Lenin and the Bolsheviks

How did the Social Democratic Party emerge in Russia?
The Social Democratic party emerged in 1898 with Georgi Plekhanov leading them after a merging of various Marxist groups. Both the SD’s and the social revolutionary party followed the ideas of Karl Marx.

Figures within the SD’s were:

- Lenin
  His revolutionary beliefs began while studying in 1887 and were intensified by the execution of his brother, ten years later he fled to Siberia to avoid being linked to his brother’s partaking in Ali’s assassination. He joined the SD’s in 1900 and increased they popularity through speeches about Marxism.

- Trotsky (Lev Bronstein)
  Bronstein was dissatisfied with society as a whole while growing up and turned to Marxism at a young age. He fell in love with another Russian revolutionary in 1900 and together incited strikes and were subsequently arrested and exiled. Bronstein escaped Siberia using a prison warder’s alias - Leon Trotsky, where he fled to Paris and met another woman. He attended the SDP’s second congress in London in 1903 where he got on well with Lenin but as the party split he could not decide who he agreed with. It was only in 1917 that he decided to join the Bolsheviks, once the revolution had started.

- Martov
  He was one of the founding members of the SDP and contributed greatly to the party in aspects such as the Iskra, the party’s newspaper. He greatly opposed Lenin’s ideas in 1903 and joined the Mensheviks as a leading figure. He was banned from joining the Bolshevik party in 1918 and exiled in 1920.

Why did the party split in 1903 and what were the differences between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks?

When Lenin joined the SDP in 1900 he was a renowned revolutionary who had great influence over those he spoke to, he was a key figure for the party and therefore when he wasn’t happy with the direction of the party in the 1903 London congress, many joined him. Lenin named his partition of the party the Bolsheviks, meaning majority, they believed in a more streamlined approach to communism, cutting out the Capitalism part of Marx’s theory. The Mensheviks (minority), led by Martov, believed that only completing all stages of Marx’s theory would enable a complete communist society. The Bolsheviks also wanted a tight-knit party with only professional revolutionaries, the Mensheviks wanting a broader-party enabling more people to turn to the party for revolutionary ideas. Lenin led his party through a small council with himself at the head, meaning he had the last say on any decisions. The Mensheviks were more democratic, voting on decisions. The Mensheviks also worked closely with liberals and other revolutionaries to put pressure on