

Basel 1912 as an object of the culture of remembrance

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Willy Brandt's speech 'Peace policy 1912 and 1982' was held on the occasion of the commemoration in the Basel cathedral of the international peace congress 70 years previously. In it, he spoke of the renewed tensions of the second Cold War which were the reason for this reflection on the major peace congress. He also postulated an expanded definition of peace which encompassed much more than the absence of war. What, then, were Basel's legacy and tradition? What collective memories were moulded by this event? Who sustained the culture of remembrance? Was it the peace movement alone, in the 1930s, 1950s and 1980s? With champions of the Second Socialist International in the West such as Brandt appealing to the legacy of Basel, the question arises as to how the peace congress was remembered in the Eastern Bloc. The paper aims to trace the culture of remembrance throughout the political and social upheavals of the 20th century. It seeks to determine in which – perhaps different – ways the peace congress in Basel was remembered in the West and in the East of the European continent, and whether Basel was usurped and ideologically distorted as a source of guidance and identity. Is a battle being waged for ownership of the past?