

Robert Heilbroner in 1990: Who Predicted Socialism's Demise?

[Context: The Berlin Wall came down in 1989, and the Soviet Union ended formally in 1991.]

“But what spokesman of the present generation has anticipated the demise of socialism or the ‘triumph of capitalism’? Not a single writer in the Marxian tradition! Are there any in the left centrist group? None I can think of, including myself. As for the center itself—the Samuelsons, Solows, Glazers, Lipsets, Bells, and so on—I believe that many have expected capitalism to experience serious and mounting, if not fatal, problems and have anticipated some form of socialism to be the organizing force of the twenty-first century.

“... Here is the part hard to swallow. It has been the Friedmans, Hayeks, von Miseses, *e tutti quanti* who have maintained that capitalism would flourish and that socialism would develop incurable ailments. Mises called socialism ‘impossible’ because it has no means of establishing a rational pricing system; Hayek added additional reasons of a sociological kind (‘the worst rise on top’). All three have regarded capitalism as the ‘natural’ system of free men; all have maintained that left to its own devices capitalism would achieve material growth more successfully than any other system.”

Source: Robert Heilbroner, “The World After Communism.” *Dissent* (Fall 1990): 429–430.