RAYMOND WILLIAMS FOUNDATION

WAR – AND PEACE

May 14 -16 2014

OPPOSITION TO THE GREAT WAR

These questions and points are in no sense comprehensive, nor are they in any particular order of importance. They are simply intended to provide a framework for discussion, and there are, no doubt, many more questions which we might add to the list.

1.The Second Socialist International had devised policies intended to make a European war impossible, and these were supposed to be binding on all the International's member parties. In the event, most of them found reasons to support their own governments, with the important exceptions of the Russian Bolsheviks and the majority of the Italian Socialist Party. Why might this have been?

2. What were the different sources of opposition – political, religious, non-religious ethical, ethnic/nationalist. How did they inter-relate and differ?

3. What were the differing levels of opposition in different European countries? Why might there have been large-scale opposition in Russia and Italy, limited (though significant) opposition in England and Germany, developing opposition in Ireland, Scotland and Wales and very little opposition in France?

4. Why did opposition develop among industrial workers from 1915, and what caused this to take on revolutionary undertones in some cases? What likely divisions were there, as well as points of agreement?

5. Were there differences in men's and women's responses to the war?

6. Why was conscription such an issue in Britain?

7. Colonial troops from India, Africa, the Caribbean and SE Asia were part of the allied armies. How might they have perceived their roles, and what effect did this have on post-war politics?

8. What effects did opposition to the war have on post-war opinion in Europe and elsewhere? What, if any, lessons may be drawn about the success or otherwise of anti-war movements in different times and places?

Among the many things written about the Great War, try to have a look at a book by Marc Ferro, a French historian, called **The Great War 1914 -18**, published by Routledge. This was first published in 1973, but it remains an excellent analysis of social and political aspect of the War, rather than purely military ones.