

MIM Theory

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ORU dissolves and Women, environment and proletarian democracy

MIM in its official literature on the international situation has set forth the lines of demarcation for Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought — namely the question of the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union and China. It is thus with disappointment that we report the collapse of another Maoist organization in the United States — the Organization for Revolutionary Unity (ORU).

ORU's dissolution leaves the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and MIM as the only two political organizations in the United States that uphold Mao and the Cultural Revolution.

ORU had written in support of the Cultural Revolution and against the Khrushchevite restoration of capitalism. While individual members of MIM polemicized with ORU, MIM also distributed significant quantities of ORU literature in xeroxed form. Thus, it could be said that MIM took up a line of struggle with ORU and practical unity wherever possible, especially in distributing ORU literature on Central America, the Cultural Revolution, the Soviet Union, Poland and the RCP. For its part, according to ORU spokespeople, ORU studied and distributed some MIM literature. Despite ORU's collapse, MIM will continue to distribute works by ORU unless any MIM distributor wanted to challenge this practice and bring it to a vote.

What follows is an unofficial view by a MIM comrade put forward for discussion purposes.

ORU's explanation

ORU's explanation for merger with two other non-Maoist organizations is attached as a negative ideological example for the reader's benefit. It is a reminder of many questions that confront Maoists and revolutionary-minded people at this time. It is tempting to point to the announcement as an example of the weakness of the Maoist movement at this time, but that would be presumptuous, as we do not know how significant ORU's practices were. It is also always possible that the splintering and reunification of leftist groups is actually the work of the state.

More on who the FRSO is

It is perhaps useful in this instance to employ the RCP's descriptive rhetoric in regard to these organizations: The unity of ORU, RWH and PUL is like that of Lin Biaoists, Hua Guofengists and Eurocommunists respectively.

ORU held that the split between Mao and his second in command — Lin Biao — eventually doomed the Cultural Revolution.

Revolutionary Workers Headquarters (RWH) is a faction ejected from the Revolutionary Communist Party. It comprised much of the RCP leadership and about 40% of its membership. The internal struggle of the RCP is documented in a book sold by the RCP — *Revolution and Counterrevolution*.

RWH endorsed the arrest of the Gang of Four by Hua Guofeng. RWH never obtained Chinese recognition, however.

As for the Proletarian Unity League (PUL), aside from its theoretical activities, MIM has had no evidence of any political practice by PUL. Perhaps it had merged so well with the Rainbow coalition or the RWH that MIM activists couldn't detect its independent influence.

ORU's gripes with MIM

In member to member polemics with ORU, MIM comrades disagreed with ORU comrades on the nature of the revolution in Nicaragua. One ORU comrade tended to stress that the revolution in Nicaragua was a real one and that it was dogmatism not to recognize it as such.

The ORU comrade, in echoing PUL attacked MIM for seeing itself as the center of revolution. It pointed out the fallacy of vanguardism, mountain-topism, stronghold mentality etc.

Another notable issue is the role of trade unions. ORU claimed roots in trade union struggles and sought to make them a central focus.

Today, as gathered from the ORU announcement, ORU is plugging FRSO work in the Rainbow coalition. (See also the latest issue of International Correspondence, #10, 1987 for a shift of a Stalinist group toward supporting Jesse Jackson) At least some MIM members have held that the Jackson campaign has served to draw Blacks into the Democratic Party, promote illusions and set up the movement against white supremacy for a big fall.

These questions put a distance between ORU and MIM comrades. Both sides inevitably decided to concentrate on their political practices rather than continue full-blown polemics. MIM for its part believes that it is possible for Maoists to have widespread disagreements on the questions raised above in this section.

MIM response: relations with the mass movements

In Marxism-Leninism there is one stupidity with two poles that comes up in the question of the revolutionary organizer's relationship with the masses. On the one hand, there is the liquidationist tendency as evidenced in PUL and now FRSO (also the pro-Albanian tinged Red Dawn Assoc. which recently dissolved) and on the other hand there is the isolated dogmatist position that was especially prominent in the RCP immediately after its split with its Mensheviks.

(This comrade would point out that the Revolutionary Worker has started to carry detailed stories of the mass movements and even photographs of demonstrations. In the past, RCP members had found photographs and stories of demonstrations whether by students or workers or petty-bourgeois forces to be inappropriate for revolutionary purity.)

To the ORU, MIM has argued that starting a group as a party with the aim of becoming a vanguard party is not the same thing as sectarian isolation from the mass movements. It is unfortunate that both ORU and the RCP (until recently, i.e. since about the time their anti-imperialist contingent went to Germany) believe it is impossible to work in close contact with the mass movements without giving up one's independent identity.

The ORU announcement of its own liquidation stresses that PUL and RWH have done considerable work in the trade union and anti-white supremacist movements. They also cite the pro-Deng Xiaoping League of Revolutionary Struggle (LRS) as a hard-working organization.

Indeed, collected impressions indicate that LRS members are hard-working. This is also true, however, of many people in the anarchist movement, the Mobilization for Survival, the Democratic Party and countless bourgeois political groups.

Why does ORU seek to join two groups that are so easily overshadowed in terms of "work" by other groups when the RWH and PUL do not even demarcate the same way as ORU on the cardinal questions?

At best, ORU might expect to win the struggle within the democratic centralist organization on the questions of the Soviet Union and China. This seems unlikely given that it appears that FRSO has no definite stance on these questions at this time. The probable numbers involved, the likely dishonesty of some forces, future plans for uniting with LRS and a host of other factors make it seem unlikely that there is a basis for uniting previously splintered forces.

Of course, it is possible the majority involved in the FRSO are honest forces. In that case, by-gones will be by-gones if developments turn out other than as expected by this MIM comrade.

Reuniting the past or catching up with the future

We suggest here that the reason ORU joined FRSO is its own demoralization and experience from the '60s and '70s. Instead of seeking out new forces to carry forward the revolutionary banner, ORU drops its banner to follow another banner with '60s and '70s experience.

To an extent, the prestige and model of the Chinese Revolution still exists. Hua and Lin Biao supporters claim a portion of that historical prestige. In a sense ORU is trying to go back and unite some of the forces that fell out in the '60s and '70s.

The problem with this approach is that it does not recognize that there is an actual material and historical basis for the broad political divisions discussed above. There is no reason to expect that everyone would unite on the questions of China and the Soviet Union.

That is not to say that joint work is impossible.

Quite the contrary, even the predecessors of the MIM, the RADACADS had a style of working with several different self-styled parties (and mass organizations) including the RCP, CWP, PL, May 19th etc. On concrete issues there is no problem with this. ORU, however, is not only working with other groups, it is dissolving its own independent organization.

This is perhaps an inevitable result of ORU's own relativist and liquidationist approach to knowledge, political line and party-building as expressed in its criticisms of MIM.

It is MIM's experience that uniting time-tested revolutionaries is desirable but not necessary and certainly not worth the price of giving up propagating correct stances on China and the Soviet Union. One of the lessons of the '60s and '70s is that political naivete exerts a terrible price on fledgling organizations. The movements of the '60s and '70s paid a high price before they realized that they were not monolithic.

If people are not able to agree on socialism where it has already existed, how are they ever going to build socialism in a country which has never had it! To create socialism in the United States will require more, not less unity on questions of the international experience of communist movements, especially in the Soviet Union and China. By overlooking these experiences now, FRSO sets itself up for future failure and factionalism especially if it does eventually attract a large following.

It is foolish to do work in mass movements and expect that these movements will not develop severe ideological conflicts over the international communist movement and the particulars of the struggle in the United States!

MIM members themselves emerged from the mass movements of the '80s — e.g. anti-militarist, solidarity movements etc. All of the founding members of MIM distrusted the RCP for its lack of contact with the mass movements and yet believed it necessary to hold onto certain principles and form an organization leading in a definite direction against imperialism and militarism.

Mao pointed out in the Cultural Revolution that the youth and intellectuals are always the first to come to the fore in revolutionary movements. He also said that the only real political test of these particular groups is their willingness to go amongst the masses.

Nonetheless, there is nothing Maoist about dissolving a revolutionary organization at this point in time. While the revolutionary movements may have many leaps to make until they are ultimately successful, that does not justify trashing everything and starting from scratch.

ORU MERGES INTO FREEDOM ROAD SOCIALIST ORGANIZATION

The Organization for Revolutionary Unity is pleased to announce it has joined the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), a national revolutionary organization.

To give a bit of history, the FRSO was formed last year by the merger of the Proletarian Unity League and the Revolutionary Workers Headquarters. As you are probably aware, the RWH was a split from the Revolutionary Communist Party. Having exposed and repudiated the many and manifest left errors of the RCP, the comrades of the RWH went on to carry out a national campaign in support of the United League of Tupelo, Mississippi as well as numerous local campaigns in support of Black struggles. The RWH has also been very active in the contemporary student movement and trade union work.

The PUL united a number of local collectives in the Boston area in opposition to the dominant ultra-left line of the early 70's, which included premature, almost irresponsible party formation. On the basis of its persistent struggle against left errors as well as its emphasis on the fight to expose and combat white supremacist national oppression, PUL grew to be a national organization. Both PUL and RWH have had extensive experience in the electoral arena and united on the basis of making Rainbow work a central focus.

Not only were the PUL and the RWH from somewhat divergent political backgrounds, but each was quite different from the ORU. What has united us has been basically a firm commitment to the principles of Marxism-Leninism and their application to the United States, including hard-won lessons our groups learned from the defeats suffered by Left organizations in the 60's and 70's. This unity became clear across a broad range of issues, ranging from important political line questions such as the vital role of the struggles of the oppressed nationalities to the importance of genuine democratic norms within a democratic centralist organization.

Given our divergent backgrounds, it was to be expected that there would be some substantial areas of disagreement on political line questions. In the process of a two year unity struggle, the majority of the differences that existed, which were few in number, were overcome. A few,

however, were not completely resolved. The remarkably positive experience we shared in struggling toward unity gave us the confidence that our remaining differences could and would, in fact, be worked out in a principled way.

For those of you familiar with the backgrounds of the groups, it probably comes as no surprise that the major area of disagreement was over international line. While FRSO is united on the proposition that the Soviet Union is one of the major enemies of the world's peoples, there remains a range of views on the class nature of contemporary China and the applicability of the Theory of Three Worlds. (We hope those of you who are interested in these issues will consider joining us for what is likely to be a lively debate at some time in the future.)

What we feel is most important, however, is the commitment to revolutionary unity that these merger processes represent. In a period when the survival of revolutionary socialist politics as an organized force in the U.S. seemed in doubt, even small steps toward reversing the trend of dissolution and demoralization are important. We do not see ourselves as the center for the eventual formation of a revolutionary Marxist party, but we do intend to play a role in forming that center.

Our merger process has convinced us of not just the necessity, but also the possibility of struggling successfully for unity among a broad range of revolutionary forces. The most obvious of these is the League for Revolutionary Struggle, whose record of struggle in the people's movements is noteworthy, but we feel it is also necessary to look much further afield - particularly to the isolated independents and collectives which continue to fight against such difficult odds.

That the U.S. Left is in crisis has become a commonplace observation. We would like to remind folks, though, that the Chinese symbol for crisis is a combination of the characters for danger and opportunity. While remaining aware of the dangers, let us reach boldly for the opportunity inherent in the current situation.