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0521582008 - The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy

Manfred B. Steger

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*The quest for evolutionary socialism* is neither a conventional political history nor a traditional “historiography of political ideas,” but is an examination of past and present interactions between European social democratic politics and socialist political ideas. Since no study of Bernstein’s life and work has appeared since Peter Gay’s 1952 study, *The dilemma of democratic socialism*, Steger’s book is a timely response to the need for a new, comprehensive biography of the German “Father of Marxist Revisionism,” as it not only incorporates recent academic developments, but it also addresses current debates on the “end of socialism,” as a result of the collapse of Marxism-Leninism, the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the chronic ailments of European social democracy.

This study is set within the historical context of the *fin-de-siècle* European labor movement, and thus Steger argues that Bernstein’s contribution to socialist theory is directly relevant to the current process of rethinking the traditional project of the democratic left along more libertarian lines. Bernstein’s “evolutionary socialism,” interpreted as a quest for liberty, solidarity, and distributive justice, is still the most appropriate vehicle for the extension of political and economic democracy and the reconstruction of the sphere of civil society. As Steger stresses, the future of social democracy lies in its capacity to heed Bernstein’s call for critical self-reflection, theoretical renewal and reorientation toward the liberal ideals of the Enlightenment tradition.

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# The quest for evolutionary socialism

*Eduard Bernstein and social democracy*

Manfred B. Steger

*Illinois State University*



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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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For my wife Perle and my family

## Contents

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<i>Acknowledgments</i>	xi
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xiii
Introduction: the nature of Bernstein's quest	1
 <b>Part 1: Preparation</b>	
1. The making of a social democrat	19
2. Persecution and exile	41
3. The "Revisionist Controversy"	66
 <b>Part 2: Vision</b>	
4. The meaning of socialism	89
5. Evolutionary socialism as "organized liberalism": rethinking economics, state, and democracy	120
 <b>Part 3: Disappointment</b>	
6. Facing the critics	151
7. The revisionist debate extended	176
8. The dawn of a new era	205
9. Bernstein's final battle: confronting socialist instrumentalism	230
Epilogue: evolutionary socialism at the "end of socialism"	253
<i>Select bibliography</i>	261
<i>Index</i>	277

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0521582008 - The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

0521582008 - The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy

Manfred B. Steger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Cambridge University Press

0521582008 - The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy

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Frontmatter

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## Abbreviations

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- Adler BW* *Victor Adlers Briefwechsel mit August Bebel und Karl Kautsky, sowie Briefe von und an I. Auer, E. Bernstein, A. Braun, H. Dietz, F. Ebert, W. Liebknecht, H. Müller, und P. Singer*, collected and with commentary by F. Adler, Vienna, 1954
- Adler A* *Victor Adler Archive*, International Institute of Social History (IISH), Amsterdam
- Bebel BWE* *August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels*, edited by Werner Blumenberg, The Hague, 1965
- Bebel BWK* *August Bebels Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky*, edited by Karl Kautsky Jr., Assen, 1971
- Bernstein A* *Eduard Bernstein Archive*, IISH, Amsterdam
- Bernstein BWE* *Eduard Bernsteins Briefwechsel mit Friedrich Engels*, edited by Helmut Hirsch, Assen, 1970
- C I* Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. I, edited by Friedrich Engels and translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, New York, 1967
- DDS* Peter Gay, *The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism: Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx*, 2nd ed., New York, 1962
- EB* Francis L. Carsten, *Eduard Bernstein 1850–1932: eine politische Biographie*, Munich, 1993
- Engels BWK* *Friedrich Engels' Briefwechsel mit Karl Kautsky*, edited by Benedikt Kautsky, Vienna, 1955
- ES* Eduard Bernstein, "Entwicklungsgang eines Sozialisten," in *Die Volkswirtschaftslehre in Selbstdarstellungen*, edited by Felix Meiner, Leipzig, 1924
- MECW* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Collected Works*, 50 vols. (incomplete), London, 1975–
- MEW* Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, 39 vols. Berlin, 1972–8
- MS* *Marxism and Social Democracy: The Revisionist Debate 1896–1898*, edited by Henry Tudor and J. M. Tudor, Cambridge, 1988

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Manfred B. Steger

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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xiv List of abbreviations

*NZ* *Neue Zeit*

*PS* Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, edited and translated by Henry Tudor, Cambridge, 1993

*SM* *Sozialistische Monatshefte*