Examination-style questions

(a) Explain why Nicholas issued the October Manifesto in 1905.

(12 marks)

To explain why the manifesto was issued you will clearly need to provide some context - both of the immediate reasons behind the pronouncement, the general reasons that had provoked revolution in 1905, and the broad opposition to autocracy which had led to demands for constitutional reform. It would probably be sensible to look at these three areas in this order so that it is clear that you understand why the manifesto was issued in October 1905, rather than sooner, or later.

(b) How successful was the tsarist autocracy in reasserting its authority by the end of 1905?

(24 marks)

To answer this question you will need to balance the restoration of tsarist authority against the ways in which autocratic power had been weakened and authority lost through the events of 1905. You should decide what your argument will be before you begin to write and should guard against presenting a narrative account of the year by considering different aspects of tsarist authority, so as to provide a thematic rather than a chronological answer.

The tsarist regime, 1906–1914

In this chapter you will learn about:
- the new constitution set up in the aftermath of revolution
- the problems associated with the new Dumas
- Stolypin's attempts to carry through agrarian reform between 1906 and 1911
- the extent of change in the countryside by 1911.

On September 14th 1911, Pyotr Stolypin, Prime Minister of Russia, was enjoying an evening's performance of Rimsky-Korsakov's The Tale of Tsar Saltan at the Kiev Opera House. Stolypin was sitting in the stalls, while Tsar Nicholas II and his family were also in attendance, in the royal box. No doubt the troubles of the last few years were forgotten as all related for the evening. However, just after the royal family had left their box, during the second interval, two sounds were heard. Nicholas later said that he thought a glass had been dropped, and he went back into his box to look. Below him, he could see a group of officers and others trying to drag someone along, whilst women were shrieking and Stolypin was standing unsteadily and looking towards him.

Dmitrii Bogrov had shot Stolypin in the arm and the chest but the wounded man had risen from his chair, removed his gloves and unbuttoned his jacket. Nicholas saw his bloodied waistcoat and watched as he raised his left hand to make the sign of the cross to him. Stolypin slowly sank down again crying, 'I am happy to die for the tsar'. Stolypin lived on for four more days and Nicholas visited him in hospital, begging the minister to forgive him for bringing him to this end. Bogrov was hanged ten days later.

Having led a brief administration, which gave rise to a series of major reforms, this was to be the end of Russia's third Prime Minister.

The work of the Dumas

The new constitution

Although the October Manifesto had provided no precise detail as to what the election arrangements for, or powers of, the promised Duma would be, over the following months, a new constitutional arrangement was drawn up with two legislative houses, as shown in Figure 2.
The two houses had equal legislative power and all legislation also had to receive the approval of the tsar. Any one of the three bodies could veto legislation.

**Fig. 2 The new Russian constitution and indirect voting**

**The Fundamental Laws**

Five days before the first Duma met, Nicholas issued a series of Fundamental Laws (April 23 1906) defining his view of power. The laws stated that the tsar:
- possesses supreme administrative power;
- is supreme leader of all foreign relations;
- has supreme command over all land and sea forces of the Russian state;
- has the sole power to appoint and dismiss government ministers;
- has the sole power to declare war, conclude peace and negotiate treaties with foreign states;
- has the right to overturn verdicts and sentences given in a court of law.

The tsar also had complete control over military expenditure and household expenses and the right to control the Orthodox Church.

### Political groupings

There were to be four Dumas. The main political parties which contested the elections (in addition to the independent candidates and fringe groupings) were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bolsheviks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mensheviks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Revolutionaries (SR)</td>
<td>Founded in 1901; led by Viktor Chernov. Favourable populist ideas of re-distribution of land and nationalisation. Lett of parties favoured terrorism to achieve aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trudoviks (Labour group)</td>
<td>Non-revolutionary break-away from SR party of moderate liberal views but with no formal programme. Favourable nationalisation of non-peasant land, a constituent assembly, a minimum wage and 8-hour working day. Supported by peasants and intelligentsia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadets (Constitutional Democrats)</td>
<td>Led by Pavel Milyukov (1859-1943). A central liberal party which favoured a constitutional monarchy with parliamentary government; full civil rights; compulsory redistribution of large private estates – with compensation and legal settlement of workers’ disputes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Octoberists (Union of 17th October)</td>
<td>Leaders included Alexander Guchkov (1862-1936). A moderate conservative party which accepted the October Manifesto and opposed further concessions to workers or peasants. Supported by wealthy landowners and industrialists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressists</td>
<td>A loose grouping of businessmen who favoured moderate reform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rightists – including the ‘Union of the Russian People’</td>
<td>Leaders included Vladimir Parshkevich (1870-1920). The Union of Russian People was extremely right-wing, favouring monarchism, chauvinism, Orthodoxy, pan-slavism and anti-Semitism. Promoted violent attacks on the left-wing and pogroms through its street-fighting gangs, the Black Hundreds. Other rightists shared conservative views but were less extreme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalist and religious groupings</td>
<td>Ukrainians, Poles, Georgians, Muslims – all seeking rights and greater independence.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity**

Thinking and analysis

Create a table of two columns. On one side write down the ways in which the new Russian governmental arrangements appeared democratic and on the other write down the ways in which they restricted the emergence of democracy.
The results were as follows [see Figure 3]:

The four Dumas

The First Duma, May–July 1906

A national election campaign took place through the winter of 1905-06. The Bolsheviks and Social Revolutionaries refused to participate, as did the extreme right-wing Union of Russian People. This meant that the first state duma, optimistically referred to as the 'Duma of National Hopes' was overwhelmingly radical-liberal in composition. The Kadets fought a skilful campaign and won the largest number of seats of any grouping. More than a third of the new deputies (191) were peasants and peasant farmers made up the single biggest professional group. There was also a strong group of deputies to the left of the Kadets, who were strongly critical of the tsar and his ministers.

They met at the Tauride palace in St Petersburg on May 1st 1906. Maurice Baring, the English journalist writing for the Morning Post, attended one of its first sessions:

'I had the good fortune to gain admission to the Duma yesterday afternoon. I think it is the most interesting sight I have ever seen.

One saw peasants in their long black coats, some of them wearing military medals and crosses; priests; tartars; Poles; men in every kind of dress except uniform. When the sitting began I went up into the gallery. The members go to their appointed places, on which their cards are fixed and the impression of diversity of dress and type becomes still stronger and more picturesque.

You see dignified old men in frock coats; aggressively democratic-looking intellectuals with long hair and pince nez; a Polish Bishop dressed in purple; men without collars; members of the proletariat; men in loose Russian shorts with belts and men dressed in the costume of two centuries ago.

They were a motley band and commentators commented on the 'uncivilised' manners of some of the peasant deputies, who threw their smoke ash onto the polished floors and spat out the husks of the sunflower seeds they liked to chew. It was said that the tsar's mother was upset for several days after witnessing all these commoners in the palace.'
Key profiles

Prince Lvov
Prince Georgi Yevgenyevich Lvov (1861–1925) began his career as a lawyer and worked in the civil service until 1893. In 1905 he joined the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets) and won election to the first Duma. He became chairman of the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos in 1914 and was the head of the Provisional Government of Russia, after the tsar’s abdication, from March to July 1917. Although later arrested by the Bolsheviks, he escaped and lived out his days in Paris.

Ivan Goremykin
Ivan Goremykin (1839–1917) was a lawyer with strongly conservative political views. He had served as minister for internal affairs between 1895 and 1899, before becoming Prime Minister in 1906. He was soon forced to resign in July 1906, after disagreements with the first Duma, and was replaced by Peter Stolypin. Goremykin was a close ally of Rasputin and again became Prime Minister in 1914. He retired in February 1916 but was recognised as an ex-tsarist and murdered by mobs in December 1917.

The Second Duma, February–June 1907
Stolypin’s government tried to influence the elections to the next Duma, supporting the Octobrists, who more than doubled their representation. However, partly because of the disfranchisement of the leading Kadets, the more moderate-liberal centre was reduced in size and the more extreme left-wing increased enormously because the Bolsheviks, Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries decided to participate. Only some 30 representatives from the first Duma were returned and the Duma soon received the nickname, the ‘Duma of National Anger’ because it was even more oppositional than its predecessor. Neither the left nor the right wanted the Duma experiment to succeed and they succeeded in crippling it as a political force.

Stolypin struggled to find any support for the agrarian reform programme he had drawn up and resorted to passing legislation under the emergency powers granted by Article 87, while the Duma was not in session. When the Duma refused to ratify this, he spread a story about a Social Democrat (SD) plot to assassinate the tsar. When the Duma deputies refused to waive the Social Democrats’ immunity from arrest, (a right of all Duma delegates), Stolypin simply dissolved the Duma. The SD delegates were immediately arrested and exiled and an (illegal) emergency law brought in to alter the franchise. The weight of the peasants, workers and national minorities was drastically reduced and the representation of the gentry increased.

The Third Duma, November 1907–June 1912
Not surprisingly, the groups which favoured the government, the Octobrists and Rightists, won the majority of seats, while the Kadets and socialists were much reduced in size as well as being divided in principles. This time the Duma’s nickname in radical circles was the ‘Duma of Lords and Lackeys’. Generally, this Duma was far more submissive and it agreed 2,200 of 2,500 government proposals – including important proposals for agricultural reform, presented by Stolypin. However, it is a sign of how unpopular the tsarist regime had become that even this Duma proved confrontational at times. There were disputes over naval staff, Stolypin’s proposals to extend primary education and some of his local government reforms. By 1911 the Octobrists had turned into government opponents and the Duma had to be suspended twice, while the government forced through legislation under emergency provisions. Although the Duma ran its course, by 1912 it was clear that the Duma system was not working and had no control over the actions of the tsar or his government.

The Fourth Duma, November 1912–17
The party groupings were broadly similar in the final Duma, although the Octobrists did considerably less well, creating a greater rift between right and left. However, it was a relatively discordant body and the new Prime Minister, Rokitsky, who replaced Stolypin after his assassination in 1911 and remained in this post until 1914, proclaimed, ‘Thank God we still have no parliament’. He simply ignored the Duma and its influence declined. It was too divided to fight back, and in any case, the workers again seized the initiative with a revival of direct action and strike activity in these years down to the outbreak of war.

Activities

Class discussion
1. How effective was the Duma experiment?
   Complete the following chart which highlights some of the achievements of the Dumas, with balancing criticisms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievements of the Dumas</th>
<th>Criticisms of the Dumas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A centre for political discussion which enabled the tsar and ministers to gauge popular feeling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped spread democracy by encouraging public political debate as their activities were reported in the press</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used their powers e.g. approving the budget and questioning ministers to good effect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approved important reforms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A promising experiment which would have succeeded but was never given enough time to show its true worth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Consider this quotation from the modern historian, Alan Wood
   ‘A tragic drama it certainly was; a revolution it was not.
   After 1905 there was no real devolution of political power, which still rested in the hands of an irresponsible Emperor and his appointed ministers. There was no radical redistribution of property and no realignment of the hierarchical class structure of society. The principles of Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationalism still provided the regime with its ideological bedrock. The traditional institutions of the state — bureaucracy, church, military and police — continued to function unaltered. And the Romanov Empire remained — bruised but unbroken.’

In the light of what Wood has written, would you agree or disagree that the events of 1905 deserve to be called a ‘revolution’? Explain your answer.