

# To what extent did russia undergo economic

Economics



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

To what extent did Russia undergo economic and political reform in the years 1906-14? After the 1905 revolution Russia was in need of reforms both economically and politically, to allow it maintain its role of a great power and to prevent another revolution occurring the answer to this was the October Manifesto. However, due to the stubbornness of the Tsar who was determined not to relinquish his autocratic powers, what may have appeared as reforms were largely superficial making little change in particular to the Russian political system. In early 1906 the October

Manifesto was published as a result of the 1905 revolution and as a way to appease the peasants and appear as a revolutionary change, when truly very little was changed by this. Political activity was now legal so political parties now no longer needed to remain secrets; freedom of speech was also introduced along with the introduction of a state elected Duma. Most of these changes were made as a bid to make the peasants content and prevent the chances of another revolution; however this also banned trade unions and newspapers. The introduction of the first Duma was short lived due to the disapproval of the Tsar, who dissolved it under the

Fundamental Law, after only 73 days. This was due to the number of members that were revolutionaries, who wanted to push through more moral ideas and reforms than the Tsar was willing to do, only 2 out of 391 made it into the law. This then led to the Duma manifesto, which was a group of frustrated Duma members teaming up to go against the Tsar's action of raising taxes - unfortunately this backfired, leading to all 200 members being banned from standing in the next Duma. The next Duma followed a similar suit, just with the gaining of the Social Revolutionaries and the

Social Democrats gaining seats, it was the third and fourth Dumas that raised the most change within Russian society, but this may have been due to the Electoral Reform. In order to make sure that the government gained the best support, voting was restrained to the wealthy, meaning that only 30% of Russia could vote. This meant that the majority of the revolutionaries supporters could not vote, leading to mostly pro-government parties winning the vote. The Duma was never seen as political institution and was never meant to be, it was supposed to be a simple forum to please the masses and make them believe that the autocracy was listening.

The Third ; Fourth Dumas managed to make some successful reforms as the government were more inclined to listen to them, they managed to replace the biased Land Captains, introduced universal primary education, create health and accident insurance programmes and made improvements to the army and navy. Despite the fact that the Duma were never supposed to be parliamentary, they still successfully managed to have the Duma debates reported in the press, meaning that the reformers and radicals participating managed to influence public opinion legitimately - something that had been denied to them previously.

This reform had helped create political reform, as it had created a space where a forum for political debate could be taken note of, and could be published without being censored. It meant that political parties had been established legally, and despite the fact that the Third and Fourth Dumas thwarted many reforms, they helped too, as not all of the seats in this institution had been pro-government. Another factor affecting the amount of

political change over the years is the use of Peter Stolypin, the Russian Prime Minister from 1906- 1911.

It is hard not to see Stolypin as a reformer, as he evidently saw what policies and laws needed to be changed or created in order to vanquish any repeat of the revolution, as he brought great change to the Russian countryside, giving peasants the freedom to leave their communes, offering them cheap land in Siberia, or helping them to own their pieces of land through the redistribution of peasant wealth through the Land Bank.

This had a big impact, as it led to 50% of peasants having ownership of land, and agricultural production had risen from 45.9 million tonnes to 61.7 million tonnes in 1913. It is said by historians that had war not broken out, Russia could have developed a more stable, loyal and prosperous peasantry, as Stolypin envisaged. On the other hand, despite the rise in crop yields and production, not much was done about the living and working conditions of Russia's industrial workers.

This was definitely shown after his assassination, where a plague of Russian unrest came around again, only leading to the Lena Goldfield massacre of 1912 in Siberia, which led to strikers being killed by the police. This was then a tipping point for more strikes and demonstrations, reminiscent of the 1905 revolution, to take place, showing that despite the fact Stolypin had helped reform a little economically, it was immediately undone by the wrath of popular unrest amongst the lower classes once more.

From these two arguments it is very easy to see points helping question the extent of the Russian economic and political changes over the years, but

<https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-did-russia-undergo-economic/>

believethat the true tipping point comes to the Fundamental Law. This Fundamental Law, created in 1906, created the constitution of the Russian Empire, creating a national parliament with the lower house (the Duma), being elected. This all sounds very good, and sounds like political eforms were in their heights in 1906 - but this was completely changed in Article 87.

This gave the right for the Tsar to govern by decree, thereby ignoring his faithfully created' parliament. This basically meant that the creation of the Duma was practically pointless, as the Tsar could still change his mind as to what laws he wanted created, and which laws he would go against, putting incredible restrictions on how much could be done within the Russian Empire. Therefore, I find that the extent to which the Russian Empire underwent economic and political changes were the smallest possible, as Nicholas was not willing to create any reforms.