



Revolution in Romania

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Eastern Europe's most repressive regime has fallen. Its most hated Stalinist dictator is dead. But the Romanian revolution is not over, as the bourgeois rulers of the west would like to believe. Only its first phase is at an end. The most important tasks lie ahead.

The workers must retain their arms. The bourgeois democratic counter-revolution must not succeed. Close the door to the social counter-revolution! The workers and peasants must take power into their own hands!

The revolution and civil war between 16 and 25 December 1989 was the most courageous uprising against Stalinism since the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. Beginning with the mass demonstration in support of the persecuted pastor Laszlo Tokés and ending with the formation of the Provisional Government of the National Salvation Front (NSF), these were indeed ten days that shook the world.

Ceausescu's repressive regime

The hypocrisy of the imperialists in their rejoicing over Ceausescu's downfall is staggering. For years, decades even, they toasted and fêted Ceausescu. The man who demagogically denounced the USSR's invasions of Czechoslovakia and Afghanistan was the west's favourite communist. He was hosted by the President of France and knighted by the Queen of England. His wife was given honorary degrees for bogus scientific talents. All this cant was tolerated out of pure political calculation that the Kremlin's enemy must be the west's friend.

And all the while, from the moment of his 'election' as Romania's despot to the moment of his flight from Bucharest, he killed and imprisoned those who even voiced support for democratic rights. Where were the imperialist preachers of 'democracy' then?

Since 1965 Ceausescu has ruled Romania in an increasingly autocratic and brutal style. It was this as much as anything that underpinned the country's stability in the 1980s. The bureaucracy ruled through terror, it could allow of no dissent, not even of the most sanitised kind. Its ubiquitous internal security force (the Securitate) spied and pried, harassed and murdered its enemies whether at home or abroad. No larger machine of terror per head of population existed in any Eastern European country.

This level of repression flowed entirely from the project of the Ceausescu-led caste since the 1970s. On the one hand they eschewed military pacts with the USSR and fashioned a political independence from it. On the other hand, Ceausescu drew Romania back from its growing indebtedness to imperialism, fearing a Polish-style reaction from the working class.

Consequently, Ceausescu embarked on a more autarchic path. Clinging firmly to the reactionary theory of socialism in one country, the bureaucracy cut back its debt and set out for self-sufficiency. In a country of few resources this inevitably involved a great increase in labour discipline and an even more heavy-handed attempt to boost agriculture and direct it increasingly to export markets.

Ceausescu's assaults on the workers' standard of living undercut any support for him. His policies of forced destruction of villages and the creation of 'agro-industrial complexes' further alienated the peasantry. In recent years

the bureaucracy became an isolated caste relying on naked repression alone to rule.

In its final years, Ceausescu's repression was increasingly directed against sections of the bureaucracy itself. The inner clique grew narrower with Ceausescu's family playing an ever more central role. They displayed all the traits of the Stalinism of the 1930s: the cult of the personality and a failure to comprehend the reality around them. By the end the Ceausescus lived in a fantasy world of 'Potemkin villages'.

Although they vilified Gorbachev's process of bureaucratic reform after 1985, when the Ceausescus went to the wall on Christmas Day they were its indirect victim. Slowly but steadily the effects of glasnost in nurturing oppositional movements throughout Eastern Europe penetrated the borders of Romania. The efforts of the workers of the GDR and Czechoslovakia in particular gave hope where none existed before.

But the first mass protests of the Romanians did not result in the strengthening of the hand of the reform wing of the Romanian bureaucracy and the relatively peaceful eclipse of the Ceausescu dynasty. Unlike in the GDR or Czechoslovakia, such a reform wing barely existed, still less did it form a silent majority. All key 'reform' figures in the ministries or the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) had been purged by the mid 1980s.

Unlike elsewhere in Eastern Europe Romania was not subordinate to the command structure of the Warsaw Pact and had no Soviet Armed Forces on its soil. Therefore the Moscow bureaucracy had little control over events. Gorbachev had restrained the 'hardliners' in the GDR from a violent and bloody clampdown on protests.

In Romania Gorbachev's political pressure on the Ceausescu dynasty was barely felt. The Kremlin could not hope to stay the hand of the Bucharest executioner. Rather, civil war ensued, precipitated by a split in the bureaucracy and above all in the armed forces.

It was natural that the gathering storm should first appear in the border areas inhabited by ethnic Hungarians, a population with more grievances than most. The students of Timisoara played a vanguard role. Then the workers moved into action. Together, they paid the first and heaviest sacrifice for the revolution. They rose in mass support for a local dissident pastor. The security apparatus moved in to quell and isolate the movement between 16 and 18 December. At this stage the army joined the fray against the workers and students.

The insurrection begins

Soon the 500 on the streets turned to 5,000. The Securitate tried desperately to drown the rebellion in blood. But on 19 and 20 December the workers in the factories around Timisoara went on strike, some threatening to destroy their factories. Up to 80,000 took to the streets, stole their first few arms and stood firm. Faced with this resolve the first units of the mainly conscript army refused to continue shooting the workers. Disaffection spread like wildfire. At last Bucharest rose; once again the students initiated the action and led the storming of the key installations.

Under pressure army chiefs agitated for a return to barracks. The army saw its own caste interests as lying in the ousting of the Ceausescu clique and making a pact with the process of 'reform'. Faced with the 'fight to the death' stance of the security services loyal to the clique, reforms could only materialise by the army chiefs siding with the revolution from below. On 22 December Milea, the Defence Minister, agreed to withdraw troops from the fighting. The Securitate promptly murdered him.

This act finally provoked the bulk of the 140,000 strong army into open revolt against the ruling regime as they sided with the workers and peasants. Open civil war raged the length and breadth of Romania. Dual power was established, especially in the provincial towns and cities, where the workers and peasants set up armed revolutionary committees to fight alongside the army.

The final days of the civil war witnessed the most tenacious and vengeful actions of the security services loyal to Ceausescu, as the leader and his inner clique fled the retribution of the proletariat. Thousands died in the course of eliminating the rats of the Securitate from the underground passages where they infested Bucharest. Ceausescu was

tried and executed by a military tribunal and a new Provisional Government announced, formed from within the NSF.

The NSF had no existence prior to the uprising and is at present a loose, politically incoherent coalition of purged bureaucrats, members of the bureaucracy outside the Ceausescu clique, workers and sections of the intelligentsia. It is reported as aiming to establish a free market economy and multi-party (bourgeois) democracy out of the ruins of the Stalinist dictatorship. The new government is led by President Ion Iliescu, a minister under the old regime up to the mid-1980s. He is a well-known Gorbachevite.

The imperialist powers are even now seeking to develop political leverage within the NSF through swift recognition of this unelected government and the deployment of their international aid agencies. The Kremlin, by contrast, was cautious in the midst of the storm. In order to prove itself to Washington and Europe it observed its 'non-interference pact' even in its own 'backyard'. It was willing to risk the possibility of a victory of a vicious Ceausescu backlash.

Both the Kremlin and the White House can agree: the Romanian revolution is over. Should it refuse to lie down, however, and the workers take the offensive against the new government, then the Kremlin has already been given the green light by the imperialist powers to intervene and establish a stable, reforming pro-imperialist government.

The new government's final physiognomy is not yet decided. Although all factions are keen to end the remaining elements of dual power and to disarm the workers and students, it is to be expected that the most pro-capitalist elements will seek to strengthen their position via the manipulation of popular protests.

For proletarian political revolution

The Romanian workers must not be deprived of the fruits of their sacrifice! They must stop the bourgeois democratic counter-revolution in its tracks! The second phase of the revolution, the proletarian political revolution must now begin in earnest!

The most urgent task for the revolutionary committees is to refuse the calls to give up arms to the forces of 'law and order'. The armed power of the workers is the only guarantee of further success: of implementing the promised reforms; of rooting out every last agent of the security services now that they have gone to ground.

The workers must spread the distribution of arms to the revolutionary committees and form militias attached to them.

In the civil war rank and file soldiers played a crucial role in defeating the armed resistance of the Securitate. The officer corps, now in open conflict with the inner clique, tolerated this situation. But this corps is itself part of the state bureaucracy. Having removed the dictatorship over themselves they are calling for a return to law and order.

This will involve a clamp down on dissent within the army itself. They will seek to ensure that the crimes of the officers carried out in the past remain hidden or unpunished. Democratic soldiers' committees must therefore be urgently built with the right to elect their own officers, to investigate and punish the misdeeds of the officers.

Arms in hand, the workers must continue the unfinished business of the first phase of the revolution: the crimes of the old regime must be brought fully to light! No one will grieve over the summary trial and execution of the Conducator and his wife. But those figures from the past who remain, including many in the army and NSF, hope that the Ceausescus will carry their secrets to the grave.

The workers and poor peasants must not let the crimes of the bureaucracy be buried along with the bodies of its leaders!

The revolutionary committees in every town and village must establish elected tribunals to investigate the activities of party bosses and local bureaucrats. Peoples' courts need to deliberate and judge any charges. Uproot the corruption! Reveal the tyranny! Punish the guilty!

After many years of savage repression the first signs of political crystallisation of parties and programmes is emerging. The result is an acute crisis of leadership. None of the competing leaderships which have so far appeared can lead the

workers and poor peasants to power.

The workers, having achieved so much, must not stand aside and let the intelligentsia and discredited RCP bosses form the political parties of reconciliation, pro-imperialism and social counter-revolution. The working class needs a revolutionary communist (Trotskyist) party that can consolidate the gains already won and establish proletarian power in Romania.

For workers? democracy

Already there are signs that the Romanian workers are taking the talk of democracy seriously. While the NSF appoints from within its ranks a government to speak for the people and promises elections next April, the workers in the factories are beginning to oust hated managers and elect new factory committees. Once again the workers of Timisoara are in the vanguard. For elected and recallable factory committees in every enterprise! For new and independent trade unions!

It is essential that the urban workers develop and lead the revolution in the countryside. Ceausescu began to tear up the villages and herd their population into 'agro-industrial complexes', both to destroy the homogeneity of the dissident national communities and raise agricultural output for export.

The workers must help organise the peasants into their own revolutionary committees with their own militia in alliance with the workers and soldiers. For workers? management in the state farms; in the co-operatives there must be genuine democracy and the ousting of the managers. There must be new elections in the co-operatives.

The peasants? own organisations must be won to the drawing up of a plan for the modernisation of the villages and agricultural production itself. This plan must be integrated into a workers? plan for the entire national economy.

Factory-based organisation of the workers appeared only after the workers and students were on the streets, arms in hand. It is essential that these are linked up with the local revolutionary committees at town and especially at regional and national level. This organisation of the workers must be independent of the Provisional Government.

This is the key to further progress in the proletarian political revolution. Workers? and poor peasants? councils must urgently be built in every village and town. Do not leave politics to the politicians, do not entrust the running of the economy to the 'professional administrators'.

Stalinism has only been partly smashed, the revolution is stuck half way. The workers and youth, having spilled their blood to down Ceausescu, are excluded from the Provisional Government. Instead, purged ex-bureaucrats now emerge from their bunkers to claim the spoils of victory. These enemies of the working class want to maintain their rule behind the facade of parliaments and the promise of elections every few years for representatives that cannot be made to account for their actions. The Romanian workers must hold full power! For a government, not of the NSF or National Christian Peasant Party, but of the sovereign workers? and poor peasants? councils. No support for the Provisional Government! No return of King Michael to the Republic of Romania!

While this government remains in office, the revolutionary committees must demand that it recognises their authority and organise an election for a government based on these committees. The government must submit itself to the will of the workers and peasants. It must immediately repeal all the hated laws of the old regime. It must take measures to improve the position of women who, amongst many features of oppression, have been subject to the death penalty for abortion. Romanian women must have full access to free contraception and abortion, for a woman?s right to choose.

Ceausescu tried to eliminate religion by bulldozing churches. The only effect was to ensure its survival in the workers? and peasants? homes. Socialists must insist on the full freedom of religious observation, but without any privileges or subsidies by the government for any religious institution. For the strict separation of church and state!

The Romanian proletariat and poor peasants know only too well what a sick joke the statistics of socialism were in their

country. Pampered luxury for the Ceausescu dynasty, vast privileges for the hired killers, court poets and servile propagandists. For the majority of toilers there were only punishing work norms, lengthening queues and empty shelves. This misery was not the fault of ?communism? or ?socialism?, which have never existed in Romania, and were never the goals of the bloated bureaucrats of Bucharest.

The economic shortages were not the result of trying to plan the distribution of Romania?s economic resources. The objective of the bureaucrats? plan was primarily to maintain their rule and their social privileges. Such planning could never create a genuine socialist society. Deprived of real workers? and peasants? democracy, the plan degenerates into a farce. It becomes the planning of the plunder of the workers. All this was the direct result of the strategy of ?socialism in one country?, the attempt at autarky and the resultant destruction of peasant agriculture from above.

The road from starvation and autarky must not lie through opening up Romania to the bloodsucking western banks. From these institutions we demand aid without strings, not further rounds of indebtedness, as well as unlimited material aid without strings from the USSR. The government must demand emergency and unconditional aid from the west, the USSR and Eastern European states to fill the shelves with basic foodstuffs and other goods.

The rural and urban workers must seize control of the factories, offices, banks and means of communication from the bureaucrats. There must be no privatisation of industry, no sell-offs to imperialists or exiled Romanian capitalists. The workers must take control of the central planning organisations. They must draw up a new workers? plan whose objective is to meet the consumption needs of the masses, to increase equality and to open the road to genuine socialism and communism.

The Romanian degenerate workers? state came into existence without the participation of the workers themselves. The borders were carved out in such a way that national minorities (Germans, Hungarians) were imprisoned inside its confines. Ethnic Romanians were moreover forcibly incorporated within the USSR in 1940. The political revolution in Romania has had a major effect on all these groups. The legitimate grievances of many, incapable of public expression before, are coming to the surface.

Romanian workers must grant autonomous status to the regions of the oppressed national populations, including the right to be educated in their languages, the right to cultural facilities. For the right of all oppressed nations to self-determination! For the right of Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic to unify with the Romanian nation if it so wishes!

The heroic actions of the Romanian workers and peasants have shown the path for liberation of all republics of the USSR. Not fratricide between the national groups, but unity against the hated Stalinist bureaucracy. Such must be the lesson for all the peoples of Eastern Europe and the USSR.

? No to social counter-revolution!

? For proletarian political revolution throughout Eastern Europe!

? For a free federation of workers? states on the road to a Socialist United States of Europe!

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