

Romania joins imperialist war drive against Russia

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The drive by American and German imperialism towards confrontation with Russia is exacerbating regional conflicts in Eastern Europe, returning the region to conditions that prevailed in the first half of the 20th century. It is transforming the region into a tinderbox that could trigger a devastating armed conflict between nuclear-armed powers.

Romania's bourgeois elites have used the crisis instigated by Washington and Berlin in Ukraine to transform the country into a hotbed of imperialist intrigues. They seek to revive irredentist and nationalist nostrums, previously associated with the fascist fringes of society, and elevate them to the status of official state policies.

The recent drive by the Romanian political establishment for "reunification" with the former Soviet republic of Moldova, which shares linguistic and cultural ties with Romania, is a stark warning of the volatility of international relations brought about by the imperialist military encirclement of Russia and the reckless character of Eastern European regimes.

Last year, a diplomatic row with Russia was provoked by Romanian President Traian Basescu, who was campaigning aggressively in Moldova's capital Kishinev for the association agreement with the European Union and for the integration of Moldova into the EU.

In October, Russia accused the EU and Romania of seeking to annex the former Soviet republic, accusations that were denied at the time by Basescu. On November 27, however, before the start of the EU summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, where leaders of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine were expected to sign the EU association agreement, Basescu declared Romania's intentions towards Moldova.

Using the language of a nationalist demagogue, Basescu said that "blood is thicker than water" and announced that "the next fundamental national project for Romania is to make our country whole" by absorbing Moldova.

Highlighting the link between the appetite of the Romanian bourgeoisie for power politics and the drive by US and German imperialism to push back Russia, he added that "right now it is essential for us to be advocates of the Republic of Moldova for the EU road. Vilnius ... is the beginning of that road".

At the Vilnius summit, Moldova and Georgia signed the Association Agreement. Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's refusal to do the same led to the staging of a right-wing coup orchestrated by the imperialist powers and led by fascist forces, which ousted his government and replaced it with a

hand-picked, pro-EU regime. The ensuing crisis was used by NATO to mount a dramatic escalation of tensions with Russia.

Romania, along with the other Eastern European and Black Sea region member states, became the focus of a vast military ground, air and naval military deployment, described by the country's foreign minister in March 2014 as a "clear dynamic of repositioning of the military capabilities in this region of the North Atlantic Alliance, including Romania".

At the same time, Romanian politicians were placing themselves at the forefront of the propaganda campaign against Russia. They were among the most strident proponents of economic sanctions and stepped up the Moldova question.

In January, Basescu, during a speech to foreign ambassadors in Bucharest, further increased the stakes against Russia, suggesting that Romania will act unilaterally to ensure Moldova will push through with the European integration and that it will not repeat Ukraine's refusal in Vilnius.

Basescu said, "Romania is a partner of the US and EU in this road of the Moldovan republic. But I can't be dishonest with you. Romania will not be able to remain impassable politically, if provocations will begin from Transnistria and the Gagauz area that will interrupt its road to the EU. We will make a political offer to Moldova if the sovereignty of this country, which is a European country and not a country of the Euro-Asian Union, is not ensured."

In other words, Romania, with the blessing of the US and European imperialists, will act to force a union with Moldova to counter the development of opposition among restive populations to the diktats of the EU.

Transnistria, the eastern industrial region of the former Soviet Republic, broke away from Moldova after a series of armed conflicts in the early 1990s and maintains close relations with Russia, which has some 1,200 troops still stationed in the region. However, the Kishinev authorities continue to claim sovereignty over the territory. Gagauzia is an autonomous region in the south of the country, which tried unsuccessfully to break away from Moldova in 1991 over fears of persecution by Romanian nationalists.

The NATO summit in Wales at the beginning of September marked a fundamental shift in the alliance's military strategy and enshrined the status of Eastern member countries as militarized forward outposts of the alliance against Russia.

Speaking in blunt terms at the follow-up press conference, the

Romanian president said that the summit had “revitalized the organization” and “prefigured new missions, after Afghanistan”. Romania was to host an increased number of American ground troops, as well as the infrastructure for a regional NATO command centre of “acceptable size”. The Black Sea region was also to be heavily militarized, with Romania hosting a naval centre, together with the Bulgarian fleet, that will include “warships from the US Navy”.

In a brazen display of warmongering rhetoric, Basescu added that the summit’s declaration “will make anyone wonder if they’ll like to have a meeting with NATO on the Eastern flank.”

Romania’s role in the NATO war plans is accompanied by the turn of the entire political and media establishment towards militarism and chauvinism. In June, 50 Romanian members of parliament from across the political spectrum declared their support for the unification with Moldova at a summer school organized by Action 2012, a front group of dubious NGOs and state provocateurs that serve as the foot soldiers of the unification campaign.

Notable political leaders, including Remus Cernea, well-known activist and former Green Party presidential candidate, and Ecaterina Andronescu, an important Social Democratic leader, expressed support for unification as part of the process of European integration of Moldova.

Current prime minister, Victor Ponta, the leader of the Social Democratic Party and likely successor of Basescu as head of state, announced his intention to become the president of Greater Romania.

Speaking in September at a Social Democratic rally held in Alba Iulia, a place chosen for its symbolic connotations, Ponta said that “In 1918, here at Alba Iulia, after hundreds of thousands of Romanians gave their lives in the First World War, we obtained the most important national objective: the great unification.... This is my engagement, my call to all Romanians, to realize together for the second time the great unification of Romania”.

Ponta reiterated his message at a rally held in Bucharest to launch his presidential campaign. Sharing the stage with the prime minister of Moldova, Iurie Leanca, Ponta called “for all Romanians to be worthy of our ancestors and to celebrate in 2018 the great unification of the Romanians”. On the same day, Ponta received messages of support for his presidential bid from leading EU Social Democrats, including Martin Schultz, president of the European Parliament, who called Ponta a “close friend”, with “a common mission in Europe”.

In 2014, Romanian authorities have stepped up their cross-border administrative and logistical projects with Moldova. On August 27, Ponta, Leanca and European Commissioner for Energy Günther Oettinger inaugurated the Iasi-Ungheni pipeline, a €26 million project partly financed by the EU designed to eventually break Moldova’s energy dependence on Russia. The EU has allocated another €10 million for the extension of the pipeline to Kishinev, to ensure an alternative supply of gas to the Moldovan capital.

The European Union, through a cross-border project between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine begun in 2007, has also financed the extension of the Romanian disaster agency SMURD in

Moldova. The first centre was opened by Ponta and Leanca on August 28 in Balti, Moldova, with five emergency crews offered by Romania.

The SMURD has a special status and a peculiar development in Romania. Begun as a volunteer organization in the early 1990s, it grew rapidly through donations and grants offered by various foreign embassies and NGOs, such as the Soros Open Society Foundations and the British Know How Fund, before being integrated into the structures of the Romanian state.

The EU’s fostering of Romanian nationalism and regional antagonisms, in order to incorporate former Soviet territories and further encircle and threaten Russia, refutes all claims that the organization represents a peaceful and civilized unification of Europe. In Eastern Europe, it functions as an instrument of German imperialism to follow its historical interests, in alliance with predatory local bourgeois elites.

The imperialist drive to the east poses big dangers for the working class of Moldova and Romania. The last time the Romanian bourgeoisie launched an adventure to “reunify the country” was in 1941, when it joined the invasion of the Soviet Union at the side of Hitler’s Wehrmacht. The Romanian elites, characterized by extreme anticommunism, corruption and savagery, took part in the Nazi war of extermination and participated in some of the worst crimes that humanity has ever seen.

The renowned Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg describes the viciousness and barbarism of the Romanian army in the occupied territories. He writes: “But there also were instances when the Germans actually had to step in to restrain and slow down the pace of Romanian measures. At such times the Romanians were moving too fast for the German bureaucracy.... Jews were transported to what we might call the Romanian ‘East,’ the territory of Transnistria (in the Soviet Ukraine), which was under Romanian occupation. In that region the Romanians also killed around 150,000 indigenous Jews in the Odessa area and Golta. No country, besides Germany, was involved in massacres of Jews on such a scale.”



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