

Assess lenin's strengths and weaknesses as leader of russia from 1917 to 1924 ess...

War



During the period lasting from 1917 to 1924, Vladimir Lenin remained in full power of Russia through the communist Bolshevik party. Throughout, from his rise to power to his death, Lenin made many decisions. The first major events which led to the Bolsheviks rise to power were the revolutions in February and October, both to which Lenin were absent from. Once the Bolsheviks had gained power, Lenin was determined to ensure that the Bolsheviks ruled to the exclusion of other socialist parties.

Throughout their consolidation, Lenin made the decision to abolish the constituent assembly, end the war with Germany, effectively start the civil war, introduce 'War Communism' to control the lives of the Russian people and then changed his tactics by going against his beliefs and introducing the New economic policy as well as using political repression. On top of this, Lenin also had a considerable amount of luck which was evidently shown by his survival after being shot in the neck leading to his decline. In many ways then, Lenin's decisions could either be described as being reflective of a good leader or a bad leader.

In many ways, the actions of Lenin could suggest that he was a weak leader which was first apparent before the Bolsheviks even gained power. One of the problems with Lenin's leadership was his punctuality; Lenin was certainly not a punctual leader. He completely missed the February revolution, as did other Bolshevik leaders, at the time he was living in Sweden in exile. With so many of the leading Bolsheviks out of the country for so long before 1917, their knowledge of the situation in Petrograd in was unreliable. Following the revolution, the Bolsheviks rushed to Petrograd and both Stalin and Kamenev became the leading voices in the Bolshevik Party, this was not good for <https://assignbuster.com/assess-lenins-strengths-and-weaknesses-as-leader-of-russia-from-1917-to-1924-essay-sample/>

Lenin, as compared to his aim of international revolution, they wanted a socialist revolution. Lenin gained access to Russia through Germany, and arrived on the 3rd April. Although Lenin was absent from the revolution, it can be argued that his determination to regain control of the Bolsheviks was a major strength.

As stated by his wife, once Lenin had heard of the February revolution and the situation, he had no sleep; he spent his nights building improbable plans on how he would achieve his goal. There was no doubting the significance of Lenin's arrival, before this, Stalin and Kamenev had accepted the events of February leading to the dual authority and were willing to work with other parties. Lenin changed all of this, in his speech he declared that February had not been a genuine revolution as it was far from giving Russia political freedom. He condemned the provisional government and called for its overthrow in a second revolution.

The following day, Lenin then introduced the April theses, Lenin made promises to the people on what was to be done, and what the provisional government were not doing. This gained the Bolsheviks mass support from the soldiers, workers and peasantry. However, although this was a major strength, it can be argued that his failure to deal effectively with the July Days was a weakness as it gained support for the provisional government. It can also be argued then that Lenin was strong in the sense that he was determined, able to regain power of the Bolsheviks and unify them, however it can also be argued that he was weak, as he was not a punctual leader and failed to deal with the July Days.

Now that Lenin had regained control of the Bolsheviks, he now faced the task of overthrowing the Provisional Government and gaining the Bolsheviks power. Following the July Days, the Bolsheviks managed to regain their support due to the Kornilov affair. Once again, Lenin was absent from the October Revolution. From his exile in Finland, he constantly appealed to his party to prepare for the immediate overthrow of the Provisional government. Lenin's decision making skills were clearly shown, as his earlier estimate of what would happen had proved wholly correct; that the provisional government were becoming increasingly reactionary. This left the soviets as the only hope of true revolutionaries. Another great decision made by Lenin was that he ordered that the Bolsheviks should seize the moment immediately. Although it may be seen as a weakness that he didn't listen to anybody, Lenin had his reasons. He was aware of the all-Russian Congress of Soviets and the November election at the constituent assembly, and he knew that these may both limit the Bolsheviks freedom. This then indicates the decision making of a great leader, as Lenin was always looking ahead, one step in front of his opposition. He knew the Bolsheviks had to act to topple over the provisional government; he was determined and ready to push forward any idea to ensure the Bolsheviks seized power.

A further strength of Lenin was the amount of effort and hard work he put in to ensure the Bolsheviks won the October revolution. When Kerensky announced that a pre parliament was to be formed, Lenin immediately acted to demolish the plans. He condemned it as a manoeuvre not to broaden the government's base but to strengthen its grip on power. Following his orders, Bolshevik members of the soviets who could attend the Pre Parliament first

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derided it then walked out. After the success of this, Lenin then set out to persuade Bolsheviks of the central committee who were against these.

He spent exhausting hours at a number of meetings, until finally he managed to persuade the Central Committee to pledge itself to an armed insurrection. This is again another prime example of Lenin's ability to keep pushing forward until he got what he wanted. However, it must also be remembered that Trotsky played a major role in the the Bolshevik rise to power. Lenin was the influence while Trotsky was the organiser; he was the one who actually did everything which eventually led to the collapse of the provisional government and rise of Bolsheviks who were victorious in the October revolution. It is possible to argue then, that Lenin was a weak leader as he didn't organise anything, however it must also be considered that you don't necessarily need carry out the job to be a good leader. Dictating roles to people and giving them jobs to do such as giving Trotsky being the organiser of military forces etc., also indicates a very strong leader, who is aware of people who are right for the job and will get things done.

Once the Bolsheviks had gained power, Lenin then made many decisions to ensure that they remained in power. Although the Bolsheviks had won the October revolution, they were still not the most favoured party. Only a good leader would be able to remedy this. After all of the revolution of October, they still managed only to win one quarter of the vote in the elections to the Constituent Assembly. Consequently, the Assembly and all hope for a parliamentary republic were removed, in return for a 'purer' form of democracy through the Soviets. Under the new Soviet constitution, Lenin

decided to ban the constituent assembly and exclude all other political parties no matter how allied they were to the Bolsheviks. After this, Lenin then reintroduced censorship, the Cheka and the death sentence. In just seven years, 200, 000 people were executed, as well as 50, 000 people being set to the Gulags, compared to 17, 000 people over 50 years under Tsarist rule. It was clear that Lenin sought to drive Russians into Communism. Although He was Ruthless and brutal in his methods of retaining power, notably from his secret police force the cheka, he still managed to hang on to power. However the fact that Lenin failed to compromise or work with another socialist or political party could be seen as a major weakness.

Lenin was also a fantastic tactician in national affairs. However, it can also be argued that the gambles that Lenin made were signs of a weak leader who would risk the lives of many people just to get what he wanted. Lenin realised that Russia's military exhaustion made it impossible for it to fight successfully. With this, Lenin made the drastic decision to become allies with Germany, by signing the Brest-Litovsk treaty with Germany which sealed their safety in World War 1 despite losing much land. Russia lost a huge slice of territory, amounting to a third of European Russia stretching from the Baltic to the Black Sea and including Ukraine, Russia's major grain resource and the land lost contained a population of 45 million people.

As well as this Russia had to pay 3 billion roubles in war reparations.

However, he made the treaty on a gamble, it was purely ideological. He believed that Germany would lose the war to other western allies and Russia

would get its land back. In the end this paid off, However, one may suggest that this risky gamble was not wise and therefore makes Lenin a bad leader. While he sat in his house, with his feet up, he made a huge gamble, yet, the simple fact remains that it did work and in the end Russia could only reap the rewards. To be a successful leader you need to take gambles to make progress, and on this particular occasion, Lenin made a huge gamble which proved to be a successful one.

Following the treaty of Brest Litovsk and crushing of the constituent assembly, came the Russian civil war.