

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box ☒. If you change your mind, put a line through the box ☒ and then indicate your new question with a cross ☒.

Chosen question number: Question 7 ☒

Question 8 ☐

Question 9 ☐

Question 10 ☐

The reforms to the peasantry in the years 1855 to 1964 were many and varied; Alexander II emancipated the serfs in 1861, whilst Stolypin tried to implement new farming methods in 1906-11, and then Lenin issued the paper Decree on Land in 1917 and subsequently the NEP in 1921. Stalin also imposed changes on the ~~serfs~~ peasantry in the form of collectivisation during the years 1928-41 and then Gorbachev and Khrushchev attempted to alter the agricultural life of peasants but these reforms have been described by historians as 'tinkering around the edges'. There is some debate about which reform evidenced the most significant change in the lives of the Russian peasantry during this period; some view the Emancipation of Serfs as the most important whilst others see collectivisation as the most significant change. 'Change in the lives' of the peasantry can be both positive and negative and political, social or economic. Positive political change would evidence a shift in the legal status of peasants, social change would result in an improvement or backward step in the living conditions and economic change would be defined by a shift in the economic property of the peasants.

Emancipation of the Serfs can be seen ~~as~~ as a significant change in the lives of the peasantry. This is because this reform marked a positive political change in that it legally freed the peasants from the ~~typ~~ tyrannical bondage of the landowner. Before 1861 the peasants were tied to the landlords and bound to the land, meaning



that they were completely subject to the authority of the landlords. This often meant gruelly hard work for minimal financial reward and were often encouraged to marry early to encourage the next generation of peasants. This however changed with the introduction of Emancipation, as peasants became legally free and their status changed; ~~they~~ it evidenced a step towards them becoming 'their own masters' as they could officially set up their own businesses and were <sup>legally</sup> freed from the dominating authority of the landlords. This therefore evidences positive political change in a shift away from the power of the landlords. Even Emancipation also evidenced a negative economic change. Before 1861, peasants were required to work on a landlord's field with no financial reward, however after 1861, although they received a slightly increased wage, they had to pay redemption payments for 49 years at 6% interest to the landlord. This therefore evidences a negative economic change in their lives.

However, Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861 although granted legal free status to the peasants was in reality not that big a change as the landlords continued to dominate the peasantry and dictate their wages and therefore living standards.

In addition to this, there were also other reforms that brought about changes in the lives of the peasantry. One such reform was that of Stolypin in 1906-11. Before 1906, peasants were required to farm small fields that were split into strips. This made farming very difficult as it became almost impossible to introduce new more efficient and ~~the~~ effective farming methods to feed the ever increasing population. Stolypin to some extent changed this as he



introduced the concept of ~~consolidated~~ consolidated farms and new technology, meaning that peasants began to farm more efficiently and could therefore grow more grain to supplement their incomes and improve their living standards. This shows ~~therefore~~ that indeed overall production rose by 23% - a sign of the success of this reform. This therefore shows that Stalin's reform ~~and~~ brought about positive economic change in the farm increased income and ~~was~~ improved living standards, so a positive political change.

Another reform that brought about massive reform was collectivisation in 1928-41, introduced by Stalin. This evidenced a massive change to both socially and economically in the lives of the peasantry. This was because although there had been attempts to consolidate the farms under Stalin and Lenin, this ~~was~~ reform marked a complete break with what had gone before with the introduction of collective farms.\* Under such reform, the land became owned by the state and the peasantry once again came under ~~the~~ totalitarian authority. By 1940, 97% of the farmland was collectivised, showing ~~that~~ the vast extent to which this reform changed the agricultural base of Russia. Although there were positive elements, for example mechanisation and electrification in 1927 for the first time <sup>social</sup> ~~ending an~~ improvement in their living standards, the peasantry also suffered socially and economically. Many peasants were blamed for hoarding the grain during times of food shortage and therefore were subject to terror and ~~and~~ brutality from the communist regime in an attempt to steal the grain from the peasants. The more commercially-minded peasants, the kulaks, suffered the most: dekulakisation.



Whereby Stalin argued the removal of all kulaks took the lives of 5 million peasants and disease and famine on the farm were responsible for the death of 5-5 million peasants. This therefore shows that whilst there may have been some evidence of a slight improvement in living conditions, the social change in the form of mass murder on purpose was a huge class negative change as the peasants since 1855 had never experienced this on such a large scale. The peasants were also set to lose out economically as the procurement price for grain remained low and peasants were forced to sell the grain cheaply to feed the workers in the cities, and therefore they experienced a net decrease in their financial state and income.

Another reform that evidenced change in the lives of the peasantry was Khrushchev's Virgin Lands Scheme in 1954. This was a change because previously abandoned land on the steppes of Kazakhstan was farmed, thereby making a new adventure for the peasants farming this land. However the change was limited as they used similar farming techniques as before and the 1963 harvest failure proved the scheme to be unsuccessful.

In conclusion, whilst the Emancipation of the Serfs in 1861 marked a political change in the form of free legal status the change was minimal as the landowners continued to dominate. The negative change in the form of redemption payments was a big economic blow to the peasants but this was minimal compared to other financial burdens they faced and this was abolished in 1906 by Stolypin. Therefore the change this brought in minimal. Stolypin's reforms did bring some change in the economic position of the lives



of the peasantry but this too was limited as many peasants continued to farm in the same inefficient manner, and is especially limited when compared to the <sup>change</sup> brought about by collectivisation. For sure, collectivisation in ~~the~~ ~~to~~ 1928-41 was the most significant change in the lives of the peasantry in the years 1855-1944. This is because it marked the greatest change in the agricultural methods from largely a step-farming based technique to collective farms owned by the state, and also evidenced the most significant change in their social well-being. ~~The~~ The new farming method only resulted in famine and disease, responsible for 8.5m deaths and the peasants lived in continual fear of the brutality of the regime, a fear that they had never experienced before. Whilst Khrushchev's reform may have been evidence of a change in farming as it ~~play~~ ploughed previously abandoned land, the farming techniques ~~and~~ remained largely the same. Therefore it is clear that the Russian peasantry experienced the most change in their lives during collectivisation under the ~~top~~ tyrannical regime of Stalin.

\* Collectivisation was a complete change because prior to this, the peasants had largely been caught in the trap of inefficient farming techniques, farming very small areas of land with the traditional horse and plough method. Collectivisation brought with it new technological and a new scheme of farming which led to the eventual collapse of the entrepreneurial spirit of the peasantry.

