Demonstration on the Nevsky Prospekt, Petrograd [1920?]

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1 This photo is undated but it is likely to have been taken on 19 July 1920 during the festivities in honor of the opening of the Second Congress of the Comintern. A parade up Nevsky Prospect made sense as a way to get from the Field of Mars where a commemoration had taken place to the former Winter Palace, now part of the Hermitage Museum.
The aim of the ceremonies of 19 July 1920, the formal opening of the Second Congress of the International, was to give the beleaguered Petrograd population a sense of being supported by a world-wide movement, and to give the delegates a sense of mass popular support for the struggling Soviet regime. Thus, devastated and crumbling Petrograd – a city that suffered immensely during the Civil War – could for one day be turned into a fairy kingdom.

This photo shows a fairly unscripted crowd wandering down one of Petrograd’s main arteries on a pleasant summer day. Most other processions or even other moments in this procession on that day are more tightly choreographed, some in almost military fashion. Looking back, we can see in the events of 19 July 1920 a foretaste of the mass rallies and propagandistic productions that were such a striking feature of all communist regimes.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

