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**LAND MANAGEMENT DURING THE STOLYPIN REFORMS**

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**Abstract**

The paper deals with the development of land management during the Stolypin agrarian reforms. It analyzes a large amount of historical literature on land management in Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and explores different scientific approaches to the definition of land management and land surveying, the difference between them. The paper considers the tsarist period when land management was first legislatively mandated, being facilitated by the agrarian reforms initiated by Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin. The reforms were aimed at destroying the commune system that hindered the development of capitalist-oriented agrarian relations. On May 29, 1911, resulting from the reforms, the Tsar signed the Law On Land Management, which represented the goals and interests of the state for economic development, in particular the agrarian sector. Land management was based on economics, while land surveying was recognized as the simplest geodetic operation. Land management became pivotal in the Stolypin agrarian reforms and was understood as a system of optimal measures aimed at reorganization of agricultural regions, creation of a separate property, a separate plot to work independently of neighbors, thus being an important guarantee of agricultural progress.

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*Keywords:* Land surveying, land management, reform, capitalist, agrarian, state



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## 1. Introduction

In 1556, the Scribe Mandate was drawn up containing 'surveyor's notes'. Land surveying meant technical actions performed for drawing up plans and maps, measuring and delimiting land, calculating areas. Land marking consisted in establishing the boundaries of land ownership, securing them with boundary marks and ended up with documents issued for the right of ownership. The Sobornoe Ulozhenie of 1649 (a code of laws in Russia) recognized land marking as an independent legal action. Land marking eliminated stripes and blotches, placed roads. These actions were not yet viewed as land management, but they were not included in the content of land marking either. In 1754, the "Instruction to Land Markers" (Empress Elizaveta Petrovna, 1754, p. 40) was approved, clearly separating the concepts of land surveying and land marking. The land marker was responsible for a legal part, while the land surveyor made measurements and drew up acts.

In 1779, the first Russian land surveying school was founded in Moscow, where in 1835 the Land Surveyor Institute was organized. In 1766-1861, general marking was carried out, i.e. land owned was delimited.

In 1849, the Land Survey Institute was pronounced as a first-class higher educational institution and was transferred to a military institution.

## 2. Problem Statement

During the tsarist period, land management was legislatively registered, being facilitated by the P.A. Stolypin agrarian reforms. The reforms were aimed at destroying the commune system that hindered the development of capitalist-oriented agrarian relations. Land management became pivotal in the Stolypin agrarian reform and was understood as a system of optimal measures aimed at reorganization of agricultural regions, creation of a separate property, a separate plot to work independently of neighbors, thus being an important guarantee of agricultural progress.

## 3. Research Questions

110 years ago, on September 18 (new style) 1911 in Kiev, the chairman of the Russian Council of Ministers died after an injury. During his five years in office, an intelligent and tough politician played a significant role in suppressing the revolution of 1905-1907 and in initiating a number of important projects, primarily the agrarian reform. In doing so, he became the main target of hatred from both left- and right-wing political actors.

On May 29, 1911, resulting from the agrarian reforms, the Tsar signed the Law On Land Management, which represented the goals and interests of the state for economic development, in particular the agrarian sector. Land management was based on economics, while land surveying was recognized as the simplest geodetic operation. (Law on Land Management in the Russian Federation, 2005).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Following a capitalist path, agriculture was developing slowly. Capitalist-oriented relations in agriculture were still mainly hampered by communal land tenure that had many drawbacks, including forced crop rotation, overlapping, fragmentation of plots, far-away land, and strip cropping. Without the consent of the community, peasants could not leave their village, lease the land, sow a culture that did not fit into the general crop rotation. Communities routinely redistributed land, which at the turn of the century happened on average once every 6 years.

In light of the above, the paper aims to analyze literary sources engaged in the Stolypin agrarian reforms, to identify the essence and summarize this unique phenomenon in Russian history.

#### **5. Research Methods**

The paper was based on such sources as: Russian Land Management by Kofod, (1914), Fundamentals of Land Management by Inoveronov, (1915), Guide to Land Management and Land Surveying by Rzhantsyn, (1910) and Instruction to Land Surveyors, (1754), etc.

#### **6. Findings**

Agriculture was then the main sphere of the economy of the Russian Empire. However, it remained underdeveloped, thus making the economic and industrial potential of Russia lag behind that of European countries. Despite this, a share of agriculture in the Russian economy in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century exceeded 50%. This area needed to be somehow reconstructed, which was the main reason for Stolypin agrarian reform.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the aggravated class struggle triggered the Emancipation Reform and the beginning of land tenure called by economists the first land reform. The reform was based on the experience of 'land surveying' and 'land marking' and involved the transfer of land ownership to villages and peasants. (Khvostov et al., 2021).

The reforms sought to transform the commune system of land use with individual farming, which gave peasants the right to leave the community with an allotment. For this, land management activities were carried out: allocation of land to villages, settlements and parts of villages; allocation of allotments to members of rural societies; distribution of land to rural communities and villages, elimination of strip farming, consolidation of different land ownerships into a single array, division of land in common use of peasants, etc.

Consequently, it was necessary to consolidate private ownership of land, create a large and strong class of wealthy peasants, which was to become the backbone of the state system. According to these laws, communities that had not redistribute land for 24 years, regardless of their desire, were recognized as having transferred to household land tenure, and land was consolidated by issuing certificates of identification.

P. A. Stolypin clearly understood that the implementation of agrarian reforms alone would not pacify the population and would not allow the Russian Empire to make a qualitative leap in its development. Therefore, along with the changes in agriculture, the Prime Minister spoke about the need to adopt laws on

religion, equality among citizens, local self-government reforms, the rights and lives of workers, the need for compulsory primary education, an income tax, teachers' pay rise, and so on. In a word, everything that the Soviet government subsequently implemented was one of the stages under the Stolypin reforms.

Undoubtedly, it is extremely difficult to start large-scale changes in the country. That is why Stolypin decided to start with the agrarian reforms. This was due to a number of factors:

Evolution is mainly pushed forward by the peasant. This has always been the case across the globe, and so it was in those days in the Russian Empire. Hence, in order to remove a revolutionary heat, it was necessary to focus on broad strata of those dissatisfied, offering them remarkable transformations countrywide.

The peasants advocated the need for the landowners' land to be redistributed. Often the landowners kept the best land for themselves, allotting non-fertile plots to the peasants.

"In short, recognizing the nationalization of the land, with or without remuneration for the land alienated, will entail such a social upheaval, to such a transfer of all values, to such a transformation in all social, legal and civil relations, which had not been seen in history so far. Surely, this is no reason against the proposal of the left-wing parties, if this proposal is deemed salutary. Let us assume for a while that the State will recognize this as a blessing, will go and ruin an entire, no matter how they say, numerous educated class of landowners, will reconcile itself to the destruction of rare local centers of culture. What would come of this? That, at least in this way, would the land issue be resolved, at least from the material point of view? Would you give or not give the peasants an opportunity to settle in their localities?" – Pyotr Stolypin warned in his speech.

Stolypin agrarian reform was not a 'pill' for cure a sharp pain – it was predestinated for decades and primarily aimed to tackle, perhaps, the most burning and urgent issue – peasant law and peasant property in Russia.

Agriculture was the mainstay of the economy in the country, employing about 74 percent of the workforce. Moreover, there was a significant demographic growth: in 1900-1904, the rural population grew by one and a half times versus 1870.

However, manpower is only part of the story. Evidently, the agrarians were technologically disadvantaged: yields were much lower than in Europe, and it was not only the climatic conditions that were to blame. The peasantry was still dominated by the old three-field crop rotation system, while modern agricultural implements were almost never used. As a result, the average yield of staple grains in Russia was 8.3 centners per hectare of land against 23.6 in Germany, 22.4 in Great Britain, and 10.2 in the USA. And this is about the Chernozem region famous for its high quality soil. In those regions where the soil was scarce, the yield reached 3-4 centners per hectare.

Land management activities were legally divided into types, the tools were designed, and the content was supplemented by engineering and economic estimates. Thereafter, land was distributed and redistributed only based on land management projects (Provalova et al., 2019).

Tsarist scientists highly valued the establishment of land management and its separation from the technical activities that make up the essence of land marking. In Guide to Land Management and Land Surveying written in 1910, Rzhantsyn (1910) wrote that "... being aware of land management as an activity aimed at the establishment of robust agricultural holdings, and land marking as the demarcation of legal

boundaries of land ownership, it is necessary to recognize land marking as an integral part of land management ...” (p. 348).

Kofod (1914) also noted that “... all changes in the organization of territories should be decided pursuant to land management projects, and then land marking and registration of the rights of subjects of law should be initiated” (p. 4).

In 1915, Inoveronov in his book *Fundamentals of Land Management* wrote that “... land management differs from land marking primarily in its economic nature, and land marking is just a part of final more or less complex land management operations aimed at the organization of land ownership” (p. 12).

Inoveronov’s (1915) consideration of land management and land marking serves to warn against ignoring the latter or the former, i.e. both of these measures are needed by society. At present, land plots are cadastrally recorded and land titles are registered disregarding the projected growth of productive forces, the organization of municipalities, land use and land ownership.

The reform turned out to be a global transformation that was the most promising. It was important to comprehend one thing in the reform: whether our people were capable of changing. In our opinion, no doubt, they were. The First World War and the revolution devalued the strategic mission, in a sense, truly making all of Stolypin reforms an interrupted flight, which had a very successful start.

Cooperation was a field that saw unprecedented advances in those years. By January 1, 1914, a number of small credit institutions exceeded 13 thousand, with 10 million members. The overwhelming majority of the institutions were rural. The amount of local deposits, loans in savings and credit partnerships was growing. Agronomic aid and savings-and-loan financial mechanisms began to gain momentum. Between 1907 and 1912, the number of government agronomists increased from 140 to 1400 people, and zemstvo agronomists – from about 600 to 3300 people. Clearly this process was gaining momentum in a favourable environment because the number of agricultural societies was steadily increasing across the country. Extracurricular education, lectures and other forms began to develop as well.

We have an idea that the Stolypin reforms were a marathon race that, for reasons beyond the athletes’ control, was interrupted before reaching the halfway point. Of course, in that sense, it failed, but we can compare the results of this race with what came before and with what came after.

Traditional historiography argued that the years between 1909 and 1913 were marked by heavy yields, not everywhere, though. Besides, what is heavy for the Non-Black Soil region is not so for the Polish provinces. It is about too large territories for everything to be the same everywhere. Many scholars of the time tend to attribute heavy yields to advanced land use and agriculture. However, not all peasants who joined collective farms began to lease their land. Most of them put their energies into cultivating their own land. Their attitudes changed dramatically. Any ditch would be fenced off, a ravine would be strengthened, the forest would not be disturbed. In addition, agricultural machinery was tremendously used.

Notably, land management operations required a lot of money and involved qualified staff good at not only the legal and technical, but also economic, organizational, and environmental aspects of land management. For this reason, the word ‘land surveyor’ were increasingly replaced by the words ‘land manager’, and the concepts of land marking, land surveying by the concept of land management.

## 7. Conclusion

If we look at the data on land management, we will see that in 1907-15, applications for land management were received from 6.2 million peasant households. This accounted for more than half of all households in the country and over 70% of commune households. In total, 2.4 million households were able to go through all four complicated stages, of which 64% were approved in the second stage. And the total measured area exceeded 20 million hectares. In total, land management covered about 375 thousand square kilometers, being more than the territory of modern Germany. Everyone was amazed at the scale. However, most of the applications for land management – almost two-thirds – never made it through.

Thus, land management in Russia was established and legalized in a capitalist-oriented form in order to reconstruct and improve land tenure and land use, in the interests of the state for the development of capitalist agrarian relations and the development of national economy at large. More than a hundred years have passed. The fruitful experience gained during Pyotr Stolypin's transformations is in demand by those who need a great Russia, not great upheavals.

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