, would not have produced the dire outcome predicted by his opponents⁴⁰. On the contrary, they were designed to prevent this kind of development. These reforms preserved and strengthened the peasant character of Russian agriculture

³⁸ Lenin, V.I. op. cit. vol. 13, pp. 422-23 and in "The new agrarian policy". Collected Works, vol. 13, p.457. According to Lenin, "the landlord way of breaking up the old order involves the forcible destruction of the village commune and the accelerated ruination and extermination of the mass of impoverished owners for the benefit of a handful of kulaks". Similar opinions were expressed by leftist deputies in the Duma, for example by Karavayev, cited in Lenin, op. cit. p. 388 or A. Kropotov and I. Tomilov cited in G. Tokmakoff, op. cit. p.37.

³⁹ See the previous chapter of this thesis.

⁴⁰ The tactics of the Russian Marxists on the agrarian issue, at that time, were themselves influenced by Stolypin's reforms. The Marxists tried, because of the weakness of the rural proletariat, to gain the support of those "petty capitalists", the peasants by supporting a popular call for the expropriation of nobility. At the same time they also fiercely attacked Stolypin's reforms, using scary visions of an impoverished peasantry, because they feared that the possible success of those reforms without the development of a rural proletariat could definitively deprive them of any social and political base in the countryside.

with all the possible positive and negative consequences. Thus, the absence of effective large estates could mean a lack of sufficient capital for technological improvement. It could mean, according to Robinson, an "agrarian levelling-down", to an absence of any genuine foundation for a capitalistic agriculture⁴¹. It would be the capitalism of small producers with a majority of the owners being at the same time laborers. On the other hand, this kind of development could lead to social stabilization and to transforming the peasantry from potential revolutionaries to defenders of order. The increase of the political power of the peasantry, initiated also by Stolypin's reforms, could lead to some kind of rural democracy over the heads of the liberal urban intelligentsia. The strengthening, through proposed reforms, of the central government accompanied by appropriate social and political development, could lead in Russia to the creation of a political and constitutional system similar to systems existing at that time in Germany and in Austro-Hungary⁴².

Processes initiated by Stolypin's reforms would lead to further economic, social and political changes. The greater availability of labor, the relaxation of fiscal pressures upon agriculture and the increased consumption of industrial goods by the peasantry caused changes in industrial development. Heavy industry sponsored and protected by the state would give way to more consumer oriented and labor-intensive production. According to A. Gerschenkron,

⁴¹ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. p. 261.

⁴² The possibility of the development of Russia on the German and Austro-Hungarian pattern was suggested by G. Tokmakoff op. cit. p.33. The possible outcome of this "German way", desired probably by Stolypin himself, with emphasis on the conservative stabilization was somewhat different from Lenin's vision of the "Prussian road" with emphasis on the extreme economic polarization accompanied by violence against the proletariat and peasantry.

it resembled the economic development of Western Europe⁴³. The reforms of civil rights, an increase of education, the diminution of social differences and the potential creation of a stronger middle class could lead to the formation of a civil society. The further development of the representative system on the central and local level, accompanied by the legal order would lead to a genuine democratic system. Of course, a fully evolved market economy, a modern civil society and a full democracy could not be recognized as the direct and inevitable consequences of Stolypin's much more modest and limited reforms, but the implementation of those reforms would at least lead to the possibility of such an outcome.

But most of Stolypin's reform proposals were never legally implemented. Those proposals which came to be rejected were mainly opposed by influential reactionaries and/or the nobility⁴⁴. Stolypin's failures in those struggles were caused by his weak position in the Russian power structure along with the still dominant position of the Tsar. The appraisal of the factual success of the reforms legally enacted, especially those concerning agriculture, have been the subject of heated controversy, with completely different opinions based often on the same facts and statistical data.

Some authors stress the persistence of old structures like the rural commune and the open-field system, and the continuity of such a negative phenomena as the peasants' poverty, material backwardness, and the overpopulation of the countryside during the period of Stolypin's reforms. This they see

⁴³ Gerschenkron, A. op. cit. p.800.

⁴⁴ See the description of particular reform proposals in the previous chapter.

as proof of failure of the reforms or proof that to succeed they would have needed a very long time to affect the Russian social and economic system⁴⁵.

Other authors emphasize the positive aspects of the changes in the Russian social structure and economy at that time and the continuation of trends initiated by the reforms. They recognize those changes as proof of Stolypin's success or at least a perspective of the reforms' success in the near future⁴⁶. Stolypin himself acknowledged the difficulties in the implementation of his reforms but had predicted in 1908 that after the difficult period of four or five years, the path would be easier⁴⁷. He expressed also the opinion that the total transformation of Russia could be achieved within twenty years of the

⁴⁵ Robinson, G.T. op. cit. pp.244-5, 264; Gerschenkron, G. op. cit. 795. According to him, the rural commune, despite Stolypin's reforms, was not foredoomed to quick extinction and "was not in a state of general disintegration". On the other hand, he expressed the opinion that not all conceptions of Stolypin's legislation were lost even after 1917. op. cit. p. 797-8.
Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 191. She states that "by Stolypin's death little had been accomplished" but in the same time she expresses the opinion that over the long term some of his reforms "would [have] led to momentous changes... in the fabric of all Russia". See also, Dubrovsky, S.M. Stolypinskaia zemel'naia reforma, Moscow 1963, excerpts of which are to be found in McNeal, R.H. ed. Russia in Transition 1905-1914. Evolution or Revolution? N.Y. 1970. pp. 50-54. According to this Soviet historian, Stolypin's reforms failed entirely, caused the worsening of agricultural conditions and confused land tenure even more than before. Such an opinion was typical for the whole Soviet historiography about that period. See too, Mosse, W.E. "Stolypin's Villages" in Slavonic and East European Review, vo. 43, no. 101, London, June 1965, pp. 257-74, who argues that Stolypin's reforms had very little impact on Russian agriculture and he tends to agree with an estimate that about a century was required for that policy to succeed.

⁴⁶ Pavlovsky, C. op. cit. pp. 135, 144.; Shapiro, L. op. cit. p. 97; Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p. 198; Antsiferov, A. Russian Agriculture during the War. New Haven, 1930.

⁴⁷ Conroy, M.S. op. cit. p. 48.

undisturbed implementation of his reforms⁴⁸. Lenin also acknowledged in 1908 the possibility of Stolypin's success⁴⁹. Bernard Pares noted in 1911 that the agrarian reform was proceeding very rapidly⁵⁰.

The period of Stolypin's reforms was too short for the clear assessment of their success and prospects. They were implemented in very difficult economic, social and political circumstances and were still in the transitional stage. Their progress slowed down especially after Stolypin's death in 1911 but the trends initiated or strengthened by those reforms, such as the economic individualization, material improvements, the social and political upgrading of the peasantry, the reorganization of agriculture, and the spreading of education were continued. There was also some pro-reform movement in the administration and in the Duma, and the legislative process regarding some of Stolypin's proposals was also continued after his death.

Stolypin's reforms did not stave off a revolution. They were reversed after 1917 and Russia was turned in a completely opposite direction, towards collectivism and socialism⁵¹. The ultimate failure of Stolypin's reforms was caused, according to some authors, by the strong opposition of the peasants to

48 Mosse, W.E. op. cit p.257.

49 Lenin, V.I. "On the beaten track", in Collected Works, vol. 15, Moscow 1973 p. 42.

50 Cited in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. note 14 on p. 206.

51 Some trends of that period, such as mass education, the industrialization and colonization of Siberia, and the consolidation of the land were accelerated, but the main idea and philosophy underlying Stolypin's reforms were completely reversed.

those reforms⁵². This opinion is highly controversial in the light of facts up to 1914. The ultimate failure of Stolypin's reforms accompanied the collapse of the Russian government and political system during the unsuccessful war but at that point economic and political circumstances which were completely different from those before 1914, prevailed⁵³.

The general historical appraisals of Stolypin and his reforms have fluctuated, depending to a great extent on the political and ideological outlooks of particular authors⁵⁴. He was represented as a brutal reactionary by the Soviet historians⁵⁵. On the other hand, he has been presented by some

52 Dubrovski, S.M. op. cit.; Mosse, W.E. op. cit.; Manning, R.T., The Crisis of the Old Order in Russia: Gentry and Government. Princeton, 1982.

53 It is emphasized among others, by G.T. Robinson op cit. pp.264-5. Stolypin himself in 1911 was afraid of the fatal impact of the possible war on his reforms. Quoted in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. p.195. The description and analysis of social, economic and political circumstances during the War, the Revolutions of 1917 and the following Civil War are beyond the scope of this thesis. The impact of the war on the agricultural situation in Russia is described comprehensively, among others, by A. Antsiferov et al. in Russian Agriculture During the War. New Haven. 1930.

54 That differentiation of opinion is well presented in the anthology Russia in Transition 1905-1914 Evolution or Revolution? ed by R.H. McNeal, with completely contrasting excerpts (appropriately chosen and titled by the editor): "Liberal Disappointment in the Duma" by P. Miliukov vs "Liberal Optimism Concerning the Duma" by B. Pares; "The Failure of Stolypin's Tyranny" by A.I. Avrekh vs. "Stolypin's Progressive Statesmanship" by L.I. Strakhovky, "Stolypin Against the Peasants" by S.M. Dubrovsky vs "Constructive Governmental Action Among the Peasantry" by G. L. Yaney, "The Economic Failure of the Land Reform" by W.E. Mosse vs "Increasing Industrial Maturity" by A. Gerschenkron; "The Approaching Revolutionary Crisis" by B.N. Ponomarev vs "Impressive Progress Since 1905" by S.S. Oldenburg.

55 A. Avrekh, S. M. Dubrovsky, A. Davidovich, P. Liashchenko, E.G. Vasilevskii, M.N. Pokrovskii, N. Karpov.

Russian authors as a far reaching reformer and the would-be saviour of Russia, had his premature death not been brought about by a terrorist's bullet⁵⁶. According to some authors, he was the conservative liberal trying to create legal order and a civil society by granting legal equality to peasants⁵⁷.

The material represented in this thesis does not support such polarized opinions about Stolypin and his reforms. As we have seen, he acknowledged and supported the dominant political position of the Tsar and the nobility, but at the same time he recognized the constitutional framework with its new representative institutions. Moreover, he was personally committed to a broad program of reforms to stimulate the economic progress and the active participation of the peasantry in the economic, social and political life of the country. Certainly, he was not the reactionary portrayed by Soviet writers, wishing to return to the unlimited autocracy that existed before 1905, nor was he the liberal wishing to radically change the political system created in 1906. Rather, he was a pragmatic politician trying to adjust Russian society to modern circumstances.

Stolypin's reforms were not designed to create a market economy overnight, nor a liberal civil society and a political democracy in the short term. However, his reforms could create at least the possibility of long term

⁵⁶ L.I. Strakhovsky; A.V. Zenkovsky; A. Solzhenitsyn, August 1914. N.Y. 1989. This view also is presented in Govorukhin's controversial and popular recent film, The Russia We Have Lost.

⁵⁷ L. Shapiro; V. Leontovitsch Geschichte des Liberalismus in Russland. (History of Liberalism in Russia). Frankfurt, 1959 cited in Shapiro L. op. cit. p.99 and in Tokmakoff, G. op. cit. note 11 on p.206.

development on the Western pattern, and as such, an alternative to the path taken by Russia since 1917.

Seventy five years after the ultimate failure of Stolypin's reforms, the ideas connected with economic individualism, freedom of enterprise, and the civil society were revived in Russia in the unexpected circumstances brought about by the failure of the August coup in 1991 and the disintegration of the USSR. It was the new Russia's first democratically elected president, Boris Yeltsin, who rehabilitated Stolypin a few months later. During his visit to France in February 1992 the Russian president spoke of his faith in his people's "spirit of enterprise", expressing the hope that his country would wake up from the "long deep freeze into which [it] was plunged at the very moment it was moving towards democracy, towards freedom"⁵⁸.

But this does not mean yet the unchallenged victory in current situation of ideas and conceptions embodied in Stolypin's reforms. The reforms leading to market economy, such as the individualization and privatization of agriculture, met with the strong opposition of the part of bureaucracy and the managers of big state enterprises, and also with the opposition of significant groups of industrial and agrarian workers and pensioners. The privatization of agriculture also is impeded by the lack of capital in private hands and the technical difficulty of division among individuals of machinery, buildings and other property belonging to big collective farms⁵⁹. The struggle about the direction of Russia's development is revived now but it is still far from being resolved.

⁵⁸ *Le Monde*, in the English Section in the *Guardian Weekly*, February 16, 1992 p.13.

⁵⁹ See Laurie Hays, "A Taste of Capitalism at Russian Collective brings Chaos and Strife", *Wall Street Journal*, November 27, 1992.

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