When the League for the Fifth International (LFI) was founded in 2003 this represented the victory of the semi-state capitalist Fifthist line. Workers Power took this step because they saw the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum as the movements which would build the new supra-class International. The split documents from the minority in 2006, The Platform of the Opposition, explain this further turn away from the working class and Trotskyism in detail, but from an anti-Leninist perspective. Their ‘orthodoxy’ covered their own retreat from the working class, unlike the recent right split by Simon Hardy and Luke Cooper, who don’t even try. The 2006 split in essence charged the majority with being grossly opportunist in pursuing the original opportunist Fifth International orientation.
Where We Stand

1. WE STAND WITH KARL MARX: ‘The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves. The struggle for the emancipation of the working class means not a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for equal rights and duties and the abolition of all class rule’ (The International Workingmen’s Association 1864, General Rules).

2. The capitalist state consists, in the last analysis, of ruling-class laws within a judicial system and detention centres overseen by the armed bodies of police/army who are under the direction and are controlled in acts of defence of capitalist property rights against the interests of the majority of civil society. The working class must overthrow the capitalist state and replace it with a workers’ state based on democratic soviets/workers’ councils to suppress the inevitable counter-revolution of private capitalist profit against planned production for the satisfaction of socialised human need.

3. We recognise the necessity for revolutionaries to carry out serious ideological and political struggle as direct participants in the trade unions (always) and in the mass reformist social democratic bourgeois workers’ parties despite their pro-capitalist leaderships when conditions are favourable. Because we see the trade union bureaucracy and their allies in the Labour party leadership as the most fundamental obstacle to the struggle for power of the working class, outside of the state forces and their direct agencies themselves, we must fight and defeat and replace them with a revolutionary leadership by mobilising the base against the pro-capitalist bureaucratic misleaders to open the way forward for the struggle for workers’ power.

4. We are fully in support of all mass mobilisations against the onslaught of this reactionary Con-Lib Dem coalition. However, whilst participating in this struggle we will oppose all policies which subordinate the working class to the political agenda of the petty-bourgeois reformist leaders of the Labour party and trade unions.

5. We oppose all immigration controls. International finance capital roams the planet in search of profit and imperialist governments disrupts the lives of workers and cause the collapse of whole nations with their direct intervention in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan and their proxy wars in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, etc. Workers have the right to sell their labour internationally wherever they get the best price. Only union membership and pay rates can counter employers who seek to exploit immigrant workers as cheap labour to undermine the gains of past struggles.

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Introduction

In order to reply to a long document written by Comrade Michael Pröbsting of the RCIT we were obliged to look at the origins of his movement. This required an outline of the politics of his parent group from which he was expelled in 2011, the League for the Fifth International and its leading section, the British group Workers Power. So unintentionally at the beginning this pamphlet is a polemic primarily against Workers Power and thence against Pröbsting’s RCIT, whose pre-split politics are almost identical.

Whilst we have close agreement on the history of the Fourth International post WWII there are very real and substantial differences between the SF/LCFI and the RCIT on the question of method as it refers to the continuity of Trotskyism which closely relates to our orientation to reconstructing the Fourth International which is counterposed to the RCIT’s call for a Fifth International.
The refusal to engage with left-moving oppositional currents struggling to reassert the Transitional Programme and method led it to dismiss contemptuously the Revolutionary Tendency in the US SWP in the early 1960s led by Wohlforth, Madge and Robertson and the groupings that spring from it.

These are the 1974 split from the WRP which became the Workers Socialist League and various groupings internationally which sprung from that struggle, including the International Trotskyist Committee and its British section, the Revolutionary Internationalist League, the International Trotskyist Opposition, which split from a degenerating ITC, the Workers International League in Britain and its international grouping, the Leninist Trotskyist Tendency in Britain, Belgium, Germany and South Africa and others in France and Latin America.

This rejection of serious engagement with these currents is also reflected in many practical questions of the class struggle today both domestically and internationally, in particular on how to apply the Transitional Programme and method to today’s conditions and how to relate to the mass organisations of the working class, the trade unions and the bourgeois workers’ parties, how to relate to petty bourgeois national liberation movements and imperialist wars via proxy forces against semi-colonial countries.

As we will see this difference in method comes out in our support for the call for a vote for the ANC in the election that ended apartheid in South Africa in 1994. We differ strongly on the Arab Spring and the so-called ‘revolutions’ in Libya and Syria today and we will trace these differences back to the late 1980s over the Baltic states, the reunification of Germany, the fall of the Soviet Union and the wars in ex-Yugoslavia. This brought out differences on the rights of nations to self-determination which Workers Power, Britain (WPB) took as absolute, overriding the defence of the nationalised property relations established by the Russian Revolution and the post WWII overthrow of capitalist property relations in the deformed workers’ states of Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, Albania, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. Whether capitalist property relations were ever overthrown in Cambodia/Kampuchea and Laos is a moot point.

There are agreements between the LCFI and the RCIT on many things also ranging from the need for a rank and file movement to mobilise the working class against the trade union bureaucracy and to fight ‘with them when possible, against them when necessary’. We agree that the former workers’ states of the USSR, Eastern Europe, Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam are now bourgeois states and that Cuba and North Korea are the two sole remaining deformed workers’ states. However for nine years after the Yeltsin counter coup of August 1991 WPB described Russia as a ‘moribund workers’ state’, of...
which more below. And there are many other areas of agreement.
As Marxists therefore please do not take these agreements as read when the bulk of this document will concentrate on the differences. We must therefore first establish the unity before the conflict begins or else we will not be in the same political location and will be unable to develop that sharp political conflict so necessary for the advance of the cause of the political clarification to take forward the cause of the world revolution. (We will deal with the question of the continuity of Trotskyism in a separate document).

But what about the politics of Workers Power?
When the counter-revolutions began in Eastern Europe in 1989 WPB showed a great softness on the difference between bourgeois democracy and workers’ democracy, confusion between defence of the democratic rights won by the working class under bourgeois democracy and the only way the working class can develop its own class rule, the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised via soviet or workers’ council democracy in a workers’ state. This was quickly overcome by an outright capitulation to petty-bourgeois public opinion, expressed in the mass media; WPB began openly to advocate bourgeois democracy in the deformed and degenerate workers’ states, just as they do today in the semi-colonial world. Every serious Marxist knows that this is the ideological content of imperialism’s neo-liberal offensive against the gains of the global working class; every imperialist war and every pro-imperialist proxy army are supposedly fighting for ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’ although it is very difficult to sustain that notion today in Syria.
On this fundamental question it is clear WPB never completely broke from its state capitalist/Cliffite origins and, despite the great effort it made from the early 1980s to the early 1990s under Dave Hughes, as outlined by José Villa below. In those years the incompleteness of this break was obvious in its rejection of ALL the post WWII struggles of Trotskyist centrist forces, its refusal give even critical support to attempts to reassert the Trotskyist programme, and the name its international adopted in the early 1980s, the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International, later changed to the League for a Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI), a reflection of the internal conflict about whether to orient to the regeneration and reconstruction of the Fourth International or whether to opt for a Fifth International.
The 1995 pamphlet by the Revolutionary Internationalist League, *Split in Workers Power*, drafted by NdM, outlines this political degeneration on Stalinism and the counter-revolutions of 1989-91 in great detail, especially the section beginning on page 17, The LRCI and the crisis of Stalinism. [1] Consequently WPB took this Stalinophobic abstractness on the question of ‘democracy’ as superseding the class interests of the world working class which is to overthrow its main enemy, global finance capital, centrally located in the USA’s Wall Street, the dominant imperialist power. The International Bolshevik Tendency related, ‘In May 1990 WPB advised: “we should demand that the British government recognises Lithuania and supplies goods requested by Lithuania without conditions”. They denounced the imperialists for offering only token support to the Baltic counterrevolutionaries’. [2] They openly demanded that Margaret Thatcher assist the working class in Lithuania to further the case of ‘the revolution’. They supported Yeltsin’s counter-revolutionary mobilisation outside the ‘White House’ in opposition to the Yanayev coup in the USSR on 19–21 August.
1991 – “in the words of one of their leading ‘theoreticians’ they “stood arm-and-arm with Boris Yeltsin”, the Split in Workers Power records. We have quoted from Jose Villa’s document on this below, with which we have much agreement. And it comes out today in supporting bogus, imperialist-sponsored, ‘revolutions’ in Libya and Syria in the name of the same abstract ‘democracy’ which is clearly not even on offer. From its emergence from Tony Cliff’s International Socialists in 1974 WPB and its international affiliates evolved leftwards to become an orthodox Trotskyist centrist group by the early 1980s retaining some major problems from its origins, however. It must be acknowledged as one of the most serious attempts to regenerate post war Trotskyism. It won very serious Marxist intellectuals. It took the re-evaluation of the history of the Fourth International very seriously under the leadership of Dave Hughes. However after 1991 Keith Harvey (Hassell)’s semi-state capitalist position began to gain more influence in the group; at that point they began to abandon orthodox Trotskyism, and to readopt more clearly a semi-state capitalist position, similar to the IS/SWP, the current from which they had sprung. As with the original capitulation of Tony Cliff over the 1950-53 Korean War, it was essentially a capitulation to the pressure of the mass media and petty bourgeois public opinion by refusing to defend the degenerate and deformed workers’ states in Eastern Europe, the USSR, China and Vietnam as they fell to the right and re-

On 19 Aug 1991 Boris Yeltsin stood on a tank outside the White House and proclaimed resistance to the attempted coup. The coup rapidly fell apart, Yeltsin became President of Russia and abolished the USSR. Workers Power, in their own words, “stood arm-and-arm with Boris Yeltsin” (ideologically, they mean) outside the White House.
stored capitalist property relations under imperialist pressure in 1989-92.

**WPB, the Fifth International and the Transitional Programme**

This is how the 1995 RIL pamphlet, *Split in Workers Power*, evaluates this problem:

“Revising the fundamental starting point of Trotsky’s Fourth International, the Transitional Programme, WPB challenge the notion that the crisis of humanity can be reduced to the crisis of proletarian leadership. The LRCI’s Trotskyist Manifesto boldly declares: “However today it would be wrong simply to repeat that all contemporary crises are ‘reduced to a crisis of leadership’. The proletariat world-wide does not yet face the stark alternatively of either taking power or seeing the destruction of all its past gains. Nevertheless, in many countries and, indeed, whole continents, the crisis of leadership does reach such a level of acuteness”. [3]

This shows a fundamental misunderstanding of Trotskyism. They are saying that the crisis; of leadership can only be central in revolutionary type situations. But what factors push society from nonrevolutionary to revolutionary and from revolutionary to counter-revolutionary situations? And what factors are responsible for the low levels of class struggle and political activity by the working class in nonrevolutionary periods? The question of leadership is fundamental to this. The central factor remains the crisis of proletarian leadership.

Trotsky never meant that only the crisis of leadership was important and when that was resolved all other factors would automatically fall into place. Such an approach, like Workers Power’s revision of Trotsky, shows an abandonment of dialectics and a refusal to understand the dynamics of struggle. The working class defeats suffered in recent years, the disorientation of workers’ organisations, the political demoralisation and disinterest on the part of some workers, all of these things are fundamentally caused by the crisis of leadership. The impact of defeats can reinforce that crisis as the relationship between the class and its leadership is a dialectical and dynamic one.

However the essential point in this relationship is the crisis of proletarian leadership: the epoch we live in makes conditions for socialism ripe the misleadership of the workers and oppressed movements is capitalism’s last salvage. The fundamental task of Trotskyists remains the resolution of the leadership crisis. To misunderstand this is to misunderstand the central basis for the creation of the Fourth International. The LRCI’s position on the crisis of leadership would suggest that the struggle for an international Trotskyist vanguard party is no longer of prime importance rather we should join up with reformist, Stalinist and centrist leaderships to ‘help’ the workers regain their combatively so that in future the crisis of leadership could once again be central! Along with this revisionism Workers Power have a centrist approach to transitional demands. On paper they can raise many correct demands, but when faced with practice they backslide.” [4]

But their refusal explicitly to call for the political regeneration and reconstruction of the Fourth International represented its incomplete split from state capitalism which was personified by the presence within its ranks of a substantial semi-state capitalist minority led by Keith Harvey which represented the tendency to capitulate to mass media-led petty bourgeois public opinion, the essence of the politics of the Cliff tradition as we have noted above.

When the League for the Fifth International (LFI) was founded in 2003 this represented the victory of the semi-state capitalist Fifthist line. Workers Power took this step because
they saw the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum as the movements which would build the new supra-class International. The split documents from the minority in 2006, *The Platform of the Opposition*, explain this further turn away from the working class and Trotskyism in detail, but from an anti-Leninist perspective. Their ‘orthodoxy’ covered their own retreat from the working class, unlike the recent right split by Simon Hardy and Luke Cooper, who don’t even try. The 2006 split in essence charged the majority with being grossly opportunist in pursuing the original opportunist Fifth International orientation:

“The problems that this approach leads to can be demonstrated through our use of the slogan for the Fifth International. The use to which we put this slogan has become tied in with the perspective of the world pre-revolutionary period. There is little time left to resolve the crisis of leadership. We need the Fifth International now. This position also has its origins in the flawed documents of the Sixth Congress. The resolution on building the international today the states: “Important elements of a new mass international are taking shape. This process was expressed first in the wave of co-ordinated international protests against capitalist globalisation. It assumed mass and proletarian form in vast marches against imperialist war. And it achieved a political expression in the Social Forum in Florence, the largest and most extensive assembly of international working class and anti-capitalist movements since the 1920s, in a wave of international solidarity with the Palestinian people, and in a worldwide explosion of anger against US imperialism. The call for demonstrations around 15th February 2003 issued by the first ESF conference led to an unprecedented co-ordination of world wide protest against war with Iraq; 10-15 million rallied to the streets against the imperialist drive to war.”

Neither the ESF nor the marches against the war were purely a “mass and proletarian form” “of a new mass international taking shape”. And nor is a new mass international, in the sense of a new mass international party, “taking shape”. The mobilisations called for by Florence were considerably more complex than that statement suggests. They involved a coalition of forces with vastly differing political projects and class backgrounds. To posit this as the manifestation of the International in waiting, and to then, as we have done, ascribe undue importance to every gathering of the ESF movement as the “make or break” meeting at which we could take a step towards this International, is totally wrong. The ESF is not the International in waiting. It has receded in importance since Florence – as the London gathering conclusively proved – and the forces that lead it have blocked its evolution to the left at every turn. Its calls for action have found less response since February 2003. These are facts. They should alert us to reality – that the formation of an international through a struggle at the ESF or WSF is not the most likely way...
Moreover while the movement has important proletarian forces (mainly reformist led) within it to which we should indefatigably relate it is not, as a movement, “proletarian” in “form”. Only a totally skewed perspective could saddle us with such an approach.” [5] In the 1999 document, 10 Years of the LRCI a former WPB/LRCI member from Bolivia, José Villa, [6] assessed its history and brings out these points. He describes in great detail (see original article for all these) how and why that collapse came about. It is clearly the origin of their political attitude to the wars on Libya and Syria, which the RCIT has wholly inherited without question or reassessment. Here are some extracts from what is a very uncritical estimation of the ‘golden years’ of WPB, from the early 80s to the early 90s. We have highlighted the most important conclusions and points of analysis:

**“Workers Power attempts to revive Trotskyism.”**

“Several failed attempts were made by small orthodox Trotskyist groups with the aim of restoring and developing the Transitional Programme in the face of such terrible bankruptcy. The last significant one was the LRCI. It was created around very good programmatic positions and international analysis.

In a way this organisation was an attempt to fuse the traditions of the Western European comrades around Workers Power (so rich with important theoretical contributions) with the ones developed in revolutionary crises by the comrades who launched an Andean Workers Trotskyist Fraction. Later on other important traditions come to the LRCI and the most significant one was a long established group in New Zealand.
Workers Power originated inside Cliff’s International Socialists and during its first five years (1975-80) it remained as an anti-defencist and state-capitalist group. With the opening of the Second Cold War this group made a radical shift towards orthodox Trotskyism. Under Dave Hughes’ influence Workers Power correctly sided with the Afghan popular front government and the USSR against the pro-CIA Mujahidin.

Andean revolutionaries
In 1985-86 comrades from Peru and Bolivia developed similar conclusions arising from another continent and conditions. They were quite active in the two revolutionary situations that put the so-called Trotskyists to the forefront of the struggles in those years. In Peru the Trotskyites achieved 12% of the votes and were the largest electoral anti-imperialist force during several general strikes.

The Peruvian and Bolivian comrades saw how all the “Fourth Internationals” betrayed so many good possibilities and they adopted a quite radical analysis of the collapse of that international calling for a New International Workers Trotskyist Fraction (FOT). These comrades would maintain very strong links with the workers’ movement. Poder Obrero Bolivia was once elected in the leadership of the main workers union (Huanuni), it still leads a national union and has delegates in the assemblies and congress of the COB (national trade union congress) and when today have comrades in leading positions in the current wave of strikes that is shaking this country.

**LRCI a healthy regroupment**
During the 1980s the groups that constituted the LRCI adopted a clear revolutionary profile. We differentiated from the Stalinophobic currents like the Morenoites, Lambertists or Cliffites who sided with the Afghan clerical-feudal reaction against the USSR or who fought for a Walesa’s Solidarnosc government in Poland. We also demarcated from the Stalinophiles like the Spartacists who hailed the USSR in Afghanistan and Jaruzelski’s coup against the most militant European workers movement. We sided with the left bourgeois government and the Stalinist army against the medievalist reaction but condemning the reactionary methods of the Soviet invasion and war. We defended the Polish workers committees and unions against Stalinist repression without trying to overthrow the Degenerated Workers’ state with a pro-church capitalist restorationist Solidarnosc government and without asking for the release of the prisoners of the KPN and other bourgeois parties.

On the question of the struggle against imperialism we differentiated from currents like the Usec or Healyites that capitulated to the PLO, FSLN and other nationalist movements. We also defended Palestine, Argentina, Ireland, Iran and other oppressed nations in their confrontations against imperialism unlike the Cliffites, Militant or the Spartacists who adopted a pro-imperialist neutral and dual defeatist position.

**New Period test of LRCI**
However, the LRCI did not understand the new period that opened some months after its congress. The disintegration of the Stalinist dictatorships in Eastern Europe did not lead to working class political revolution but to a multi-class democratic social counter-revolution. Trotsky always wanted to replace the bureaucratic dictatorship of the proletariat with a revolutionary one based in workers councils. However, after 1989 a worse scenario happened and forms of the dictatorship of the incipient local bourgeoisie and the multinationals replaced every form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.
At the beginning of the post-1989 events the LRCI adopted correct positions. It fought against any type of German unification and against any bourgeois parliament in the East. It fought for workers democracy but it believed that the restoration of bourgeois democracy was even worse than the authoritarian Workers’ state. In 1990 the LRCI also critically sided with the Stalinists against the Azerbaijani bourgeois independence movement and the pro-imperialist democratic and anti-Communist student demonstration in Rumania.

**LRCI Bends Under imperialist Pressure**

However the LRCI was under the extraordinary great pressure of the pro-democracy imperialist media and public opinion. In 1991 it started to radically shift its policies. It proposed to make a united front with the Lithuanian bourgeois restorationist movement Sajudis and to ask the imperialist powers to intervene in the internal affairs of a workers’ state in order to help them (in fact that was in 1990 – SF). Trotskyist could not support Gorbachev’s repression of the Lithuanian workers because he was not defending the workers against a counter-revolution but neither could they block with imperialism.

In August 1991 when Yeltsin made its counter-coup that finally dismantled the Soviet Union and created a new Russian bourgeois republic, the LRCI proposed a united front with him and all the non-fascist bourgeois parties. This was a radical departure from the original LRCI’s programme that said that revolutionaries should not be in favour of the freedom for bourgeois parties in a workers’ state, and even worse, make blocks with them. During those events revolutionaries should have opposed the Yanayev coup because it was launched against union rights but without making a block with the social counter-revolution and considering always that the latter was the main enemy.

**Petty bourgeois tendency in LRCI**

The introduction of these new right-wing policies created a big conflict at the second LRCI congress (December 1991) in which the leadership of the League was heavily punished. However, after it they decided to introduce new revisions to the programme behind the back of the rank and file. The LRCI’s thesis that the right of self-determination is a bourgeois concept which cannot be mechanically apply to the workers’ states was replaced by supporting unconditionally the right of every nation or ethnic group to separate from a workers’ state even when it could lead to capitalist restoration. Harvey tried to introduce the idea that the struggle for bourgeois parliaments and constituent assemblies were progressive in the workers’ states. He was defeated when he attempted to revise our line on Germany to say that it was wrong to not be in favour of a pan-German constituent assembly in 1989.

The LRCI was becoming an extremely eclectic current which was trying to conciliate its original revolutionary Trotskyist defencism with the pressure of the Western democratic public opinion and Harvey’s anti-defencist theories. That led it to the most bizarre contradictions. It characterised the world situation as a revolutionary period because Stalinism was smashed but also as a counter-revolutionary phase. It confused social and political revolution and both with a democratic social counter-revolution.

**War in Bosnia Brings Split**

In the Balkan wars the LRCI leaders sided with everybody. In the conflict between Serbs and Croats they sided with both camps at the same time. Until November 1992 they opposed the independence of Bosnia and
condemned Izetbegovic’s Bosnian Muslims as reactionary, ethnic cleansers and pro-imperialists. One month later they decided to support them, and later on to ask imperialism to send weapons money and men for them. In 1992 they organised a common demonstration in Vienna with Great Serb monarchists and year later with Muslim and Albanians who were asking for NATO intervention against the Serbs. They always said that they were willing to defend the Serbs against NATO and its Muslim and Croat allies if imperialism bombed them. However, when it happened they called for a dual defeatist position in those bombardments, for more resolve action by the Muslim-Croat troops who were ethnically cleansing almost one million Serbs, and for imperialism to give tanks, planes and missiles to their local puppets. In 1995 all the Latin American comrades were expelled because they organised a tendency proposing that the LRCI defend Haiti and the Serbs against imperialist attacks. Immediately after that the LRCI moved towards a fusion process with the PTS who also defended Serbia and Haiti against the USA. The LRCI decided once more to shift its position. In the last Kosovar conflict it called for the defence of the Serbs. However, it did so in an extremely contradictory way, because it was also for a military victory of the pro-NATO KLA. The LRCI advised the KLA to demand more money and weapons from NATO and to use their massive bombardments to smash the Serbs. It regards and anti-Communist formation that was using US military support to destroy what remained from a workers’ state as ‘petit bourgeois revolutionaries’ - a position that contrasts sharply with the LRCI’s attitude to the Basque nationalist republican ETA, which it denounces as completely reactionary and refuses to defend against Spanish imperialist state repression.

**Class roots of right opportunism**

The LRCI is not a democratic-centralist international. All the power is concentrated in an International Secretariat which is not elected in a congress, it is composed by British full-timers and academics (none of them with the slightest experiences in leading mass demonstrations or revolutionary crises) and have the power to change the programme, statutes, resolutions of the congresses, to break with sympathise sections, to exclude from the organisation entire sections or members of the International Executive Committee (the highest body elected at congresses), or even to change the leadership and policies of the national sections. At the end this his small Secretariat is dominated by one single great leader who could be the treasure, the editor of the journal and the person who does the minutes and edit (change) all the League’s documents. On 4 August 1995 the Croat army was launching the worst ethnic cleansing in the Balkans. An entire Republic (Serb Krajina) was completely depopulated. Helped by previous NATO bombs and financial, military and logistic help the Croat and Muslim troops reversed (carried out? SF) the ethnic cleansing. In that significant moments the LRCI decided to consider the people attacked by the worst imperialist attacks as their main enemy. We considered that it meant the final collapse of the organisation and that we need to openly put publicly our own line.” [7]

**Catastrophism As The Twin Of Opportunism**

We remember Bob Pitt’s description of Gerry Healy’s catastrophism above; “impending economic collapse, the erosion of parliamentary democracy, a drive towards right-wing dictatorship, and imminent revolutionary struggles.” WPB had developed its own
catastrophism to pander to the impatience of its student youth cadre who were used to expel the anti-Leninist conservative minority. But the 2006 minority were able to expose the essential backwardness of their majority opponents on their way out:

Catastrophism And Perspectives

7. The perspectival method of the IS majority can be characterised as “catastrophist”. That is, they argue that the period we are in is marked by the imminence of catastrophe – economic and political crisis, inability of capitalism to expand, inability of bourgeois politics to continue containing the class struggle etc. All of this is because globalisation is exhausted and represents only a regime of stagnation and crisis. If we suggest anything other than this prolonged state of acute crisis then we get charged with pessimism. The characterisation of the world as having entered a “pre-revolutionary period” lies at the heart of the majority’s catastrophism. By this phrase the comrades mean that globalisation is a phase of acute imperialist economic and political crisis that the working class and other movements are moving onto a generalised offensive as a result of this crisis that the task of the hour is building parties and the international in order to prepare for power in the period ahead. [8]

Those who had been WRP members will recognise the formula: impending economic and political catastrophe will produce a revolutionary crisis; we genuine revolutionaries will be called upon to give that leadership which we will be able to supply instantly, no need to win the allegiance of the vanguard in advance and no need to build the International by the traditional methods of political struggle and splits and fusions. If that was not bad enough in 2011 the LFI expelled the old leadership of its Austrian section, because it was a bit too independent-minded and far too leftist for their liking. Ironically they achieved this by mobilising the youth against them. However the new RKOB, the Austrian section of the RCIT, became even more catastrophist and youth vanguardist than their former comrades. They produced the following assessment of the August 2011 riots in Britain:

“The political situation in Britain: a pre-revolutionary development. It is crucial that activists in Britain have a correct assessment of the political situation, derive the right political perspectives, and try to implement them – as much as it is possible for them given their strength – into practice. The worldwide decline of capitalism has also shaken the economic and political system of Britain deeply. Spreading poverty and unemployment and welfare cuts are the result. It is inevitable that this historic crisis of the capitalist system provokes sharp class struggles, including a number of (pre) revolutionary and counter-revolutionary situations. That is why we from the RKOB speak of a world-historical period in which humanity is faced with the alternative “socialism or barbarism”. The uprising of the poor in Britain – as Darcus Howe noted correctly – is part of a wave of revolutionary events in the recent past: the Arab Revolution and the general strikes and occupations in Greece and Spain. Already in the autumn of 2010 hundreds of thousands of youth held a mass protest in Britain, which culminated in the storming of the Tory party headquarters. This was followed on 26th March 2011 by a day of action organized by the TUC with half a million demonstrators. And eventually on 30 June 750,000 employees in public service went on strike. In short, after the mass protests of the youth in the education sector and the strikes of the trade unions, the lower strata of the working class, blacks and migrants have now entered the battlefield of class struggle with their uprising. All this underscores that Britain is going
through a pre-revolutionary development. “[9]

A RKOB delegation to London during the riots were accommodated by a Socialist Fight comrade. We listened in amazement whilst the above perspectives were outlined to us. A tall, strong youth refused a drink at the bar after a public meeting. He explained that he wanted to be “ready”. “For what?” we asked. “To lead the revolution, of course, that’s why we came here”. It should be obvious that an uprising/riot, even one as widespread and violent as that of 2011, could not be a revolution. It had no organised working class input, it dissipated its energy in all directions, it was the expression of incoherent rage at the oppression and victimisation of the youth and their willingness to fight. But it could not be organised or led because it really was a spontaneous outbreak of anger.

expose the non-revolutionary British left: “Recognising the character of the uprising as a form of class struggle of the lower and oppressed strata of the working class, a revolutionary organisation would have immediately after the beginning of this spontaneous rebellion issued a public call to support and join the uprising.”

Whilst all serious revolutionaries sympathised with the anger of the oppressed youth and defended them against the police and exposed the shocking brutal sentences handed down by the courts, we did not think the revolution had started in August 2011. Our Comrade Emma had a more balanced view of the riots:

“For well over forty years now, the number of deaths in police custody has averaged one a week. Yet no police officer has been found guilty of murder or has even been charged. Although the spark for the uprising on the 6th was the murder of Mark Duggan, and the police assault on the 16 year old girl, it is the government’s social and economic policies that led to this explosion of violence. It has been brewing for some time. The regime now seeks to shift the blame elsewhere. Tottenham has the highest level of unemployment in London. Half the borough’s children live in poverty. Youth project funding has been slashed by 75% this year, eight of the borough’s 13 youth clubs have shut.

There were uprisings here, (as well as in other communities) in 1981 and in 1985. Many people who work receive such miserly wages that they still have to claim benefits from the State in order to pay their rents. So we as taxpayers are actually subsidizing these criminal employers.
The young people who took to the streets have grown up in a society where corruption is rampant and where criminality gets rewarded. They have seen bankers blatantly stealing the nation’s wealth, billions of pounds have been looted from public funds yet they continue to pay themselves hefty bonuses despite the “debt crisis” and they get away with it. These young people have seen MPs steal our money through fraudulent “expenses” claims and luxury lifestyles. Hospitals and other necessary services are starved of funding, and people die, this is also violence for which the regime is responsible. Nobody is prosecuting the bankers for robbing us, or the politicians, Press and Police for corruption. How can stealing a pair of trainers equate with the billions of pounds stolen by the bankers and politicians, (against whom no charges have been brought) yet these youngsters are being carted off to prison with sentences being meted out that do not reflect the crimes. Decades of unemployment, poverty and “Stop and Search” (of Black men) has caused these desperately oppressed and brave young people to unite against the criminals in the regime in Whitehall.

The scandals in the Murdock Press empire highlighted the corruption of the police, this was not news to the Black community which has borne the brunt of police violence/corruption over the years. The newspapers, controlled by the ruling class, were more than willing to slander the poor with demeaning epithets trying to make injustice acceptable and perpetuating racist stereotypes. The “flog ‘em and hang ‘em” brigade is calling for more repression, because the actions of the young have undermined the fundamentals of capitalist society by challenging private property- goods and property were targeted, not people. Much has been made of the looting, but capitalist culture radiates consumerism. Capitalist society flaunts luxury products and luxury lifestyles before these young people, who have no hope of ever attaining these things and this contributes to their alienation. The constant message is you are what you wear, what you drive etc. Cameron has now appointed someone from the Fourth Reich to lead the Police service, so things can only get worse. The only two Black MPs in the regime, (for Haringey and Hackney) have been baying for blood just like the fascists. They have been calling for more repression and a curtailment of the civil and human rights of the very people to whom they owe their cushy positions. These
MPs are immoral, unscrupulous, despicable and without principles.
The rulers of the society are a bunch of criminals, it is criminal to steal from the public purse and to send armies to other countries to murder and to steal resources. It is criminal to bomb innocent women and children in the name of democracy. We’ve had uprisings before. The lesson people need to learn is that the source of their misery is the capitalist system of production. The only way to break this vicious cycle is to organize to end capitalism. We don’t have to accept austerity.” [10]

As we have seen from 1991 WPB began increasingly to seek out non-proletarian petty bourgeois forces such as bourgeois nationalists in the Baltic States, the right-populist forces of capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe and the USSR, the Izetbegović government in Bosnia and the KLA, the US imperialist sponsored mafia gangster ‘liberation’ movement, in Kosovo. Later came the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum, student/youth vanguardism, etc. as a substitute for the working class.

The Fourth International or the Fifth International?
“Trotskyist-centrists” groups did emerge from the degeneration of the Fourth International and do recruit from (some more than others) the working class and its organisations. They are a part of the workers’ movement and moreover that part which contains the most self-sacrificing and subjectively revolutionary elements from the working class and serious student and intellectual circles and which must be won to consistent Trotskyism to achieve the world revolution. It is nonsense to proclaim that we will orient to the trade unions and to the Labour/Social Democratic bourgeois workers’ parties and not to the subjectively revolutionary elements which also orient in that direction. This policy contains a big element of political cowardice, a lack of confidence in the strength and correctness of our own revolutionary Trotskyist politics and in our own membership and their ability to fight and win if properly educated and directed against those who can seriously challenge their politics. And there is no better school of Trotskyism for the youth and all new adherents to revolutionary Trotskyism than the class struggle itself in its three separate but inextricably bound aspects, the industrial, the political and the ideological.
The LFI had superceded the League for the Revolutionary Communist International (LRCI) by then, signalling the victory of the Fifth International tendency against the Forthists. The following extracts are from the Permanent Revolution group which was formed from the expelled 30% minority. Its own politics were libertarian from older comrades who had become demoralised by the 32-year struggle and were giving up on revolutionary politics. Although the expelled minority made many correct points against the majority it did not reassess its history and the political collapse of 1990-91 as outlined above by Villa. In particular it retained the capitulation to imperialism on the abandonment of the theory of the AIUF so ably defended by Stuart King in that 1987 polemic with the Italian GOR. [11]

During the imperialist-sponsored attack on Libya in early 2011 Gerry Downing challenged Stuart King that he had abandoned this political position and he shamefacedly admitted that he had and asserted that “the GOR were right” against him in that debate. No section of the mass media opposed the war against Libya, launched and sponsored by the US and its agents in Benghazi under the guise of the Arab Spring unlike the support the Daily Mirror and the Liberal Demo-
the weaknesses are the result of imperialist action. If, under cover of the no-fly zone, Libyan insurgents and revolutionaries can re-take positions, undermine the morale or the loyalty of Gaddafi’s troops and even advance on the capital, Tripoli, that is a step forward for the Libyan revolution and should be welcomed.”

It would certainly be welcomed by world imperialism and every reactionary state in the Gulf. But what of the politics of the leadership and where it was going politically and what about those black workers? This has escaped WPB entirely; another advocate of the anti-Trotskyist stagiest notion of the ‘democratic revolution’ and the ‘Arab revolution’. No worries the ‘Libyan revolution’ (more of the same) is proceeding swimmingly, or would be if our plans, and those of the Benghazi reactionaries and world imperialism, were not being thwarted by that ‘dictator’ Gaddafi and his brainwashed followers. Their former comrades in Permanent Revolution have no doubts about supporting the reactionary rebels: “Libya: imperialists move to control uprising (10 March 2011)

Before this Simon Hardy had acknowledged a few problems in: “Libya – a revolutionary civil war”

“The lack of a revolutionary working class is a central factor why Libya was different to the other countries.” Might be connected with those murders of black workers, Simon? And anyway we had a very adequate substitute; those CIA-sponsored reactionaries will do the job just as well. “As the fighting rages in Libya sinister forces in the western world gather” Indeed they do, Simon, those CIA

Even the pacifists did not buy the CIA-sponsored ‘Revolution’ in Libya and Syria, like Workers Power and the RCIT did.
agents plotting with their imperialist-sponsored clients in Benghazi we suppose?

Well no. Simon, in a statement that puts WPB well to the right of the SWP and the Socialist party and close to the pro-imperialists of the AWL, blazing the path for the United Front of Obama, Cameron and Sarkozy demanded his own imperialist United Front on 26/3: “The overriding question in Libya today is not “Who are the imperialists attacking?” It is “How can the Libyan Revolution succeed in overthrowing Gaddafi’s regime?” A united front with Gaddafi in this situation would be literally impossible… Within Libya, we oppose the calls on the imperialists to intervene but that does not prevent the forces of the democratic revolution taking advantage of the impact of the imperialists’ intervention against Gaddafi. It would be bizarre, indeed, to refuse to continue the campaign against Gaddafi’s repressive apparatus because it had been weakened by imperialist action!”

You see comrades by ‘democracy’ the imperialists mean the right of finance capital to penetrate that economy at will and exploit its people and rob its natural resources. If we had a real successful revolution in any or all of these countries it would not be called a ‘democratic revolution’ at all, but the dictatorship of the proletariat. And it would have to do many of the things that that old dictator Gaddafi has done in the past to ensure survival. That is it would have to execute the counter-revolutionaries, the CIA agents and their unfortunate deluded and confused followers just like the Bolsheviks. With the working class in the saddle it would be the majority class and would not suppress workers’ organisations as he has done, but enshrine them as the ruling class.

And it would be the victim of vicious lying imperialist propaganda, just as the early Soviets were, just as Stalin’s regime was and China, Cuba, North Korea and Libya are today. We would have to sort out the truth from the lies, to defend the gains of the revolutions whilst rejecting those leaderships who were merely protecting them as the source of their own privileges. And there would be plenty soft left groups like WPB to swallow whole the lies and regurgitate them for us with a leftist, ‘Trotskyist’ gloss.

The Workers Power stuff is an incredible mass of self contradictory nonsense, just like their line on the Balkans in the 1990s. The ‘revolutionaries’ who are led by reactionaries are fighting the reactionaries who are led by worse reactionaries, it seems. There is no revolutionary working class; nevertheless this revolution is unfolding in a continuation of the struggles for ‘democracy’ and the ‘democratic revolution’ in Egypt and Tunisia, where the working class is playing a vital role.

There is no mention that Gadaffi was a bulwark against imperialist finance capital and Zionism just some puerile tut-tutting about the pro-imperialism of the leaders these ‘revolutionaries’ unfortunately have got right now.

This is how Workers Power managed to support the KLA on Kosovo, and ended up with Camp Bondsteel and a US colony in the heart of Europe led by CIA sponsored gangsters with close ties to the Italian and Albanian mafia who made their money harvesting the body parts of kidnapped opponents and friends in a clinic in Albania. This is where support for ‘democracy’ led.

To substitute Gaddafi for Chiang Kai-shek in Trotsky on China in 1937 the LCFI defended the “remainder of the independence of Libya” – Gaddafi was not totally controlled by imperialism.

“The Eiffelite imbeciles try to jest about this “reservation.” “The Trotskyists,” they say, “want to serve Gaddafi in action and the proletariat in words.” To participate actively
and consciously in the war does not mean ‘to serve Gaddafi’ but to serve the independence of a (semi) colonial country in spite of Gaddafi’.

Reply to Michael Pröbsting (RCIT): Liberation Struggles and imperialist Interference
The 10,800 word article by Michael Pröbsting Liberation struggles and imperialist interference in Revolutionary Communism News Newsletter of the Revolutionary Communist International Tendency (Reit), No. 12, 24/10/2012 deserves some consideration because it seeks to defend their indefensible pro-imperialist position on Libya and attacks those who took a principled stance. The Revolutionär-Kommunistische Organisation zur Befreiung – RKOB is the Austrian-based leading group. Michael Pröbsting says, “Examples for such a reactionary position (sectarian anti-imperialism—Ed) are the Liaison Committee of the Communist League (Brazil), the Revolutionary Marxist Group (South Africa) and Socialist Fight (Britain) or the ICL/Spartacists, the Internationalist Group/LFI of Jan Norden or the Stalinist group the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist)”

We reject lumping together the positions of the Liaison Committee of the Fourth International with those of the ICL/Spartacists and the Internationalist Group/LFI. There are big differences; these two groups and the International Bolshevik Tendency, the third member of the ‘Spart family’, refused to defend Libya against the CIA-directed Benghazi rebels in their proxy war on Gaddafi from the outset and never took the principled orientation of the Anti-Imperialist United Front, adopting the softer and incorrect line of a ‘military bloc’, as against the positions of the early Comintern under Lenin and Trotsky, which Trotsky defended until his assassination in 1940.

However incorrect the label of ‘sectarian anti-imperialists’ might be for the first three groups mentioned it is at least arguable in terms of the political orientation of the RCIT. But it is clearly a lying political amalgam to lump in the ultra-Stalinist Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) with the three; their leader Harpar Brar took a totally unprincipled position of uncritical political defence of Gaddafi himself, visiting Tripoli to implicitly express contempt for the oppressed migrant workers in particular who suffered so badly under the regime and the pacts with imperialism which resulted in the detention of immigrants bound for Europe in concentration camps in the desert, etc. And we reject also the suggestion that we hold the position of the old WRP under Gerry Healy and the present position of the WRP under Sheila Torrance who are similarly uncritical of Gaddafi albeit in the name of the objectively unfolding world revolution which found its unconscious agents in the form of Gaddafi, Arafat, Saddam and even Khomeini and not of the two stage revolution of the Stalinists, even if that is the ultimate logic of the Healyite position.

They say, “We are anti-imperialist because we take the stance of the working class … and not the other way round” This is the position of the ‘Eiffelite imbeciles’ above. We must be anti-imperialist because Wall Street-dominated global finance capital controls all our lives. In claiming that they are taking the “stance of the working class” the RCIT mean supporting pro-imperialist workers in metropolitan countries who do not understand this, which is what all the Fifth Internationalist groupings which originated from WPB do. “The Bolsheviks-Communists support any real movement of the popular masses against the suppression of democratic rights” says Michael. But what is a “real movement”? As Trotsky says, “but the masses are by no
means identical: there are revolutionary masses, there are passive masses, there are reactionary masses.”

Then, “In reality the imperialist meddling is no help for the revolutionary-democratic struggle, but threatens to undermine it. That is why we have supported progressive liberation struggles of the masses against dictatorships, but at the same time rejected sharply imperialist interventions. (e.g. the struggle of the Bosnians 1992-95, the Kosovo Albanians in 1999, the uprising against the Gaddafi dictatorship in Libya in 2011).”

But your ‘rejection of imperialist interventions’ was purely verbal, you supported it and alibied it in practice by pretending it was not happening because it was a proxy war ‘confined’ to mass bombing in Libya and there were no openly admitted ‘boots on the ground’. If fact there were thousands of Qatari troops and US and UK Special Forces operating in Libya as they are today in Syria. And note the ‘threatens to undermine’ bit. As we will see he goes on to claim that they failed in this putative endeavour and the ‘revolution’ has succeeded as a ‘partial dual power’ situation.

They say, “Our anti-imperialism is a consequence of our fundamental position on the class struggle and not an overriding principle, which resides above the class struggle.” If anti-imperialism is not ‘an overriding principle’ it follows that there could be some pro-imperialist struggles that better serve the interests of the working class than defeating global imperialism, like defeating the local tyrant with the support of imperialism. This is a statement of gross opportunism and a forthright rejection of fundamental Marxist positions!

And now Michael tries to portray himself as a principled Trotskyist:

“Our method is that during such just democratic or national liberation struggles we are on the side of the liberation fighters (who are mostly under bourgeois or petty-bourgeois leaderships) and support their military victo-
ry. We sharply differentiate between these progressive liberation struggles and the interests of the imperialist powers. While we support the first, we totally oppose the later. Hence we Bolshevik-Communists reject any imperialist interference and call for the defeat of the imperialist forces.”

But you did none of this. The ‘liberation fighters’ were reactionary pro-imperialist and al-Qaeda forces. You therefore supported imperialist forces and called for their victory on behalf of imperialism in all these conflicts and now in Syria.

On Syria we polemised against the RCIT in its confused pro-imperialist line by Yossi Schwartz in Socialist Fight 13:

“Yossi on the leadership of ‘the revolution’ in Syria. Yossi now finds himself to the right of his former IMT comrades on the question of the leadership of this ‘revolution’.

In an article on 14th March 2013 ‘What The Assad Regime Was and What It Has Become – Part Three, the IMT’s Fred Weston says:

“... the situation is now far more complicated. Many revolutionary youth are still fighting to remove the hated dictator and all his hangers on. But what determines the real nature of the opposition as a whole is its leadership and its programme. It is true that some sections of the Free Syrian Army have clashed with the fundamentalists that they see as having hijacked their revolution, but what is their alternative? The programme is fundamentally one of bourgeois democracy at best and Islamic fundamentalist reaction at worst. We must speak the truth and explain honestly what has happened. We are for the downfall of Assad, but we are also against imperialist intervention and the manoeuvres of the reactionary regimes in the region.”

Yossi’s article, Victory to Revolution in Syria assesses the opposition to Assad thus:

“The ability of the Bashar al-Assad regime to survive so far is largely due to the lack of working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition. There are many local committees that could become Soviets and which are continuing to provide services. But they lack coordination and a revolutionary strategy. Equally, the resistance is still made up of countless formations of loosely connected armed militants, with no credible unified revolutionary command. The fractured character of this armed resistance is a result not only of the social segmentation and isolation policies enforced for decades by Damascus but also because of the class nature of the opposition at the moment.”

“The middle class leaders of the uprising are blaming each other for the failure. The secu-
lars blame the Islamists while the Islamists are blaming the secularists. The simple truth is that the middle class organizations – whether they are secularists or Islamists – do not have the program, strategy or tactics to mobilize the masses workers and peasants to overthrow the bloody regime. If the leaders of the opposition hate Assad they are at the same time afraid of working class revolution. If there is a clear lesson to learn it is that without the working class, women and men leading the masses including the lower middle class and without a revolutionary leadership of the working class the stalemate can continue for a longer period.”

This is all “if your aunt was a man she’d be your uncle” stuff: “There are no working class independent mobilization at the head of the opposition” – because it is an imperialist sponsored counter-revolutionary opposition. “There are many local committees that could become Soviets”. But they are sows’ ears and not silk purses. “But they lack coordination and a revolutionary strategy” because they are counter-revolutionary. There is a problem with “the class nature of the opposition at the moment” – it is a reactionary, imperialist-sponsored bourgeois movement. If only, if only it was not what it is it would be something else. At least Fred Weston can acknowledge the bitter truth: “But what determines the real nature of the opposition as a whole is its leadership and its programme”. But Fred ignores imperialist sponsorship so the unstoppable Arab Spring still dazzles him into support; Yossi ignore these problems and plumbs for the Sunni Muslims.

The ISL and Muslim fundamentalists

The correct attack by the ISL on the IMT for refusing to defend Hamas against Arafat’s Zionist-US-sponsored thugs has now morphed into a strategic alliance with the fundamentalist Muslims. “Palestine united and free from the river to the sea” is a Hamas slogan used by the ISL and makes difficult any alliance with Israeli workers. This turn away from the working class is far clearer in Yossi’s Victory to the Revolution in Syria statement. In the split debate the ISL charged the LRP with failure to defend the fundamentalist against French imperialism. We have looked at the LRP statement and the subsequent notes in reply to readers and can find no substance in this charge at all. Despite big differences with the LRP over Libya and Syria the LRP statements on Mali seem principled and correct to us. Moreover the LRP counter charged the ISL with a failure to criticise the fascistic barbarism of the fundamentalist in Mali and assert that as the source of the disagreement that caused the split. We feel there is substance to this charge. In Yossi’s statement on Syria he explicitly defends his position on ‘Islamism’:

“Thus it is clear that at least until now the Western imperialists have not armed the rebels and the reason they have not armed the rebels is because they do not trust them as many of them are Islamists. The problem the imperialists have in Syria is the relative strength of the Islamists in the mass movement.”

Of course imperialism has armed the rebels, both on their own accord and via Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. They have not supplied them with heavy weapons or air cover; apparently Syria’s air defences are very sophisticated. And it is true that they are nervous about what the fundamentalist might do to Israel and the reaction of Russia, China and Iran. Yossi’s criticism amounts to a demand that imperialism arm the FSA now; he may get his wish soon. But the next statement brings out his capitulation very clearly: “At this conjuncture of history in Afghanistan, in Palestine, in Mali the imperialists are
on one side and the Islamists on the other. This of course can be changed and this would not be the first time in the history of the last 100 years that the Islamists would serve the imperialists. But today the Islamists are fighting against the imperialists and today Revolutionary Marxists are on the same side as the Islamists in the conflict against Assad’s tyranny without giving the petit bourgeois or bourgeois secular or religious forces any political support (our emphasis)”.

We do not have to go back 100 years to find ‘Islamists’ in the service of imperialism. The CIA sponsored Bin Laden and armed the Afghan Mujahideen against the USSR in the 80s. The CIA sponsored the fundamentalist Muslim zealots in Libya against Gaddafi. And at this very moment they are sponsoring another wing of the same movement that now dominates the Syrian opposition, the Muslim Brotherhood, in Egypt to smash that revolutionary struggle in which the working class has played and is playing such a vital part. imperialist-sponsored fundamentalists are leading the attacks on the working class in Tunisia. The Turkish AKP government has accepted Israel’s Obama-dictated apology over the murders of their nine citizens on the Mavi Marmara by Israel the better to co-ordinate their assault on Assad. And the very same Hamas, in which Yossi places such faith, has made clear that it will cut a deal with Israel if possible to betray the Palestinians, just as Arafat did before them and Abbas is doing now. It has rejected its traditional alliance with Shi’a-dominated Syria and Iran and now proclaims itself Sunni Muslim in alliance with the Sunni/Whabhi reactionary imperialists stooges in Egypt and Saudi.

On 28 March 2013 The Times of Israel approvingly reported that the FSA had: “retaliated against what it claimed were Hezbollah hostilities and bombarded the group’s interests inside Lebanon”. The Hezbollah are Shi’a Muslims and the third target of the US and Israel.

End of the Road for the 2006 Split

Let us now record the end of the road for the 2006 split from WPB and of the 2011 split which formed the Anti Capitalist Initiative with the 2006, who had denounced this approach so vehemently in their 2006 split document. It seems WPB is shortly to follow them into the International Socialist Network, the right-moving state capitalist split from the SWP last. The RCIT may shortly be the only group claiming that heritage. Here a few extracts from their political obituary in Weekly Worker No 990 (12 December 2013):

“Liquidationism: End of the road, The Anti-Capitalist Initiative is about to fold. Meanwhile the International Socialist Network looks set to splinter. Harley Filben explores the politics of the marsh:

Alas, it has – for all intents and purposes – now reached the end of the line. A national
meeting of the organisation resolved to dissolve the ACI into the International Socialist Network – well, sort of. There is no mechanism for making any binding decisions in the ACI, its refusal to adopt any such mechanism being one of the many indicators of its short shelf life. Where branches are functioning – principally Manchester and Birmingham – they will continue their independent existence. The group has never taken hold in London, however, so the core comrades – composed principally of the ex-Workers Power members who set up the now-defunct Permanent Revolution group, and a number of younger ex-WP comrades around Simon Hardy and Luke Cooper – will simply transfer their standing orders to the ISN.

It makes a certain sense. Having been through a very different factional struggle in the Socialist Workers Party, the founders of the ISN have arrived at more or less the same conclusions, albeit with a more SWPish flavour. The ISN has functioned primarily to attract various individuals who have found themselves outside the SWP over the years, for one reason or another. Some of the older heads from the PR half of the ACI, indeed, were once members of the SWP or its predecessor, the International Socialists. In practical terms, ACI comrades have dedicated themselves to building Left Unity (with some exceptions, of course, and no coherence, given the ACI’s utterly individualistic and atomised character).

It is hardly a coincidence that the ex-Workers Power flotsam should wash up on the same shore as the ISN jetsam; but it is in fact the same political dynamic that ensures first the ACI and then the ISN should run so rapidly into difficulties. That dynamic is liquidationism. Lest I be accused of political ‘anathematisation’ by comrade Seymour and his allies, I should stress that this hardly means the comrades are not sincere. Hardy, Cooper and the PR people come from a political tradition that suppressed public criticism of some pretty absurd political perspectives over the last two decades; most ISN comrades were treated in much the same way, before their departure from the SWP, as the ‘Trotsky-Bukharin gang’ was by 1930s Stalinists, although without the final recourse to mass murder.

The trouble with this approach is, firstly, that it is ultimately depoliticising. This was almost laughably obvious during the history of the ACI. At its founding meeting, it decided not to decide on even the most elementary political line. When, at its next meeting, it decided once again to defer any such decision, Workers Power walked out (as is WP’s habit – comrade Hardy learned from the best). Those of us who had ‘given it a year’ wondered if we might have to start thinking in weeks.

Their excuse on each occasion was that ‘more time’ was needed to ‘discuss’ the way forward – the implication being that greater unity would be reached, as it were, by osmosis. This process has actually had the opposite effect – the best part of 100 comrades, initially at least, had in their overwhelming majority been until very recently members of the same centralised Trotskyist “fighting propaganda group”. Now they are scattered among 57 varieties of no-doubt worthy activism; some, like comrades Hardy and Cooper themselves, are gearing up to be minor-league public intellectuals (I remain unconvinced); others have collapsed into irrationalist feminism. They are not all in Left Unity, and within it they are scattered across the different platforms.”

**South Africa and the 1994 vote**

Finally let us take the question of the vote for the ANC in the 1994 elections as advocated...
by the RIL and the LTT/CWG. All the previous political explanations in this document around the question of method are involved in this discussion. In the first place we wish to defend the political approach to the revolution in South Africa of the LTT and the section that was evolving towards it in 1991, the Comrades for a Workers Government.

In South Africa at the Crossroads, Draft theses on the present situation we extract the following:

This document was written in March 1991. Since then, the perspectives contained in it have in all important respects been confirmed. The ANC leadership has largely failed to carry out the decisions of the Consultative Conference. As a result, the offensive of the Inkatha attacks has continued without effective response by the ANC-SACP alliance. The recent attack by 1,000 armed Inkatha thugs on a squatter township, following hard on the heels of the threat by Inkatha that it was prepared to deploy 100,000 armed troops in order to crush its opposition in the townships, amply demonstrate the pathetically weak position that the ANC has been placed in at the hands of its own leadership.

In the meanwhile, De Klerk can smile smugly at the ease with which the plans of the ruling class have fallen into place. The ANC timidly backed down even on the extended May 9 deadline it set. Having long ago compromised on the pre-conditions of the Harare Declaration, it has now even further narrowed the scope of its immediate political demands on the regime. By virtually begging the regime to stop the violence and abdicating responsibility for organising armed defence units, it has yet again given De Klerk the opportunity simply to exercise a crackdown on all political activity. All the ANC leadership can say in response is that De Klerk has taken up the ANC’s pleas in too harsh a manner. Now the apartheid courts have handed Winnie Mandela a six year sentence. While De Klerk and his allies grow more confident, within the masses of South Africa the mood of political anger, frustration and despair grows.

Cosatu’s recently launched three month campaign of action for a constituent assembly provides a great opportunity for worker militants in its ranks to turn the political tide. They should grasp the moment, at last put their revolutionary stamp on the unfolding events by militantly raising all the political and economic demands of the work-
ing class. This document offers a guide to such action.
Similarly, the run in period to the ANC Congress in June provides an important political opportunity for its militant worker and youth supporters. On the basis of the perspectives in this document, they too should vigorously struggle to take things onto a higher plane and ensure that the political rifts in the ANC deepen. They must now grasp the truth that unless the masses seize the initiative and break out of the negotiations framework, a monstrous betrayal is all that can be expected.
For the workers in Cosatu and the proletarian militants in the ANC, consistent revolutionary struggle can only mean a political and organisational break with the ANC-SACP alliance and the establishment of an alternative revolutionary Marxist vanguard party. Without it there will be neither socialist revolution nor socialism. This document is directed at securing these noble aims.

THE TASKS OF THE TROTSKYIST VANGUARD, May 1991
1. Trotskyists must penetrate the ANC-SACP milieu on the basis of a programme of action along the lines developed above. In the course of fighting for such a programme of action and with a view to dispelling the illusions in peaceful reform, a mighty political offensive must be conducted against the ANC-SACP leadership.
2. In fighting to bring the masses to active political life, through a vigorous struggle to implement our programme of action, and through a consistent fight against the bankrupt ANC-SACP leadership, the way will be prepared for an inevitable split in these organisations. The fault lines that have already emerged are expressions of the class divisions within the ANC and the SACP. These are inevitable, given the popularity and mass base of these organisations.
3. But the spontaneous, half-conscious dissatisfaction of rank-and-file militants must be given political coherence and organised expression. Only the forces of Trotskyism have the political principles and programme to offer a way out for the genuinely revolutionary proletarian elements within the ANC and the SACP. Immediate political and organisational conclusions must be drawn; an alternative revolutionary organisation of the working class must be established.
4. At the same time as penetrating the proletarian base of the ANC-SACP alliance in its township structures – and this does not exclude the tactic of entry – we must concentrate forces inside the unions, especially in Cosatu. All efforts must go into freeing the unions from the deadly political influence of the ANC-SACP.
5. In the present context, there are innumerable opportunities for taking up this fight and exposing the rotten role of these organisations, not only on the basis of propaganda but, even better, of living experience. The implementation of our programme of action will inevitably lead to the kind of political differentiation required to take the struggle forward. Its ultimate result will be the separation of those who are prepared to go all the way with the bourgeoisie and thereby betray the proletariat, from those who grasp the necessity for completely breaking with the bourgeoisie, preparing for the seizure of power by the working class and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat over the bourgeoisie.
6. Trotskyists must not shrink from practical blocs with the centrists inside and outside the ANC and the SACP (e.g. in the MWT, in WOSA, in AZAPO, etc.); indeed, to facilitate our political aims, they must initiate such practical agreements, so as both to expand
the arena for fighting for our programme of action and to facilitate militant mass action and independent mobilisation of all sections of the black working class, as well as to win recruits to Trotskyism. But such blocs must never imply the smoothing over of political differences; on the contrary, while proving ourselves to be the most energetic and fearless militants of the fighting proletariat, the anti-Marxist programme and politics of the centrist must be mercilessly exposed before audiences of advanced workers and youth.

7. The immediate task is thus to constitute a nucleus of a genuine Bolshevik party in South Africa. This nucleus must immediately clarify and publish its principled and programmatic perspectives with the aim of winning the best elements in the unions and in the township organisations to it. To this end there must be a vigorous struggle to produce a propaganda organ of the nucleus of the vanguard party, for the widest possible circulation within militant circles of the black workers and the proletarian youth.

8. Where there is such a burning need for political clarity, with the existence of a clear and farsighted Trotskyist nucleus, we are confident that the technical and material means will be found to regularly produce such a vital publication. [13]

Understanding the politics of the ANC, the SACP and Cosatu leaders did not solve the problem of how to intervene in the struggle. As we have comprehensively exposed above the WPB/RCIT have no understanding of the Transitional Programme and method at all. The Comrades for a Workers Government are clear here on the possibility of entry into the ANC/SACP. It is straight to the masses with the revolution like Bukharin and the early leftist who suffered from that infantilism in 1920. The decision to call for a vote for the ANC in the 1994 elections ALONE was because of the nature of those elections. We must not make the mistake of thinking that because revolutionaries understand the laws class struggle that the masses do as well. We must be with them in their struggles and sympathetically listen to how they see the struggle. The RCIT has conceded on the principle of voting for a mass petty bourgeois part in struggle with imperialism in conceding a vote for Sinn Fein the north of Ireland in the early 1980s. We contend that the ANC did not become transformed from a petty bourgeois nationalist party into a straight bourgeois nationalist party until after that 1994 elections. In any case that was how the Black masses understood them in 1994. As the RIL document explains:

"Trotskyists have to fight to break the workers and the masses from the ANC. In the elections it was essential to fight for the
pendent working class organisation and action, including defence to expose the treachery of the ANC, and to call for the unions and mass organisations to build a Workers Party, all of which was the position taken by the ITC. But this fight had to be taken into the living experience of the masses, who saw a vote for the ANC as constituting themselves as a nation, voting for social change and defending ‘their’ elections against sabotage. That is why we understood that on that basis and as part of that strategy (and not for any other reasons) consistent Trotskyists had to be in favour of a vote for the ANC.”

The Black masses voted in 1994 to end Apartheid, that was how they saw their vote for the ANC, and like Lenin explained in 1920 and Trotsky explained in relationship to the British Labour bourgeois workers’ party up to his death it was a vote that ‘supports them like the rope supports a hanged man’. It enabled communists to gain the ear of workers. The 2006 minority castigated WPB for walking away from this historic position: “The Workers’ Party and Tactics Towards Reformism

Another area of difference, one that primarily affected the British section, concerned tactics towards reformism. WPB had historically taken a critical electoral support position towards the Labour Party. We regarded Lenin’s description of the Labour Party as a “bourgeois workers party” – a party with a bourgeois reformist programme and leadership but with a working class base mainly through the affiliated trade unions – as correct and still accurate.

The United front – placing demands on Labour, trying to win its working class supporters to struggle and revolutionary politics, and mobilising reformist workers in a fight with their leaders, inside and outside the Labour Party – is still a crucial tactic in our view. Critical electoral support was part of this tactic – gaining a hearing with reformist workers, putting their party to the test of office, winning these workers to a revolutionary alternative.

This was a tactic not a strategy – if we had been larger we would have stood revolutionary candidates against Labour. We supported “class struggle candidates” where workers in struggle represented a real break from Labour and stood against the party. We actively supported and helped build the Socialist Alliance (SA). One of our faction’s members was a parliamentary candidate for it in Greenwich while another was on the SA’s executive.

Part of this struggle against Labour reformism was a fight to democratise the political fund. This was designed to break Labour’s monopoly hold on TU political funds and allow unions nationally and locally to fund and support other working class political parties as well as Labour – like the SSP in Scotland. This was the position WP argued for in the SA and was a tactic the Alliance used with some success with many faction members playing a leading role in mobilising a thousand strong trade union conference on the issue.

In the last two years, against our opposition, WP has abandoned all of these positions. It now calls on trade unionists to disaffiliate from Labour even though there is no “workers’ party” to affiliate to.

This is a recipe for encouraging the growth of apolitical trade unionism – a danger that now faces the FBU since its disaffiliation a general abstentionist position in elections – calling on workers not to vote is somehow “relating to the vanguard”. Worse, in one document they went so far as to say WPB was not “putting demands on Labour in this conjuncture.” So, no demands on them to repeal anti-unions laws, anti-asylum seeker laws and so on? This was getting ridiculous.” [14]
Notes

[7] Reprinted from *Class Struggle* No 29 September-October 1999 *10 Years of the LRCI*. http://www.geocities.com/communistworker/interbul3.html#10%20Years%20of%20the
[8] Platform of the international tendency in the L5I.
[9] *The strategic task: From the uprising to the revolution!*, These are not “riots” – this is an uprising of the poor in the cities of Britain!, http://www.thecommunists.net/worldwide/europe/britain-uprising-of-the-poor/
[12] Let us put the record straight. MP writes “SF/LCFI holds up the old position of RIL and their then-comrades of the Committee for a Workers Government (South Africa)”. The CWG (SA) were never ‘then-comrades’ with the RIL. They were part of the Leninist-Trotskyst Tendency of which the Workers International League (WIL) was the British section. And the organisation was called the Comrades for a Workers Government.