

Romanian fascist Georgescu wins first round of presidential elections

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A first round of the presidential election was held in Romania on November 24. Calin Georgescu, an avowed fascist running as an independent, produced an electoral upset and came in first place with over 22 percent of the votes. He will be joined in the runoff by Elena Lasconi of the opposition liberal USR (Save Romania Union). The candidates of the two traditional ruling parties, the Social Democratic Party (PSD) and National Liberal Party (PNL) who have governed Romania in a Grand Coalition since 2021, were eliminated.

The election has triggered an intense political crisis in Romania's ruling establishment. Pre-election polls showed a comfortable win for the Social Democrats and a slew of candidates vying for the runoff spot, while Georgescu polled only fifth place in the days before the election. The leadership of both the PSD and PNL have been sacked, as the two parties brace for general elections on December 1, which are expected to place several far-right parties in the legislature.

Georgescu was virtually unknown to the wider public before the elections. He had been associated with the fascist Alliance for the Unity of Romania Party (AUR) but was expelled, as his open glorifications of Nazis and war criminals interfered with AUR attempts to dress up its image and get votes.

Georgescu's campaign openly violated election regulations. He declared zero campaign expenses and failed to add election markings to his videos. In the days after the elections, multiple press outlets received an email containing photos purporting to show Georgescu in the company of his close entourage. It includes two former Romanian secret service chiefs, as well as Adrian Thiess, a media mogul tied to the Trump staff, who had recently organized Trump Jr.'s trip to Hungary.

Far-right commentators have talked about a near-future visit to Romania by Robert Kennedy Jr., the anti-science hack nominated by Trump to head the US Department of

Health, ostensibly to promote his book *The Real Anthony Fauci*, with a forward by Georgescu. Georgescu is himself a well-known figure within the fascistic swamp of COVID denialism.

The country's Supreme Defense Council was summoned by the country's outgoing president, Klaus Iohannis, on Thursday. It issued a report that found "cyberattacks with the purpose of influencing the correctness of the electoral process." The report issued unsubstantiated allegations that the election result was due to "state and non-state actors, especially the Russian Federation, who has a growing interest to influence Romanian society's public agenda and social cohesion."

The Special Telecommunication Service (STS), part of Romania's overgrown internal spying apparatus, issued a statement denying the existence of "cyberattacks." A similar report had been issued by the Romanian Information Service (SRI) prior to the elections, after Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu accused candidates of using "troll farms."

The Supreme Court has ordered a vote recount and given itself until December 2 to take a decision on whether to cancel the election result outright.

The official campaign against Georgescu, focused solely on technical-legal issues, serves to obscure the social and political issues involved. It is driven not by any aversion for his far-right views, many of which are shared by his rivals, but more by his criticisms of NATO and the Ukraine war. *Politico* noted: "Georgescu's success has triggered alarm as Romania has in recent years been viewed as one of the EU's more reliable members in Central and Eastern Europe when it comes to rule of law and security—with a major NATO base on the Black Sea."

The election result is first of all an indictment of the Romanian ruling establishment, who came to believe their own lies about a pro-war "national consensus."

Georgescu, who made criticism of the war the focus of his campaign, centered on Telegram and TikTok, built an audience among workers and youth who could find no progressive outlet for their concerns.

An important political role of this campaign is to amalgamate opposition to war with Georgescu's fascist sympathies. The ruling capitalist parties suppress opposition by falsely arguing that all opposition is necessarily fascist.

The ongoing COVID pandemic has led to the near-collapse of the healthcare system. In the summer, revelations of mass deaths in a public hospital led to the framing of two doctors by prosecutors and the media for murder. The case against them has since been dismissed by a judge, but this ongoing "social murder" is continuing unabated.

Romania is heavily involved in the imperialist war against Russia in Ukraine, which risks turning into a direct conflict between nuclear armed states. As a Black Sea state bordering Ukraine, Romania would undoubtedly suffer heavily in any expansion of the war. Yet any deviation from the official pro-war line is denounced as the result of Russian interference. The pro-war official consensus is backed by pseudo-left groups like the Socialist Action Group (GAS), which denounce "Russian imperialism."

The global cost of living crisis has been compounded by austerity measures demanded by the EU Recovery and Resilience Plan as well as ballooning defense spending. A recent pension cut deprived many elderly workers, notably in mining and nuclear sectors, of cost-of-living adjustments. 2025 is expected to bring new rounds of austerity in Romania.

The policies of war and austerity have degraded the bourgeois democratic norms, such as they were after the Stalinist regime's restoration of capitalism in the 1990s. The ruling establishment, with the post-Stalinist PSD at its head, swung towards the far right, adopting extreme forms of nationalism, irredentism, and COVID denialism. Fascist parties like the Alliance for the unity of Romanians (AUR) and the SOS Romania Party were staffed by PSD apparatchiks, Stalinists, academics and union bureaucrats.

A report published in November by the Romanian site PressOne highlights the AUR's dominant political position in the Jiu Valley mining region:

remaining miners, after suffering decades of defeats and closures at the hand of the state and the unions. A revolving door of Stalinists, union bureaucrats and local politicians forms the basis of AUR's activities in many deindustrialized regions. One such example is Nicu Bunoaica, a mining union leader and former associate of the pseudo-left Association for the emancipation of workers (AEM) who ran as an AUR candidate in local elections earlier this year.

The elevation of a fascist admirer of interwar Romania's Iron Guard to the highest office appears to be a less "shocking" bolt from the blue as it has been described in the media.

Similar to other far-right leaders elected in recent years, Georgescu is first of all the expression of the ruling class' increasingly open abandonment of democratic norms, under conditions of global war and intensifying working class resistance. The main responsibility for the rise of the far right lies with the nominal left political forces, who have adapted to nationalism and have surrendered any resistance to war.

Georgescu himself is the product of the former Stalinist ruling establishment. He followed the path of his mentors, Sergiu Celac and Mircea Malitza, who enjoyed careers in the Stalinist regime's diplomatic corps and remained influential after capitalist restoration. Georgescu has links to the Malthusian "Club of Rome" think tank and has been promoted by PSD leaders in the foreign policy establishment as an expert on "sustainable development." During the pandemic, he became a leading promoter of quack medicine and opponent of health measures.

Georgescu's opposition to war is, however, a complete fraud. He has called for the reintroduction of the military draft. His criticism of the Ukraine war is merely raised from the standpoint that it undermines the economic and geostrategic interests of Romanian capitalism.



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