

International Committee of the Fourth International's May Day greetings to the workers of Valea Jiului, Romania

2 May 2001

The following are greetings from the International Committee of the Fourth International that were read to a May 1 meeting held in Valea Jiului, the main coal mining district in Romania. After a series of militant actions, including marches on the capital of Bucharest in 1999, the miners have faced severe state repression and the systematic shutdown of the mines. In recent months, sections of these workers have resorted to desperate forms of protest, including hunger strikes, locking themselves into unventilated pits for days at a time, and even burning themselves alive. Unemployment continues rising, as government promises to invest in the region to offset the destruction of mining jobs remain unfulfilled.

The International Committee of the Fourth International sends its warmest fraternal greetings to the Romanian miners on this May Day. We wish you the greatest success in your meeting and in the struggle to defend the rights of Romanian workers against the combined onslaught of world finance capital and its servants in the Bucharest government.

Class-conscious workers throughout the world have followed with the greatest solidarity the heroic struggles of the miners of Valea Jiului, from the 1977 strike against the dictatorial regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, through to the repeated marches on Bucharest over the past decade to stop the shutdown of the pits.

Again and again the Romanian miners have come forward in massive struggles, only to be swindled by governments led by ex-Stalinists, “social democrats” and right-wing nationalists alike. All of them have turned their backs on the demands of miners and other sections of the working class for jobs and livable wages in order to satisfy the profit drive of internationally

organized banks and corporations, and to feed the money grubbing of the local black market Mafia.

To suppress resistance to “free market reforms,” successive governments have sought to vilify the miners, while criminalizing their struggle, killing many and jailing Miron Cozma and other union leaders.

Twelve years after the downfall of Ceausescu, the Romanian workers have learned through bitter experiences the fraud of capitalism's prediction that the downfall of the Stalinist dictator would usher in a new era of “democracy” and prosperity. Instead, even more reactionary elements of the old regime—from Iliescu to Tudor—have dominated the country's politics, while the “triumph of capitalism” has seen the industrial output plummet, millions thrown into unemployment and a vast growth of misery and social polarization. The social tragedy in Romania has been mirrored throughout the “new democracies” of Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund and the European Union continue to demand harsher social policies and swifter privatization of state-owned industries, most of which are merely scrapped, as the condition for new loans to pay off ballooning foreign debts and EU membership.

The globalization of production and the domination of global capital have raised the same issues everywhere. The masses of Africa, Asia and Latin America have seen their living standards fall—in some cases catastrophically—during the past two decades of economic restructuring programs dictated by the IMF and Western governments. In the centers of capitalist industry and finance—North America, Western Europe, Japan—workers have also faced declining living standards and economic insecurity, while government programs that formerly offered a modicum of

protection against pauperization have been slashed to the bone.

And in the United States, the heartland of world capitalism, the social tensions arising from global economic changes have fatally undermined the old political structures. The past two years have seen an attempted constitutional coup d'etat followed by the outright theft of a presidential election, both backed by the most ruthless sections of the financial and industrial elite, who are determined to do away with any impediment to their further enrichment.

Thus, throughout the world, economic, social and political conditions are setting the stage for a new wave of struggles by the working class.

The first of May has long been the day of international working class solidarity. Never before, however, has this political conception assumed such urgency and significance. The global integration of the world capitalist economy has allowed the transnational banks and corporations to pit workers against each other across national boundaries in a fratricidal contest to determine who can produce the greatest profits for the bosses.

Even as these banks and corporations use their ability to shift operations from country to country to achieve the optimum conditions for the exploitation of labor, their political agents foment nationalism and ethnic hatreds in an attempt to divide the workers and divert them from confronting the real source of the crisis they face in every country.

Successfully combating the strategy of the transnational companies is possible only through a global response by the working class. The workers of Romania, Western Europe, the United States, Japan, Latin America and throughout the world must join in a combined struggle for social equality and to defend jobs and living standards.

The world working class must rally to the banner of internationalism and unite in opposition to globally organized capital. This is the only way forward for the workers of Romania and every other country.



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