

Romania goes to second round of presidential election

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The second round of the Romanian presidential elections is set to take place on Sunday May 18. After the first-round win of fascist pro-Trump candidate George Simion in the presidential race, PSD Prime Minister Ciolacu resigned, bringing down the PNL-PSD (National Liberal-Social Democratic) coalition government. Interim president Bolojan has named PNL chief Predoiu interim prime minister, allowing the next president to oversee the formation of a new majority.

These developments triggered a panic on the Romanian stock market, and the national currency fell against the Euro.

Regardless of Sunday's election result, the breakdown of democratic rights will intensify, as both candidates have laid out programs of war and austerity.

Simion has announced that he will seek to cut 500,000 public sector jobs in a Trump-inspired attack on workers that would mean laying off almost half of the public workforce. He openly admires fascist Argentinian president Javier Milei and billionaire Elon Musk, boasting that the fired workers would be recruited by business owners who would no longer hire foreign workers.

Nicusor Dan, the pro-EU candidate is also unashamedly a candidate of the financial markets. On Romanian television he declared: "We need to regain the trust of the financial markets, of the private market. We need to have a range of predictability so that an investor will know that the taxes they are paying now will be the same in one year or two years," while working people must endure "painful but necessary budget cuts."

To confirm his anti-worker credentials, Dan is touting his "achievements" at the Bucharest city hall: "At the city hall, we found a current debt of three billion lei that needed to be paid." Dan restructured the city hall, laying off thousands of employees and cutting what he called "social handouts," such as disability payments.

Much of the media are trying to railroad workers, and especially young people, behind the candidacy of Dan, in the name of defending democracy or even "fighting fascism." As the cancellation of the December presidential elections and the arbitrary barring of candidates has proven, the Romanian establishment has disdain for democratic rights. Behind the bogus allegations of Russian interference and cyber warfare lies their commitment, repeated by Dan during the election, for

unconditional support of the war against Russia in Ukraine.

In country after country across Europe, far-right and fascist forces have been systematically promoted from the top of official politics. More and more, European governments have taken up and normalized the far right's program, including the persecution of refugees, disdain for public health and the militarization of society.

In Romania and other Eastern European countries, anti-communism has, since the restoration of capitalism, been promoted to the status of a state religion. This has invariably been joined by the glorification of individualism and the promotion of fascist and Nazi-linked historical figures and movements.

Significantly, both Simion and his opponent Nicusor Dan, come from the same milieu of "civic" protest politics, a milieu infused with anti-communist ideology and western funds. The AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians) movement came to the fore of political life in 2020, as the PSD was promoting an anti-science program against COVID measures.

It is important to note, against all the pseudo-left and neo-Stalinist movements, that the political dead end of Romanian society was not an inevitability, but is instead the direct responsibility of the Stalinists and their betrayal and perversion of Marxism.

Sections of the Social Democratic Party (PSD), a direct continuator of Romania's Stalinist ruling party in the Cold War era, are now preparing to take power in a coalition government with the fascists. This would be a continuation of their previous politics, including the admission by PSD leaders that they used their electoral networks to funnel votes to Simion in December.

The Romanian Socialist Party (PSR) is the largest Stalinist group that still maintains a "left" veneer and works with pseudo-left groups like the GAS (Socialist Action Group) and the AEM (Association for the emancipation of workers). In December, PSR issued a statement condemning the cancellation of the presidential elections. It describes fascist candidate Georgescu as "calling for peace, bringing back the riches of our country ... keeping the traditions and faith of our people, defending Romanian dignity and sovereignty, etc."

Other sections of the PSD are lining up behind the pro-EU drive. Victoria Stoiciu is a social democratic MP, hailing from

the pseudo-left, “activist” milieu, promoted by PSD leadership in recent years, to try to give the PSD a “left” veneer. In an interview defending her support for Dan, she advanced what she called “If you will, a cynical and tactical argument. The sovereigntist lane is taken, there is a contest going on, who is more sovereigntist or extremist. In this case, we are dealing not with sovereigntism but with extremism. But we have no genuine left-wing party. PSD has some left-wing policies, but it needs much more.”

Her promotion of Dan exemplifies how the post-Stalinist political setup has served, since the restoration of capitalism in Romania, to stifle resistance and politically confuse workers, especially through the use of the union bureaucracies and their pseudo-left attendants.

The BNS (National Trade Union Bloc), the second-largest union federation in the country, held its National Congress on May 7. On this occasion, it invited both presidential hopefuls for an electoral “confrontation.”

Lending legitimacy to both big-business candidates, including the overtly fascist Simion, the BNS website announced, “The presence of the two candidates in front of the representatives of the trade union movement represents an important sign of respect towards the millions of salary earners in Romania, but also towards the essential role that social dialogue plays in a solid democracy.”

The assembled bureaucrats repeatedly asked the two candidates how to make sure that Romania could “benefit” the most from the EU’s rearmament drive. The two candidates answered in harmony, lining up Romania’s potential weapons building sites. Dan declared, “we have a potential on airspace, on vehicles, on munitions, on powders, there is this potential.”

The meeting highlighted the corporatist integration of the trade union apparatus with the structures of the bourgeois state and their determination to act as an industrial police. The BNS leadership exemplifies the class gulf between the working class and the labor bureaucracies.

Its leader, Dumitru Costin, who leads the union since 1993, is a well-connected businessperson, profiting off of the unions’ assets and workers’ contributions. Apart from their symbiotic relationship with the social democrats, BNS leaders also in the past signed an electoral pact with another post-Stalinist party, the Greater Romania Party (PRM). The PRM, which in many ways anticipated Simion’s AUR, was a fascist party staffed by former bureaucrats and members of the Stalinist repressive apparatus.

Throughout its sordid history, the PRM collaborated with other union bosses, and crucially with those responsible for the betrayal and defeat of important miners’ struggles of the 1990s. Constantin Cretan is one of the more important union leaders involved in these betrayals, who has for many years maintained a relationship with the pseudo-left AEM and now leads the National Federation of Labor union.

On May 7, together with other union leaders from the Oltenia

Energy Complex, Cretan signed an election protocol to support Simion. In what amounts to a slap in the face to the tens of thousands of miners who had lost their livelihoods as a result of their betrayals, the union bosses are promoting Simion’s lies that he will reopen the mines.

“Everything will reopen. He will apply Trump’s method. Decrees will be signed on the first day after the inauguration,” said one AUR operative present at the talks. The protocol reportedly includes trade union support for the war drive, under the guise of “reinvesting 80 percent of all military acquisitions from the state budget and loans,” as well as for a premiership of the fascist Calin Georgescu.

Among the ideological props of these reactionary class enemies are the pseudo-left groups like the GAS. The group specializes in promoting middle-class identity politics and subservience to the union bureaucracy. About workers’ struggles in recent years, the GAS has declared: “Of course, this fact [that subway workers remained isolated] together with the low rate of unionization in the private sector shows us that we are still in a historical period in which workers as a class are on the defensive.”

At a time when millions of workers throughout Europe and the world are engaged in struggle, such an appraisal can only serve to cover for the betrayal of the trade union apparatus.

In fact, in the US, support for the Democratic Party on the part of the trade unions and the pseudo-left only helped pave the way for Trump’s second term and the current global assault against the rights of the working class.

Likewise in Romania, a victory for the pro-EU Dan would not lessen the fascist danger in any way. The AUR only stands to gain politically, as the only official opposition to Dan’s proposed grand coalition government and its attacks on living standards.

The precondition for a successful fight against war, fascism and the destruction of living standards is the struggle for the political independence of the working class. Workers and youth must turn to a study of the program of the International Committee of the Fourth International and its uninterrupted history of struggle against Stalinism, social democracy and middle-class pseudo-left politics.



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