

## **Preventing war, then and now. What message does the Basel Peace Congress have for us today?**

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Firstly, one must give credit to the fact that a peace congress of the European social democrats and socialists took place at all in this form, something which was certainly not a matter of course in the age of European nationalism and militarism. We are then confronted with the fact that the Second Socialist International did not achieve its key objective of preventing war. There was a war, it developed into a world war, and the International collapsed. Today, 100 years on, the vast majority of people in Europe regard the prevention of war as the self-evident and overriding objective of politics. They demand that governments preserve peace, and they also contribute on their own initiative to the development of a culture of peace. In the context of the fundamental differences between the situations of 1912 and 2012, the paper addresses the following questions from the perspective of historical peace research: Firstly, what factors were responsible for the failure of the Basel Peace Congress 100 years ago? Secondly, what have the people of Europe learned from this failure and the two world wars which followed? Thirdly, in what way have the historical lessons from this failure been turned to good account in post-World War II Europe on a political, intellectual and institutional level?