Consequences of the 1905 Revolution

October Manifesto

Nicholas knew he had to do something to calm down and quell the ever-increasing mass of people that were revolting, subsequently he agreed to sign a document on the 17th October promising reforms. Nicholas did however have to be persuaded to sign this decree as he still wasn’t fully convinced on giving up any of his power, his Ministers played a vital role in securing this manifesto. The promises of Nicholas of were:

- To grant the population Civic Freedom; personal rights, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and union.
- To establish a duma to allow a voice for all classes of the population.
- No Law can become effective without passing through the Duma and that representatives within the Duma will be voted upon by the public.
- Half redemption payments from Jan 1906 and abolish from Jan 1907 (added in November)

This announcement led to celebrations on the streets of St. Petersburg and the general strike was called off, the majority were overwhelmed and satisfied with the changes but revolutionaries such as Trotsky and Lenin were not convinced, claiming that no real reform had been made and all workers still lived under autocracy.

There were limitations to the manifesto as radicals had been suggesting: Nicholas and his ministers had little commitment to sticking to the manifesto, the Duma was consultative e.g the Tsar did not have to agree with it, it was not to be elected by a secret ballot and not everyone had equal representations in the Duma and there was no promise of a new constitution.

The Fundamental Laws

In April of 1906, Nicholas issued the Fundamental Laws. These were:

- The Supreme power is invested in the Tsar. It is God’s command that he should be obeyed not only through fear but for conscience sake.
- The Tsar exercises the legislative power in conjunction with the council and the Imperial Duma.
- Only the Tsar may decide when to review the Fundamental Laws in the Council and Duma.
- The Tsar approves the law and no law can be made without his approval.
- The Tsar chooses when to dismiss the president of the Council, the ministers and the heads of departments.

The Tsar had to regain his authority after losing so much in the October Manifesto, these laws invested his trust back through religion and gave him extra powers over the top of the Duma, deeming the reforms of the October Manifesto, useless. He had just as much power as before the 1905 revolution.

The reaction to the Manifesto

The initial reaction was that of ecstasy and rejoice at a ‘new Russia’ in which everyone’s voice will be heard and the standard of living will be significantly better. This quelled the 1905 revolution and workers returned to factories, satisfied they had won and pushed the Tsar into reform. The moderates were also happy with the reforms and set to work in making the Duma a success, this group became known as the ‘Octobrists’, headed by Alexander Guchkov.