Social Democratic Party wins Romanian elections

Andrei Tudora, Tina Zamfir
16 December 2016

Romanian elections held December 11 were won by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), which gained 45.5 percent and will be able to form a government alone or with its neo-liberal ally Alliance of Liberals and Democrats (ALDE), which won 5 percent. Voter turnout, at 39.49 percent, was one of the lowest in the country's history.

The vote represented broad rejection of the technocratic government headed by former EU Commissioner Dacian Ciolos. The government was imposed last November by conservative President Klaus Iohannis, a close ally of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, after the ouster of the Social Democratic government headed by Victor Ponta.

The vote for the conservative National Liberal Party, which supported a second Ciolos government, collapsed, standing at little over 20 percent, with the party facing a protracted internal crisis including the risk of breaking up. Another party that supported Ciolos was the Save Romania Union (USR), formed in February this year on an anti-corruption platform by various civil society organizations, ranging from free-market NGOs to pseudo-left "activists." The party expected to play a major role in a new governing coalition, but only managed to pick up 8.83 percent of the vote.

The Social Democrats, running in the election as an opposition party, had in fact supported the formation of the technocratic government and backed it in parliament for the past year. The PSD is preparing to take power at a time when the European Union (EU) is in rapid disintegration and the country finds itself at the forefront of the war drive led by Washington against Russia.

The Social Democratic Party, formed from the remnants of the former ruling Stalinist Communist Party, has acted as the main pillar of capitalist rule in Romania. Backed to the hilt by the trade unions, it has presided over the privatization of state-owned enterprises in the early 1990s and the implementation of the savage attacks on workers' rights demanded for entry into the EU. Its ruthless bureaucrats have admitted to complicity in crimes against humanity perpetrated by the CIA, and justified them with the "success" of accession to NATO.

The right-wing, anti-working class character of the new administration is evident in its election program. While attempting to cultivate a basis among sections of the middle classes with nationalist rhetoric and measures to prop up small entrepreneurs, the Social Democrats aim to prop up big business by drastically slashing taxes and contributions to social funds.

The Social Democrats were supported in the campaign by the trade unions, who tried to sell for good coin their election promises to increase pensions and salaries for state employees and increase the minimum wage from €277 to €321. The union bosses showed signs of nervousness when, after the elections, it became obvious the promises were not destined for the 2017 fiscal year. Dumitru Costin, leader of the National Union Bloc for the past 25 years, said, "We are not talking here about questioning in the first day after the election a promise of President [Liviu] Dragnea [PSD leader], we're becoming slightly ridiculous. Mr. Dragnea was more than exact in his words; we have the documents."

After the beginning of the Ukrainian crisis, the PSD was also the main political driving force of the militarization of the country. In January 2015, then prime minister Victor Ponta met President Iohannis and the leaders of the other parliamentary parties to sign a political agreement that whoever came to power would

© World Socialist Web Site

uphold an increase in military spending of at least 2 percent of GDP beginning next year.

On December 1, RomanianNews.ro cited a report delivered by the British trust Jane's Information Group, that showed that Romania's military spending has surpassed for the first time the sum of US$3 billion. This is, the report shows, the second highest spending in Eastern Europe, surpassed only by Poland.

PSD leader Dragnea, likely to become the new prime minister, reiterated his unwavering commitment to the EU and NATO immediately after the first exit polls came out.

Although the European press largely focussed on the corruption allegations associated with the PSD, more astute bourgeois commentators recognize in the Romanian PSD a valuable ally of the imperialists' interests. Writing for the Euractiv web site, Nicolas Tenzer complained: "Russia now encircles Romania with new puppet presidents and Russian troops stationed in Crimea are just 250 kilometres from Romania's Black Sea coast." Tenzer notes that "Due to his former position, Ciolos is very popular among his fellow European leaders. The rest of the Union, however, should not overlook the strong pro-European stances of the rest of Romania's political sphere as well."

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site