

## **Positions on war and peace in the First and Second International**

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The labour movement's position on war and peace was discussed for the first time in 1868 at the Brussels Congress of the First International (1864-1876) and later at all of the congresses of the Second International (1889-1914). After all, it was the proletariat that would have to make the greatest sacrifices in the event of war. One conviction remained constant throughout. It was expressed at the Zurich Congress in 1893 in the following words: 'With the abolition of class rule, war will also disappear. The fall of capitalism means universal peace.' Opinion was divided, however, on the fundamental problem of whether a war would help or hinder the achievement of the ultimate goal. Certain proposals recurred in the discussion on resources – the abolition of standing armies, rejection of the military budget or a general strike in the event of war. After the turn of the century and against the backdrop of the arms build-up of the imperialist powers, demands increased for disarmament and international arbitration, and also for antimilitarist education. These debates were increasingly caught in the balance between internationalism and patriotism and caused contention between the political wings and between the national divisions, but they were patched over by various compromise resolutions. The Second International was the largest anti-war movement before World War I, but in August 1914 it proved unable to act.