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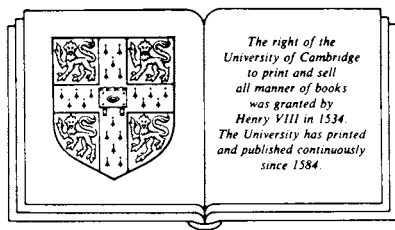
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Marxism and Social Democracy

The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898

Edited and translated by
H. TUDOR and J. M. TUDOR

With an introduction by
H. TUDOR



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Preface

One of the most prominent features of twentieth-century politics has been the conflict between revolutionary Marxists and non-revolutionary Social Democrats. This conflict has its origins in the great debate, known as the Revisionist Debate, which divided the socialist movement at the end of the last century. Like any major political controversy, the Revisionist Debate had many ramifications and no obvious boundaries. It did, however, have a main current, namely the direct interchange between Eduard Bernstein, the main protagonist, and his critics; and it is on this that we have concentrated our attention.

Bernstein had served as editor of the *Sozialdemokrat* in the 1880s, he had played a leading role in drafting the Erfurt Programme, and he had collaborated closely with Engels until the latter's death in 1895. In short, his track record was that of an eminent and orthodox Marxist. But shortly after the death of Engels, he began to have doubts about certain aspects of German Social Democracy, and he expressed these doubts in a series of articles published mainly in *Neue Zeit*. As he developed his views, it seemed to many members of the party that he not only was making a number of policy recommendations but was supporting these recommendations by mounting a comprehensive attack on the fundamental doctrines of Marx. This provoked a long and at times acrimonious exchange between Bernstein and various representatives of the radical left. At the Stuttgart Conference in the autumn of 1898, the issues raised by Bernstein were debated, and in the end the party leadership joined the radicals in repudiating Bernstein's position.

The Stuttgart Conference was not the end of the story. In the spring of the following year, Bernstein published his *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus* in which he restated his position, and this occasioned another exchange, with Karl Kautsky as Bernstein's main opponent. This second phase of the debate is both interesting and important, but if it is to be dealt with satisfactorily, it must be dealt

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with separately. By the time of the Stuttgart Conference, the main battle lines had been drawn and the principal elements of the Revisionist position had been established. We therefore feel that the first phase of the debate can stand on its own.

Our purpose is to enable the reader to follow the debate and gain an idea of how Bernstein's position and that of his opponents came to be what they were. At present, there is nothing in English which does this. There are, indeed, translations of Plekhanov's articles, Rosa Luxemburg's *Sozialreform oder Revolution?*, Bernstein's *Voraussetzungen* (though this is incomplete and not very accurate), and extracts from Kautsky's *Bernstein und das sozialdemokratische Programm*. But of the articles, letters, and speeches in which Bernstein and his opponents actually developed their respective positions, almost nothing is available. The effect is to give an incomplete, ill-balanced, and misleading impression of the debate, and we hope that the present volume will help correct this impression.

We have included most of the contributions that clearly form part of the main current of the debate, but, in order to minimise repetition and irrelevance, we have made a small number of omissions. Thus, we have omitted three of the articles which Bernstein published under the heading "Problems of Socialism." One of these is simply a translation of an article by J. A. Hobson and is therefore already available in English; the other two contain no important points that are not restated in other articles. Furthermore, we have translated only the first five articles in Parvus's series, "Bernstein's Overthrow of Socialism." All in all, Parvus wrote seventeen articles against Bernstein, but the five we have translated state the substance of his case, and it was on these five that Bernstein concentrated his counter-attack.

In translating, we have tried to turn the German of the originals into readable modern English without sacrificing accuracy. This has not always been easy. Bernstein's manner of expression, for example, tends to be either awkwardly "popular" or too near to the convoluted prose often affected by German academics of the time; and preserving accuracy of translation sometimes also meant preserving the defects of Bernstein's style. We have also felt it necessary to be consistent in translating certain terms which have a special significance in Marxist theory, even where this resulted in turns of phrase which sound odd in English. Thus we have regularly translated *Widerspruch* as "contradiction," *Gegensatz* as "antagonism," *Produktionsweise* as "mode of production," etc. A few of the pieces we have included, especially in chapter 2, originally appeared in English. We

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have reproduced them unchanged, and since we saw little point in trying to translate all the other pieces into late Victorian English, there is a discrepancy between these passages and the rest of the book. We have accepted this discrepancy as the lesser evil, and also out of linguistic interest, since it seemed to us that Bernstein's English was often much clearer and less forced than his German. Finally, in translating Rosa Luxemburg's articles (chapter 9), we found it very helpful to consult Dick Howard's translation of *Sozialreform oder Revolution?* However, our own translation differs substantially from his, partly because we have often preferred a different way of putting things and partly because he translates, not the articles themselves, but the revised 1899 edition, together with the further revisions introduced in the 1908 edition.

Material inserted in the text by the editors is enclosed in square brackets. Footnotes in the originals are indicated by lower-case Roman numerals and will be found at the end of each chapter. The editors' notes are indicated by Arabic numerals and are to be found at the end of the volume. The bibliography lists all the sources referred to in the text (except classics such as Horace and Goethe, references to which are identified in the notes) and those secondary works which were found to be most useful.

The staffs of several libraries have been very helpful. We would particularly like to thank the library of the Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus in Berlin, the Sächsische Landesbibliothek, the British Library, Durham University Library, and the library of the Trades Union Congress. We would also like to thank friends and colleagues who made many helpful suggestions, notably Mr R. J. Williams, Mr Guido DiMeo, Professor W. R. Ward, Dr A. W. Orde, and Dr A. R. Wightman. However, our special thanks go to Lesley Doyle, whose diligent searches located much of the material eventually included in this volume, particularly in chapters 7 and 9. Finally, we would each like to thank the husband/wife without whose support and forbearance, etc.

H. TUDOR
J. M. TUDOR

Durham