

Romanian pseudo-lefts praise Hungary's right-wing government

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The Romanian government of Social-Democrat Victor Ponta is preparing a massive confrontation with the working class. In line with demands made by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund, the government has installed professional liquidators in major state-owned companies, to dismantle contracts and prepare companies for privatization.

The government has also indefinitely frozen wages and social benefits and begun its health care reform, in the form of additional payments and a freeze on new hires. Such measures will inevitably provoke mass resistance in the working class and are increasingly difficult to reconcile with the norms of bourgeois democracy.

The attacks on Romanian workers are part of the social counter-revolution unleashed by the ruling classes throughout Europe. Ponta was entrusted with intensifying deeply unpopular austerity measures, as he can rely on the support of the trade unions and their middle class “left” allies. Both the union bosses and the fake left CriticAtac group have promoted the social democrats as the “lesser evil” to the conservatives and abstained from any serious criticism of the government.

An important sign of the political evolution of these social layers was a conference entitled “The crisis of the Eastern European Left”, organized on April 18 in Bucharest by the CriticAtac group. The conference was designed as an internal brainstorming session for the middle class “left” milieu, attended mainly by members of the group plus a delegation of supporters from the Socialist Alliance Party (PAS).

The PAS is an arch-Stalinist, nationalist formation, tied to the German Left Party (Die Linke). It supported Ponta’s electoral vehicle, the Social Liberal Alliance, during the general elections and did not run its own candidates. Attila Melegh, an associate professor at Corvinus University working at the Demographic Research Institute in Budapest, was invited to give the

main report.

Melegh based his presentation on an ahistorical, anti-Marxist analysis. He made no mention of the seminal experiences of the 20th century, beginning with the Russian Revolution, or of the historic crisis of capitalism, which found its latest expression in the financial crisis of 2008.

Instead he described a continual march of counter-revolutions, broken only by the emergence of bourgeois-nationalist regimes in the developing countries. He described these regimes as part of “a reconfiguration of the world economy” and “another style of globalization,” enabling them to attain a “comparative advantage” over Western countries.

The complete disregard of the international class struggle was harnessed to definite social and political conceptions. The “left” should act as advisers to the national bourgeoisies of Eastern Europe, trying to emulate the conditions of super-exploitation prevailing in Third World countries.

“In order to have a left, we should listen to these people, we should see how capitalism has worked outside Europe, we should make the proper alliances, otherwise nobody is going to listen to us,” he said.

In the case of Hungary, Melegh’s proposal as candidate for such an alliance was the ruling, right-wing Fidesz Party: “In a sense, we have a very strong left in Hungary: Victor Orban and the Fidesz itself.”

Highlighting the rhetoric of Orban’s official demagogic campaign against the IMF and images from a government-staged rally in Budapest, Melegh claimed that Fidesz enjoys mass backing and said that the Orban government should be supported when it takes “popular measures”.

The fact that a supposed “left” academic can support Orban’s right-wing government—which has imposed savage austerity measures and has constantly courted and encouraged fascist elements—speaks volumes about the

social orientation of these layers.

Melegh made clear that in the absence of a party like Fidesz, however, “the left” could orient towards other forces. “We eastern European intellectuals have to pay attention to army officers—like Chavez, an army officer,” he said.

He added, “Now I’m learning that in certain societies, army officers have a much better vision of the world.”

The support for bourgeois governments and even for military dictatorship is consciously directed against working class resistance to attacks on their living standards. Ascribing to the unions the role of policing workers in a corporatist system, Melegh called for “a progressive and dynamic system based on complex and combined ownership, work, etc., which of course will not be without dramatic conflicts.”

The lecture was greeted with applause and statements of agreement by those in attendance. In the ensuing discussion, one of the CriticAtac leaders described Romanian workers as “bigots, most of them,” and proposed orienting the group towards the orthodox clergy. Discredited by its corruption scandals and collaboration with the former Stalinist authorities, the Romanian Orthodox Church is well-known as a crucible of nationalism and neo-fascist violence.

An event this February showed the lack of any constituency amongst these groups for basic democratic rights, and their willingness to condone state-sponsored violence. A film showing organized by a gay rights foundation was broken up by a fascist gang, chanting religious and nationalist slogans, working with the help of state authorities. Moviegoers were humiliated and threatened.

Police called to the scene cleared the building and documented the audience, without so much as identifying the fascists, who were later proven to have connections with the museum management.

The CriticAtac group responded to the affair in an article by one of their leaders, Vasile Ernu. He applauds the fascist thugs for staging an “authentic protest,” and whitewashes the state’s role in the affair: “An authentic protest, be it from the left or the right, is one that doesn’t follow the rules, doesn’t ask for approval from the authorities and doesn’t want a location set by others. The more the basic rules are broken, the more efficient the protest and the more its chances of success.”

Ana Bazac, a political operative active around various groups of bureaucrats trying to revive the Stalinist Romanian Communist Party, is often called upon to

provide a leftist cover and provide Marxist phraseology for the group’s various maneuvers. An academic working in a humanities department influenced by the anti-Marxist Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, she is representative of the group’s social and theoretical origins.

For instance, in a piece entitled “Uneasily on the Left,” Bazac discusses an “historic crisis of the left,” tracing its origins in the ideals of the Enlightenment and orthodox Marxist conceptions, which she claims have to be replaced by other philosophical viewpoints. She writes, “Social reality has to be squeezed in these ideals: but as this reality is structured by domination, by economic interests, by cultural horizons and by the unique concreteness of the situation, a lagging behind of these ideals or a divergence from reality is evident.”

She goes on to attack historical materialism, accusing the Trotskyist movement of being “dogmatic” and ignoring “objective conditions”. She uses this anti-Marxist rhetoric to justify the group’s every twist and turn. She turns the class questions involved in the struggle to defend democratic rights against state and fascist violence into issues of “human dignity”.

Like SYRIZA in Greece and the petty-bourgeois tendencies that came to dominate this year’s protests in Bulgaria, the Romanian pseudo-lefts are drawing closer to the state apparatus, emerging as openly right-wing tendencies.

CriticAtac has links to the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, which has supported some of its projects and is associated with the Social Democratic Party in Germany. Mariya Ivancheva, a member of the Social center Xaspel in Bulgaria and a collaborator of CriticAtac, will be organizing a panel at the Subversive Festival 2013 in Zagreb, Croatia, with the participation of the state-capitalist Marx21 group from Serbia.

Speakers at the festival, which features leading figures from the pseudo-left milieu, include Slavoj Zizek, Tariq Ali, Oliver Stone and the leader of SYRIZA, Alexis Tsipras.



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