

How stable was russia in 1906-1914



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Between 1906-1914 there were many problems occurring which was affecting the stability of Russia and Nicholas II's autocratic regime. Soon after the 1905 revolution, there was still much tension present in Russia in the early years, but by 1914 greater stability had been achieved through a series of social, economical and political policies that had been brought about, although the underlying factor was that the causes of the revolution were not dealt with properly, thus an illusion of stability was created by 1914. Similarly to Witte, when Stolypin came into power, he wanted to get the most out of Russia at this time of unrest and his main aim was to push the country hard to increase the efficiency of it. Witte chose to industrialise it by moving a lot of workers into a concentrated area to work for long hours under harsh conditions, whereas Stolypin chose an agrarian approach and pushed it hard. He chose to give peasants their own land and the right to rule their own land. Some questioned this unorthodox technique but it did prove to work effectively. This can be compared in another way to Wittes industrialisation, there had been no revolution before Wittes choice of the economic push yet Stolypin gained his power after the 1905 revolution and so had a better knowledge of the situation and who the tsar needed to keep on his side to avoid another revolution occurring. Stolypin decided to benefit the peasants by giving them land and by educating them; this luckily coincided with some good harvests which made the whole situation easier for Stolypin to get the peasants on the Tsars side, and for them to thank the Tsar for his prosperity. The use of agrarian reform had many benefits as it increased the efficiency of Russia's farming sector and agriculture, he helped create financial aid to the peasants with the formation of the Peasant Land Bank, which helped them provide funds for them and their new land, and it

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also benefited the peasants to relieve tension between them and the Tsar, thus the mood for a revolution to occur was dissolved. The main reason for this use of reform was to please the peasants to avoid anything happening as it did in the past, yet it didn't all go to plan as well as he thought, he didn't actually solve any problems, but only attempted to alleviate them, and even some peasants complained that the Tsar was getting too involved with their lives. Stolypin's land reforms were perhaps not enough to secure the continuation of Tsarist autocracy in Russia. The October Manifesto stated that a constitutional government may be formed in Russia. Stolypin, much like Witte was a firm believer in autocracy, but he now saw that some change had to be made to the tsarist regime, otherwise Nicholas would be overthrown by the revolution that was inevitably going to happen. The way people were represented was by the opening of a Duma. The first two Dumas that opened were mainly run by the extreme left-wing parties such as the Kadets and Trudoviks (Labour and Liberal) and these groups mainly had anger towards the regime which pushed them to enforce unrealistic reforms, thus giving an excuse to the Tsar to dissolve both Dumas within the first few months. This obviously helped the Tsar with his one-sided decisions as he proved his point in why Russia should only be run through autocracy. On the 3rd of June 1907, Stolypin passed a reform making the voting system more biased towards the conservative nobility, yet this did actually contribute towards the stability of Russia. This third Duma that had now opened was completely different to the previous two, this time it was run mainly by right-wing parties such as the Octoberists and Rightists (Conservatives). This Duma lasted for the whole five years for a number of reasons, firstly, the reforms that tried to be passed towards were less

extreme compared to the previous Dumas, and so any opposition for the Tsar was more muted. Moreover, the Tsar chose to keep the third Duma running so Russia could now be seen as a powerful Democratic country by Britain and France. Due to Stolypin's use of Article 87 of the Fundamental Laws, a more favourable Duma was created which relieved a lot of tension in Russia as reforms which benefited the public were being placed such as the National Insurance Act and Education Act. Although this all seemed well and good, the fact that the right-wing parties now had power over the Duma wasn't good for the working class as they didn't have any sympathy for them. This resulted in an increase of strikes from 1907-1911, and after Stolypin had been assassinated, the number of strikes increased up to 1914. There may have been an illusion of stability, but many problems were still occurring in Russia. Stolypin was very similar with Nicholas in the way that they knew that they had to keep Russia under control, one way or another, the main plan was to use repression and to have the army, Okhrana and the police to be a deterrent to those who opposed the regime. Yet he began to change his approach by undergoing social reforms to relieve tension in Russia. In heart he wasn't a reformer, but he realised he had to change his 'necktie' approach as the time came for adjustment in Russia. There were genuine attempts by Stolypin to reform, even if they weren't for the right reasons. Pyotr Stolypin was murdered in 1911, and from then, Nicholas knew that the idea of reforming just wasn't working right in Russia and so he reinforced the same repressive attitude as before to make sure that no one again steps out of line. An example of this was the Lenin-Goldfield phase. This once again allowed Nicholas to have the upper hand over the Russian public, yet Russia was not very stable at this point, yet it can be argued that

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Russia was more stable now than in 1906. In conclusion, following from the 1905 revolution, there had been a series of attempts from different people to change Russia and ultimately relieve tension between the public and tsar Nicholas II. Stolypin chose an agrarian approach to increase the efficiency of Russia and ultimately keep the peasants on the Tsars side while Witte chose to industrialise Russia, therefore also increasing its efficiency. What must be considered is the plan that they both had. They both possessed long term plans on how to change Russia into a super power and a well known respected nation. Pytor Stolypin ruled from 1905-1911, but he clearly stated that he needed 20 years for his plan to be fully effective, and this is comparable with Witte as he was let go early in 1906 when he needed longer to achieve the full potential of his plan. The premature release of both Witte and Stolypin could well have had an important effect on the overall stability of Russia between 1906-1914. Soon after the revolution in 1905, there was much tension lingering on in Russia and so reforms and ideas were put about to relieve this. Stolypin didn't actually solve problems but only managed to alleviate them. What can be said is that Russia in 1914 was far more stable than it was in 1906, this didn't mean everything was going well as the main problem had not been sorted. The underlying problem was that the causes of the 1905 revolution had not been dealt with and so only an illusion of stability had been created to delay the next inevitable revolution.