

# Serfdom

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# What is a Serf?

Serf: A bonded labourer of land, household or state

- Privately owned vs State serf
- Barschina vs Obrok
- Mirs



## Before the act

- Shelter in exchange for hard labour
- Serfs could be bought and sold
- Serfs couldn't marry freely
- Serfs were liable for army conscription
- Serfs were subject to corporal punishment



# The Emancipation Act 1861



- Serfs were released from bondage
- Serf family entitled to keep cottage and land
- Landlords receive compensation and peasants required to pay redemption payments
- Free serfs remained in mirs until payments
- Peasants to continue obrok for two years until freedom
- Landowners retained ownership
- Open fields could be used by all ex-serfs
- Peasants kept land surrounding cottage and received more
- `Volosts` supervised mirs

# Serf situation after the Act

## Pros

Successful peasants (Kulaks) could buy more land and hire peasants of their own.

## Cons

- The land given to the ex-serfs didn't include the tools and commodities the landowners used to share with them.
- Landowners could set the price of the land, and also get the best plot of land for themselves.

# Landowner situation after the Act

## Pros:

- Get out of debt
- Invest more

## Cons:

- Loss of land
- Loss of influence in politics and economy
- Less efficient production

Many riots were caused by landowners, where the military had to restore order.