I. Introduction

The Paradox of 1989

In 1991, Robin Blackburn, then editor of *New Left Review*, argued in a long article with the title "Fin de Siècle: Socialism after the Crash", that "today's moribund 'Great Power Communism' is not a spectre stalking the globe but an unhappy spirit, begging to be laid to rest" (1991: 5). Although he conceded that "for Marxists, to disclaim any responsibility whatever for the October Revolution and the state which issued from it would be wrong" (ibid: 9), he believed in the possibility of a new beginning for radical and Marxist social theory – especially if theorists not only considered the Eastern Bloc's lack of democratic structures, but analysed its economic problems and failures as well. About one year later, the American political philosopher and editor of the left-wing journal *Dissent*, Michael Walzer, seemed more sceptical:

> We are in a period of uncertainty and confusion. The collapse of communism ought to open new opportunities for the democratic left, but its immediate effect has been to raise questions about many leftist (not only communist) orthodoxies: about the 'direction' of history, the role of state planning in the economy, the value and effectiveness of the market, the future of nationalism, and so on. (1992: 466)

Again three years later, American cultural sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander observed in the pages of *New Left Review* that the events of 1989 had to be understood as a 'new transition': "It is the transition from communism to capitalism, a phrase that seems oxymoronic even to our chastened ears. The

sense of world-historical transformation remains, but the straight line of history seems to be running in reverse" (1995: 65). Calling his article "Modern, Anti, Post and Neo", Alexander described how North Atlantic intellectuals had come full circle, arriving again at a world of ideas quite similar to what he defined as the modernism of the 1950s.[1] Towards the end of the decade, the British political scientist Andrew Gamble wrote an introduction to a compilation of reflections on Marxism's future role within the social sciences. As a title, he chose the question: "Why bother with Marxism?" and explained:

> Nothing quite as cataclysmic however has occurred before in the history of Marxism as the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991. Its significance for Marxism must not be underrated. Despite the ossification of Marxism as a doctrine in the Soviet Union, and the open repudiation of the Soviet system by Marxists in other parts of the world, the extent to which in the previous seventy years the meaning of Marxism and of socialism had become inextricably bound up with the fate of the Soviet Union had not been fully appreciated. (1999: 1)

Gamble saw two alternatives, neither of which appeared attractive to him: Marxism could either continue to exist in isolation and as a former shadow of itself or else merge with the intellectual mainstream. He pleaded for keeping at least some core elements of Marxism – especially the formulation of critical questions on the origins, character and developments of economic and social relations (ibid: 4). Finally, the Swedish sociologist Göran Therborn diagnosed in an article "After Dialectics. Radical Social Theory in a Post-Communist World", published in *New Left Review* in early 2007, that a post-1945 and – according to him – especially post-1968, Western Marxist triangle had been disentangled: social theory as the combination of historical social science, philosophy of dialectics and a working-class poli-

1 Alexander's version of modernism borrows from modernisation theory. This theory held a hegemonic position within the social sciences from the 1940s to the 1960s. Modernisation theorists worked under the assumption that societies were coherently organized systems, traditional or modern, developing through evolutionary processes towards individualism, secularism, capitalism, democracy (cf. 1995: 67-68).

tics aiming at the overthrow of the existing order (cf. 2007: 69). In particular, the politically revolutionary third dimension had disappeared as a result of the historical defeats of Western European social democracy in the 1970s and 1980s, the intellectual challenges of postmodernism and post-structuralism, and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. According to Therborn, the European Marxist and socialist left was more seriously affected than the traditionally weaker, more sober and geographically farther removed American one (cf. ibid: 99-100). However, with regard to both, two decades after the events of 1989/91, the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and slightly later of the Soviet Union is still often characterised as a last stumbling block for a tired and disillusioned Western Marxist left, old as well as new.[2]

This constitutes a paradox because Western Marxism in most of its shades had for a long time distanced itself from really existing socialism. The paradox was characterised by the British political theorist Norman Geras as "a tendency, amongst people who have thought, insisted, for years that the Soviet and Eastern European regimes were not a genuine embodiment or product of Marxist belief, to wonder if the entire tradition is not now bankrupted by their wreckage – as though the ideas and values of Marxism were then, after all, wrapped up in these regimes, as before they were said not to be." (1990: 32) Especially in Britain, numerous studies have been published over the last approximately fifteen years which diagnose, deplore and criticise the end of Marxism as an intellectual-political project. They come up with a variety of explanations for what was, in their eyes, an improper ending. Even more surprising than the diversity of the reasons suggested – some of which seem contradictory – is the empirical

2 The distinction of old and new left is widely used in Britain and North America. The 'old left' which developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, stood for a more traditional version of socialism with the emancipation of the working class as the central goal, changes in the economic order as the means with which to achieve it, and socialist or working-class parties and the labour movements as the agents which fight for it. The new left, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, aimed at liberating people from various types of structural oppression such as, for example, racism, sexism, or imperialism. The new left identifies civil rights groups, pressure groups, grassroots organisations, and non-governmental organisations as the major agents of change – ideally united in a 'rainbow coalition'.

base on which they are founded. With the exception of Paul Newman's study on Ralph Miliband[3] (2002), they concentrate either on the journal *New Left Review* or on the individual often seen as its mastermind – Perry Anderson[4] (Achcar 2000; Blackledge 2000; Blackledge 2002; Blackledge 2004; Elliott 1998; Sprinker 1993; Thompson 2001; Thompson 2007). They elaborate on Anderson's "Olympianism" (Elliott 1998), "Deutscherism" (Blackledge 2004, Elliott 1998), and his and *New Left Review*'s "historical pessimism" (Blackledge 2002, Thompson 2007), the journal's over-reliance on short-lived social movements, its distrust of the British working class and its too rosy picture of Third Worldism. Most important for the paradox of 1989, the pessimism resulting from the events is interpreted as the logical consequence of what Gregory Elliott called the 'Deutscherite' perspective (1998). At its core was the perception, ascribed to Isaac Deutscher, of the U.S.S.R. and its allies as non-capitalist and, furthermore, post-capitalist societies, despite their shortcomings (to be explained with the Soviet Union's backward economy and hostile environment) (cf. van der Linden 2007: 139-146).[5] Deutscher was convinced that eventually these deficiencies would be corrected:

> Stalinism has exhausted its historical function. Like every other great revolution, the Russian revolution has made ruthless use of force and violence to bring into being a new social order and to ensure its survival. An old-established regime relies for its continuance on the force of social custom. A revolutionary order creates new custom by force. Only when its material framework has been firmly set and consolidated can it rely on its own inherent vitality; then it frees itself from the terror that formerly safeguarded it. (1953: 164)

3 Ralph Miliband, 1924-1994, Marxist political scientist, taught at London School of Economics and the University of Leeds, co-founded *Socialist Register* with John Saville in 1964.

4 Perry Anderson, born 1938, from 1962 editor of *New Left Review* for almost 20 years, became editor again in 2000 and stayed on until the end of 2003; he left Britain in the 1980s to take up a post as professor of history and sociology at UCLA and is seen by many observers as the leading figure in *New Left Review.*

5 For a short summary of Deutscher's perspective, see Marcel van der Linden, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union. A Survey of Critical Theories and Debates Since 1917* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), pp. 139-146.

As Thompson pointed out, according to Deutscher's perspective the principal achievement of the October Revolution, namely the abolition of private property, had in fact never been reversed and thus the Soviet Union stood in the revolutionary tradition of 1917 (cf. 2007: 33). It was at least 'one step further' than the capitalist West. Hence, change towards a version of socialism worth the name *could* be implemented from above (cf. Elliott 1998: 30). However, there was no guarantee that it would, and the Cold-War climate diminished the likelihood of this to happen (cf. Thompson 2007: 33). Still, it remained more probable than a socialist transformation in the West, realised through working-class struggle – especially at a time when the working class was declining in absolute numbers and also becoming ever more fragmented (cf. Anderson 1992: 279-375). According to Paul Blackledge, "this transposition of the extrinsic history of the class struggle from the point of production to the global arena of the Cold War effectively tied his [Perry Anderson's; S.B.] vision of socialism to the fate of the Soviet Union" (2004: 99). For those who thought like Anderson, socialist agency, or at least the possibility of movement towards socialism, rested with the Soviet Union, and some of them saw the Gorbachev era as a delayed vindication of Deutscher's thesis.

Important as Anderson indubitably is for the history of the Anglophone intellectual left in the second half of the twentieth century, the question arises in how far studies focusing on him suffice as analyses of the problems that 1989 caused for certain strands of Marxist and socialist thinking. Can the Deutscher-based explanation help us to understand the intellectual left's tiredness and confusion after 1989 beyond the specific cases of Anderson and perhaps *New Left Review*? Reducing – at least implicitly – the history of a non-aligned, heterogeneous intellectual left to a journal (even if it admittedly calls itself the 'flagship of the intellectual left') and further narrowing down this journal to the ideas of Perry Anderson, Robin Blackburn[6], and – for its earlier phase – Tom Nairn[7], entails the danger of substi-

6 Robin Blackburn, born 1940, member of *New Left Review*'s editorial board since 1962 and editor from 1981 to 1999, played an active role in British student protests in 1968, close long-term cooperation with Anderson, professor of sociology at the University of Essex.

7 Tom Nairn, born 1932, member of *New Left Review*'s editorial board from the early 1960s until the late 1980s, co-formulated the Anderson-Nairn thesis,

tuting accusations of individuals 'selling out' their former political convictions for thorough analysis. Many more Marxist and leftwing intellectuals than those writing in the pages of *New Left Review* had deeply ambivalent feelings about the changes of 1989 though they had, with Norman Geras, declared again and again – at least since 1956 – that the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc did not represent their idea of socialism.

A major methodological problem for an approach focusing less narrowly on individuals and their political biographies lies in the question of who belongs to the 'intellectual left' and points to a difficulty that always arises once one sets out to investigate the ideas of collectives that are more amorphous than, say, political parties or interest groups. I try to come to grips with this problem through developing a comparative approach based on a clearly defined corpus of sources: political-academic journals. They were chosen because researchers of intellectuals generally agree that journals form important nodal points around which intellectuals assemble (cf. Bock 1998: 41). This study embarks on a comprehensive analysis of the relevant material in four such publications. Two of them, *New Left Review* and *Socialist Register*, were British in origin while the other two, *Dissent* and *Monthly Review*, had U.S.-American roots, and all tried to produce social theory with political surplus value. With its comparative focus, thus, the study does not only analyse the similarities and differences between the journals, but also the possible variance between British and North American intellectuals. The analysis covers those articles in which authors tried to make sense of recent developments within the five years from January 1990 to December 1994. Although these publications did not represent the British and American intellectual left as a whole, they played important roles within its debates.[8] Moreover, although discussions did not end in 1994, the time frame is deliberately chosen: five years are short enough to allow for a

claiming that Britain's archaic political culture had to be explained with its proto-bourgeois revolution and a later alliance of aristocracy and bourgeoisie; he fell out with the editorial board due to different perceptions of nationalism, professor of nationalism and cultural diversity at Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology.

8 This selection of journals allows for a consideration of many of those thinkers (and their intellectual environment) whose work is discussed by Alexander and Therborn.

detailed reading and long enough to explore longer-term trends. Further, these five years form a period of crisis in the Gramscian sense: the old had died but the new could not yet be born. Arguably, the new came to life from the mid-1990s onwards when intellectuals embarked on critiques of globalisation, opposition to the incremental acceptance of war – legitimised through the UN – as a means of 'solving' geo-political conflicts and scepticism over centre-left and social democratic parties' return to governmental power on supposedly neo-liberal platforms.[9] With this methodological design, the study complements the existing historical-biographical long-term accounts with a comparative analysis of networks or collectives of intellectuals.

There are strong arguments for choosing these publications as cases for a comparative study. Some are formal: the journals stand out: with birth years between 1949 and 1964, and uninterrupted activity since, through longevity and a high degree of personal continuity among editors and contributors. With Irving Howe[10], Paul Sweezy[11], Perry Anderson and Ralph Miliband, respectively, the character and perspective of each periodical was shaped by one particularly influential, long-serving editor – two of them British and two citizens of the United States, though certainly none of the journals can be seen as a mere brainchild of its head editor.[12] All stand for a

9 *Socialist Register* debated globalisation already from 1992 onwards. But as a topic that occupied the minds of a large number of political economists, globalisation critique developed from the mid-1990s.

10 Irving Howe, 1920-1993, literary scholar and political activists, belonged to the 'New York Intellectuals', disapproved of the move of many of his contemporaries from Trotskyism to Neo-Conservatism and embraced a loosely defined 'democratic socialism', became co-founder, with Lewis Coser, of *Dissent* in 1954.

11 Paul Sweezy, 1910-2004, Marxist economist, academic and New Deal administrator, co-founder, with Leo Huberman, of *Monthly Review* in 1949, became well-known for his work on 'monopoly capitalism'.

12 There are numerous discussions on editorial politics and mechanisms of decision making in *New Left Review*. The tenor is that Perry Anderson has played (and still plays) an extremely important role in its life, even at times when he was not the official editor, as in the early 1990s. Anderson's role was discussed by Paul Blackledge (2004), Lin Chun (1996), Dennis Dworkin (1997), Gregory

genre of writing that integrates essayistic elements into academic articles. Further reasons for this selection of journals lie in their content and political outlook. Since they were founded during the early Cold War, most of those individuals setting them up belonged to a generation of leftwing intellectuals born in the 1910s and 1920s and politically socialised in the interwar years and the Second World War. During that time, it was difficult to unambiguously define one's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union – which stood for Stalinist violence but also for a decisive contribution to the defeat of Nazism. Whereas it seemed often impossible then to square the circle of expressing solidarity with both the U.S.S.R. and with workers' interests on a global scale, after the war it became increasingly difficult to react adequately to the developing block confrontation. With different approaches, each of the journals tried to find a democratic-socialist position, a 'third way' or 'third space' that was neither uncritically pro-communist nor dogmatically anti-communist. They subscribed to a socialist and – with the partial exception of *Dissent* – Marxist ecumenism. Having started their political activities in the orbit of radical-left organisations, the U.S. intellectuals associated with *Dissent* and *Monthly Review* had already broken with Moscow in the 1930s or 1940s or had always been broad-minded Marxists rather than 'party soldiers' (cf. Diggins 1992: 152). In Britain, they broke free from the Communist Party in 1956. The four journals saw themselves as critically allied primarily to the labour, peace and civil rights movements in their respective countries (as well as internationally) and, in some cases – as deliberately following popular-front traditions in coalition building – in a critical dialogue with the major political parties of the centre-left. Further, the contributors represented a specific intellectual type: they were neither closely associated with parties nor, although sympathetic, intimately allied with radical movements. They became the first generation of an academic left which – to a large degree – substituted 'theoretical practice' for in-

Elliott (1998) and Michael Kenny (1995). None of the other journals' internal lives have attracted comparable interest. Perhaps they were run more smoothly (*Socialist Register*, for example, did not work with an editorial committee before Ralph Miliband's death in 1994), yet apparently *New Left Review* is also an exceptional case. The other publications are less frequently used as reference points for making statements about one's own political position – a role that, to me as a foreign observer, seems quite evident in the case of New Left Review.

volvement in political struggles.[13] Still, they saw themselves as 'organic intellectuals'. Having preceded the student New Left of the late 1960s, all the journals sympathised with the student protests but also disagreed on certain points. Nevertheless, they provided important orientation for the younger new-left generation of 1968. Several student activists of the late 1960s later joined their editorial boards or contributed articles. In the changing political and academic climate of the 1970s and 1980s, the journals expressed scepticism of (post-)Marxist revisionism and of neo-Trotskyite approaches. They became severe critics of the rising neo-liberalism and did not follow many progressives' turn towards post-structuralism and deconstruction. Instead, they kept their faith in historical-materialist and political economic explanations. From their early days, the journals acknowledged each other, followed each others' debates, and criticised each other – at times rather heavily.[14] Finally, most writers in the journals shared the view that – despite all the differences they saw between their ideas of socialism and the version that had been realised in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – a self-critical debate was unavoidable.

A comparative analysis of these journals' articles faces two difficulties: first, it is almost impossible to find journals that can be considered as 'real' equivalents – not only because of the specificities of the political-cultural settings in which the publications try to make themselves read, but also because it is of all things the relative uniqueness of a periodical that makes it successful and worth reading. The journals in question differ from each other in their respective versions of Marxism and socialism, in the breadth of political opinion that is tolerated within their pages and in many further

13 This distinguished the journals from others, such as *Marxism Today* and *International Socialism* in Britain or *The Nation* and *New Politics* in the USA, which either moved, as a consequence of embracing Marxist revisionism, closer to centre-left parties, or, because of a different understanding of the relation of structure and agency, claimed to have a more intimate link to the radical left sections of labour and social movements.

14 It should be noted that several contributors published in more than one journal – for example, Daniel Singer in *Socialist Register* and *Monthly Review*, Norman Geras in *New Left Review* and *Socialist Register*, Cornel West in *Monthly Review* and *Dissent*, Ralph Miliband in *New Left Review*, *Socialist Register* and *Monthly Review*.

respects: different levels of theoretical abstraction and fields of empirical focus, varying prestige in the academic world, and wider popular versus narrower academic recruitment areas of contributors and implied readerships. They are marked by conceptual specificities such as *New Left Review*'s short-lived sympathies for Mao and Althusser in the 1970s, a left-wing, critical Zionism among post-Trotskyist *Dissenters*, Miliband's theory of the capitalist state shining through the pages of *Socialist Register*, or Sweezy's theory of capitalist development visible in those of *Monthly Review*. Nevertheless, all of them solicit articles rather than simply inviting contributions and all of them try to reach a readership spectrum from the left wings of the respective centre-left parties in Britain and the United States to the many groups of the radical left. The second difficulty arises from the limitations of a purely contrastive comparison. It can certainly identify differences, similarities and analogies in the intellectual reactions to 1989. However, it is an insufficient tool when it comes to explaining the paradox described in the beginning of this introduction. Such an explanation requires hypothesising and subsequent hypotheses-testing via comparison and contextualization.

For left intellectuals writing in the journals, the events of 1989/91 constituted a turning point. The Eastern Bloc – whether post-capitalist or not – had domesticated Western capitalism because it was perceived in the West as a systemic alternative to capitalism. This fuction was left vacant with the Eastern Bloc's demise. Neither the labour movements of the West nor the societies and states of the South could be counted on as suitable substitutes. Hence, the future was likely to suffer from the imposition of a more brutal, 'liberated' capitalism. In so far, the years 1989/91 constituted a turning point. However, the texts published in the journals reacted not only to these political, but to discursive shifts. At the time, Dick Flacks suggested that "[t]o make social theory is frequently to attempt to make history" (1991: 3). The intellectual left saw themselves engaged in a struggle about discursive power. Did they still have chances to influence political discourse on issues such as the reasons of the failure of state socialism, the designing of alternative futures beyond capitalism as it existed in the last decade of the 20th century?[15] Furthermore, writers asked themselves in how far the events of

15 The problem of finding the adequate term for the political and economic systems of the states of the Eastern Bloc has caused considerable debate among the

1989 marked a caesura that required a rethinking of key components of the critical social theory and political analysis they had produced. Did Marxist and socialist concepts still prove to be useful for explaining historical developments and formulating political goals and strategies? It seems that, at least for most, Marxism still provided an analytical toolkit when it came to explaining social phenomena and developments of the past and of the present. For the design of concrete goals and practical political strategies, however, many writers moved towards post-Marxism and social democracy. Without systemic alternative, it became next to impossible for the Marxists and socialists in focus here to formulate a fundamental political disagreement with social democrats and post-Marxists. In this sense, 1989/91 became an ending, which put intellectuals in a state of existential crisis. As a general tendency, this can be observed in all the journals investigated. Nevertheless, one has to ask whether this embrace of post-Marxist or social democratic positions was shared to the same extent by British and American texts and by the two different generations, which were represented among the contributors and editorial committees – one politically socialised with the experience of the Great Depression, the rise of fascism, the popular front, and the Second World War, the other in the context of welfare capitalism, the Cold War and the Vietnam War. Shortly, what follows is a theoretically-informed comparison, elaborating in how far two generations of Anglo-American intellectuals' reactions entail an adoption of social democratic and post-Marxist assumptions, principles, goals and strategies.

This study looks into a large sample of articles from different angles. It uses a method that could be called 'deconstructive': it investigates lines of argument in regard to the question of their position on, for example, the deficiencies of state socialism (Part III, Chapter 2) or the core values of democratic socialism (Part III, Capter 4.1). Considering the narrative intention of the texts, it nevertheless reads them with questions in mind that are in many cases different from the questions the writers addressed in their articles and from the purposes their texts served. After introducing the Marxist-inspired democratic socialism, for which the journals claimed to stand as well as social democracy and post-Marxism, Section III will first

left in the West. I use the term 'state socialism' to confess agnosticism with regard to these debates rather than to take a position within them. For an overview of the discussions see van der Linden 2007.

analyse articles and passages which were almost emotional – expressing thoughts ranging from elation to grief and sorrow over the events of 1989. These represent the most personal attempts at coming to terms with the historical break. The Section then goes on to investigate more analytical reflections. Writers tried to establish what had actually happened in 1989/91 and why it had happened. Many of the contributions asked in how far the Western side should be held responsible for the implosion of the Eastern Bloc through stifling its potential to develop. Would the history of the state socialist systems have been different without the 'competition' from the 'West' and without the arms race? These articles often contained implicit normative comparisons. The systems of the Eastern Bloc had their deficiencies – but were these more serious than the shortcomings of the systems of the capitalist West? The following chapter discusses the future status of socialist theory. If Therborn's earlier mentioned diagnosis that the Marxist triangle had been broken was correct, what would remain of Marxism? Was Marxism simply an overrated theory, a system of thought that had been granted the stature of an intellectual giant which was now eventually cut to size?[16] Which elements should be retained as kernels of a socialist theory and politics? What was their relationship to other social theories? If Blackburn's perception, also mentioned earlier, was right that Marxism had to accept responsibility for developments in the Eastern Bloc – what would this mean for radical social theory? In how far should Marxists and socialists accept the allegation that a logical connection existed between the holistic claim of Marxist theory and the authoritarian excesses of Stalinism? Should socialists look for alternative ideas and strategies from within and beyond the socialist traditions? Which looked most promising? The following chapter starts out from numerous writers' agreement that one of the

16 To understand Marxism as a 'system of thought' implies granting it a privileged position in explanations of historical phenomena. Rather than seeing it as one analytical approach among many, employing Marxism as a system of thought rests on the assumption that its explanatory validity – and superiority to other theories – is self-evident or proven. Different from this approach is the use of Marxism as a 'spirit of critique', which means to evaluate historical phenomena from a distinctive normative position. Rather than claiming its explanatory superiority, employing Marxism as a spirit of critique rests on the assumption of its evident ethical legitimacy.

most serious mistakes of Marxists had been their reluctance to engage in utopian thinking. What direction could such creative thinking take to start designing scenarios for an emancipatory politics? In this context, contributors spent much time reflecting on the concept of democratic socialism. Most of them admitted that a lack of democracy had constituted the biggest stumbling block for movement towards a socialist society in political terms. However, the implosion was interpreted not just as the consequence of political inadequacies; economic problems played an equally important role – most seriously the incapability of the Eastern Bloc's economic system – based on centralised top-down planning – to satisfy the needs of its own citizens. Consequently, contributors engaged in the debates on the potentially beneficial role of markets as distributive mechanisms in general, and of possible structures of market socialism more specifically. Thirdly, within this search for alternatives, really-existing models were also investigated: these could include socialist systems considered as working more humanely or more efficiently than those of the Eastern Bloc, while also extending to capitalist systems which had most successfully reconciled the search for profit with a welfarist social policy. The final chapter of Section III deals with the problem of how to achieve political change. Which parts of the world, which classes or collectives within a given society could one imagine as revolutionary or transformative agents? What was the role of the capitalist state and its institutions such as elections, governments and parliaments? Would political change be organised from above, struggled for from below or would it require double pressure from both sides? In this context, the question of the necessity of a revolution could not be ignored. Did it still make sense to envisage a violent rupture, a revolution in the traditional sense, as a prerequisite and a promising starting point for the implementation of a socialist project? In addition, intellectuals had to think about their own role within an emancipatory strategy. Could they function as a transformative vanguard? Or was their task more low-key – did they have to feed the political public with critical social theory? Which were the groups they should try to reach: political parties, trade unions, social movements? Via contrastive comparison of articles and passages within contributions, Section III shows a near-universal agreement among radical intellectuals that a great deal of new thinking was necessary though there was a high degree of disagreement as to what direction it should take.

The final part (Section IV) takes the comparison a step further by asking whether these new directions in socialist thinking need to be understood as intellectual moves towards social democracy, post-Marxism, or both. To this end, the section discusses what the empirical findings in Section III mean for central elements of traditional Marxism and socialism: it tries, for example, to identify intellectuals' positions on the logic of historical development, on the necessity of a qualitative break with capitalism and on the privileged role of the working class in emancipatory struggles and it juxtaposes these with the perspectives of social democracy and post-Marxism. What can be learned from this comparison is – among other things – that old distinctions of revolutionary socialists on the one hand and reformist social democrats on the other and of historical-materialist Marxists on the one hand and postmodern post-Marxists on the other have lost most of their relevance for radical intellectuals in both Britain and the United States. The section continues with a summary of the British-U.S. comparison and concludes by reflecting on the longer-term consequences of the events of 1989/91 for the intellectual left as a political and discursive community.

The argument to come follows a strictly symmetrical structure: each topic's treatment is analysed for each journal individually, followed by a short comparison. This allows the book to be read in different ways: most readers will probably be interested in specific topics. They can read the relevant chapters or subchapters in Part III in detail. Alternatively, they can focus on the contrastive comparison at the end of each chapter. Others might want to learn how the individual journals deal with and debate the historical conjuncture and turning point. They can use the relevant sections in each of the chapters and ignore the others. This structure proves useful for different categories of implied readers, even though it betrays the study's origin as a habilitation thesis.