

## **War and the prevention of war. The war of the future in the work of Jan Bloch (Hague Conference)**

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Jan Bloch's ambitious aim was to prove the 'impossibility' of war. Successful proof alone, however, did not lead to its prevention. Against this background, Bloch's work is presented as an early form of 'historical peace research' between the conflicting poles of militarism and the European peace movement.

Bloch's chilling, prescient work reveals an almost entirely accurate prediction of the course and outcome of the First World War. In his 1899 work, he describes a war of the future of an entirely new quality. According to his theory, this war would be so drawn out and terrible that it would be equally ruinous for both the victors and the vanquished, and would spark socialist unrest and revolutions.

Bloch's statistical, empirical approach and the theory it produced were the subject of controversial discussions. Few scholars or military leaders took any pleasure in the image of a war in which not man or the nation, but materials, resources and stamina would be the deciding factors. Politicians, too, shied away from the theory of the impossibility of war – and thus of the continuation of politics by other means. The peace movement, meanwhile, received the theory enthusiastically as confirmation of the futility of war and the danger of a further build-up of arms.