Commemoration, Square of the Victims of the Revolution (Field of Mars, Comintern Congress, Petrograd, 19 July 1920)

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Here we see close up the giant wreath commemorating the victims of the Revolution that was carried in the procession from the Tauride Palace where the formal opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern had taken place to the Field of Mars. The white-shirted honor guard which seemed earlier to have been constituted of sailors is now a more varied group. Some members in white shirts and kerchiefs are wearing what would become later on the uniform of young Soviet Pioneers. The delegates at the head of the procession are unidentified. They are dressed in bourgeois business suits and, like some other delegates, are holding briefcases under their arm but, conspicuously, they are not pulling the cart that is carrying the giant wreath.

The Field of Mars is a large park in the center of Petrograd that became a memorial location for victims of the revolution immediately after the February Revolution in 1917 (that is, when the Bolsheviks were still a small minority). The procession there in March 1917 honoring those who fell in the February Revolution was, no doubt, the largest mass procession seen in Russia up to that time. The present procession, among the ceremonies marking the opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern was clearly an attempt to reenact that earlier event. As before the war, the ability to organize such huge gatherings, to maintain order and decorum, and to manifest constructive solidarity was a proud statement by worker parties and other worker organizations of their legitimacy as a political actor and as future leader of society.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

