

Between peace and Zionism? Jewish delegates at the 1912 congress

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In 1912, fifteen years had passed since the First Zionist Congress in Basel, at which Theodor Herzl had announced the 'Basel Programme' for the achievement of the goals of Zionism. Socialism was dominated by a not insignificant number of activists from Jewish families. What position did these activists adopt towards Zionism? Was it of any relevance at all to these individuals, most of whom appeared at best indifferent to their Jewish heritage? One example of an approach to Zionism and a possible process of development is provided by Eduard Bernstein, who said in 1902 that if he 'felt Jewish' at all he would be a Zionist. In 1930, he then declared that although he opposed all forms of nationalist structures, the Jewish people had to have a home.

Taking Eduard Bernstein's involvement with Judaism and Zionism as a starting point, the paper examines whether there was a connection between socialists of Jewish origin and Zionism, and whether Zionism had an influence on the work of the participants at the 1912 congress in Basel, or whether a commitment to the peace policies of the 'International' and Zionism were mutually exclusive.