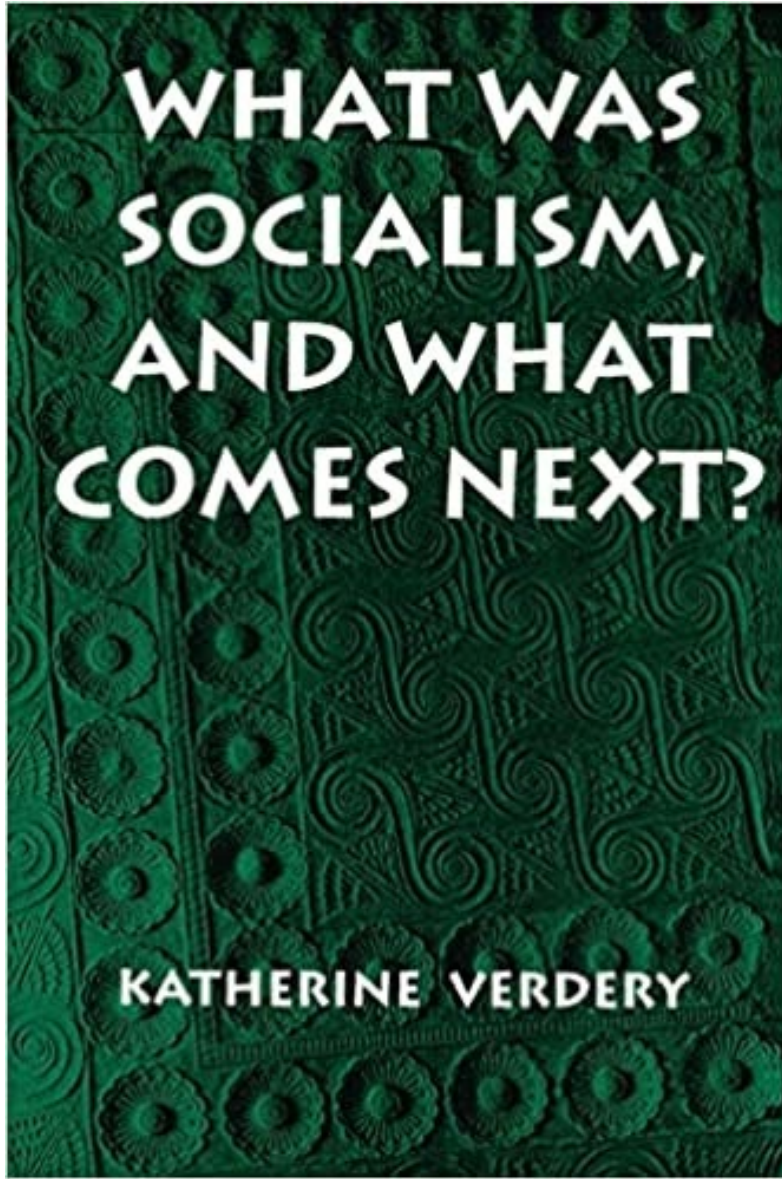


Capitalism and its “Others”: Socialism

What are range of types of governments/economic arrangements confusingly referred to as “socialism”:

- 1) Communist countries – Soviet Union and satellites – centralized authoritarian governments and centralized planning; (Verdery refers to these as “state socialist” societies)
- 2) Market-based democracies w/ strong welfare states – Nordic countries
- 3) Marxist movements in formerly colonized regions in post-independence period of 60s-70s that followed still other logics



Katherine Verdery – STATE SOCIALISM
in Eastern Europe and former Soviet
Union; authoritarian state with
centralized planning

- What were everyday logics of production in Soviet system and how did they differ from capitalist ones?
- What did this mean for workers? Resistance through cult of non-work vs. official cult of work

How did the Soviet state and satellites which often lacked popular legitimacy try to maintain its authority?

CARROT VS. STICK

- surveillance
- redistribution

Why Did State Socialism Fall?

“It is not simply socialism’s embrace with capitalism that brought about its fall but the fact that it happened to embrace a capitalism of a newly “flexible” sort.” [Verdery cites David Harvey here]

“I am suggesting then, that the collapse of socialism came in part from the massive rupture produced by its collision with capitalism’s speedup.”

Verdery, Katherine. *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* Princeton University Press, 1996. © Princeton University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see <https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/>.

Verdery, pg. 34 and pg. 36

Does capitalism naturally follow after demise of state socialism in
1990s?

*Verdery instead suggested “feudalism” – where loss of order at center led to
rule by local and regional “bosses” [or mafias]*

*State bureaucrats engaged in “primitive accumulation” [plunder] of state or
public resources and turn them into private holdings – hence the rise of the
oligarchs*

*Average citizens are ambivalent in light of “destatization” and “restatization”
[state reconstituting itself along authoritarian if not state socialist lines]*

Verdery :

- focuses on everyday logics which are very different from abstracted logics of critics and supporters
- challenges teleological understandings of history
- does ethnography of state
- critic of both sides

Possible topics for final papers

- contingent faculty in academia
- debates over franchising
- Fast Food Forward/Fight for \$15
- debates over UBER and gig economy jobs
- Amazon warehouse jobs
- Pandora papers/tax havens

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21A.461 What is Capitalism?
Fall 2021

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