After the Procession, Comintern Congress, Petrograd, July 1920

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By the time of this photo, the formal part of the events marking the opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern was over.

The ceremonies had led delegates and participants from the Smolny Institute, a building that held the status of a revolutionary shrine, to the speeches in the Tauride Palace where
the Congress formally began, to the procession toward the Field of Mars where delegates had deposited a giant wreath commemorating the martyrs of the Revolution. After these formalities, many of the white shirts that had been so prominent earlier on during the ceremonies, in a formal and quasi-military capacity, were now milling around in the warmth of a summer day. All the people here appear to be relaxing while waiting for the next episode in the well-choreographed festivities. There was to be a midnight show across the Neva on Vasilyevsky Island.

The caption indicates that this photo represents a sports event, loosely described as “Olympic Games.” In fact, the Spartakiade, the Soviet alternative to the Olympic Games, was not created until 1928 and the Soviet Union first participated in the Olympic Games in 1952. There may well have been sports activities on the occasion of the Second Congress but, if so, this photo depicts spectators rather than athletes. The crowd may also have been waiting for a distribution of food and drink, as was common on such festive occasions, and a practice that was particularly appreciated at times of hardship, such as these.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

