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| **The Development of Opposition Groups to 1917:*** **Emergence of opposition groups including the Constitutional Democrats (Cadets), the Octobrists**
* **Emergence of revolutionary groups including the Social Revolutionary Party and the Social Democrats.**
* **The split in the Social Democrats – Mensheviks and Bolsheviks**
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Over the period we are studying, various political parties and organisations emerged who sought to lead the people to force change upon the Tsar. However, these groups all represented different ideas and social groups and consequently responded to events in different ways.

1. **MIDDLE CLASSES/LIBERALS – ‘EVOLUTIONARY’ OPPOSITION**

These were mainly professionals and business men living in the cities. They were educated and looked to western systems of government for inspiration. In Russia, it had been this group that had begun to get experience of being involved in government through the zemstva.

Following the October Manifesto, they were allowed to form political parties and had high hopes for the Duma. They believed in a **constitutional monarchy**. This meant that the Tsar would still be there, but his role would be mainly symbolic and the real government would be run by the elected officials of the Duma. They believed in slow change (‘**evolutionary change’**) as they were also very afraid that the peasants and workers would destroy their businesses and standing in society if there was a revolution.

Their tactics before 1905 had been to use propaganda, meetings and petitions to put pressure on the government to allow them to reform. They had been very active in the zemstva and had taken on responsibilities where they could (e.g. famine relief). While they had continued these methods during the 1905 revolution, the chaos had ultimately scared them.

They were not completely united. As we have seen, they supported the October Manifesto and stood for election to the Duma. At this point, they split into two groups:

1. **The Constitutional Democratic Party, known as the ‘Cadets’**. They believed that the October Manifesto was only the first step and that the Duma should continue to pressure the Tsar to give up more power. They also believed more reforms were needed; from greater rights for the people to more help for the poor. They therefore supported Stolypin’s reforms and used their positions in the first Duma (especially) to criticise the Tsar.
2. **The Octobrists**. They believed that the October Manifesto had gone far enough for now. A timid bunch, they were worried that if more demands were made then the peasants and workers might be encouraged to start a revolution that they would not be able to control. They therefore supported the Tsar in the Duma (although by the fourth Duma they were moving towards the ideas of the Cadets as result of events such as the assassination of Stolypin, the Lena Gold Fields Strike and the refusal of Nicholas II to allow them to get involved with any serious issues).

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| **Successes** | **Failures** |
| The Cadets formed the largest group in the first Duma.Both groups were present in all Dumas, although the Octobrists views dominated the third and fourth.Some rights and reforms were pushed through (see Stolypin section) with their support. | Their activities and influence were limited to only a few cities.Nicholas II largely ignored them and was able to close down the first two Dumas without any problems.After their ‘betrayal’ of the peasants and workers by accepting the October Manifesto in 1905 they had little influence over the majority of the population and therefore had little chance of challenging Nicholas II’s power. |

**2. THE PEASANTRY – REVOLUTIONARY OPPOSITION**

The main revolutionary group in the countryside was the **Socialist Revolutionary Party**. They were formed in 1896 and enjoyed considerable support from the peasants, especially in 1905. They were led by **Victor Chernov**, who argued for a complete revolution. Land should be given to the peasants and everybody should have equal rights. To do this, he wanted to overthrow the Tsar, the Orthodox Church and the aristocracy completely. The Social Revolutionaries saw this as a violent struggle and promoted revolution.

They were inspired by the terrorist group ‘**The People’s Will’** (who started our story with their assassination of Alexander II). They used propaganda to gain the support of peasants, directed and encouraged much of the rioting and violence we have seen in the countryside, and carried out assassinations of government officials.

After the events of **1905 the party split into two groups**. The first group had been convinced that they should unite with the other revolutionary groups of the workers in the cities, while the second group were keen to keep the movement focused on the peasants.

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| **Successes** | **Failures** |
| Developed a wide base of support – by 1900 half of their supporters lived in the cities.They had 30 representatives elected to the second Duma, illustrating their widespread popularity.They assassinated Stolypin and Grand Duke Serge, as well as 2000 lesser government officials - really damaging the Nicholas II’s power.The Okhrana gave them the compliment of describing them as the most dangerous and powerful opposition group in Russia. | The Okhrana managed to infiltrate the group with spies who were able to control and limit their activities to a degree.Their split in 1905 (possibly linked to the above) weakened them as a group. The split prevented them from making alliances with other groups which prevented a combined opposition against the Tsar. |

**3. THE WORKERS – REVOLUTIONARY OPPOSITION**

The **Social Democrat Party** was the main revolutionary group opposed to Nicholas II among the workers in the cities. They believed in the ideas of Karl Marx and aimed to lead a violent revolution that would completely change society (this would become known as communism).The group was formed in **1898** at a time when conditions for workers in the cities was worsening as a result of Witte’s programme of industrialisation.

They produced really effective propaganda that spread their ideas among the workers. This mainly took the form of free education and study groups in the factories, as well as a regular newspaper. As the soviets were set up in 1905, the Social Democrats sometimes influenced or even controlled them.

In 1903, they held a conference in London to sort out their aims and methods. The party split into two groups; the **Mensheviks** and the **Bolsheviks**.

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| Argued about: | **The Mensheviks (led by Martov)** | **The Bolsheviks (led by Lenin)** |
| **Revolution** | Martov argued that there was no hurry. If they waited, conditions would soon become right to take on the Tsar. | Lenin argued that revolution needed to happen right away – especially as discontent against the Tsar was rising by 1903. |
| **Membership of the Social Democrats** | Martov argued that everyone who wanted to join should be able to – this would make the group stronger. | Lenin argued that there should just be small elite in the party. They would then tell the workers what to do in the revolution. |
| **Relationship with the middle class** | Martov argued they should work closely with the Cadets and Octobrists. They believed that they would help with the first stage of the revolution. He also argued they should make alliances with other workers groups such as the trade unions – this way, they might make the workers lives better in the meantime. | Lenin argued that there was no room for allies. Only committed revolutionaries could be trusted – he was more willing to look to the peasant revolutionary groups for support.Lenin did not want to help make the lives of the workers better – the more awful their life, the more likely they were to follow him in revolution. |

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| **Successes** | **Failures** |
| Organised many strikes throughout this period.Bolsheviks organised the Moscow strike in 1905.Had over 40,000 members by 1905. | Some historians argue that strikes would have happened anyway. Most strikes throughout the period were orgnanised and run by the workers themselves through their soviets, without the involvement of any of the Social Democrats.They were divided and spent a lot of time arguing and fighting amongst themselves.Police spies infiltrated the group very easily. |

**Check your understanding:**

1. Who were the Cadets?

2. Why did the middle class liberals not join the revolutionary groups?

3. Why did the Octobrists start to behave more like Cadets in the Fourth Duma?

4. What was the name of the revolutionary group associated with the peasants?

5. Why did the Okhrana identify them as the most dangerous opposition group?

6. What happened to them in 1905?

7. Which group in society did the Social Democrats try to lead?

8. Who was Lenin and Martov?

9. What influence did they have over events in 1905?

10. Who did Lenin feel should be allowed in the Social Democrats?

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| **Did you know?*** It would, ironically, be the Cadets and the Octobrists who eventually took over Russia and forced out the Tsar in February 1917. However, Lenin did not give them much of a go at being in charge. In October of the same year, he was proved right when his small group of Bolshevik ‘elite’ revolutionaries, with the support of the workers soviets, seized power for themselves. Russia would remain communist for the next seventy years.
* Nicholas II and his entire family were executed by the new Bolshevik government in the same year. Perhaps secretly ashamed of what they had done, great care was taken to hide their bodies. It has only been in recent years that DNA tests have finally proved that all of his family were killed that day, finally putting an end to rumours of escape and survival.
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