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« Indignés » de Roumanie : les raisons de la colère

De notre correspondante à Bucarest, Julia Beurq - Mise en ligne : lundi 23 janvier 2012

Il a neigé à petits flocons tout le weekend, mais cela n'a pas tenu. Les « indignés » roumains, eux, tiennent bon. Certes moins nombreux et moins vaillants qu'il y a dix jours, ils ont occupé la place de l'Université de Bucarest pour la dixième journée consécutive. Malgré le froid, le gel et la neige, les Roumains continuent de crier leur colère. Quelques éclaircissements sur les causes de la révolte, alors que les syndicats entrent dans l'action.

La neige s'est transformée en boue. La colère des premiers jours en désenchantement. Les voix se sont éraillées, mais le thé bouillant préparé par certains manifestants remonte le moral à tous. Même si l'animation et l'excitation du début sont retombées, selon George, l'un des initiateurs du mouvement Occupy Bucharest [1], « tous ces débats qui ont enfin lieu dans la société roumaine sont un oasis de santé pour les Roumains. Ils se sont tus pendant 22 ans, voilà d'où vient la multitude de voix qu'on entend. Notre sens civique était difficile à faire renaître, mais une fois qu'il a pris racine, il est bien là ».

Pourtant, les journalistes sont moins présents. Les télévisions ont coupé le fil de nouvelles qui transmettaient le mécontentement général au gouvernement et au président. À croire que ce dernier n'entend rien : aucune déclaration officielle n'a filtré, Trajan Basescu n'a pas dit un mot sur les protestations qui ont lieu dans tout le pays. Certains le comparent déjà à Ion Iliescu, le premier président après la chute du communisme, qui avait lancé en 1990 à propos des manifestants : « laisser les mariner dans leur jus ! ». Pourtant, à entendre nombre de protestataires, « ce n'est pas le froid qui nous fait peur ! Nous avons eu la patience de rester dix jours sur la place, et nous continuerons jusqu'à ce que les choses changent ». Une enseignante rajoute, « nous sommes un peuple tolérant, mais nous sommes arrivés à la limite de notre patience ».

Une révolte tardive

Depuis deux ans, les Roumains avaient bien des raisons de descendre dans la rue. C'est ce qu'ils ont fait à plusieurs reprises, en protestant à l'appel des syndicats contre les mesures d'austérité, mais sans succès malgré leur nombre. Entre la baisse de 25% des salaires des fonctionnaires, celle de 15% des retraites, l'augmentation de la TVA, à 24%, les diminutions des aides sociales, les prétextes sont nombreux. Narcis Iordache, collaborateur du site anti-corruption Romania Curata confirme : « j'ai la sensation que cela aurait dû commencer il y a bien longtemps. L'été a vu les prémices de cette révolte, lorsqu'il y a eu de petits rassemblements à Bucarest, et de plus importants dans toute l'Europe. Mais là, il y a eu un déclencheur qui a tout fait exploser ». Ce « déclencheur » a été la démission du docteur Arafat, initiateur du service d'urgence en Roumanie à la suite de l'entrée dans le débat public de la réforme de la santé.

Avant cet événement, le gouvernement avait également engagé sa responsabilité sur une série de lois - sans les faire voter au Parlement - qui ont amplifié l'insatisfaction générale. Il s'agit du nouveau Code du travail adopté en février dernier et de la loi concernant le regroupement des élections locales et parlementaires qui attend d'ailleurs d'être validée par la Cour constitutionnelle, saisie par l'opposition. Selon Narcis Iordache, « la manière dont ces lois ont été

passées illustre clairement qu'il y a un gouffre entre le pouvoir et le peuple. Les citoyens ressentent qu'il n'existe pas de dialogue entre eux et le gouvernement si ce dernier prend des décisions sans les consulter. Ils veulent qu'on les respecte ainsi que leur point de vue. »

Une presse discréditée et la soif de démocratie

D'autres banderoles sont apparues au fil des jours : « images truquées dans une presse manipulée », « presse indépendante = 0 ». Ces slogans très critiques à l'égard du « quatrième pouvoir » illustrent bien le manque total de crédibilité de la presse et notamment de la télévision. Dans un pays où les conglomerats de presse appartiennent à des magnats proche des partis politiques, ces critiques ne sont pas surprenantes et se ressentent lors des manifestations : certains journalistes ont été insultés, une camionnette de la télévision publique a reçu des pierres. Selon Mircea Toma, fondateur d'Active Watch, l'agence de surveillance de la presse créée en 1994, « la presse abandonne son professionnalisme. Elle a basculé en faveur de certains acteurs politiques et donc cela se retourne contre les journalistes. » Toujours selon lui, « la presse reste tout de même un vecteur d'influence » et c'est par elle que le peuple transmet au pouvoir ses doléances.

Des doléances qui parlent d'elle-même : « A bas les voleurs ! », « Tous les partis sont corrompus », « Démocratie réelle maintenant ». Les statistiques montrent que la participation des Roumains aux élections diminuent tous les ans et que la confiance dans les partis politiques se restreint. Selon une étude publiée en mai 2009 par l'Institut pour les politiques publiques, la participation aux élections législatives en 1990 était de 86,2%. En 2008, elle est tombée à 39,2%. Ce qui n'étonne pas George, du mouvement Occupy Bucharest, « il faut trouver une autre forme de système et redonner du pouvoir au citoyen, afin que son implication dans la société soit plus active ».

La suite du mouvement ? Alex, le collègue de George prend la parole, « le prochain pas, c'est l'arrivée des syndicats et celui d'après, la grève qui amènera une pression publique et économique ». La grève, pour le moment, n'est pas prévue au programme, mais les syndicats sont enfin entrés dans la danse : trois manifestations sont prévues cette semaine. Réagir à cet article

Romania : Thousands in angry protests against social service cuts

Posted by asinforomania on January 18, 2012

In the last days, protests were held in various cities of Romania against the health bill that has been submitted by the government. Extensive privatization of the entire health sector will be enforced with this new law. By Sunday, January 15th, 2012, the social protests climaxed. In Bucharest it came up to street clashes that lasted for several hours [see video]. Police and gendarmerie inflicted severe injuries to demonstrators.

Privatization of the entire health care system - Health only for the rich

By the end of December 2011, the new health bill was submitted by State's president Traian B sescu of the right liberal-democratic party (PDL). The president expounded that he seeks the whole privatization of this elementary field of society in order to revive the 'competition between the hospitals'. Simultaneously, the services of the health insurance were cut severely. Additional payments or general contributions of medical attendance are obligatory. The ambulance service (SMURD) is about to be privatized as well. That means in concrete : no money - no salvation. This purpose made sub-secretary Raed Arafat, director of the emergency service, to declare in public that this bill

shatters the health system and that he would not agree upon this project. The reaction of president Traian B sescu was authoritarian as is usual. He denounced Arafat as 'the greatest enemy of the private health system' and declared last Thursday (January 12th, 2012) : 'If he doesn't agree with the law, he goes.' To give more weight to his threat, B sescu added towards a journalist : 'It was a bigger issue when Stefan Lazaroiu (former labour minister) resigned from his position.' Raed Arafat resigned finally and left his post on last week's Friday. [For two and a half years, R.Arafat was under-secretary of State for Public Health, but he was compelled to resign on January 10th, after expressing his criticism during the current health care and welfare reform debate.]

Additionally, it came out that the IMF uttered complimentary and surprised comments towards the Romanian government because of the almost docile implementation of the most massive cuts in social services in the history of the country. The money for pensioners, civil servants, unemployed was cut extremely, the workers are deprived from trade union rights and the working hours were expanded. The prices for groceries, electricity and water rose massively, while there are regular tax increases. The impoverishment of broad parts of society fostered by government and IMF proceeds.

In support with the (officially) resigned Arafat, spontaneous solidarity rallies and protests against the health bill were held across the country. In the centre of Bucharest, the police attacked a peaceful gathering of some hundred protesters on Saturday evening. It's unusual, however, that these protesters resisted the assaults and briefly clashed with the cops. By Sunday, the protests climaxed. B sescu had already responded since Friday to the unrest among the population and the first protests, saying : 'The people do not deserve their leader.'

Street clashes in Bucharest - Brutal police violence

Yesterday, January 15th, several thousands of people (by the end there were about 4,000) gathered at the Piața Universității [University Square] in the centre of Bucharest to protest against the privatization and police violence. In chants and on self-made banners, they claimed the resignation of B sescu and the head of the government Emil Boc (PDL as well). On a banner one could read : 'Freedom - Not profit.' The protests were mainly carried by pensioners "who have been part of the most active opponents of the social services cuts in the last years" and youths. Police and gendarmerie took (as usual) authoritarian measures against the protesters. Consequently, street battles broke out. The fact that people resist state violence and counterattack is a very new development, thus surprises. It is the first time since decades that it came to such attacks on state authority. Obviously, the police violence and the condemnation in corporate media, naming demonstrators 'terrorists' and 'hooligans', could not prevent more and more people from joining the protests. The number of people increased from 2,500 in the early evening to 4,000.

In several cities protests against the government, against the health bill and in solidarity with the demonstrators in Bucharest took place simultaneously, as in Botosani, Deva, Alba Iulia, Craiova, Brasov, Pitesti (a gathering was held there at the central office of PDL), Cluj-Napoca, Piatra Neamt, Iasi, Timisoara (with several thousands of participants), Arad, Sibiu (a gathering was held there at the central office of PDL), Targu Mures (a spontaneous demonstration), Constanta. (This enumeration is not intended to be exhaustive.) Nationwide, tens of thousands took to the streets. In Brasov 200 demonstrators were hindered to go by train to Bucharest, where they wished to support the demonstrators. We have similar reports from Craiova, where football fans (ultras) of Universitatea Craiova were about to go to Bucharest to support the protests. In Rosio de Vede they were kicked out of the train by gendarmes.

Moreover, the participation of ultras from the Steaua and Dinamo Bucharestian football clubs in the protests is new. The bourgeois and pro-government mass media now attempt to blame them for the street battles. 'The opposition and the ultras have driven the protests into violence,' according to the right newspaper EVZ, which published numerous names of Dinamo's ultras in today's edition [January 16th]. A smear campaign against 'hooligans' is running on all TV channels, just as if football fans are not themselves affected by the impact of the state policy and had no right to political expression. A spokesman for the ultras of Dinamo Bucharest claimed exactly this right for the

football fans too. 'We show our solidarity with Raed Arafat and we are finally affected ourselves by the new health bill and have the right of political expression.' Several hundred ultras participated in the protest. In a joint demonstration, approximately 300 students, most of them from the History Department, reached the Piaca Universit cii in the evening and joined the protests. Just in December, they had a strike against the increases in tuition fees and kept a wing of the university occupied.

On Sunday, the street battles expanded to six kilometres in the city centre. In addition to the Piaca Universit cii, clashes occurred also in the Piaca Unirii ; barricades were erected there, several of which were set on fire. Shops and newspaper kiosks were stormed, along with three banks. Police units were attacked with stones and Molotov cocktails. Police and gendarmerie have beaten protesters indiscriminately, as well as bystanders. A man, who was on his way home, was harassed by cops, tried to escape, was caught by the police and pressed against a wire fence where he lost a leg. One paramedic explained to the corporate Antena3 : 'We do not know with what they hit him, we only found out that he held his severed leg in his hand.' [Correction, January 17th, 2012 : We reported that a man's leg was severed when he was pressed by police officers against a fence or something similar. Last night, the real reason was publicized. As stated in the commercial Antena3, a tear gas grenade was fired from the ranks of the police against the man from one metre distance and cut through his leg. The bone at this point is completely fragmented.] Other uninvolved pedestrians were dragged by cops to police stations, where they were totally unduly beaten up. Journalists and observers that covered the events with cameras were attacked and got beaten by the police, who used batons, tear gas and water cannons. The bourgeois media virtually never reported on this police violence. In order to be difficult for more supporters to come to the protests, the 'Universit cii' metro station was not served ; the trains continued on without stopping. Masked police snatch squads hunted down demonstrators deliberately. As the corporate Antena3 reported, officials of the Romanian Intelligence Service infiltrated in civilian demonstrator blocks. The street clashes lasted until one clock in the morning.

First reactions

As aforementioned, the mass media now shift the blame on the football fans. Representatives of the bourgeois political parties still try to use the opportunity of the moment and demand new elections. In a joint press conference, the conservative party (PC) and the national liberal party (PNL), both calling themselves advocates of privatization, urged people to support the protests, but distanced themselves from the violence. The social democrats of PSD expressed themselves similarly. The parliamentarian Urban Iulian of the ruling right-wing PDL stated publicly on his website about the protesters : 'Those who take to the streets are worms. They deserve to die prematurely in hospital, because they are against the new health bill.' The cops requested that armored cavalry squadrons and dogs be used in future protests.

An outlook

What forms of protest to assume further on, is still not yet assessed. Large parts of the protesters argue with nationalist positions, some call for the return of the king, and the fascists are present too. The left is weak in most cities, or rather not present at all. The majority of the few communists are themselves ardent nationalists without any understanding of the situation. Anarchists are a small minority. Many of those affected by the new measures do not see the context of welfare cuts in Romania as part of the international capitalist 'crisis' and leave the social problems solely up to the 'leaders'. At that, capitalism and the State have led to this misery, and the situation will only get worse if the knowledge will not spread en mass, that the capitalist system itself is the error and must be abolished. In similar violent protests as on Sunday, the government will be better prepared. The struggle against the privatizations should also extend to the economic sector and be built on further pressure with strikes. However, this is not at all in sight. While the front of the middle class is well organized and possesses influence through legislation, media and executive power, the extra-parliamentary opposition is yet neither well organized, nor prepared for such conflicts. The coming days and weeks will show whether the protest of Sunday was a flash in the pan. More rallies have been announced for today. Reports will follow.

Anarcho-Syndicalist Info Service Romania (ASIR), January 16th, 2012

Translation by Contra Info

<http://en.contrainfo.espiv.net/2012...>

[1] Occupy Bucharest est un mouvement civique inspiré de celui créé aux Etats-Unis à Wall street le 17 septembre 2011. Occupy Wall Street dénonce le capitalisme financier et s'inspire du printemps arabe dans la manière d'utiliser les réseaux sociaux et des indignés d'Espagne, dans leurs revendications.