TO WHAT EXTENT DID STOLYPIN’S POLICIES PUT THE REGIME ON A MORE STABLE FOOTING?

Stolypin’s policies of repression:
The peasantry went on rampage due to land hunger. There were rent strikes, land seizures and attacks on manor houses. There was also physical violence. In 1906, 1000 died in terrorist attacks. This rose to 3000 in 1907. Army units were sent into areas of unrest, killings and beatings left 15,000 dead and 20,000 wounded. 45,000 were exiled to Siberia and whole villages were burned to the ground. The aim was to terrorise the rural population into submission.

Durnovo’s policies made the Trans-Siberian Railway safe and restored order in the Baltic Region, but everywhere else problems continued. The army couldn’t be sent to all areas of unrest due to lack of troops. Government redemption payments were being cut by half in 1905 and were abolished in 1907 but why? They were due to end in 1910 anyway so didn’t help reduce unrest in the countryside.

In May 1906, Durnovo was replaced with Stolypin. Stolypin proclaimed a state of emergency which gave government officials the power to imprison people without trial and exile troublemakers. Field court martials were allowed. Trials were held in secret, the accused couldn’t have a lawyer, trials lasted for a maximum of two days, death sentences were carried out within 24 hours of the decision, and no appeals were allowed.

Actions against revolutionary parties:
Revolutionary leaders were either arrested or driven into exile. Trotsky and other leaders were sentenced to a lifetime exile in Siberia. Dissolution of the 2nd Duma was accompanied by the arrest of the Duma’s Bolshevik members. Parties were left weakened and demoralised.

Emigration to Siberia:
Siberia was mineral rich, sparsely populated and economically underdeveloped. Much of it was barely habitable. However in the South-West there was an abundance of cultivable land. The opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway made this area more accessible and mass migration became a possibility. Stolypin offered peasants free/cheap land, interest free loans and reduced rail fares to encourage them to migrate. 3.5 million emigrated but 20% failed to settle and returned to European Russia.

Stolypin and his critics:
he wanted to get rid of land captains. He proposed to reform the education system so all children received 4 years of education from aged 8. He claimed to introduce a proper workers compensation scheme for factory workers. The nobility took an issue with government reform, the Orthodox church resisted educational reforms and industrials complained the compensation scheme was too expensive. Stolypin began to lose the Tsar’s confidence.

The Lena Goldfields Massacre 1912:
Gold was first discovered in eastern Siberia in early 19th century. By 1900, a thriving industry had developed, dominated by the Lena Gold Mining Company. Industrial disputes in the goldfields were common: the environment was harsh and the treatment of workers was poor. A protest began when rancid horsemeat was served in the workers canteen. This led to a strike for a 30% wage increase, an 8 hour day and better medical care. The government sent in troops to arrest the strike leaders. 90 soldiers open fired on 3000 unarmed marchers. 160 were killed and 200 were wounded. Nearly 10,000 gave up and left the area. The mine-owners replaced them with workers from Korea and China. The massacre caused a wave pf protests and strikes across Russia which only calmed down when war broke out in 1914.

Stolypin’s land reform:
He aimed to break up village commune, do away with open-field strip farming and reconstruct Russian agriculture on the basis of peasants owning their own separate farms. Peasant households who owned their small farms would have an incentive to develop and improve their land. A more highly motivated peasantry would be more productive. Increased production would ensure the supply of food to growing towns and eliminate unrest due to high food prices. Every peasant householder could demand that his share of communal land could be tuned into his own private property. The government set up local bodies called land organisation commissions to settle any disputes about land reform measures.

Initially, there was a rush to take advantage of the new policies but many peasants saw no reason to depart from their traditional customs. Those who did were victimised by fellow-villagers. By 1914, only 20% of peasants became legal landowners. There was a sharp increase in agricultural production but not just due to land reform. A run of good harvest and greater uses of machines/fertilisers also helped. His land reforms didn’t help land hunger or over-population of the Black Earth region, his solution to there was emigration to Siberia.
The State of the Armed Forces in 1914:
The army had 1.4 million men and 3 million trained reservists, the largest in Europe. After its failure in the Russo-Japanese war, it had been re-armed and modernised. However good-quality junior officers were in short supply. The physical condition and emotional standards of ordinary soldiers was low. Soldiers were less highly motivated and hadn’t developed a high sense of national identity. During WW1, troops surrendered quickly and the army was still poorly equipped. It didn’t have enough heavy artillery, machine guns or motorised vehicles. There was a shortage of rifles.
In Autumn 1914, Russia advanced into German territory but this was followed by a German counter-attack. In 1915, the year of the Great Retreat, Russian forces were driven out of Poland and Lithuania and 1 million men were killed/wounded, another million taken prisoner.

1915 Munitions Crisis:
Wars were assumed to be short so no steps were taken to stockpile vast quantities of munitions of build up Russia’s armaments. Russia had to place huge orders with British and American manufacturers. However the foreign suppliers failed to meet the deadlines. This resulted in the munitions crisis.

Supplies for cities and transport problems:
The war imposed huge strains on the transport system in Russia. Military traffic was given priority and arms shipments from aboard clogged up the Trans-Siberian railway. Trains carrying food supplies to cities were seriously delayed, sometimes rotting before it got here. This cause wartime food shortages and rising food prices.

Inflation:
The main driver of inflation was rising food prices. Grain production fell because important food-producing areas were occupied by Germans. Many peasants hoarded grain as they were unwilling to buy over-priced consumer goods. The wages of industrial workers went up during the war but prices went up faster. Inflation only caught up with the peasantry later on in the war, when consumer goods like clothes and shoes rose sharply. As far as food was concerned, they were largely self-sufficient.

Nicholas, Alexandra and Rasputin:
The Great Retreat of 1915 caused panic and rumours circulated that Petrograd might be in danger. In August 1915 Nicholas took control of the front himself, intending to set an example and restore calm. Therefore Nicholas spent very little time in Petrograd, giving his wife and Rasputin an opportunity to have an influence. Alexandra was widely disliked due to her German origins and she was conservative, advising Nicholas against making concessions. Rasputin was a Siberian peasant who won reputation as a healer. Alexander believed he could cure her sons haemophilia. In 1916, Rasputin was murdered. Rumours circulated that Alexander and Rasputin were guilty of more than mismanagement and that they were traitors conspiring to bring about a German victory.

The Progressive Bloc and Zemgor:
Only the Bolsheviks were united in its opposition to the war. The Mensheviks and SRs were divided on the issue. On the other hand, middle class parties were supporters if the war. Octoberists and Kadets were deeply patriotic. When war broke out, they rallied behind the government. Two unions were created to undertake war relief work – providing medical care for wounded soldiers. They then diversified in 1915 to manufacture war essentials, joining forces with the Zemgor. The voluntary sector put the work of officials to shame. Opposition politicians criticised the government for the mismanagement of the war effort. Under pressure, Nicholas II agreed to recall the Duma. 300 of its 430 members formed the Progressive Bloc in order to press for measures which were essential if the war was to be won. They wanted a partnership between the government and Duma. Nicholas rejected their demands. The Kadets then abandoned the thought of compromise with the Tsarist regime. By late 1916, leading figures of the Progressive Bloc were plotting to force Nicholas II to abdicate.
The Kornilov Affair:
On 18th July 1917, during negotiations about the make-up of his new government, Kerensky appointed Kornilov commander-in-chief of Russia’s armies. Kornilov was popular among the middle/upper classes – a section of the population Kerensky was keen to see represented in his government. Kornilov said he would only take up this position if a number of conditions were met. Strikes in all industries to be banned for the duration of the war, violations of the ban being punishable by death. Railway workers were to be placed under army control, and desertion/treason by soldiers to be punishable by death. On 26th August, Kornilov demanded more. He called for martial law in Petrograd. Kerensky wanted to make himself a military dictator. On 27th August, Kerensky dismissed him as commander-in-chief. An outraged Kornilov responded by ordering a detachment of troops, under the command of General Krymov, to march on Petrograd. It seemed there was a counter-revolution in the making. Kerensky was forced to turn to the Petrograd soviet for support. The soldiers of the Petrograd garrison, the Kronstadt sailors and the Red Guards were all issued with weapons by Kerensky. The advance on Petrograd faded out without one shot being fired. Railwaymen loyal to the soviet held up troop trains heading towards the capital. The soviet and many Bolsheviks infiltrated Krymov’s advancing forces. Kornilov was placed under arrest and eventually killed in a civil war battle. Krymov committed suicide after his advance of Petrograd was halted.

Impact on the government and the Bolsheviks:
The Kornilov affair left Kerensky badly damaged. He was under fire from both the left and right. On the left, Kerensky was suspected of having been a willing part of Kornilov’s scheme. The right wing argument was that Kerensky should’ve stood by Kornilov and implemented his programme. The winners from the affair were the Bolsheviks. Bolshevik sympathisers led the successful defence of Petrograd. Also, the political orientation of the Red Guard and Kronstadt sailors was Bolshevik. The Bolsheviks presented them as saviours of the revolution. They won 33% of the vote in Petrograd and 51% of Moscow. The started to win control of soviets in major cities. Trotsky, who had committed himself to the Bolsheviks returned from exile and became chairman of the Petrograd soviet. The Bolsheviks also controlled Moscow Soviet. However, they didn’t have majority support across Russia as a whole. Other factors increased Bolshevik support too. They were better led and organised that their rivals and had fewer internal divisions. The policies that Lenin set out in the April Theses grew in appeal as 1917 wore on. Trotsky entering to Bolshevik ranks was significant because he was the best known revolutionary in Russia and was an electrifying public speaker.