

The civilising aspirations of the Second International

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The 100th anniversary of the Basel Congress of the Second International brings to life the highly-charged social and political scene in Europe of the time. However, it also reminds us how long we had to wait on our planet for the fulfilment of the great civilising project which the Second International presented at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. Most of the executive committees of the Second International held the view that this project should be based on a democratic system which was necessarily competitive. As we all know, the advocates of a revolutionary path did not have a majority among the leadership of the Second International.

The key demands at the previous congresses had been equal civil rights, decent living conditions for everyone, labour legislation, the abolition of the death penalty, and an arms freeze in the largest countries in and outside of Europe. However, the extraordinary congress in Basel added a problem that posed a serious threat at the time: the possibility that the war in the Balkans could spread to other regions in Europe and other continents. The threat became a reality – the First World War began just two years later with all of its long-term consequences.