

From the archives of the Russian Revolution

Letter to the Provisional Government

Leon Trotsky
31 July 2017

This is a new translation of an open letter Trotsky addressed to the Provisional Government on the arrest of Bolshevik leaders, which took place during the crackdown that followed the July Days (see: July 17-23: The “July Days,” insurrection and counterrevolution in Petrograd). The letter is dated July 23, 1917 (July 10, O.S) and was published in the journal Novaya Zhizn, N. 73, on July 13 (O.S.). The Provisional Government responded to this letter by issuing a warrant for Trotsky’s arrest.

Citizen Ministers!

I am informed that the arrest warrants that were issued in connection with the events of July 3-4 extend to comrades Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, but not to me. Accordingly, I consider it necessary to bring to your attention the following:

1. I share the principled position of Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev, and I have advocated it in the journal *Forward (Vperiod)* and in all of my public speeches.

2. My attitude towards the events of July 3-4 was identical with the attitude of the above comrades, namely:

(a) Concerning the anticipated demonstration of the First Machine Gun Regiment and other regiments, comrades Zinoviev, Kamenev and I first learned of it at a meeting of the joint Bureaus on July 3, and we immediately took the necessary steps to ensure that this demonstration did not take place; in taking this position, comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev were in contact with the centers of the Bolshevik Party, as I was with my comrades in the “Interdistrict” organization, to which I belong;

(b) When the demonstration nevertheless took place, I, like the comrade Bolsheviks, repeatedly spoke before the Tauride Palace, expressing my full solidarity with the main slogan of the demonstrators: “All power to the

Soviets,” but at the same time I emphatically called on the demonstrators to return promptly to their military units and their quarters in a peaceful and organized manner;

(c) At a meeting involving a number of members of the Bolshevik and Interdistrict organizations, which took place deep into the night (July 3-4) in the Tauride Palace, I supported Comrade Kamenev’s proposal: to take all measures to prevent the repeat of the demonstration on July 4; only after all the orators arriving from the districts reported that the regiments and factories had already decided to demonstrate, and that until the government crisis had been resolved, there was no way to restrain the masses, all participants of the meeting joined the decision to undertake every effort to ensure that the demonstration took place within a peaceful framework and to insist that the masses come out without weapons;

(d) During the whole day of July 4, which I spent in the Tauride Palace, I, like the Bolshevik comrades present there, repeatedly spoke before the demonstrators in the same sense and spirit as on the previous day.

3. The fact that I am not connected with *Pravda* and am not a member of the Bolshevik Party is not due to political differences but to certain circumstances in our party history which no longer have any significance.

4. Press reports that I “denied” my involvement with the Bolsheviks are fabrications, as are the reports that I supposedly asked the authorities to protect me from “mob violence,” as well as hundreds of other statements of the same press.

5. In light of the above, it is clear that you cannot have any logical reasons for exempting me from the warrants that subject comrades Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev to arrest. As for the political side of the

matter, you can have no reason to doubt that I am an equally irreconcilable opponent of the general policy of the Provisional Government, just like the comrades mentioned. My exemption only more sharply underscores the counter-revolutionary and capricious character of your actions in connection with Lenin, Zinoviev and Kamenev.

Leon Trotsky

July 10, 1917

Petrograd



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