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# Moldova's Revolution Against Cynical And Cronyist Authoritarianism

by Vladimir Tismaneanu

What we are currently witnessing in Chisinau is the beginning of a revolutionary movement.

I wish to emphasize this, because revolutions are the only means of action against political systems that are defunct, but refuse to admit it. The political regime in the Republic of Moldova is indeed such a case. The country has been governed for many years by the Communist Party of Moldova (CPM), an unreformed, unrepentant party of the Leninist mold.

I disagree with those analysts who consider this party communist only in name, on the grounds that it allegedly reconstructed itself as a political formation foreign to traditional communist principles. True, it would be absurd to assert that the CPM is communist in a classical sense, because things have changed radically in the past 20 years since the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991. But if one takes into account the CPM's motivation, its nostalgia for the Leninist past, and the way it rules the country, the CPM led by Vladimir Voronin is the clear successor to the Soviet-era Communist Party of Moldavia.

Voronin himself has said so many times. He and his comrades have viciously and unswervingly opposed even the most anodyne decommunization initiatives. Moreover, on December 18, 2006, when Romanian President Traian Basescu condemned the communist regime in Romania as "illegitimate and criminal," Voronin's party issued an official denunciation of the "Final Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania" (which I chaired), the document on which Basescu's statement was based.

I wish to stress a few things about the movement that is taking shape in Chisinau. First and foremost, I consider it to lie within the continuum created by the revolutions of 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe. Two decades after those historic events, we are seeing, in a former Soviet republic, a movement which I believe is fundamentally spontaneous and characterized by a liberal anticommunism centered on honoring and actualizing individual human rights. The primary and essential principle of modern liberalism is the recognition of the inalienable rights of any human being.

The protests in Moldova show us beyond any doubt that anticommunism is not an illusion. The essence of the demonstrators' message, both to their country and to Europe, is anticommunism: the simultaneous rejection of the police state that Comrade Voronin so deftly built while in power, and of the endemic corruption generated in this country by state-sponsored Mafioso networks.

Last but not least, Voronin's overreaction to the post-election protests -- repression by the secret police, mass arrests, sealing the country's borders, censoring information and the media -- clearly shows his Stalinist mentality. The governing principle of his politics is Lenin's old dictum: *kto kogo* -- who will prevail over whom? The pillars of the CPM regime are hostility to the rule of law, undermining pluralism, and total

disregard for civic dignity.

## A Movement Emerges

I would also like to stress that this is a revolution of an anti-ideological type, as clearly stated by the Anticommunist Forum in Moldova, an organization that emerged spontaneously over the past few days. We are dealing with a movement that has not yet assumed a clear political coloring. In their own words: it is transparent and pure.

This indeed is a beautiful definition, a truly poetic self-description. You may ask: What does poetry have to do with revolution? Revolutions are poetic moments. The epic lies within the minutiae of mundane politics. Poetry alone can do justice to the empowering and liberating revolutionary act.

Undoubtedly one must always be careful when dealing with metaphors. One must resist the temptation, so typical of utopian radicalisms, to develop them too far. But in Moldova now there is no utopian ideal in operation. The younger generation has risen against the neo-Leninist CPM. And the prefix "neo" is the key to the story here, because it shows that the CPM regime is a form of authoritarianism with a very distinct ideological flavor, and of a characteristic cynical and sycophantic nature.

It is regrettable, as Romanian historian Armand Gosu has remarked, that in the ongoing geopolitical games on the eastern flank of the European Union, EU representatives' shared fixation with Russia's strategic position seemingly deters them from taking a categorical stand in defense of the "young generation of Moldovan citizens who wish to built their destiny in freedom." As in 1989, Europe was caught unawares by a rejection of the status quo from below. The established power game in the region takes priority over the civic rebellion from within.

Where is the pro-democracy movement in Moldova heading? That will depend largely on how it chooses to organize itself. The Moldovan case falls into the category of "new social movements," such as Vaclav Havel's Civic Forum in former Czechoslovakia in 1989-1990.

The revolutionary movement in Moldova will almost certainly give birth to several new political parties. I can easily believe that the anticommunist forum in Moldova will produce a democratic, liberal youth party. Hungary's FIDESZ (Fiatl Demokraták Szövetsége, Alliance of Young Democrats), the original statutes of which even included an upper age limit of 35 for membership, could serve as an excellent example.

I believe that those who took to the streets in Chisinau and occupied the official buildings on National Assembly Square are the opposite of homo sovieticus (Soviet man), and the antithesis of homo prevaricatus (mendacious man, a term coined by Russian sociologist Yury Levada). They are people who demand simply to live in truth, to reject hypocrisy and duplicity -- people who refuse to relinquish their human dignity in the face of abuse of power.

This protest will not end soon. The approaching commemoration on August 23 of the 70th anniversary of the shameful and criminal Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact may well serve as the catalyst for a renewed opposition onslaught against the neo-authoritarian and neo-Leninist regime of Comrade Voronin and his clique. The memory of the victims of 20th century totalitarianism will surely strengthen the political will of those who are now fighting for democracy and freedom in Moldova.

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