
**Strategy and Tactics in a Revolutionary Period:
U. S. Trotskyism and the European Revolution,
1943–1946**

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ABSTRACT: The outbreak of the Second World War found U. S. Trotskyism divided into two organizations: the Socialist Workers Party led by James Cannon, and the Workers Party led by Max Shachtman. The downfall of Mussolini on July 24, 1943 led to the appearance of a third current: a minority within the SWP led by Felix Morrow, Jean van Heijenoort and Albert Goldman. Confronting the SWP leaders' line, according to which U. S. imperialism would operate in Europe through "Franco-type governments," the minority argued that it would rely on democratic regimes to stem the advance of the revolution, propping them up with economic aid, and that it would be helped in this task by the Socialist and Communist Parties, which would revive the policy of class collaboration known as Popular Front. The task of the European Trotskyists was therefore to wrest control of the masses from those parties through democratic and transitional demands (a Democratic Republic, a Constituent Assembly, etc.) which would help the workers discover the anti-socialist agenda of their mass organizations through their own experience. The Morrow–Goldman–Heijenoort tendency's inglorious ending precluded any serious analysis of the dire consequences of the policies pursued by the SWP leadership.

*The Italian Revolution and the Appearance
of a Minority Faction in the SWP*

ON MARCH 5, 1943, IN FASCIST ITALY, workers at the Rasetti factory in Turin went on strike; two days later, stoppages at work spread to nine factories; by the end of the month, many

* To Pierre Broué and Al Richardson, *in memoriam*.

workplaces in the northern cities had seen some form of strike action, with some 100,000 workers involved. Then, on July 10, 1943, the Allied armies landed in Sicily, and nine days later Rome was bombarded for the first time. King Vittorio Emanuele III decided that his survival depended on getting rid of Mussolini and staged a palace coup. The Fascist Grand Council, supreme body of the Fascist party, met in Rome on July 24, 1943 and adopted a motion critical of *Il Duce*. The following day, when Mussolini went to meet the king, he was asked for his resignation and arrested immediately afterwards (he was rescued on September 12, 1943 by the SS official Otto Skorzeny and placed at the head of the puppet *Repubblica di Salò* until his final execution by partisans on April 28, 1945). The ensuing Forty-Five Days under Marshal Pietro Badoglio (July 25–September 3, 1943) were marked by enormous popular demonstrations celebrating the end of Fascism, which met with a brutal response by the government. The uneasy interlude ended on September 3, with the signing of a secret armistice between Italy and the Allies, made public five days later. The king fled to the South while the army dissolved; more than half a million Italian soldiers were made prisoners and deported to Germany. The September 1943 armistice also marked the beginning of the Italian resistance — a partisan movement against the Nazi occupation reaching over 100,000 members by April 1945, of whom some 35,000 were killed (Ginsborg, 1990, 10–12, 70).

Unbeknownst to the long-suffering Italians, their travails would shake the American Trotskyist movement, already split into two organizations after the signing of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact on August 23, 1939: the Socialist Workers Party, led by James P. Cannon, which upheld Trotsky’s characterization of the Soviet Union as a “degenerated workers’ state” and called for its unconditional defense in case of military attack, and the Workers Party, led by Max Shachtman, which held the position that Russia was not in any way a workers’ state, but a bureaucratic collectivist state.¹ The SWP had had a membership of

1 Cf. Trotsky, 1973, Cannon, 1972, and the documents collected in Haberkern and Lipow, 2008. The Trotskyist movement, grouped around an organization called the Fourth International, originated in 1923 as a political tendency known as the Left Opposition within the Communist International, receiving the adhesion of the main figure of Chinese communism, Chen Duxiu. It remained in the Comintern for a decade, until Hitler’s rise to power in 1933, aided by the sectarian policy of the “third period,” which denounced Social Democracy as “social fascism” and rejected Lenin’s united front policy. These events persuaded Trotsky that the Comintern could not be freed from Stalin’s stranglehold. For a history of the Left Opposition see Broué, 1997, 570–594. The founding documents of the Fourth International have been collected in Reissner, 1973.

“around 800 to 1,000,” and it split “right down the middle, fifty-fifty,” so that the new SWP began with a membership which was probably something less than 500, a number which was to rise to approximately 1,500 by the end of the war (Alexander, 1991, 805, 825). The Italian events would further divide the small American Trotskyist movement into three currents: alongside the WP and the SWP now appeared a minority tendency within the SWP, led by Felix Morrow, Jean van Heijenoort and Albert Goldman, which opposed the Cannon leadership’s analysis of the European events.²

As early as August 1943, the minority’s main spokesman, Felix Morrow, noticed in an article on the “Meaning of the Italian Events,” published in the party organ *The Militant*:

To dismiss Mussolini would mean to leave the way open to return to a form of government which the masses might be led to think was their own government, that is, the “democratic” form of government in which parliamentary majorities appear to rule the country. This is always the last resort of the capitalist class in the flood tide of revolution: to hide behind the back of “Socialist” and “Labor” parties, which run the cabinet but, in the last analysis, run it for the capitalists whose ownership of the means of production make them the real rulers of the country. . . . The King, the army generals and the capitalists [were] ready to drop the totalitarian system of government, once the masses are rising in revolutionary wrath, and hide behind a “democratic” front. (Morrow, 1943a.)

A month later, Morrow pointed out that the Italian workers had “wrested from the Badoglio government an agreement for the election of factory committees by secret ballot,” and that the Allied Military Government for Occupied Territories (AMGOT) then followed by conceding a “free labor movement” in the South (Morrow, 1943b). The appearance of factory committees and the AMGOT’s agreement to the workers’ election of their own delegates revealed the leading role of the working class in the political upheaval that Italy was then going through. No less important, it put some real democratic content into what had been, up until then, the mere preservation of the fascist state under a new

2 “We definitively parted company in July 1943. The dispute began with estimating the significance of the fall of Mussolini. . . . In the months between July and the October 1943 Plenum, the Italian experience unfolded and mirrored the future of Western Europe: the development of bourgeois democracy; the revival of the dominance of the traditional reformist workers’ parties; the central role of such democratic questions as the republic and the Constituent Assembly; illusions about American imperialism” (Morrow, 1946c, 32).

name. Would those first steps be followed by the — at least temporary — consolidation of democratic freedoms and parliamentary institutions in the framework of capitalism, or would they be quickly followed by a council movement and a socialist revolution? The dispute between the leadership of the SWP and its minority tendency would originally revolve around that question, raised by the Italian events.

The SWP minority leaders were not newcomers to the Trotskyist movement, but its best intellectuals: Felix Morrow wrote the canonical Trotskyist analysis of the Spanish Civil War (Morrow, 1974; Spanish ed., Morrow, 1978); Jean van Heijenoort (who wrote under the pseudonyms Marc Loris and Daniel Logan) could read several Western European languages as well as Russian and had been Trotsky's bodyguard and secretary (van Heijenoort, 1978); and Albert Goldman (who used the pseudonym M. Morrison) delivered one of the most stirring defenses of socialism ever made before an American court of law during the 1941 Minneapolis sedition trial against the SWP (Goldman, 1942). They were also committed militants: Morrow and Goldman served time in prison (alongside Cannon and 15 others) under the Smith Act for their opposition to the imperialist policies of the U. S. government during World War II. Indeed the course of the debate between the SWP minority and the majority led by James Cannon, which started in the October 1943 Plenum of the SWP, was marked by the "Minneapolis case" and the subsequent imprisonment of the 18 defendants: they entered prison with 16-month terms on December 31, 1943, and the final 12 were released early for good behavior on January 24, 1945 (Cannon, 1977, 423). The circulation of the minority documents of the October 1943 Plenum and of Morrow's article of December 1943, "The First Phase of the Coming European Revolution," was limited only to National Committee members, because Cannon argued that the documents should be kept from the membership until the principals to the dispute returned from prison on January 25, 1945.³

3 "The SWP majority leaders not only prohibited publication of the SWP minority documents in *Fourth International* following the [October 1943] Plenum, but also prohibited their distribution to the party membership. The pretext was that since the majority and minority leaders were shortly to go to prison, the documents should not be issued until the principals to the dispute returned. The documents were finally made available to the SWP membership on the eve of the November 1944 convention. Nor was this done because the party regime yielded to the entreaties of the minority; it was only because one of the documents had reached the Workers Party which had published it. Even then the minority documents were not sent to Europe. When I returned from prison at the end of January 1945, I found that the minority's views on the European questions were still unknown on the continent" (Morrow, 1945, 49).

*The Morrow–Morrison Amendments to the Resolution
of the October 1943 Plenum*

A month after the U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals at St. Louis sustained the convictions of the party leaders in the Minneapolis Smith “Gag Act” trial of 1941, the National Committee of the SWP held a four-day Plenum in New York City from October 29 to November 1, 1943.⁴ It was at this October 1943 Plenum that the tactical differences between the Morrow–Goldman–Heijenoort minority and the Cannon-led majority of the SWP finally came to the surface. The chief spokesmen of Cannon’s majority would be E. R. Frank (a pseudonym of Bert Cochran), William Warde (George Novack), and William Simmons (Arne Swabeck), with a little help from Michel Pablo (Michalis N. Raptis) from France (cf. Pablo, 1946). The majority commentator on the Russian question was Joseph Vanzler (best known by the pseudonym “John G. Wright”), who consistently underplayed the counterrevolutionary role of the Red Army in Eastern Europe (cf. Jacobs, 1944, 8–13).

In his “Report to the Plenum,” Felix Morrow pointed out that the significance of the resolution that was going to be adopted went well beyond the American frontiers, and that it would have a determining impact on the future of the Fourth International (the organization that gathered the Trotskyist parties all over the world), particularly in Europe, then the center of the world revolutionary movement:

The purpose of writing an international resolution at this time should be clearly held in mind. We are living under extraordinarily favorable conditions at this moment in contrast to the situation of our European comrades. We are a legal party, we have access to broad areas of information denied to our comrades in the underground, we have a measure of leisure for thought without the terribly harassing conditions which dog our European comrades. Thanks to our good fortune we have been placed in the position of being in essence the trustees of the Fourth International. Let us hope that we will execute our trusteeship with all the moral and political responsibility which we owe to it.

Were the parties of our European comrades functioning, and in communication with each other and with us, our international resolution would be merely

4 Cf. “5th Wartime Plenum of SWP Meets in New York: Fifteenth Anniversary of the Founding of American Trotskyism Celebrated at Banquet in New York As Party Records New Gains,” *The Militant*, Vol. 7, No. 45 (November 6, 1943), 1–2.

one among many contributions to a resolution of the Fourth International. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Our resolution must serve, in reality, as the determining resolution of the Fourth International. (Morrow, 1944a, 25.)⁵

Of the amendments to the International Resolution proposed by Morrow, the main one was amendment 23, which denied any immediate and direct determination of political developments by the economics of imperialist decay:

The fact that the economic pre-conditions for an extended period of bourgeois-democracy in Europe have disappeared does not, however, put an end to the role that bourgeois democracy can play to stem the advance of proletarian revolution. Just as fascism served to halt the masses, so bourgeois democracy will now attempt to disorient the revolutionary struggle against fascism. When no other shield can protect them, the forces of capitalism retreat behind the protection of the democratic republic. This phenomenon will in all likelihood appear in our epoch as it has in previous periods. (Morrow, 1944b, 14.)

The following section of Morrow's amendments drove home this point by reference to the recent Italian events: "Tomorrow, if necessary, the Badoglio regime will concede general elections just as it had to concede factory committees." It was of course the masses who had wrested these democratic rights from their oppressors. "But the oppressors understand also the necessity of sanctioning these democratic rights when they have no alternative" (Morrow, 1944b, 15). Morrow concluded: "The Italian events indicate that after the collapse of fascism the bourgeoisie is prepared to evolve in the direction of a bourgeois-democratic government." In all likelihood, the collapse of Nazism would likewise result in "an attempt by the German bourgeoisie to save its rule by hiding behind bourgeois-democratic forms" (Morrow, 1943d, 15). This stratagem of the European bourgeoisie, in collusion with American imperialism, would be aided at the beginning by the inevitable revival of democratic illusions among considerable sections of the masses, due to the "intensification of national feeling in Europe as the result of the struggle against Nazi occupation," the lack of direct experience with bourgeois democracy by the younger generation, and

5 "The dispute in the SWP during the past two years has not been in any sense a dispute peculiar to the American party. It has been from the first a dispute over questions which are far more important to Europe in the first instance than to America" (Morrow, 1945f, 49).

the willingness of both Social Democracy and Stalinism — which the Italian experience indicated would emerge as “the principal parties of the first period after the collapse of the Nazis and their collaborators” — to divert the revolutionary energy of the mass in that direction through the application of the policy of class collaboration known as Popular Front, in which the workers’ parties renounced the application of the socialist program (Morrow, 1944b, 15).

As regards the “intensification of national feeling in Europe as the result of the struggle against Nazi occupation,” it should be pointed out that the debate at the October 1943 Plenum had been preceded by an exchange on the national question set off by three theses advanced by a group of German exiles, who advocated support for the “struggle for national liberation” then going on under Nazi occupation, arguing that “these are *democratic* demands, which must *always* and *everywhere* be supported” (IKD, 1942, answered by Morrow, 1942). This need for “participation in the present movement of resistance” had also been emphasized by van Heijenoort, whose European background possibly made him more sensitive to this problematic: “The slogan of national liberation has played up to the present, and will continue to play for some time, an important role in regrouping the masses, overcoming their atomization and drawing them into the political struggle. This is more than enough for it to appear on our banner” (van Heijenoort, 1942, 337–338). Morrow would later criticize his willingness to compromise with the Cannon leadership about the significance of the national question in Western Europe, arguing that it buttressed “the sectarian trend of the French party after 1943” (Morrow, 1946c, 31).⁶

6 “Under the pressure of the attacks of the P.C. majority on some of Logan’s formulations, I made the mistake of trying to reconcile the position of Logan with that of the majority. And I joined with the majority in attacking the position of the German section on the national question, which, while stated often in extreme terms was, nevertheless, essentially identical with the position of Hic and Cordier. The most one could justly have said against it was that it was a rightist emphasis within the fundamentally correct position of integration in the national resistance movement. I, however, accused the German comrades of revisionism. My political confusion on the national question cleared up very slowly indeed. It is very hard for an American to understand the national question. So I must take my share of responsibility for the aftermath. The position of the German section became anathema, neither published nor seriously analyzed in our press but made unholy by sheer dint of repetition of curses against it. This would not have mattered too much had the French party been able to develop its work in the resistance movement. But then came the terrible tragedy of October 1943 when Hic and almost all his leading co-workers were seized by the Gestapo, with Hic and others dying in concentration camps. The beheaded party fell into the hands of inexperienced and foreign comrades and turned its back on the resistance movement” (Morrow, 1946b, 31).

Morrow drew from his analysis the tactical conclusion that “only cadre elements” would be “recruited by our program and central slogan of the Socialist United States of Europe.” To win over the masses would require reaching out to them “as we find them, with all their inexperience and illusions.” Trotskyists should therefore “appear as the most resolute fighters for democratic demands: freedom of assembly and elections, freedom of the press, trade unions and political parties, etc.” as well as “transitional demands — for jobs and social insurance, workers’ control of production, etc.” (Morrow, 1944b, 15–16). The aim of the democratic and transitional demand was to enable the European Trotskyists to dispel the illusions of the workers about the bourgeois democratic regimes, the reformist parties and their leaders *through the masses’ own experiences*.

A special section in Morrow’s amendments was dedicated to “The Role of the U. S. in Europe.” While the draft resolution stated that U. S. imperialism would resort to “Franco-type governments”⁷ — or even, as *The Militant* put it more bluntly, to “Quislings”⁸ — Morrow emphasized that the *subjective aims* of the ruling classes in the United States and Britain, on which the SWP leadership based its prognosis, would clash with other factors, such as the resistance of the ruling classes in the continent, which had their own imperialist aims:

(36) The kind of resistance that U. S. imperialism will meet from other imperialisms is indicated by the debacle of its French policy. It attempted to foist Darlan–Giraud, the most docile agents it could find, upon the French people. But this proved impossible even before the intervention of the French masses. The Gaullists, representing French imperialism but backed by national feeling and the Stalinists, were able to thwart Washington’s plan. Roosevelt was compelled to come to terms, on an unstable basis, with the Gaullist–Stalinist forces. French imperialism is certain to resist Washington domination even more forcefully when France is re-conquered. (Morrow, 1944b, 16.)

7 “The Anglo-American imperialists . . . aim to impose new forms of servitude upon the European peoples. They propose to crush all manifestations of revolutionary independence by the European workers and to set up military–monarchist–clerical dictatorships under the tutelage and hegemony of Anglo-American Big Business. . . . The Allies cannot afford to sanction the slightest democracy in Europe. . . . The choice, from the Roosevelt–Churchill point of view, is a Franco-type government or the spectre of the socialist revolutions” (SWP Resolutions Committee, 1943, 7).

8 “Allies intend to dominate Europe through Quislings” ran the headline of *The Militant* on October 23, 1943 (Adamson, 1943).

No less important in determining the outcome would be the resistance of the European workers to the imperialist plans, and the pressure of the American and British masses against the imposition of dictatorships. The minority thus saw an evolution toward bourgeois democracy in Europe as the *objective resultant* of the class struggle and of the dispute between the contending capitalist classes: "Washington will in all likelihood soon find itself compelled to 'sanction' democratic regimes in Europe for the same reasons which impel the Italian and German bourgeoisie in this direction. Naked military force alone is insufficient to achieve the aims of U. S. imperialism; it must also resort to deceit, *i.e.*, bourgeois democracy" (Morrow, 1944b, 17). According to Morrow's later account:

There was much indignation at the Plenum, notably from Comrade Cannon, when I defined the Gaullists as a bourgeois-democratic tendency. The majority could not understand this quite simple phenomenon, that a section of the French capitalist class, first to resist German imperialism and then to resist U. S. domination, was for a period basing itself on the masses through the mediation of the reformist parties. Hence the majority rejected the [above-quoted] minority amendments. (Morrow, 1945b, 21.)

Finally, as against the draft resolution's emphasis on the revolutionary effects of the Red Army's victories and the growing breach between Moscow and its capitalist allies, Morrow stressed the two-sided character of the Soviet victories, arguing that it was not merely a matter of progressive consequences. An agreement between Stalin and the Anglo-U. S. imperialists was not excluded because "the Kremlin shares with the imperialists fear of the proletarian revolution in Europe, which would inspire the Soviet masses to oust the reactionary bureaucracy." In its attempt to come to terms with the Anglo-U. S. imperialists, "the Kremlin places the Stalinist-dominated working-class movements in subordination to the bourgeoisie of those countries. Essentially this is a continuation of the counter-revolutionary Popular Front program." The consequences of this policy would be even more dangerous for the revolution than in the 1930s, because the Red Army victories had given the Soviet Union enormous prestige among the European peoples:

Until the Soviet masses succeed in overthrowing Stalin and his clique, the prestige of the Soviet Union is appropriated by the parasitic bureaucracy. The power and ideological influence of Stalinism will not wane under these

conditions. The Italian events have shown the capacity of the Stalinists for perverting the struggle of the workers, demoralizing and betraying the working class. The Stalinists are the principal organized force today in the European working class. We must warn the workers against the terrible dangers which Stalinism holds in store for them. The European proletariat must never again permit Stalin to crush a revolution as he did in Spain. (Morrow, 1944b, 18–19.)

Morrow's amendments ended with a call to free the Greek and Yugoslav partisan movements "from subordination to the national-conservative policies of the Kremlin" and "for the independent Soviet republics of Yugoslavia, Greece and Poland!" (Morrow, 1944b, 20). This call was particularly prescient in the light of future events in Greece, where Stalin would strangle the revolutionary movement, and of the even most blatant handover of the Warsaw Uprising fighters to the Nazi executioners in 1944 (for a contemporary account, see Zaremba, 1997; for a recent scholarly study, Borodziej, 2006). Goldman's amendments to the draft resolution basically endorsed Morrow's document (Goldman, 1944).

Ultra-Leftism and Democratic Demands

In his article "The First Phase of the Coming European Revolution: A Criticism of the International Resolution of the [October 1943] Fifteenth Anniversary Plenum" (Morrow, 1944c),⁹ Morrow summed up "the essential differences between the Morrow–Morrison amendments and the draft resolution" in two propositions:

1. That the draft resolution erred in excluding the possibility of the use of bourgeois-democratic methods by the European bourgeoisie and its American imperialist masters; they would in all probability attempt to stem the European revolution not only by the use of military and fascist dictatorships but also where necessary by the use of bourgeois democracy.
2. That the draft resolution erred in minimizing the Stalinist danger; we must recognize that the victories of the Red Army have temporarily

9 The article was written in December 1943 but first circulated in the SWP *Internal Bulletin* in September 1944 and printed in *Fourth International* in December 1944, *i.e.*, a year later. Cf. Morrow's later comments: "The October 1943 Plenum resolution of the SWP was a piece of ultra-leftist braggadocio which could serve only to disorient the Fourth International" (1945f, 49).

strengthened the prestige of Stalinism; and we must, therefore, include in the resolution a warning of the very real danger of Stalinism to the European revolution. (Morrow, 1944c, 370.)

According to Morrow, the final resolution included several sentences from the Morrow–Morrison amendments, while at the same time retaining formulations of the original draft resolution which were in crying contradiction to the incorporated amendments.

Against the SWP leadership's insistence on the danger of opportunism, Morrow stressed the danger of ultra-leftism faced by the tiny and inexperienced Trotskyist groups in Europe. He criticized the stress laid on the maximum program, in particular the slogan "For the Socialist United States of Europe," because it appeared abstract to people engaged in a brutal national liberation struggle against Nazi military occupation. Instead, Morrow argued, tactics should be adapted to the existing level of political consciousness of the masses by raising slogans relating to their immediate problems. According to Morrow, the revival of democratic illusions among considerable sections of the masses, as demonstrated by the reemergence of the traditional workers' parties as well as centrist and liberal–democratic parties in Italy, would slow the tempo of the European revolution. This made all the more pressing the raising of democratic and transitional demands, as means of wresting the masses from those parties, in particular the Stalinist and Social Democratic ones. Thus, for instance, the demand for a republic in Italy would expose before the PCI supporters the true import of Palmiro Togliatti's *svolta di Salerno*, i.e., his decision, on Stalin's orders, to support Marshall Pietro Badoglio's monarchical cabinet upon his return to Italy in March 1944 (Agarossi and Zaslavsky, 2011, 72).

The Methods of U. S. Imperialism and Bourgeois Democracy

Morrow insisted that due weight had to be given to the "undeniable fact that considerable sections of the Italian masses enthusiastically welcomed the American troops." In the immediate future, "the covert blackmail of food and the promises of American economic aid" would "play a major role in shaping the Italian events," and this process would be repeated elsewhere in Europe. American imperialism would for a time "appear before the European masses in a very

different guise than German imperialism.” That difference was due to the difference in the economic resources of the United States and Germany:

Unlike Nazi occupation, American occupation will be followed by improvement in food supplies and in the economic situation generally. Where the Nazis removed factory machinery and transportation equipment, the Americans will bring them in. These economic contrasts, which of course flow entirely from the contrast between the limited resources of German capitalism and the far more ample resources still possessed by American capitalism, cannot fail for a time to have political consequences. (Morrow, 1944c, 374.)

Hence, Morrow concluded, it was quite false for the October 1943 Plenum Resolution to state that Anglo-American imperialism and the Nazis were “equally predatory”:¹⁰ “Equally imperialist, yes, but not ‘equally predatory,’” Morrow remarked (*ibid.*). A correct tactic for the sections of the Fourth International could only be based on a precise estimate of the different methods that were being employed by the different imperialisms in Europe. U. S. imperialist penetration of the occupied countries, Morrow warned, would *not* take place through “Quisling regimes, *i.e.*, regimes which rule entirely by means of force and terror and which have no support in the masses.” With the help of “the Stalinist, Social-Democratic and bourgeois democratic parties, it could muster a majority in an election as free as Italian elections prior to 1921.” Rather than relying on “Franco-type governments” or “military–monarchist–clerical dictatorships,” it would stabilize European capitalism through “the use of bourgeois-democratic regimes” (Morrow, 1944c, 374).

*The Relation Between Ultimate Goals and Immediate Demands:
Cadre Slogans and Mass Slogans*

In his criticism of the International Resolution of the October 1943 Plenum, Morrow had already pointed out the distinction between fundamental program and mass slogans, *i.e.*, between maximum demands destined to members of the revolutionary organization, and demands whose purpose was the political mobilization of the masses

¹⁰ “Europe, today enslaved by the Nazis, will tomorrow be overrun by equally predatory Anglo-American imperialism” (Fifteenth Anniversary Plenum of the SWP, 1943, 331).

based on their current political consciousness.¹¹ In their defense of one such mass slogan, the demand “For a Democratic Republic” in Italy, the minority explained that that fight for democratic demands did not mean a fight for bourgeois democracy as a system capable of solving the problems confronting the masses. The political logic of the raising of mass slogans was different:

To state our fundamental programmatic concepts does not solve the problem of all problems: the winning of a majority to our banner. The masses do not take the trouble to study the fundamental programmatic ideas of the various parties and follow that party which appears to them to have the historically correct program. Only the most advanced section acts in that manner. It is only in the course of a struggle for all of their immediate demands and wants that the masses come to see the necessity of following that party which wants to lead them to power. It is only if we participate in all of the struggles of the masses, if we show them that we are interested not only in the ultimate goal but in all of their immediate needs, that we can gain the confidence of the masses and win them over to our basic program. (Goldman, 1945a, 4.)

The fundamental question was to adapt the tactics to the level of political consciousness of the masses and to go with them through all their struggles, thus following the precepts laid down by Trotsky in the *Transitional Program* (van Heijenoort, 1945, 214).¹²

In the article “Some Arguments Heard Against the Slogan of the Republic in Italy,” written on July 30, 1945 and published in the SWP *Internal Bulletin*, Morrow argued that “the task of tasks” was “to break

- 11 “The central slogan of an epoch is not at all the same thing as the slogan or slogans under which the party leads the masses to make the revolution. The classical example of a central slogan — the slogan which determines the whole course of the revolutionary party in a period — is the slogan raised by Lenin, ‘Turn the Imperialist War into Civil War.’ This was the central slogan without, however, being a slogan for the masses. This central slogan was a party, a cadre slogan. That is, it served to educate the party but did not show how to win the masses to the proletarian revolution. Trotsky once characterized ‘Turn the Imperialist War into Civil War’ as an algebraic formula whose concrete content was yet to be found, as it was found, in ‘All Power to the Soviets’ and other slogans” (Morrow, 1944c, 375).
- 12 There was nothing particularly Trotskyist in the method of transitional demands: it was widely discussed in the Fourth Congress of the Communist International held in 1922 (Riddell, 2011) and Karl Radek even wrote a draft transitional program in 1923: “We distinguish ourselves from all the workers parties, not only by the slogan of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the soviet regime, but also by the transitional demands. While the demands of the Social Democratic parties are meant to be carried out in the framework of capitalism and to reform it, our demands serve the struggle of the working class to seize power and destroy capitalism. That is what should be clearly expressed in our transitional program” (Radek, 1923, 128, translation by authors).

the hold of the Communist and Socialist parties over the masses and to win them to the Fourth International” (Morrow, 1945e, 1). But that could not be done “directly by winning the masses to our whole program, that is by propaganda for a Soviet Italy and the Socialist United States of Europe.” Morrow explained the difference between cadre slogans and mass slogans by referring to the famous Marxist distinction between propaganda and agitation (Lenin, 1897, 332–333):

By propaganda you win cadre elements, but not the elements for a mass party; indeed, even cadre elements do not come to us, very often, on the basis of our propaganda; they are won by seeing that the party has the flexibility to conduct *agitation* successfully among workers who are not yet revolutionists, or who, if revolutionary-minded, do not see what next to do; that is, that the party is able to get the workers to take a step forward. (Morrow, 1945e, 1, emphasis in original.)

Morrow then tried to explain how the logic of the *Transitional Program* applied to the concrete situation of postwar Italy, where the masses were in political ferment but followed reformist parties:

The task of our Italian party on the agitational plane is to show to the Communist and Socialist party members a series of steps which ought to be taken by their parties. These steps must appear reasonable to the masses, possible of fulfillment. *We* know that their parties, reformist and class-collaborationist, will resist carrying out these steps. But their members don’t know it. By convincing them of the need for these steps, by inspiring them to demand these steps by their leaders, we will teach the masses to be critical of their parties and open their minds to the party of the Fourth International. (Morrow, 1945e, 1–2, emphasis in original.)

Morrow’s warnings went unheeded, which is not surprising considering that “the SWP took four months — and then only after a minority motion for it — to publish the program of action” of the Italian Trotskyists, which had been received in the latter part of November 1944, because its first five demands were purely democratic, starting with “Abolition of the monarchy and the institution of a democratic republic” (van Heijenoort, 1945, 215).¹³

13 The program started: “The Workers Communist Party affirms its position of struggle against collaboration with the Government or with the Committees of National Liberation and for the formation of a socialist–communist government upon the following transitional program:

The Nature of the Italian Governments

Morrow criticized the June 10, 1944 editorial of *The Militant*, which stated that Churchill “came out unequivocally in support of military and police dictatorships” because “he spoke in glowing terms of the Badoglio government” (Breitman, 1944). He pointed out that the SWP should have distinguished between the first Badoglio government (July 25, 1943–April 17, 1944), “which could correctly be called a police and military dictatorship,” and the second Badoglio cabinet (April 22–June 8, 1944), a six-party coalition that was “something quite different,” because “the key to the character of a government” was not who headed it but “*what parties support it.*” The second Badoglio cabinet was “supported by the parties of the majority of the politically active population of Allied-held Italy” (Morrow, 1944d, 24).¹⁴

Morrow’s ideas were expanded upon by van Heijenoort in an article dealing with the draft resolution for the sixth convention of the SWP, which was to meet in November 1944.¹⁵ Van Heijenoort observed that “the draft resolution in point 20 explains — correctly — that, after the Allies entered Rome [on June 5, 1944], the Badoglio government ‘simply melted away under the hostility of the masses’.” He stressed the significance of democratic demands in such a political situation: “To all the horse-trading among the monarchists, the ambulating corpses of liberalism and the Stalino-royalists, the revolutionary party must answer with the cry: *Immediate proclamation of the republic! Arrest of the king, the Crown Prince and all of the royal family! Immediate confiscation of all the royal properties for the benefit of the people!*” (van Heijenoort, 1944, 31). The democratic republic once

(1) Abolition of the monarchy and the institution of a democratic republic. (2) Freedom of speech, press; freedom to organize, strike, demonstrate, etc. (3) A Constituent Assembly and the holding of immediate elections with the participation of all parties. (4) *The right of universal, direct and secret suffrage for all citizens, soldiers and members of both sexes 18 years of age and over.* (5) Complete separation of Church and State; application of a progressive tax on the wealth and property of the Church” (Workers Communist Party of Italy, 1944, 3, emphasis in the original).

14 These sectarian analyses were not confined to Italy, but applied systematically all over Europe. For instance the SWP “found no difference between the first Papandreou cabinet [April 26–December 2, 1944], which included the EAM [the National Liberation Front dominated by the Communist Party of Greece], and the second [December 2, 1944–January 3, 1945] which did not” (Morrow, 1945b, 13).

15 van Heijenoort’s article “On the European Situation and our Tasks” (van Heijenoort, 1944), dated July 9, 1944, was published in the *SWP Internal Bulletin* of October 1944 and then reprinted in the *Fourth International* issues of January–February 1945, half a year after it was written.

obtained, van Heijenoort argued, revolutionaries should call for the most democratic forms under a bourgeois democratic regime, such as a single rather than a bicameral parliament, immediate elections, etc. Then, when the revolutionary tide was high enough, they would demand the expulsion from the government of the representatives of bourgeois parties and call upon the reformist leaders to take power, if they enjoyed the confidence of the majority of the workers. In such a context, “a slogan which may soon gain great importance is: *For a Togliatti–Nenni government!*” — *i.e.*, a joint government of the Communist and Socialist parties, which were then supported by the overwhelming majority of the Italian working class (van Heijenoort, 1944, 62). It was only by going through such experiences that first the Italian and then the European working masses would reach socialist political consciousness, not by being handed down maximum demands such as the Socialist United States of Europe.

The November 1944 Convention of the SWP and the Defense of the European Revolution Against Stalin

By November 1944 it was obvious that the resolution of the October 1943 Plenum had failed to foresee the course of events in Europe and to orient the Trotskyist cadres in the tactics required by the political moment. Yet despite the insistence of the Minority Report to the Convention on “the importance of a democratic interlude,”¹⁶ the Resolution adopted by the Sixth Convention of the SWP in November 1944 started by stating that “the events of the past nine months have served to underline the validity of our previous analysis of the world situation” (Sixth Convention of the SWP, 1944, 361).¹⁷

Nevertheless, the majority was forced to make one concession in the resolution adopted by the November 1944 Convention of the SWP, under pressure from Trotsky’s widow, Natalia Sedova. One of Cannon’s collaborators, Farrell Dobbs, then serving time with him at Sandstone penitentiary, had sent a letter sharply criticizing the August

16 “Our criterion of a democratic interlude from the viewpoint of revolutionary action also helps us to establish the role of democratic and transitional demands. . . . The regimes we now have in Italy and in France are transitory regimes with a mixture of Bonapartist and democratic features” (Morrow, 1945a, 15–16).

17 The majority spokesman E. R. Frank (Bert Cochran) put the SWP leaders’ political perspective at its crassest: “Bourgeois democracy is incompatible with the continued existence of capitalism in Europe” (Cochran, 1944, 379).

19, 1944 *Militant* editorial “Warsaw Betrayed,” arguing that it had not taken up the question of

the duty of guerrilla forces — and in the circumstances that is what the Warsaw detachments are — to subordinate themselves to the high command of the main army, the Red Army, in timing of such an important battle as the siege of Warsaw. On the contrary, the editorial appears to take as its point of departure the assumption that a full-scale proletarian uprising occurred in Warsaw and that Stalin deliberately maneuvered to permit Hitler to crush the revolt. . . . We are deeply concerned about this carelessness in writing about such a crucial question. (Letter from Dobbs dated August 23, 1944, quoted in Jacobs, 1944, 34.)

This apology for Stalin’s delivery of the Warsaw Commune into Hitler’s hands, and the call for Polish guerrillas “to subordinate themselves” to Stalin’s generals, drew an immediate response from Trotsky’s widow. In a letter dated September 23, 1944, she argued: “I do *not* propose that we take off the slogan ‘defense of the USSR’ but I find that it must be pushed back to the second or third rank.” The slogan of the military defense of the USSR “*withdraws to the background in the face of new events*” — namely the victories of the Red Army and the heightened prestige of Stalinism. The only alternatives for the USSR, Natalia Sedova insisted, were “socialism or the restoration of capitalism”:

A mortal danger is threatening the Soviet land, and the source of this danger is the Soviet bureaucracy (the internal enemy). The war is not ended; the external enemy still exists. But at the beginning of the war we viewed it as the most dangerous one and the struggle against the bureaucratic regime ceded its place to the military struggle; at the present time matters must be put just the other way. (Sedova, 1944a, 24–25; cf. the emphasis on this idea in Sedova, 1944b.)

Cannon hastened to agree with her analysis, in a letter published in the same issue of the *SWP Internal Bulletin* of October 1944 (Cannon, 1944, 29). The part of the resolution adopted by the November 1944 Convention of the SWP dealing with the Soviet Union therefore reads:

Throughout the period when the Nazi military machine threatened the destruction of the Soviet Union, we pushed to the fore the slogan: *Unconditional defense of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack*. Today the fight for the defense of the Soviet Union against the military forces of Nazi Germany has essentially been won. Hitler’s “New Order in Europe” has already collapsed.

The present reality is the beginning of the European revolution, the military occupation of the continent by the Anglo-American and Red Army troops, and the conspiracy of the imperialists and the Kremlin bureaucracy to strangle the revolution. We therefore push to the fore and emphasize today *that section* of our program embodied in the slogan: *Defense of the European Revolution against all its enemies*. The *defense of the European revolution* coincides with the genuine revolutionary defense of the USSR. (Sixth Convention of the SWP, 1944, 367.)

“A Balance Sheet of the Discussion on Europe”

Returning from prison on January 25, 1945, *i.e.*, two months after the November 1944 Convention of the SWP, Morrow wrote two major overviews of the debate that had been taking place since October 1943 (Morrow, 1945b; 1945c). In the most important of these overviews, “A Balance Sheet of the Discussion on Europe,” published in the *SWP Internal Bulletin* in May 1945, Morrow stressed that “most of what the minority had to say is part of the written tradition of the Trotskyist movement, though the majority leaders seem blissfully unaware of this material” (Morrow, 1945b, 5). Morrow had in mind Trotsky’s “Letter on the Italian Revolution” of May 14, 1930, which had foreseen the eventual sequence of events after fascism’s downfall:

Does this mean that Italy cannot, for a certain time, again become a parliamentary state or become a “democratic republic”? I consider — in perfect agreement with you, I think — that this eventuality is not excluded. But then it will not be the fruit of a bourgeois revolution, but the abortion of an insufficiently matured and premature proletarian revolution. In the event of a profound revolutionary crisis and mass battles in the course of which the proletarian vanguard will not have been in a position to take power, it may be that the bourgeoisie will restore its rule on “democratic” bases. Can it be said, for example, that the present German republic is a conquest of the bourgeois revolution? Such an assertion would be absurd. What took place in Germany in 1918–19 was a proletarian revolution, which for lack of leadership was deceived, betrayed, and crushed. But the bourgeois counter-revolution nevertheless was forced to adapt itself to the circumstances resulting from this crushing of the proletarian revolution and to assume the form of a parliamentary “democratic” republic. Is the same — or about the same — eventually excluded for Italy? No, it is not excluded. The enthronement of fascism resulted from the fact that the 1920 proletarian revolution was not carried through to its completion. Only a new proletarian revolution

can overturn capitalism. If it should not be fated to triumph this time either (owing to the weakness of the Communist Party, maneuvers and betrayals of the social democrats, the Freemasons, the Catholics), the “transitional” state that the bourgeois counter-revolution would then be compelled to set up on the ruins of the fascist form of its rule would be nothing else than a parliamentary and democratic state. (Trotsky, 1944, 216.)

Thus, in Morrow’s opinion, Trotsky’s rich and nuanced analysis, which rejected any linear correlation between economics and politics and contemplated different possible scenarios depending on the outcome of the struggle among living social forces, was reduced by the SWP leaders to a sterile formula about the inevitability of “Franco-type” military dictatorships. This, Morrow concluded in his second overview of the debate, led the SWP leadership into an ultra-leftist rejection of “*the method of democratic and transitional demands, i. e., the method of winning the majority of the workers and peasants to the revolutionary party*” (Morrow, 1945c, 147, emphasis in original).

The End of the Second World War and the Fate of the Soviet Union

Half a year later, on November 4, 1945, Cannon delivered an address celebrating the 38th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, in which he warned against “excessive zeal in criticizing and denouncing the Soviet Union” as “Russophobia,” and flatly denied that the Second World War had ever ended:

Trotsky predicted that the fate of the Soviet Union would be decided in the war. That remains our firm conviction. Only we disagree with some people who carelessly think that the war is over. The war has only passed through one stage and is now in the process of regroupment and reorganization for the second. The war is not over, and the revolution which we said would issue from the war in Europe, is not taken off the agenda. (Cannon, 1945, 7.)

Morrow had no problem demolishing Cannon’s analysis, whose inadequacy as a reflection of the objective course of events was self-evident:

Any serious Marxist knows that the preconditions for World War III have not matured, that World War II is over, that between it and the next war is the obstacle of the war-weary and politically-awakening masses of Britain and Western Europe, that even the American masses cannot for a whole period

be driven to war, that the next war can take place only after new crushing defeats of the European proletariat. (Morrow, 1945f, 51.)

The rational kernel behind Cannon's startling statement would only emerge a year and a half later, with the outbreak of the American jihad on behalf of private property in the means of production known as the Cold War.

The Sectarianism of the European Secretariat and the Question of Entrism

Until the middle of 1945, the minority had waged a battle with the hope of winning over, not just a majority of the SWP membership, but above all the European sections of the Fourth International, which were the ones actually involved in the revolutionary process. Then, in a letter to the European Secretariat of the Fourth International dated July 10, 1945 and called "European Perspectives and Policy," Morrow criticized its "February 1944 theses and the January 1945 resolution" for failing to pay attention to the fundamental role of the subjective factor in the unfolding European revolution. "Bewitched by the 'objectively revolutionary' situation," the European Secretariat repeated "the formula about the 'inexorable necessity' which transforms the imperialist war into civil war, etc." Actually, Morrow argued, revolution was not "an objective function of the social process," and the situation in Europe was in no way comparable to the aftermath of the First World War. "We are not repeating 1917–1923," Morrow warned. The situation in 1945 was "far more backward" because, in the absence of a rallying point for revolutionized masses like the Bolshevik revolution and the Third International, the development of the revolutionary parties was far slower, and therefore the whole process would be far more protracted. "Instead of mass revolutionary parties confronting reformist parties of relatively equal size, our tiny cadres confront two mass reformist parties. In France, our few hundreds confront a Stalinist party of nearly a million!" Morrow drew from this analysis the conclusion that the European Trotskyists had to "enter one of the reformist parties, constitute a faction in it and work in the direction of a split, out of which we will come with sufficient forces to begin seriously building the revolutionary party" (Morrow, 1945d, 82–83). Above all, Morrow concluded, revolutionaries had to rid themselves

of all traces of a conception of the “objectively revolutionary” situation today. The absence of the revolutionary party — and it is absent — changes the whole situation. Instead of saying, “Only the revolutionary party is lacking,” we must instead say, at least to ourselves, “The absence of the revolutionary party transforms the conditions which otherwise would be revolutionary into conditions in which one must fight, so far as agitation is concerned, for the most elementary demands.” (Morrow, 1945d, 85.)

Thus the question of the entrust tactic, first raised in the Fourth International during the “French Turn” of 1934–36 and later picked up by Michel Pablo in the 1950s, was posed by the Morrow–Goldmann–Hijenoort tendency in July 1945, a couple of years after it had begun to develop an alternative analysis of the unfolding revolutionary events in Europe. Morrow later stated that “before or at the time of the liberation the comrades could have and should have entered or remained in the reformist parties in Italy, Belgium and Germany” and regretted “raising the question in July 1945 — two years too late” (Morrow, 1946b, 217). The reaction of the European Secretariat, dominated by the majority of the French section of the Fourth International, was to side with Cannon in the dispute. The SWP minority believed that, by denying the significance of bourgeois democracy in Europe, the European secretariat and the SWP majority were “launched on sectarian policy which is wreaking havoc in the International” (Morrow, 1946b, 214).

According to Morrow, the sectarianism of the French section was long-standing; indeed “when the armed proletariat made the Paris insurrection in August 1944 our party was completely outside the movement thanks to their false position on the resistance movement” (Morrow, 1946c, 31). Due to its long-standing divorce from the living experiences of the masses, the majority of the French party refused to struggle for legality in France, because fascism being near, it was useless and even dangerous to try to emerge out of illegality. “Not until nine months after liberation, after the French minority leaders — who are the public leaders of the party because of their moral authority¹⁸ — returned from the concentration camps, in May 1945, not until then was a turn toward legality made” (Morrow, 1946b, 214). Similarly, when all of France had its eyes fixed on the Constituent Assembly, the one party which did not present a draft of a constitution to the masses was the French section of the Fourth International (Morrow, 1946b, 211).

18 The most outstanding French minority leader was Yvan Craipeau (see Craipeau, 1977, 1978).

The Question of Unity between the SWP and the WP

In the face of such know-nothing attitudes, involving both denial of political reality and glossing over past mistakes in political analysis, staking a virtual claim to infallibility on the part of the party leaders, Morrow and Goldman introduced a resolution on unity with the Workers Party on July 12, 1945, in the belief that “without unity the SWP is doomed to monolithic degeneration” (Morrow and Goldman, 1946d, 6).¹⁹

A political basis for the proposed unification had developed early on, when Shachtman began to emphasize, before the October 1943 Plenum of the SWP (in fact a few weeks before Mussolini’s fall on July 25, 1943), the importance of democratic slogans for Europe, particularly, the demand for “the national independence of the nations under the German imperialist heel” (Shachtman, 1943, 217). The July 1943 issue of *New Internationalist* in which Shachtman’s article appeared included two articles by Trotsky on the relationship between fascism and democratic demands (Trotsky, 1943a; 1943b). Morrow believed that the minority was “far closer to the Workers Party than to the SWP majority on the question of democratic and transitional demands and other tasks in Europe” (Morrow, 1945f, 53).

But the obstacles on the way to reunification — such as Shachtman’s insistence on retaining his characterization of the Soviet Union as bureaucratic collectivism and Cannon’s staunch opposition to unification, which Morrow attributed to his ultra-centralism²⁰ — proved to be more powerful than the unifying tendencies. Indeed Cannon was preparing the expulsion of the minority members from the SWP. Not surprisingly, after a long and unfruitful exchange of missives and invectives, the initiative came to nothing.²¹

19 “Unity means a democratic-centralist party as against the monolithic tendency of Cannonism” (Morrow, 1945e, 53). Cf. also Goldman’s position: “*The general rule should be recognized: no prohibition of factions or factional organs*” (Goldman, 1945b, 56, emphasis in the original). Morrow and Goldman pointed out, as an example of the build-up of leaders in the party press, “Hansen’s fawning eulogy of Cannon” in Hansen, 1944 (Morrow and Goldman, 1945, 7).

20 “Cannon does not want a large group in the party which will not blindly follow him” (Morrow and Goldman, 1946d, 11).

21 See “The Question of Unity: Documents of the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party,” *New Internationalist*, XI:6 (September 1945), 184–186; “SWP Majority and Minority Viewpoints,” *New Internationalist*, XI:8 (November 1945), 250–255; “On WP–SWP Unity Negotiations: Documents of the WP and SWP Minority,” *New Internationalist*, 12:1 (January 1946), 21–23.

Not with a Bang but with a Whimper: The End of the Minority Tendency in the SWP

Morrow's swan song in the SWP was his "International Report" on behalf of the minority to the June 1946 Plenum of the new International Executive Committee elected at the April 1946 conference of the Fourth International. Morrow's closing argument was an impressive summation of his charges against Cannon:

In the name of the unchanging program, Comrade Cannon, you taught the following things: That our proletarian military policy means that we should telescope together overthrow of capitalism and defense of the country against foreign fascism. That the Polish revolutionists should subordinate themselves to the Russian Army. That there is an objectively revolutionary logic brought about by the Russian victories. That naked military dictatorships are the only possible governments in Europe because it is impossible to set up a new series of Weimar republics in Europe. That American imperialism is at least as predatory as Nazi imperialism in its methods in Europe. That it is theoretically impossible for America to help rebuild or feed Europe. That there are no democratic illusions in Europe. That there are no illusions about American imperialism. That amid the revolutionary upsurge it is reformist to call for the republic in Greece, Italy and Belgium or the Constituent Assembly. That to speak of a Stalinist danger to the European revolution is only possible for a professional defeatist. That the fate of the Soviet Union would be decided by the war but only careless people think the war is over. (Morrow, 1946c, 28–29.)

This imposing list of charges, of course, didn't help Morrow or his minority comrades, since the body to which it was addressed was packed with Cannon supporters. There was an additional element weakening his argumentation, namely the abandonment of his previous position in defense of the USSR.²² The fact that van Heijenoort also embraced this policy of throwing the baby (the nationalization of the means of production and rudiments of a planned economy) out with the bathwater (the Stalinist bureaucracy) — in Hegelian terms, the inability to apprehend the Soviet phenomenon as a unity of antithetical determinations — provided invaluable grist to Cannon's mill (cf. van Heijenoort, 1946).

²² "All the reasons we gave for defending the Soviet Union have disappeared" (Morrow, 1946c, 28).

In late May 1946, Morrow, the only minority member on the party payroll, was removed from it in order to make it impossible for him to prepare the minority documents for the Twelfth National Convention of the SWP,²³ which took place on November 12–18, 1946. The convention duly approved a “Motion on the Minority Faction” expelling him and “David Jeffries” — probably a pseudonym of Heijenoort (Twelfth Convention of the SWP, 1947, 31). Then the SWP minority simply disbanded. Morrow left politics altogether. Goldman (who had already gone over to the Workers Party in May 1946 in the face of imminent expulsion) broke with Shachtman and switched his allegiance to the Socialist Party in mid-1948 (Wald, 1987, 255). Van Heijenoort, in turn, collaborated with the Workers Party until late 1947 under the party names “Logan,” “Gerland” and “Loris”; then in 1948 renounced Marxism altogether (van Heijenoort, 1948) and retreated into academic life as a specialist in mathematical logic at Brandeis University — though the main historian of the Trotskyist movement, Pierre Broué, held him in high esteem (Broué, 1986; 1990).

Summary and Conclusion

The outbreak of the Second World War found the American Trotskyists divided into two main organizations over the nature of the Soviet Union: while the Socialist Workers’ Party, led by James Cannon, followed Trotsky in characterizing it as a “degenerated workers’ state” and called for its unconditional defense in case of military attack, the Workers Party, led by Max Shachtman, described it as a bureaucratic collectivist state. The outbreak of the Italian Revolution after the downfall of Mussolini on July 24, 1943 led to the appearance of a third current within American Trotskyism: a minority within the SWP led by Felix Morrow, Jean van Heijenoort and Albert Goldman. Confronting the SWP leadership’s analysis that Anglo-American imperialism and the Nazis were “equally predatory” and that U. S. imperialism would operate in Europe through “Franco-type governments,” the minority argued that U. S. imperialism would rely on parliamentary democratic regimes to stem the advance of the revolution in Europe, propping them up with economic aid, and that it would be helped in this task

23 Cf. “The Removal of Comrade Morrow from Full Time Party Work” (Statement of the Minority of the Political Committee) (June 4, 1946), *SWP Internal Bulletin*, 8:8 (July 1946), 42.

by the main workers' parties, the Social Democrats and Communists — particularly the latter, which, under Stalin's guidance, would revive the policy of class collaboration known as the Popular Front, already practiced on a mass scale in France and Spain during the 1930s. The main task of the European Trotskyists was therefore, according to the Morrow–Goldman–Heijenoort tendency, to wrest the masses from those parties by raising democratic and transitional demands (such as “For a Democratic Republic” in Italy and Belgium, the election of a Constituent Assembly, etc.) that would help the workers discover the anti-socialist agenda of their mass organizations through their own experience. Their inglorious ending precluded any serious analysis of the consequences of the policies pursued by the SWP leadership, and by the European Secretariat of the Fourth International in its wake, policies that would help reduce Trotskyism to political impotence for most of the century.

If this analysis is correct, then the crisis of the Fourth International began, not, as often argued, with the controversy sparked off by Michel Pablo's “deep entrism” tactics in 1953, but ten years earlier, due to the SWP leadership's inability to adapt its tactics to the new situation that developed in Europe as a result of the fall of Mussolini in 1943, and the subsequent adoption of a policy of democratic counterrevolution by the capitalist classes of Western Europe and by U. S. imperialism.

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