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Academic journal

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## **STOLYPIN'S PROJECT OF UPDATING THE AGRARIAN SYSTEM OF SIBERIA AND ITS FATE**

*The article analyzes activities of the tsarist government in reforming land relations and introducing private land ownership in Siberia in the years of the Stolypin agrarian reform. In a generalized form, the Stolypin program for the modernization of the land relations in Siberia was reflected in the "Memo" compiled after the 1910 trip to Siberia of P.A. Stolypin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and A.V. Krivoshein, Chief Administrative officer for land management and agriculture. But there was not enough time for the development of legislation necessary for the implementation of this program.*

*The main reason for the slowing down of the reform was the resistance of multi-vector political forces, both from the right and the left. Both, the opposition parties represented by the deputies of the State Duma from Siberia and a significant part of the ruling class represented in the Russian Government opposed introduction of private land ownership in Siberia. However, as the analysis shows, a significant part of the rural population of Siberia, both old-timers and newcomers (resettlers) were supporters of the Stolypin reforms.*

**Key words:** *Siberia, land, agrarian reform, modernization, resettlement, private ownership, P.A. Stolypin, A.V. Krivoshein.*

The topic of land relation reforms in Siberia at the beginning of the XX century is actively developed by to-day historians [5. Pp. 87-94]. The law-making and organizational activities of the tsarist government aimed at modernization of the agrarian system and introduction of private land ownership in Siberia during the Stolypin agrarian reform is of particular interest in this regard.

Of the latest works on this topic, we would like to single out the book by A.A. Hramkov [6. P. 328], as well as a collective monograph "Projects of transfor-

mation of the agricultural system in Siberia in the XX century: the choice of ways and methods of modernization" [13. P. 298]. A special chapter in it is devoted to the Stolypin project for reforming the Siberian village. Certain aspects of the problem were also considered in our publications [12. P. 156; 28. Pp. 220-238].

The purpose of this article is, without repeating the predecessors, to reveal the main features of the program aimed at updating the Siberian agricultural system and developed under the guidance of P.A. Stolypin, as well as outline the measures taken by the government for its implementation.

P.A. Stolypin and A.V. Krivoshein, Chief Administrative officer for land management and agriculture, who was Stolypin's right hand man in the implementation of the land reform, were supporters of not just resettlement, but of settlement of Siberia [8. P. 264]. Addressing the Third Duma, Krivoshein said that the government viewed resettlement not as "a means of resolution of the land issue in the central provinces" by evicting the working masses of the peasantry to the outskirts, but as "a means of settling the latter by the economically wealthy Russian people and of their durable placement in the new places" [11. P. 100].

**Memo Regarding the Trip to Siberia.** An important step in the implementation of these plans was a trip by P.A. Stolypin and A.V. Krivoshein to Siberia in the late August – early September of 1910. It is not so important now that the two page draft report on the results of the trip submitted personally to the Tsar and the 127-page appendix to it, published in the form of a *Memo* in a separate book, were written by I.I. Tkhorzhevsky, the right hand man and, in modern language, A.V. Krivoshein's speech writer, before the ministers' trip beyond the Ural [29. P. 446].

In the end, what matters is not who writes the text for statesmen, but what they sign.

"The main wealth and power of the state is not the treasury or state property, it's the population that's becoming wealthier and stronger," read the *Memo*.

"It is necessary in Siberia as firmly as in the European Russia," the ministers emphasized, "to take the path of creating and strengthening private property" [1. P. 58, 59].

The *Memo* contained a comprehensive program of updating, or in modern terms, modernizing land relations in Siberia. First of all, it was proposed that during the land survey land plots should be allotted to the villages of old-timers and resettlers in the region not for use, but for ownership. For the peasants to be able to become sole owners, the task was set to carry out intra-land survey. In the areas most favorable for settlement, it was planned to start selling land to the newcomers. This measure was not dictated by fiscal interests. The newcomers were especially willing to settle in the relatively densely populated areas of Western Siberia. It was important for the government to direct the resettlement flow to the less populated territories of Eastern Siberia.

P.A. Stolypin and A.V. Krivoshein understood that "solely agricultural and solely peasant" Siberia would not be able to develop really quickly and success-

fully. With no right to buy land, Siberian entrepreneurs were forced to rent it from the treasury or peasants, thereby falling into dependence of the turns of the government agrarian policy or the mood of the rural communities.

It was important to assist the inflow of capital to Siberia. For this purpose P.A. Stolypin and A.V. Krivoshein put forward the task of revising the law of June 8, 1901 in order to eliminate complex formalities and class restrictions to the sale and long-term lease (up to 99 years) of large land plots. The law provided for the appropriate benefits only for the nobility, which caused sharp criticism from the opposition, including V.I. Lenin, who defined the essence of the law as “the embezzlement of the treasury by the nobles” [9. P. 90, 91].

Therefore, the *Memo* put forward the task of creating conditions for the formation, along with the small-peasant farms, of large private land holdings and removal of class restrictions on the sale and long-term lease (up to 99 years) of large land plots.

The growth of Siberia should have been promoted also by measures aimed at providing its economy with reliable sales markets. To solve this problem it was envisaged to start large-scale construction of new railways, a course was taken to cancel the so-called Chelyabinsk tariff change, which made difficult the sale of Siberian grain in the European part of Russia if it was transported by rail [9. Pp. 126-130].

**Land Management Bill.** In November 1910, the Main Directorate of Land Management and Agriculture sent to the State Duma a draft law “Regulation on the land settlement of peasants and aliens on the state lands of Siberian provinces and regions.” In accordance with it, land was granted to the Siberian villagers for ownership without payment. True, the state retained the right to the subsoil. The government refused to give the villagers the right to own forests, they should, as before, remain in state ownership.

By that time, work on the survey of the state lands according to the laws of the late 19th and very early 20th centuries had not yet been completed in Siberia. And where the state and peasant lands were not demarcated, it was inexpedient to start internal monitoring.

Therefore, according to the draft law, land was given into the ownership of peasant communities, only one family farms who lived away from the village received land in their sole disposal [15. P. 41, 42].

The State Duma at a general meeting decided to transfer the bill to the land commission for a consideration. The commission, in turn, instructed its second sub-commission to consider the bill.

The review process is described in detail in the article by M.T. Kogut [7. Pp. 29-39]. We supplement this story with archival materials from the Russian State Historical Archive.

Deputies of the State Duma from Siberia at a meeting of their parliamentary group, despite some differences in assessments, spoke out against the Bill.

Among the Siberian deputies there were no members of the Duma second land sub-commission, but they were given the right to participate in its meetings with an advisory vote [7. Pp. 34-35].

The second land subcommission began to discuss the project of Siberian land management on February 3, 1911. Speaker, Count I.I. Kapnist, immediately proposed an article-by-article review of the bill. However, the Duma deputy from the Irkutsk province, the social democrat Terenty Belousov and the influential Trudovik from the Tobolsk province Vladimir Dzyubinsky insisted on the opening of a general debate.

Then, the head of the Resettlement Department, full councillor G.V. Glinka took the floor: "No one will work for someone else's interest, on the land that is not their," he said, justifying the need for an early introduction of private land ownership in Siberia. Concluding his speech, the head of the Siberian Prikaz emphasized that "there is no reason to doubt the timeliness and suitability of the Bill being examined."

The Siberian deputies did not like this wording. "Siberia lives its own life perfectly ... and there's no need to change its system," Belousov proclaimed. Nikolai Skalozubov saw loopholes in the Bill to create landowner tenure in the province. The deputy from the Tobolsk province Vladimir Dzyubinsky added that Siberian old-timers "do not ask for any land management from the government", and the deputy from the Tobolsk province cadet Konstantin Molodtsov suggested that if the Bill is adopted, the poorest peasants would intensely loose their land. The cadet from Transbaikalia Nikolai Volkov also spoke out against the Bill. All Siberian deputies unanimously reiterated that the peasants of the eastern outskirts were ardent opponents of private land ownership.

However, the Siberian parliamentarians did not outnumber their opponents. Count I.I. Kapnist, representatives of various departments: G.F. Chirkin, P.V. Dzenkovsky and others supported completely opposite considerations. The political aspect was also taken into account. "Fusion of the population with Siberia is possible, of course, only if the land they occupy is assigned to the population," said I.I. Tkhorzhovsky. The official of the Ministry of Internal Affairs D.I. Pestrzhetsky noted that private ownership of land in the region is necessary to guarantee a lasting consolidation of Siberia with Russia. "... We must save Siberia, we must make it one and strong, otherwise it will be taken away from us earlier than we can even expect," he said.

As a result, in February 1911, with the seven votes to one, the second land sub-commission of the State Duma adopted the following wording: "The lands of Siberian peasants and aliens allotted to them and being allotted to them shall be transferred to them with the destruction of the title of state property" [15. L. 41-50]. In the following days, the sub-commission engaged in an article-by-article discussion of the Bill, but did not have time to approve it before the end of the powers of the deputies of the Third Duma.



The “inhibition” of the Bill in the subcommission was also due to the fact that the attitude towards it in the right-wing groups, close to the government, was ambiguous.

The Ministers of the Court and Finance opposed the “transfer of state and cabinet land to private ownership of peasants.” According to the Minister of Finance, this measure could become an overwhelming financial burden for the country [23. P. 135].

The second land subcommission of the Fourth State Duma began to discuss the draft law on Siberian land management in March 1913. The Siberian deputies of the Fourth Duma, like their predecessors in the parliamentary group, were negative in respect of the introduction of private land ownership in Siberia. The discussion of the draft law on Siberian land management in the subcommission was going on very slowly. Only in March 1914, this work was completed. However, soon the Duma went on vacation, and then the world war began ... On January 29, 1916, the Minister of Agriculture Naumov petitioned the Chairman of the Duma M.V. Rodzianko requesting him to put for consideration the Bill on land management of peasants in Siberia at the general meeting of the Russian parliament [7. P. 38]. The request was not granted.

**Intra-land Survey.** At the same time, the government pursued a policy objectively preparing the introduction of private land ownership in Siberia. On November 3, 1910 P.A. Stolypin sent a circular to the Siberian governors, in which he demanded “without allowing any violence against the will of the old-timers or new settlers, help the rural communities with the transfer of communal land from use to private ownership” [12. P. 30].

From the end of 1910, work on the intra-land survey in the interests of the Siberian rural population accelerated sharply. By 1916, in Siberia, 290 thousand old-time households, that is about a fourth of the total number, filed motions for an intra-household land survey. Almost every tenth householder from among them managed to become sole owner [24. P. 236].

There were not enough state surveyors. But this did not stop the villagers. It became common practice that at rural gatherings, especially in the Tomsk province, peasants made decisions to hire private land surveyors, sometimes at inflated prices, in order to quickly divide the land.

Head of Zemsky department of the Ministry of the Interior Y. Ya. Litvinov, who visited the Tomsk province in the summer of 1911, was struck by this phenomenon. Speaking at a meeting of the provincial administration, he defined its reason: “While the division of allotments in the European Russia is caused by economic reasons ... in Siberia this question is raised by legal considerations, it has a legal basis. First of all, the Siberians want to get rid of those land disturbances and troubles that arise from the seizure of land ... They need to make land distribution as soon as possible to determine the land use” [12. P. 31].

This explanation is clearly incomplete. The lion's share (about four fifths) of the Siberian peasants who have got allotments from the community were from the Tomsk province. The region was an undisputed leader in the number of migrants it accepted. In addition, it was much ahead of the rest of Siberia in the pace of land management according to the laws of the late 90s of the XIX century [6. P. 328]. Only those old-time villages where these works had been carried out had the right to conduct intra-land surveying.

In the European Russia, attempts of some peasants to organize separate farms often provoked serious resistance from the middle class villagers. The poor peasants sometimes were not against selling their land and going somewhere to earn money, and the kulaks hoped to increase their savings by becoming full-time sole owners, the middle class peasants were not ready for a radical change in their way of managing land, and, accordingly, opposed any attempts of allocation of separate farms.

In the conditions of Siberian comparative land abundance, redistribution of land within the communities was a rare and sometimes unknown phenomenon, and consequently local peasants had less obstacles when they wanted to have a separate land plot. It was the relative immaturity of the communities that made the Siberian peasants a reliable supporter of the Stolypin transformations.

The newcomers who settled in the resettlement sites did not have to wait until the completion of the land survey before submitting applications for an intra-land survey. In addition, the Main Directorate of Land Management and Agriculture has developed measures to stimulate the migrants to carry out work on intra-land survey. In particular, cash bonuses for forest clearing in the plots were issued only to those new settlers who had single-use plots. Migrants who moved to the separate farms received loan assistance, etc. [10. Pp. 40-53]. Therefore, in the resettlement villages, intra-land surveys proceeded on a relatively wide scale. By January 1, 1916, intra-land surveying in the Yenisei province was completed in 118 villages, of which only three villages were old-timers and the rest were new-comers [16. P. 16].

From our point of view, we cannot agree with the conclusion of M.V. Shilovsky that the Stolypin "agrarian reform was not supported from below in Siberia, also because of the desire of the peasants to preserve the communities" [17. P. 21]. More right is D.N. Belyanin, who specially studied the process of conducting intra-land surveys in Western Siberia and came to a clear conclusion: "the facts refute the assertion that the policy of intra-land surveying was not supported by the peasantry of Western Siberia" [2. Pp. 38-47].

**New Leasing Terms.** In March 1911, the Council of Ministers adopted the Regulation "On the Allocation of Separate Farm Plots to Resettlers to Private Ownership." This project did not become law, being stuck in the State Duma. However, it was possible to transfer sole plots to the newcomers not to ownership, but to use, without adopting a law. As a result, the Resettlement Department took

a course on developing separate farms for use. In accordance with the instruction adopted in March 1911, it was prescribed to assign farm sites to the newcomers in the best places [26. P. 237].

In February 1912, the State Duma received two more bills aimed at creating and distributing private land ownership in Siberia. One of them provided for the transfer of land plots to the newcomers for preferential rent with the right of their subsequent redemption, and the other provided for measures to attract private entrepreneurs to develop empty land. These projects were forever stuck in the Duma commissions.

At the same time, the government took measures to implement the ideas set forth in the projects. At the end of 1912, the Rules on the leasing of resettlement areas intended for sale beyond the Urals came into force. Under the terms of the lease, approved on March 30, 1913 by A.V. Krivoshein in the development of these Rules, in Asian Russia resettlement areas intended for sale, "until the law on the sale of them are issued," were transferred to prosperous new-comers without bidding for up to 12 years with the subsequent repurchase right [18. Pp. 78-85; 25].

Already in 1913, 3,869 such plots with a total area of 134,479 tiths were prepared in Tobolsk province, Akmola and Turgai regions, and 371 of them (14,120 tiths) were leased. In Eastern Siberia, the rules on the leasing of resettlement sites have not been applied [19. Pp. 346-347; 27. P. 48]. This practice has been applied in Western Siberia. However, having sent their main workers to the world war, the resettlement farms in the areas intended for sale did not manage to get stronger. By 1917, about half of them in Tobolsk province had large arrears of rent [21. Pp. 14, 15].

In 1911, they developed a new version of the law of June 8, 1901 "On attracting private enterprise to the development of wasted state land in sparsely populated areas". Its distinctive feature was that not only nobles, but also persons of other classes could rent large tracts of state land on concessional terms. The project was not approved by the State Duma and did not become law, but the principle of providing preferential rents to large entrepreneurs still found application.

On January 29 and February 15, 1913, Minister of Justice Ivan Shcheglovitov and Chief Administrative officer for land management and agriculture Alexander Krivoshein approved the Interim Rules on the leasing of plots of state land for horse and cattle breeding in Asian Russia. In accordance with the Rules, land was leased at preferential rates without bidding for a period of up to 36 years to "mainly wealthy herders, regardless of their class origin" [22. Pp. 57-58].

By 1917, in the Irkutsk, Yenisei, Tobolsk and Tomsk provinces of 55 plots prepared for cultural cattle breeding with a total area of 168.4 thousand te, only 17 plots with an area of 82.7 thousand tiths were leased [4. P. 220-249].

The largest sheep farm of this type was the partnership of "Siberian Economies" of Alekseev and Chetverikov, which rented 57.2 thousand tiths of land in four sections in the Yenisei province in 1917. The largest of these sites was lo-

cated near the healing lake Uchum in the modern Uzhur district. The partnership had 330 workers and employees and kept about 40 thousand heads of high-breed merino sheep [3. Pp. 61-65].

In general, the Rules on leasing state land for cattle breeding, of course, contributed to the inflow of capital to agriculture in Siberia.

Of considerable importance for the entrepreneurial activity and normalization of land relations in commercial – industrial villages were also the Rules approved on February 20 and March 6, 1913 by Ivan Scheglovitov and Alexander Krivoshein on the lease of land plots for construction in Asian Russia (without the Far East) in the railway and other settlements of urban type. In accordance with the Rules, manor plots were rented out without a tender into a 36-year lease with the right to purchase land when the villages were transformed into towns [14. L. 47-52].

Thanks to the Rules, residents of urban-type settlements received more solid land status, because earlier they were significantly dependent on officials of the treasury department, who had the right to increase rents at virtually any time. The tenant of the land was also not guaranteed that the land leased by him at the auction would not be transferred to another owner [20. P. 57]. Ultimately, this government measure could become the basis for the introduction of private land ownership in urban settlements.

Thus, it is hardly fair to say that after the death of P.A. Stolypin, the implementation of the agrarian reform, named after him, was suspended. A.V. Krivoshein was a worthy successor to P.A. Stolypin.

In a generalized form, the Stolypin program for the modernization of land relations in Siberia, the creation and development of the institution of private land ownership in the Urals, was reflected in the Memo compiled following the results of the ministers' trip to Siberia. However, legislative prerequisites for the implementation of this program did not manage to take shape.

The main reason for the inhibition of reform was the resistance of diverse political forces, both on the right and on the left. Both opposition parties represented by deputies of the State Duma from Siberia and a significant part of the ruling class represented in the Russian government opposed the introduction of private land ownership in Siberia. However, as the analysis shows, a significant part of the rural population of Siberia, both old-timers and newcomers, were supporters of the Stolypin transformations. This was vividly revealed by the clearly favorable attitude of the peasants to the intra-land survey carried out in accordance with the Stolypin's instructions.

It should also be noted that during the years of the Stolypin agrarian reform, serious measures were taken to create not only small-peasant, but also large private landholdings beyond the Urals without class restrictions.

Steps were also taken to create the institution of private land ownership in the cities of the Asian part of the country.

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