

Russian Political Parties in 1905/06

Who were the different political parties in 1905/06 and what did they want?

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SOCIALISTS (LEFT)

Popular protest groups
and terrorist
organisations of the
1870s onwards...

Populist (popular and
supports people)
political movement

Socialist
Democratic
Party (SPD)
(Marxist)

Socialist
Revolutionaries
(SRs)

Bolsheviks
(Lenin)

Mensheviks
(Trotsky)

LIBERALS (CENTRE)

Octobrists

Constitutional
Democrats
(Kadets)

CONSERVATIVES (RIGHT)

Nationalists

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Mensheviks

- In 1898 the Socialist Democratic Party (SPD) was created by Lenin.
- In 1903, the SPD split. This happened at the 2nd Party Congress in London (they could not all meet up in Russia without being arrested).
- Lenin, the leader, believed one way that the party should be run. Some of the Party thought that it should be run another way. He held two votes at the Congress over whether to follow his ideas.
- He lost the first vote 28-22, but then he waited until some people left and held the vote again – he won 15-17.
- The Party split in two – his part were called Bolsheviks (“majority”) and the other side were called Mensheviks (“minority”).
 - Yuli Martov led the Mensheviks.
- In 1905, the SPD temporarily reformed, but they separated again in 1907.

What did the SDP believe?

- Marxist, so they believed that history proceeds in predictable cycles.
- They believed that after industrialisation happened, the workers (proletariat) would have a revolution against the factory owners (bourgeois).
- This would lead to socialism, where everyone will work in harmony with a working class government, and eventually Communism, where everyone would be equal.

What was different about Mensheviks?

- They believed that the revolution should be slow; they had to let history take its time until Russia was ready for a full revolution.
- They believed that their Party membership should be open to as many people as wanted to join.
- They also believed that class struggle should be limited to industrial workers, and that they had to wait until enough of Russia was industrialised.

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What was different about Bolsheviks?

- They believed that the revolution could be sped up by violent, aggressive revolutionary activity and propaganda.
- They believed that their Party membership should be limited to a small number of professional revolutionaries.
- They also believed that class struggle could be extended beyond industrial workers, to include peasants as well.

Socialist Revolutionaries

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- The Socialist Revolutionaries were formed in 1901 by Viktor Chernov. He was a university student, and led the party from exile in Switzerland until the Tsar legalised political parties in 1905.
- The SRs believed that the future lay with “the people”. This was mainly the peasants, although he did try to attract industrial workers as well to strengthen his party.
 - The key belief of the SRs was that peasants should be given their own piece of land, without compensating the former owners.
- In the 1905 Revolution, they played a major role in organising revolutionary action. They formed the “All-Russian Union of Peasants” during the revolution and this was the most supported union until 1917.

What type of party were the SRs?

- Although they had one aim, peasant land ownership, the SRs were a collection of factions (separate groups).
- Some SRs were anarchists, who wanted to smash central government and form local peasant communes (independent communities) that ran themselves.
- Others had Marxist ideas which were similar to the SDP, and were more willing to work with them.
- There was also a terrorist wing to the SRs that carried out political assassination between 1901 and 1904, including Phleve (Minister of the Interior) in 1904, and Grand Duke Sergei (Nicholas II's uncle) in 1905.

Why were the SRs so popular?

- Because they focussed upon the peasants, the largest population group in Russia, and also encouraged industrial workers to join, the SRs became the most widely supported political group in Russia between 1902 and 1917.

Octobrists

- The Octobrists were formed in 1905, as a result of the October Manifesto; their proper name was the “Union of October 17”.
- Essentially, they believed that the October Manifesto was the ideal settlement of political demands.
- As a result, they were a centre party with liberal ideas, but they firmly supported the Tsar.
- They wanted some change but no revolution. They wanted to use the Duma to pass legislation that would help the people and stabilise the country.

The Manifesto of the SRs:

1. Preservation (protection) of the Russian State.
2. Develop a constitutional monarchy that worked effectively with the Duma.
3. Guarantee civil rights.
4. The urgent summoning of a State Duma to deal with urgent issues such as:
 1. The peasant question – whether peasants should have equal rights with everyone else.
 2. Workers insurance, limited working hours and the right to strike.
 3. New measures on education.
 4. Judicial (law court) reforms.
 5. Economic measures to make the tax system more sensible and fair.

Constitutional Democrats (Kadets)

- The Constitutional Democrats, or Kadets, were a more radical centre liberal group.
 - They were formed in 1905 as a result of the October Manifesto.
- They believed that the Manifesto was helpful, and that the Duma was a good step. But they believed that it was only a start on the road to democracy and that more developments were needed.
- Ultimately, they wanted a reduction (but not removal) in the Tsar's power and an increase in democratic power in Russia.

The Manifesto of the Kadets:

1. Basic right of citizens:
 1. All Russians treated equally, regardless of sex, religion, nationality.
 2. Every citizen guaranteed freedom of religion.
 3. Freedom of press, and to organise political meetings without permission.
2. Government apparatus (structures):
 1. Constitution (rules) of the country to be decided by the people.
 2. Elections by secret ballot, and all adults allowed to vote.
 3. No ukase (imperial decree, or statement that is treated as a law) by the Tsar without the Duma agreeing it.
 4. Greater local self-government throughout the Russian Empire.

Nationalists

- Nationalists is a catch-all name for the large number of conservative nobles and politicians who became involved in the Duma system after the October Manifesto.
- Essentially, this group believed that the October Manifesto was a necessary step to prevent violent revolution, but that it was not desirable.
- Overall, they took the Tsar's side on everything.
- They voted in favour of laws that benefitted the traditional elite, and against laws to reform for the people.
- Whilst the Kadets and Octobrists saw the Duma as a source of democracy, the nationalist politicians saw it as a threat to Russian traditions.

What type of people were nationalists?

- Most nationalists were wealthy, and often landed elite or factory owners.
- To them, the extension of democracy and political power to the masses was a threat to their traditional position.
- Most nationalists would be described as "slavophile", rather than a "westerniser".