

Question 5

(a) Write an account of the 1905 Revolution. [15]

The 1905 Revolution was triggered in January 1905 with Bloody Sunday, when the workers of St.Petersburg marched on the Winter Palace to bring a petition to the Tsar. The people of Russia had long term grievances, which largely involved the extreme poverty of the workers and peasants, as well as a more immediate grievance: the war with Japan. Therefore, the crowd brought a petition to the Winter Palace to ask the Tsar for improved conditions. (I.e. better working and living conditions, an end to the war with Japan, and an elected parliament.)

Even though this was a peaceful protest, the soldiers fired on the crowd, killing 500. This event sparked a wave of riots, strikes and murders, as the Tsar was now undermined in the eyes of those who trusted that they would help them. As a consequence, the next months saw increasing revolutionary turmoil in Russia. There were strikes in the capital and this spread to other towns and cities. Government officials were killed, including the Governor General of Moscow (the Tsar's uncle). The countryside saw peasant uprisings, and landlords were murdered. Moreover, non-Russian areas started to demand independence.

By May 1905 even professionals (like doctors, lawyers and teachers) began to support the demands for change. The unrest then became even more intense when Russia received news of the Japanese destruction of the Russian Baltic fleet. Next, there was a mutiny by the crew on the battleship Potemkin. (Fortunately for Nicholas II, this was the only mutiny during the 1905 Revolution.)

Strikes and uprisings continued until it came to a climax in October 1905. There was a general strike that brought the country to a standstill. The Tsar, therefore, reluctantly issued Oct Manifesto. This was a promise to allow the people of Russia freedom of speech, the right to form political parties, the right to form a Duma (national parliament, elected by all adults), and he promised to make no laws without Duma's approval.

The October Manifesto brought the 1905 Revolution to an end. Many workers returned to work. Liberals also welcomed the manifesto and ended their opposition. However, revolutionary groups formed Soviets in major cities. These workers' councils aimed to take matters into their own hands, but were soon broken up by the Police. By March 1906 the Tsar's forces had crushed all remaining opposition. Nicholas II was fortunate that the armed forces remained loyal to him and that the workers' strikes and peasants' uprisings were not coordinated. Nicholas II, therefore, survived the 1905 Revolution.

(b) Discuss the extent to which the October Manifesto was a turning point for the Tsarist regime. [25]

YES

- Allowed democracy and political representation in Russia
- Civil rights / freedoms: legalised political parties in Russia
- Ended revolution: Tsar able to crush radical opposition using the army and Okhrana

NO

- Tsar passes Fundamental Laws, giving him power to dismiss Duma
- Rigged voting system
- Long-term impact of Tsar's rule & authority (Joined Battlefront; allowed Rasputin to influence decisions)
- Stolypin's reforms, e.g. land reforms increased peasant ownership of the land (i.e. not due to Oct. Manifesto)